

An Analysis on Research Gaps in Expatriate-Repatriate Management in Sri Lanka

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Abstract- Expatriate-Repatriate Management (ERM) is increasingly considered an important branch of International Human Resource Management (HRM). With the rapid growth in the globalizing business environment, it is still an emerging field of research in the Sri Lankan context. This research paper is an attempt to find out some research gaps in the ERM process which are highly essential to address in the future empirical studies. The scope of the paper, thereby, was limited to empirical findings available in Sri Lanka and it resulted in identifying six gaps in the ERM process under the coverage of two theories namely, contingency theory, and social exchange theory. Empirical research findings of future research studies could fill these identified research gaps.

Index Terms- Expatriates, Repatriates, Organizational support, Social support, Cross-cultural adjustment, Home country readjustment, Sri Lanka

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the distinguished but unnoticed features of the Sri Lankan economy after 1977 is continuing rise of outward foreign direct investment (O-FDI) activity of local business organizations. After 1977 with an open market economic policy, the Sri Lankan government deregulated control over foreign exchange and this led to rapid increases in outward investment within the region and outside the region. More significantly such investment is driven by both manufacturing and service organizations. Following such changes in investment, the demands for international assignments have emerged but as revealed by the Global Competitiveness Report (2010), Sri Lanka needs to achieve much more progress if it is to be globally competitive. Among the 12 variables that the report looks at, Sri Lanka is rated well in the areas of innovation, business sophistication, market size, technology improvements, increasing markets sophistication, and good market efficiency but the country lags behind in labour markets including foreign labour market efficiency and productivity. To date, no empirical findings were found to claim the positive changes of the condition that has been achieved to reach the desired level of competitiveness globally.

According to Adler and Ghadar (1990), compared to the stages of internationalization of business, Sri Lankan firms are still at the early stage of the internationalized process. In the final attempt of being a global firm in the future, the development of potential leaders through expatriate assignments (non-traditional types of international assignments excluded from this study),

assurance of the continuity of the responsibility upon after completion of international assignments (repatriates) is highly desirable in Sri Lankan firms. In this backdrop, an international assignment is considered as a faster way of getting core competencies in a dynamic business world (Black *et al.*, 1991a, Stroh *et al.*, 2008). According to Stroh *et al.* (2008), it is acknowledged that living and working internationally can help employees develop a robust and well-rounded personality because of working in diverse fields, job feedback from various sources, exposure to different ways of approaching business problems, and sensitivity to market flexibilities (Jayasekara and Takahashi, 2014). More specifically, expatriates directly control over subsidiary to maintain uniform management standards developed by headquarters and thereby transfer and establish organizational culture in foreign establishments (McNulty and Selmer, 2017). Meanwhile, expatriates play an important role to keep direct and immediate contacts with headquarters as well (Scullion and Collings, 2006). In general, expatriates are equipped with capacity of operating in global teams, equipped with global mind-sets, as well as are able to provide leadership in the global arena (Gibson *et al.*, 2015). Transferability of the expatriates international business acumen and proficiency returning to the organization is highly favorable for the future development of organizations in many ways (Jayasekara and Takahashi, 2014, Harrison *et al.*, 2006; Takeuchi and Takeuchi, 2013). This background is forced to reintegrate Expatriate and Repatriate to the parent organizations at work and in a social and general context. Therefore, carefully managing performance outcomes of Expatriate and Repatriate ensure that they can apply these core competencies to contribute to both domestic and international business expansion of the Sri Lankan business firms in the future. Thereby strategic formation around the performance outcome of both expatriates and repatriates foresees the future of international business organizations.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

While the expatriate literature has continued to expand since the 1980s (Collings *et al.*, 2007), the existing research studies have not yet been addressed adequately in the Sri Lankan context. The context of this study is Sri Lankan business firms which in broader aspect represent the non-western context and in particular represents the context of Asian developing countries (Jayasekara and Takahashi, 2013), where it lacks extensive academic research. Although, the impact of ERM on both individual and firm performance have been relatively well tested

in large scale multinationals in the Western economies, it has no direct implications for the non-western context of the early stage of internationalized businesses owing to structural, cultural, and developmental differences. Therefore, some major facets of the ERM process leading to global competitiveness are still vague and an empirical gap of knowledge exists especially in the case of the early-stage of internationalized firms similar to the Sri Lankan context. The purpose of this paper is to explain the research findings on ERM and introduce some research gaps for future references in the Sri Lankan context.

