
Job satisfaction of returnees to Japan

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Abstract: We coin the term ‘Japanese returnees’, referring to workers who were born in Japan but, of their own volition, have spent some time abroad for educational and/or work reasons. Here, we investigate how Japanese returnees’ job satisfaction is influenced by organisational identification, motivational cultural intelligence, and the degree of ‘Japaneseness’ of the business system at the workplace. Based on the tenets of the social identity theory as well as from the person-environment (P-E) fit perspective, we find that returnees with stronger organisational identification enjoy higher job satisfaction. Furthermore, firms with western-oriented business systems have more returnees who have a higher degree of job satisfaction. Even though we do not find any direct relationship between motivational cultural intelligence and job satisfaction, there is a group of returnees with higher motivational cultural intelligence who state they have higher job satisfaction when working in firms with a rather Japanese business system.

Keywords: Japan; job satisfaction; organisational identification; motivational cultural intelligence; MCQ; Japaneseness; business system.

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Biographical notes: Lara Makowski-Komura is a PhD post doc and received her PhD at Kobe University under supervision of Ralf Bebenroth. She is interested in language implications and expatriations. After spending six years in Japan, she goes back now to Germany to start working in a Japanese firm at Duesseldorf

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1 Introduction

In the era of globalisation, multinational corporations are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of a global workforce consisting of employees with international work experience (Bossard and Peterson, 2005; Yeung and Olds, 2000). In order to globalise a firm, the expatriation of headquarters managers to overseas affiliates is generally adopted as a strategy to tackle international challenges. Such an approach has been a popular topic in academic research for many years (Edström and Galbraith, 1977; Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Hechanova et al., 2003; Baruch et al., 2016). Another recent trend that is used to internationalise a firm is the employment of individuals with work experience abroad who have returned to their country of origin.

This phenomenon is most observable in Asia and the Pacific Rim countries where a high number of individuals go abroad to gain overseas work experience. Tung (2006) observed this phenomenon and coined the term ‘ex-host country nationals’ (EHCNs) when studying Chinese nationals who returned to their homeland after a long stint of overseas employment (Tung, 2016; Tung and Verbeke, 2010). The term EHCNs refers to individuals who share the same ethnic background with those in the countries of operation (Tung, 2006). Data collected from Chinese EHCNs in Central and East Europe confirmed that EHCNs were indeed an important phenomenon (Tung, 2006; Tung and Larazova, 2006). Tung furthermore distinguished Chinese EHCNs into three different sub-categories: ethnic Chinese born and raised abroad, Chinese born in China but raised and educated abroad, and Chinese born and raised in China but have spent at least some time abroad for educational and/or work reasons.

Our research covers only the second and the third groups of EHCNs discussed in Tung’s research. Also, there are similarities of returnees with those in the research on repatriates undertaken by Chiang et al. (2015). These so-called self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) who, having acquired the necessary experience and expertise, eventually return home (Myers and Pringle, 2005). However, our sample did not consist of repatriates who were sent abroad and later returned to their headquarters, but of individuals who went abroad and returned voluntarily. All our subjects were born in their home country (Japan), but had stayed abroad for some years, with some of them even having been educated abroad. This leads us to coin a new term ‘returnees’ to refer to such employees.

In this research, we investigate factors thought to influence Japanese returnees’ job satisfaction. As shown by Tett and Meyer (1993), organisational identification is an important predictor of job satisfaction. There are also studies indicating that better physical and psychological health leads to higher job satisfaction of the workforce (Haccoun and Jeanrie, 1995). Job satisfaction also has a positive impact on the willingness to stay on at the organisation, and is negatively correlated to turnover (Kristof-Brown, 1996; Tett and Meyer, 1993; Chen, 2017). This shows that identification contributes to higher job satisfaction. In addition, motivational cultural intelligence (MCQ) and the culture of the business system should also affect job satisfaction. Hence, in this study, we investigate how organisational identification, MCQ, and the culture of a business system affect job satisfaction of Japanese returnees. There are two pertinent questions in this study: first, ‘To what extent does organisational identification influence job satisfaction of returnees?’ and second, ‘How do MCQ and the business system of a country influence job satisfaction of returnees?’

This paper makes several contributions to the literature on job satisfaction. First, we investigate how organisational identification of returnees influences job satisfaction.

Second, we integrate returnees' MCQ as a moderator of the influence of the business system on returnees' job satisfaction, and third, by focusing on the uniqueness of the Japanese business system, we show how country specific factors and different business systems can influence job satisfaction of returnees. Our research also differs from other studies mainly undertaken in the US and Europe (Bonache et al., 2001; Foster and Johnson, 1996; for critique see Harzing and Feely, 2008).

Based on the tenets of social identity and from the person environment (P-E) fit perspective, our findings indicate that returnees with stronger organisational identification enjoy a higher degree of job satisfaction. Furthermore, the degree of the 'Japaneseness' of the business system is negatively related to the job satisfaction of returnees. This shows that returnees working in firms with a western-oriented business system have a higher level of job satisfaction than their counterparts in firms with very Japanese characteristics in their business system. Also, there is evidence with weak statistical support for MCQ as a moderator of the influence of the business system on a returnee's job satisfaction. Some returnees with high MCQ do enjoy more job satisfaction when working in a rather Japanese-oriented business system.

