

Repatriation Distress among Young Adult Korean Third Culture Kids: ABC-X model

한국 초기 성인기 TCK의 귀환적응 스트레스 : ABC-X 모델 적용

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초록

본 연구에서는 한국 초기 성인기에 속한 제3문화인(TCK)의 귀환적응 스트레스 경험에 대한 일반적인 성향을 살펴보고자 하였다. ABC-X 가족 스트레스 모델을 바탕으로 대처자원인 자아 효능감, 가족 적응력과 결속력, 사회적 지지 그리고 TCK가 지각한 문화정체성 변화를 변인들로 선정하여 이 변인들이 한국 TCK의 귀환적응 스트레스에 미치는 영향을 살펴보았다. 본 연구의 대상은 한국으로 귀환하여 현재 공부를 하거나 일을 하고 있는 145명의 20대 한국 TCK이며, 자료수집을 위해 온라인 서베이를 이용하였다. 본 연구의 결과를 요약하면 다음과 같다. 첫째, 한국 TCK는 보통 수준의 귀환적응 스트레스를 경험하였지만 높은 수준의 문화정체성 변화를 지각하고 있는 것으로 나타났다. 또한, 한국 TCK의 대처 자원 중 자아 효능감과 사회적 지지는 높은 수준이었고, 가족 적응력과 결속력은 보통 수준으로 나타났다. 둘째, 한국 TCK의 귀환 스트레스를 유의하게 설명하는 변인은 자아 효능감, 사회적 지지와 문화정체성 변화로 나타났다. 한국 TCK들은 자아 효능감과 사회적 지지 자원을 덜 가질수록, 문화정체성 변화를 높게 지각할수록 귀환적응 스트레스를 더 많이 경험하였다.

주제어: TCK, 귀환적응 스트레스, ABC-X 모델, 자아 효능감, 문화정체성 변화

I. Introduction

1. Korean TCK and repatriation distress

Korea, the country that had taught its people to take pride in their nation's ethnic homogeneity, is now struggling to embrace a new reality with an influx of foreign workers, migrants and inter-cultural families (Kim, 2009). Many recent studies in Korea (Jung & Park, 2012) have focused on understanding the acculturation process of this new group of

multicultural individuals. However, a group of ethnic Koreans known as Third Culture Kids (TCKs), who internally carry multicultural characteristics, are also adding to the growing diversity of the multicultural population in Korea (Nam, 2013).

The term TCK was the term introduced about 40 years ago by a socialist, Ruth Useem (Pollack, 1998). TCK originally signified people who had spent a significant amount of time outside their passport culture during their developmental years, usually as a

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result of expatriate work of their parents (Pollack, 1998). Nowadays, the term includes a variety of individuals with cross-cultural living experiences, having grown up as children of business executives, diplomats, missionaries and emigrants who returned to homeland (Szkudlarek, 2010) or have returned from studying overseas (The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, 2009). It has been reported that 23,698 overseas students had come back to reside in Korean again.

The typical TCK's journey in life starts with leaving their home countries and eventually moving back home (Sussman, 2002). For TCKs, the first culture is the home culture, the second culture is the host culture, and the third culture is the culture that lies within the individual, which is neither the home nor the host culture (McDonald, 2010). When TCKs return to their home countries after experiencing the third culture, they face similar adjustment challenges as the ones they originally experienced living outside of their home culture. This adjustment challenges back in the home country is called "repatriation distress" (Sussman, 2002) and is accompanied by psychological responses such as anxiety, sadness, anger, and depression (Ward et al., 1998). Many studies show that repatriation outcomes are negative for many repatriates and their families (Sussman, 2002).

Unlike growing studies on the repatriation distress of TCKs in the West, those in Korea seem far limited. So far, studies on repatriation distress amongst TCKs have been carried out in Korea, all focus on Korean TCK adolescents and their issues (i.e. language, school, teacher relationships, peer relationships etc.), mainly related to their school adjustment (Oh, Park & Oh, 2010). However, little studies on Korean TCKs and their adjustment difficulties have been conducted on other age groups. This study sought to build on results of previous studies by extending the scope to young adult Korean TCKs, in an effort to understand how young adult Korean TCKs experience the repatriation distress.