Specifically this paper attempts to achieve the following objectives:

1. To present an introduction to expatriate-repatriate process
2. To specify the key study findings on expatriate-repatriate management in Sri Lanka
3. To present certain research gaps in expatriate-repatriate management process

Various theories contribute in describing ERM and amongst them, two theories namely, contingency theory, and social exchange theory selected in explaining the research gaps in Sri Lankan context.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Expatriates and Repatriates

Throughout the history of International Human Resource Management (IHRM), expatriate assignment was the most popular international assignment type which was labeled as traditional international assignments which were alternatively called structured assignments or, long term international assignments (Haslberger and Brewster, 2009, Opatha, 2002). Different researchers have presented different meanings for expatriates though its essence is based on the movement from one original country to another country. According to Suutari and Brewster, (2000), an expatriate is an individual that lives and works abroad who engage in work of a temporary nature. Caligiuri *et al.*, (2009) referred to expatriates as employees, a national of one country who is sent by a parent organization to live and work in another country. An expatriate may be an employee of a business or government organization sent to a country other than their homeland to implement the goals of the organization (Aycan *et al.* (2000). In general, "an expatriate" refers to the employee assigned by the international corporation to work abroad.

Repatriation refers to the return expatriates (Berthoin Antal, 2001., Jayasekara, 2019). Among the reasons for repatriation, researchers are encountered period of posting getting over as the main reason. In addition to that, because of the necessity of moving to another global assignment, expatriates return to the home country. 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. These qualities are highly desirable for the long-term success of the company, and can be transferred to the organization by appropriately managing the behavior of repatriates (Jayasekara

and Takahashi, 2014, Lazarova and Caligiuri 2001, Burmeister and Deller, 2015)

3.2 Expatriate and Repatriate Adjustment

Globally, the adjustment of expatriates has emerged as a key element for success of organizations, since it is positively associated with individual and organizational performance in many ways (Jonasson *et al.*, 2017). However, the term 'expatriates adjustment' has experienced a lack of consensus among the experts in the field and is named as adaptation, acculturation, or assimilation as alternative terms for adjustment (Sousa *et al.*, 2007, Hippler, Caligiuri and Johnson, 2014). Researchers defined expatriate adjustment differently. Adjustment in terms of subjective well-being (Campbell, 1981), adjustment in terms of unhappy feelings of expatriates about their circumstances (Munton and West, 1995), adjustment as psychological discomfort which can be categorized as work, general, and interaction adjustment (Black, 1988) adjustment as the degree of comfort or the absence of stress associated with the new situation abroad as an adjustment to the new culture (Bhaskar and Shrinivas *et al.* 2005), defined by the authorizers of the field. A basic concept on the expatriates' adjustment is the multidimensional sociocultural concept (Selmer *et al.*, 2015) and the three dimensions: general, work, and interaction adjustment, introduced by Black *et al.* in (1991), were repeatedly tested by researches. *General Adjustment*: The extent to which an individual experiences psychological comfort, familiarity, and ease regarding features of the general environment/non work environment. It comprises factors such as housing conditions, healthcare, and cost of living, etc. *Interaction Adjustment*: Interactional adjustment refers to the degree of psychological comfort regarding different communication and interpersonal styles used in the host country nationals at work and in non-work situations. *Work Adjustment*: Work adjustment reflects the degree of psychological comfort regarding different work values, expectations, and standards. It involves adjustment to job responsibilities, supervision, and performance expectation (Black, 1988; Black and Stephens, 1989). Other authors have also identified three types of adjustment: sociocultural, psychological (Searle and Ward, 1990), and professional (Aycan and Berry, 1996). *Sociocultural adjustment* refers to the social skills that influence attitudes, and involves the individual's ability to adjust to a new cultural environment (Searle and Ward, 1990). It is grounded on cultural learning theory and highlights practical social skills and behaviors motivating attitudinal factors (Selmer *et al.*, 2015). *Psychological adjustment* focused on the attitudes of the expatriate, which corresponds to the theoretical concept of subjective well-being and satisfaction with regard to various aspects of life (Halim *et al.*, 2014; Selmer *et al.*, 2015). *Professional adjustment* refers to the attitudes of individuals in relation to their work and the organizational practices of the way they perform their tasks (Dawis and Lofquist, 1984; Halim *et al.*, 2014).