This paper consists of the following sections: An overview of the study, is presented as the Introduction in Section 1. This is followed by Section 2 which contains the theoretical framework of this study. Next, in Section 3, there is a brief description of the Japanese culture and the Japanese business system. The hypotheses for the study are stated in Section 4, followed by Method and Results in Sections 5 and 6 respectively. Finally, the discussion in Section 7 brings the study to a close in Section 8.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Returnees

Multinational firms (MNCs) that aspire to become more international used to rely heavily on the practice of expatriation. For that reason, the dominating topic in the academic literature about the transfer of managers remains expatriate research (Edström and Galbraith, 1977; Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Hechanova et al., 2003; Baruch et al., 2016; Takeuchi, 2010; Bebenroth and Pascha, 2011). In contrast, repatriate research has received less attention (Chiang et al., 2015; Suutari and Brewster, 2003; Hyder and Lövblad, 2007). The reason for the under researched repatriate topic is that repatriates are assumed to know and understand the culture and habits of their home countries as well as common work practices in the business field. However, recent studies suggest that repatriation might be as problematic as expatriation because many repatriates have to deal with a so called 'reverse culture shock' (Kraimer et al., 2012; Hyder and Lövblad, 2007; Bossard and Peterson, 2005; Morgan et al., 2004).

In order to better understand expatriation and repatriation, and to better manage the difficulties that come along with exchanging headquarters employees, Baruch et al. (2016) proposed an expatriation and repatriation framework and coined the latter as ex-host country nationals (EHCNs). This concept can be seen through the lens of a career ecosystem and applies to an increasing number of both employers and employees still venting their frustration as a result of repatriation (Paik et al., 2002).

There is a stream of research focusing on 'SIEs' who are different from expatriates (so called organisational expatriates, OEs). In the case of SIEs, employees are not sent by

the headquarters but they go abroad on their own free will (Stahl et al., 2002; Peltokorpi and Froese, 2009). While both OEs and SIEs are likely to be stationed at headquarters, the participants in this study did not fit any of the other categories discussed above and, therefore, will be referred to as 'returnees'. These individuals left Japan for a period to study and or work, and are back in their home country at the time of this study.

Returnees have their own unique characteristics that differentiate them from repatriates. They do not have any headquarters to return to and also, contrary to what is common to repatriates (Chiang et al., 2015), returnees do not have any 'expatriate experience' at a given foreign subsidiary of a specific company. This means that returnees come home to their country of origin not because the headquarters require them to come back, but it is a personal choice. Our study subjects return to their home country for various reasons. While some are financially driven, e.g., being headhunted by Japanese intermediaries, a more common reason for returnees to decide to go back to their country of origin is that they simply expect to feel better being back home again. In addition, family issues can draw individuals back to their country of origin as, especially in Asia, it is common for elderly family members to be taken care of by their children. If the return is sudden and unplanned, returnees do not have any fixed workplace to return to and are in a weak position to negotiate. Unlike organisational repatriates, returnees might even agree to take up low pay job offers, or work at jobs that they are overqualified for. They come back to their home country to find themselves disoriented and are unexpectedly rather lost in the job market. Such distress is exacerbated as their expectations are commonly based on their previous own experiences in the home country (Black et al., 1992). Moreover, the returnee might be oblivious to the changes that have taken place over time in the home country. It is also likely that the returnee is a changed individual, having adapted himself after living abroad for many years. On return to the home country, he may find that his expectations clash with the changed reality at home (Stroh et al., 1998). Based on the previously stated reasons, it can be assumed that returnees might face varying degrees of difficulty re-adjusting to and re-integrating into their home working environment as compared with organisational repatriates. Nevertheless, returnees could make valuable contributions to their firms. Therefore, we investigate returnees' job satisfaction from two theoretical perspectives, viz. the social identity theory and the person-environment fit (P-E-fit) perspective.

2.2 Theoretical approach

According to the social identity theory developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), every human being is defined by social relationships (Cho et al., 2014; Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007). The theory implies that an individual defines him/herself to a certain extent or even completely as a part of a structured society through group membership, or by subscribing to the values and meanings of a group, a society or an organisation (Stets and Burke, 2000). Considering an organisation as a social group, employees generally tend to establish their social identities from their group of co-workers, taking into consideration age, gender, profession, and from the organisation itself (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Johnson et al., 2006). The social identity theory describes, among others, the in-group versus out-group phenomenon, where members of the former group benefit from having strengthened relationships.

Organisational identification is recognised as one of the most important tools to help understand an employee's behaviour at the workplace and his/her attitudes towards work

(Van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007; Ashforth and Mael, 1989). Organisational identification is defined by Mael and Ashforth as the “perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organisation, where the individual defines him- or herself in terms of the organisation in which he or she is a member” (1992, p.104). Numerous studies have found that the construct of organisational identification correlates with several other constructs in an organisation, such as job involvement, turnover, work absence, and job satisfaction (Mael and Ashforth, 1995; Riketta, 2005; Van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007).

Another important construct relating to sociocultural adaptation and highly influenced by the environment is cultural intelligence (Ang et al., 2006; Van Dyne et al., 2008). For this, we systematically conceptualise our construct as consisting of four variables, viz. meta-cognitive, cognitive, behavioural and motivational CQ (Ang et al., 2006). While meta-cognitive CQ describes the individual’s cultural consciousness and awareness in circumstances when people from different cultural backgrounds interact with one another, cognitive CQ describes the individual’s knowledge about different cultural settings. Behavioural CQ refers to the individual’s flexibility of verbal and nonverbal actions when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds. The fourth construct, motivational CQ, examines interactions among people from different cultural backgrounds. In other words, MCQ reflects the degree of the individual’s ability and desire to understand and accept others from different cultures. It is based on his or her level of open-mindedness, and this includes the ability to respect and/or adapt to the cultures, customs, beliefs, and values of individuals from different countries (Thomas et al., 2008 Emerson et al., 2002). As this research is aimed at investigating returnees’ job satisfaction, we apply only the fourth construct of the original cultural concept, viz. motivational CQ, to examine returnees’ willingness to interact with their colleagues and how this would impact their job satisfaction [Earley and Ang, (2003), p.26].