Unlike adolescents, who are still largely dependent on their parents' support, young adult TCKs making the transition into adulthood are subject to a gradual individuation process (e.g., leaving home, leaving school or entering university, starting a career, becoming economically independent etc.) which could potentially lead to a changed perception of their repatriation experience (You & Malley-Morrison, 2000). It would therefore be of value to extend studies to this older age group in order to gain a better understanding of Korean TCKs and their repatriation experience.

2. The ABC-X model of family stress and its component variables

The variables selected in this study were based on ABC-X model of family stress (Boss, 2002). The variance of repatriation distress can be well explained by the ABC-X family stress model as it is a comprehensive approach to the many variables involved in understanding stress coping strategies in families.

Repatriation distress results from migration or repatriation, causing a state of disturbed equilibrium in the majority of TCKs and their families (Bush et al., 2010). However, not every member of the family responds to the stress in the same way. The outcome of stress for individual family members can thus vary. In the ABC-X family stress model, the family's *perception* (C) of the stress provoking *event* (A) and, the *resources* (B) that the family has at the time of the event, can determine the outcome of family *crisis* (X) (Boss, 2002, p.65). Though small in number, few studies conducted in the west used the ABC-X model to examine family's cross-cultural adjustment to living in a foreign country. Caligiuri and colleagues (1998) found that the combination of the global assignment, the family resources and the family's perception of relocating internationally, were all related to the families' cross-cultural adjustment. The study also found that family resources such as family support, family communication and family adaptability were

related to families' adjustment to working and living in the host country.

Previous findings (Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991; Harrison, Chadwick & Scales, 1996; McGraw, Brooks et al., 2012; Milstein, 2005; Osman-Gani & Rockstuhl, 2009; Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012; Sussman, 2002) showed that factors such as self-efficacy (personal resources), family adaptability and cohesion (family resources), social support (social resources), and cultural identity change (perception) significantly affected the cross-cultural adaptation of internationally mobile individuals. Hence, the present study selected these variables related to the cross-cultural adjustment of internationally mobile individuals to investigate the degree of effect they may have on repatriation distress amongst Korean TCKs. Furthermore, the ABC-X model was employed to examine the cross-cultural adjustment or the repatriation experiences of Korean TCKs: TCK repatriation (event) was selected as factor A, self-efficacy (personal resource), family adaptability and cohesion (family resources), social support (social resource) as factor B, cultural identity change (perception) as factor C, and the outcome of the family crisis as factor X.

TCKs are often faced with the absence of a sense of belonging. Moving frequently back and forth between the home culture and host culture(s) during the development years contributes to difficulties in forming cultural identities. Furthermore, the struggle with the sense of belonging intensifies when they finally return to their home countries (McDonald, 2010). They may feel like a 'hidden immigrant' in the home country (McDonald, 2010) and experience marginality, anxiety and depression (Szkudlarek, 2010). A small but increasing number of studies on the group of teenage-returnee students have been consistently carried out in Korea. The findings showed that those who had lived outside of their home country during their early development years experienced reverse culture shock or stress after they returned to Korea (Oh et al., 2010). Also, a study also indicated that Korean returnee students had more difficulties in

readjusting to Korean culture than adjusting to the host cultures during their stay abroad (Choi, 2009). In the present study, these challenges confronted back in Korea by TCKs are determined to be the stressor element (A) in the ABC-X stress model.