In the means of repatriate adjustment, researchers 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 (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. Repatriates, sometimes, fail to adjust to the given new role due to unclearness and ambiguity of the given task, consequently lead to negative relationship with organizational commitment and positive relationship between intentions to turnover. (Cox (2004., Bossard, and Peterson, 2005., Dunlap-Hinkler, and Parente, 2004., Jassawalla *et al.*, 2004., Lee and Liu, 2006).

3.3 Family Adjustment

As in Filipič *et al.* (2018), McNulty in 2014, defined expatriate family as: “married, de-facto, live-in, or long-term partners of the opposite or same sex, with or without children, with family members that reside in one or many locations; and legally separated or divorced (single) adults with children, with family members that reside in one or many locations.” This definition discloses that family members such as spouse and children are a secondary stakeholder of the organizations. They indirectly influence organizational achievements. For example, Selmer & Leung (2003) noted that the relationship between spousal adjustment and expatriate adjustment is indeed reciprocal, because the stress felt by the spouse can have damaging effects on work and marital relationship of the expatriate and vice versa. Because of their isolation in a foreign location one depends on each other more than ever. Shaffer and Harrison (2006) verified that spouse adjustment had direct impact interaction and general adjustment of expatriates. As in Caligiuri *et al.*, (1998), success of international assignments is not the sole function of expatriates themselves, but the function of expatriate’s spouse and family members too. However, the spouse and family members are less sheltered from in-country HRM support (Anderson, 2008). The spouse and family adjustment exists under three dimensions as cultural adjustment, interaction adjustment and personal adjustment. *Cultural adjustment*: refers to the adaption to various environmental and situational conditions, *interaction adjustment*: refers to relationships or interpersonal associations with host country nationals and, *personal adjustment*: refers to the sense of becoming part of, belonging to or feeling at home in a foreign environment (McNulty and Selmer, 2017; Shaffer and Harrison, 2001)

3.4 Spillover and Cross-over Impact of Adjustment

Spillover effects related to the impact of expatriate attitudinal behaviour in a particular area (e.g., work) on other areas (e.g., home). If expatriates are well adjusted to working in the host country, their positive feelings will spill over to their family and facilitate family’s cross-cultural adjustment. Crossover effects related to the impact of expatriate attitudes on partner’s attitudes and vice versa. There are a number of researches which had shown significant crossover effects among partners (e.g., Black and Gregersen, 1991, Takeuchi *et al.* 2002., Luring and Selmer, 2010). Van der Zee *et al.* (2005) found that a crossover of stressors from the expatriate to their partner’s subjective well-being. Takeuchi *et al.* (2002) confirmed crossover and spillover effect owing to expatriate’s and spouse adjustment. A study by Luring and Selmer (2010) concluded that partners who feel well adjusted to the general environment in the host culture can have a positive influence on expatriates by giving information support, were the first to report on spillover effects between family life and work

adjustment. Among the studies Caligiuri *et al.* (1998), Ali, (2003), Trompeter *et al.*, (2016) confirmed a positive spillover of adjustment to expatriates’ partners and children. Van der Zee *et al.* (2005) reported a negative spillover of expatriates’ home demands to their work roles.

3.5 Expatriate and Repatriate Performance Outcomes

Expatriate performance outcome is an important phenomenon in financial and emotional perspectives, both for the MNC and for the individual as well. Expatriate performance includes both contextual and task elements. Task performance is related to the technical and managerial aspects of work. It represents the core technical activities of the organization and in which an expatriate is expected to successfully perform his/her job duties by meeting or exceeding the targeted goals and projects (Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.* 2005). Multidimensional form of performance of expatriates are exemplified: establishment of business contacts, effort and initiative, management and supervision, job-specific task proficiency, generating business, supervision/leadership, demonstrating effort, quantity of performance, and quality of performance of expatriates. Contextual performance is related to Non-job-specific task proficiency, such as socialization with host country nationals (Kraimer and Wayne 2004). Contextual performance indicators have been recorded in the literature, as interpersonal relations, personal discipline, communication and persuasion, ability to work with others, maintaining personal discipline, facilitating peer and team performance of expatriates (Scullion, and Collings, 2006., Rose *et al.* 2010., Kraimer and Wayne 2004) . However, inability to adjust to the foreign culture, length of assignment, willingness to move, work-related factors, psychological contract, inability to adjust to the foreign culture, and spouse/partner dissatisfaction work as moderators of expatriate performances in a host country setting (Lee and Sukoc, 2010., Dowling and Wejch, 2008., Takeuchi, *et al.*, 2018).

