**When the going gets tough: The influence of expatriate resilience and perceived organizational inclusion climate on work adjustment and turnover intentions**

**Abstract**

Despite the strong evidence for the beneficial influence of resilience for employee stress resistance in domestic settings, the construct has not received much attention in the expatriation literature, where stress is considered a major factor for expatriates’ poor cross-cultural adjustment and turnover. Drawing upon conservation of resources theory, the present study examines resilience as an antecedent of expatriate work adjustment and turnover intentions. Furthermore, this study investigates the moderating role of perceived organizational inclusion climate as a resource-protecting organizational factor. Results from a survey of 175 expatriates in South Korea indicate that resilience is positively related to expatriate work adjustment and that these positive effects are more pronounced when expatriates perceive their organizational climate to be highly inclusive. Furthermore, findings suggest that work adjustment mediates the effects of resilience on turnover intentions and that this mediation is moderated by a perceived organizational inclusion climate. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

**Keywords:** Expatriates; resilience; perceived organizational inclusion climate; workadjustment; conservation of resources theory; South Korea

**Introduction**

Individuals are increasingly sent on expatriate assignments or opt to relocate internationally of their own volition to pursue global careers. While expatriation can be an exciting and enriching experience, it can also be extremely challenging, requiring expatriates to remain persistent in the face of numerous stressors in the host country. For instance, expatriates are confronted with communication difficulties (Selmer, 2006; Selmer & Lauring, 2015), social exclusion/discrimination (Bader, Stoermer, Bader, & Schuster, 2018), a lack of job role clarity (Stroh, Dennis, & Cramer, 1994; Takeuchi, 2010), or, in general, face the uncertainties of cultural novelty (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004). Thus, there is solid evidence that expatriation is a stressful endeavor (Silbiger & Pines, 2014) and that failure to cope with the aforementioned challenges can lead to the detrimental outcomes of poor cross-cultural adjustment, withdrawal intentions, and eventually turnover (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Shaffer, Harrison, & Luk, 2005; Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003).

Drawing from the conservation of resources theory (COR) (Hobfoll, 1989) in the domestic context (e.g., Huang, Xin, & Gamble, 2016; Meng et al., 2017; Shin, Taylor, & Seo, 2012; Shoss, Jiang, & Probst, 2016), we know that resilience can be key to individuals’ successful mastery of stressful conditions. Resilience is defined as an individual’s ability to bounce back from stressful events and to remain effective in the face of adverse situations (Cooper, Flint-Taylor, & Pearn, 2013). Prior research has provided robust evidence for the beneficial effects of resilience in the domestic work context. For example, Shin et al. (2012) found that resilient employees can deal better with and are more committed to organizational change, and Meng et al. (2017) showed that resilience protects employees against burnout. However, little is known about the role of resilience during expatriation. This is surprising since individuals are prone to experience stress due to cultural differences and need to recover quickly to learn from these setbacks to eventually become adjusted.

Thus, the purpose of the present study is to elucidate if resilience functions as an enabler of expatriates’ cross-cultural adjustment. In detail, we investigate the relationship between resilience and cross-cultural adjustment in the work domain, broadly defined as individuals’ comfort with their job or tasks in the host country (Black, 1988). We investigate our research model based on a sample of expatriates in South Korea (henceforth ‘Korea’). Korea has experienced rapid economic growth and internationalization of its markets in recent years (Cho & Lee, 2018; Chun, 2018), making it the 11th largest economy in the world (IMF, 2017), and a potentially interesting destination for expatriates. However, adjusting to the Korean workplace is markedly difficult due to extremely high working hours (OECD, 2017), an idiosyncratic interpretation of work-life balance (Bader, Froese, & Kraeh 2016), and strict hierarchies (Hildisch, Froese, & Pak, 2015; Jöns, Froese, & Pak, 2007; Kraeh, Froese, & Park, 2015). Thus, given its challenging nature, Korea is an adequate context for the investigation of the effects of resilience on expatriates’ work adjustment.

Further, prior research indicated that expatriates in Korea are prone to encounter exclusionary behaviors, as they are foreigners who are usually not part of the in-group (Hildisch, Froese, & Toh, 2015; Kraeh et al., 2015; Stoermer, Haslberger, Froese, & Kraeh, 2017). This raises the importance of an inclusive organizational climate (Kraeh et al., 2015), which relates to employees’ perceptions’ of how strongly their organization values diversity and fosters the integration of minorities in the workplace, e.g. ethnic minorities or women, among others (e.g., Mor Barak, Cherin, Berkman, 1998; Nishii, 2013). According to COR and its concept of caravan passageways (Hobfoll, 2011), organizational ecologies can protect or detract individual resources, and, as a result, promote or undermine individual resources. Against this background, this study examines the interplay between resilience, positioned as an individual resource, and a perceived organizational inclusion climate, representing a relevant organizational ecology, in the workplace in Korea. We adopt the following rationale that an inclusive organizational climate alleviates the exclusion-related stressors expatriates face in Korea and clears a passageway that strengthens the positive effects of resilience on work adjustment.

