Cross-cultural non-work transition stresses: domestic transferees in Indonesia

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to address this gap in the literature by examining a cohort of Indonesians employed within a financial organisation and the cross-cultural transition stresses that they and their families encountered when relocated within Indonesia.

Design/methodology/approach – The research involved semi-structured interviews conducted with managers in a financial institution in Indonesia. In specifically referring to non-work issues, the paper explores the support given by the transferees' organisation, the difficulties experienced by the employees and their families.

Findings – The major finding was that managers believe that the organisation provides them with insufficient support to deal with the cross-cultural transition stresses that result from their domestic relocations.

Practical implications – The paper provides suggestions for HR and senior managers to more effectively address non-work needs of domestic transferees.

Originality/value – While expatriate management literature has devoted considerable attention to cross-cultural transition stresses encountered when transiting across international borders to undertake international assignments, a smaller body of literature has examined the transition stresses experienced by domestic employees and their families when relocating jobs within nations. An issue erstwhile given much less consideration within the literature, however, is the cross-cultural transition stresses experienced by employees and their families who are relocated within nations that have substantive regional cultural differences. Thus, this research adds value to the existing literature in undertaking an assessment of cross-cultural transition stresses in domestic relocation.

Keywords Cross-cultural studies, Transition management, Indonesia

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

During the past three decades there has been a substantive growth in the number of organisations that have transferred their employees across international borders and within nations. Growth in international trade, rapid advances in information technology and communication, distribution, and manufacturing technology, have contributed to increasing numbers of organisations deciding to expand their operations internationally and resulted in unprecedented numbers of employees being expatriated (De Cieri *et al.*, 2001; Hutchings, 2003; Rothwell *et al.*, 1998). It has been suggested that by 2008, as many as 1,000 US companies will have relocated their entire corporate headquarters due to mergers and acquisitions, and to take advantage of tax incentives, access to raw materials, lower labour costs, cutting-edge research facilities, and lower living costs and better quality of life in new locations (Feldman and Bolino, 1998; Mason cited in Stroh, 1999). Yet, there has also been substantive movement of corporate operations domestically as global competition necessitates that organisations restructure their operations, downsize, reorganise work and adopt

continuous improvement (Ostroff and Clark, 2001). Such concomitant movement of labour requires not only changes in the way that employees are managed (Schein, 1996) but intraorganisational mobility results in employees needing to move jobs, locations and sometimes even occupations and careers (Eby and Rusell, 2000; Hall, 1996; Ostroff and Clark, 2001) and is increasingly involving not only the largest multinational corporations but also smaller and recently internationalised organisations (Harzing, 1995).

In addition to enabling organisations to fill job positions with suitably qualified people, intraorganisational mobility can promote employee development, encourage knowledge sharing, match technology and employee skills, and avoid displacement of employees in times of corporate restructuring (McCall *et al.*, 1998; Saunders and Thornhill, 1998). Relocation can enable employees to develop experience in a range of situations (including exposure to new cultures) and present opportunities for career advancement (Saunders and Thornhill, 1998). However, geographic relocation can also create work challenges for the employee in adapting to new co-workers, subordinates and supervisors and different organisational norms and reporting relationships (Eby and DeMatteo, 2000) as well as posing a serious threat to non-work (social) satisfaction and happiness for the employee and his/her family as a consequence of disruption to community ties and networks and requisite changes in housing, education and lecture activities (Noe and Barber, 1993). Where there are also cultural differences to which the employee and/or family must adjust (as occurs in the case of international assignments), the transition stresses are greater, and even more so, note Kaye and Taylor (1997) where there are significant gaps between the home city/nation and the host city/nation.

Research has suggested that work transitions, and in particular, those that also involve a change in geographic location, can be a major source of stress for employees and their families (Martin, 1999). Despite this noted stress, that managerial-level and high tech employees may expect to be transferred every two-three years, and since the late 1970s researchers have been calling for organisations to provide more effective pre-departure, preparation, and training for sojourning and transferring employees and their families (Black *et al.*, 1991; Forster, 2000; Hogan and Goodson, 1990; Hutchings, 2002; Tung, 1987) the relocation support offered by organisations continues to extend little beyond financial assistance with moving and establishment costs.

In the last decade organisations have witnessed an increasing unwillingness of employees to take international assignments and domestic transfers, citing reasons including: dual career/family issues; perceived lack of promotion/recognition on return; housing and financial considerations; lifestyle issues; and expected socio-cultural adjustment issues (Dowling and Welch, 2004). Moreover, the increasing recognition by employees (and employers) of the need for work-life balance has also contributed to employees' reluctance to undertake job postings requiring geographic relocation (Noe and Barber, 1993). Given the considerable financial and psychological organisational and personal costs associated with relocation and the increasing reluctance of employees to geographically relocate for work, it is important that organisations recognise the problems employees and their families encounter in geographic job relocation and implement practices to minimise negative effects.

