

# **THE POWER OF SHARED VISION: BIDIRECTIONAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER BETWEEN EXPATRIATES AND HOST COUNTRY NATIONALS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Expatriation leads to many organizational outcomes to a host country including knowledge transfer. Little is known about the influence of individual and social capital factors on knowledge transfer involving expatriates and host country nationals (HCNs) bi-directionally. This paper examines the determinants of knowledge transfer involving the two groups of professionals bi-directionally. Focusing on the individual and social capital factors, we investigated the role played by shared vision in the effects of cultural intelligence and feedback-seeking behaviour on knowledge transfer. This empirical study is supported by three theories, namely the resource-based theory, the social capital theory and the anxiety and uncertainty theory. Data were obtained from a sample of 134 expatriate-HCN pairs who are employed in business organizations including multinational companies in the areas of Klang Valley, Malaysia. Our findings suggest that shared vision mediated significantly the influence of cultural intelligence and feedback-seeking behaviour on knowledge transfer as perceived by expatriates as well as HCNs. Implications to theory and human resource practice are discussed.

**Keywords:** Knowledge transfer; Expatriate; Host country national; Cultural intelligence; Feedback-seeking behaviour; Shared vision.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Many advances have been made by researchers on the determinants of knowledge transfer over the last few decades. Cummings and Teng's (2003) study in R&D industries revealed that interaction and shared vision between employees influence knowledge transfer. Nery-Kjerfve, and McLean's (2012) meta-analytical review was based on worldwide literature on knowledge transfer among repatriates. However, authors have been silent specifically on the role of expatriate-HCN bi-directional relationships in knowledge transfer with the presence of shared vision as a mediator, particularly in the context of a developing country. Knowledge transfer constitutes processes at the

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individual, departmental and organizational level (Argote, 2012). In addition, insights on how knowledge transfer is explained involving expatriate-HCN pairs are still inconclusive. This is specifically so in relation to the significance of individual and social factors on knowledge transfer as these factors are close to the daily functions and behaviours of the two groups of human resources.

Literature is rich in evidence on the relevant role of both internal and external resources for innovation and knowledge transfer (Cassiman & Veugelers, 2006). Among the internal resources are individual and social factors of the employees. It is commonly accepted that organizations vary widely in their capability to develop and understand these internal resources. The focus of this research on the determinants of knowledge transfer (individual and social capital factors) is relevant to the idea of Cohen and Levinthal (1989) on firms' absorptive capacity, which should be capitalized on in addition to benefit from externally acquired resources.

Many studies focus on the unidirectional form of knowledge transfer from expatriates to HCNs, failing to unravel the bi-directional form of knowledge transfer from expatriates to locals and vice versa (Chang, Gong, & Peng, 2012; Cummings, & Teng, 2003). Similarly, literatures have also been focusing on the general mechanisms of knowledge transfer and expatriations (Minbaeva & Michailova, 2004; Smale & Suutari, 2011) with little concern on the process occurred within an organization through the involvement of both groups of professionals. Internationally, there is one study that has empirically proven the bi-directional form of knowledge transfer between expatriates and HCNs (e.g., Hsu, 2012), but the study was with different conceptual scope and covered samples in wider geographical areas of developed and developing countries such as the US, Taiwan, China, Vietnam, South Korea, Thailand and India. None has focused on the specific bi-directional form of knowledge transfer between expatriates and HCNs using individual and social capital variables based on Malaysia context.

The research questions of this study are as follows: Do individual factors of cultural intelligence and feedback seeking behavior significantly influence knowledge transfer between expatriates and HCNs bi-directionally? Does shared vision mediate the relationship between individual factors and knowledge transfer between expatriates and HCNs bi-directionally? Therefore, the objectives of this research are: i) to examine the influence of cultural intelligence and feedback-seeking behaviour on knowledge transfer between expatriates and HCNs bi-directionally; and ii) to identify the mediating role of shared vision in the relationships of cultural intelligence and feedback-seeking behaviour on knowledge transfer between expatriates and HCNs bi-directionally. We choose shared vision because it is a mechanism that embodies the collective goals and aspirations of the members of an organization to combine resources (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998).

Vision is defined as a vivid anticipation of a desired future. Shared vision is a bonding mechanism that helps different groups of employees in an organization (such as expatriates and HCNs) to unite and function harmoniously. Upadhyayula and Kumar (2004) refer to shared vision as a facilitator of the internal resources of individual and social capital factors, and shared vision could mediate their influence on organizational outcome of knowledge transfer. Later literature on organizational learning has advanced the concept of consensus building, and calls for better understanding of shared vision as a transformational mechanism of a learning organization (Senge, 1990; Sinkula et al., 1997). Shared vision is central to the long-term success of any organization (Neff, 2015). Wang and Rafiq (2009) succinctly highlight that shared vision promotes the overall active involvement

of organizational members in the development, communication, dissemination, and implementation of organizational goals.

