

# The Role of Counselling Psychology on Expatriate Adjustment in East Asia: A Systematic Review

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**Abstract**—Purpose: This research paper seeks to review the empirical studies in the field of expatriate adjustment in East Asia in order to produce a thematic understanding of the current adjustment challenges, thus enabling practitioners to enrich their knowledge. Background: Learning to live, work, and function in a country and culture vastly different from that of one's upbringing can pose some unique challenges in terms of adaptation and adjustment. This has led to a growing body of research about the adjustment of expatriate workers. Adjustment itself has been posited as a three-dimensional construct; work adjustment, interaction adjustment and general or cultural adjustment. Methodology: This qualitative systematic review has been conducted on all identified peer-reviewed empirical studies related to expatriate adjustment in East Asia. Five electronic databases (PsychInfo, Emerald, Scopus, EBSCO and JSTOR) were searched to December 2015. Out of 625 identified records, thorough evaluation for eligibility resulted in 15 relevant studies being subjected to data analysis. The quality of the identified research was assessed according to the Standard Quality Assessment Criteria for Evaluating Primary Research Papers from a Variety of Fields. The data were analysed by means of thematic synthesis for systematic reviews of qualitative research. Findings: Data analysis revealed five key themes. The themes developed were: (1) personality traits (2) types of adjustment, (3) language, (4) culture and (5) coping strategies. Types of adjustment included subthemes such as: Interaction, general, work, psychological, sociocultural and cross-cultural adjustment. Conclusion: The present review supported previous literature on the different themes of adjustment and it takes the focus from work and general adjustment to the psychological challenges and it introduces the psychological adjustment. It also gives a different perspective about the use of cross-cultural training and the coping strategies expatriates use when they are abroad. This review helps counselling psychologists to understand the importance of a multicultural approach when working with expatriates and also to be aware of what expatriates might face when working and living in East Asia.

**Keywords**—Expatriates, adjustment, East Asia, counselling psychology.

## I. BACKGROUND

### A. Introduction to Adjustment

IN the last few decades the region of East Asia (EA) has emerged as a major economic power, resulting in the relocation of many European, Australian and American international corporations to EA countries [18], [37]. This has led to a substantially increased number of professionals sent by their companies or who have voluntarily moved to an EA county to seek employment [1], [8], [18], [37]. By EA, we

define the following countries: China, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Mongolia, Korea and Taiwan [1].

Stress, anxiety, uncertainty associated with crossing borders and cultural differences, separation from the family or spouse may be the result of working and living in EA [50]. Having to live, work, and function in a vastly different cultural environment might pose a challenge of adaptation and adjustment [26]. This has led to a growing body of work on the adjustment of expatriate workers [3], [26], [28], [37], [38] [42], [45].

Views about adjustment and definitions vary in the literature. Adjustment has been defined in terms of subjective well-being [9] or unhappiness that expatriates feel about their circumstances [23]. Reference [31] has defined adjustment as the socio-cultural characteristics required to achieve effectiveness in interpersonal exchange with host country nationals. Furthermore, adjustment itself has been posited as a three-dimensional construct [5], which is confirmed by [40]. These dimensions include work adjustment, which refers to comfort with their job; interaction adjustment, which relates to the interaction with the host country nationals both inside and outside work, and general or cultural adjustment, which refers to the degree of psychological comfort related to several aspects of the host cultural environment such as climate, health care, food, and housing conditions [5], [27], [37], [41].

A great deal of research has been conducted concerning cross-cultural adjustment [4], [27]. Cross-cultural adjustment refers to the changes that occur within expatriate individuals or families as a result of environmental demands, i.e. the psychological comfort and familiarity that the individual has in the new foreign environment [4].