Repatriates performance outcomes were measured along three dimensions as: individual group and organizational levels. These outcomes at the individual level concerns: improvement of quality of life and subsequent career paths, job satisfaction, and psychological wellbeing, while group/team level outcomes concern, socialization, used to cope with new managers and peers, including psychological adjustments of repatriates, forming new working relationships, taking advantage of new opportunities with others and merging back into the former organizational culture and subcultures. Repatriation at the organizational level focuses on the organization-wide policies, procedures, and strategies for the repatriate including resourcing at all IHRM function ex: cross-cultural training, expatriate selection, introducing new international business markets, resourcing to train local staff to educate on international business, knowledge sharing with the local staff, lesser turnover or turnover intention, and organizational commitment as recorded in the literature (Jayasekara, 2020., Suutari, and Valimaa., 2002., Kimbe, 2019).

IV. METHOD

The desk research approach was adopted as it was appropriate in order to achieve the objectives of this study. Thereby, key pioneering studies in IHRM were utilized for

achieving the first objective while an extensive literature survey was conducted to archive second and the third objective. For the purpose of achieving the second objective, the literature survey was mainly limited to the articles which had been empirically tested in the Sri Lankan context. The articles were searched in databases such as Emerald, JSTOR, Scopus, EBSCO Host, Sage, and Research Gate. The scope of literature was firstly limited to the published articles during the year 2000 to 2020 and secondly limited to corporate sector assigned expatriates and the returnees (repatriates). Thereby self-initiated expatriates, migrants, public sector expatriates and professional expatriates were excluded. One book including some interpretative papers published under the subjects of IHRM was also found.

V. EXPATRIATE-REPATRIATE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN SRI LANKA

The concept of IHRM is not a literally rich area in Sri Lanka perhaps due to majority of organizations are laid in an early stage of internationalization where they lack global or international exposure and such organizations. The available research opportunities abound despite some of the scholarly work (Jayasekara & Takahashi, 2014., Jayasekara, 2019., Jayasekara, 2020., James, 2018., James and Azungah, 2020., James 2020) on Sri Lankan expatriate and repatriate management which is a bit unique with Asian management heritages. However, all the studies were around one central question: "What is the most effective mechanism that leverages the performance of Sri Lankan expatriate and repatriates?" where performance outcomes were considered as multidimensional phenomena.

5.1 Contingency perspective and ERM in Sri Lanka

This approach mainly focuses on the concept that combination of coherent and complementary Human Resource Management Practices (HRMPs) which refer to internal fit or horizontal fit of individual HRMPs that align in such a way that they support and enhance the effectiveness of each other (Boselie, 2010). HRMPs that are combined with each other lead to better performance because of the inherent nature of the internal fit (MacDuffie, 1995), resulting in performance outcomes of expatriates and repatriates. Aiming in analyzing this main research issue, Jayasekara and Takahashi (2014), Jayasekara (2020) proposed in a seminal work which assist and comprehensively address this phenomenon. Investigation on the direct impact of organizational support through HRMPs on expatriates and repatriates performance outcomes were organized through three research questions.

- (i). Do HRMPs on an individual basis affect the performances of Sri Lankan (a) expatriates and (b) repatriates?
- (ii). Do HRMPs on a bundling basis affect the performances of Sri Lankan (a) expatriates and (b) repatriates?
- (iii). Do HRMPs make changes over the performances of (a) expatriates and (b) repatriates with strategic configuration of assignment?

Addressing the first part of the first research question, a study done by Jayasekara (2019), confirmed that organizational support through HRMPs of selection, training and compensation make influence on at least one dimension of cross cultural

adjustment of Sri Lankan expatriates on individual basis. More specifically, a significant interactive effect of selection and training on work adjustment by a higher degree as well as a combined impact of all three HRMPs on work adjustment and interaction adjustment was proven. Further, findings of this study confirmed that bundling of HRMPs are more sensitive on cross-cultural adjustment than that of the individual impact of HRMPs. Thereby, concluding the results, the sensitivity of selection, training, and compensation on work adjustment seemed to be better than that of the combination of selection and training on adjustment of Sri Lankan expatriates.

The second part of the first research question, Jayasekara and Takahashi (2014), had proven that among the selected HRMPs of preparation, recruitment, selection, training and development, compensation and performance evaluation, only preparation and selection emerged as important functions in the Sri Lankan context. More expressively, they found a significant impact of those three factors on three types of dependent variables of job commitment, organizational commitment, and retention of repatriates from Asia. Recruitment, training and compensation were not supportive with that expectation on individual basis.