This empirical study draws on a sample of expatriates and HCNs in organizations in the Klang Valley, and its new expansion area of Greater Kuala Lumpur, the most vibrant industrial areas in Malaysia. With the capital city of Kuala Lumpur, MNCs choose Klang Valley and Greater Kuala Lumpur as their Asia base. This area is “a powerful magnet that can pull investors to the diverse investment opportunities in the country and the region” (Deng, 2012). In 2018, Klang Valley is ranked as a mega world city due to its achievement in economic, financial and cultural city of the country, while having a high Human Development Index in terms of life expectancy, education and income per capita (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2018). In addition, a total of 80 out of 93 (86%) Malaysian MNCs are based in the Klang Valley ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_companies\\_of\\_Malaysia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_companies_of_Malaysia)). In Malaysia, there is a total of 921 MNCs comprising of both international-based and local-based (<http://www.malaysiaplc.com/directory/listed-companies/>). Out of the 921 MNCs population, a sample of 30 MNCs are randomly selected, of which 28 of them (93.33%) reside in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. This further highlights the significance of Klang Valley as the site of this research.

There were about 133,108 expatriates in 2016 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2018), an increase from 90,000 expatriates in 2014 recorded by the Department of Immigrant, Malaysia (Pinto, 2014). Their presence in the country (with population of 32.4 million in 2018), helps in the total number of skilled human resources from whom the local employees may gain many benefits through mutual sharing and transferring knowledge. This is one the strategies for the country to call for stronger involvement of private sector in the economic transformation initiatives as stipulated in the New Economic Model of Malaysia (National Economic Advisory Council or NEAC, 2010) towards achieving a high-income status nation by 2020 and beyond. Kuala Lumpur has been crowned sixth best city in the world for expatriates, according to Expat City Ranking 2018 (New Straits Times, 2018). This surely leads to a continuing increase of expatriate population in the country.

Findings by Ismail et al. (2016) show a powerful role played by shared vision as a mediator between the determinants of knowledge transfer bi-directionally. Thus, this study is significant to organizations where there are co-existence of expatriates and HCNs, which adds to the diversity at the workplace (Ismail & Arokiasamy, 2008), and the organizations believe on the crucial functions of individual, social capital factors, and the significant role of shared vision in the bi-directional knowledge transfer.

The next section presents the theoretical framework, followed by the justification of hypotheses. The methodological procedures are then described and finally we discuss conclusions as well as theoretical and practical implications of the study.

## **2. THEORETICAL JUSTIFICATION AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study uses three theories to support its research framework. First is the resource-based theory (Galbreath, 2005), which considers knowledge as an intangible asset to employees and firms. The theory recognizes that the transfer of knowledge affects the overall success of an organization

(Conner & Prahalad, 1996). The theory justifies the role of knowledge transfer involving professionals in organizations (i.e. expatriates and HCNs), in which the functioning of the professionals' personal resources such as cultural intelligence and feedback-seeking behaviour, as well as the social capital factor of shared vision are anticipated to influence knowledge transfer. This theory also supports shared vision as an outcome of cultural intelligence and feedback-seeking behaviour, as well as shared vision as an antecedent of knowledge transfer.

Secondly is the anxiety and uncertainty management theory (Gudykunst, 1998), which deliberates the personal qualities of individuals in organizations. Anxiety is regarded as an essential problem a person faces when he/she interacts with others of different socio-cultural backgrounds (Yoshitake, 2002), and it is an emotional correspondent of uncertainty. Uncertainty is a cognitive dimension that influences the way people perceive about others and that anxiety decreases as people get to know each other. In cross-cultural setting, anxiety and uncertainty are critical factors proposed by the theory as they affect the nature of intergroup communication. For instance, in a global perspective study involving organizations in developed and developing countries, Brandl and Neyer (2009) suggested that if anxiety is too high, people interpret others' behaviours using their own frame of reference.

Finally is the social capital theory (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998) in which social capital is defined as the resources embedded within and derived from the network of relationships possessed by members in a social unit. These social resources are in the forms of social ties and trusting relations that facilitate actions of individuals located within an organization. In the context of expatriate-HCN links, social capital emphasizes interactions and two-way communication between expatriates and HCNs that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Ismail, 2015). Past studies show that bi-directional relationship is identified as one of the predictors of successful knowledge transfer (Song, Almeida & Wu, 2003; van Wijk, Jansen, & Lyles, 2008). For instance, Song et al.'s (2003) study in the US emphasized the importance of two-way knowledge transfer i.e. from the hired employees to the hiring firm and vice versa. From these arguments, it is justifiable that the social capital theory and the other two theories support the mediating role of shared vision in the relationship between cultural intelligence and feedback-seeking behaviour within the two-way knowledge transfer process involving expatriates and HCNs in this study.

## ***Hypothesis Development: Determinants of Knowledge Transfer***

### ***2.1. Cultural Intelligence and Knowledge Transfer***

Cultural intelligence is about intercultural competence that requires one to be socially sensitive within a cross-cultural work environment setting (Nery-Kjerfve & McLean, 2012). In the context of this study, it is believed that cultural intelligence is pertinent to cultural adaptability of expatriates as learners (Feitosa et al., 2014) as well as players or actors in knowledge transfer process (Tsang, 2001; Kodwani, 2012). In other words, expatriates or HCNs with high level of cultural intelligence would enable them to be more content when interacting with people from different cultures, and to easily share organizational goal together. This implies that expatriates must be willing to cope with cultural challenges in their social interactions with HCNs and vice versa. High level of cultural intelligence is expected to lead to highly meaningful interactions and

therefore, should facilitate knowledge transfer process between expatriates to HCNs bi-directionally based on a study in Taiwan (Chang et al., 2012). Thus, we hypothesize that:

