

WHEN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE LEADS TO WITHDRAWAL INTENTIONS AMONG INTERNATIONAL EMPLOYEES:

The mediating role of general assignment satisfaction

Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between organizational culture and withdrawal intentions among international employees. The data were collected through a self-administered survey of 221 international business employees from different nationalities. The results indicate that organizational culture influences the individuals' intentions to withdraw from the assignment, the organization and the occupation. These relationships are mediated by general assignment satisfaction. Moreover, the results show that home and destination organizational cultures affect withdrawal intentions but do so differently: home organizational culture affects mainly withdrawal intentions from the occupation, while host organizational culture has a stronger influence on withdrawal intentions from the assignment and the organization. These findings take the debate over the influence of organizational culture on turnover among international employees one step further. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

Keywords: Organizational culture, withdrawal intentions, international employees, general assignment satisfaction, turnover

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1. Introduction

The number of employees boarding on international assignments of short or long term duration has increased over the years. However, concerns about the economic climate have recently affected the size and composition of the expatriate population. In 2007, a global relocation survey (GMAC, 2007) reported an expected growth of the expatriate population, among 67% of the surveyed companies; but in a similar report in 2010, 46% of the companies mentioned a decline in the expatriate population (GMAC, 2010). In the same report, companies expressed “cautious optimism” about the future: 44% of respondents predicted an increase, and another 44% expected the expatriate population to remain the same.

Interestingly, participating companies reported other changes in the expatriate population: the selection of more experienced employees reflected on the average age of this population; a decline in the percentage of expatriates accompanied by the family, and an increase in the number of commuter assignments. Additionally, 20% of respondents noted a growing expatriate attrition, though the percentage of early returns is still 7%, which is the same as in 2009, and similar to the historic average. It is also reported an increase in the number of repatriates leaving the companies during the first year after repatriation – 38% in the 2010 survey, compared to a historical average of

22% (GMAC, 2010). Besides, 22% repatriates left their companies after two years upon return (GMAC, 2010).

These figures seem to illustrate the companies' increasing difficulties to retain international talent and find jobs upon return, due to the weak economy. As there is no available data to distinguish voluntary from involuntary turnover, it remains unclear what might have led employees to leave their assignments and employing companies in a context of limited job opportunities in the labour market.

These results also suggest that international human resource managers (IHRM) are facing added challenges to motivate and retain an international mobile workforce. The "need" for senior international professionals may well collide with economic pressures to reduce costs. And cost cutting may run over the individuals' interest and ultimately lead to low satisfaction and psychological withdrawal. Briefly, there is a clear need to further examine the organizational antecedents of turnover among international employees.

Most research on voluntary turnover has been on the individual level, thus disregarding organizational factors affecting the individuals' decision to leave the organization. Intuitively, many scholars and managers would agree that home and host organizational cultures matter in expatriation success. However, less is known about how it matters. Hence, this research explores how home and host organizational culture affect turnover among international employees. As several studies have looked at turnover intentions and withdrawal cognitions as antecedents of actual turnover (Griffeth, Hom & Gaertner, 2000), this study explores the influence of organizational culture on withdrawal intentions, as a proxy to voluntary turnover. Besides the influence of organizational culture on withdrawal intentions, this research also tests the mediating

influence of general assignment satisfaction, since there is empirical evidence (among domestic employees) of the importance of satisfaction as an antecedent of turnover (Porter & Steers, 1973; Griffeth, et al., 2000; Holtom, Mitchell, Lee & Eberly, 2008).

2. Background and hypotheses

2.1. Organizational Culture

There are many definitions of “culture”. Culture is “the way in which a group of people solve problems and reconciles dilemmas” (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997, p. 6); or “the collective programming of the mind, which distinguishes the members of one human group from another” (Hofstede, 1980, p. 21). Schein (1992) defines culture as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions one group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration. These basic assumptions have worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein, 1992, p. 12).

In common, these definitions consider culture to be transmitted to new members and shape the individuals’ perceptions, cognitions and emotions by exerting an explicit or implicit social control. Moreover, culture is expressed in collective behaviours, practices, assumptions and values (Hofstede, 1980; Schein, 1992), and is a distinct feature of the organization formed over a period of time and remaining relatively stable (Taras, Rowney & Steel, 2009).

A number of models based on the cultural values shared by organizational members have been suggested in the literature. However, organizational cultural values are particularly difficult to perceive and weigh up, especially by international

employees. Being the deepest layer of culture, these values are not noticeable to sojourners and newcomers, and when they are, they tend to be blended in national cultural values. Hence, while the influence of national culture and culture novelty has been largely documented in the cross-cultural and expatriation literatures (Taras et al., 2009; Stahl & Voigt, 2008; Harzing, 2003; Shenkar, 2001), the influence of organizational culture has been overlooked (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer & Luk, 2005; Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991). To overcome this limitation, Taras et al. (2007) suggest that other dimensions can be used to collect data for measuring culture, and Goffee & Jones (1998) suggest organizational culture can be appraised through observational checklists, practices questionnaires, and critical incident analysis. Following the latter approach, this study looks at the concept of organizational culture through a survey of observable behaviours among the members of an organization, in accordance with Goffee and Jones' model (1996; 1998), to explore its influence among international employees.

According to this organizational culture model (Goffee and Jones, 1996; 1998), two cultural dimensions constitute the foundations of organizational culture: sociability and solidarity. These two dimensions are not mutually exclusive, and organizational culture is normally best described as a combination of them.

Sociability, is defined as a measure of friendliness among individuals, and emerges when people share similar interests and values. In the organizational context, sociability promotes openness to new ideas, leads to creativity and increases commitment to colleagues and to performance (Goffee & Jones, 1998). However, high sociability can also have negative outcomes, especially when endorses consensus and excessive tolerance for colleagues' poor performance.

