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Managing Behavioural Outcomes of Repatriates through a Proactive Model

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to present a proactive model in explaining a mechanism which ensures behavioral outcomes of repatriates. A series of activities, which were already well researched in an isolated manner in different contexts were incorporated to develop this model. The literature-based data compilation was done to develop this model. The key of pre-departure stage of expatriation, on-assignment stage of expatriation, post- assignment period of expatriation, expatriate adjustment, repatriate adjustment, behavioural outcomes of repatriates, social support for expatriates, social support for repatriates, organizational support for expatriate families, organizational support for repatriate families, and cross-over effect of expatriate adjustment were included to the Google Scholar search engine to find the articles.This model outlines logic on the necessity of being proactive on returnees' post-assignment behavioural outcomes, by taking into account three time stages of pre-departure, on-assignment, and post assignment stages.

INTRODUCTION

Organizations tend to use assignments of expatriates as one of the key channels through which they develop talent work group in correspondence to today's global environment (Ren et al., 2015; Andresen and Margenfeld, 2015). Past researchers have confronted with issues of expatriates but still lesser attention has been given on issues of the repatriates despite the fact that their return back to the home country is one of the most difficult phases in the international process for both the assignees and the organization (Schuler et al., 2002). In the ever changing nature of global competition, international experiences are becoming critical assets (Gregersen and Black, 2000). It is widely recognized that living and working outside the country enables employees to develop a robust and well-rounded personality because of the opportunity to work in diverse fields, the availability of feedback from various sources on their work, exposure to different ways of approaching business problems, and sensitivity to market flexibilities (Stroh *et al* 2008). These qualities are highly desirable for the long-term success of a company, and can be transferred to the organization by appropriately managing the behavior of repatriates (Oddou *et al*., 2009).

In addition, such internationally mobile employees may enhance decision-making skills in the international context, which can be leveraged for the benefit of the organization. Further, repatriates who have favorable behavioral outcomes, (e. g: commitment, retention, job attachment) are flexible in accepting organizational changes even if they have not received strong

appreciation for their international assignment (Jayasekara and Thkahasi, 2014). Moreover, strongly committed repatriates contribute to increased national productivity by reducing the national job attrition rate (Chow and Gong, 2010) and by helping organizations avoid the extra cost of hiring and training new people. They bring the ability to work and manage effectively in other countries, information about specific local markets and customers, flexible management and formation of global mindset, and the transfer of knowledge between countries is accelerated by those employees (Vidal et al. 2007). Hence the retention of such repatriates in the parent organization, and getting them to offer a higher level of commitment can be very helpful for international business expansion in the future (Szkudlarek, 2010), which is specially more favorable for early stage of internationalized organizations.

In addition to the prevailing benefits, researches' findings on some of the behavioural outcomes e. g: turnover rate among return assignees, e. g: 15% within first six month period, 25% within a one year period (Black 1989), and approximately 50% within two years (Poe, 2000),) make an open invitation to undertake further subsequent detailed analysis. The costs to poor commitment to or final resignation from the organization are significant both financially and strategically (Szkudlarek and Sumpter, 2015; Allen and Alvarez, 1998; Stroh, 1995). On one hand, the higher turnover rate of assignees implies that they lost the associated benefits over expatriation (e. g, international knowledge and experiences), which are expected to provide a higher degree of tacit knowledge (Vidal et al., 2007**).** On the other hand, newly developed skills may be transferred to competitors (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2001) while there may be an influence on the future potentialities or volunteering for international assignments (Tung, 1988). Thereby this poses new challenges in terms of managing and improving post-assignment behavioral outcomes (retention and commitment) of returnees, which are good proxies of assessing overall effectiveness of international assignment effort of the organizations.