A substantive corpus of literature has noted both work and non-work relocation and cultural transition stresses that international sojourners have experienced (Bauer and Taylor, 2001; Black *et al.*, 1991; De Cieri *et al.*, 1991; Kraimer *et al.*, 2001) and the work and non-work relocation stresses of the domestic transferee (Brett, 1981; Dalton and Wimbush, 1998; Levi, 1994; Martin, 1999; Munton and West, 1985). Yet, despite the fact

that it has been suggested that the stressors facing international and domestic transferees should be similar (Fisher and Shaw, 1994), what has not been explored in detail are the cultural transition stresses that are experienced by domestic transferees who are relocated within the nations that evidence substantive regional cultural differences. This article seeks to address this gap in the literature in presenting the findings of research examining a cohort of domestically-transferred employees within an Indonesian financial organisation and the cross-cultural non-work transition stresses encountered by them and their families.

We begin the article with an exploration of the literature on international and domestic relocation and the transition stresses experienced by transferees and their families. This is followed by an overview of the methods utilised in the study of a financial institution in Indonesia which utilises employee transfer as an explicit aspect of its strategic human resource management. We then present the findings of the research and discuss the non-work (social) issues encountered by the transferred employees and their families and the support provided by the organisation. The article concludes with some suggestions for management for more effectively addressing the needs of transferees within the context of cross-cultural domestic transfer, and implications for theory and issues for future research.

Literature review

Research has suggested that work transitions can be a major source of stress for employees, resulting in physical and psychological consequences (Burke, 1988; Levi, 1994). Similarly, moving job or moving house can be stressful events, but when the two coincide (as they do in the case of geographic job relocation), very high levels of stress can be expected for both the employee and his/her family (Brett, 1981; Dalton and Wimbush, 1998; Martin, 1999). Indeed, studies of people in occupations necessitating high rates of transfer indicating a profile of stress symptoms characterised as mobility syndrome, and multiple moves have been associated with stress-related disease (Marshall and Cooper, 1979). Munton and West (1985) found that over 50 per cent of relocators reported high levels of stress up to six months following their move. It has been further argued that the employees that are geographically relocated either internationally or domestically experience varying degrees of culture shock that result from differences in work practices for the employees as well as non-work lifestyle changes, and cultural differences for the employees and their families (Moakler and Reinhart, 2003).

Accordingly, there is a growing resistance by employees to undertake both international and domestic relocation. The growing resistance of employees to international mobility has been attributed to several factors, including career uncertainty arising from home company restructuring during the employee's absence, and unwillingness to disrupt the career of one's partner or children's education (De Cieri et al., 2001). Similar reasons for a reluctance of employees to be transferred has also been noted in a domestic setting with these personal and other financial factors (such as cost of living adjustments and loss on sale of housing) cited as barriers to employee mobility (Saunders and Thornhill, 1998). Yet, despite such barriers to mobility, organisations continue to find millions of employees each year who do accept international and domestic relocations and the academic and practitioner literature is replete with examples of the transition stresses that they encounter.

International relocation

As a result of the rapid international movement of labour that has accompanied the expansion of business internationally over the past three decades, international human resource management (IHRM) practitioners have given increasing attention to the culture shock experienced by individuals undertaking international assignments. It has been argued that culture shock, defined as feelings of frustration, confusion, and alienation in the uncertain environment of a foreign culture (Oberg, 1960) leads to non-adjustment and ultimately to expatriate failure. Expatriate failure, presently estimated to cost organisations in the range of US$250,000-1,000,000 (Varner and Palmer, 2002, p. 9), was initially defined by organisations and IHRM literature as being the measurable financial costs of early return of expatriates and disruption to international operations or as expatriates who are not retained by their organisation following completion of an international assignment (Garonzik *et al.*, 2000). The definition was later expanded to include the less measurable financial cost of expatriates who may complete international assignments but who contribute to loss of business confidence and damaged relations to the host country market through committal of cultural faux pas (Harzing, 2002). Accordingly, it has been argued that managers need to be cross-culturally competent when managing across international borders.

Literature has highlighted the vital importance of organisations providing comprehensive, strategic, country-specific programmes of preparation for expatriates (and their families) if the costs of expatriate failure for organisations and international managers are to be minimised and cross-cultural competence achieved (Caligiuri, 2000; Forster, 2000). It has been further suggested that better selection techniques (Harvey and Novicevic, 2001; Richardson, 2000), cross-cultural training (Black *et al.*, 1991; Selmer, 2001; Tung, 1988), and in-post support (De Cieri *et al.*, 1991; Kraimer, Wayne and Jaworski, 2001), can play a major role in contributing to expatriates' intercultural effectiveness and their own psychological adjustment. Despite such arguments, research has found that expatriate cross-cultural preparation is either neglected outright or handled poorly by international organisations (Osman-Gani, 2000) and international transferees and their families continue to experience marked culture shock and expatriate failure.

