

Adaptive performance on military assignment effectiveness among leaders deputed on United Nations missions

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Abstract

The establishment of United Nation Security Council has witnessed the increase in international peace keeping missions to maintain peace and security among conflicting countries. In the modern peace keeping missions, adaptive performance has been identified as a critical dimension of job performance for military leaders. Military leaders not only working in new cultural environment, but also will be interacting with locals with different cultural values and expectations. Thus, this conceptual paper focus on the cross cultural competences as the determinant of adaptive performance among military leaders on peace keeping missions. Approach: The literature was explored to acknowledge the accessible relationships among cross cultural competence (Culture intelligence, Emotional intelligence, Social intelligence and language proficiency) and adaptive performance among military leaders deputed on United Nations peace keeping missions. Conclusions: This conceptual paper provides an updated review of the literature on cross culture competences and adaptive performance. The practical implications as well as academic contributions were also presented.

Keywords: cross culture competences, culture intelligence, emotional intelligence, social intelligence, language proficiency, adaptive performance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Recent and future peace keeping operations require military leaders to interact with people from diverse regions and cultures. As matter of fact, the cultural consideration and human resource management has been recognized across the peace keeping forces as an important factors for their effectiveness throughout current reports of peace keeping leaders.

Traditional measures of peace keeping mission success were on restoring the peace and harmony in the conflicting countries with minimal number of injures and death among both the civilians and military personnel. This implies that the effectiveness of peace keeping mission was measured from the overall performance of the entire unit assigned to a particular conflicting country. However, measures of military leader's effectiveness on peace keeping missions left unexplored. Although is not sensible to measure how one perform during the war, however findings from recent research conducted among peace keepers on international peace keeping missions suggest that adaptability to local culture and living condition should be considered as part of the measures of leaders effectiveness. Study among United State Army on duty found that the most frequently reported sources of stress were being away from home, deployment and increases in work load.

The consequences of inability to handle stress mainly due to cultural differences can be very harmful to personnel on mission. Suicide rate has been reported to be approximately 24.1 per 100,000 personnel in 2011 (United States Army, 2010). More over recent report revealed that Army suicides this year exceed 2012 combat deaths in Afghanistan, in another way each day there is a suicide death (CNS, 2012). Apart from suicidal incidents, many have committed both the duty and non-duty offences. Some of those non-duties related offences are related to cultural blunders incidents. A total of 78,262 offenses committed by active duty soldiers mainly due to lack of cultural awareness by the military (Center for Advanced Defense Studies, 2006).

According to McFarland (2005) the soldier's ability to positively interact within local population has become so crucial issue that a mission's overall success is often significantly affected by it. Hence, adaptability is an important measure of military leaders' performance to be studied in order to understand how leaders navigate successfully in local culture and successfully perform in competitive environments (Burke et al., 2006; Pulakos et al., 2000).

2. THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT

The concept of Cross Culture Competences (CCC) in peace missions is useful in allowing military leaders to learn and understand cross-culture, thus helping leaders decide when and

how culture is relevant during interactions with the local people. Therefore, this skill is necessary when adapting to foreign countries (Abbe, Gulick & Herman, 2007). CCC is also an important element for military leaders who often interact with people from different cultures (Semelski, 2009). Individuals (leaders) who possess higher levels of CCC report better cross-cultural adjustment (CCA) (Gabrenya et al., 2011). This study identifies four skill areas that have been found critical in effective adaptive performance: Culture intelligence CQ, Emotional intelligence EQ, Social intelligence SQ, and language ability.

Adaptive performance has recently become an important factor in the skill set of civilian and military leaders in completing tasks, particularly overseas assignments. Adaptive performance is also considered one of the job performance components. Adaptive performance is defined as an effective change in response to an altered situation, in which behavioral change is required (Chan, 2000; White, Mueller-Hanson, Dorsey, Pulakos, Wisecarver & Deagle, 2005).

Adaptive performance broadly refers to behavior that demonstrates proficiency in self-managing the changes in work tasks (London & Mone, 1999). Campbell (1999) reveals that performance factors concerning how individuals adapt to changes in job requirements and conditions are beneficial to the dimensional taxonomy of job performance of individuals. The findings of Campbell have led to the expansion of theoretical models on job performance, which now includes an adaptive performance dimension (Campbell, 1999).