We apply the person-environment (P-E) fit perspective proposed by Searle and Ward (1990), which explains the ability to ‘fit in to’ or to interact with foreign cultures. The PE fit perspective not only applies to an individual’s adaptation to different national and/or firm cultures (Black et al., 1992), but also to re-adaptation to one’s own country and culture on his return. The theory implies that each individual has to adapt to the environment he finds himself in, and whether he is a fit or misfit depends on his ability to adapt. As such, a P-E fit can be seen as a match of the individual to environmental characteristics. So far, P-E fit has been studied in relation to the improvement of HRrelated factors. Oakman and Wells (2016) analysed the effect of P-E fit for lifetime working duration, aiming to improve the retention of an elderly workforce in Australia.

Being able to fit in is not seen as having similarities with others but rather as having complementary characteristics (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Cultural incompatibility or ‘misfit’ is often seen as a reason for failure. The P-E perspective has also been applied in macro-level analyses in M&A research (Bauer and Matzler, 2014), with studies examining cultural differences in cross border mergers and acquisitions (Stahl and Voigt, 2008).

Literature at the macro-level argues that cultural differences have a negative impact on the post-merger integration process and that national cultural differences have an influence on socio-cultural integration (Bauer and Matzler, 2014). In the field of repatriation research, the cultural ‘fit/ misfit’ perspective as introduced by Chiang et al. (2015) considers repatriation as the repatriates’ progress to ‘fit’ back into their home country and culture. The authors developed a multi-level conceptual framework of ‘fit’ to

better understand the process of repatriation. ‘Fit’ is defined as the extent to which repatriates’ expectations and perceptions of work- and non-work related factors match the actual ‘real’ environment (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). In this study, as mentioned above, returnees are expected to face an even stronger clash of expectations with reality upon going back to Japan. Hence, we investigate the effect of the returnee’s cultural fit on his level of job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction is defined by Locke in two influential essays. In this study, the definition from the 1969 essay is used. Hence, job satisfaction is defined as the “pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job as achieving or facilitating one’s job values. In contrast, job dissatisfaction is the unpleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job as frustrating or blocking the attainment of one’s values” [Locke, (1969), p.317]. The assumption adopted for this study is that returnees with greater organisational identification have higher job satisfaction.

Organisational identification serves as a predictor variable. A meta-analysis of Tett and Meyer (1993) provides evidence that employees with high organisation identification are also more satisfied. Therefore, we argue that in order to be satisfied at a given job, employees need to identify with their jobs.

Several studies on individuals similar to our definition of returnees have been conducted, focusing on New Zealand and Australia. Like New Zealand and Australia, each country has its own specific national and business culture characteristics. The unique Japanese culture is reflected in most of the business systems in the country. For example, companies in Japan usually have a closed business system with a high cultural context, but unlike those in Australia and New Zealand, stress not only performance, but also personnel relationships and loyalty to one’s company (Recht and Wilderom, 1998). Foreign languages, especially English, are highly valued assets for Japanese returnees and tend to count more than (non-English) language skills of returnees to New Zealand or Australia. Furthermore, in Japan, it is important to understand the unique business system. This is why, besides language issues (Reiche et al., 2015), local Japanese managers at the headquarters with poor mastery of English tend not to trust new non-Japanese staff whom they regard as not being able to understand the Japanese cultural traits in the business system (Hagen and Choe, 1998).

3 Japanese business system

The Japanese business system was described by Blahova and Zeleny (2013) as a management and business system of embedded fundamental processes to ensure that objectives are achieved. Comparative studies have been undertaken to examine how organisations and management systems of Japanese companies differ from corresponding practices in the west (Hall and Leidecker, 1981). Even today, researchers describe the Japanese business system as consisting of three main characteristics, viz. lifetime employment with a seniority-based pay and promotion system, consensus decision-making, and job rotation (Endo et al., 2014). Arguably, lifetime employment in Japan is alien to western firms (Forrier and Sells, 2003). In addition, Japanese cultural values are embedded in the system, especially a preference for collectivism over individualism, indicating less emphasis on the importance of individual contribution, and valuing the ‘we’ more than the ‘I’ (Hofstede, 1984). During the peak of its perceived prowess, the

Japanese business system was judged in the literature on a scale ranging from neutral to positive. However, the current Japanese system is increasingly associated with a tough working life (North and Weathers, 2007; Pavel, 2016). The work environment offers a poor work-life balance as long working hours are still the norm. Also, unpaid overtime work is widespread, and a vacation that exceeds a week is a rarity.

Japanese firms not only rely on their regular employees as the major (first) workforce, who are life time employed (*shūshin koyō*) but also on dispatched or temporarily 'borrowed' employees (*haken*) (Fu, 2013). A third group consists of part-timers and time-contracted workers. Unlike the western concept of part-timers, such Japanese employees work long hours, often from the early morning until the evening, five days a week, performing the same work as the regular workers. However, part-timers do not receive a long-term contract, and neither are they entitled to a bonus nor any other benefits enjoyed by their counterparts who are regulars. This rather unique employment system can be seen as one way for many Japanese firms to compete, especially in blue collar work against international competitors. Still, in terms of internalisation, many Japanese firms face difficulties because Japanese managers hardly want to leave the country. Those who intend to obtain international exposure agree to be sent abroad as expatriates only if they are assured of being re-employed by the same firm. As soon as they have a family, however, many of them do not want to leave the country anymore. Also, expatriation is very costly for Japanese MNCs (Sekiguchi et al., 2016; Fukuda and Chu, 1994).

4 Hypotheses development

4.1 *Effect of organisational identification on job satisfaction*

As stated above, the social identity theory can be used to explain intergroup behaviour (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). Researchers also use this theory to build a link from identity to identification (Brewer and Gaertner, 2001). Using this idea, we investigated the extent to which identification influenced job satisfaction of returnees on an individual level. Job satisfaction of employees rests on two main pillars, viz. the value of work and on rewards received at the workplace (Kallerberg, 1977). Research on expatriates has shown that appropriate job task and organisational factors increase job satisfaction and decrease tendency of turnovers (Shaffer and Harrison, 1998; Naumann, 1993; Van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007).