Domestic relocation

A large body of literature has also examined the stresses that employees and their families experience when relocated for work within a nation. Such discussions of domestic relocation have focused on two primary issues: the willingness of employees to relocate/accept transfers (Eby and Russell, 2000; Feldman and Bolino, 1998; Noe and Barber, 1993; Ostroff and Clark, 2001); and the relocation problems that employees and their families experience and the transition and adjustment support that organisations provide (Dalton and Winbush, 1998; Eby and DeMatteo, 2000; Munton and West, 1985; Saunders and Thornhill, 1998). Vanhalakka-Ruoho (1994) suggests that organisational support and preparation prior to a domestic transfer has a significant effect on the experience of the employees and their families, while Moakler and Reinhart (2003) also maintain that organisations can help eliminate stress and ensure that the employee and his/her family settle in by providing necessary supports and creative relocation entitlements. Yet, while the benefits of prior preparation are accepted by practitioners, Martin (1999) argues that the actual outcomes of such transition/adjustment support have been little tested in empirical research. Importantly, the belief that organisations are providing assistance to their employees is positively regarded by employees.

Indeed, in their research, Callan (1993) and Moyle and Parkes (1999) found that the negative impacts of relocation and stress of change can be buffered by perceptions of control and social support.

Though the majority of the academic relocation literature hails from North America, there is a substantive international practitioner literature, mostly provided by relocation consultants. Coyle and Shorthand (1992) detail the support structures that organisations can put in place to minimise stresses and ensure the effectiveness of transferred staff in both domestic and international relocations while Coyle (1993) also explores how organisations can optimise the success of staff transfers and reap the benefit of the experience gained by committed staff in domestic postings. She also provides practical recommendations for relocated domestic employees and their families for minimising the stress and pitfalls of moving, and maximising both the challenge and personal growth which can be an integral part of relocation (Coyle, 1993). However, within the bodies of literature examining international transfers and domestic transfers, there has been limited simultaneous consideration of both international and domestic relocation (see Black *et al.*, 1991; Fisher and Shaw, 1994; Rushing and Kleiner, 2003). Yet many of the stressors facing international and domestic transferees should be similar – especially when the domestic geographic relocation includes the cross-cultural differences (and potential culture shock) experienced in international assignments.

Culture shock in domestic relocation
While the domestic relocation literature devotes substantive discussion to the transition stresses associated with relocation in the form of buying/selling/finding housing, lifestyle changes, children's schooling, and social and networking considerations, what is not sufficiently explored is the cross-cultural issues that domestic transferees and their families may experience when relocating domestically. Indeed, it can be argued that when people relocate within a nation they actually may experience a form of culture shock as a result of unexpected changes that induce anxiety, particularly when adjustment assistance is not provided (Coyle, 1993; Rushing and Kleiner, 2003). Such culture shock may be akin to that experienced by international sojourners, particularly in cases where the nation exhibits substantive regional variations in cultural and social practices. One such nation to present such internal cultural diversity is Indonesia. This article focuses on examining the transition stresses experienced by domestic transferees and their families in Indonesia because it does present fertile ground for a discussion of the impact of cultural differences for domestic transferees.

Cultural diversity in Indonesia
The world's largest archipelago, Indonesia comprises over 17,000 islands, the largest of which Sumatera, Bali, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Irian Jaya. Almost half of Indonesia's 220 million people live in Java (ERI Prague, 2004). Except for Java and the tiny islands of Bali, that are densely inhabited, the population is relatively sparse throughout the remainder of the country and some of the hill tribes have relatively little contact with people outside of their immediate surroundings. Indonesia is a nation of great extremes of development, encompassing large cities which reflect the modernisation of some of the world's most industrialised metropolises as well as rural villages where lifestyles are little advanced from hunting and gathering. Indonesia is also a country of great cultural diversity, reflecting its long indigenous traditions, the

influence of European traders and the Dutch colonial power, and Chinese merchants. Though the majority (about 85 per cent) of the population follows Islam, Indonesia is not an Islamic state and freedom of religion is protected by the Indonesia constitution, which is defined in the first principle of the state philosophy, Pancasila. Five major religions are predominant in Indonesia, being Islam, Protestant, Catholic, Hindu, and Buddhism. Despite a lengthy colonial period, missionaries were only successful in converting small pockets of the Indonesian population to Christianity – the Bataks of Sumatra, the Toraks of Sulawesi and 95 per cent of the population of Flores being notable examples. Hindu is followed mostly in Bali and Buddhism can be found in Java and several other islands in Indonesia (Bowen, 1995).

Despite Bahasa Indonesia, similar to Bahasa Malay, being the official national language, and Dutch and English also being widely spoken, there are about 583 languages spoken by as many distinct ethnic groups across the archipelago. There are five main language groups on Sumatra alone, six on Sulawesi and three on Java and the Balinese speak their own language. And many local languages also include forms of address to be utilised to give due respect to individuals' social standing (Marshall, 1997). Each province has its own cuisine based on traditional cooking and the influence of European and other Asian cuisines, and social customs vary markedly across the country. Indeed it can be argued that for people to relocate to work and live outside their own province or city in Indonesia can indeed entail quite considerable transition stresses and its own form of culture shock and accordingly require substantive time and resources for the adjustment of domestic transferees and their families.