Self-efficacy is frequently adopted as a personal resource element (B) in various studies. Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as "the level of confidence that individuals have in their ability to accomplish tasks" (Harrison et al., 1996, p.170) and suggested that it arises from the gradual acquisition of complex cognitive, and/or physical skills through experience (Bandura, 1982). So far, self-efficacy has been studied predominantly among expatriates who were abroad on overseas assignments. In cross-cultural adjustment, individuals face a wide range of situations and challenges. Therefore, self-efficacy could be an important factor related to cross-cultural adjustment (Harrison et al., 1996). According to Black and his colleagues (1991), individuals with high levels of self-efficacy constantly attempted to employ new behaviors in unfamiliar situations. Positive and negative feedbacks received during this process can then lead individuals to monitor and modify their behaviors to meet the expectations of the new environment.

Additional resources involving the family can be family adaptability and cohesion which can also contribute to the success or failure of cross-cultural adjustment (Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012). Caligiuri and colleagues (1998) defined family support in terms of family adaptability and how effectively the family responds to the stress-provoking event. Family adaptability indicates how effectively the family can adapt in response to an external stressor. They, also, stated that cohesive families provide healthy levels of emotional support to each other and at the same time allow each other to build relationships with others outside of the family system. A well-functioning family is able to accept the changes, whereas a dysfunctional family tries to maintain the status quo when the environment requires change. Family support and adaptability also facilitate the growth and effective

functioning of families (Caligiuri et al., 1998). Early studies on internationally mobile individuals and families identified that, among various factors, family situation was the most important factor that contributed to the success and failure of international assignments (Rosenbusch & Cseh 2012).

Another measure of resource that explain individuals' repatriation distress can be social support. Kaplan and his colleagues (1977) defined social support as the degree to which an individual's social needs (of affection, security, approval, and belonging, among others) are met through social interaction (Vaux et al., 1986). Some of the social supports include religious organizations, social clubs, and friendships by exchanging positive feedback, disclosure of private feelings, advice, social participation, practical aid, and physical assistance (Copeland & Norrell, 2002). Early findings showed that it could protect people suffering from a wide range of pathological states, such as low birth weight, death, arthritis, tuberculosis, depression, alcoholism, and the social breakdown syndrome (Cobb, 1976). Various studies have investigated on the relationships between social support and the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates. The results of these studies indicated that a high degree of perceived social support decreased the effect of acculturative stress and helped individuals and families cope with the pressure of living in a cross-cultural environment (McGraw et al., 2013). Other research on repatriates and their repatriation adjustment reported that perceived social supports of returnees were also associated with their adaptive, maladaptive coping styles, anxiety, depression, and physical and psychological distress (Priel & Shamai, 1995).

Cultural identity change is selected as factor C of ABC-X stress model in this study. Cultural identity is defined as a collective self or a shared culture, which people with a common history and ancestry hold in common (Hall, 1990). It is often known as national identity or nationality. TCKs living in cross-cultural environments identify, to a certain degree, with cultural identity of the home culture or

the host culture in terms of behaviors, traditions, and beliefs (Overevo, 2009). Those who have experienced a mobile cross-cultural lifestyle during their childhood often have problem with their cultural identity due to a disruption in the identity process (Grimshaw & Sears, 2008). When they enter into new cultures, they realize that their perceptions of the new culture are often incongruent with their existing inner values and beliefs. Such disconnect between the new environment and their existing beliefs results in distress. In order to reduce this distress, they have to change their behaviors to adjust to the new environment (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001). When this shift in identity occurs, TCKs struggle to identify their cultural identity. The concept of cultural identity shift is also closely linked to the "alternation conceptualization" proposed by Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi (1986), which assumes that it is possible for an individual to know and understand two different cultures and "it is possible and acceptable to participate in two different cultures or to use two different languages, perhaps for different purposes, by alternating one's behavior according to the situation" (Ogbu & Matute-Bianchi, 1986, p.89).

In sum, the aim of this study was to examine the impact of the selected resources and perception as variables to predict the degree of repatriation distress experienced by young adult Korean TCKs. The result of the current study is expected to enhance the awareness of TCKs in Korea and establish a framework to better understand the challenges they and their families encounter whilst adjusting back to their home country. It is also hoped this study will provide knowledge so that potential interventions can be designed to support the cross-cultural adjustment of Korean TCKs with repatriation distress.