This study has the following contributions. First, we contribute to the vast body of literature that has examined the outcomes of resilience in domestic workplace settings (e.g., Cooke, Cooper, Bartram, Wang, & Mei, 2016; Huang et al., 2016; Malik & Garg, 2017; Meng et al., 2017; Shin et al., 2012; Shoss et al., 2016) by providing an empirics-based account of the effectiveness of resilience in an international work context. Similarly, we extend the expatriation literature focusing on the role of individual level predictors of adjustment (e.g., Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003; Peltokorpi & Froese, 2012; Selmer & Lauring, 2015) by identifying resilience as a relevant individual resource in a challenging host country environment. Furthermore, we investigate work adjustment as a mediator in the relationship between resilience and turnover intentions and disentangle the mechanisms by which resilience affects important employee outcomes. Thus, our study also contributes to the few studies that explored mediators of the effects of resilience (e.g., Meng et al., 2017). Second, we apply the concept of caravan passageways (Chen, Westman & Hobfoll, 2015; Hobfoll, 2011) and investigate a perceived inclusion climate as an organizational ecology that strengthens the effects of resilience on work adjustment. In doing so, we highlight the importance of caravan passageways in enabling expatriates’ resilience and empirically test Hobfoll’s (2011) concept of caravan passageways. Moreover, by investigating the role of inclusion climate, we integrate the expatriation and diversity literature. Third, we derive concise recommendations for decision-makers in global mobility departments regarding the identification of resilient individuals, training measures to enhance employees’ resilience, and the establishment of an inclusion climate. This will help organizations to facilitate expatriate adjustment and retention and reap the resultant cost-savings.

**Theory and Hypotheses Development**

*Conservation of resources theory, resilience, and caravan passageways*

Hobfoll’s COR (1989) is a stress and motivational theory. The main tenet of COR is that individuals strive for the retention, protection, and enhancement of resources (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 513). Within COR, resources relate to valued personal characteristics, objects, (environmental) conditions, and so-called energies. For example, relevant resources encompass an individual’s self-esteem, self-efficacy, social status, possessions, such as houses, or social networks. Following the theory, individuals are prone to experience strain when they feel that their resources are endangered or being depleted. In this regard, stress is conceptualized as a force exerted by an external stressor on the individual, i.e. in the present study, working in an unfamiliar foreign country; and the experienced strain is the consequence of a stressor in an individual’s cognitive and/or somatic system (Hobfoll, Stevens, & Zalta, 2015). In the work domain, experiencing strain is related with negative effects on individuals’ work attitudes, such as low job satisfaction, or increased absenteeism (Darr & Johns, 2008; Fogarty et al., 1999), and ill-health, e.g. burnout (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Ebbinghaus, 2002). However, while strain can emerge from perceptions of future or actual resources loss, resources are likewise critical for dealing with and mitigating the detrimental effects of stressors (Hobfoll, 1989). Thus, individuals utilize their resources to regulate their behavior and to master the demands of the respective context (Hobfoll, 1989, 2011).

One of the most important resources individuals can draw from is their resilience (e.g., Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Kossek & Perrigino, 2016; Shin et al., 2012). According to Chen et al. (2015), within COR, resources, such as self-efficacy and self-esteem, are aggregated and are the building blocks that make individuals resilient, with resilience practically functioning as a *higher-order* personal resource against stress and adversity. There have further been significant discussions on the nature and elements of resilience: Kossek and Perrigino (2016) note that scholars have drawn multiple conceptual directions of resilience relating to accessing resources (trait, capacity, and processes) as well as comprising different types (cognitive, emotional, and physical). Hobfoll et al. (2015) conclude that resilience can be viewed through multiple lenses and definitions, acknowledging the multiple approaches that scholars, clinicians, etc., have taken – thus, the conceptualization of resilience should match the research goal and target sample of the study.

In this study, we concur with the view that resilience is a capacity that is malleable and responsive to the events occurring in an individuals’ social environment (e.g., Block & Kremen, 1996). Another element of COR that is relevant for the present study is the concept of caravan passageways (Hobfoll, 1989, 2011). The concept has only recently been explicitly developed and refers to the influence of the environment on individual resources (Hobfoll, 2011; Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018). According to Hobfoll (2011), resources travel in caravan passageways. This implies that resources should not be viewed as isolated variables; rather, resources interact with their environment. Within the context of organizations, Hobfoll (2011), thus, underlines the importance of organizational ecologies that can either support and protect or detract and undermine individuals’ resources. This implies that the investigation of individual resources should be framed within the relevant ecological context. In the present study, we draw from Hobfoll’s work (2011) and focus on caravan passageways and establish how they can promote the effectiveness of resources in dealing with stress and enabling adaptation to change. We further elaborate on this aspect with regard to a perceived organizational inclusion climate as part of our hypothesis development.