Methods
This article presents the findings of research conducted in a state-owned Indonesian financial organisation that has an explicit human resource practice of geographically transferring managerial-level employees across the organisation's operation. The organisation has one of the largest, and most geographically diverse operations of the financial institutions within Indonesia. The findings presented in the article are based on information gleaned through 22 semi-structured telephone interviews conducted with managers in Indonesia throughout April-June 2004. Initial pilot telephone interviews were conducted with the human resources (HR) manager of the organisation and four other interviewees (chosen by the HR manager) to ascertain basic details of the organisation's domestic transfer policy.

Procedure
The selected financial organisation was approached (through a local Indonesian business contact) to seek willingness to participate in this research. After receiving from the managing director a formal letter of agreement to participate in the research, the HR manager was contacted and provided further details of the research and asked to provide a list of 30 potential interviewees with the proviso that they were a representative sample on grounds of gender, number of transfers, geographic location, and province of origin. Once contact details of potential interviewees were provided by the HR manager, the individuals were contacted in writing with further details of the project and assurance of confidentiality and voluntary participation. As not all of the 30 employees agreed to participate in the project, the HR manager was requested to provide a further list of potential interviewees and these individuals were then contacted seeking their consent to participate. From the two lists provided, 22 individuals agreed to be interviewed (six of whom were involved in an intra-province

relocation while 16 were involved in an inter-province relocation). The potential interviewees were then contacted and requested to complete a questionnaire providing basic bio details in order to limit the telephone interview time to questions of specific reference to the research.

The elimination of random sampling in favour of snowballing/convenience sampling through the use of personal contact to provide access to the participating organisation does suggest the potential for bias on the part of the interviewer and the individual whom provided entrée to the organisation. However, it is a strategy that has also been adopted by an international team of researchers currently reporting best practice in IHRM (Von Glinow *et al.*, 2002) and was utilised in this instance because of the difficulties associated with gaining an adequate sample when utilising random sampling in Asia and the relative benefits of conducting research with an insider advantage (see Hutchings, 2004; Siu, 1996). Interviewer and interviewee bias was minimised by the use of a neutral setting, by establishing trust and rapport by referral via a local contact and the HR manager, and the use of funnelling and presentation of questions in unbiased form. To ensure that all interviewees were interviewed in the same manner clarifying questions were avoided.

The semi-structured telephone interviews were designed to be of approximately 30 min duration. In practice, the interviews ranged from 15 min to 1 h in duration. At the request of interviewees, the interviews were not audio-recorded but rather were transcribed at the time of the interview and later returned to the interviewees for clarification or comment. At all stages throughout the process interviewees were assured that all information provided was given on a purely voluntary basis. Moreover, they were reminded that their names, the names of their organisations, and names of their employees who facilitated interview scheduling would be kept strictly confidential.

Sample
The majority of interviewees (21) are male which reflects the general practice in the participating, and other, organisations in Indonesia to transfer male employees in preference to female employees. The ages of the interviewees ranged from 34 to 60, and they have between 10 and 35 years of service to the organisation. Most of the interviewees (16) have undertaken inter-province transfers, with the majority involving moves to two or more different locations. The majority of the interviewees are married and are senior managers. For further bio data on the transferees interviewed, see Table I. For confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms for individuals are used throughout.

Measurement
As noted the interviewees were sent a pre-interview questionnaire to ascertain basic bio data and pilot interviews were conducted with the HR manager and four other organisational representatives to glean basic information about the organisation's domestic transfer policy. In the semi-structured telephone interviews, interviewees were questioned on: the relocation assistance provided by the organisation before and during their transferee; the information that the organisation provided about the new location; the assistance the organisation provided for children's schooling; and the support provided by the organisation for long distance commuting. The interviewees were also provided with an open-ended question asking them to identify any areas where they believe they needed assistance with their domestic transfer. The questions were developed from issues identified in the international and domestic relocation literature and were specifically adapted to the Indonesian cultural and business environment.

| | | | | | Career profile | |
Code	Gender	Age	Position	Years of service	Number of transfers	Provinces
AM1	M	52	AMBM	31	5	Intra
MO2	M	51	MO	31	4	JTG/SLWS
BM3	M	41	BM	14	5	DKI/NAD/SMTR/JTG
AM4	M	48	AMBM	28	3	Intra
MO5	M	44	MO	22	2	DKI/JTG
AM6	M	51	AMBM	27	6	Intra
BM7	M	45	BM	16	5	DKI/SULTGH SLT/NTT/JTG
MM8	M	40	MM	14	4	Kaltim/Jatim/Jabar/JTG
GH9	M	43	GH RPKB	15	4	DKI/DIY/JTG and New York
BM10	M	44	BM	19	4	DKI/DIY/SUMBAR/BL/JTG
HDO11	M	43	HDO	16	4	DKI/IRJA Sulsel/JTG
VCR12	F	51	VCR	25	4	DKI/Kalsel/DIY/JTG
BM13	M	47	BM	19	10	JTG/DKI/Kalsel/Sulteng/Irja
VHD14	M	34	VHD	10	5	Jabar/DKI/NAD/DIY/JTG
BM15	M	46	BM	24	6	Jabar/JTG
AM16	M	49	AMBM	28	2	Intra
AM17	M	54	AMBM	28	4	Intra
AM18	M	53	AMBM	27	4	Intra
HS19	M	54	HS	29	3	JTG/DIY
HDO20	M	46	HDG	19	5	DKI/Sulsel/Kalse/JTG
HDO21	M	60	HD-R	35	5	JTG/Irja/BL/JTG
HS22	M	58	HS-R	28	4	JTG/DKI/Irja