Regarding solidarity, it is a measure of relatedness motivated by mutual interests and goals. It emerges when people share common interests and perceives the advantages of pursuing them collectively (Goffee & Jones, 1998). Even if solidarity is generally positive for organizations and individuals, high solidarity may have negative effects. An excessive endorsement of collective goals and a disproportionate focus on winning (above all other values) can promote extreme competition between group members and ruthless relationships, ultimately affecting performance (Goffee & Jones, 1998).

According to Goffee & Jones (1998), the separate dimensions of sociability and solidarity can combine, outlining four organizational cultures: communal, networked, fragmented, and mercenary. A communal culture results from the combination of high sociability and high solidarity. This culture type brings together friendship and commitment with energy and focus. The end result is a working environment where individuals share a strong sense of belonging and accomplishment of business goals. This positive combination is often difficult to get and sustain—especially when conflict arises. A dysfunctional communal culture may take place when personal interests dominate over collective ones, distracting the organization from its competitive goals (negative sociability), or when personal concerns are excluded from the workplace, turning relationships into power instruments (negative solidarity).

A networked culture combines high sociability with low solidarity. The end result is a working environment characterized by informality, loyalty, close and friendly relationships, and above all, commitment to the group. This positive combination can lead to a dysfunctional form. This emerges when individuals show persistent disagreements about company mission and goals, reveal an excessive tolerance for poor performance, undue concern for the means instead of the targets, and apply rewards

based on connections instead of performance. It is most likely to occur when people become more committed to protect self-interests than company well-being and a highly political and manipulative work environment evolves.

A fragmented culture combines low sociability and low solidarity. The end result is a working environment where people are not particularly friendly, but work hard toward individual goals. A positive fragmented organizational culture shows high tolerance for distinctive behaviours and individual freedom, because in these organizations success depends on great ideas, and not so much on common goals or strong relationship ties. On the negative side, these organizations can often cultivate an excessive criticism, which defies any collective goal and undermines performance.

A mercenary culture results from the combination of low sociability and high solidarity. This combination results into a working environment full of energy, intensity, and drive for making things happen. In such a context, low sociability inhibits networks and politicking, while high solidarity boosts shared goals attainment. However, this positive combination can turn dysfunctional, when an obsessive drive for measured outcomes often at the expenses of personal concerns emerge, thus leading to a ruthless and heartless working environment.

There is little empirical evidence of the influence of organizational culture on withdrawal intentions, and turnover, particularly among international employees. To the extent that international employees are particularly exposed to substantial cultural, social and professional challenges, organizational culture is likely to influence their expectations about the assignment, their satisfaction, and ultimately, their intentions to leave the assignment prematurely. However, it remains unclear which of the two – home and host organizational cultures – is most influential in that process. Therefore,

this research examines the impact of home and host organizational cultures, as perceived by international employees, on their intentions to withdraw.

2.2. *Withdrawal Intentions*

Turnover intentions refer to the self-perception that the individual will be leaving the current employer in the near future (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982). Turnover intentions make part of the withdrawal cognition process that includes thoughts of quitting, intentions to search for employment alternatives, and intentions to quit (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand & Meglino, 1979). The relationship between turnover intention and real turnover has been explored, showing that turnover intention is a strong predictor of actual turnover (Griffeth, et al., 2000). Moreover, turnover intention is also a significant (and negative) predictor of performance orientation, organizational deviance and organizational citizenship behaviours (Krishnan & Singh, 2010). Being easier to measure than real turnover, turnover intention has been extensively used as a proxy for turnover itself.

In the expatriation literature, some studies have shown that several factors affect international employees' turnover intentions and withdrawal cognitions (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001; Bhaskar-Shrinivas, et al., 2005; Vidal, Sanz Valle & Aragon, 2007). The research evidence available suggests that turnover among expatriates and repatriates has different antecedents. For instance, Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. (2005) showed that adjustment and job satisfaction are significant antecedents of withdrawal cognitions among expatriates; while Lazarova and Caligiuri (2001) found a negative relationship between the perception of repatriation support by the organization and repatriates' turnover intentions. And Vidal et al. (2007) using a sample of 81 Spanish repatriated managers found that turnover intentions are determined by repatriates'

satisfaction, that is enhanced by accurate work expectations, a promotion and a suitable job upon return. Overall, prior research has shown that expatriation attrition is largely influenced by expatriation adjustment, while turnover among repatriates is mostly determined by the lack of appropriate job alternatives.

Despite these contributions, the relationship between organizational culture and international employees' withdrawal intentions remains largely unexplored. Some indirect evidence comes from studies with domestic employees (Carmeli, 2005). This research involved the participation of 168 social workers from Israel health institutions, and the use of Zeitz, Johanneson & Ritchie (1997) organizational culture index. To describe withdrawal intentions, three distinct dimensions were considered: (1) job withdrawal intentions; (2) organization withdrawal intentions; and (3) occupation withdrawal intentions. Withdrawal intentions from the job were defined as the individual's judgement that he, or she, will be leaving the current job in the near future, though remaining in the same organization. Organization withdrawal intentions reflected the individual's intention to leave the employing company in the near future; and occupation withdrawal intentions referred to the individuals' intentions to leave their current career (Carmeli, 2005). Results indicated that job challenge, one of the organizational culture dimensions was the strongest predictor of all three dimensions of withdrawal intentions; and personal and organizational variables were not significant predictors. These results suggest that the highest the job challenge dimension of organizational culture, the lowest the intentions to withdraw from the job, the organization and the occupation.

Based on these results, one may hypothesize an association between home and host organizational culture and international employees' withdrawal intentions.

According to Goffee & Jones (1998) organizational culture framework, if solidarity constitutes a measure of shared business goals, one would expect an organizational culture high in solidarity to be negatively related with withdrawal intentions. As solidarity fosters a competitive and challenging work environment, is more likely to boost the attainment of the assignment goals and reduce withdrawal intentions. In that case, a home and host organizational culture high in solidarity would be negatively related with international employees' withdrawal intentions, as indicated in hypotheses H1 and H2:

H1: A home organizational culture high in solidarity is negatively associated with international employees' withdrawal intentions from: (a) the assignment; (b) the organization, and (c) the occupation.