Some research reveals that expatriates sometimes find it easy to adjust with work and life abroad, while others might conclude a negative result [22]. Expatriates face a double-edged challenge to their mental and physical health: the stressors affecting them are not only new and unfamiliar, but the coping responses that worked at home may not do so abroad [16], [47]. Culturally adjusted expatriates are open to the host culture and keen to add new behaviour, norms and rules to the foundations provided by their home cultures [10]. Those who cannot adjust may face failure at work [29]. For example, studies about adjustment of American expatriates in EA have found that between 16 and 40 per cent of all assignments terminated early [29]. Limited adjustment to the host culture has various negative work and life related consequences such as lower job satisfaction [25].

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### B. The Role of Counselling Psychology

According to the research expatriates seek counselling services either to deal with issues related to their new life abroad such as the stress of living and working in a new environment or for other issues not related to their expatriation [46]. Reference [25] reported that expatriates, once they settle in China, face various forms of mental health issues. One of the most common issues revealed in the aforementioned study is depression, which is experienced by expatriates as a feeling of loneliness, cultural isolation and lack of a social network such as friends and family [25]. Also, many of the women and men who relocate to China report feelings of hopelessness and helplessness [25] and family issues caused by the long distances [16].

## II. RATIONALE

The present research aims to systematically review the empirical studies in the field of expatriate adjustment in EA. The main focus of this literature to date has been from a Human Resource and Business Studies outlook, which concentrated on the adjustment of expatriates at work and the effects on their productivity [5], [37], [41]. Less research has been conducted from a Counselling Psychology perspective. To author's knowledge, to date no one has systematically looked at what research says about the challenges of adjustment facing skilled international migrants in EA and how counselling psychology can facilitate those challenges.

The majority of the studies on the present topic have used quantitative methods of analysis; thus a qualitative study could possibly bring new findings and a different perspective. The present study is not aiming to measure the effectiveness of counselling psychology, but to gain a thematic understanding of the current challenges of adjustment facing expatriates in EA and how practitioners can enrich their knowledge.

## III. RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on the above rationale the following research question was formed:

*What are the key themes present within the research literature regarding expatriate adjustment in EA?*

## IV. METHODOLOGY

### A. Research Strategy

A review of the literature has been conducted of all identified peer-reviewed empirical references related to expatriate adjustment in the East Asian region using the following databases: PsychInfo, Emerald, Scopus, EBSCO and JSTOR. The following terms formed the basis of the search: "expatriate (s)", or "international assignments" or "highly skilled professionals" AND "adjustment". Also, "expatriates" AND "adjustment in East Asia". Other key words used include "counsel (l)ing" or "counsel (l)ing psychology" AND "adjustment" "of expatriates". The search strategy was formulated according to its suitability with the different search engines. In addition, the Cochrane Review

was scanned, but no references were identified. The study included both qualitative and quantitative studies.

### B. Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria

TABLE I  
INCLUSION - EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Inclusion	Exclusion
Studies which examined expatriates	Studies examined internal immigration
Studies whose population held medium or high professional positions	Studies which examined expatriates holding low skill positions
Studies must have participants who live and work in one of the countries of EA.	Studies which examined expatriates from EA (i.e. Chinese expatriates working in Japan or Taiwanese working in China)
Studies must have researched in Psychological, Social and Cultural Adjustment	Studies which focused only on work adjustment or work suitability
Articles must be written in English	Unpublished dissertations, theoretical articles, poster abstracts,
The study sample must be adults	Study sample: children and adolescents

The present review selected six inclusion criteria as shown in Table II. To begin with, included studies are those which examined people who live and work in East Asian countries and who are not from another East Asian country (Intra-Asian migration). Also, the studies must have research in psychological, social and cultural adjustment. The majority of the research has focused on work adjustment and the work suitability of expatriates because this research was mainly conducted by human resources and business studies. This study, however, aims to enrich the knowledge of counselling psychology hence its interest in the psychological and sociocultural adjustment process of the participants. Moreover, the included studies focused on adults rather than children or adolescents, since the rationale of the present study focuses on people who work and reside in countries of EA, not on children and adolescents who might have moved to an East Asian country as family members or because of university/college exchange programmes. Finally, for greater accuracy, no unpublished studies were included.