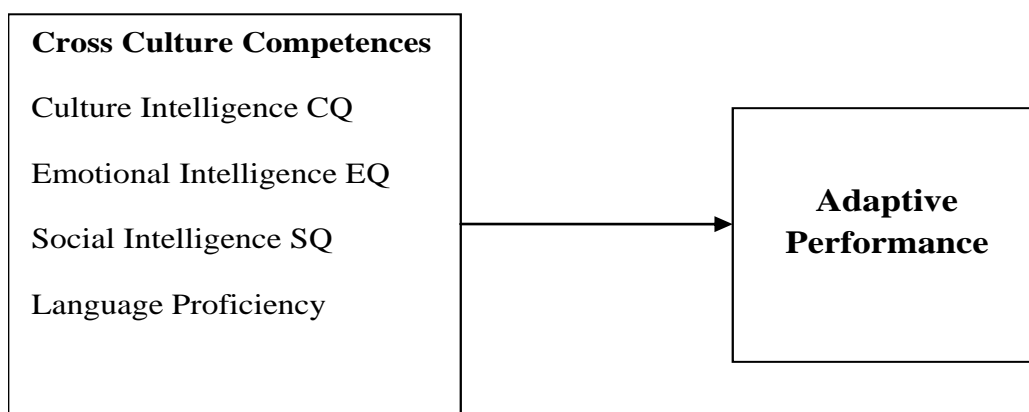


Fig. 1: A simplified theoretical framework

Cross-cultural aspects have different effects on adjustment and adaptability, particularly among army leaders; thus, studying these aspects is necessary. This study attempts to fill the research gap by examining the relationship between CCCs and the effectiveness of the

adaptive performance of peacekeeping forces. Considering that previous studies have focused on the importance of expatriate adjustment, this study investigates the effect of CCCs on adjustment and adaptive performance as well as the effectiveness of peacekeeping leaders.

3. MATERIALS and METHODS

In this article we will provide a logical understanding of CCC and adaptive performance contributions on United Nation peace keeping missions. For this purpose, a thorough search of journal articles, doctoral dissertations, research studies, reports and web sites were done, we developed a comprehensive model that contain the relationships among CCC, peace keeping leaders adjustment and leader adaptive performance. Finally, our discussion consist of four sections and each section literature to support the relation between the CCC components: CQ, EQ, SQ and language and the adaptive performance.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 The Cross Cultural Competences

The concept of CCC in peace missions is useful in allowing military leaders to learn and understand cross-culture and to decide when and how culture is relevant when interacting with the local people. Therefore, this skill is necessary when adapting to foreign environment (Abbe et al., 2007). In this paper, CCC is examined under four components (CQ, EQ, SQ, and language) and is defined as “a set of cognitive, behavioral, and affective/motivational components that enable individuals to adapt effectively in intercultural environments” (Abbe et al., 2007). The elements of CCC are as follows:

4.1.1 Culture Intelligence

Culture Intelligence is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct comprising of four dimensions: Meta cognitive, motivational, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions (Earley and Ang, 2003). CQ is defined as “the person’s capability to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity” (Ang et al., 2007).

CQ is an important factor, particularly its motivational and behavioral components, that affects the adjustment of international expatriates (Sri Ramalu et al., 2010). Moreover CQ has a significant effect on international business (Hadia, 2011).

4.1.2 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is also an important factor in leader adaptability. EQ is defined as “the cluster of personal and social competencies that include self-awareness and control, motivation and persistence, empathy, and the ability to form relationships” (McCollum &

Broadus, 2007). Afolabi (2010) reported that police officers with high EQ are more satisfied and perform better than those with low EQ. Shahzad et al. (2011) reveal that a positive relationship exists between social awareness and relationship management and employee adjustment/performance.

4.1.3 Social Intelligence

Social Intelligence is one of the pillars of CCC skills that affect the ability of leaders to adapt in new culture settings. SQ is defined as “the ability to understand the feelings, thoughts, and behavior of persons, including oneself, in interpersonal situations and to act appropriately upon that understanding” (Marlowe, 1986).

People’s (leaders) understanding of SQ should motivate others, even those from different culture backgrounds, to think about others’ feelings and needs, and to know the cultural values of the group to establish a strong interaction with them to adjust and achieve the goals of the operation (Goleman, 2006).

Moreover social intelligence is important, cognitive and behavioral versatility and flexibility are essential characteristics of competent leaders. Leader who are socially intelligent appear to experience a rich, meaningful life. Also, social intelligence has been found to be associated with enhanced social problem-solving abilities and positive interpersonal experience. Social intelligence can help facilitate in the leadership effectiveness and success (Beheshtifar & Roasaei, 2012).

