

ROLE OF LOGISTICS SUPPORT IN INTERNATIONAL ADJUSTMENT: A STUDY OF INDIAN EXPATRIATES

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ABSTRACT

This paper explored the relationship between logistics support and the international adjustment of professional Indian expatriates. With the help of a self-administered online questionnaire relationship of various individual variables with adjustment and its different dimensions (general living, work related and interaction adjustment) was analysed. A total of 369 Indian expatriates from 13 different countries were surveyed using judgement and snowball sampling techniques. The results of the analysis indicate that Indian expatriates were found to be adjusted well in foreign countries. The level of adjustment was more towards general living and work environment as compared to interaction adjustment. Significant correlations were found between logistics support and adjustment and its dimensions. Various practical suggestions were also given based on the present research study.

Key words: Expatriate, Adjustment, general living adjustment, work adjustment, interaction adjustment, logistics support.

1.INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of globalization has significantly altered the world. Previously, the thought to move abroad was considered to be the sphere of prosperous persons and big corporate houses. According to Punnet (1997) global mobility has become a reality and a necessity today. More and more people are moving to other countries to live and work. When the employees are sent by the organisations from home nations to various international locations they are termed as organizational expatriates. On the other hand when the individuals decide by their own to shift overseas to live and work they are known as self-initiated expatriates.

The issue of management of expatriates has got a significant attention in the literature related to International Human Resources Management. An important aspect which differentiates expatriate jobs from other jobs is

the additional complication of the intercultural environment that makes adjustment challenging for expatriates and their families.

When enterprises expand internationally, they realise the urgency to utilise expatriates on global assignments for strategic reasons. So as to stay competitive in current global environment, organisations recognize that shifting proficient workforce not only add-on vital skill and acquaintance to their outcome and performance and making them more competent to compete worldwide markets, but also this type of work force is crucial for accomplishing global projects. Expatriates help in implementing global business strategies and managing subsidiaries in different countries.

The expatriates depart from their own country with the intent of an ultimate come back. They get into entirely different environment which may be very unknown and unpredictable. They take on work roles in a different framework; cope up the cultural shock and go through intense change. The frustration and confusion that result from being bombarded by uninterruptable cues makes the expatriate job different from other jobs and is again and again proved as the prime reason of a failed or ineffective expatriate assignment (Oberg 1960).

Many researchers like Black(1988); Gertson (1990); Parker &Evoy (1993) recommended that expatriates who don't adjust satisfactorily with respect to global assignments are not able to perform well, take out psychologically, and mostly come back before term. There may be many different factors responsible for this occurrence that may involve problem of adapting to various physical or cultural surroundings, family connected complexities, personality related aspects, job connected technical aptitude, and absence of inspiration to do job abroad .For expatriates and their families, adaptation to live abroad may be considered as a major hurdle .The more the level of adjustment of expatriates, the more is the probability of completing their international assignments (Kramer Wayne and Jaworski 2001). For that reason, well-adjusted expatriates are more proficient and dedicated for their new assignments as they undergo low degree of stress and frustration. The successful adaptation of expatriates in the foreign environment is proved time and again as the foremost influential factor of his work performance. Because of this basis it is vital to figure out the unexplored determinants like social support that facilitate adjustment of expatriates to the foreign cultural environment.

2.THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

2.1. Expatriate

Conventionally, the term “expatriate” refers to those employees that are dispatched to posts outside of their home nation for a period of months or years. Currently, the term has begun to include those persons that are not transferred overseas but who decide by their own to live and work in foreign locations (Suutari&Brewster, 2000). They are known as self-initiating expatriates. Because of deficit of skills in different nations and growing demand of culturally empathetic and competent work force self initiated expatriates are significant human resource for global organisations and an increasing number of persons are hired by multinational corporations (Deloitte, 2010).

For the purpose of present study an expatriate is defined as someone who has chosen to live in a country other than the one of which he or she is a citizen. So all the people who are Indian citizens and are residing and working in other countries are Indian Expatriates.

2.2 Professional

According to Macmillan Dictionary, a professional is someone who has special skills or qualifications which are certified formally by a professional body. Now the scope of the term has widened. Basically the individuals who are involved in mental or administrative work are included in the definition of professional contrary to those who are engaged in physical work.