### C. Quality Appraisal & Data Extraction of the Included Studies

The selected studies were assessed for their methodological qualities based on the methodological orientation of the studies. Quantitative studies were assessed by using methodology provided by the Standard Quality Assessment Criteria for Evaluating Primary Research Papers from a Variety of Fields [19]. Qualitative research was appraised according to the guidelines for good practice suggested by [19]. Each study was assessed according to the 14 criteria covering six main quality issues. These included; aim of the study, design, recruitment and data collection, data analysis, findings, and interpretations and implications (example in Table III).

Data extraction process was conducted in order to obtain the necessary information about the characteristics and findings of the included studies [14]. For this purpose, a form was written (see example Table IV) according to the methodological orientation each study used [11]. This covered

the aims of the research, hypotheses, participants, design, measures, data analysis, findings and conclusion.

#### D. Data Synthesis

The data derived from the findings/results sections of the 15 studies were analysed using a thematic analysis methodology as outlined in [44]. For the completion of the synthesis the following steps were followed: Firstly, all the text was coded line by line leading to the development of descriptive themes which reflected the original findings of the studies. Next, analytical themes were generated according to the research question of the present study through the use of NVivo software for qualitative data analysis [7]. The initial synthesis led to the creation of 123 initial codes, reflecting mostly the original codes in the data. Then, the codes were examined under 27 descriptives based on the research questions of the present systematic review. Finally, five key themes were derived from the descriptive themes. Results of search strategy and identification of publications included in the review

#### E. Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Manchester, which confirmed that the current review utilised secondary data that was already available for public use. The present research also followed the procedural ethical frameworks of the University of Manchester School of Environment, Education and Development (SEED), the British Psychological Society's Code of Human Research Ethics (2014) [6] and the Health and Care Professions Council Standards of Proficiency for Practitioner Psychologists (2012) [15], [17]. All the procedures of conducting a systematic review have been followed and all the data have been used accurately and fairly [15], [17]. All the studies and authors have been credited and the data analysis and the data inclusion/exclusion criteria are transparent with no data altered during the study analysis [48].

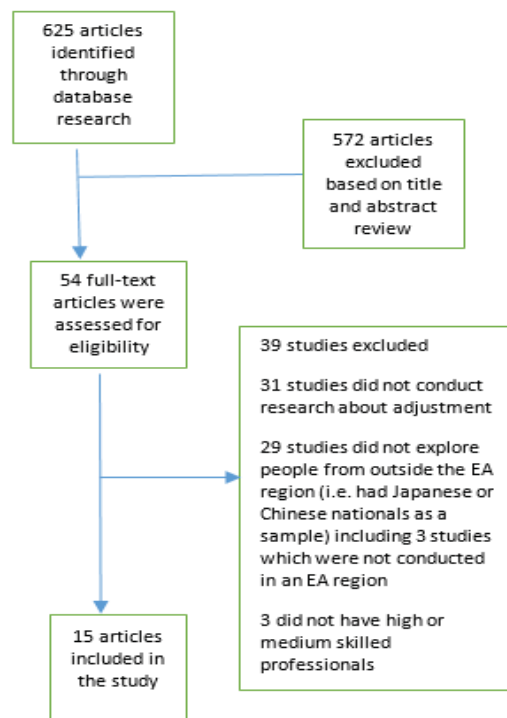


Fig. 1 Results of Search Strategy and Identification of Publications Included in the Review

## V. RESULTS

### A. Study Flow

The total result of all database was  $n=625$  in total. To begin with, the titles and abstracts of the results of each database were searched for based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table I) and irrelevant studies were removed. For instance, studies whose research interest looked at expatriates in America, Africa or Australia were excluded since the main focus of the present study is the countries of EA. This resulted in 572 studies being excluded based on the title and abstract unsuitability. Also, only those studies whose interest focused

on “non-Asian, adult expatriates” were included in the study, which resulted in 54 studies. The reason for the above decision is that the present study focuses on those people who decided to move from non-Asian countries to live and work in the countries of EA. This decision was made due to the fact that there might be some potential cultural influences such as language, cuisine and taste similarities, traditions and beliefs which might influence their adjustment process. There was no such restriction, however, on those with an Asian heritage from Euro-American countries, such as Asians born and raised in Europe or America. Those 54 studies were analysed by reading the full text.