H2: A host organizational culture high in solidarity is negatively associated with international employees' withdrawal intentions from: (a) the assignment; (b) the organization, and (c) the occupation.

2.3. General Satisfaction

The relationship between satisfaction and turnover intentions has been extensively explored and recent meta-analyses show that job satisfaction and turnover intentions are inversely related (Holtom et al., 2008; Griffeth et al., 2000). Thus, the more satisfied employees are with their job, the less likely they are to search for another job and eventually quit. Inversely, job dissatisfaction does not lead to voluntarily turnover, according to Wheeler, Gallagher, Brouer & Sablinski (2007). The authors proposed a model of multidimensional fit that included other explanations of how individuals behave in face of misfit with the organization. For instance, they tested the mediating role of job mobility in the relationship between job dissatisfaction and turnover

intentions and found that perceived alternative job opportunities mediate this relationship. Individuals mis-fitted in the organization, and therefore dissatisfied, will only leave their employing company, if alternative job opportunities exist (Wheeler et al., 2007). Similarly, Stahl, Chua, Caligiuri, Cerdin & Taniguchi (2009) found dissatisfaction to be unrelated with turnover intentions among international employees. In this research, they found higher turnover intentions among expatriates assigned for developmental purposes (*developmental assignees*) than among expatriates assigned to fulfil task-related goals (*functional assignees*), though all revealed low satisfaction with company support. The authors argued that the differences on turnover intentions between the two groups of assignees are better explained by the perception of alternative job career opportunities outside the company, than by dissatisfaction with company support.

Despite these contributions, the whole picture regarding the relationship between satisfaction and turnover among international employees remains unclear. As early studies found a negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover among expatriates and repatriates (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001; Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Vidal et al., 2007), one may expect a similar negative relationship between general assignment satisfaction and withdrawal intentions, as stated in hypothesis H3.

H3: General assignment satisfaction is negatively associated with intentions to withdraw from: (a) the assignment; (b) the organization, and (c) the occupation, among international employees.

In addition, individuals can be more or less satisfied with the assignment, depending on organizational variables affecting the attainment of assignment goals. Hence, a results oriented organizational culture (i.e. high in solidarity) may influence

positively general assignment satisfaction and, thereafter, international employees withdrawal intentions. Therefore, one can assume general assignment satisfaction to be a mediator in the relationship between home and host organizational culture solidarity and withdrawal intentions, as hypothesized in hypotheses H4 and H5.

H4: General assignment satisfaction is a mediating variable for the relation between home organizational culture solidarity and intentions to withdraw from: (a) the assignment; (b) the organization, and (c) the occupation, among international employees.

H5: General assignment satisfaction is a mediating variable for the relation between host organizational culture solidarity and intentions to withdraw from: (a) the assignment; (b) the organization, and (c) the occupation, among international employees.

2.4. Control variables

Several demographic variables that were found to influence turnover and withdrawal cognitions were considered in this study, such as age, gender, marital status, education, tenure in the assignment, and previous cross-cultural training (Holtom et al., 2008; Griffeth et al., 2000).

Figure 1 presents the theoretical model and the hypothesized relationships between the dimensions of organizational culture and withdrawal intentions.

Insert Figure 1 about here

3. Research methodology

3.1. Procedure and participants

This study examined the influence of organizational culture, herein measured by the combination of two separate dimensions - sociability and solidarity - on withdrawal intentions among international employees. A sample of 221 international employees from 13 multinationals participated in this study. Three multinationals were based in the U.S., six in Europe, one in South America, and three in Asia. The companies represented a variety of industries, including automotive, pharmaceuticals, electronics, telecommunications, and the service sector. The sample size and the broad representation of industries, countries of origin and destination may allow for some level of generalizability of results.

Data were collected through a web survey, piloted tested with a smaller sample. The questionnaire was written in English, which was the business language of all potential respondents. Requests for participation in the questionnaire survey were made to the HR manager in charge of international employees in each company, who forwarded the web link to the respondents. This participation request was directed to individuals recently returned from an international assignment (repatriates) and individuals still assigned (expatriates). The inclusion of expatriates and repatriates in the sample make it possible to assess the influence of home and destination organizational cultures. Overall, 445 international employees were contacted and 221 respondents participated, which represents a response rate of 49.7%. This response rate is similar to the one achieved in other surveys with international employees (Black, 1992; Gregersen and Stroh, 1997; Shaffer, Harrison & Gilley, 1999). Table 1 summarizes sample characteristics.

Insert Table 1 about here

In this sample, 166 individuals were expatriates, and 55 were repatriates who have returned to the employing company within the last 18 months. This timeframe is considered reasonable, to keep memories of the last assignment.

Of the respondents, 74% were male ($n = 164$), and 26% were female ($n = 57$). The average age was 40.37 years, ranging from 20 to 68 years old. Most respondents had at least a bachelor's degree ($n = 202$) and only 8.6% ($n = 19$) had no higher professional education. The majority ($n = 64$) worked as middle manager or senior manager ($n = 71$), and has been working on their current position, on average, for more than 2.55 years. Respondents were from 29 nationalities and were assigned to 39 different countries. Expatriates from the US and India represented 21% and 12% of the sample and no other birth country exceeded 10% of the respondents. Regarding destinations, China and U.S. represented the main destination countries, representing about 14% and 13% of all cases. No other host country represented more than 10% of the overall number of cases. Similarly, responses distributed evenly by all participating companies, and no significant differences were found for the research variables, based on company provenience. In general, the sample demographics are similar to what has been reported in other cross-cultural studies (Gregersen & Stroh, 1997; Selmer & Leung, 2003; Stahl & Cerdin, 2004).

3.2. Measures

A survey instrument was designed to collect information on the dependent and independent variables. The questionnaire was structured in four sections. The first section assessed the perceived home and destination organizational culture, according to Goffee & Jones (1998) framework. Respondents were asked to indicate on a 1-to-5 Likert scale, their level of agreement with 23 descriptive statements of individuals' behaviour at home and host companies. Sample items were: *"At Home/Host company, people know business objectives clearly"*, or *"At Home/Host company, people often socialize outside of work"*.