Research questions are as follows:

1. What are the general characteristics of young adult Korean TCKs with regard to self-efficacy, family adaptability and cohesion, social support, cultural identity change, and repatriation distress?

2. What are the effects of self-efficacy, family adaptability and cohesion, social support, and cultural identity change on the level of repatriation distress in Korean TCKs?

III. Research Method

1. Sampling and demographic characteristics

A total of 145 Korean TCKs (female=87; male=58) participated in the survey. Their age ranged from 19 to 30 years with a mean of 23.4 years ($SD=2.7$). At the time of the survey, majority of the participants (66.9 %) were studying. 83.5 percent of students were primarily attending college or university and 0.1 percent were attending a master's program. Graduates of college or university and a master's program were 29.7 percent and 1.4 percent.

The majority of the participants lived in Seoul (66%) and Pohang (15%). The mean age of their first move was 7.2 years ($SD=5.6$). Also, the mean time spent overseas during childhood was 12 years ($SD=5.6$) and the mean time spent in Korea since their recent repatriation was 3.65 years ($SD=3.3$). Most of the participants were born in Korea possessing Korean citizenship. The remainder was comprised of those with a citizenship from US or other countries and others with Korean and US dual citizenships. The reasons for moving overseas were in the order of their parents' work, their own education and schooling overseas, family immigration and other reasons, and their parents' study.

The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

3. Measures

The dependent variable in this study was the repatriation distress of TCK, and the independent variables were self-efficacy, family adaptability and cohesion, social support and cultural identity change.

1) Repatriation distress

Repatriation distress was measured through Sussman's (2002) 7-item psychological repatriation distress scale (RDIS). This tool uses a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). The total score of the scale can range from 7 to 49 and higher scores of RDIS indicate that the participants felt more repatriation distress. The Cronbach's α for the complete scale for the current study was .75.

2) Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy was measured using New General Self-Efficacy scale (NGSE), developed by Chen, Gully, and Eden (2001). NGSE is a 7-item self-reported scale designed to assess the participant's self-perceptions of competency and achievement across diverse situations and tasks (Judge, Erez & Bono, 1998). It uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all true"(1) to "exactly true"(5). The total score can range from 7 to 35 and the higher scores for NGSE indicate that the participants are more self-efficient. The Cronbach's α for the complete scale for the current study was .87.

3) Family cohesion and family flexibility

The variables of family cohesion and family flexibility were measured using the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale II (FACES II), developed by Olsen et al.(1992). The FACES II is composed of 30 items measured through a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "almost never" (1) to "almost always"(5). The scale contains 16 cohesion item and 14 flexibility items. The items focus on system characteristics of all family members currently living together. The total score for family cohesion can range from 16 to 80 and the total score for family flexibility can range from 14 to 70. Higher scores for family cohesion and flexibility indicate that the families of the participants are more cohesive

〈Table 1〉 Demographic characteristics of the participants

(N=145)

Variables	N	%
Age		
19 ~ 20	33	22.8
21 ~ 22	32	22.1
23 ~ 24	39	26.9
25 ~ 26	25	17.2
27 ~ 30	16	11.0
Education status		
Graduated from high school or less	7	4.8
Attending 2 or 3 year college/4 year university	81	55.8
2 year college/4 year university graduate	43	29.7
Attending or graduated Master's program	14	9.7
Occupation		
Student	97	66.9
Employed	38	26.2
Unemployed & Military	10	6.9
Current residing city		
Seoul	96	66.0
Pohang	22	15.0
Others	27	19.0
Age of first move (years)		
0~2	41	28.3
3~5	21	14.5
6~8	15	10.3
9~11	24	16.6
12~16	43	29.7
Time spent overseas (years)		
3~6	29	20.0
7~10	44	30.3
11~13	22	15.2
14~17	25	17.2
More than 18	25	17.2
Time spent in Korea since repatriation (years)		
0~1	38	26.2
2~3	56	38.6
4~7	30	20.7
More than 8	21	14.4
Country of birth		
Korea	118	81.4
US	11	7.6
China & Others	16	11.0
Citizenship		
Korea	110	76.0
US	13	9.0
Other	15	10.0
Dual Citizenship (Korea & US)	7	5.0
Reasons for moving overseas		
Education and schooling	50	35.0
Parents' work	62	43.0
Parents' study	13	9.0
Immigration & others	20	13.0

and flexible. The Cronbach's α for the complete scale for the current study was .86.

