



CONCEPTUAL STUDY ON EXPATRIATES ADJUSTMENT IN CROSS-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

In this study author review the reputable concept expatriate, thrash out its related problems & present a more complicated & ample understanding of the concept. In this highly competitive globalized environment the expatriate's face many challenges who ought to work collectively are often from diverse culture (Mendenhall, Dunbar and Oddou 1987). Many research work has been done related with the concept of expatriate altogether and the attempt made now is to focus on the review of HR literature to analyze problems related with work-life conflict in expatriate context. The major focus of the paper is to endow theoretical foundation as well as to emphasis the significance of expatriate's work-life balance which has been ignored by past researches. The author reviewed articles from diverse databases, books and magazines. A comprehensive framework has been proposed based on the earlier literature gaps. Based on the framework proposal the researchers invite empirical research in order to strengthen work-life conflict factors as predominant factors for expatriate adjustment in multi-cultural milieu.

Introduction

Expansion of domestic human resource practices to global human resource practices brought new challenge for researchers as well as HR professionals. Adjustment of expatriates is one major challenge among the global human resource practices. For the overseas operations MNC's appointed many expatriates in order to achieve their strategic objectives. The researcher should identify whether the individual or organizational factors predict the success of expatriate (Bennett 1995). Black, Mendenhall and Oddou 1991 proposed in their research work that to be more effective expatriate's manager should understand both the origin of their own behaviour and the congruence of their behaviour with that of individuals of foreign culture. To step into the next stage of business, organizations look ahead expatriation assignment as an imperative strategy. Gupta & Govindarajan, (2000) proposed in their research the success of MNC's in their global market is because of transfer knowledge as well the development among the organization.

Expatriate

Expatriates are those people who are assigned by their organization to another in order to accomplish job related assignment (Sinangil & Ones, 2001). Black and Gregersen, (1999) in their study proposed that there is increase in expatriates as knowledge transfer because of the modification in the management of international companies. Expatriate managers have to conquer challenges not only because of cultural difference but also from their superiors when they endeavor to influence who are from a foreign culture.

Expatriate Culture Adjustment

Taylor (1987) defined culture as that "complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society". Kraimer, 2001 proposed in his research that the performance of the expatriate is the output of cultural adjustment. Bosses of global managers identified that the high performers are the global managers with higher scores on cultural adaptability. The IHRM literature specify that "the failure of expatriate assignments can be traced to the inadequate adaptation of the employee, their partner and family, to unfamiliar, and often threatening, overseas locations" (Nankervis et al., 1993, p. 570). Stone 1991 in his research find out the expatriate managers rank at the top "ability to adapt" and "spouse and family adaptability" in their selection. Dessler, 1997 in his research proposed that professional



psychologists should focus towards family adaptability because much of earlier work focuses in terms of expatriate selection process.

Organizational Support

Employees work performance and work-family roles integration can be achieved by means of support at work Kamerman and Kahn (1987). Thomas, L., & Ganster, D. C. (1995) proposed in their research that the supervisory support can alleviate the conflict between work and family. Supervisory support for the working parents with young children reduces the work/family conflict by means of listening towards their family needs.

Expatriate Cross-Cultural Training

Expatriate to get adapted with the new environment they should be educated about the culture of other people through cross-cultural training (Waxin & Pannacio, 2005). Training courses has to be designed in terms of the area where exactly the expatriate need the support (Farh, Bartol, Shapiro and Shin, 2010). In contrast Pruegger & Rogers, 1994 in their research proposed that there is no liaison between cross-cultural training and performance of job. Similarly Waxin and Pannacio (2005) found in their research work that there is no connection between expatriates adjustment with that of cross-cultural training. Lee & Croker, 2006 said that in recent times training for expatriates has been acknowledged as a critical factor for the success of abroad company's.

Work-life Balance Accomplishment through Family Member Support

The importance of spousal support, adjustment, and well-being towards expatriates is well being recognized by the researchers and practitioners (Kupka & Cathro, 2007; Lee, H.-W., 2007; Sievers, 1998). Black & Mendenhall (1991) proposed in their study a U-shaped adjustment process. Doubts, confusion, stress, and despair arises out of the international assignment if the family members learn and cope with unfamiliar foreign locales. The adjustment of family members and their difficulty towards new environment results in negative affect towards the expatriate as well as. The positive and negative influence of one domain affects the other domain (Kahn, 1964; Madjar, Oldham, & Pratt, 2002). The adjustment of expatriates through the lens of family system theory states that if one is having adjustment problem then the entire family is impacted (Caligiuri, Hyland, Joshi, & Bross, 1998). The adjustment towards the present culture results relatively with smaller changes, while in turn of adaptation towards the cross-culture results in serious crisis due to big changes (Halsberger, Brewster 2007, p. 3). The premature return of expatriate has been linked directly towards the inability of spouse and family members to cope with the new foreign environment (Fischlmayr & Kollinger, 2010). Improving family adjustment during the international assignment is required. Lee, L. & Sukoco, 2008 proposed in their research that the social support for the expatriate spouse accelerated influence on the adjustment and performance of them.

Social Factor

Social Support and Networks

Social support can be defined as a "buffer against stress and a positive association of emotional well-being" (Copeland & Norell, 2002, p. 255). Kraimer et al., 2001 proposed that the stress associated with the new cultural environment get reduced by means of the social support for the expatriates. Harvey, 1998 in his research found that the organizations, co-workers and family members of expatriate can provide the social support to them which in turn reduce the stress associated with cross-cultural environment. Shen & Hall, 2009 proposed in their research that the social network interruption an underexplored area in literature of expatriation. Due to the lack of social network the spouse of expatriate found it difficult in terms of international assignment (Briody & Chrisman, 1991).