A second section of the questionnaire adapted Bonache's (2005) scale of job satisfaction to assess individuals' general assignment satisfaction. Five items compose general assignment satisfaction, such as: *"I am satisfied with my present/last assignment"* or *"My overall satisfaction with the present/last assignment is excellent"*. To reply, respondents were provided with a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree.

The third section used Carmeli (2005) procedure to measure withdrawal intentions, notably withdrawal intentions from the present assignment, the organization, and the occupation. Three items composed each variable and responses were made on a five-point Likert scale, from: (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Sample items used were: *"I think a lot of leaving the present assignment/organization/occupation"*, *"As soon as it is possible, I will leave the present assignment/organization/occupation"*, and *"I am actively searching for an alternative to the present assignment/organization/occupation"*.

Demographic variables were included as control variables, such as age, gender, marital status, education, tenure in the assignment, pre-assignment cross-cultural training, present position and type of assignment (e.g. expatriate versus repatriate). Tenure in the assignment was computed in years, and pre-assignment cross-cultural training was enquired in terms of “yes” or “no”. All statistical analyses were carried out using the SPSS statistical computer package.

3.3. Data analysis

A three-step procedure was adopted in the analysis. Firstly, responses to the items measuring organizational culture, general satisfaction, and withdrawal intentions were factor analyzed, and factor scores obtained were used for subsequent data analysis. Secondly, correlations between research variables of the study were computed. Finally, stepwise regression analyses were conducted to test the hypotheses and assess the extent to which withdrawal intentions can be predicted by home and host organizational culture.

The Baron and Kenny (1986) procedure was used to test whether general assignment satisfaction mediates the relationship between the dimensions of organizational culture and withdrawal intentions. In this case, three sets of regressions were conducted separately for the three dependent variables. In step one of the procedure (Baron and Kenny, 1986), the mediator - general assignment satisfaction - was regressed on the independent variables: home and host organizational culture dimensions. The regression weights for home and host solidarity are expected to be significant, if, as expected solidarity affects the mediator.

In step two of the procedure, the dependent variables – withdrawal intentions – were regressed on the independent variables - home and host organizational culture

dimensions. If, as expected, organizational culture predicts withdrawal intentions, then a significant beta weight is expected for home and host solidarity dimensions.

In step three of the procedure, the dependent variables were regressed on both the independent and on the mediator. If the mediating condition holds true, according to Baron and Kenny (1986), the effects of home and host solidarity on withdrawal intentions are expected to be less in this third step, when compared to step two. Hence, the beta weights for home and host solidarity are expected to be lower, in this third step.

In all regression equations, control variables, such as age, gender, marital status, education, tenure in the assignment and previous cross-cultural training, were entered into the first step of the regression, while the main predictors entered into the second step.

3.4. Common Method Bias

To mitigate the risk of common method bias, because data come from the same source, several actions were taken, such as: using different response formats; pilot-testing the questionnaire and providing instructions there were no right or wrong answers. Besides, all measures were factor analyzed to investigate whether a compressed range of answers emerged, due to a social desirability effect. The interpretation was based on factors with eigenvalues greater than one and items with a loading of more than 0.5. Since the factor analyses confirmed the underlying constructs and the independence of variables, the theoretical integrity of the research model was assumed.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics

Factor analyses of the perceived organizational culture, general satisfaction and withdrawal intentions were performed. Regarding organizational culture, two factors were extracted that can readily be interpreted in terms of the original concepts of sociability and solidarity (Goffee & Jones, 1998). Four items were removed from the scales, because they showed consistently poor results. Therefore, nine items were included in the sociability factor and ten items in the solidarity factor, with factor loadings above 0.5. The two factors explained 43.61% of the total variance for home organizational culture and 44.53% of the variance for host organizational culture. Finally, alpha coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) computed to assess the internal consistency, ranged from 0.807 to 0.844.

For general assignment satisfaction, a single five-item factor was extracted, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.931, explaining 79% of the variance. This result confirms the theoretical integrity of this variable and supports its use.

Regarding withdrawal intentions, three factors with eigenvalues greater than one emerged from a principal components factor analysis, using an Oblimin procedure; and accounted for 84.86% of the variance. This result is consistent with previous reported data from Carmeli (2005). These factors can be labelled as withdrawal intentions from the organization (factor 1), withdrawal intentions from the assignment (factor 2), and withdrawal intentions from the occupation (factor 3). The scales internal consistencies computed by Cronbach's alpha coefficients were high, ranging from 0.858 to 0.945, which supports the use of these measures.

Table 2 indicates sample means, standard deviations and zero-order correlations for the main research variables.

Insert Table 2 about here

To determine whether mean score differences for the research variables varied with the type of assignment (e.g. expatriate versus repatriate), a series of t-tests were computed. Although the repatriate group scored low in age and education, and high on general assignment satisfaction, and withdrawal intentions, these differences were not statistically significant. Therefore, these results support the decision to continue the analyses with the entire sample of 221 international employees.

4.2. Hypotheses testing

Moderate to strong correlations were found between measures of organizational culture, general assignment satisfaction and withdrawal intentions. Correlation analyses provide preliminary support for hypotheses H1 and H2, as home and host solidarity are negatively and significantly correlated with all dimensions of withdrawal intentions. Also, general assignment satisfaction is negatively and significantly correlated with assignment withdrawal intentions ($r = -0.516$; $p < 0.01$), organization withdrawal intentions ($r = -0.439$; $p < 0.01$), and occupation withdrawal intentions ($r = -0.299$; $p < 0.01$), which support hypothesis H3.