The proposed model in this article integrated a series of activities, which were already well researched in an isolated manner in different contexts to add "How organizational and social support which compile at three stages of pre-assignment, on-assignment and post-assignment can intensify cross-cultural adjustment, home culture readjustment as well as post-assignment behavioral outcomes of patriates (including expatriates and repatriates). The literature suggest that failure to achieve good post-assignment behavioral outcome is often not a consequence of the lack of pre-departure organizational support, but may be due to weaknesses in the procedures even on-assignment and/or post-assignment periods too (Black et al., 1998; Florwski & Fogel, 1999; Stroh et al., 2008). Therefore, one of the basic logics of this proposed model is justifying the necessity of being proactive on returnees' post-assignment behavioral outcomes, by taking into account the three stages of pre-expatriation (pre-departure), and expatriation (on-assignment) periods in addition to the post-assignment period as depicted in figure 1.

Conceptualization of a proactive model to confirm behavioural outcomes of repatriates

There is a theoretical knowledge gap on what mechanisms intensity behavioural outcomes of repatriates that need to be considered as a good proxy for confirming the effectiveness of a chain of activities applied throughout expatriate-repatriate cycle. The proposed effective expatriate - repatriation proactive model comprises three stages and is cyclical in nature. Figure 1 illustrates the several integrated components at each stage which highly influence on determining the final expected behavioural outcomes of the repatriates.