Notes: Position: AMBM, Assistant manager for micro business; BM, Branch manager; HDO, Head of operational department; HS, Head of section; MM, Marketing manager; MO, Operations manager; VCR, Vice chief of regional office; VHD, Vice head of department; Provinces: BL, Bali; DIY, Special province of Yogyakarta; DKI, Special province of Jakarta; IRJA, Papua/Irian Jaya; Jabar, West Java; Jatim, East Java; JTG, Central Java; Kalsel, South Borneo; Kaltim, East Borneo; NAD, Ache; NTT, East Nusa Tenggara; SLWS, Celebes; SMTR, Sumatera; Sulsel, South Celebes; SULTGH, Central Celebes; Sumbar, West Sumatera.

Table I.
Bio data of interviewees

Analysis
The transcribed interviews were manually coded and analysed by qualitative inquiry. It is acknowledged that the process of coding and analysing the interview data, like the data collection itself, is something of a selective process in terms of a determination of what to add in and what to leave out. Coding provides an efficient method for data labelling and retrieval, yet it is acknowledged that qualitative data analysis has a potentially ad hoc character (Miles and Huberman, 1994), the process is eclectic and there is no right way (Tesch, 1990, cited in Creswell, 1994). In order to maximise validity a first-level coding start-list was utilised to divide the collected data into clusters of topics representing each question. Memos were also compiled for detailing more reflective comments of interviewees. To minimise bias, interviewees' reference to dramatic incidences were removed from the usable data and checks for representatives were undertaken (as detailed above in relation to procedure and sample). Internal validity was assisted by having a third party check decisions made throughout the analysis process; by having the interviewees check interpretation of the data; the interviewees being involved throughout various stages of the research; and researcher/

interviewer bias minimised. External validity was assisted by the use of an inter-disciplinary research time comprised of individuals with insider and outsider status ensuring the context from which the data was gathered being made clear. The interview questions are adapted from previous researchers' questionnaires, and therefore, the study could be replicated. Issues of representatives of the particular sample are discussed above. It is acknowledged that another researcher may not arrive at the same findings using either this sample set or another set in other organisations/locations, as interviews were undertaken only at one point in time, and as such, the findings cannot necessarily be generalised within, or outside, Indonesia.

The results are presented in a detailing of numbers of interviewees that responded to particular questions. The results are also described in more detail with reference to individuals' comments where informative and illustrative.

Results and discussion
The key finding of this study is that the transferees and their families experience many problems in adjusting to their new location, some of which are related simply to geographic transfer and re-establishment while others reflect the cultural differences between their home and host provinces or cities. Overall, the interviewees suggested that the organisation provided sufficient assistance with the financial aspects of relocation. However, they also argued that if the organisation needed them to continue to maintain their current levels of work performance when transferred then the organisation needed to provide much more support when they are transferred in the form of educational assistance for their children, support for long distance commuting, and more detailed information about the new location. Most of the interviewees said that they believe that a minimum of one month's notice was required to assist them undertake the intended move, establish themselves at work and be required to assist them undertake the intended move, establish themselves at work and be performing at usual standards in the new work location. Yet only four of the 22 interviewees had receive one month's notice, while 16 received two weeks notification and four interviewees had received a paltry one week's notice. None of the interviewees had been provided with any cross-cultural training or information about the cultural practices in their new posting. None of the interviewees had received training in the language(s) used in the province(s) to which they had been transferred by their organisation.

Relocation assistance
The interviewees in this study include ten senior managers and 12 middle-managers. While the company provided the senior managers with housing and transportation (car and a driver) in new locations, the middle-managers are required to find their own house and their alternative transport. However, interviewees were generally of the opinion that the financial relocation assistance provided by the organisation was sufficient as they also received all of their moving costs and transportation for the transferee and family to the new location as well as funding for temporary housing and living expenses. The majority of the interviewees also have a housemaid and, in such cases, all the costs associated with moving for this individual are also met.