Applying the social identity theory, returnees are considered as outgroup members, as they differ from their other colleagues who share more common characteristics with one another. Also, a deep understanding of another culture might pose a risk to returnees as local employees may not fully share their thinking. Hence, despite the returnees' high potential contribution to the organisation, there is the disadvantage that, when treated as outgroup-members, returnees are not able to fully participate in and contribute to the firm. We argue that returnees bring benefits only when they have job satisfaction, and further suggest that job satisfaction is influenced by organisational identification.

Furthermore, according to Kristof-Brown et al. (2005), expatriates with higher organisational identification have a higher person-organisation fit, and this in turn has a positive impact on job satisfaction. Likewise, going by the social identity theory, returnees with high organisational identification should feel accepted as in-group

members. This strong feeling of belonging to the firm would result in returnees being more satisfied at their workplace and with their jobs. Hence, in accordance with empirical findings in the expatriate literature, we propose that returnees with higher organisation should be more job-satisfied. Even if returnees were coincidentally re-hired by their previous firm prior to going abroad, or might not even have stayed for a long period on their return to the old firm, or were treated differently compared to other regular employees, their organisational identification should still have an impact on their job satisfaction. We therefore state the following hypothesis:

H1 The higher the organisational identification of returnees, the higher their job satisfaction.

4.2 *Effect of the Japanese business system on job satisfaction*

On the tenets of social identity theory and from the P-E-fit perspective, there are reasons for returnees to prefer a Japanese business system. In cases of returnees not wishing to belong to an out-group, they would prefer to stay at a Japanese-oriented firm. Being in a firm with a rather Japanese business system, there would be limited contact with foreigners, while communication with Japanese co-workers would increase. Returnees might also not want to experience again the pressure of a western performance-oriented system. On the other hand, especially in regard to the social identity theory, there could be more reasons for returnees to prefer the western business system (Conrad, 2010). Returnees who have experienced working in a western business system when they were abroad would value its style of management, e.g., fast decision-making process, an open discussion culture, less overtime work, recognition of a highly-valued work-life balance and higher motivation owing to performance-based evaluation. All these attributes of the western business system lead to greater awareness of fairness. It should be noted that even in Japan, western-oriented firms tend to have performance-based remuneration instead of a lifetime employment contract with seniority-based remuneration. Hence, returnees who have experienced a more western and flexible system might prefer it to the traditional Japanese business system. These arguments are supported by the P-E-fit perspective. Based on our theoretical underpinnings, we further assume that returnees should value work-life balance, reduction of unpaid overtime and an increase in vacation time, just like what they have experienced while working overseas under non-Japanese (or western style) management. Therefore, we hypothesise that returnees in a company with a high level of 'Japaneseness' in its business system should be less job satisfied.

H2 The more Japanese traits there are embedded in the company's business system, the lower the job satisfaction of returnees.

4.3 *Effect of MCQ on job satisfaction*

Returnees should not be treated as a homogeneous group. When staying abroad, some of them might have been exposed more to foreign cultures than others. Prior research suggests that individuals high on MCQ are more flexible and adapt more easily to different situations (Shi and Franklin, 2014). In contrast, individuals with lower levels of MCQ tend to feel uncomfortable in unfamiliar situations. For example, some Japanese prefer to stay in groups of their own ethnicity instead of integrating with the local community. This phenomenon of self-imposed segregation, being in another country but

spending most of the time with fellow countrymen, is more common among Japanese expatriates than others (Hofstede, 1984). As such, Japanese returnees with high levels of MCQ are greatly valued for their ability to help their firm in international business dealings. Such employees have a decisive advantage as they are better at understanding other cultures, and this would be useful to management at the firm's Japanese headquarters. In contrast, returnees who have low MCQ lack this ability. Even if they have spent time abroad (in rather closed circles of Japanese friends), they are hardly of any help to the headquarters in international dealings. Such returnees are, therefore, assumed to be dissatisfied with their jobs as they are not as much valued as returnees with higher MCQ. Therefore, we hypothesise that returnees with higher MCQ have greater job satisfaction.

H3 The higher the level of MCQ of returnees, the higher their job satisfaction.

4.4 Moderating effect of MCQ

As stated above, Japanese returnees are assumed to value the western business system more than the Japanese business system. It would seem logical that they should prefer to work for a western style firm that offers a more employee-friendly environment, which should contribute to higher job satisfaction.

However, the opposite might be true, especially for returnees with lower levels of MCQ. As MCQ indicates the degree to which an individual is open to different cultures, the individual with low MCQ might be rather closed to other cultures. Along this line of argument, it is reasonable to assume that Japanese returnees with low MCQ would be satisfied working in a Japanese-oriented business system environment as they do not have to speak English neither do they have to deal with foreigners (non-Japanese) anymore. These returnees with low MCQ must have been relieved and are glad to be back in Japan where they feel more at home working for firms using the traditional Japanese business system.

Regarding the comparatively small group of Japanese returnees who have high MCQ, we have two contrasting thoughts leading us to believe that they behave differently from the 'average' returnee. On the one hand, it is plausible that returnees with high MCQ would not opt to work in a firm with a Japanese business system as they have experienced the benefits of the western business model while they were abroad, viz. more job flexibility, greater job empowerment, independence, and performance-based remuneration. Therefore, it can be assumed that such returnees would be more satisfied working in firms using a western business model.

However, for a similar group with high MCQ, the same argument might not always apply. Since returnees with high MCQ have a greater ability to adapt to a different environment when they worked abroad, grounded on social identity theory, they are also assumed to be able to re-adapt easily to the Japanese business system upon their return to Japan. Also, the P-E-fit perspective suggests this line of argument, that ambitious returnees with high MCQ and who aspire to climb up the corporate ladder quickly would be disappointed when they are passed over for promotion in a western style firm in Japan. Western expatriates, instead of Japanese returnees, might be appointed to senior positions simply by being sent to Japan by the headquarters. For example, firms such as Daimler Fuso Truck in Japan are known to preferably employ its top managers directly from

Germany. Hence, there are situations where returnees might have better job advancement working in firms based on the Japanese business system.