The final studies included are those which measured adjustment or carried out further exploration on “expatriates’ adjustment” and not just simply mentioned it as a phenomenon. The reason for this is to make sure that the data were representative of the target group and to the research question of the present study. More specifically, 39 studies were excluded because they explored other issues of expatriation, such as language, communication and productivity at work, but did not analyse the adjustment process of the people who were participants in the study, instead the word “adjustment” was simply mentioned. Thirty one (31) studies neither examined nor mentioned the process of adjustment. Twenty nine (29) studies explored adjustment using as participants either people from East Asian countries, for example a Japanese resident in China and vice versa, or internal immigration such as Chinese nationals who had moved from rural areas to major cities. Such studies did not meet the requirements of the present study because it does not focus on Intra-Asian migration.

Three (3) studies examined the adjustment of exchange students and did not focus on people with a professional working background; this study is looking specifically at the adjustment of people living and working in countries of EA. Finally, two (2) studies were excluded because they did not examine people working and living in countries of EA for a specific time period with the aim to repatriate later, but mostly focused on immigration and people who had relocated permanently. Moreover, the research question(s), methodology and findings of the selected studies were further assessed for relevance, resulting in 15 studies (see example in Table III).

#### B. Characteristics of Included Studies

Fourteen of the included studies used quantitative methods, while only one used a qualitative method of thematic analysis [50]. Out of those quantitative studies, four used an experimental study design [13], [26]-[28], while five used a comparative research method of analysis [31], [32], [34], [35]-[38]. Of the remainder, two used a correlation design of analysis [2], [49], two others used a cross-sectional design [20], [43] and one study used a longitudinal design [32].

All of the above mentioned studies had an expatriate population living and working in various countries of the East Asian Region such as Japan [26], [28], Korea, [13], Hong Kong [2], [20], [31], [32], [34]-[36]. The rest of the studies examined expatriates living and working on mainland China [31]-[33], [36], [37], [51]. The studies examined many forms of expatriate adjustment such as work adjustment, general, interaction, cultural, psychological and socio-cultural adjustment. An example of the detailed information of the full characteristics of the studies can be found in the Appendix.

#### C. Quality of Included Studies

An in depth quality appraisal of the included studies is presented in the Appendix. However, quality appraisals were not explicitly incorporated into the synthesis and no studies were excluded on the basis of their quality. An assessment of

the rigour and quality of the studies was carried out to provide additional information.

#### D. Synthesis of the Data

In the appendix, an example table representing the data extraction process conducted for the included studies can be found. However, this serves the purpose of additional information and was not explicitly incorporated into the synthesis. The findings (results) and discussion sections of the included studies were analysed using thematic analysis in order to answer the research question: *What are the key themes present within the research literature regarding expatriate adjustment in EA?*

The analysis generated five main themes: (1) *personality traits* (2) *types of adjustment*, (3) *language*, (4) *culture* and (5)  *coping strategies*. Each theme is analysed below.

### VI. PERSONALITY TRAITS

The first theme helps us understand the adjustment procedure of expatriates and how some are able to adjust faster than others. *Personality traits* consist of openness and cultural empathy [20], [26]-[28], [43]. Being open-minded is the first personality trait mentioned in the included studies which focused on the people’s characteristics and how these can affect adjustment [26]. Open-mindedness is defined as being open to new cultures, social norms and characteristics and the ease to accept new cultures [20], [26], [28], [43].

A person accepting cultural differences can establish better social relations with the host country nationals, which can lead to better interaction and general adjustment [26], [28]. Openness is correlated with cultural empathy, which indicates that both traits share common characteristics, such as being open, transcending one’s own perspective and remaining non-judgemental in inter-cultural interactions [28].