4) Social support

The variable of social support was measured using Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS), developed by Zimet et al.(1988). This scale consists of 12 items and assessed perceived social support from family, friends, special person (significant other). Each item was rated on a scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). The scale was modified for the purpose of this study. Four items related to family were removed in this study since they overlapped with items in Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale. In total eight items related to friends and special persons (significant others) were used to measure perceived social support in this study. The total score can range from 7 to 56 and higher scores for MSPSS indicate that the participants have more social support. The Cronbach's α for the complete scale for the current study was .90.

5) Cultural identity change

In order to assess cultural identity change, Sussman's (2002) 7-item transition scale was used. This scale is rated on a 7-point scale of agreement with higher scores reflecting more change. In addition, Sussman's additive, subtractive, and intercultural identity change items were employed and added to this scale. The additive component was measured by the item "In some ways I feel more Korean as a result of my studies abroad". The subtractive question was measured by the item "I feel less like a person from my home country as a result of my studies abroad". Intercultural identity was measured by the item "I feel that I am a more global or international person now than I was prior to studying abroad". These items were also rated on a 7-point scale of agreement with higher

scores reflecting more identity change and all seven questions were summed as one composite score. The total score can range between 7 and 49. The Cronbach's α for the scale for the current study was .83.

4. Procedures and data analysis

To ensure that all the items in the questionnaires were relevant to and comprehensible by the participants, a pilot test was conducted to 5 TCK students recruited for this study. The researcher initially contacted and visited a few universities with international faculties from undergraduate and postgraduate schools to encourage TCK students for survey participation. The snowball sampling was, then, used and an online survey was created and circulated. After completion of the online surveys, participants were asked if they could invite their friends and acquaintances to participate in the survey.

A total of 154 completed online surveys were collected and their responses were checked for the accuracy of data entry, appropriate ranges and frequencies, and missing values. The data was analyzed with descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analysis using SPSS 21.0. Descriptive analysis was done to investigate the characteristics of Korean TCKs recruited for the present study. Pearson's correlation was calculated to examine the correlations between the study variables. Lastly, multiple regression analysis was performed to identify the effects the variables had on the level of repatriation distress perceived by TCKs participating in this study.

IV. Results

1. General characteristics of TCKs in regard to study variables

Descriptive analysis was done to investigate the

first research question, the general characteristics of TCK participants in regards to their coping resources (self-efficacy, family adaptability and cohesion, social support), perception (cultural identity change), and family crisis (repatriation distress). The means and standard deviation of these study variables are presented in Table 2.

As for self-efficacy, the mean score was 3.24 ($SD=0.43$). This score lay between “moderately true” and “exactly true” of a 4-point Likert scale and indicated that the overall self-efficacy level of the participants was quite high in general.

The mean score of family adaptability and cohesion was 3.23 ($SD=0.45$). This mean lay between “sometimes” and “frequently” of a 5-point Likert scale and indicated that the participants had an average level of family adaptability and cohesion in general.

The mean score of social support was 5.82 ($SD=1.00$). This mean score lay between “agree a little” and “agree” of a 7-point Likert scale and indicated that the participants had a fairly strong level of social support in general.

The mean score of the cultural identity change was 5.69 ($SD=0.94$). This mean score lay between “agree a little” and “agree” of 7-point Likert scale and it indicated that there was a higher than an average level of cultural identity perception change amongst the participants.