Regression analyses were conducted to examine which organizational culture dimensions explain the most variance in withdrawal intentions (see Table 3, model 1); and test the mediating effect of general assignment satisfaction, following Baron and

Kenny (1986) procedure. The analyses were controlled for age, gender, marital status, education, tenure in the assignment and cross-cultural training. The main results are presented in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

Hypotheses 1 and 2 predicted negative associations between home and host solidarity and international employees' withdrawal intentions. The results indicate (see Table 3, model 1) that home solidarity is a significant predictor of organizational ($\beta = -0.178, p < .05$) and occupation withdrawal intentions ($\beta = -0.277, p < .001$); while host solidarity predicts assignment withdrawal intentions ($\beta = -0.296, p < .001$) and also organization withdrawal intentions ($\beta = -0.175, p < .05$). Overall, these results support hypotheses H1b)c) and H2a)b). The regression models explain 10.9% of the variance of assignment withdrawal intentions, 9.6% of the variance of organizational withdrawal intentions and 7.2% of occupational withdrawal intentions. These results confirm that organizational culture, notably the solidarity facet; affect all three dimensions of withdrawal intentions,

In a second analysis, the mediating condition was examined, since correlation results confirmed general assignment satisfaction was significantly and positively correlated with all dimensions of withdrawal intentions, thus supporting H3. Following Baron and Kenny (1986) three steps procedure, general assignment satisfaction was regressed on organizational culture dimensions (see Table 3, first column); second, withdrawal intentions were regressed on organizational culture dimensions (see Table 3,

model 1); and third, withdrawal intentions were regressed on the main predictors and the mediator (see Table 3, model 2). From a theoretical perspective, this procedure indicates whether: (1) organizational culture dimensions affect general assignment satisfaction; (2) organizational culture dimensions affect withdrawal intentions; and (3) general assignment satisfaction affects withdrawal intentions. If the mediation condition holds in the predicted direction, then the effect of organizational culture dimensions on withdrawal intentions is expected to be less, when satisfaction with the assignment enters the equation (Table 3, model 2), than when organizational culture is tested alone (Table 3, model 1).

As shown in Table 3, general assignment satisfaction is predicted by host sociability ($\beta = 0.206, p < .01$) and host solidarity ($\beta = 0.308, p < .001$). These dimensions altogether explain 17.8% of the variance of general assignment satisfaction. Regarding home culture influence, general assignment satisfaction is not predicted by any of the two dimensions. Apparently, home organizational culture has no influence on international employees' satisfaction with the assignment; while a destination culture high in sociability and solidarity (e.g. *communal*) is positively associated with assignment satisfaction. Furthermore, general assignment satisfaction predicts withdrawal intentions. Contrary to expectations, when withdrawal intentions are regressed on the independent variables (organizational culture) and the mediator (general satisfaction), the variance explained by the regression models increase (Table 3, model 2 vs. model 1).

In the case of withdrawal intentions from the assignment, host solidarity explains 10.9% of the variance, thus supporting H2. However, when general assignment satisfaction enters the equation, host solidarity has no effect, thus supporting H5a),

while home solidarity emerges as a negative and significant predictor, which does not support hypothesis H4a). Altogether, this second model explains 28.8% of the variance of assignment withdrawal intentions ($\text{Adj. } R^2 = 0.288$; $F = 30.661$; $p < .001$).

Regarding withdrawal intentions from the organization, home and host solidarity are significant predictors in model 1, explaining 9.6% of the variance of organization withdrawal intentions ($\text{Adj. } R^2 = 0.096$; $F = 8.802$; $p < .001$), thus supporting H1b) and H2b). However, when general assignment satisfaction enters the equation, in model 2, only home solidarity remains as a significant negative predictor, thus supporting H5b) but not H4b). Altogether, this second model explains 23.6% of the variance of organization withdrawal intentions ($\text{Adj. } R^2 = 0.236$; $F = 23.678$; $p < .001$).

Regarding occupation withdrawal intentions, home solidarity is a significant negative predictor in both models, though the variance explained is higher in model 2. In this case, home sociability also emerges as a positive significant predictor, which does not support hypotheses H4c), but supports H5c). Altogether, this second model explains 15.7% of the variance of occupation withdrawal intentions ($\text{Adj. } R^2 = 0.157$; $F = 14.625$; $p < .001$).

The inclusion of satisfaction produced two distinct effects. Firstly, it reduced the magnitude of the relationship between host solidarity and assignment and organizational withdrawal intentions, as predicted; and second, it increased the magnitude of the relationship between home solidarity and all three dimensions of withdrawal intentions. The traditional approach to test mediation proposed by Baron & Kenny (1986) assumes that the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable, initially significant, turns non-significant when the mediator is entered. In this case, results show that the inclusion of general assignment satisfaction reduced the magnitude of the

relationship between host solidarity and withdrawal intentions, and increase the magnitude of the relationship between home solidarity and withdrawal intentions. These results indicate that general assignment satisfaction only partially mediate these relationships.

To explore the nature of these relationships further, additional analyses were performed. To determine whether mean scores for the dependent variables (withdrawal intentions) varied according to home and destination culture types; several one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) were run, according to each organizational culture type (e.g. networked, communal, fragmented and mercenary). To determine each culture type, the Goffee and Jones (1998) procedure was followed, which combines ratings for solidarity and sociability. Several statistically significant mean differences were found for the dependent variables, as shown in figure 2.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Consistent with regression results, Figure 2 shows that satisfaction and withdrawal intentions among international employees differ with home and destination culture types. For instance, a home and destination fragmented culture endorse lower levels of satisfaction and higher withdrawal intentions, among international employees; while a home and host communal culture is positively associated with general satisfaction and negatively related with all three measures of withdrawal intentions. Interestingly, a networked home culture is positively related with general assignment

satisfaction, but is also positively related with all three dimensions of withdrawal intentions.

5. Discussion and conclusions

This study attempted to fill a gap in the literature by examining the extent to which organizational culture influences withdrawal intentions, considered a proxy of actual turnover among international employees. Home and host organizational culture dimensions are both relevant and have a distinct influence on withdrawal intentions. Making this distinction is appropriate because results indicate that the perceptions individuals hold about home solidarity and host solidarity are more significant to their intentions to remain or withdraw from the assignment and the organization than other cultural dimensions. Furthermore, host organizational culture determines general assignment satisfaction, as an organizational culture high in sociability and solidarity (e.g. *communal*) predicts general satisfaction with the assignment among international employees.