2.3 International Adjustment

Basically, adjustment is the degree to which an individual feel comfortable with different aspects of environment (Black, Mendenhall and Oddou 1991). This definition can be extended by Brett's (1980) contention that one of the principal processes of adjustment is that of decreasing uncertainty.

2.4 Dimensions of Adjustment

Earlier researchers (Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1960) regarded adjustment as a one-dimensional concept. But Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991 have given a three dimensional view of international adjustment.

- General living adjustment
- Interaction adjustment
- Work adjustment

1. **General adjustment** is level of comfort an expatriate feels with respect to various dimensions of foreign country environment, such as climate, food, housing, health care, shopping and transport facilities.
2. **Interaction adjustment** refers to the level of psychological comfort with respect to different styles used by the expatriate for communicating with foreign nation nationals.
3. **Work adjustment** is the degree of comfort with respect to various job standards, requirements and work values at the workplace in the foreign country.

2.5 Logistical Support

International assignments usually involve a great deal of uncertainty. Expatriates and their families may be uncertain about what new behaviours might be required or expected of them. Also, there may be confusion about whether or not old behaviours will be considered unacceptable or inappropriate if utilized in the new environmental setting (Black et al., 1991). When moving to a new country there are many logistical issues which prove to be a source of uncertainty. Logistical support refers to the assistance provided by the company that deals with the uncertainties of day-to-day living. For example, many expatriates and their families will be extremely uncertain about where they should go grocery shopping, when they can go grocery shopping, whether or not price is negotiable, and whether or not their favourite foods will be available to them. This is just one example; other issues might include uncertainties about schooling, housing, social activities, medical care, local laws and rules, free-time possibilities, etc. Logistical support provided by the organization reduces both the uncertainty associated with the issues mentioned above, and the time which expatriates have to spend on these issues. Accordingly, logistical support is considered to have a significant influence on expatriate adjustment (Aycan, 1997).

3. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

This paper explores the relationship between logistical support and different dimensions of adjustment. By understanding this factor for a successful expatriate adjustment in the host site, this study can assist organizational performance and reduce attrition rate among expatriates.

4. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the present study is to explore the relation of logistical support with the different dimensions of adjustment of Indian expatriates who are living and working in different countries.

5. HYPOTHESES

Based on literature review the study was advanced on the following hypotheses:

H1: Logistical support has no relation with international adjustment of working professional Indian expatriates.

H1(a): Logistical support has no relation with general living adjustment of working professional Indian expatriates.

H1(b): Logistical support has no relation with work adjustment of working professional Indian expatriates.

H1(c) : Logistical support has no relation with interaction adjustment of working professional Indian expatriates

6 METHODOLOGY

6.1 Scope of the Study

The study included only those Indian expatriates who are working professionals. Unskilled labour i.e. people engaged in manual jobs and those have become entrepreneurs were not a part of the study. However the study covered both types of expatriates i.e. OEs (Organizational expatriates) and SIEs (Self initiating expatriates).

6.2 Population of the Study

The universe for the present research consists of all professional Indian expatriates working and living in various countries of the world. There are 10037761 non-resident Indians living in 205 countries of the world (data available on the official website of ministry of Indian overseas affairs in the form of country wise list of population of non-resident Indians updated latest on May12, 2012).

6.3 Sample and Sample Design

Sampling for the study was done at two stages. At first stage, 15 countries out of the top thirty countries where there is high concentration of Indians (data available on the official website of ministry of Indian overseas affairs in the form of country wise list of population of non-resident Indians updated latest on May12, 2012) were selected by simple random sampling technique.

Table 1: List of top thirty countries (NRI population wise)

S.No.	Country	NRI Population
1.	Saudi Arabia	1789000
2.	UAE	1750000
3.	UK	1500000
4.	USA	927283
5.	Oman	718000
6.	Kuwait	579390
7.	Qatar	500000
8.	Bahrain	350000
9.	Singapore	350000
10.	Australia	213710
11.	Canada	200000
12.	Malaysia	150000
13.	Nepal	112500
14.	Italy	97719
15.	Thailand	90000
16.	Philippines	47000
17.	Germany	42500
18.	Kenya	37500
19.	New Zealand	35000
20.	Bhutan	33010
21.	Maldives	26000
22.	Hong Kong	23000
23.	Japan	22500
24.	Netherlands	20000
25.	Ireland	18018
26.	South Africa	18000
27.	Spain	15000
28.	Uganda	15000
29.	Mauritius	15000
30.	Libya	14995

At the second stage non-probability techniques i.e. judgmental and snowball sampling techniques were applied. Judgmental sampling means a technique where the researcher selects those subjects which he thinks appropriate for the research subject. The other technique used to obtain respondents was snowball sampling also known as reference sampling. The planned sample size was 400. One thousand forms were sent to the potential

respondents of these randomly chosen countries. These respondents were further requested to forward the questionnaire to their friends and known and identify further members of the population.