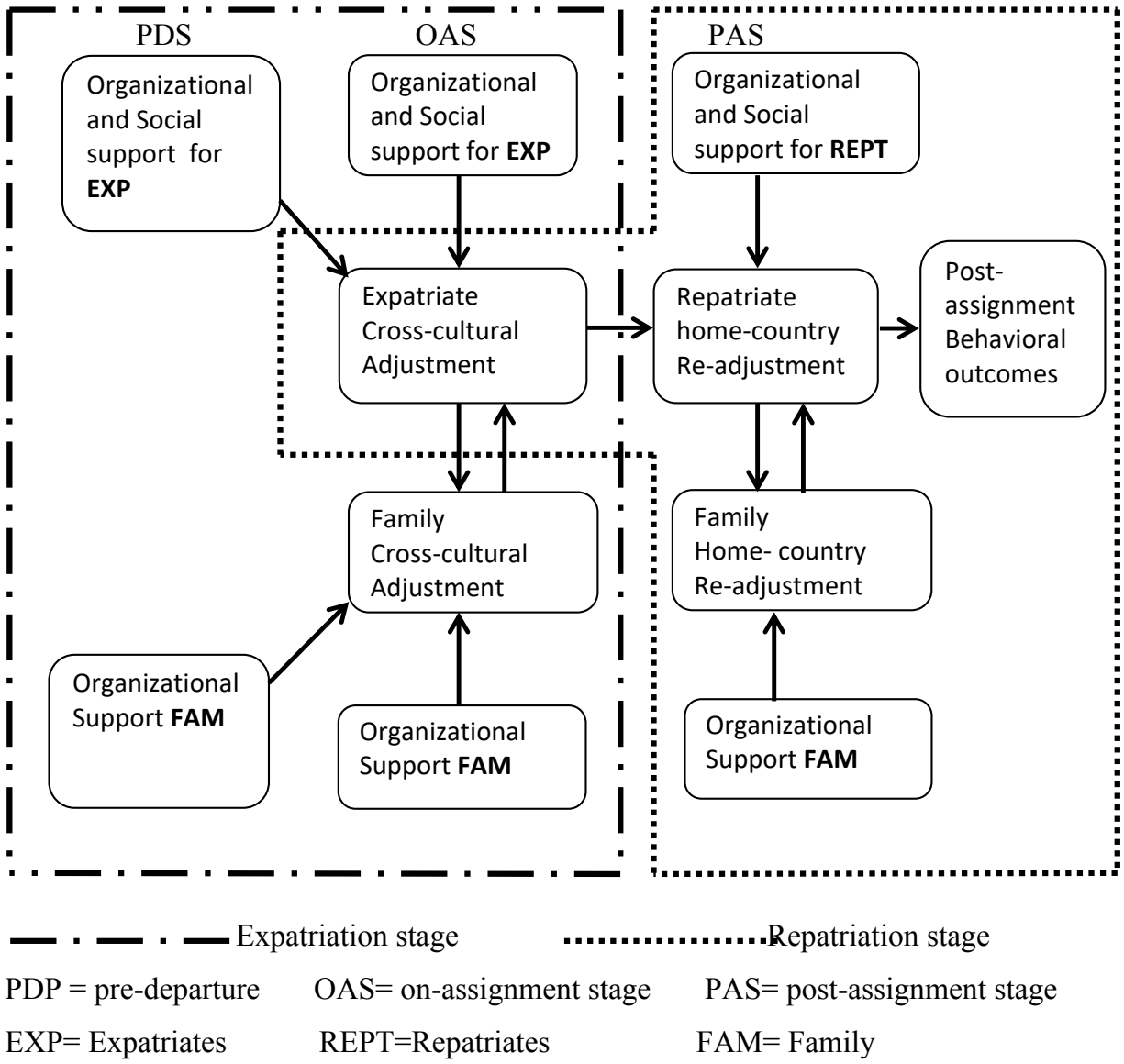


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Literature recorded that there are three types of support available for both expatriates and repatriates including information support, instrumental support and emotional support (House and Kahn,1985). Informational support means providing information and advice, emotional support targets the need for showing empathy and instrumental support refers to actual services and funds such as financial support or providing childcare (Puchmüller, et al (2017). They work as a determinant of preparing the staff psychologically which can provide a strong foundation for better cross-cultural and home-culture readjustment adjustment while well-adjusted expatriates encompass to be more competent and committed upon their return (Black 1988; Nicholson & Ayako, 1993). Therefore organizational support for both expatriate and repatriates was included to the model to determine cross cultural adjustment and home country re-adjustment.

Moreover organizational support was largely "expatriate centered" despite the fact that an organizational support is one of the determinants of family adjustment (including spouse and children) (Black & Stephens, 1989; Tung, 1981). According to Herod (2009) about 80% of expatriates around the world are married, and more than 70% are accompanied by their spouses and children (Black et al., 1990). Extended support of the family will ensure the adjustment possibilities of trailed family members which always make a positive influence over expatriates and repatriates' adjustment as well (Kempen et al, 2015). Even though, this goes beyond the employment contract but it still facilitates for a strong foundation on the psychological bond between return assignee and the organization that in return can encourage the repatriates to remain in the organization (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001).

However, in the previous literature (McNulty and Selmer, 2017; Shockley et al., 2018), family adjustment was the main criterion of family support. In this study, as suggested by Kraimer et al. (2001) and Shaffer & Harrison (2001), spouse and family adjustment are detached from spouse and family members' support but include both of them in the same study setting to extend the discussion to disclose that there is methodological misinterpretation. In addition to that, work related and non-work-related social ties can be taken as another aspect of social support that influence expatriate adjustment and how it was addressed because of their non-exclusivity in nature in the setting of the study.

Social exchange theory and its two approaches of namely; organizational approach and social support were incorporated at each stage to have subsequent detailed explanation in favor of assignees and family members. In addition to that the relationship between expatriates and family adjustment was covered getting guidance for family system theory while social network theory uses to cover social supportive chains. Social learning theory was utilized to formulate the direction of cross-cultural adjustment to home-culture readjustment of the returned expatriates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pre-departure organizational support for cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates and family members

Organizational support for expatriates

Organizational support is defined by researchers based on perception of organization involvement of improving their work-relationships or general well-being (Eisenberger et al, 1986) or emotional attachment towards the organization (Mayer and Allen, 1997). This refers to employees' perception on to what extent organizations value their contribution and care about their well-being through various policies, practices, and treatments (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson and Sowa, 1986). Many studies have shown that the organizational support to prepare staff psychologically can provide a strong foundation for better cross-cultural adjustment while well-adjusted expatriates are deemed to be more competent and committed on their return (Black 1988; Nicholson and Imaizumi, 1993; Shaffer and Harrison, 1998). According to Allen et al. (2003) appropriate HRM practices would be signed with organizational support and facilitate to establish a long term relationship with employees (Tremblay et al. 2010).

Preparation, recruitment, selection, training and development, compensation, performance evaluation, industrial relation etc. are some of the common HRM practices. In addition such traditional type of human resource management activities, researchers have introduced employer

branding, talent development, and project team-working etc. as contemporary practices mostly applied at on-assignment stage of expatriate cycle.