H1: Cultural intelligence influences knowledge transfer between expatriates and HCNs in bi-directional form. (H1a, H1b)

## **2.2. *Feedback-Seeking Behaviour and Knowledge Transfer***

Feedback-seeking behaviour is a proactive personal behaviour. It helps self-growth of professionals such as medical educators in adapting, learning and performing (Crommelinck & Anseel, 2013) as well as expatriates, repatriates and top management personnel in international firms to promote cross-border assignments (Crowne, 2009; Krasman, 2010). Krasman (2010) found that part-time university business students who work full-time in the US portray their feedback-seeking behaviour as a partial attribute of their personality, which then influences knowledge transfer between two or more people. Feedback-seeking behaviour enables individuals to assess themselves and learns through mistakes as evaluated by others. Scholars also relate feedback-seeking behaviour with opportunity seeking as one of the predictors of knowledge received by subsidiary and subsequently its performance, as found in the Taiwanese study by Chang et al. (2012).

VandeWalle's (2004) theoretical model explained that feedback-seeking behaviour has been frequently associated to three psychological variables: (1) task information; (2) self-efficacy; and (3) feedback utilization. In this study context, task information requires feedback from both expatriates and HCNs to one another in order for them to correct work-related errors. Self-efficacy nonetheless, is the ability of oneself to execute a course of action that is fundamentally required in producing certain desired outcome such as knowledge transfer. Feedback utilization is the degree to which expatriates and HCNs in organizations are able to make specific changes according to the feedback they received from one another. De Stobbeleir, Ashford and Buyens' (2011) supervisor-employee dyadic study in the US and Kumar's (2013) reverse knowledge flow study in MNCs in Sweden explain that employees who perform skilfully at work are those who constantly sought after feedbacks. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H2: Feedback seeking behavior influences knowledge transfer between expatriates and HCNs in bi-directional form. (H2a, H2b)

## **2.3. *Shared Vision and Knowledge Transfer***

Shared vision (i.e. the extent to which different people share one common, long-term goals and visions) are vital cognitive elements of social capital that influences knowledge transfer (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005). Social exchanges between expatriates and HCNs are specifically essential in transferring tacit knowledge as tacit knowledge is non-tangible. In the case of Bank Loan Managers in Chicago of the US, learning through knowledge transfer is also located in relationships among individuals (Uzzi & Lancaster, 2003), which is through shared vision.

In the context of expatriate-HCN relationship, shared vision encourages mutual understanding and offers an important bonding mechanism that facilitates different actors to incorporate knowledge

(Hsu, 2012) as expatriates and HCNs come from various cultural backgrounds. This implies the bi-directional flow of knowledge transfer between expatriates and HCNs, and hence the significance of having a shared vision in the expedition of knowledge transfer between them. Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H3: Shared vision influences knowledge transfer between expatriates and HCNs in bi-directional form. (H3a, H3b)

#### **2.4. *Mediating Role of Shared Vision***

The role of a mediator is indispensable in any communication process involving senders and receivers. This is further supported by Lin's (1999) social capital theory. Shared vision requires collective collaboration in achieving common sets of goals. A study in 12 African countries involving 12 Africa-China joint ventures (JVs) indicates that the absence of cultural intelligence becomes an obstacle for collaboration between local Africans and their Chinese counterparts (Ado, Su & Wanjiru, 2016), which hinders shared vision. Feedback-seeking behaviour is considered as a self-regulatory constructive behaviour (Lee et al., 2007; Krasman, 2010) because individuals adjust their behaviour as they gain feedback from others in order to become more acceptable to others and consequently shared vision is achieved (Ashford, Blatt & Walle, 2003).

Shared vision refers to collective goals and aspirations of the members of an organization. Scholars refer to shared vision as the social aspects of a cooperative relationship (Roueche, Baker and Rose, 2014). Shared vision is also a psychological determinant of cooperative social bonds of relationships, which entails familiarity, friendship and confidence in a relational exchange (Rodríguez & Wilson, 2000). Li's (2005) intra and inter-firm study in Western MNCs' subsidiaries located in China found that shared vision is a required condition in the occurrence of exchange process because the identification and combination of strategic resources can only be realized if the interacting firms have systems and cultures that are adequately compatible to facilitate regulated action. Knowledge transfer is influenced as the mutual understanding among diverse culture increases due to the shared norms and vision. In a study conducted among high-tech firms located in the United Kingdom, it is found that absorptive capacity of a firm in knowledge acquisition and transfer upsurge in the expatriate-HCN pair due to shared vision (Yli-Renko, Autio & Sapienza, 2001). Nonetheless, the significance of shared vision is illustrated as the transfer of knowledge involving highly communication-intensive interaction (Bresman, Birkinshaw & Nobel, 1999; Cummings & Teng, 2003). Thus, it is hypothesized that:

H4: Shared vision mediates the relationship between cultural intelligence as well as feedback-seeking behaviour and knowledge transfer between expatriates and HCNs in bi-directional form. (H4a, H4b, H4c, H4d)