Altogether, these results corroborate the importance of exploring organizational culture in studying the international context. Home and destination organizational cultures affect international employees' satisfaction with the assignment, and their intentions to remain or leave the assignment, the organization and ultimately their occupation. Host solidarity is fundamental to predict international employees' assignment withdrawal intentions and withdrawal intentions from the organization. Apparently, a high focus on shared and common business goals at destination is critical to decrease assignment and organization withdrawal intentions. These findings are consistent with Carmeli's (2005) results with domestic employees and support the predictions of Goffee & Jones' (1998) model. However, international employees'

satisfaction with the assignment mediates this relationship, and this mediating effect depends on the organizational culture type. In a communal organizational culture (high in sociability and solidarity) at home and at destination, satisfaction decreases withdrawal intentions, while in a home networked environment (high in sociability but low in solidarity), satisfaction fosters withdrawal intentions.

Interesting to the interpretation of these findings is the role played by sociability. As pointed out by Goffee & Jones (1998), sociability can have a double-edge sword effect in an organizational context: it can foster social interactions and reciprocal relationships that are positive and satisfactory for many employees; but it can also lead to unofficial networks or unofficial rules that generate personal compromises at the expenses of the attainment of business goals. Hence, a home networked organizational culture (high in sociability and low in solidarity), promotes satisfaction among international employees by increasing their sense of belongingness to the network, but a host networked culture potentially decreases international employees satisfaction, as it is likely to increase their sense of foreignness at destination. Overall, a home and host networked culture increase withdrawal intentions; since individuals' capacity to influence organizational processes or decisions are more dependent on relationships than performance. Inversely, a home and host communal organizational culture, by combining high sociability with high solidarity, would balance sociability with a collective drive for results, beneficial to both individuals' satisfaction and organisational intent to reduce voluntary turnover.

The contributions of this study are threefold. The first refers to the exploration of the work-related outcomes of organizational culture in the international context. The findings confirm that the solidarity cultural dimension is a significant predictor of

general assignment satisfaction and withdrawal intentions, among international employees.

The second contribution refers to the distinct influence of home and host organizational cultures. While home and host fragmented organizational cultures (low in sociability and solidarity) are detrimental, thus lowering satisfaction, and increasing withdrawal intentions, the effects of a networked culture depends on whether it refers to the home or destination company. In any case, a networked organizational culture boosts international employees' withdrawal intentions, and ultimately turnover, despite the fact that a home networked organizational culture increases satisfaction. Inversely, home and host communal cultures shape satisfaction and diminish withdrawal intentions, which underpin the importance of the solidarity dimension and the mediating role of satisfaction. These findings diverge from the argument of Goffee & Jones (1998) that no single organizational culture is better or worse; and add to the debate on organizational culture' influence and the need to further explore these differences. In future, greater attention needs to be directed toward the antecedents and outcomes of organizational culture in the international context. An important starting point is to find out whether similar results can be obtained with other samples, distinguishing the influence of home and host organizational cultures on satisfaction and withdrawal intentions of expatriates, repatriates and domestic employees. The current study has not surveyed some common causes of withdrawal intentions among expatriates and repatriates, such as expatriation adjustment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005) and job opportunities (Pattie, White & Tansky, 2010). Future studies should address these issues in a systematic way to find out whether organizational culture shape individuals' interpretations of these issues.

The third contribution of this study relates with the empirical clarification of the antecedents of assignment, organization and occupation withdrawal intentions. The results are consistent with previous research (Carmeli & Weisberg, 2006; Blau, 2007), finding satisfaction to be an antecedent of withdrawal intentions and confirming the usefulness of this framework in the international context. An expatriate longing to withdraw from the assignment can still remain in the organization and continue the same career path. Another expatriate can plan to withdraw from the current employer, while planning to remain in the assignment, though in a distinct occupation. Future studies should explore this issue further, to distinguish what antecedents and outcomes are relevant to each withdrawal dimension. For example, Krishnan & Singh, (2010) has shown that performance orientation, organizational deviance and organizational citizenship are outcomes of intention to quit among domestic employees; so future research should investigate whether these outcomes vary on the dimension of withdrawal intentions and whether they apply to international employees.

In addition to these contributions to theory, this study has also practical implications for individuals and organizations. The results suggest that individuals are aware of the influence of home and host destination companies, and are responsive to the solidarity dimension of organizational culture. Although satisfaction with the assignment partially mediates the influence of organizational culture on withdrawal intentions, the findings reveal the importance of collective interests and goals to drive relatedness. Therefore, before accepting an international assignment, individuals do well to consider what are the expected goals and how collectively shared they are, between home and destination companies. Likewise, before introducing organizational practices designed to reduce turnover among international employees, IHRM do well to consider

what target of intervention is the most adequate. Since the solidarity organizational culture dimension is likely to benefit or reduce withdrawal intentions to the greatest extent, and international employees are more likely to remain (in the assignment, in the employing company and in their selected career) when solidarity is high (and salient), actions intended to endorse collective goals, should be a primary focus of intervention. Although cultural changes are difficult and lengthy to achieve, HR professionals can contribute to increase satisfaction with the assignment and decrease withdrawal intentions among international employees by granting assignments a clear and collective sense of purpose and accomplishment.

This study has also some limitations that affect the interpretation of the findings. The approach adopted – a cross-sectional design – is often used to examine unexplored relationships, but cannot be employed to ascertain a one-way influence. Besides, results are limited by the use of self-reported data, which could be under the influence of common method variance. Although precautions were taken to prevent it, the risk of a social desirability bias remains. Finally, satisfaction and withdrawal intentions develop over time and the method employed to collect data only captured them at a certain moment. Therefore, collecting data from multiple levels (withdrawal intentions versus actual turnover), and at different moments (following a longitudinal approach), should be considered in the future to explore these relationships further. Besides these developments, future research on turnover among international employees may progress following Holtom et al. (2008) suggestions to explore international differences, capture the influence of social ties, and determine how (unmet) expectations affect withdrawal intentions, turnover decisions, and turnover intention outcomes.