Preparation to identify formalized task, duties and responsibilities associated with transition can reduce role shock or uncertainties upon arrival to the new setting (Trobiorn 1992; Mesmer-Magnus et al. 2008). Recruitment message on realistic job preview is the key to have a clear picture which encountered difficulties of assignment, nature of the task and duties, remuneration package and condition upon return. This allows expatriates to be proactive on psychological preparation in a new cultural setting (Stroh et al. 1998). Careful and fair selection practices and procedures would be salient to keep suitable candidates for the assignment (Koteswari 2007).

Based on the categorization of Caligiuri & Lazarova (2002) and Deen (2011) preparation, recruitment and selection are considered as sources of giving both information and emotional support for expatriates. Effective pre-departure training enhances familiarity to the new culture, reduce uncertainties, and improve comfort ability, proficiency with expected behavior, accuracy of cultural assumptions, and socially acceptable value systems in the host culture (Morris and Robie 2001) which come under instrumental support. Information on clearly defined policies, procedures, and standards and criteria on expatriation would be helpful to improve mental adjustment through reducing inconsistencies, conflict and stress and subsequently lead to better work-related adjustment (Opatha 2007). Compensation information revealed whether organizations are ready to value international contribution and provide rewards for family members' necessities. As evaluation and compensation of such performance would be ensured information given support at this pre-departure stage.

Organizational support for families

Family members such as spouse and children are a secondary stakeholder of the organization and they indirectly influence organizational achievements. Information given attempts mostly to ensure minimizing confusion and uncertainties e. g housing cost, security information, schooling conditions, medical facilities, transportation system etc. Facilitating to associate with previous successive repatriate families will be a possible mechanism of providing realistic first-hand information unless they are not invited for the selection process. Instrumental support during this stage is encountered with language training, workshop on cross-cultural adaptation which is mostly reported by researchers (Shaffer et al. 1998; Herod 2009).

Emotional support is also necessary at this stage because that helps them overcome the negative feelings of the transition by family members on isolation, insecurity and stress (Harvey & Buckley 1998; Punnett 1997; Takeuchi et al. 2002). In most cases employees' spouses are reluctant to relocate because of the difficulties of finding a job during the assignments and stress due to loss of career and loss of professional identity (Wiggins-Frame and Shehan 1994). In the case of having children, additional challenges arise, such as the children's anxiety and uncertainty related to identity formation, break-up of friendships, and disruption of schooling (Borstoff et al. 1997; Lazarova et al. 2010). Thereby career counseling and marriage counseling sessions are advantageous at pre-departure stage.

Pre-departure social support for cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates

Research evidences are still inconclusive on the effect of spousal support at different assignment stages. Information given support may link to spouse persuasion being proactive on facts-findings about general living condition and related cultural matters on behalf of the family (Caliguiri et al. 1998; Hervey 1998). Instrumental support of the spouse can precede with lesser family demand on housework engagements of family needs, house cleaning, involvement with children and meal preparation that may be an advantage for the assignee to get ready well. If such expectations are low, the higher the freedom assignees have to organize their time, energy and attention on necessities. However spouse emotional support helps the assignees to overcome negative feelings of accepting the assignments. Attention on reducing marital stress but an expression of warmth and caring from the spouse are kind of reward for them to take the departure decision more effectively (Julien and Markman 1991; Trompetter et al, 2016; Schnittinger and Bird 1990).

Children in most cases as dependents are likely to be more prominent for international dispatched, but lesser research attention has been paid. Because of their dependency on parents, they are more promising to provide emotional support rather informational and instrumental support at this stage. Educational and social disruptions of children are more likely to create mental rejection over the acceptance of the assignments. However their readiness to give up friends and to start schooling at different cultural setting is quite supportive to increase emotional feelings over easy adaptation with good mental condition.

The assistance of work-related friends is supportive to reduce psychic cost of relocation in keeping good mantel fitness. Past experienced expatriates assignees from other departments and sharing positive and negative experiences and pros and cones of the assignments would be an emotional support for them. At the same time helping to access work related information before departure, e.g. relevant data sources, web pages, agencies would tend to extend their both informational and instrumental support.