Supportive social networks help to improve psychological well-being by reducing the stress as well as depression which is caused by isolation. Through the social network support they can stay connected with friends, family and events back home (Uchino, Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Bloor, 2004). Baker & Roberts, 2006 proposed in their research that the family related issues arises among the expatriation because of "costs" such that clothing

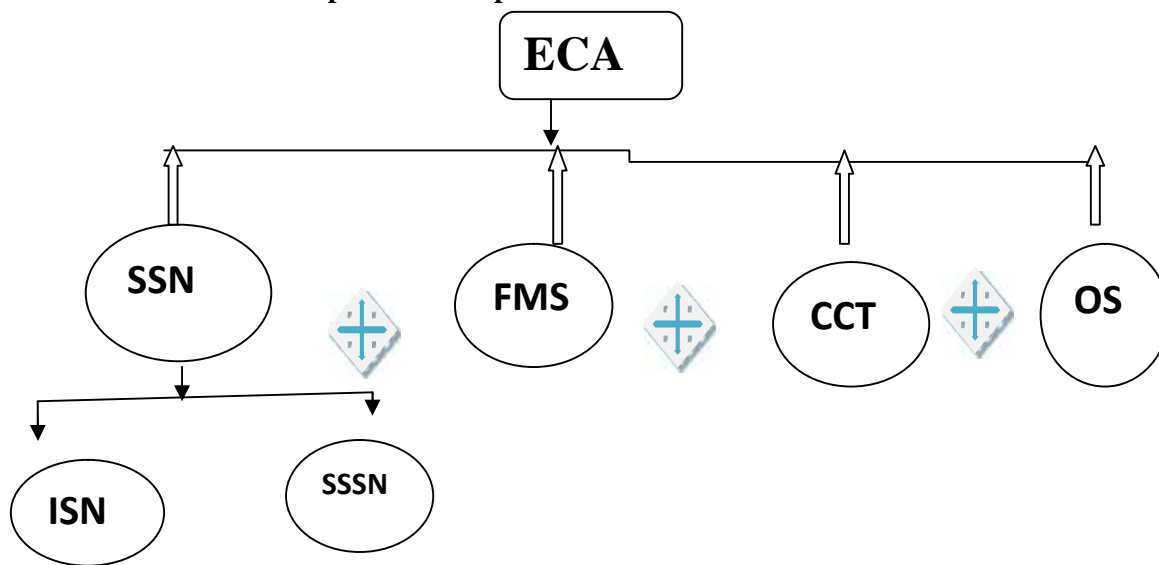


allowances and food we can include schooling for children and assistance for spousal. The online social networks and information online social networks will assist their family members in those areas. Very limited research in terms of expatriate's children. A study explores that the teenagers of expatriate's factors differ from the expatriates and spouses in terms of adjustments which include friends at school and school adjustment (Weeks, Weeks, & Willis-Muller, 2010).

Both supportive and informational social networks will help expatriates family members to adjust and to act appropriately with the new culture which eventually results in adjusting towards assignment and location. Enhancing the cognitive social capital is important and it includes shared language, codes and narratives (Lee, R., 2009). Social capital development helps the expatriate's family members to adjust with the new culture.

A conceptual framework developed in order to fill the gap in expatriate literature.

Model for the Expatriate to cope work-life conflict in Cross-cultural milieu



- ECA- **Expatriates cross-cultural adjustment**
- SSN-- **Social support & networks**
- FMS- **Family-member support**
- CCT- **Cross-cultural Training**
- OS- **Organizational support**
- ISN--- **Informational social support network**
- SSSN-- **Supportive Social support & networks**

Discussions and Conclusion

Shen and Hall 2009 proposed in their research that many of the expatriates worried about their foreign assignments because “out of sight, out of mind usually”. Cross-cultural impacts and its adjustments is examined numerous in recent years (Ramalu et al 2010; Shapiro and Shin, 2010; Osman-Gani & Rockstuhl, 2009; Kumar, 2008 ;Tahir & Ismail 2007; Lee & Croker, 2006; Martin and Anthony, 2006; Waxin & Pannacio, 2005; Harris, 2004; Guthrie, Ash and Stevens, 2003; Hechanova et al, 2003; Farh, Bartol.; Dowling, Welch and Schuler, 1999; Dowling et al, 1999). This research provides a new dimensions in the international human resource management field, it presents new model which demonstrate the expatriate's family adjustments to international assignment through number of factors such as social network factor, individual factor as well as the organizational factors.



Kupka & Cathro, 2007 in their research proposed that spousal issues of international assignment need to be addressed in the International Human Resource Management by means of creating some of the strategic initiatives. This article act as the foundation in terms of expatriates adjustment. To further online social network to focus on the expatriates children. To promote and support social network it requires investment, time and effort (Shen & Hall, 2009). But investment will not be as cost effective since its already established online social network such as facebook (Green & Bailey, 2010). Caligiuri et al., 1998 proposed that spouses and family members are disconnected from their earlier network because of the new assignment of the expatriates while examining the literature it's important to focus on family adjustment. Through the review of numerous research works the author found the major factors which are favoring the expatriate's adjustment with that of the new assignment. The research concludes that to reduce work-life conflict and to improve expatriates performance it's important to improve cross cultural adjustments by means of organizational support, family support and social network support.

Implications for Practice

After analyzing numerous literature reviews shows that improvement in cross cultural adjustment is essential in order to avoid work-life conflict. So it is very important to focus on expatriates spouse as well as family member's adjustment with that of the new culture.

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