Information about the new location
In most cases, the organisation neither provided an executive briefing about the new location nor an opportunity to visit the intended city or province of posting prior to

making a decision about relocating. None of the interviewees had received comprehensive information about the new location's history, economy, or political situation, nor had the organisation provided them with information about cultural practices within the province. Where interviewees had received a briefing it related specifically to the organisation's operations in the new location, the day-to-day operations of the business and the strategic direction of the organisation. Only five interviewees claimed that they did not need information about the new location, while 17 others argued that they would have expected the organisation to have provided such information and believed they (and their families) would have benefited from being provided with a realistic preview of the new location. Only four of the interviewees had visited the new location prior to being posted permanently. In these cases, the individuals involved had previously held a short term posting in the city/province. The interviewees maintained that when they required cultural information about the new location (either in respect to a non-work, social setting or in dealing with work colleagues or business partners) they sought information from their new work peers or friends who had worked in or were familiar with the particular location. Some interviewees also mentioned that they gleaned information about new locations from books and the Internet.

Children's schooling
One of the major issues that the interviewees have faced when changing locations is in addressing the need to find a new school for their children. All of the interviewees have school-aged children. All of the interviewees (22) said that they had received no support from the organisation to either help them find a suitable school for their children to provide them with written information about educational facilities in the new location. 18 interviewees said that they had tried to access such information after having been relocated while four other sought information from the department of education. All interviewees suggested that education of their children has been a major problem for them when relocated as very often the time of transfer does not coincide with the beginning of school terms which makes it difficult for the transferee to find an opening at a school, and where available, the children experience disruptions to their studies and difficulties in settling-in and making friends. The children also need to adjust to differing standards of education with the quality shifting quite dramatically between Java and large cities throughout Indonesia and rural areas. One interviewee revealed his concerns about his children's schooling in commenting that:

> Every time we move, I worry if my children can easily adjust to the new situation and if it will influence their performance at school. I also have concerns about the quality of my children's education. My job demands me being transferred to different locations. However, when they are in Senior High School, I would prefer that they are able to study in Java or Denpassar although it means that we will have to live separately and it will be more costly (MM8).

The children's adjustment process is made more difficult by differences in cultural practices, particularly language variations, between the provinces. Local language in some regions (such as Javanese and Sundanese) is taught in schools and children are required to learn the local language in order to get good marks, as well as in order to ease the process of socialising with other children in the new location. Although Bahasa is the Indonesians' national language and is widely used, informally people still tend to use local languages and dialects. Despite this, the organisation had not made language training available to any of their transferees or their spouses/children,

nor had the organisation provided additional tuition for the children to assist them in adjusting at new schools. One of the interviewees shared his children's experience in adjusting to the local language in saying that:

> When we moved to Java, my children had to learn Javanese language in school. We come from Batak, and no one in our family speaks Javanese. For the first months, the children felt very stressed because they got bad marks at school. It took four months to improve their performance (BM15).

Another significant issue for transferees is the registration fee that is required to be paid when moving their children to new schools. Not only are registration fees payable every time a child enrols for a new school but the fee is higher when children move outside of usual term commencement times. One interviewee said that he anticipated these costs by establishing education budgets and funds for his children, but most interviewees argued that the organisation should be responsible for meeting these costs as well as for providing transferee's children with extra-curricula tuition while they are adjusting to new languages and cultural practices. As one interviewee said:

> When moving involves finding a new school for children, there are both psychological and financial impacts. Our position demands us to be ready to transfer every two or three years and this requires children to adjust to both new schools and new environments frequently. It is also costly, because we have to pay relatively expensive registration fees when we send the children to a new school (VHD14).

And another interviewee remarked that:

> In relation to the children's schooling, the company needs to help the transferees to pay the registration fees as well as to help find their children new schools in the new location. It would be better if moving could be conducted at the same time as new school terms, with at least one-month notification in advance (GH9).

Long distance commuting

Most of the interviewees (17) said that they had undertaken long distance commuting at some time during their careers. Four of the interviewees noted the value of moving ahead of the family as it gave them time to find housing and make arrangements for the children's schooling, as well as provide time for them to devote to establishing themselves in the new job. One interviewee noted that:

> Moving earlier before the family will (at least) maintain my performance at work, and give me time to prepare housing and schooling before they come. For the first month I can even be more productive because I can devote all my time to my job. But then in the following months, I began to miss my family and needed to see them (BM10).

Long distance commuting is, however, considered very costly by most of the interviewees who commented that they not only have to spend money on their daily living expenses but also have the additional costs of regular transportation back to their home city/province as well as communication expenses. Interviewees also suggest that there are psychological difficulties with long distance commuting back to family, particularly in situations where there is a problem at home, such as an illness of the family members and work commitments prevent them from returning to visit. In no case has the organisation met the costs of commuting, either in providing for the employee to return home for visits or for the spouse/children to visit the transferee.