A total of 383 questionnaires were received from respondents of 13 countries. There were no responses from two countries. Out of 383, 16 were incomplete responses which could not be used so final sample was of 367 expatriates. Of these 239 were SIEs (self initiated expatriates) and 128 were OEs (organisational expatriates).

Table2: Country wise distribution of responses received

S.NO.	COUNTRIES	OE	SIE	TOTAL
1.	UAE	18	30	48
2.	Saudi Arabia	10	11	21
3.	Bahrain	1	1	2
4.	Oman	1	2	3
5.	Kuwait	2	3	5
6.	Qatar	-	4	4
7.	USA	28	48	76
8.	UK	10	31	41
9.	Australia	21	40	61
10.	New Zealand	9	18	27
11.	Canada	24	47	71
12.	Singapore	2	4	6
13.	Hongkong	2	-	2
14.	Japan	-	-	-
15.	Germany	-	-	-
Total		128	239	367

6.4 Collection of Data

Data was collected with the help of both primary as well as secondary sources. The primary data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire using online and mail survey technique. The questionnaire

was drafted in a MS word format and it was also put on the Googledocs web link. Online surveys generally suffer from low response rate and involve more time and money. Taking this into consideration, online survey was conducted that made the procedure less time consuming and more suitable for the participants, therefore, motivating them to respond. Secondary sources comprised of books, journals, government ,non-government agencies, newspapers and earlier studies, papers presented in seminars and conferences; internet etc.

6.5 Tools Used

6.5.1 Adjustment scale

A standard scale consisting of 14 statements proposed by Black and Stephens (1989) was used for measuring adjustment level including its three dimensions. It is a five dimensional scale whose scores range between 1 to 5, 1 being very unadjusted and 5 being very adjusted. Out of total fourteen statements 7 statements are for measuring general living adjustment like food, housing, shopping etc., 3 statements are for measuring work related adjustment like various job and performance obligations and finally 4 statement for measuring interaction adjustment like socializing and making networks with people in the host country. Validity and reliability of this scale have been established again and again in subsequent studies across different cultures.

6.5.2 Logistics support scale

A scale developed by White and Firsova(2008) was modified for the study and a shorter version of the scale consisting of six items was used to measure logistics support. The items were scored on 5 point scale (*1=very dissatisfied to 5=very satisfied*). Example of the item include: “Assistance provided by the organization in locating school/kindergarten for your children”.

6.5.3 Reliability and Validity of Scales

The reliability and validity of all the selected scales were checked before applying them for data collection. Reliability was checked with the help of Cronbach alpha(α) and of most of the scales it came out to be satisfactory and within acceptable range.

Table 3: Values of reliability coefficients of various variables

“Scale”	“Cronbach alpha value(α)”
Social Support	.64
Total Adjustment	.89
Adjustment in general living conditions	.92
Adjustment in interacting with others	.78
Adjustment in work related settings	.87

The validity of the scales was checked by using the inputs from experts. The validity was established by editing it again and again and by giving it to several experts for their suggestions.

7. ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data was analysed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 21.0 in this study. Descriptive statistics namely “mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis” were computed to study nature of distribution of scores of social support and adjustment & its dimensions. Demographic profile of respondents was analysed by means of frequency and percentage distribution.

Pearson product moment correlations between adjustment, its dimensions and social support were calculated to ascertain the extent of relationship between these variables.

8. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

8.1 International Adjustment and Its Dimensions:

The values for skewness and kurtosis were calculated. These values were within limits (-1 to +1 for skewness) and (-3 to +3 for kurtosis) for almost all the variables, so the distribution of scores was normal.