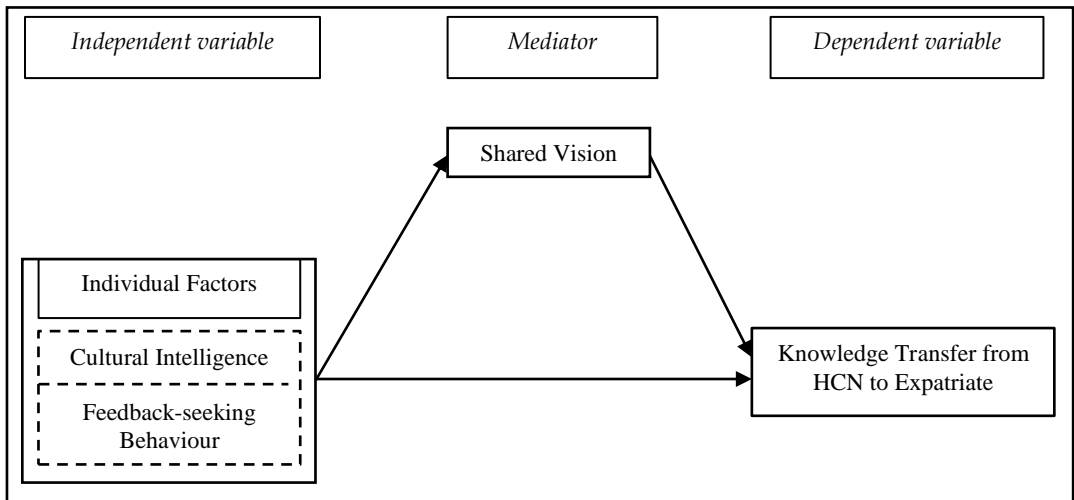
#### **2.5. *Bi-directional analysis of knowledge transfer***

In this study, a pair of respondents consist of expatriate and HCN that can be differentiated from each other based on one's functional identity. The pair maintains a sociologically significant relationship in a workplace and they are inevitably interdependent in achieving an organization mission and vision (Kashy & Kenny, 2000). The interdependence could occur resulting from expectation on mutual gain, reciprocity, and synchrony in the responses of the members. Past

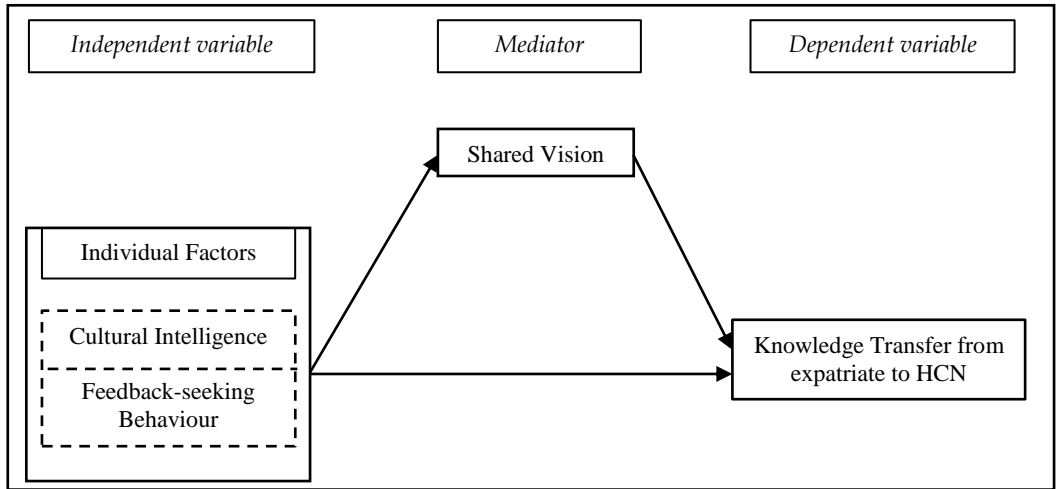
research has also been dominantly focusing on expatriates, failing to consider the vital contributions made by HCNs in order to advocate an effective bi-directional knowledge transfer process within organizations (e.g., Smale & Suutari, 2011; Minbaeva & Michailova, 2004), even though HCNs are as much important as expatriates and they do in a way, complement each other in the process of bi-directional knowledge transfer (Caligiuri & Cascio, 1998).

In this study, the reciprocity between the pairing members leads to the process of bi-directional or two-way knowledge transfer. The relevant social factor is mutual shared vision at workplace. Based on the above literature arguments, the framework of this study is shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 from the perspectives of expatriates and HCNs, respectively.