In some instances the transferee and family live separately and the transferee commutes home regularly because of them being a dual career couple. Of those

interviewed, six have a working spouse. Five of these interviewees decided to move without their family because the spouse is employed in the civil service which makes it difficult for her to transfer jobs. Four of these five are individuals who have transferred intra-province while only one had moved to another province, so the commuting time varied much from one individual to another. The extent to which spouses are able to move and find work in the new location depends very much on the occupation and type of employment of the spouse. One interviewee said:

> My wife works as a lecturer in a nursing school. When I have to move to another location, mostly my wife can also find work or transfer her job to that location. This is because she has a good bargaining position that results from her academic background that is still highly demanded in this country. According to me, if we have distinct or specific expertise in our field, we can choose where we will move. What I mean is, the company will try to put the right man in the right place. So for me, as an example, I have more chances to be relocated to big cities where business activities are highly routine because I have expertise in foreign exchange (BM10).

In most cases, where transferees have children of senior high school age (16 years and above) or university students, they will generally not move their children with them to the new location but will send their children to Java or major capital cities throughout Indonesia, as the quality of education is regarded as being higher than elsewhere. Again, the organisation does not provide for these associated educational costs and costs of living where the children board at school or with other family members. Interviewees noted that while not having the children with them is beneficial for the children's education, it does create other problems such as the children's behaviour as a result of not being under parental control. Again, costs of transporting children to visit their parents during holidays and vacations, and on going telecommunication costs are high and the organisation does not provide any assistance to meet these costs.

Other cross-cultural transition issues

As noted, interviewees were also asked to respond to an open-ended question about the other transition stresses that they have experienced. The major issues identified included: lack of on-site support from the organisation; specific problems for females; and cultural and political issues. The majority of interviewees said there was a very real need to have some knowledge of the culture of the new city/province prior to arrival because of the advantages they perceived that it could provide in terms of immediate awareness of different business and non-work (social) practices. Awareness of these differences, it was argued, could decrease the likelihood of committing cultural faux pas due to simple ignorance of what was considered acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in certain situations. While it could be expected that the interviewees should have some basic knowledge of differing cultural practices throughout Indonesia, they still suggested that it would have been beneficial for the organisation to provide them with specific cross-cultural briefings.

As the organisation did not provide any support in terms of cross-cultural information, transferees found that they needed to find their own ways to adjust to the new environments. Many interviewees spoke of the importance of joining in social activities, such as sporting clubs like golf, tennis, or football or participating in karaoke get-togethers. Such activities were viewed as beneficial in helping them develop business networks in the local community as well as a conduit for accessing information about differing cultural practices. Several interviewees also suggested that trying to accept the differences and not consider themselves superior to people of other

cultural backgrounds also helped their transition to working and living in the new location. The interviewees also noted that while they were learning new skills on-the-job an equally important aspect of the transfer was being prepared to ask for help and work together with new peers and friends. One interviewee said:

> My job as a branch manager in city X demands me to get in touch with as many clients as possible. Because I like tennis, I joined one of the tennis clubs in that city, as most of its members are businessmen. By doing this, I can get more information, friends and also clients who help me perform my job effectively. It also gives me support (BM10).

Another interviewee argued that:

> My first transfer has been to city X, where I am in a new position, changing from conceptual jobs in head office to operational ones in that branch. From the first time I came here, I declared to all the people in the office that, as this is my new position, I would need help from others. So I learn by doing and asking others. Fortunately, all people in this branch are very helpful and friendly. They have different characteristics to the people in the head office (MO5).

Some of the interviewees also suggested that very often it was the spouse that bore the burden of relocation given that she (in the majority of cases) needed to make arrangements for new schools and handling problems associated with the children as well as building new social networks and conducting the shopping and management of household affairs. Additional problems were noted for female managers, for whom the transition to a new location often required extra time and energy, especially for high-level positions. It was suggested that the acceptance of females as managers differed quite substantially throughout Indonesia according to a region's economic and political development as well as cultural traditions. Female managers also have the difficulty that they do not have their own established networks but often feel outsiders amongst the male-dominated networks. A female interviewee described her experience, thus:

> For me as a female manager, moving and adjusting to a new environment is not a simple process. I even decided to quit my job just because the working environment was not so conducive for me. My husband and my daughters, however, convinced me to stay. Right now, every time I have problems, I will talk to a psychologist to get help. This, in most cases, can help reduce my level of stress (VCR12).

Interviewees noted that there were substantive cultural distinctions between the locations in which the organisation has operations and suggested that there were many differences to which they needed to adjust, including: dialects, customs and habits, food, transportation, entertainment, medical facilities, shopping, education, and costs of, and standards of, living. One interviewee commented thus:

> My position demands me to move from one city to another within Central Java every two to three years. Although this is still in the same province, I feel there are some differences between regions, such as between coastal and agricultural areas. The characteristics of most people in the coastal region are more repulsive, so that when I live in that area I have to try to learn their characters and try to understand them (AM6).

Another interviewee said that:

> My wife and I have lived in Jakarta for years when I was transferred to this small city. We were used to spending every weekend going to some places of interest, doing shopping, or just enjoying eating out at restaurants. Here, we have limited places to visit. So, we have needed to change that routine. We sometimes feel bored (MO5).