To address the second research question, two types of HRMP bundles were identified in the same study. The Development orientation bundle included the HRMPs of preparation, recruitment, and selection while the motivation-oriented bundle comprised of training, performance evaluation, and compensation. Development-oriented HRMPs, selection, when bundled with preparation, and motivation-based bundle, the combination of fair performance evaluation and adequate compensation improved repatriates commitment to their jobs, and to the organization. These findings confirm the availability of the internal fit of some of the HRMPs in Sri Lankan organizations and the necessity of streamlining the functions at least, pre-departure stage and on-assignment stage of expatriate assignment as a proactive strategy of improving performances at post- assignment.

The aim of the third research question was to identify vertical fit of HRMPs with organizational strategies. This study proved that HRMPs had a vertical fit with the purpose of the expatriate assignments (learning driven vs development driven) to improve behavioral performance of Sri Lankan repatriates from Asia. The given task to the expatriate affected the interaction between the HRMPs and their expected outcomes upon return. However, the impact vertical fit with any organizational conjunction on the relationship of HRMPs and expatriate performance including cross cultural adjustment was not tested in the Sri Lankan context.

5.2 Social exchange perspective and ERM in Sri Lanka

A substantial body of empirical research was conducted on a wide range of antecedents under the broader theme of social exchange theory. In explaining ERM, normally two perspectives namely social perspective of exchanges and organizational perspective of exchanges were discussed. Social relationship and their linkages with expatriates' cross cultural adjustment, is well researched in many country contexts but not yet to be concluded due to incomplete findings (Johnson et al., 2002). Organizational related exchanges are more structured, and they are mostly formal than social ones. At the same time, organizational exchange relationships make a demand over repayment within a particular

period of time e.g. short-term vs long-term. The nature of the return is determined before exchanging the resources. Strong human relations as cultural heritage of collectivistic Asian culture (Hofstede, 1992), the findings on the role of social support on work life is quite important. To explore the impact of social support given to expatriates and repatriates, the following research questions had been addressed.

(i). Do pre-departure, on-assignment and post assignment social support intensify (a) cross-cultural adjustment of Sri Lankan expatriates and (b) home country readjustment of Sri Lankan repatriates?

(ii). Do pre-departure, on-assignment and post assignment organizational support intensify (a) cross-cultural adjustment of Sri Lankan expatriates and (b) home country readjustment of Sri Lankan repatriates?

The Answers to the first part of the first question is found through, Jayasekara (2019) who had proven that the impact of social support on expatriate cross-cultural adjustment. This study provided a clear insight of social support by taking four social networks as spouse support, work-related friends support and non-work-related friend support separately. In addition to that, this study had proven that work-related friends' support on work adjustment and interaction adjustment of Sri Lanka expatriates. Moreover, non-work related friendship significantly explained the relationship with general adjustment possibilities rather than interaction or work adjustment in the case of Sri Lankan expatriates. Thereby, this study contributed a new insight that there is a necessity of being mindful to giving strategic orientation for welfare programs of organizations since Sri Lankan society normally displays positive work ethics, strong work ties, as well with collectivistic group norms e.g. caring, helpfulness, protection, trust, respect obedience and caring on others, this kind of positive linkage is justifiable.

Addressing the second part of the same question, Jayasekara (2019), in her study had proven that social supportive channel of spouse, work and non-work-related friends' significant predictor of both organizational commitment and home country re-adjustment of Sri Lankan repatriates. These findings confirmed that there is a necessity to extend such practices with a more strategic focus on developing professional links within the organization to enrich the work-related contacts and improving socialization facilities due to higher predictability of improving adjustment by non-work friends' support of Sri Lankan repatriates.

In addition to that, a study of James (2020) revealed that repatriates' proactive behavior, perceived coworker support and organizational support facilitates the repatriation adjustment process and repatriates' adjustment influences repatriate's knowledge sharing behavior at home organization. Further, he had discussed the role of repatriates' personal and situational variables on adjustment as well. Also, this study introduced adjustment as a predictor of work engagement and found it had more influence on engagement than the perceived support practices among academic repatriates. In addition to that James and Azungah (2019) in their research had proven that repatriates' both the perceived organizational support had an important role to play in the prediction of repatriation adjustment and intention to leave. However, this study found that "adjustment is still a stronger

predictor of repatriates' turnover intention than repatriates' external employment opportunities among academic repatriates. In addition, when repatriates had trouble in adjustment and perceived high external employment opportunities, they reported higher intentions to leave the university than those who perceived fewer external employment opportunities".