Table 5 Descriptive Statistics for Adjustment and its dimensions

Statistics	Adjustment and its dimensions			
	General Adjustment (N=367)	Interaction Adjustment (N=367)	Work Adjustment (N=367)	Adjustment(Total) (N=367)
Mean	4.0686	3.7829	4.0052	3.9548
Std.Deviation	.41588	.55672	.59070	.36482
Minimum	2.71	2.00	2.33	2.56

Maximum	5.00	4.75	5.00	4.65
Skewness	-1.002	-.710	-.339	-.955
Kurtosis	1.369	1.186	-.099	2.149

On the dimension of General Adjustment the scores of Indian expatriates ranged between 2.71 and 5. The mean of the score was found to be 4.06 and the standard deviation was .415. The Indian expatriates scored between 2 and 4.75 on the dimension of interaction adjustment. The mean of the group was 3.78 and standard deviation was .558. The scores of Indian expatriates ranged between 2.33 and 5 on the dimension of work adjustment. The mean value calculated as 4 and the standard deviation computed as .590. The scores of Indian expatriates on total adjustment ranged between 2.56 and 4.65. The mean of the score was found to be 3.95 and the standard deviation was .364. The results indicate that the mean adjustment degree of Indian expatriates was well over the mid-point mark. So the Indian expatriates are well adjusted on total adjustment as well as on its different dimensions. The level of adjustment is more on the dimension of general adjustment and work adjustment as compared to interaction adjustment. These results are as per the findings of the earlier work done by Black et al (1988), Napier (1995) and Taylor (2002). Interaction adjustment is considered to be the most challenging as it is concerned with speaking and adapting to socialising with people of the foreign country. As an individual deals with nationals of a different nation so there may be conflict because the perception of the expatriate may not match with the values and beliefs of people in the host nation. It may cause frustration, depression and anxiety, which can negatively influence the process of adjustment (Chang, 1996)

Table 6 Descriptive Statistics

Statistics	
Mean	3.5518
Std.Deviation	.66456
Minimum	1.00
Maximum	5.00
Skewness	-.761
Kurtosis	1.612

The scores on social network with home country nationals ranged between 1 and 5. The mean was found to be 3.55 and the scores on skewness (-.761) and kurtosis (1.612) were found to be within limits.

8.2 CORRELATION BETWEEN LOGISTICS SUPPORT AND ADJUSTMENT AND ITS DIMENSIONS

Logistics support was found to be significantly positively correlated with general adjustment, interaction adjustment and work adjustment and total adjustment. The correlation was found to be significant at .01 level. The results imply that higher the logistics support, higher is the level of general adjustment, work adjustment, interaction adjustment and higher is the overall adjustment and vice versa.

Table 9: Correlation between logistics support and adjustment & its dimensions

Adjustment	Correlation with logistics support
General Adjustment	.183(**)
Interaction Adjustment	.240(**)
Work Adjustment	.171(**)
Adjustment(Total)	.275(**)

*Significant at the 0.05 level.

** Significant at the 0.01 level.

Logistical support refers to the assistance provided by the company that deals with the uncertainties of day-to-day living. Logistical support provided by the organization reduces both the uncertainty associated and the time which expatriates have to spend on these issues.

In Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. (2005) logistical support facilitated both general and interaction adjustment, and in Shaffer et al. (1999) logistical support was only found to have a significant effect on interaction adjustment. There has been no empirical research which has supported the notion that logistical support might have a cross-domain effect on work adjustment.

But this study shows that logistics support is significantly related to all the dimensions of adjustment i.e. general, interaction and work adjustment but the coefficient is highest with interaction adjustment.

Hence Hypothesis 1(a)(b)(c) that logistics support is not significantly related to adjustment and its dimensions i.e. work adjustment, interaction adjustment and general living adjustment is rejected.

9.CONCLUSION

The study revealed that as far as international adjustment of professional Indian expatriates is concerned, they found to be more adjusted for the dimension of general living and work environment as compared to interaction adjustment. Significant correlations were found between social support and adjustment and its dimensions.

10. STUDY LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Firstly self reported data has been used which includes an element of personal biasness and may affect the finding of the study. So in future studies data can be collected from multiple sources like superiors, subordinates and peers to have the complete information.
- Only selected social support variable has been included in the study. So other relevant variables can be studied in relation to adjustment and its dimensions.
- It is also recommended for future research to consider and take issues of consequences of adjustment like performance, satisfaction etc.
- Both quantitative and qualitative techniques may be applied that provide in-depth findings and results, which may allow to give the relevant organizations with practical recommendations to enhance international adjustment of expatriates.

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