Non-work related friends support is less researched and here it is identified that possible informational support given like international work experiences reduce uncertainties in host location. Instrumental supportiveness include residential arrangements (helping to find a good tenant), emotional support like willingness to extend their helping hand to the rest of the family members (caring older parents and support on their health issues), assurance of continuing assignees' responsibilities and obligations on social activities during his or her absent period is supportive to improve mental fitness of the adjustment.

On-assignment organizational support for cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates and family members

Organizational support for expatriates

At this stage, organizations sometimes facilitate in making contacts with various assistance centers through sponsors, monitoring, newspapers, club notices, etc. In addition to organizational support, it includes implementation of work in a timely manner with various administrative bodies. Expatriate support and services include financial benefits to maintain the standard of living that the expatriate is used to in the home country, and assistance in housing relocation etc. These instrumental the support always save the time of the expatriates (Aycan 1997; Karaimer et al. 2011). Moreover, facilitation to keep good contact with the rest of the family members in the home

country, rest and relaxation vacation leave, assistance with schooling for children, spousal employment, maintaining communication with the expatriate as well as timely necessary information sharing with assignees would tend to upgrade the emotion on security of their position even after going back to the home country (Punnett 1997). This mostly prevents them from feeling out of sight and out of mind upon their return. In addition to that, the company branch in the host country has to support the expatriate adjustment since the expatriate is working there on a day-to-day basis. This support includes foreign language courses, socialization experiences, as well as offering opportunities to interact with host-country nationals.

Organizational support for families

Once the family moved to the host location, it is assumed that most suitable organizational support is instrumental based (Deen 2011). For example; financial support that is making arrangements on creating opportunities to join formal or informal clubs and organizations, such as charity groups, health clubs, baby-sitting, helping with yard work, lending books, and giving free host-country language lessons suggested by researchers. Administrative support and assistance in daily activities are also expected, which can be both instrumental and informational support (Deen 2001). However in general, family members are less sheltered by organizational support during this stage.

On-assignment social support for cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates

Research evidences are still inconclusive on the effect of spousal support at different assignment stages. A large number of studies also point out the importance of the spouse's support in expatriates' overseas adjustment (Caliguiri et al., 1998; Harvey, 1998). In addition continuity of the facts in pre-departure stage, researchers have pointed out that spousal emotional support at this stage is to be positively linked with expatriates work adjustment owing to giving a faire evaluation on job success, giving about well-being, and managing the family issues by herself/ himself and releasing expatriate for task accomplishment (Lu and Cooper 1995). Spouse can himself/ herself find a solution for logistic issues, giving full mental capacity to concentrate on work. Expatiates' spouse deserves special attention at this stage because the marriage relationship is mostly vital for psychological and physical well-being.

Upon their movements to the host country, in addition to giving emotional support in this stage the degree of involvement of children in their school activities, and how they arrange themselves into a target oriented or competitive framework are more important to reduce worries over taking decisions to relocate (De Leon, and McPartlin, 1995). Children's involvement with political, intellectual, and cultural activities, participation in social and recreational activities, are reflections of good personality of children who are ready to take challenges. The higher the involvement, the higher the supportiveness will be (Timko and Moos 1996, Pollock et al, 2009).

Other expatriates in host location are an important information sharing channel to make an expatriate aware of the working culture (Black and Gregersen 1991). Sharing tasks, validation of perception, beliefs and actions, advice in handling life situations, and sharing positive and negative experiences reducing socially non acceptable behaviors (smoking, drug addiction etc.) are to be provided, which encompass both informational and emotional support reducing uncertainties or confusions (Gregersen and Black 1992). Emotional supportiveness to overcome negative

psychological effect or isolation and loneliness improve self-identity and self-esteem because of their readiness to listen and understand the problems (Caligiri et al. 2002).

Non-work related friends' support is strongly associated with general health and well-being and weekly associated with work-related strains LaRocco et al. (1980). However effectiveness of information depends on the expertise of the person because of its lesser formality and lesser structure. This as less researched area, and is suggested in this model the possibility of continuing the facts raised at pre-departure stage, even at this stage too.