**Figure 1:** Research Framework of Expatriate-HCN Knowledge Transfer (From Expatriate's Perspective)



**Figure 2:** A Research Framework of Expatriate-HCN Knowledge Transfer (From HCN's Perspective)



### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. *Subject of Research*

The research subjects of this study are expatriate-HCN pairs. Expatriates were identified first by various means as follows: 1) organizations that may have expatriate employees were traced through Companies Commission of Malaysia (CCM) database; 2) the HR division of each organization was contacted through emails, followed by phone calls inviting them to participate in the study; 3) a set of online questionnaire was emailed by attaching together the Google Form link in the email; 4) the researchers met international representatives e.g. a Japanese or French consultant, to get assistance from him to introduce the researchers to the expatriates in his circle; 5) through professional communication with the researchers' networking loop. Each identified expatriate was then required to recommend one HCN that s/he works best with, in an MNC or private company in order to establish an expatriate-HCN pair. The expatriates and their HCN colleagues whom the researchers contacted were employees in MNCs and private companies in the areas of Klang Valley and its vicinity of Greater Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The total respondents obtained with complete questionnaires were 134 expatriate-HCN pairs involving 36 MNCs categorized under 10 different industries, namely airlines, engineering, oil and gas, education, consultation, automotive, insurance, online retailing, retailing and hospitality industries. As a whole, the respondents were obtained using cluster random sampling technique. Mohd Tahir and Ismail (2007) conducted a study on work adaptation of expatriates in the Klang Valley, which the findings were appropriately used for generalization. It is therefore believed that this sample justifies the representativeness of expatriate-HCN pairs in Malaysia used in this study.



### **3.2. Study Instrument and Data Collection**

Knowledge transfer construct was measured using the instrument by Dhanaraj et al. (2004), which consists of a 6-item questions with a 7-point Likert-type scale. This instrument requires the expatriates and HCNs to evaluate the extent to which they have learnt tacit knowledge such as “new marketing skill”, knowledge about foreign cultures and tastes, as well as “managerial techniques” from their respective counterparts. The expatriates and HCNs are also required to evaluate the extent to which they have learnt explicit knowledge such as “written knowledge about firm’s technology”, “procedural or technical information”, and “written knowledge about management techniques” from their expatriate/HCN colleagues.

This study used the instrument from Ang & Van Dyne (2008) to measure cultural intelligence, which consists of a 9-item questionnaire with a 5-point Likert-type scale. For this, expatriates and HCNs are required to rate the extent to which they agree with statements such as “I know the values and religious beliefs of other cultures”. Feedback-seeking behaviour is measured using the instrument from Ashford (1986). The measurement consists of a 7-item questionnaire with a 5-point Likert-type scale where expatriates and HCNs are required to rate the extent to which they agree with statements in the instrument such as “I would like to get feedback on what behaviours will help me advance within the company”. Shared vision was measured using the instrument developed by Gutiérrez, Lloréns-Montes & Sánchez (2009). It consists of a 6-item questionnaire with a 5-point Likert-type scale to measure the extent to which respondents have engaged in shared vision. For this item, expatriates and HCNs are required to rate the extent to which they agree with statements in the instrument such as “My HCN/expatriate colleague and I share a clear vision guiding the strategic goals and missions of the organization”. The reliability values of the constructs in the instrument (Cronbach’s alpha values) ranged from 0.78 to 0.92.

### **3.3. Data Analysis**

The data were analysed using IBM SPSS 24 to produce descriptive and inferential results. The descriptive analysis reports the mean, standard deviation, percentage and range for the demographic and professional profiles of the respondents. The inferential statistics were used to test the hypotheses of the study. They include Pearson’s product-moment correlation prior to multiple linear regression analyses. Since this study does not involve exploratory research approach, PLS SEM would not be a suitable method of analysis (Ringle, Sarstedt & Srtaub, 2012). In addition, the sample size of this study would have not fit for the use of SEM AMOS as this method requires a sample size of at least 200 pairs of expatriate-HCN (Siddiqui, 2013). Therefore, mediation role of shared vision on the relationship between the antecedents and knowledge transfer was analysed using PROCESS IBM SPSS 24 by Hayes (2013). This method is considered to be superior relative to others such as that by Baron-Kenny (1986) in mediation testing as it was used by Molina, Martinez-Gutierrez, Puschel & Thompson (2013) in their cancer research. This approach examines both the direct effect and the indirect effect of specified shared vision as mediator in the relationship between the independent variables and knowledge transfer.

### **3.4. Profile of Respondents**

The expatriate sample consists of 77.0% male and 23.0% female respondents who represents 26 nationalities. Indian expatriates make up the largest group (22.4%), followed by Japanese and

Indonesian (15.0%, respectively), and British (12.70%), as well as American (4.5%). German, Filipino and Singaporean each makes up to 3.7 %, while Italian and Thailand constitute 2.2%. The rest are Palestinian, Irish and Australian each makes up to 1.50% and other nationalities include Canadian, Chinese, Danish, Sri Lankan, French, Iranian, Nepalese, Nigerian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Turkish and Uzbek. Most of the expatriate respondents are in the age range from 35.1 to 45 years (35.8%) (mean = 41.60, SD= 9.3). While for the HCNs, they consist of 64.20% male and majority (45.50%) are below 35 years old (mean = 37.48, SD= 8.47). Table 1 and Table 2 show the demographic and nationality profiles of the respondents, respectively.

Based on the type of industry, a total of 32.1% of the expatriate-HCN pairs work in the engineering sector, followed by 15.7% in each consulting services and airlines, 14.2% oil and gas, 11.2% education, 4.5% automotive, insurance and online retailing (2.2% each), 1.5% in retailing, and only 0.7% in hospitality industry. These industries are important contributors towards Malaysia's economic growth, preparing the country to achieve its high-income nation status by 2020 (Tan & Yap, 2015).

**Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n=134 Pairs)**

Variables	Expatriate			HCN		
	Freq	Percent (%)	Mean (S.D)	Freq	Percent (%)	Mean (S.D)
Gender						
Male	103	76.90		86	64.20	
Female	31	23.10		48	35.80	
Age (year)			41.60 (9.29)			37.48 (8.47)
25.0-35.0	42	31.30		61	45.50	
35.1-45.0	48	35.80		46	34.30	
45.1-55.0	37	27.60		25	18.70	
55.1-65.0	4	3.00		2	1.50	
65.1 and above	3	2.20		0	0.00	

Finally, the expatriates and HCNs have been working for their companies for an average of 3.61 years (S.D=2.67) and 7.37 years (S.D=5.01), respectively. Webb (1996) asserted that expatriation is an essential approach in facilitating cross-border knowledge transfer, which requires them to live in foreign business areas for several years for them to collect and share the necessary experiences. Therefore, upon their return, their experiences and new perspectives are expected to increase their capability to lead their organization. That is one of the reasons for expatriates do not work at certain foreign country for a long period of time.

**Table 2:** Country of Origin of Expatriates by World Geographic Regions (n=134 Pairs)

Variables	Expatriate	
	Freq (f)	Percent (%)
Country by World Geographic Region		
Asia	93	69.00
India	30	22.40
Japan	20	14.90
Indonesia	20	14.90
Philippine	5	3.70
Singapore	5	3.70
Thailand	3	2.20
Palestine	2	1.50
Others (China, Iran, Nepal, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Uzbekistan)	8	5.60
Non-Asia	41	31.00
United Kingdom (UK)	17	12.70
United States of America (USA)	6	4.50
Germany	5	3.70
Italy	3	2.20
Ireland	2	1.50
Australia	2	1.50
Others (Canada, Denmark, France, Russia, Serbia, Spain)	6	4.20

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Paired sample t-test (Table 3) found that levels of knowledge transfer and cultural intelligence show significant difference between expatriates and HCNs. The mean of expatriates is higher than that of HCNs (4.526 and 4.269, respectively). This shows the knowledge transfer task is more felt by the expatriates than the HCNs. Similarly, the mean of cultural intelligence of expatriates ( $M=4.096$ ,  $SD=0.561$ ) is higher than the mean of HCNs ( $M=3.856$ ,  $SD=0.533$ ). This implies that expatriates are more sensitive and prepared about this intercultural competence in their task of transferring knowledge with the locals. This difference may suggest variation in the potential influence of the predictors of knowledge transfer in this study.

**Table 3:** Paired Sample t-test for Difference in Level of Variable (n=134 Pairs)

Variables	Mean	S.D	t	p
Knowledge Transfer			2.019	0.046
Expatriate	4.526	1.363		
HCN	4.269	1.202		
Shared Vision			0.017	0.986
Expatriate	3.939	0.745		
HCN	3.938	0.627		
Cultural Intelligence (CQ)			3.839	0.000
Expatriate	4.096	0.561		
HCN	3.856	0.533		
Feedback-seeking Behaviour (FSB)			0.505	0.614
Expatriate	3.882	0.781		
HCN	3.838	0.704		

*Note:*  $p < .05$

Pearson product moment correlation analysis results from the expatriate sample as shown in Table 4 indicate the highest value is shared vision ( $r=0.484$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), followed by feedback-seeking behaviour ( $r=0.347$ ,  $p=0.001$ ) and cultural intelligence ( $r=0.288$ ,  $p=0.004$ ). Similarly, the highest value for HCN sample is shared vision ( $r=0.373$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), followed by feedback-seeking behaviour ( $r=0.297$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) and cultural intelligence ( $r=0.269$ ,  $p=0.002$ ) (Table 5). All variables show potential predictors of knowledge transfer. The results validate that both expatriate and HCN respondents experience high level of individual factors i.e. cultural intelligence and feedback-seeking behaviour.

**Table 4:** Matrix of Correlation of Variables (Expatriate Sample)

	Knowledge Transfer	Shared Vision	Cultural Intelligence	Feedback-seeking Behaviour
	r (p)	r (p)	r (p)	r (p)
Knowledge Transfer	0.888			
Shared Vision	0.484 (0.000)	0.919		
Cultural Intelligence	0.288 (0.001)	0.389 (0.000)	0.821	
Feedback-seeking Behaviour	0.347 (0.000)	0.602 (0.000)	0.428 (0.000)	0.931

*Note:* Diagonal figures refer to the reliability values of the variables

**Table 5:** Matrix of Correlation of Variables (HCN Sample)

	<b>Knowledge Transfer</b>	<b>Shared Vision</b>	<b>Cultural Intelligence</b>	<b>Feedback-seeking Behaviour</b>
	<b>r (p)</b>	<b>r (p)</b>	<b>r (p)</b>	<b>r (p)</b>
Knowledge Transfer	0.845			
Shared Vision	0.373 (0.000)	0.914		
Cultural Intelligence	0.269 (0.002)	0.410 (0.000)	0.813	
Feedback-seeking Behaviour	0.297 (0.000)	0.405 (0.000)	0.508 (0.000)	0.946