*Work adjustment*

Work adjustment is a process that involves adapting to a deep change in the workplace environment. As such, work adjustment is usually associated with significant stress for expatriates (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Black & Stephens, 1989). There are exceptions however, such as ‘yopatriates’ (Pereira, Malik, Howe-Walsh, Munjal, & Hirekhan, 2017) who find expatriation to be less stressful, and instances where expatriates may be the majority of employees in an organization, for instance, in the United Arab Emirates (Harrison & Michailova, 2012), and thus do not have to deal with too many cross-cultural situations in the workplace. Nevertheless, these are specific cases, and expatriation usually encompasses significant change and challenges for the individual (Froese & Peltokorpi, 2011; Selmer & Lauring, 2015; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Takeuchi, Yun, & Russell, 2002). Indicating that resilience is likely to have a role in expatriates’ work adjustment, domestic literature has further shown that resilient individuals deal better with change (Wanberg & Banas, 2000). Thus, through COR, we view successful work adjustment as a reflection of the successful deployment of resources, i.e. resilience, which we hypothesize in the next section.

*Resilience and work adjustment*

Resilience is argued in COR to operate in two primary ways, both as a defense against stressors, and as an intrinsic source of positive value (Hobfoll, 2011). Firstly, from the point of view of stressors, resilience is argued to help individuals withstand, and recover from the most stressful aspects of life. In this respect, Hobfoll (2011) emphasizes resources are most saliently viewed as being valuable in the presence of particular stressors. To ground this in a first example, in the event of unreasonable commands by Korean supervisors, subordinates cannot acceptably engage in open disagreement with their supervisor (Park, Dai Hwang, & Harrison, 1996), and therefore responses to supervisors must be internalized. This is due to Korean culture’s vertical hierarchy (Kraeh et al., 2015). This promotes the beneficial role of resilience as a personal resource and, we contend that resilient expatriates will be able to recover from internalized negative experiences with supervisors and hierarchy-related problems in the workplace. On the other hand, expatriates with low resilience may have less ability to recover from internalized stress related to their supervisors/ vertical hierarchy, eventually hindering work adjustment. Further, resilience not only operates on a cognitive level, it also includes a physical ability to recover from stressors (Hobfoll, 2011). In Korea, a reported source of both physical and mental stress are the long working hours in the workplace (Bader et al., 2016; Kraeh et al., 2015; OECD, 2017). However, we argue that resilient expatriates can cope and adapt better to the physical and mental demands, until the long working hours become less onerous, and eventually part of their working routines. Yet, expatriates with low resilience might give in to physical exhaustion, and the mental blowback resulting from this, compromising their work adjustment.

Secondly, from the point of view of resilience as a source of positive value, COR positions resilience as a resource that allows individuals to “remain vigorous, committed, and absorbed in important life tasks, even amidst significant challenge” (Hobfoll, 2011, p. 128). COR further mentions resilience as a potential source of energization. This should allow expatriates to adapt more proactively to the Korean work environment and move forward with building important work relationships and establishing proficiency in their jobs more rapidly; rather than becoming overwhelmed by stressors. Further, we posit that resilient expatriates will take a different look at stressors than non-resilient individuals, leading to a more positive perspective on the given challenges of the workplace. Thus, we theorize that individuals who know that they can recover quickly from and master stressful situations will be more likely to “focus on what they might gain, instead of what they might lose” (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 519). As a result, these individuals will keep an optimistic outlook and will not ‘lose heart’ in the adjustment phase. There is further surrounding empirical support for a positive relationship between resilience and work adjustment. Accordingly, Ren, Shaffer, Harrison and Fodchuck (2014) showed that positive framing, relating to viewing difficult situations as a challenge and not as a threat, facilitated the adjustment of expatriate teachers. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 1*: Resilience is positively related to work adjustment.

*Perceived organizational inclusion climate as a moderator*

When individuals relocate to a foreign country and start working in a new environment, they depend largely on the receptiveness of host country nationals (HCNs) (Kim, 2001) to become integrated members of the organization (Toh & DeNisi, 2005, 2007). The support that HCNs can offer expatriates, and HCNs’ role as “socialising agents” have been proposed as a vital part of expatriates’ adjustment (Toh & Denisi, 2007). Mahajan & Toh, (2014) found that expatriates who sought advice from HCNs, reported heightened work adjustment. However, it is not always easy for expatriates to obtain the receptiveness and support of HCNs. Varma, Pichler, Budhwar, and Kupferer (2012) and Pichler, Varma, and Budhwar (2012) investigated the likelihood that HCNs would offer support to expatriates. Crucially, both studies found that expatriates who are more culturally similar to HCNs, are more likely to be offered support by HCNs. While Varma et al. (2012) suggest hiring more culturally similar expatriates as a remedy, there are still many expatriates who are culturally dissimilar to HCNs and to whom HCNs may therefore be less receptive.