Even though there are no rich empirical evidences, this model suggests that non-work related friendships work well for better cross-cultural adjustment. In the case of many individuals and their families, now they rely on their own coping mechanisms to manage international relocation, this kind of supportive channel cost less and is relatively easy to maintain for the purpose of having all three type of assistances.

Cross-cultural adjustment of family members and cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates

Spouse and family members' adjustment predicted the extent to which they could interact with local communities which cause to reduce stress and uncertainties and taking steps to risk aversion. Available empirical findings on expatriate adjustment have examined spouse and family adjustment as a key source of posing expatriate adjustment (Torbion, 1982). More specifically, there are evidences showing that the problems associated with family adjustment are often the primary reasons for the termination of assignment early (Black & Stephens, 1998). Moreover, spouse adjustment and its positive relationship with expatriate in general and interaction adjustment were empirically proven by Black and Gregersen (1991) and Gergersen and Storh (1997).

A Positive relationship of spouse's general adjustment on expatriates' general adjustment and work adjustment were proven by Takeuchi, Yen, and Tesluk (2002). Family members' retention cognition would be a good criterion on how well they were adjusted to the host country. Minimization of real shock on cultural issues over traveling to new culture would keep moral fitness in an upper position leading for happy family relations between expatriates, spouse and family members. As such assignees then will utilize much time for work preparation, keeping high moral obligation to complete the assignment successfully, improving possibilities for better work adjustment.

Post-assignment organizational support on home-country readjustment of repatriates and family members

Organizational support for repatriates

Information sharing clarity of the job is very important. Bjorkman (1991), found that there was a positive relationship between clarity of the work and work adjustments in the case of Finnish returnees. Vidal et al. (2007) found a significant impact of continuous communication and its impact on repatriate work adjustment in the setting of Spain. Realistic expectations of the return can be helpful by providing repatriates with training on the reentry process which ensures both informational and instrumental support. In addition organizational attention on financial compensation is instrumentally sufficient enough to maintain standards of living back in the home country.

Organizational support for return families

Upon return, not only assignees but also family members are experiencing their own readjustment problems (Dowling and Welch 1999). As discussed in pre-departute and on assignment stages, the given assistance is still relevant even at this stage too.

Post-assignment social support for home-country readjustment of repatriates

Researchers pointed out that spousal support at this stage is to be positively linked with repatriates' work adjustment, owing to the fact that it allows giving fair evaluation on job success, giving ideas about well-being, and managing the family issues by herself/ himself and releasing repatriates for task accomplishment (Lu and Cooper, 1995). The spouse can himself/ herself finds a solution for logistic issues, giving full mental capacity to concentrate on work. Repatriates' spouse deserves special attention at this stage because relationship of marriage is mostly vital for psychological and physical well-being (Acitellei, 1996). Information given support may link to spouse's persuasion being proactive on facts-findings about general living condition and related cultural matters on behalf of the family (Caliguiri et al., 1998; Hervey, 1998). Instrumental support of the spouse can precede with lesser family demand on housework engagements of family needs, house cleaning, involvement with children and meal preparation that may be an advantage for the assignee to get ready well. If such expectations are low, the higher the freedom assignees have to organize their time, energy and attention on necessities.

However spouse's emotional support helps the assignees to overcome negative feelings of resuming work again with new faces. Attention on reducing marital stress but an expression of warmth and caring from the spouse are kind of rewards for them to get the departure decision more effectively (Schnittinger and Bird, 1990). In addition, continuity of the facts in researchers is pointed out as that the spousal emotional support at this stage is to be positively linked with expatriates work adjustment owing to giving a fair evaluation on job success, about well-being, and managing the family issues by herself/ himself and releasing repatriate for task accomplishment (Lu and Cooper, 1995). The spouse can himself/ herself find a solution for logistic issues, giving full mental capacity to concentrate on work. Expatiates' spouse deserves special attention at this stage because the relationship of marriage is mostly vital for psychological and physical well-being (Acitellei, 1996).