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FIGURE 1

Theoretical Model and Hypotheses

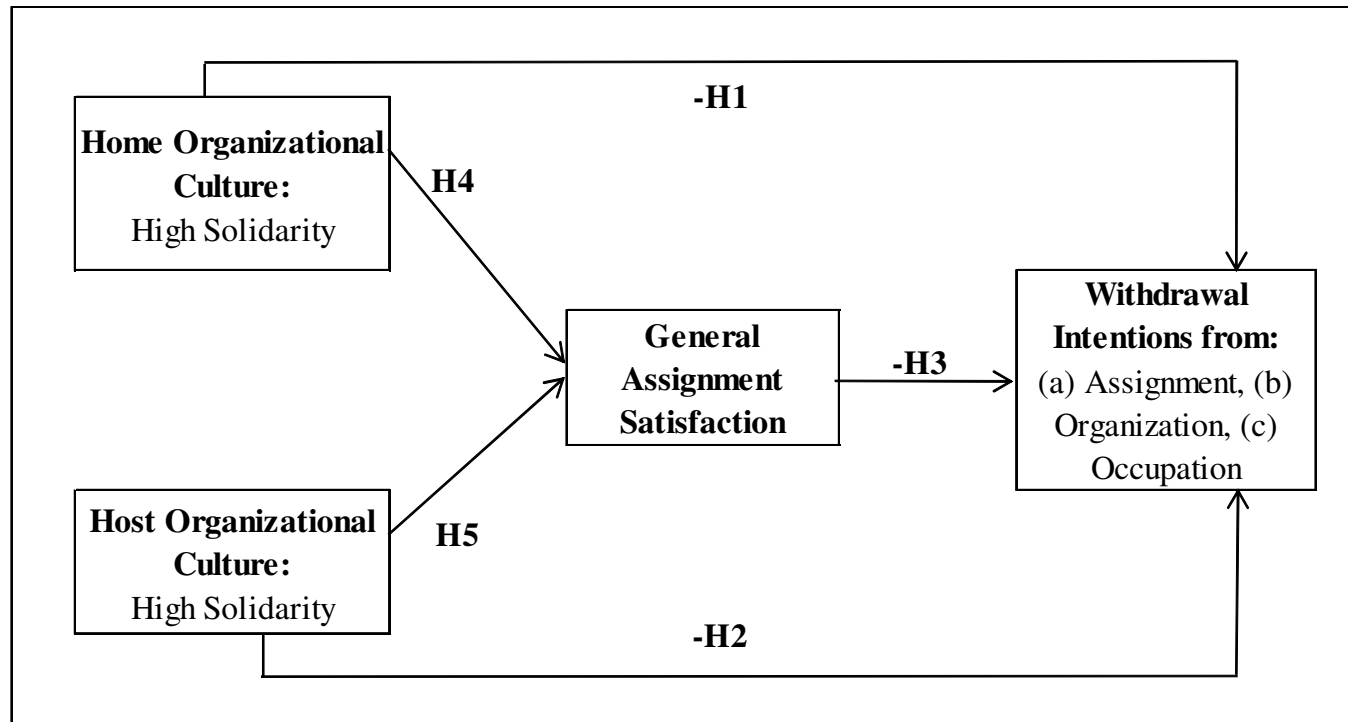


FIGURE 2

Differences in general assignment satisfaction and withdrawal cognitions,
according to home and destination organizational culture.