We propose that this reliance upon receptiveness, applies more so, and is more difficult to get in ethnically homogeneous and in-group oriented sociocultural contexts, such as Korea (Hofstede, 2001; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), where the emergence of fault lines between expatriates and HCNs is likely (Hildisch et al., 2015; Kraeh et al., 2015; Stoermer, Davies, & Froese, 2017). Drawing from the extant domestic literature on diversity management, we know that these divides and dissimilarities can exert high stress on excluded individuals, facilitate unfavorable work attitudes (Renn, Allen, & Huning, 2013), and cause intergroup conflict (Pelled, 1996). To better understand the role of the organizational context for the emergence/absence of these dynamics, diversity researchers (Mor Barak et al., 1998; Nishii, 2013; Shore et al., 2011) developed first, the concept of diversity climates (Kossek & Zonia, 1993), and later shifted the debate towards inclusive climates (see for a review: Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2017). In this sense, researchers have proposed that a strong inclusion climate can remedy the described detrimental dynamics by changing employees’ views of diversity and associated behaviors in the workplace.

Following the conceptualization of caravan passageways (Hobfoll, 1989, 2011), we think that it is important to contextualize the effectiveness of expatriates’ resilience and consider a perceived organizational inclusion climate as a resource protecting or detracting factor in the host country workplace. Expatriates may experience instances of social exclusion and discrimination at work (Stoermer et al., 2017). Being excluded and discriminated against functions as a major stressor (Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997; Schneider, Hitlan, & Radhakrishnan, 2000), as it vehemently questions target individuals’ positive sense of self and conflicts with the basic individual need of belongingness. Further, we propose that another exclusionary aspect deflecting expatriates’ resilience relates to communication in the foreign workplace. In the business context in Korea, communication can often be confusing due to highly divergent communication styles and language barriers (Froese, Peltokorpi, & Ko, 2012; Park et al., 1996). This can lead to misunderstandings, frustration, and exclusion of expatriates’ opinion in decision-making processes (Park et al., 1996). Consequently, we argue that expatriates who work in non-inclusive climates will have to concentrate their resilience to cope with the adversity of their situation. This should eventually constrain expatriates’ resilience so that expatriates will not be able to utilize their resilience for dealing with the adaptive challenges regarding their actual job. Conversely, if expatriates perceive that they work in an inclusive climate, we propose that through less exposure to inclusion-related stressors, expatriates will be more capable of focusing their resilience on work-adjustment relates tasks, e.g. learning about work processes and internalizing work routines, etc. In other words, not having to deal with these stressors will free expatriates’ resilience and remove the undermining/obstructive effects of a weak inclusion climate. This should clear a pathway for resilience and strengthen resilience’s effects on work adjustment. In support, prior empirical studies in the domestic context lend support to the assertion that an inclusion climate can help overcome fault lines driven by demographic dissimilarity (Dwertmann & Boehm, 2016; Nishii, 2013). Therefore, we postulate:

*Hypothesis 2*: Perceived organizational inclusion climate moderates the effects of resilience on work adjustment, in such a way that the positive effects of resilience become increased in highly inclusive organizational climates.

*Work adjustment and turnover intentions*

Highly work adjusted expatriates have demonstrated their ability to apply their resources to successfully overcome work stressors. Once adjusted to the foreign workplace, we suggest that expatriates’ turnover intentions will decrease. This is in line with empirical studies and two meta-analytical studies (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Hechanova et al., 2003). Both meta-analyses show a consistent negative relationship between work and turnover intentions/withdrawal cognitions. In the light of this strong empirical evidence, and the postulated direct effect of resilience on work adjustment, we further contend that work adjustment functions as a mediator in the link between resilience and turnover intentions. Hence, we suggest that resilient individuals will have lower turnover intentions due to being better adjusted to work. Finally, since we propose a moderating effect of perceived organizational inclusion climate in the first leg of our model, the postulated mediated effect is likely to be conditional. Hence, we expect that the mediated effect becomes stronger when the perceived organizational inclusion climate is pronounced, and attenuated in situations where the perceived organizational inclusion climate is weak. This leads to:

*Hypothesis 3a*: Work adjustment is negatively related to turnover intentions.

*Hypothesis 3b*: Work adjustment mediates the effects of resilience on turnover

intentions.

*Hypothesis 3c*: The mediated effect is conditional, i.e. it is more pronounced when the

perceived organizational inclusion climate is high.

Figure 1 summarizes the conceptual model.