### VII. TYPES OF ADJUSTMENT

This theme is fundamental to the research question. All the included studies explored the types of adjustment of expatriates who live and work in the countries of EA. The different types of adjustment identified in all the included studies are presented as sub-themes in the present review. The sub-themes include: interaction adjustment, general (non-work) adjustment, work adjustment, psychological adjustment and sociocultural adjustment, and cross-cultural adjustment.

Firstly, it would be beneficial to analyse the type of adjustment which may lead to a better and more stable general and work adjustment;

#### A. Interaction Adjustment

It has been found that individuals who interact better tend to be more familiar with the place they have moved to and thus experience lower levels of stress, leading to better well-being [21], [32], [34], [43]. Moreover, interaction with host country nationals can enhance a better understanding of the host country culture [35]. There is, however, a strong argument by [21], who introduced a new theoretical framework to assess the relationships between expatriates and host country



nationals (HCN). Their study shows that expatriate effectiveness and both work and non-work adjustment can be influenced by the HCN. In the study, the results showed that when the HCN are more culturally open and non-judgemental about the cultural background of expatriates and if the HCN show more understanding of the social and cultural differences of expatriates, then better general and work adjustment can be achieved [20] Psychological adjustment refers to the better well-being of the expatriates [35], [36].

### B. General Adjustment

This sub-theme concerns the general non-working adjustment of expatriates. *General adjustment* seems to be the main focus of all the studies which investigated expatriate adjustment, but a different meaning to general adjustment and different circumstances was given in each study. Reference [38] found a positive correlation between work satisfaction and general adjustment; the same conclusion was reached in other studies [31]-[33], [42]. However, some studies found individuals to have better general adjustment without being affected by work, but concluded that other factors such as cultural empathy and social interaction with the host country nationals were more important [26], [28]. Speaking the language of the host country is another factor which might influence general adjustment [51]

Reference [48] found that cross-cultural training had the strongest positive effects on general adjustment, whereas [31] found that cross-cultural training only had a minor effect. Moreover, general adjustment might be a slow process which takes time and depends on the individual [36]. Expatriates who spent more than three or four years in an East Asian country were more adjusted and seemed to have a better well-being, such as better housing conditions and familiarity with the health system [25], [27], [33], [35], [37], [48]. On the other hand, as shown in the same study, the length of stay in Korea had little effect on cross-cultural adjustment and work-related outcomes for some of the expatriates included in the study [28].

### C. Work Adjustment

Work adjustment seems to be significantly positively related with job satisfaction and the quality of life [2]. One possible explanation for this is that work adjustment is necessary since employment may be the main reason why many professionals expatriate to a country of EA, such as China or Hong Kong, and if work tasks cannot be accomplished then they might present lower satisfaction, which in turn will affect general adjustment to the country [31].

Reference [1] found that one of the most important social supports for expatriates comes from co-workers and supervisors. It has been found that it is significantly positively related to work satisfaction and work adjustment [1], [31], [42]. In the same study, it was shown that in some cases co-worker support tends to be more significant to work adjustment than the supervisor's. The reason being that some of the employees, mostly those who have been sent by a

mother company, report their work directly to the immediate bosses at the head office in their country of origin [2]

Additionally, another research found that work satisfaction also influences the greater perception of general adjustment to the new place [42]. Expatriates who report poor satisfaction with their work assignment are more likely to report more mental health concerns such as anxiety or stress, which may influence their adjustment at work, their general well-being and interaction adjustment as well [26], [42].

Other studies conducted among the expatriate population of Japan, however, found two different categories of expatriates; the "self-initiated" expatriates and the "Organizational expatriates" [26], [28]. "Self-initiated" expatriates are those who decide to move on their own free will, and they appear to be more adjusted because they often show a particular interest to the country they relocate [25], [26].

As a result, they might be more prone to learning the language, developing better interaction skills and being more interested in the culture of the host country, leading to better general, and as a consequence, better work adjustment [25], [25]. In this case, it can be argued that results of studies conducted among expatriates who can be characterized as "organizational expatriates" respond positively to work and general adjustment [31].