When it comes to the repatriation distress scores, the mean was 3.88 ($SD=1.10$). This mean score was between “disagree little” and “neutral” of a 7-point Likert scale and indicated that there was an average level of repatriation distress experienced

amongst the sample. Fifty percent of the participants in this study had little below the average level of repatriation distress, 32.6% had the average level of repatriation distress and 17.4% had above the average level of repatriation distress.

2. The variables predicting the level of repatriation distress

To investigate the second research question, multiple regression analysis was performed. As the independent variables predicting the level of repatriation distress, age, gender, education status, time spent overseas, time since repatriation to Korea, self-efficacy, family adaptability and cohesion, social support, and cultural identity change were included in the analysis.

Prior to the multivariate linear regression analysis, the multivariate normality of distributions was tested. According to Kline (2011), the normality can be assumed if the absolute value of skewness score falls below 3 and that of Kurtosis score falls below 10. In Table 2, the absolute values of skewness and kurtosis scores of all study variables fell less than 3, demonstrating the multivariate normality of their distributions.

The multiple regression analysis results in Table 3 showed that cultural identity change ($\beta=0.45$, $p<.001$), social support ($\beta=-0.20$, $p<.01$) and self-efficacy ($\beta=-0.19$, $p<.05$) were the variables that significantly explained the level of repatriation distress of Korean TCKs. This meant that Korean TCKs experienced more repatriation distress when

〈Table 2〉 General characteristics of TCKs in regard to study variables

($N=145$)

Variables	Scale range	Mean range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis
Self-efficacy	1-4	1.63-4.00	3.24	0.43	-.294	1.079
Family adaptability & cohesion	1-5	1.00-4.37	3.23	0.45	.978	3.664
Social support	1-7	2.88-7.00	5.82	1.00	.717	-.283
Cultural identity change	1-7	3.57-7.00	5.69	0.94	.583	-.472
Repatriation distress	1-7	1.43-6.29	3.88	1.10	.022	-.432

they perceived higher levels of cultural identity change, and had less self-efficacy and social support. Those three variables explained 29% of variance of the repatriation stress amongst Korean TCKs.

The demographic factors which were included as control variables (age, gender, education status, length of stay overseas and time since repatriation to Korea) did not contribute to the prediction of the level of repatriation distress among Korean TCKs.

V. Discussion

In the framework of ABC-X family stress model, this study examined the general characteristics of young adult TCKs in Korea. Moreover, it identified some of the resource variables and perception variable which affected their repatriation distress while adjusting back to Korean culture.

1. General characteristics of TCKs

First, in regards to the general characteristics of the TCKs, the overall self-efficacy level of the participating TCKs was quite high. This result was consistent with the previous study on Korean returnee students. It was reported that their cross-cultural

experience not only improved language skills, but also broadened their world view and helped them be more responsible of their own affairs, all of which are elements linked to self-efficacy (Korea Youth Counseling Institute, 2006). High academic achievements of TCKs could also be associated with high self-efficacy. Many participants in this study were studying at college or graduate school at the time of the survey (64.1%) and some were graduates from college and/or master's degree (31.1%). Therefore, such high pursuit of educational achievements amongst Korean TCKs could have been a factor which contributed to their enhanced level of self-efficacy.

Second, TCKs in Korea showed an average level of family adaptability and cohesion. This result was inconsistent to those of previous studies which indicated that internationally mobile individuals and families identified family situation as the most important factor that contributed to the success and failure of international assignments (Rosenbusch & Cseh 2012). This inconsistency may be explained by the frequent relocations and cultural adjustment processes of the participants experiencing difficulties in establishing strong relationships with people and this, in turn, extended even within the family structure (McDonald, 2010).