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**Methods**

*Data collection and sample*

The data for the present study were collected from expatriates in Korea using an online questionnaire. Expatriates were recruited through the support of the local chambers of commerce, the attendance of expatriate networks and events in Seoul, and through online career networks, e.g. LinkedIn. To ensure that only expatriates who were living and working in Korea were taking our survey, we used a screening question at the beginning of the survey. Altogether, we sent out 415 personalized invitations to our survey and received 175 usable questionnaires, resulting in a response rate of 42.2%.

The sample is comprised of 42.3% female expatriates and the average age of expatriates was 35.9 years (SD= 10.1%) at the time of the survey. Most of the surveyed expatriates were from Western countries (66.3%), while 12.6% came from other Asian countries, 10.3% are from Latin American countries, and the remaining 10.9% classified as ‘other’. Regarding length of stay in Korea, 22.3% of respondents had been in Korea for up to one year, 32% from one to three years, and 45.7% for longer than three years. Most of the surveyed expatriates were living in a relationship (57.7%). The vast majority of respondents had obtained a university degree (94.9%) and 72.6% of participants were working in non-managerial or in lower management ranks. The remaining 27.4% were middle or top managers. Altogether, 25.1% of respondents categorized themselves as assigned expatriates (AEs), whilst the majority of 74.9% classified as self-initiated expatriates (SIEs).

*Measures*

We used established scales that have been successfully applied in prior research. To mitigate the influence of common method variance (CMV) ex ante, we followed the advice of Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee and Podsakoff (2003) and inserted items for independent and dependent variables into separate questionnaire sections, assured participants anonymity, and asked them to respond as honestly and spontaneously as possible.

The *independent variable* resilience was measured using the six-item inventory developed by Smith et al. (2008). Respondents provided their answers on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (= strongly disagree) to 7 (= strongly agree). A sample item reads “It is hard for me to snap back when something bad happens” (reverse-coded). The scale’s Cronbach’s Alpha is .75.

The *moderating variable* perceived organizational inclusion climate was captured using four items from Mor Barak et al. (1998). The scale inquires about employee perceptions of how strongly their organization fosters the integration and involvement of individuals from diverse backgrounds. A sample item is “The company spends enough money and time on diversity awareness and related training”. Items were rated on a seven-point Likert scale from 1 (= strongly disagree) to 7 (= strongly agree). To enhance the reliability of the scale, we had to discard one item. The Cronbach’s Alpha for the three-item scale is .80.

The *mediating variable* work adjustment was measured with the three-item scale by Black and Stephens (1989). Respondents indicated their perceived degree of adjustment to the workplace in the host country, e.g. pertaining to supervisory responsibilities, or performance standards and expectations, on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (= not adjusted at all) to 7 (= very well adjusted). The scale achieved a Cronbach’s Alpha of .89.

The *dependent variable* turnover intentions was measured by applying the three-item scale developed by Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins and Klesh (1979). A sample item reads “I will actively look for a new job in the next year”. Answers were provided on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (= strongly disagree) to 7 (= strongly agree). The scale achieved a Cronbach’s Alpha of .88.

In accordance with prior research (e.g., Bader, Reade, & Froese, 2016; Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Froese & Peltokorpi, 2011; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999; Takeuchi, Yun, & Tesluk, 2002), we *controlled* for the effects of demographic and work context related variables: gender (0= male, 1= female), age (in years), expatriate origin (0= other, 1= Asian), length of stay in Korea (0= less than one year, 1= one year and longer), rank (0= non/low management position, 1= middle/top management position), company nationality (0= foreign, 1= Korean), and supervisor nationality (0= foreign, 1= Korean). Moreover, we controlled for the effects of host country language skills (Selmer, 2006) and used the five-item scale by Hammer, Wiseman, Rasmussen and Rnischke (1998). The items in this scale are negatively phrased. To improve the interpretability, we reversed the items with higher scores representing better language skills. A sample item reads “I cannot write Korean (R)”. The Cronbach’s Alpha is .92.

*Preliminary analyses*

Before testing our hypotheses, we screened the data for outliers and incomplete cases. This led to the removal of three cases from the data set. Next, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on all scales comprised of multiple items. We used the AMOS software package version 24.0 and applied the maximum likelihood estimator. Accordingly, we defined resilience, host country language skills, work adjustment, perceived organizational inclusion climate, and turnover intentions as first-order structures. The results obtained from CFA showed that three items in the resilience construct had low indicator reliability implying that only a low amount of the variance in these items was explained by the postulated latent factor (Backhaus, Erichson, & Weiber, 2010). Hence, we decided to remove these items. After discarding the three items, the results indicated that our model fit the data well: (χ2= 165.849; DF= 110; p < .001; CMIN/DF= 1.508; CFI= .969; TLI= .961; RMSEA= .054) (see for thresholds in e.g.: Backhaus et al., 2010; Byrne, 2001). Furthermore, all scales showed sufficient convergent validity, i.e. composite reliability estimates higher than .70 and average variance extracted (AVE) values for each factor above .5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Malhotra, 2009). In a subsequent step, we assessed discriminant validity. Following Fornell and Larcker (1981), the AVE by each factor should be higher than its squared correlations with any of the other factors in the model. This criterion was met, i.e. the lowest AVE is .542 and the highest squared correlation between factors is .191, hence, indicating that factors are distinct. Similarly, high discriminant and convergent reliability indicate that CMV was not severely affecting our data. To further substantiate this, we conducted a common latent factor test (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The results of this analysis again indicate that CMV was not a critical problem in our data, i.e. the average deviation in the standardized regression weights of indicator factor loadings between a model with and a model without a common latent factor was marginal (Est.= .037). Finally, to reduce the potential of multicollinearity, we centered all predicting variables prior to analyses (Aiken & West, 1991).