### D. Psychological Adjustment

Surprisingly, studies did not focus much on psychological adjustment and those that did mainly explored psychological adjustment defined as the better well-being of expatriates, a subjective measurement of satisfaction which measures work and non-work satisfaction [34], [37].

### E. Sociocultural Adjustment

This sub-theme refers to the ability or the openness of an individual to accept cultural differences [33]. Being more familiar with the society that a person is required to live can have a positive strong impact on general adjustment [33]. This, however, does not depend only on the expatriates, but also takes into account the place itself, as well as the host country nationals [31].

A study exploring Western business expatriates in Hong Kong and on the Chinese mainland found that expatriates had better general adjustment in Hong Kong [2], [31]. According to the study, Hong Kong is more suitable for expatriates due to the fact that English is well spoken compared to some areas of mainland China and this can make individuals more comfortable in interacting with the locals, rather than just socialising with the expatriate communities [25], [31].

### F. Cross Cultural Adjustment

For many years many of the organisations sending their employees to work and live overseas would carry out cross-cultural training prior to their leaving [31], [33], [36]. There are many arguments found in the studies about the efficacy of cross-cultural training. Some studies found a positive impact on general and work adjustment [48], whereas other studies investigating the efficacy of cross-cultural training found that it was not beneficial to general adjustment or to general well-

being [36]. The reason being that the short training about the culture of another country may not have much of an impact on any existing values held [36]. More specifically, a study conducted among North American and Western European employees, who both had cross-cultural training prior to their departure, found that North Americans had better general adjustment after the training compared to the Western Europeans [31]. This study concludes that better general adjustment is not only due to cross-cultural training, but also to other factors such as interaction and cultural empathy [31].

#### VIII. LANGUAGE

One important aspect strongly related to better interaction adjustment, network-related and general, non-work related adjustment is language [50]-[52]. Reference [28], in a study exploring expatriate adjustment in Japan, found that host country language proficiency is a more important determinant of interaction adjustment than personality traits because in their study social initiative was positively related with work adjustment. Moreover, according to [31] the best way to understand another culture is through its language. Reference [13], in their study of expatriates proficient in Korean, confirm that this had a positive effect on interaction and work adjustment. In contrast, for some expatriates' language proficiency had no significant effect on their general adjustment, which may be due to the presence of the English language in the work place and/or in the services targeting foreigners in Seoul [26]. This can be argued by the fact that in some countries of EA, such as China, host country nationals do not have high skills in the English language and this can create difficulties in expatriate adjustment [37].

#### IX. CULTURE

This theme analyses the cultural background of expatriates and how this could influence their adjustment. According to [25], large cultural differences initiate stress and require tolerance of divergent cultural values. Several cultural differences influence expatriates in their daily interactions in terms of strong categorization based on demographic attributes and direct questions [25]. One example describing the difficulty of non-work or work adjustment due to daily interactions might be "direct questions". Some cultures tend to ask direct questions (about income or marital status) which might sound offensive for some foreign individuals [25], [50].

#### X. COPING STRATEGIES

The last theme focuses on the coping strategies of expatriates. One of the coping strategies is to repeat the cross-cultural training during their stay in the foreign country [33]. Frequently, however, expatriates tend to find their own solution and ways to adjust to the new culture and environment without relying on any previous training [33]. In certain difficult situations, some individuals use "parent-country escapism"; resignation from their job and early repatriation [33]. Others rely mostly on the assistance given by their organisations and try to maintain the same standard of

living abroad as at home [28]. Another common coping strategy that helps with general adjustment is related to housing conditions [27]. People try to find large and comfortable homes or live in residential areas with other non-natives with services especially for foreigners [27]. Finally, only a few individuals use counselling services to cope with the difficulty of adjustment [43]. Reference [43] found from a sample of 194 participants who were expatriates on the Chinese mainland that 93.5% never used any kind of counselling service during their stay and work in China. Only 4.1% of the participants reported the use of individual counselling services [43].