In this study, we investigate whether MCQ has a moderating influence on the job satisfaction of two groups of returnees. We propose two contrasting hypotheses:

H4a Returnees with high MCQ have less job satisfaction in companies with a high level of 'Japaneseness' in their business system.

H4b Returnees with high MCQ have more job satisfaction in companies with a high level of 'Japaneseness' in their business system.

5 Method

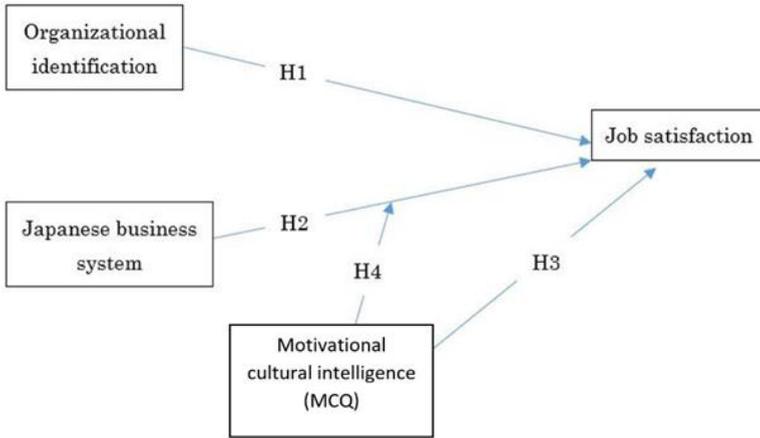
5.1 Construct measurement

This section explains the measurement of the constructs, the model used in this study, and the data collection. The questionnaire items are given in Table 1. Organisational identification was measured with eight items, based on the organisational identification questionnaire by Cheney (1983), but adapted to meet the profile of returnees. Example: 'If a story in the media criticises the firm, I would feel embarrassed'. The MCQ construct was evaluated to indicate the extent to which the returnee's level of open-mindedness influenced his/her job satisfaction. Derived from Ang et al. (2006), the MCQ construct was measured with five items. Example: 'I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures'. Throughout this study, the five-point Likert scale was used to score responses, with 1 = not at all and 5 = full agreement with the statements.

The construct of 'Japaneseness' measured the degree of typically Japanese traits in a Japanese firm. To measure this construct, respondents chose 1 to refer to 'very Japanese' and 5 to indicate 'very westernised'. Note that firms were not merely categorised according to public perception of their origin or shareholders. We did not rely on the firms' national affiliations because it would be misleading. For example, a Japan-based foreign affiliate could be easily counted as a western firm, while a local Japanese firm could easily be perceived as a firm having a Japanese business system. Misconceptions could occur, however, as some Japanese firms adopt a rather international outlook. For instance, two Japanese firms, Rakuten and Uniqlo, recently introduced English as their official company language (Yamao and Sekiguchi, 2015) and have their operations based on a western style business system. In contrast, some other foreign firms in Japan that have been operating in Japan for many years behave rather like traditional Japanese firms even though they are listed as western firms. One such company is Nestle from Switzerland, with its subsidiary located in Kobe. The firm hires very few non-Japanese in their Japanese headquarters and has a rather Japanese than western style ambience in their office. The dependent variable 'job satisfaction' is measured with eight items using a shortened version of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Igalens and Roussel, 1999). Example: 'I am satisfied with my job'. Again the 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the degree of agreement with the statement. The variables and their corresponding hypothesis are displayed in Figure 1.

Table 1 Latent variables, indicators and questionnaire items

<i>Latent variables</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Questionnaire items</i>
Job satisfaction	SATa	I am satisfied with... ... the company I work for
	SATb	... my job security at the company
	SATc	... the overall communication within the company
	SATd	... the facilities provided by the company
	SATe	... my job
	SATf	... my salary in the company
	SATg	... the promotion opportunities in the company
	SATh	... the training & development provided by the company
Organisational identification	IDa	When I talk about my firm, I usually say 'we' rather than 'I'
	IDb	My firm's success is my success
	IDc	When someone praises my firm, it feels like a personal compliment
	IDd	If a story in the media criticises my firm, I would feel embarrassed
	IDe	When someone criticises my firm, it feels like a personal insult
	IDf	I am very interested in what others think about my firm
	IDg	I feel employees with and without international experience are treated equally
	IDh	I feel out of place at my company (reverse coded)
Japanese business system	JBSa	At my firm promotion and salary raise are seniority-based (reverse coded)
	JBSb	... individual contributions are regarded as important (reverse coded)
	JBSc	... work-life-balance is highly valued (reverse coded)
Motivational cultural intelligence (MCQ)	CULTa	I enjoy travelling to foreign countries
	CULTb	I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures
	CULTc	I am comfortable in communicating in a foreign language
	CULTd	I am confident that I can socialise with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me
	CULTe	I am sure I can deal with the stress of adjusting to a culture that is new to me
	CULTf	I enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me

Figure 1 Model (see online version for colours)

5.2 Data collection and sample characteristics

This study was conducted in Japan and all the respondents in our sample were Japanese nationals with working experience abroad and also in Japan. The data consisted of 90 observations collected during a six-week period from 7 October 2015 to 23 November 2015 using an online survey program. The authors contacted half of the participants directly to invite them to complete the online questionnaire when they fulfilled specific criteria, i.e., they had to be Japanese returnees with overseas work experience and they should not be from the same firm in Japan where they had previously worked before going abroad. The other half of our sample was contacted through recommendations by the earlier participants, where the same criteria were applied. We had some missing data in our sample (three to seven respondents for some of the questions). Also, as we purposefully applied the snowballing system to receive responses, most of the respondents completely filled out our questionnaire. The later participants sent us additional information and even offered themselves to be interviewed. The questionnaire used in this study consisted of 35 questions in seven different categories. The first page consisted of a cover letter explaining the questionnaire's purpose and stating that the authors had solely academic intentions, and that the data would be kept strictly confidential. Also, the authors offered to share the results of this study with the participants (on an anonymous basis). The language used in this study was English because we are interested in investigating job satisfaction of returnees whom we consider as international employees. Hence, English language proficiency was a prerequisite for participating in this study.