**Results**

The means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations between all variables included in this study are displayed in Table 1. To test our hypotheses, we applied the IBM SPSS software package version 24.0 and the PROCESS-tool[[1]](#footnote-1) (Hayes, 2013).

In H1, we postulated a positive association between resilience and work adjustment. The results from our analysis (Figure 2) support this assumption (B= .14, SE= .07, p < .05). Hence, we accepted H1. In H2, we hypothesized that perceived organizational inclusion climate would moderate the relationship between resilience and work adjustment. The inspection of the significant interaction term (B= .09, SE= .04, p < .05) supports H2. Next, we tested H3a which posited a negative association between work adjustment and turnover intentions. This hypothesis was corroborated (B= -.33, SE= .14, p < .05). We proceeded with analyzing H3b which proposed that work adjustment would function as a mediator in the association between resilience and turnover intentions. In accordance with Hayes (2013), a 95% confidence interval (CI) for the mediated effect based upon 10.000 bootstrap samples was obtained. If the 95% CI does not straddle zero, the existence of a mediation effect can be inferred. As the 95% CI for the mediated effect does not contain zero (Est.= -.05, 95% CI [-.1524, -.0016]), we accepted H3b. Finally, we tested if the mediated effect was conditioned by the moderating effect of perceived organizational inclusion climate. Our findings suggest that indeed a moderated mediation exists. Thus, if the perceived organizational inclusion climate was below 1 standard deviation of the mean, the mediated effect was cancelled out (Est.= -.00, 95% CI [-.1094, .0528]). In contrast, when the perceived organizational inclusion climate was 1 standard deviation above the mean, the mediated effect became more pronounced (Est.= -.09, 95% CI [-.2192, -.0123]). In sum, this corroborates H3c.

To better understand the nature of the identified moderating effect of perceived organizational inclusion climate in the relationship between resilience and work adjustment, we created a plot of the interaction (Aiken & West, 1991) (Figure 3). As can be seen in Figure 3, a pronounced perceived organizational inclusion climate has a beneficial effect and strengthens the positive relationship between resilience and work adjustment. In contrast, in a situation where the organizational climate is perceived as being non-inclusive, the association becomes dampened.

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**Discussion**

Drawing from the conservation of resources theory, the present study set out to investigate the influence of resilience on work adjustment and turnover intentions among expatriates, exemplified by the case of Korea, a homogenous and potentially challenging environment for expatriates. In addition, this study examined perceived organizational inclusion climate as a boundary condition of the effects of resilience on work adjustment. The results indicate that resilience is positively related to work adjustment and that work adjustment transmits the effects of resilience on turnover intentions. Furthermore, we found that the positive association between resilience and work adjustment becomes stronger if expatriates perceive their organizational climate to be inclusive. The moderating effect of perceived organizational inclusion climate also conditioned the mediating effect of work adjustment in the association between resilience and turnover intentions. The implications of these findings for theory and practice are discussed as follows.

*Theoretical contribution*

This paper makes the following contributions. First, the present study connects the domestic literature on employee resilience with the expatriate management literature and provides relevant insights on the effectiveness of resilience beyond the domestic workplace context. Despite the major attention resilience has drawn in research on organizational behavior/human resource management in general (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Cooke et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2016; Luthans & Youssef, 2007; Malik & Garg, 2017; Shoss et al., 2016), little is known about the role of resilience as an important personal resource for expatriates. Against this background, this study demonstrated the important role of resilience in improving expatriates’ work adjustment, exemplified by the case of Korea, a challenging workplace for expatriates (Bader et al., 2016; Froese et al., 2012; Kraeh et al., 2015; OECD, 2017; Stoermer et al., 2017). This study, thus, expands current knowledge regarding the value of personal resources for cross-cultural adjustment, e.g. relational skills, social initiative, or language ability, (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Hechanova et al., 2003; Peltokorpi & Froese, 2012; Selmer & Lauring, 2015). Drawing from COR (Hobfoll, 1989) which posits that positive framing is one of the elements of resilience, our study further provides support for the results of a study conducted by Ren et al. (2014), who identified that positive framing of challenges helps expatriates to adjust. Similarly, our study introduces work adjustment to the known set of outcomes of resilience, e.g. work engagement, commitment, or burnout (Cooke et al., 2016; Meng et al., 2017). Furthermore, our study helps disentangle the mechanism by which resilience affects turnover intentions by identifying the mediating role of work adjustment. Thus, we contribute to the understanding of the mechanisms that explain the effects of resilience. In this sense, our study extends the work of Meng et al. (2017), who demonstrated the mediating role of leader member exchange on employee commitment and burnout, by shifting the focus to work adjustment as a crucial intermediary variable that carries the effects of resilience on expatriate turnover intentions.