*Note:* Diagonal figures refer to the reliability values of the variables

Table 6 shows that only shared vision ( $\beta=0.410$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) significantly influences knowledge transfer from HCNs, as perceived by expatriates. Cultural intelligence and feedback-seeking behaviour however, do not significantly influence knowledge transfer from HCNs, as perceived by expatriates. Therefore, hypothesis 3a is supported while hypothesis 1a and hypothesis 2a are not supported. Similarly, only shared vision ( $\beta=0.283$ ,  $p=0.001$ ) significantly influences knowledge transfer from expatriates as perceived by HCNs. Cultural intelligence and feedback-seeking behaviour were not found to have significant influence on knowledge transfer. Thus, hypothesis 3b is supported while hypothesis 1b and hypothesis 2b are not supported. The respective adjusted  $R^2$  values of 0.230 and 0.150 for expatriates and HCNs imply that shared vision explains 23% and 15% of the variance in knowledge transfer as perceived by expatriates and HCNs, respectively. However, when the regression analysis was re-run, the new adjusted  $R^2 = 0.228$  and  $R^2 = 0.133$  were obtained for the respective expatriates and HCNs (Table 7). This shows that the direct influence of shared vision on knowledge transfer is with the explanatory power of 22.8% and 13.3% for the respective expatriates and HCNs.

**Table 6:** Results of Multiple Linear Regression

<b>Variables</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE B</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>t</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Expatriate</b>					
Constant	0.156	0.816		0.191	0.849
Shared Vision	0.749	0.177	0.410	4.229	0.000
Cultural Intelligence	0.256	0.208	0.105	1.231	0.221
Feedback Seeking Behaviour	0.096	0.172	0.055	0.554	0.581
<b>HCN</b>					
Constant	0.500	0.792		0.631	0.529
Shared Vision	0.542	0.137	0.283	3.123	0.002
Cultural Intelligence	0.184	0.217	0.082	0.851	0.396
Feedback Seeking Behaviour	0.241	0.164	0.141	1.471	0.144

*Expatriate*  $\rightarrow p < 0.05$ ;  $F = 14.264$ ;  $Sig F = 0.000$ ;  $R = 0.498$ ;  $R^2 = 0.248$ ;  $Adjusted R^2 = 0.230$

*HCN*  $\rightarrow p < 0.05$ ;  $F = 8.835$ ;  $Sig F = 0.000$ ;  $R = 0.412$ ;  $R^2 = 0.169$ ;  $Adjusted R^2 = 0.150$

**Table 7:** Results of Simple Linear Regression for Shared Vision on Knowledge Transfer

Variables	B	SE B	$\beta$	t	p
Expatriate					
Constant	1.042	0.558		1.868	0.064
Shared Vision	0.884	0.139	0.484	6.352	0.000
HCN					
Constant	1.453	0.617		2.355	0.020
Shared Vision	0.715	0.155	0.373	4.622	0.000

*Expatriate* →  $p < 0.05$ ;  $F = 40.344$ ;  $\text{Sig } F = 0.000$ ;  $R = 0.484$ ;  $R^2 = 0.234$ ;  $\text{Adjusted } R^2 = 0.228$

*HCN* →  $p < 0.05$ ;  $F = 21.362$ ;  $\text{Sig } F = 0.000$ ;  $R = 0.373$ ;  $R^2 = 0.139$ ;  $\text{Adjusted } R^2 = 0.133$

The PROCESS procedure (Hayes, 2013) was used for the bootstrapping analysis. This procedure generates direct and indirect effects in a mediation model. PROCESS can construct bias-corrected percentile and Monte Carlo Confidence Interval (CI) for indirect effects. Table 8 presents results of mediating effect of shared vision on the relationships between cultural intelligence as well as feedback-seeking behaviour and knowledge transfer between expatriates and HCNs bi-directionally. The determination of mediation effect of shared vision is based on “zero” (0) value location in confidence interval (CI) (Hayes, 2009, p. 412) in which if CI does not contain “zero” (0) value, it means the indirect or mediation effect is statistically significant.

Table 8 further indicates that the bias-corrected 95% percentile of CI ( $\beta = 0.415$ ,  $\text{CI} = 0.223, 0.677$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) does not include zero value. These findings revealed that the indirect effect of cultural intelligence on knowledge transfer through the mediator (shared vision) as perceived by expatriates is statistically significant. As for feedback-seeking behaviour, the bias-corrected 95% percentile of CI ( $\beta = 0.454$ ,  $\text{CI} = 0.243, 0.718$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) does not include zero value. Similarly, shared vision mediates significantly the relationship between feedback-seeking behaviour and knowledge transfer, as perceived by expatriates. Therefore, hypothesis 4a and hypothesis 4c are supported.

Results also show that the bias-corrected 95% percentile of CI ( $\beta = 0.292$ ,  $\text{CI} = 0.105, 0.541$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) does not include zero value. These findings show that shared vision mediates the influence of cultural intelligence on knowledge transfer as perceived by HCNs. Likewise, the bias-corrected 95% percentile of CI ( $\beta = 0.210$ ,  $\text{CI} = 0.082, 0.414$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) does not include zero value, which indicates the significant mediation of shared vision on the influence of feedback-seeking behaviour on knowledge transfer, as perceived by HCNs. Thus, hypothesis 4b and hypothesis 4d are supported as well.