〈Table 3〉 Estimates of the effects of independent variables on repatriation distress

(N=145)

Variables	B	β
Age	-0.01	-0.03
Gender	-0.07	-0.03
Education status	0.09	0.11
Length of stay overseas	0.01	0.06
Time since repatriation to Korea	0.02	0.06
Self-efficacy	-0.49	-0.19*
Family adaptability & cohesion	0.05	0.02
Social support	-0.23	-0.20**
Cultural identity change	0.52	0.45***
R^2		0.27***
F		5.59***

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Another plausible explanation is that the participants of this study were in their twenties in their life cycle and they could have been more interested in building intimate relationships with their friends and significant others than their own families. And as a result, this could have possibly affected the level of family adaptability and cohesion of young adult Korean TCKs and brought different result from previous studies.

Third, the result from the study indicated that TCKs in Korea received a rather high level of social support resources from their friends and significant others. According to McDonald (2010), TCKs were reported to stick together with fellow TCKs and formed intimate relationships with each other. They also made efforts to maintain long-term overseas relationships. Strong social support among Korean TCKs in this study may also be related to the demographics of the participants in the current study. Since almost 67% of the participants were university students, these participants were exposed to more opportunities to find friends or social support groups through academic and social activities in their universities (Sokol, 2009).

Another study (Moon et al., 2009) on the socio-cultural adjustment among Korean returnee students revealed that Korean returnee students in high school had better relationships with their friends than the ones from elementary or middle school because the students bonded more with their friends and peers as they made the transition from childhood to adulthood. Such result shows that TCKs in young adulthood stage tend to make more effort to build intimate relationships with friends and significant others than with their own family. This could also partially explain why there was a high level of social support amongst young adult Korean TCKs in this study.

Fourth, there was generally a high level of cultural identity change among Korean TCKs in this study. The result is in agreement with findings from previous research (Szkudlarek, 2010), which reported that TCKs

returning from overseas had undergone a profound transformation, influencing their cultural identity and sense of belonging.

Fifth, despite the fact that our TCKs had undergone changes in their cultural identity, they experienced a medium level of repatriation distress in adjusting back to their original culture. This result was inconsistent with the previous findings that consistently reported high levels of repatriation distress among TCKs upon their return home (Sussman, 2002). However, findings from Sussman's (2011) study showed that the return migrants in Hong Kong were either positive or were emotionally neutral about their repatriation experience. The Hong Kong returnee migrants reported in their interviews that, as a result of the rekindling of relationships with family members and old friends, they did not find their repatriation experience particularly stressful. Szkudlarek (2010) emphasized the importance of expanding an individual's worldview to include relevant constructs from different cultural points of reference. Korea is becoming more globalized and is exposed to a greater diversity of cultures than ever before. Consequently, TCKs could have adapted well to cultural differences and have developed the ability to integrate cultural differences, resulting in a successful re-adaptation upon reentry.

Moon et al., 2009, further, suggested that educational and cultural privileges can act as a buffer against repatriation distress for Korean returnee students who come from high socio-economic status families. Studying overseas remains very popular amongst Koreans as reflected by the fact that one third (35%) of the participants in this study went overseas for the purpose of education and schooling.

In sum, the combination of high educational achievements along with improved language skills and the prestige factor of cross-cultural living experiences of young adult Korean TCKs might have led them to acquire high social supports from their age groups and partially protected them from experiencing high levels of repatriation distress

upon their return home to Korea.

2. The predictors of repatriation distress

First, the variable which predicted repatriation distress was self-efficacy. The higher TCKs' self-efficacy, the less repatriation distress they tended to experience. This is consistent with previous findings which showed that individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy were more able to handle stressful events successfully in the new culture (Osman-Gani & Rockstuhl, 2009). The findings in this study suggest that self-efficacy could help TCKs to effectively deal with repatriation distress as they readjust to their home country following their experience with another culture.

Second, social support significantly explained repatriation distress. TCKs in this study had a fairly strong social support through their friends and significant others and this predicted a reduced level of repatriation distress. This result is consistent with the findings from previous studies which found that social support could protect people in crisis from a wide variety of stresses (McGraw et al., 2013). Most of the participants who participated in the current study were either students or graduates from universities with high social integration with fellow TCKs, which appeared to moderate the repatriation challenges faced by the participants.