The existence of social support groups in the new location (e.g. Balinese community and Kampung Java), as well as the transferees' own ability and willingness to respect and understand differences, can help the adjustment process of the transferees and their families. As one interviewee remarked:

> Mostly when I move out of Java, I prefer to find housing in Kampung Java (where many Javanese live) so that I can adjust to the new location easily (BM3).

In addition to cultural differences that transferees and their families may experience, political and security differences can also be encountered when transferring between provinces. As one interviewee remarked:

> The most challenging assignment was when I transferred to city P, a conflict region. I think the reason I was transferred to that region is because I come from Bali and I'm Hindu, so people in that region would regard me as a neutral person. Although my branch was achieving well above work targets as a result of competitors leaving the area, it was full of stress. That's why I propose that people who are assigned to such an area should be given a shorter period of tenure. And there should be adequate security benefits. In order for my family and I to easily settle in. I became involved in the Balinese community in the region. I also appreciated my driver (assigned by my company) in helping all of us with information about the new region (BM7).

Conclusions
Research has suggested that cultural knowledge of a new location, prior experience and/or formal education of cultural and social practices, and language skills assist in faster acculturation, greater tolerance of, and reduction of uncertainty in, new environments (Ashamalla and Crocitto, 1997; Forster, 2000; Osman-Gani, 2000; Zakaria, 2000). Yet the findings of this research suggest that the organisation is not prepared to invest time and resources in providing its transferees with thorough briefings on their new locations, nor does the organisation appear to be giving consideration to transferring people that have requisite language and other cultural skills. The decision to relocate an employee is being based primarily on technical skills with an expectation that the transferee either will not encounter any difficulties (work or non-work) in the new location or that he/she will have to address these problems him/herself. Much of the onus is placed on individual transferees to seek out support, assistance and information for themselves as the organisation does not provide adequate notice of transfer, an insufficient handover period or induction training. This is lamentable as has been noted the benefits of such to achieve the anticipatory socialisation regarded as a crucial factor in adjusting to new jobs in a domestic context (Nicholson and West, 1988). The organisation has given little consideration to the impacts of relocation for either transferees or their families; a situation which has not only psychological stresses of the transferee and his/her family, but also immediate costs for the organisation as the employee takes time to perform at work.

Implications for practice
The findings of this research suggest that while the organisation provides sufficient financial support with relocation, transferees believe there is need for much greater social support and cross-cultural briefing. While the findings relate directly to one organisation, the following provides suggestions for management that are of value to other organisations and may assist them in providing more attractive transfer packages which allow organisations to promote themselves as having a concern for employees well-being and work/life balance. There is a need for organisations to

provide employees with the necessary information and cultural briefings for the transferee and his/her spouse and family prior to a transfer and to offer any necessary counselling to address potential problems. Where the transferee has a working spouse, consideration needs to be given to dual career issues and perhaps some of the costs of long distance commuting met by the organisation. Organisations also need to consider whether the time of posting can be adjusted to family needs, a situation which may be partly addressed by developing succession plans for all managerial positions.

Necessary information might also be conveyed to all employees throughout the organisation so that all potential transferees have some understanding of what is involved in a transfer. General cross-cultural diversity briefing could be provided to all employees with specific cross-cultural briefing provided to individuals that are being transferred across provinces. Returned transferees could be encouraged to conduct training sessions to brief colleagues on their experiences, which would also further develop corporate knowledge of the requirements of working in the organisation's diverse locations. Organisations would also profit from appointing work mentors for transferees and non-work (social) mentors for transferees and their spouses/children. Importantly, relocation policies need to be living so that they may be fine-tuned and adjusted to the needs of specific employees and their families (Mumma, 2001, p. 57).

Implications for theory and issues for future research
This study makes a key contribution to existing literature in extending the literature from examinations of international assignments and domestic relocations to exploring geographical location within a nation in which there are substantive regional cultural variations. It is recognised, however, that this research provides an initial foray into cross-cultural domestic relocation and as it does have some limitations that may be addressed by further research. First, the research findings presented here relate to one state-owned organisation in Indonesia and as such we may not be able to be generalised across other organisations, industries and sectors. Importantly, it should be noted that state-owned organisations have very high job security and very low turnover, so a study of private organisations might present quite different findings. Second, while the interviewees were asked to reflect on their current experience as well as prior transfers, the data was collected at one time period and it should not be assumed that generalisability to other time periods is possible. Indeed, Fisher and Shaw (1994) suggest that just as Adler (1996) refers to phases of adjustment in international relocations, there may be similar phases of adjustment in domestic relocations, and as such, the responses that interviewees gave at the time these interviews were conducted may differ markedly from the responses that they would provide at earlier or later time intervals. So, there is value in undertaking this form of research on a longitudinal basis. Third, this research explores primarily the non-work (social) transition, stresses and it would be informative for further research to explore work stresses also. Fourth, the research is based on a small sample and future research might include a larger sample and a more proportionate amount of female interviewees. A broader sample might also involve interviews with spouses and children.

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