**Table 8:** Results of Process Method for Analysis of Mediation

	Point estimate ( $\beta$ )	SE	Bootstrapping	
			BC Percentile 95% CI	
			Lower	Upper
As perceived by Expatriates				
Cultural Intelligence (CQ)	0.415	0.115	0.223	0.677
Feedback-seeking behaviour (FSB)	0.454	0.121	0.243	0.718
As perceived by HCNs				
Cultural Intelligence (CQ)	0.292	0.111	0.105	0.541
Feedback-seeking behaviour (FSB)	0.210	0.083	0.082	0.414

*Note:* Indirect effect is significant if zero (0) value falls outside the lower bound and upper bound of BC Percentile 95% CI. Bootstrap confidence (BC); Confidence interval (CI)

Both employees show the importance of shared vision in the knowledge transfer. This is an advantage to the organizations as this concurs with the powerful statement by Hitt (2010) (<http://www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/learning/managementthinking/articles/pdf/hitt.pdf>), that in any organizational development, employees are supposed to act on the vision that has been informed by their managers and created by their leaders.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

We have reasons to conclude the critical importance of inter-employee social interaction involving expatriates and HCNs, which is visible through vision that is being shared. Shared vision binds employees together in achieving organizational goal, inevitably knowledge transfer. Secondly, individual qualities of cultural intelligence and feedback-seeking behaviour become important determinants of knowledge transfer and further expedited when there is an increase in shared vision. Furthermore, it is recognized that bi-directional knowledge transfer involving expatriates and HCNs are possible when there are positive cultural intelligence and feedback-seeking behaviour that characterize both groups of employees. Another conclusion is that knowledge transfer is a multifaceted process. Thus, the coexistence of expatriates and HCNs adds to the dynamism of knowledge transfer process. This further highlights the importance of workplace diversity, which according to Ismail and Arokiasamy (2008) this situation leads to the improvement of organizational performance in Malaysia.

This research has theoretically implied significant capacity of shared vision as an enhancer to knowledge transfer specifically from the bi-directional perspectives of expatriates and HCNs, making use the two individual qualities as the predictors. This is further justified by considering together the resource-based theory, the social capital theory and the anxiety and uncertainty theory, which were commonly found separately in past studies. The bi-directional analysis used in this study has yielded some empirical evidence of the two-way manner of knowledge transfer (i.e. as perceived by expatriates to HCNs and vice versa), and this certainly adds to the dynamic nature of knowledge transfer based on a Malaysian context.

This study suggests several practical implications for MNCs and other organizations. Special team building solutions are suggested to be used occasionally or prior to the “knowledge transfer process” to encourage positive relationships between knowledge partners and to establish shared vision. In relation to this, six step-procedures should be considered to develop and strengthen mission statement ([http://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/learning/management\\_thinking/articles/pdf/hitt.pdf](http://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/learning/management_thinking/articles/pdf/hitt.pdf)): i) identify the needs of the stakeholders; ii) identify a direction of the unit/department; iii) draft preliminary statement of vision; iv) solicit inputs from team members and boss; v) do revision to the preliminary mission statement; vi) incorporate the vision into the unit’s plan. Nonetheless, among the suggested human resource activities are: mentoring program, best practice meetings, job shadowing, and knowledge fair (showcases the best practices). This is to capitalize on the spirit of sharing together of what to be desired and attained in the organization. The study is insightful to managers and leaders of MNCs and other organizations as shared vision among employees provides direction for action at the unit or departmental level even at times it is challenging.

In relation to shared vision, an effective leader has three interrelated attributes: the ability to create a vision, the ability to communicate the vision to others, and the ability to motivate and inspire employees to work towards the vision. As it is clear that shared vision is powerful in both directions of knowledge transfer involving expatriates and HCNs, therefore MNCs and other organizations should capitalize on this fact regardless the type of employees targeting to, as vision articulates an engaging future of the organization. This also suggests that in any vision monitoring and re-assessment, expatriates and local employees should be consulted equally.

Local organizations should imply certain quota in their employment policy for expatriates considering Kuala Lumpur is crowned the most expat-friendly city in Asia in 2017 (Patrick, 2017) and ranked sixth best city for expatriates, a year later (New Straits Times, 2018). Furthermore, in improving overall organizational performance, this study suggests that local organizations to consider bi-directional knowledge transfer involving expatriates as one of the criteria in HCNs’ annual key performance indicator (KPI). This will create a more satisfactory working climate, and certainly attract more expatriates to work in the country.

Finally, this research suggests some future research as follows: i) The present framework is limited to internal resources of cultural intelligence, feedback-seeking behaviour and shared vision. Other internal resources of firm’s absorptive capacity such as shared culture, shared values, and strength of network between parent company and subsidiary in the country should be considered; ii) Comparison between the various merits of contact of expatriates with HCNs as compared to cross-cultural training of expatriates in knowledge transfer; iii) The specific knowledge gained by expatriate versus HCNs through knowledge transfer using a longitudinal study approach; iv) Knowledge transfer using the same framework focusing on other types of pairing such as senior-junior or manager-employee dyads; and v) It is crucial for future research to include gender issues as expatriation is becoming one of non-traditional career options for women (Hansen, 2016), as well as men and women professionals have different individual and social capital qualities that may affect knowledge transfer differently.



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