Second, we contribute to a more contextualized perspective on the effectiveness of resilience and considered perceived organizational inclusion climate (Mor Barak et al., 1998; Nishii, 2013) as an important ecology that can create a caravan passageway for resilience (Hobfoll 1989, 2011). Accordingly, we argued that a perceived organizational inclusion climate reprieves expatriates from exclusion-related stressors in the Korean workplace, and, thus, allows them to fully *invest* their resilience to deal with the setbacks associated with adjusting to their job and its tasks in an unfamiliar environment. Our findings supported this hypothesis and showed that the effects of resilience on work adjustment become stronger if expatriates perceive their organization to have an inclusion climate. Accordingly, our study corroborates the beneficial outcomes of the fairly novel concept of caravan passageways in COR (Hobfoll, 2011) in an international workplace context and also demonstrates that the direct and indirect effects of resilience depend on expatriates’ perceptions of how inclusive their workplace climate is. This further highlights the importance of viewing and examining resilience and other resources not as isolated variables but to consider the role of the respective context in which resources act (Hobfoll, 2011). Finally, while prior studies have mainly examined the direct effects of organizational variables on resilience (Malik & Garg, 2017), we focused on organizational context as a boundary condition and found support for its conducive role as a moderator. We, hence, enrich the debate on the interplay between (perceived) organizational factors, individual level resilience, and related outcomes.

*Practical implications*

In terms of practical implications, our study shows a way forward for organizations to improve expatriates’ work adjustment and decrease turnover intentions by directing attention to expatriates’ resilience and the role of an organizational inclusion climate. This is important as poor work adjustment can lead to low performance and expatriate turnover, which is associated with high costs and additional intensive efforts for organizations (Nowak & Lindner, 2016), for instance, seeking and training of expatriate replacements, relocation costs, administrative work, and so on. First, during hiring or expatriate selection, organizations can include measures of resilience. Organizations might apply the short measure used in this study developed by Smith et al. (2008), which focuses on the ‘bounce back’ and recovery aspect of resilience. Likewise, following Kossek and Perrigino (2016), organizations could adopt resilience measures to the specific occupational context to enhance the predictive validity of these measures and to derive custom-made interventions to facilitate employee resilience. Regarding training and interventions, several programs were shown to affect employee resilience in a positive manner (Robertson, Cooper, Sarkar, & Curren, 2015). For instance, Sood, Prasad, Schroeder and Varkey (2011) used the Stress Management and Resiliency Training (SMART) intervention and found significant increases in participants’ resilience. Further, Robertson et al. (2015) underline that resilience training should feature one-to-one elements and should be tailored to individuals’ specific needs to enhance the training’s effectiveness. Additionally, drawing from the study of Cooke et al. (2016), HR-practices that enhance employee skills, abilities, and knowledge, can be implemented to promote employee resilience.

Second, our findings suggest that organizations should create/foster inclusive climates, to protect the resilience of expatriates by removing exclusion-related environmental stressors, and to ultimately increase expatriates’ chances of becoming adjusted. In general, as Stoermer, Bader, and Froese (2016, p. 298) propose, organizations need to consider the prevailing cultural values in their respective context, when they intend to create an inclusion climate. Thus, particularly in Korea, where power distance, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance are high (Hofstede, 2001), and where cultural tightness is pronounced (Gelfand et al., 2011), organizational efforts to promote inclusion might depend substantially on managers’ endorsement of practices fostering inclusion and their engagement in an inclusive leadership style (Nishii & Mayer, 2009). Therefore, it is important that managers become convinced of the advantages of inclusion, engage in a role model function, and sanction exclusionary behaviors. This could facilitate the invalidation of negative stereotypes, which foster exclusion, and motivate local employees to engage in inclusive behaviors (Stoermer et al., 2016). Similarly, articulating milestones and prescriptions for inclusive behaviors could further help to assure local employees’ compliance and reduce fears caused by uncertainty in interactions with expatriates (Stoermer et al., 2016).