In regard to sample characteristics, we purposefully investigated the participants' decision-making vis-à-vis working abroad and returning, i.e., whether it was of their own volition to go abroad and to come back to Japan. In all, 62% (three missing responses) decided on their own to go abroad and 60% (five missing responses) came back to Japan by their own decision. It is also interesting to note that only five returnees (6%) were hired back to Japan via a head hunter.

In regard to work experience, we divided the participants into three different categories: less than 2 years, between 2 and 7 years, and more than 7 years. In all, 25% had less than two years of experience abroad and 42% between 2 and 7 years. Finally, 20% had more than 7 years of work experience (three missing responses). Clearly, our returnees fitted well into our study as many of them had gained considerable work experience abroad and the majority left and came back to Japan by their own decision.

We also included three categories of participants who had worked only in Japanese firms for similar periods, with 9% under 2 years of experience, while 22% had 2 to 7 years work experience. Interestingly, 56% of our participants had above 7 years of experience working in Japan (three missing responses). Hence, our study sample contained adequate representation of returnees and local employees to render meaningful results.

5.3 Data analysis

This study used the structural equation modelling (SEM) with the SmartPLS software (Ringle et al., 2005) to empirically test the above proposed four hypotheses. The use of PLS-SEM is increasingly popular in the new millennium as a method for multivariate analyses in academic research (Hair et al., 2012; Moghaddam et al., 2015). PLS was chosen as an analysis tool for this study as PLS modelling is able to handle a small sample size. Furthermore, it is considered suitable for studies that conduct prediction-oriented research (Henseler et al., 2009; Moghaddam et al., 2015).

6 Results

Most of our constructs have reasonable internal consistency as reflected in Cronbach's Alpha job satisfaction = 0.88, organisational identification = 0.812 and MCQ = 0.863. Only our self-constructed variable of Japanese business system had a surprisingly low Cronbach's Alpha loading, with merely 0.448. However, the AVE (average variance extracted) reached 0.483, which is almost at the recommended threshold of 0.5, i.e., it explained almost 50% of the indicator variance (Table 2). The R square for explaining job satisfaction was 0.496. We, therefore, decided to work with these constructs in the following analyses.

On average, our scores for the three constructs, viz. job satisfaction, organisational identification and MCQ, were all clearly above 3.0 (3.47; 3.45 and 3.98 respectively, Table 3). This indicates that the returnees in our sample were, on average, satisfied with their jobs, had high organisational identity, and (as we expected for returnees) had high MCQ. The low average value for the Japanese business system construct (at 2.6) indicated that participants came more often from a Japanese than a western business style system (Table 3).

Table 2 Measurement model

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Loading</i>	<i>Cronbach's α</i>	<i>AVE</i>
Job satisfaction	SATa	19.913	0.880	0.547
	SATb	13.764		
	SATc	13.002		
	SATd	9.473		
	SATe	18.191		
	SATf	9.247		
	SATg	7.157		
	SATh	6.978		
Organisational identification	IDa	6.814	0.812	0.450
	IDb	8.785		
	IDc	33.812		
	IDd	10.530		
	IDe	9.430		
	IDf	5.557		
	IDg	5.138		
	IDh	2.273		
Japanese business system	JBSa	1.179	0.448	0.483
	JBSb	5.561		
	JBSc	8.689		
Motivational cultural intelligence (MCQ)	CULTa	3.441	0.863	0.579
	CULTb	4.105		
	CULTc	4.067		
	CULTd	3.864		
	CULTe	2.786		
	CULTf	2.027		

Note: Bootstrapping results (i.e., 500 subsamples; no sign change option).

Table 3 Descriptive statistics

<i>Constructs</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Average score</i>	<i>Standard deviation</i>
Job satisfaction	90	3.47	0.81
Organisational Identification	88	3.45	0.76
Japanese business System	86	2.60	0.77
Motivational cultural Intelligence (MCQ)	90	3.98	0.68

Table 4 Pearson correlations among constructs

<i>Constructs</i>		<i>Job satisfaction</i>	<i>Organisational identification</i>	<i>Japanese business system</i>	<i>Motivational cultural intelligence (MCQ)</i>
Job satisfaction	Pearson correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	90			
Organisational identification	Pearson correlation	0.603**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000			
	N	88	88		
Japanese business system	Pearson correlation	-.380**	-0.460**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		
	N	86	84	86	
Motivational cultural intelligence (MCQ)	Pearson correlation	0.250*	0.254*	-0.092	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.018	0.017	0.401	
	N	90	88	86	90

Notes: **Correlation is significant at the 1% level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 5% level (2-tailed).

Table 5 Path coefficients, standard deviations, and significance tests

	<i>Path coefficient</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Organisational identification to job satisfaction	0.513**	5.900	0.000
Japanese business system to job satisfaction	-0.227*	2.326	0.020
MCQ to job satisfaction	0.022	0.237	0.813
MCQ × Japanese business system to job satisfaction	0.140+	1.799	0.072

Notes: DV: job satisfaction.