#### XI. DISCUSSION

The present review aimed to find the key themes within the research literature as regards expatriate adjustment in EA and the role of counselling psychologists in order to support those individuals. Previous literature has identified the different types of adjustment and the difficulties expatriates could possibly face during their stay and work in EA [5], [31], [37], [41].

The present study identified five themes which explain and describe the different types of adjustment, along with other factors which may influence adjustment. Firstly, it has been found that personality traits and, in particular, openness, being non-judgemental and cultural empathy are the most important traits required for any kind of adjustment [20], [26], [28], [43]. Culturally adjusted expatriates are open to the host culture and are keen to add new behaviour, norms and rules to the foundations provided by their home culture [10]. The second theme, through an analysis of the different types of adjustment, shows that most of the included studies focused on general and work related adjustment [2], [31], [32], [34], [43]. Prior to these main types of adjustment, interaction adjustment was analysed. According to the literature, expatriates who interact with the host country nationals and have more social networks tend to be more adjusted both at work and in general [38], [39]. However, this not only depends on the individuals concerned, but also on how the host country nationals are willing to interact with expatriates [20].

Even though psychological adjustment is supposed to be a main theme for the studies to identify participants' anxiety, difficulties and other issues [50], only a few explored psychological adjustment on its own and those that did found only a connection to well-being, which was analysed in the general adjustment section [35], [37]. Socio-cultural adjustment was explored [34], but it seems to be more of a personality trait of being open to the culture of the host country [34].

A very important finding of this study relates to the use of cross-cultural training, which has been considered as one of the most important and helpful factors for expatriates to have better general and work adjustment [32], [49]. Cross-cultural training may only have a small effect on some individuals' cross-cultural, general and work adjustment and it has been found that the most important aspect for better adjustment is

individual personal characteristics and the extent each individual is willing to accept and adapt to the new culture [32].

Individual cultural differences can predict how easy or difficult it would be to adjust to a new cultural environment. Language can also play an important role in the interaction, work and general adjustment [51], [52]. Individuals who struggle abroad seem to have different coping strategies such as network support, better housing conditions, but only a few try to cope with their difficulties by seeking counselling support [43]. Although [24] stated that expatriates face many psychological difficulties due to the fact they have to live on the Chinese mainland, [43] found that most expatriates do not face any issues due to their expatriation and if they seek counselling it is because they already had some issues prior to their expatriation.

## XII. CONCLUSION

Overall, the present review suggests that counselling psychologists are able to assist individuals who struggle with adjustment when they relocate to a country in EA. Counselling psychologists should focus on the needs of expatriates whether they derive from personal reasons or due to adjustment difficulties. A possible way of working with an expatriate is to identify the problem of not being adjusted and then recognise which of the adjustment processes they face the most difficulty utilising. Identification of the adjustment problem can occur during the assessment stage where the client and therapist set some goals related to the adjustment process. Adjustment difficulties can also be explored during therapeutic sessions, depending on the therapeutic model the therapist is following. Therapists can give expatriate clients support and generate and construct appropriate behaviour in order to accept and understand the new cultural setting. Therapists can provide behavioural tasks in order to bring the client closer to the host country culture and also by trying to achieve a cognitive reconstruction of the client. Behavioural activation can be done by reinforcing the client to engage with activities which can be culturally influenced and they can help clients to learn elements of the host country culture. This can help the client to achieve a better therapeutic outcome. This, however, requires the therapist to be fully aware and knowledgeable of the culture they are required to work with. Practitioners can gather the relevant facts, information and meaningful knowledge to comprehend priorities in the client's cultural context and demonstrate culturally appropriate skills for helping the client change or examine the culturally learned behaviours and perspectives. In many cases it is difficult for the therapist to be aware of all the different cultures and know their characteristics. Thus, the therapist should identify some core cultural elements of the client and try to combine them with some other characteristics of the host country culture. For instance, identifying how a European client can engage with Chinese culture by finding some tasks where the client will be introduced to Chinese culture. Therapist should engage many different cultural approaches rather than conducting therapy