4.1.4 Language

Language is many researchers have confirmed the importance of fluency in the language of the host country (Jackson, 2005). Several studies denote that language proficiency and language ability are significant (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Mol et al., 2005). Moreover, English-language proficiency is revealed to enhance positively the adjustment of expatriates. Different types of English-language proficiency also affect different aspects of the expatriates’ adjustment (Xu & Du-Babcock, 2012). To prepare for the UN operations, leaders should treat learning culture and language skills as seriously as learning combat skills because both are important in achieving mission goals (Abee et al., 2007).

4.2 The Relationship between CQ and Adaptive Performance

CQ is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct comprising of four dimensions: meta-cognitive, motivational, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. CQ has a specific relevance to functioning in culturally diverse settings (Earley & Ang, 2003). Consequently, CQ is defined as “a person’s capability to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity” (Ang et al., 2007). Earley and Ang (2003) define CQ as “a person’s

capability to adapt effectively to new cultural contexts.” CQ refers to “a form of situated intelligence where intelligently adaptive behaviors are culturally bound to the values and beliefs of a given society or culture”. A study by Reza et al. (2012) in Iran reveals an insignificant relation between the behavioral and meta cognitive aspects of CQ and job performance. In another study in Iran, Amiri, Moghemi and Kazimi (2010) reveal that a significant relationship exists between the cognitive and motivational aspects of CQ and an employee’s performance. A positive relation also exists between CQ, cognitive and motivation aspects, and job performance (Reza et al., 2012). Fakhreldin (2011) studies employees in Egypt and find that high levels of CQ results in high performance levels. The findings of Ang et al. (2007) indicate that openness to experience is a crucial characteristic in effective adaptive performance in culturally diverse settings. Similarly, Kumar et al. (2008) denote that an expatriate’s CQ has a significant influence on job performance, and a significant positive relationship exists between CQ and performance (Sri Ramalu et al., 2010).

Theoretically, adaptive performance is a function of KSAO. An action that is relevant to the objectives of an organization is considered part of an individual’s job performance. Moreover, CQ, which is an aspect of the knowledge, skills, and motivation of an individual, is important in diverse environments and different cultures. Prior empirical studies reveal the relationship between CQ and adaptive performance and denote CQ as an important factor in adaptive performance. CQ also emerges as an important factor in effective adaptive performance and interaction inside and among various cultural environments (Amiri et al., 2010; Ang et al., 2007; Reza et al., 2012; Fakhreldin, 2011; Kumar et al., 2008; Sri Ramalu et al., 2010). Moreover, the development of adaptive performance requires strong leadership, authority, and cooperative effort of leaders, all of which depend upon the level of leadership and the operational environment (CQ) in which he or she strives (Burns & Waldo, 2010).

4.3 The Relationship between EQ and Adaptive Performance

The second CCC factor is EQ, which is a set of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence a person’s ability to cope with environmental demands and pressures. These capabilities and competencies include interpersonal skills (e.g., empathy and emotional self-awareness), stress management (e.g., impulse control and stress tolerance), adaptability (e.g., flexibility), and general mood (e.g., optimism and happiness) (Bar-On, 2000).

EQ is defined as “a cluster of personal and social competencies that include self-awareness and control, motivation and persistence, empathy, and the ability to form relationships” (McCollum & Broadus, 2007). In addition, EQ is a skill that can be learned and improved in the work place. EQ changes a person’s behavior and eventually leads to improved personal adaptive performance. This type of intelligence also expands the decision-making capabilities of leaders, allowing them to solve problems at all managerial levels (Weston, 2010).

In Pakistan, Shahzad et al. (2011) examine the influence of EQ on the performance of employees in the telecommunication industry. They specifically study the influence of the four significant aspects of EQ, that is, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. According to them, an employee’s performance is not significantly affected by self-awareness and self-management; however, a positive relationship exists among employee performance, social awareness, and relationship management. Similarly, Afolabi (2010) examine the influence of EQ on the job performance of Nigerian police officers. Their results reveal that police officers with high EQ are more satisfied and perform better compared with those with low EQ.

Nurul, Ma’rof & Hanina (2012) conduct a study in Malaysia and indicate that personality traits have a positive and significant correlation with the overall EQ among school leaders. Moreover, EQ provides persons (leaders) with solid understanding, assign guidelines of the present EQ performance, and provides a process for behavioral changes that will lead to improved performance. According to Weston (2010), an “intuitive manager (leader) has special skills that are likely to become more valuable in future rapidly changing environment.”