Same as even after, coming back to the home country, children support must be more critical on emotional support. As in Kulkarni et al, (2010), children's adjustment to their own culture and accepting their own values and social rules, finding friends back, association with extended family members make returned emotional fitness up.

In the case of returning into the parent country back, their assistance makes repatriates to be an active group member and it makes him or her to be quite supportive. Burt (1997) argues that work related friendships are more useful on career opportunities in which there is accessing information, greater bargaining power and referrals. Changes of corporate business plan and their consequences and necessary adaptations from the employee's side can be obtained by firsthand information from these work related friends.

It is more effective keeping continuous contact with non-work related friends being repatriated to general adjustment because a major source of learning is through connections with others (Hall

and Kahn 2001). However, little is known about the effect of such a non-work related friendship channels on adjustment. In addition, their successful work, interaction, and general socio cultural adjustment largely depends on support from local connections including non-work related friends. Instrumental support to restart the social contacts and maintaining the social states with higher level is quite supportive.

Cross-over effect of assignees adjustment and family adjustment

Although previous researchers have examined the effect of family adjustment on expatriates' adjustment, little has been done to incorporate the influence that expatriates adjustment may have on their family adjustment. In the case of cross-cultural adjustment and consequent family adjustment, relevant discussion by Black and Gregersen (1991), Gergersen and Storh (1997), Takeuchi, Yen and Tesluk (2002) are noticeable.

Relationship between expatriate cross-cultural adjustment and repatriate home country re-adjustment

In this approach it is expected to transfer the learned facts in one cultural context back in to the home country. However, this is not extensively researched and the nature of these relationships is unclear because of conflicting findings across studies. The expatriates cross-cultural learning experience many have created many opportunities to grow, both culturally and technically (Chew and Debowski, 2008). This cultural learning advancement should be accommodated in readjustment return to their home country. According to Suutari and Valimaa (2002) expatriate and repatriate adjustment are negatively related because some of them are fully adapted to live abroad without going to the native culture (Adler 2002) but others attempted to integrate their assignment skills and learned cross-cultural sensitivity, global awareness, and self-efficacy because of their mind-expanding experiences, wider job responsibility, bigger challenges, and greater autonomy acquired to the home country upon their return (Shen and Hall, 2009). Experiences of host country improvements to current practice would apply their learning upon return (Furuya et al., 2009).

For an example logical patterns of work experience build the desired cognitive and technical skills to enhance home country work adjustment up to some extent. In general, international experiences from similar cultural setting can significantly influence the returnees' adjustment in and a positive manner (Osland, 2000). In this study, it is assumed that results will further enrich the literature by adding findings from both host and home countries under similar cultures in developing countries in Asia.

Repatriate adjustment and post-assignment behavioral outcomes

Researchers have pointed out that returning managers often lack information on home country setup that leads to poor re-adjustment even for their native country with native people (Adler, 1981; Harevy, 1983; Bonache, Brewster and Suutari 2001; Linehan and Scullion, 2002; Stroh, Gregersen and Black, 2000; Schuler *et al*., 2002). Wen-Lee and Liuc (2006) found that repatriation adjustment was the strongest predictor of their psychological investment to the parent company back. Appropriate behavior of the repatriates in learning, update missing facts about home country work place and reduce their feelings of insecurity, ambiguities, novelties and increase their level of psychological comfort. Researchers have pointed out that repatriates often suffer lack of information on home country setup, resulting in poor readjustment even to their native country

with native people (Adler, 1981; Harevy, 1983). Repatriates sometime fail to adjust to the given new role due to unclearness and ambiguity of the given task, consequently lead to negative relationship with OC (Lazarova and Caligiuri, 2001).

CONCLUSION

This module study compiled the available literature on expatriate and repatriate to emphasize the necessity of proactively managing expatriates' and repatriates before they are relocate to a host country as well as after returning back to their own home country, using system and contingency approaches. This seemingly indicates that the importance of Sri Lankan organizations to facilitate "patriates" (including both expatriates and repatriates) throughout the international assignment process which broadly cover pre-departure, on-assignment and post-assignment periods, being proactive to the consequent behaviors of Sri Lankan repatriates.

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