based on an individual and specific cultural perspective. They should be approaching expatriates' challenges by adopting counselling methods according to someone's cultural needs rather than using manualised therapeutic methods, most of which have been developed based on a Euro-American perspective [14]. Furthermore, if a client is facing difficulties with adjustment, the therapist can form cognitive schemas to explain the culture to an expatriate client and inform them of the differences and difficulties they are about to face. They can also link knowledge with behaviour and specifically cultural behaviour and explanations. Studies have also found the use of mindfulness techniques to be useful in the understating of different perspectives which can be used by a therapist to the expatriate client in the process of understanding a new culture and new perspectives. Therapists should establish awareness of how they are culturally similar and at the same time culturally different from the client.

## XIII. LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

The limitations of this systematic review need to be considered. This research was conducted by one individual and is thus limited in its scope since systematic reviews are usually carried out by research teams. Moreover, most of the included studies use quantitative research and it can be argued that qualitative ones might have produced different results. To author's knowledge, however, there are only a limited number of published qualitative studies, which is not sufficient for a systematic review analysis. Furthermore, the review is limited to the research engines used to gather the data. Nevertheless, the review was conducted in accordance with the transparent and explicit research protocol; a clear audit trail is presented throughout this paper to maintain the rigour and trustworthiness of the systematic review. For future systematic reviews more qualitative research could be used and more specific types of adjustment explored. Moreover, the present study has identified the key themes of expatriate adjustment in EA. Future studies can use a different methodology and analysis which might produce different results than the present one. Also, this study examined adjustment in countries of EA, whereas a future study could explore adjustment in one specific country such as China or Japan or compare the differences of adjustment between two East Asian countries. Furthermore, other studies can focus on other topics related to counselling psychology, such as the emotional well-being of people who live and work in countries of EA as expatriates. Another area that would be worth exploring is intra-Asian migration.

APPENDICES

TABLE II  
INCLUSION/EXCLUSION CRITERIA

References	Examined expatriates	Medium or high professional positions	Participants who are not from EA but they live and work in one of the countries of EA.	Researched for Psychological, Social and Cultural Adjustment	Written in English Language	The study sample must be adults
[26]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
[30]	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
[12]	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
[32]	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

TABLE III  
CRITERIA OF THE INCLUDED STUDIES

Study 1: [27]			
1	Question/objective sufficiently defined?	X	
2	Study design evident and appropriate?	X	
3	Method of subject/comparison group selection or source of information/input variables described and appropriate?	X	
4	Subject (and comparison group, if applicable) characteristics sufficiently described?	X	
5	If interventional and random allocation was possible, was it described?		X
6	If interventional and blinding of investigators was possible, was it reported?	X	
7	If interventional and blinding of subjects was possible, was it reported?	X	
8	Outcome and (if applicable) exposure measure(s) well defined and robust to measurement/misclassification bias? means of assessment reported?	X	
9	Sample size appropriate?	X	
10	Analytic methods described/justified and appropriate?	X	
11	Some estimate of variance is reported for the main results?	X	
12	Controlled for confounding?	X	

TABLE IV  
DATA EXTRACTION

Study 3	[32]
Research Aims	The purpose of the study is to explore and compare the extent of adjustment of Western European and North American expatriate managers on the PRC mainland.
Hypotheses	H1: North American business expatriates will be less well socio-culturally adjusted to the PRC mainland than their Western European counterparts. H2: North American business expatriates will be less well psychologically adjusted to the PRC mainland than their Western European counterparts.
Participants	129 Western European and North American managers.
Design	Quantitative study comparing 2 different ethnic groups under the same hypotheses.
Measures	Sociocultural adjustment was measured using the scale developed by [3] Psychological adjustment was measured by the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12)
Data Analysis	4x2 & 4x4 multivariate analysis of co-variance (MANCOVA) ANOVA
Findings	North American expatriates are better adjusted than Western European expatriates, which rejects H1. On the other hand, Europeans had a slightly higher mean score on psychological adjustment, as measured by subjective well-being, but this difference was not statistically significant either and H2 must also be rejected

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