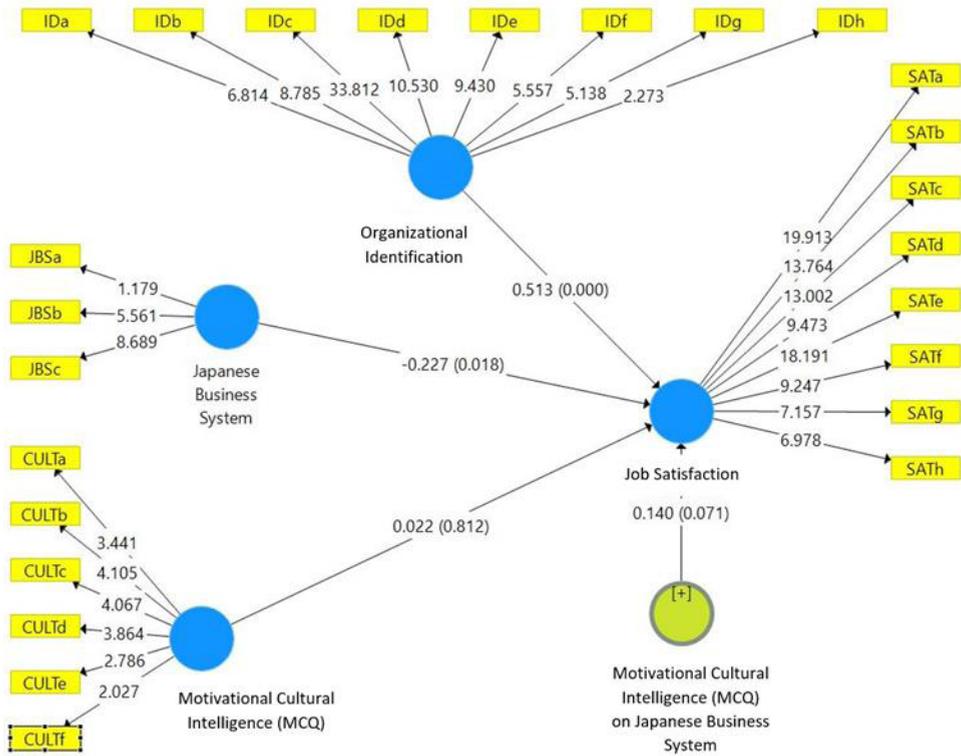
Bootstrapping results (i.e., 5,000 subsamples no sign change option) are marked with asterisks according to the significance level.

**significant at 1%, *significant at 5%, +significant at 10%.

In accordance with the social identity theory and from the P-E-fit perspective, we tested the following hypotheses. H1 hypothesis states that returnees with a high level of organisational identification are the more job-satisfied employees. The structural equation modelling was able to confirm this hypothesis (0.513, 1% sign, Table 5). Also, the variance explaining job satisfaction (at 51%) was very high, indicating that organisational identification had the biggest impact, and explained half of the returnee's job satisfaction.

It is assumed and hypothesised in H2, that the more 'Japanese' the business style adopted by the firm, the less job-satisfied are the Japanese returnees. The structural equation modelling showed that the Japanese business system had indeed a statistically significant and negative influence on job satisfaction (-0.227, 5% sign.). Therefore, hypothesis H2 was confirmed. H3 hypothesises that returnees with high MCQ are the more job-satisfied employees. However, the results did not show any statistically significant relationship between MCQ and job satisfaction, and therefore, the hypothesis H3 was not confirmed.

Figure 2 PLS-SEM model (see online version for colours)



Notes: We use the term western business system to distinguish from the traditional Japanese style business system. We are aware, however, that not all of our returnees (participants) went to western countries.

It is furthermore assumed that returnees with high MCQ are different compared to the regular cohort of returnees vis-à-vis job satisfaction. In our contrasting hypotheses, we state that they would experience less (H4a) / more (H4b) job satisfaction when working in a Japanese business culture again on their return. In other words, for this special group of returnees, it is logical to assume that MCQ will either have a negative or positive impact on job satisfaction, depending on the type of the business system their firm has adopted. Our hypothesis H4b was supported, although only weakly (0.14 10% sign, Table 5) returnees with high MCQ do have greater job satisfaction in companies with a high level of ‘Japaneseness’ in their business system.

7 Interpretation and discussion

Based on the social identity theory and the cultural fit perspective, we tested our hypotheses on a sample of Japanese returnees. The existing literature states that employees who identify themselves better with their companies are the ones who are more satisfied in their jobs (Van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007; Riketta, 2005). We had evidence that this was also applicable to Japanese returnees. The Japanese business system was found to have a negative relationship with returnees’ job satisfaction. This

shows that, on average, Japanese returnees are more job satisfied when working in firms using a western business system.

The finding in this study that there is no direct relationship between MCQ and job satisfaction of returnees is consistent with earlier research (Judge et al., 2001). In another study, Bebenroth and Ismail (2014) could not find evidence that target employees with high MCQ have higher levels of job satisfaction after a cross-border acquisition. In that study, interestingly, instead of the younger employees, the senior employees of the target firm were the ones who scored higher on MCQ. However, the more open-minded seniors turned out to be the less job satisfied employees, thus failing to confirm that Japanese employees who have more MCQ are more job satisfied.

The MCQ variable was investigated in this study to ascertain whether it moderated the relationship between the Japanese business system and job satisfaction. Based on findings in current literature on expatriates (Shi and Franklin, 2014), it was assumed that the group of motivational cultural intelligent ones were a unique group with interests and needs that had to be addressed accordingly. We found that there was weak statistical evidence that returnees high on MCQ, i.e., those with greater ability to adapt and to 'fit in' to other cultures, were also able to fit in any company, be it western or Japanese. The structural equation modelling was able to confirm this hypothesis regarding the group with high MCQ being more job-satisfied at firms that adopted the Japanese business system. In other words, the study confirmed that the small group of high MCQ returnees also had high job satisfaction when they returned to work in a rather Japanese business system environment.