*Limitations and future research avenues*

As with most studies, the implications of the present study need to be interpreted in the light of its limitations. Since the analyzed data were collected at one time-point, assumptions of causality must be undertaken with care. Even though we followed the advice of Podsakoff et al. (2003) to mitigate CMV ex-ante and found statistical support, as part of CFA and the common latent factor test, that CMV was not severely distorting our findings, the cross-sectional design still poses a limitation. However, in this regard, it is important to note that the effects of work adjustment on turnover intentions have been well established in meta-analytic research (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Hechanova et al., 2003). Furthermore, it is unlikely that CMV influenced the examined moderation effect, as CMV has been argued to only inflate zero-order correlations, but not moderation effects (Shaffer et al., 1999). Nonetheless, we recommend future research to collect data at multiple time-points and/or use multi-rater assessments. Another limitation is associated with the measurement level of our moderating variable, organizational inclusion climate. Research on organizational climates (e.g., Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013) recommends capturing the latter on an aggregate level, e.g. unit level or organizational level. Due to the nature of the collected data in this study, we could only measure inclusion climate on a perceived, psychological level. Multi-level research designs, e.g. across a multitude of organization or organizational units, could address this caveat. A further limitation in our study is that we did not measure, and therefore could not control for working hours. We suggest scholars include this in future studies relating to resilience/ stress.

As a further suggestion for future research, we would direct scholars to investigate pre-departure factors influencing expatriates’ stress resistance. There are indications in literature that certain factors might affect how expatriates’ view stressors. First, Caligiuri, Phillips, Lazarova, Tarique and Burgi (2001) found that pre-departure cross-cultural training had positive implications for expatriates’ cross-cultural adjustment, via a mediated effect of met expectations. Similarly, we deem that examining how prior international experience shapes resilience and how this might alter expatriates’ ways of evaluating and coping with stressors could be an interesting avenue for future research endeavors. Longitudinal research designs could be applied to further investigate this. We lastly, suggest that extending our knowledge of the outcomes of resilience beyond turnover, future scholars investigate further important variables such as repatriation and/ or relocation which might be affected by poor work adjustment, as even if expatriates do not decide to change employer, expatriates with low resilience may wish to change location due to the depletory effects of localized work stressors.

Despite its limitations, the present study highlights the beneficial role of resilience for facilitating work adjustment and decreasing turnover intentions in the expatriation context. Furthermore, this study demonstrated the conducive effects of a perceived organizational inclusion climate. Against this background, our study has important implications for expatriate management researchers and practitioners in international human resource management.

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Figure 1.Conceptual model

Perc. organizational inclusion climate

Resilience

Work adjustment

Turnover intentions

H1

H3a

H2

H3b, H3c

Table 1.Means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | |  | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 1 | Gender | | | .42 | .50 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2 | Age | | | 35.78 | 9.94 | -.19\* | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3 | Expatriate origin | | | .13 | .33 | .24\*\* | -.13 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4 | Length of stay | | | .78 | .42 | -.11 | .22\*\* | -.05 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5 | Rank | | | .27 | .45 | -.24\*\* | .43\*\* | -.04 | .11 | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6 | Company nationality | | | .66 | .47 | .09 | -.35\*\* | .09 | -.11 | -.28\*\* | - |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7 | Supervisor nationality | | | .64 | .48 | .03 | -.09 | .07 | -.08 | -.06 | .18\* | - |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8 | Language skills | | | 4.07 | 1.86 | .08 | -.25\*\* | .21\*\* | .26\*\* | -.04 | .16\* | .12 | - |  |  |  |  |
| 9 | Resilience | | | 4.96 | 1.19 | .12 | .09 | -.07 | -.06 | .08 | -.18\* | .04 | -.09 | - |  |  |  |
| 10 | Perc. org. inclusion climate | | | 3.50 | 1.40 | -.01 | .15 | -.04 | -.17\* | .14 | -.34\*\* | .03 | -.20\*\* | .09 | - |  |  |
| 11 | Work adjustment | | | 5.57 | 1.08 | .02 | .29\*\* | -.22\*\* | .07 | .07 | -.09 | -.10 | -.07 | .19\* | .16\* | - |  |
| 12 | Turnover intentions | | | 3.65 | 1.92 | .06 | -.28\*\* | .11 | .07 | -.18\* | .21\*\* | -.03 | .25\*\* | -.10 | -.40\*\* | -.24\*\* | - |
|  | | **Note.** M= mean. SD= standard deviation. N= 172.  \*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

R2= .17

|  |
| --- |
| **Note.** N= 172.  \*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < .001. |

R2= .20

Perc. organizational inclusion climate

Resilience

Work adjustment

Turnover intentions

.14\* (.07)

-.33\* (.14)

.09\* (.04)

Figure 2. Results of regression analysis using PROCESS.

Figure 3. Interaction plot of resilience and perceived organizational inclusion climate.

1. Additionally, we also tested our hypotheses using hierarchical regressions and obtained identical results. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)