Furthermore, EQ is a personal attribute that is highly influenced by previous experiences. An individual’s EQ is “indicative of how they interact with others and their capability to understand themselves in order to successfully interact with people and adapt their behavior according to situational needs” to achieve their tasks (McFarland, 2005). Khalili (2011) finds that a significant and positive relationship exists between EQ and organizational commitment. In addition, a significant relationship exists between EQ and job satisfaction (Najavi & Mousavi, 2012). Therefore, adaptive performance is the outcome of job satisfaction and job commitment.

Previous empirical studies reveal that a relationship exists between EQ and organizational commitment and job satisfaction and behavior adaptation improves adaptive performance (Afolabi, 2010; Khalili, 2011; Najavi & Mousavi, 2012). Further study is

needed to reveal the relationship between EQ and adaptive performance in different settings and not only in expatriate assignments.

4.4 The Relationship between SQ and Adaptive Performance

The fourth CCC is SQ, which is an important factor affecting a person's ability to interact with and understand people. SQ is defined as an "effective social behavior and its cognitive, affective, and behavior-related preconditions" (Schneider et al., 1996). Similarly, Marlowe (1986) defines SQ as "the ability to understand the feelings, thoughts, and behavior of persons, including oneself, in interpersonal situations and to act appropriately upon that understanding". Several definitions of SQ have been offered by theorists, but all these definitions share two general components, namely, awareness of others, and response and adaptation to others in social situations (Goleman, 2006).

SQ is conceptualized as the ability to understand people and act appropriately in human relations. SQ has three perspectives: SQ is the ability to react cognitively to an interpersonal stimulus; behavioral outcomes are affected by a person's ability to adapt socially; SQ includes cognitive and behavioral orientations (Zaccaro et al., 1995). The concepts of SQ incorporate internal and external perceptions, psychosocial variables, and social skills (Taylor, 1990).

Individuals with high SQ experience a rich and meaningful life and have good individual performance in team settings (Zaccaro et al., 1995). Additionally, SQ has been found to be associated with enhanced social problem-solving abilities (Jones & Day, 1997), experienced leadership (Kobe et al., 2001), and positive interpersonal experience. Several studies have shown that SQ is multidimensional and distinguishable from general intelligence domains (Marlowe, 1986).

Prior studies demonstrate the importance of SQ among expatriates' performance setting (Schneider et al., 1996; Jones & Day, 1997; Cheng, Chiu, Hong & Cheung, 2001; Goleman, 2006). However, the current study will focus more on the relationship between SQ and adaptive performance.

4.5 The Relationship between Language and Adaptive Performance

Language is the third CCC. The various viewpoints on the importance of language cannot be over-emphasized, and researchers reveal that language is an important factor in understanding culture. Additionally, language ability is denoted as a significant predictor of interaction adaptation (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005) and adaptive performance (Mol et al., 2005).

Xu (2008) conducts a study in China to understand the adjustment/adaptation of teachers of English as a foreign language to living and working in China. Their results indicate that language ability is significantly related to interaction and work adaptation. Several studies assessing language proficiency in terms of adaptability and language ability reveal that language emerges as a significant predictor of adaptability. Expatriates (leaders) who are proficient in the language of their host country are more adaptive and perform better (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005).

Developing foreign language skills can dramatically increase the abilities and skills of peacekeeping leaders. Learning foreign languages, such as English, Russian, French, and Spanish, through new and expanded programs from basic school, university, and even in the workforce is important for the adaptive performance of the peacekeeping force. Language ability enhances the capacity of the peacekeeping force in engaging foreign governments and people, specifically in critical regions. Language ability also helps the peacekeeping force convey respect for other cultures. Therefore, the government should develop a comprehensive national plan to expand programs and resources and to seek to collaborate with institutions of learning for foreign language education. The government should also seek the aid of other countries to assist in all phases of this program; that is, other countries should help provide language studies and provide job opportunities for exchange teachers. Language skills and communication is an important factor in CCA, and a positive relationship exists between language and performance (Takeuchi, Yun & Tesluk, 2002).

Moreover, language skills and cultural understanding are increasingly critical to the success of an army leader's adaptive performance (Abbe, 2008). However, further research is needed in the military setting given that the demand for peacekeeping forces in many regions has increased.

5. CONCLUSION

This paper contributes to both CCC literature and adaptive performance in many ways. Firstly, it provides a theoretical support for the relationship between CCC and leaders effectiveness outcomes. Secondly, this paper contributes to the peace keepers literature by proposing a new components of CCC and the relationship between these component and how effects leaders performance. Thirdly, this conceptual paper enrich the present peace keeping leaders literature by explaining peace keeping leader CCC can enhance leaders effectiveness in United Nation missions all over the world.

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