This study adds theoretical contributions to the literature in a Japanese context. In relation to the social identity theory, we provided evidence that returnees with high organisational identification were the ones more likely to be job-satisfied. Also, we found support for the social identity theory as returnees normally preferred to work at a firm with a rather western business system environment. Even though MCQ did not directly affect job satisfaction regardless of whether the firm adopted a Japanese or western business system, our findings indicated that only in the case of returnees with high MCQ, a Japanese-style business system was sometimes preferable. These findings also supported the P-E-fit perspective as returnees valued highly the work environment after being back in Japan.

This research also offers practical insights. Returnees who identify strongly with the company are more job satisfied, even if they consider themselves initially as outsiders at the workplace in Japan for not having had a long stint at the firm. It should be noted that returnees normally would not have started working in Japan at the same time as their colleagues. Our research consequently suggests that in order to increase job satisfaction of returnees, the management of a company should reduce the degree of 'Japaneseness' in their management system where it is practicable. In this regard, individual contribution has to be given due recognition (Hofstede, 1984) and consideration should be given to remuneration based on the individual's contributions to the firm. A more performance-oriented remuneration (Craig, 2009) would surely make the returnees happier. The Japanese business system, however, typically follows a seniority-based wage system. Not being rewarded for their individual contribution and efforts, therefore, may lead to lower job satisfaction among returnees. Firms should introduce reforms at the workplace, e.g., implementing work-life balance. Such reforms need to be implemented in companies operating on a traditional Japanese business system.

Nevertheless, firms are advised to encourage returnees to identify with the firm as soon and as much as possible to achieve higher job satisfaction. As such, returnees should be treated as a valued group of employees. They should be made to feel as an integral part of the decision-making team of the firm. As returnees normally prefer to work at western firms, Japanese firms should adopt a separate western-style business management for returnees to allow them to enjoy some of the benefits they would otherwise receive at firms with a western-oriented business system. Furthermore, these valued returnees should be given special training under top managers to enable them to apply their skills and knowledge. However, it should be noted that there is also a group of high MCQ returnees who feel they have better career advancement opportunities in a Japanese business system.

The language situation in Japanese firms also needs to be discussed. According to Tenzer and Pudelko (2013), foreign language speakers might face communication barriers at the workplace. Employees who have communication problems might experience negative emotions, thus adversely affecting interpersonal relationships among co-workers and team members, more so in Japan than in other countries. In Japan, the world's third biggest economy in terms of GDP, the English language is spoken only by a few. Hence, compared to other countries, Japan can be considered as rather underdeveloped in the use of foreign languages (Tsuneyoshi, 2005). Very often, companies have difficulty hiring English-speaking staff. As a result, many Japanese firms are unable to realise their full potential to compete in the world market (Tsuneyoshi, 2005). Owing to the shortage of international talents (Osman-Gani and Paik, 2016), multinational corporations in Japan strive to lure English-speaking Japanese employees who should not only be able to communicate in a foreign language (preferably English) but should also have the ability to interact with people from foreign countries and to deal with international matters. Japanese literature refers to 'internal internationalisation' (*uchinaru no kokusai-ka*). English-speaking Japanese have an edge over foreign (e.g., English) nationals as the former are able to understand and communicate easily with their colleagues in the Japanese language. It is likely that Japanese returnees have faced problems abroad as their English proficiency is generally not as fluent as compared to that of their peers in English-speaking countries like Australia or the US. But once they return to Japan, they easily outperform other Japanese colleagues, even with their somewhat mediocre English language communication skills. Returnees now may gain respect from other Japanese colleagues as their skills and experience can help Japanese firms project an international image in the world market. Actually, what is even more important than English proficiency is the ability of returnees to handle business matters with their foreign counterparts, i.e., know 'how to deal' with foreigners in regard to business. Japanese firms should make use of such skills to become more international.

This study, nevertheless, has several limitations. As with many other studies undertaken, this study is cross sectional, i.e., the participants in the study were only contacted once (e.g., Han et al., 2016). Therefore, even with our theoretical underpinnings, we cannot be absolutely certain of our findings, i.e., if indeed organisational identification influences job satisfaction, or vice versa. We applied the construct of MCQ however, it could be argued, that other constructs such as metacognition could be even more appropriate. Future studies may take a construct other than MCQ to see if our results in regard to cultural openness of returnees hold. Also, there was some bias in the selection of participants as the sample was through personal contacts. Even when carefully selecting participants, introductions by fellow participants

from an earlier group could have led to similarities in attitudes about Japan and the Japanese business system. The need to take care of family members could also cause returnees to have a negative attitude regarding their firm. Furthermore, our self-developed construct of Japanese business system needs to be refined in future research as the loadings were low, indicating that it did not fit the respondents perfectly. Future studies should include reasons for returnees coming back to their country of origin. Also, participants were Japanese and responses could be biased because of cultural issues. For example, westerners are usually quite decisive when answering 'yes' or 'no' in questionnaires, while Japanese tend to be rather neutral, staying closer to the middle on a scale (Yamao and Sekiguchi, 2015).

Last but not least, perceptions of returnees might differ according to their workplace. Returnees at western style firms might view the Japanese business system negatively, while returnees at Japanese firms might be positively surprised at how westernised a Japanese firm could be. Hence, one group might have positive perceptions of the firm's management style while the other group might have negative perceptions even if both firms apply the same business system.

8 Closing

We coined the term 'returnees' in our investigation of returnees' job satisfaction and found evidence that it was mainly organisational identification that contributed to higher job satisfaction. For returnees who might be new to a firm and who might be considered as out-group members, organisational identification mattered. The social identity theory as well as the P-E fit perspective lent support to our arguments that, on average, returnees were more satisfied when organisational identification was high. The business system was an additional important factor affecting returnees' job satisfaction. The P-E fit perspective supported our findings that, on average, returnees fitted better in firms that used a western business system rather than firms that based their management style on the traditional Japanese business system. However, our findings also indicated that there were returnees with higher MCQ who preferred to work in firms with a Japanese business system.

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