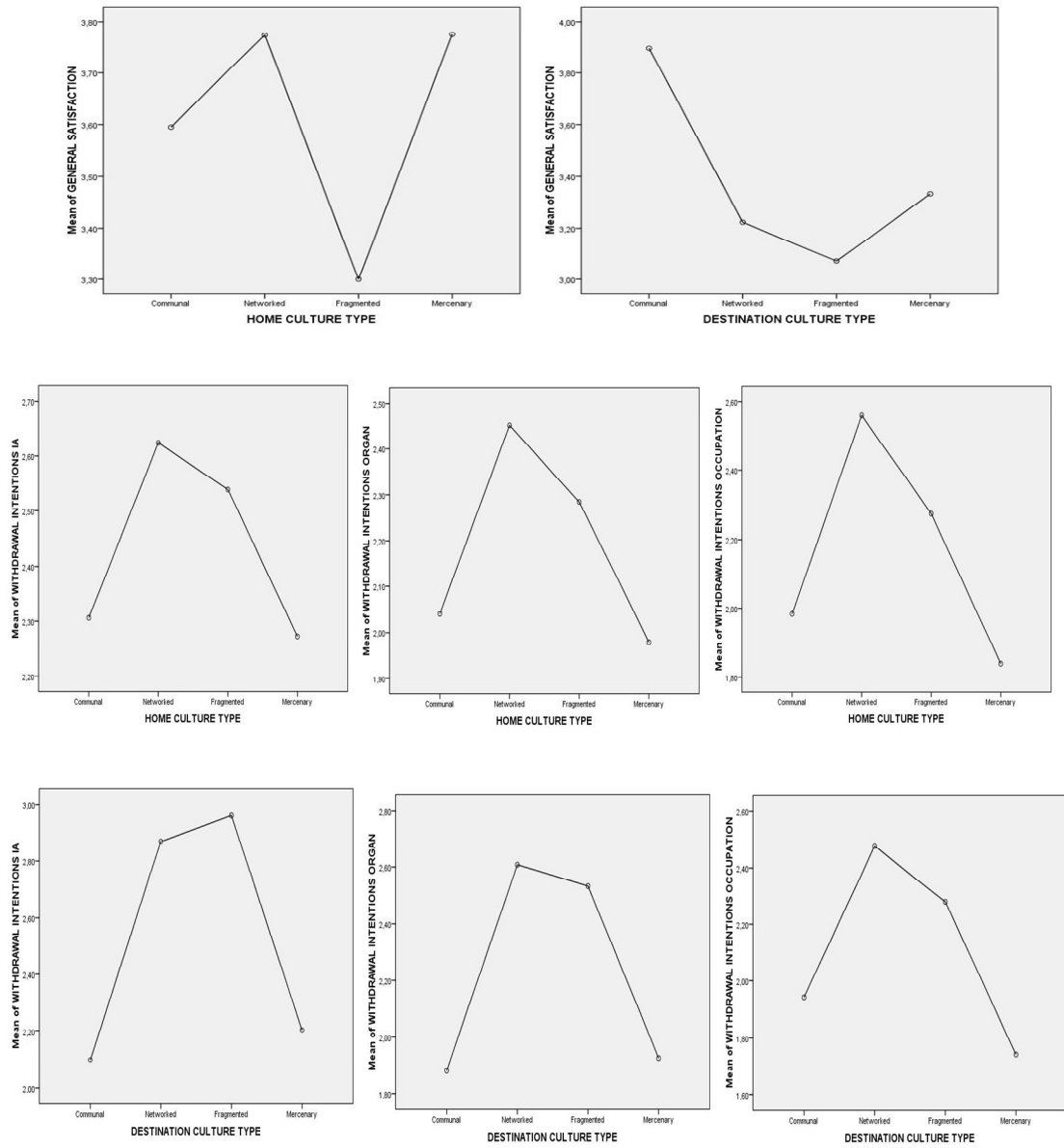


TABLE 1

Sample Demographics

Sample Descriptives	N	%	Mean	s.d.
Age	197		40.37	9.97
Gender				
Male	164	74%		
Female	57	26%		
Marital Status				
Single	41	19%		
Married	135	61%		
Living with a partner	23	10%		
Other	22	10%		
Education Level				
Less than high school	2	1%		
High school graduate	11	5%		
Some college, undergraduate	6	3%		
College graduate	64	29%		
Some post graduate	29	13%		
Post graduate	101	46%		
Present Position				
Professional & Technicals	58	26%		
Junior Management	18	8%		
Line & Middle Management	56	25%		
Senior Management	36	16%		
Top management	13	6%		
Other	40	18%		
Tenure in the assignment	91		2.55	3.00
Home Country (top 5 origins)				
US	48	22%		
India	27	12%		
UK	22	10%		
Germany	14	6%		
Canada	9	4%		
Host Country (top 5 destinations)				
China	30	14%		
US	28	13%		
Switzerland	20	9%		
Norway	16	7%		
Korea	13	6%		
Type of Assignment				
Expatriate	166	75%		
Repatriate	55	25%		

TABLE 2

Intercorrelation matrix

Variable	N	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Age	197	40.37	9.97														
2. Gender	221	1.26	.44	-.164*													
3. Marital Status	214	2.06	.78	.235**	.022												
4. Education	213	4.92	1.23	.173*	.045	0.075											
5. Tenure in the assignment	91	2.56	3.00	.411**	-0.083	.211*	0.104										
6. Training	214	1.32	.47	-.011	-.055	-.019	-.006	-0.07									
7. Home Sociability	221	28.87	5.98	-.198**	.075	-.058	-.046	-.246*	0.01								
8. Home Solidarity	221	32.90	6.53	-.021	-.015	-.028	.051	-0.036	0.069	.473**							
9. Host Sociability	221	27.10	6.54	-.026	.018	-.162*	.061	-0.068	0.047	0.109	.213**						
10. Host Solidarity	221	31.39	7.21	-.095	-.042	-.176**	-.056	-0.148	.142*	.207**	.365**	.378**					
11. General Satisfaction	221	3.60	.96	.057	-.005	-.077	-.009	0.002	0.124	0.066	0.089	.322**	.386**				
12. Assignment Withdrawal	221	2.38	1.19	-.095	.069	-.004	-.027	0.047	-.181**	-0.019	-.186**	-.176**	-.315**	-.516**			
13. Organization Withdrawal	221	2.13	1.23	-.032	.054	-.023	-.018	-0.016	-.163*	-0.032	-.250**	-.154*	-.257**	-.439**	.754**		
14. Occupation Withdrawal	221	2.09	1.16	-.130	.074	-.067	-.086	-0.165	-0.077	-0.026	-.277**	-0.08	-.202**	-.299**	.676**	.779**	

Notes: ** $p < .01$ level; * $p < .05$

TABLE 3

Hierarchical Regression Models of Organizational Culture and Withdrawal Intentions

Variables	General Assignment Satisfaction β	Assignment withdrawal intentions β		Organizational withdrawal intentions β		Occupation withdrawal intentions β	
		Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
<i>Demographics</i>							
Age							
Gender							
Marital Status							
Education							
Tenure in the Assignment							
Cross-Cultural Training		-0.135*	-0.108	-0.121	-0.095		
<i>Mediator</i>							
General Satisfaction		-	-0.491***	-	-0.410***	-	-0.280***
<i>Main Predictors</i>							
Home Sociability							0.144*
Home Solidarity			-0.134*	-0.178*	-0.207***	-0.277***	-0.320***
Host Sociability	0.206**						
Host Solidarity	0.308***	-0.296***		-0.175*			
<i>Regression Model</i>							
<i>Explained Variance R^2</i>	18.5%	11.7%	29.8%	10.8%	24.7%	7.7%	16.8%
<i>Overall R2 (adjusted)</i>	17.8%	10.9%	28.8%	9.6%	23.6%	7.2%	15.7%
<i>F</i>	24.801***	14.411***	30.661***	8.802***	23.678***	18.143***	14.625***

Notes: ***: $p < 0.001$; **: $p < 0.01$; *: $p < 0.05$; $n = 221$. Model 1: stepwise regression analysis with the dependent variables regressed on the independent variables (organizational culture dimensions); Model 2: stepwise regression analysis with the dependent variables regressed on the independent variables and on the mediator. Values are standardized regression coefficients (β) of the final model, with significance of t , except for the regression model, where rows represent explained variance (R) and F values.