The last variable which predicted repatriation distress was cultural identity change. The results showed that, the more TCKs perceived that their cultural identities had changed, the more repatriation distress they tended to experience. Such outcome is consistent with earlier research which showed that, the more individuals thought they had changed as a result of the international experience, the more they were likely to experience repatriation distress (Sussman, 2002). However, according to Sussman (2002), those individuals who indicated change towards a global identity after living abroad indicated a significantly improved repatriation experience.

To summarize, among Korean young adult TCKs, when self-efficacy, family cohesion and flexibility, social support and cultural identity change were included as factors in the prediction of repatriation distress, self-efficacy, social support and cultural identity change were found to be significant predictors of repatriation distress.

3. Limitations and future research

There were several limitations to this study. First, given that TCKs are a relatively invisible group who are not readily identifiable, the study relied upon word-of-mouth sampling among university students and their kin and friends living in Korea who had experienced a cross-culturally mobile childhood. The word-of-mouth sampling method represented a limitation since the sample size was likely comprised of participants with a high educational level or a relatively high socio-economic status. Also, the online survey could have predetermined the occupation of participants since this method is readily utilized by students attending colleges or universities. Thus, the results may not represent the general population of Korean TCKs. Previous studies on Korean returnee students (Moon et al., 2009) showed that the students with successful cross-cultural adjustment turned out to be from higher socio-economic backgrounds. In contrast, the students who struggled with cross-cultural adjustment tended to come from either a lower socio-economic status or return migrant families. Therefore, in future studies, using additional methods such as interviews and questionnaires would allow a wide range of participation from Korean TCKs with the greater diversity of ages, occupations, socio-economic backgrounds etc.

Second, in this study, the family adaptability and cohesion selected as family resources did not predict the level of repatriation distress amongst Korean young adult TCKs. Therefore, the result from this study was inconsistent with earlier studies

(Rosenbusch & Cseh, 2012) which showed that family situation was an important predictor of cross-cultural adjustments in internationally mobile families. Given the critical role of family members in the cross-cultural adjustment process of TCKs, it is important to re-examine the impact of family resources on repatriation distress among Korean TCKs in future research.

Third, all the participants in this study took an English version of the survey only. In future, the scales should be translated and validated into Korean and other languages to include TCKs from non-English-speaking countries. If so, it would be possible to conduct a comparison study involving TCKs from other countries such as Japan and China, which could, further, determine distinctive characteristics of Korean TCKs.

Lastly, since this study assessed all essential variables at one time, it was not possible to elucidate the causal relationships among these variables. In order to obtain more precise relationships among variables involved in ABC-X model, either a path or Structural Equation Model analyses, using longitudinal data, could be recommended for the future research. By doing so, ABC-X model could be tested.

Despite the limitations mentioned above, this study provided a new perspective about the topic which may help future research in this area. The author hopes that it can lead to an improved awareness of TCKs in Korea and provide useful insights for researchers and the community to better understand the challenges TCKs and their families face, and the factors that may affect and potentially mitigate their repatriation distress.

4. Conclusion

Returning to the ABC-X model: factor A is the TCKs' repatriation - stress provoking event; factor B is self-efficacy and social supports - the resources; and factor C is cultural identity change - the perception of the event. All of these factors significantly

predicted their repatriation distress level. Despite their re-entry into their country of origin Korea, they experienced successful cultural re-adaptation, resulting in average repatriation distress level. Having a high level of resources (self-efficacy and social supports) and cultural identity change, it would be likely for them to perceive their repatriation experience as a less distressful event.

Aiming to develop a positive global identity (which relates to lowering of repatriation distress) it would be essential to provide opportunities for Korean TCKs to be educated to empower them in the workforce, schools and community centers so they can interact with other TCKs to strengthen their social supports and network.

Keywords: TCK, repatriation distress, ABC-X model, self-efficacy, cultural identity change

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