To address the second research question of social exchange theory and its organizational supportive perspectives and its impact on predicting behaviour of Sri Lankan expatriates and repatriates, a study by Jayasekara (2019) reported that organizational support as a significant predictor of organizational commitment of Sri Lankan repatriates. Additionally, it was found that organizational support is positively supported on home country readjustment while it significantly determined the level of organizational commitment. This is due to repatriates' moral attachment is directly connected to repatriate's emotions of affection to their parent organization. On the other hand, when repatriates feel supported, and valued by their organization, they tend to develop identification with a moral obligation to the organization (Shen and Zhu, 2011) and to do the best to the organization in return. These findings highlighted that the financial investments extended on organizational support is regarded worthwhile to bring reasonable returns as it makes some stimuli on home country readjustment in short-term and on organizational commitment in the long-term basis.

VI. ERM RESEARCH GAPS IN SRI LANKAN CONTEXT

Under the shelter of contingency perspective, and social exchange theory, the found research gap on ERM in Sri Lanka laid the foundations for a firm conceptual model for the concern of future researchers.

Research Gap 1- "Do pre-departure on-assignment organizational post-assignment organizational support through HRMPs for performance of expatriate and repatriates moderate the by (a) personal factors (b) host country supportive factors (c) Assignment features and (d) organizational related factors"?

There are no empirical evidence on the moderating effect of personal factors, organizational factors, assignment related factors and host country related factors on the relationship between HRMPs and performance outcomes of expatriates and repatriates.

Research Gap 2- "Do pre-departure on-assignment and post-assignment organizational support for accompanied family members intensifies their cross-cultural adjustment and home country readjustment"?

There is no specific empirical finding on the relationships which exist between pre-departure on-assignment and post-assignment organizational support for accompanied family members which intensify their cross-cultural adjustment and home country readjustment. Family members such as spouse and children are a secondary stakeholder of the organizations and they indirectly influence organizational achievements. In most cases employees' spouses are reluctant to relocate because of the difficulties of finding jobs 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 anxiety and uncertainty related to identity formation, break-up of friendships, and disruption of schooling (Borstoff *et al.*, 1997; Lazarova *et al.*, 2010).

Research Gap 3- “Is there any cross-over effect between expatriates’ cross-cultural adjustment and family members’ cross-cultural adjustment”?

The members in a family exhibit coherent behavior, regular interactions, and interdependence on one another. There are predictable patterns of interaction that emerge in a family system and potentially affect cross-cultural and home culture readjustment of both expatriates and family members. In the context of global assignments, pressures within the family, such as spouse and child maladjustment to the new culture in the host country can affect other individual family member.

Because of the relocation involved in expatriate assignments, the family often becomes more isolated from its physical and psychosocial support systems (friends, relatives, colleagues, etc.), and this isolation constitutes an important loss of support (e.g., Guzzo *et al.*, 1994; Harvey and Buckley, 1998). As a result of being isolated and losing much of their existing support systems, expatriates and their spouses may become more dependent on one another for support (Harvey & Buckley, 1998). This can create a situation in which the influences that spouses and expatriates have on each other as part of the cross-cultural adjustment process (i.e., crossover effects) are likely to be particularly salient. One of the processes whereby an individual’s influence crosses over to another is the spouse’s experience at home to the expatriate employee’s experience at work. When spouses become better adjusted to the general environment of the host culture, more emotional and psychological resources may be available to support the expatriate. For example, spouses may be able to inform the expatriates about host country environments, such as the best use of the transportation systems or how to better make (business) connections. The information provided by the spouses may help socialize the expatriate to the host country. Based on the empirical support for this potential crossover effect (Black & Stephens, 1989; Caligiuri *et al.*, 1998; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998), it is necessary to incorporate these unanswered aspects in future research work in Sri Lanka.

Research Gap 4- “Is there any spillover effect of expatriates’ cross-cultural adjustment”?

Spillover theory asserts that an employee’s experiences at work can carry over into the home, and experiences at home can affect one’s work (Caligiuri *et al.*, 1998). Relocating for work causes significant disruptions in and outside of work that can create uncertainty and stress. Significant spillover effects were identified between the work and non-work domains in the expatriate cross-cultural adjustment process. Specifically, expatriates’ degree of cross-cultural adjustment to living conditions in the foreign country had positive relationships with general adjustment and job satisfaction.

Research Gap 5- “Is there any relationship between cross-cultural adjustment of Sri Lankan expatriates and home country readjustment of Sri Lankan repatriates”?

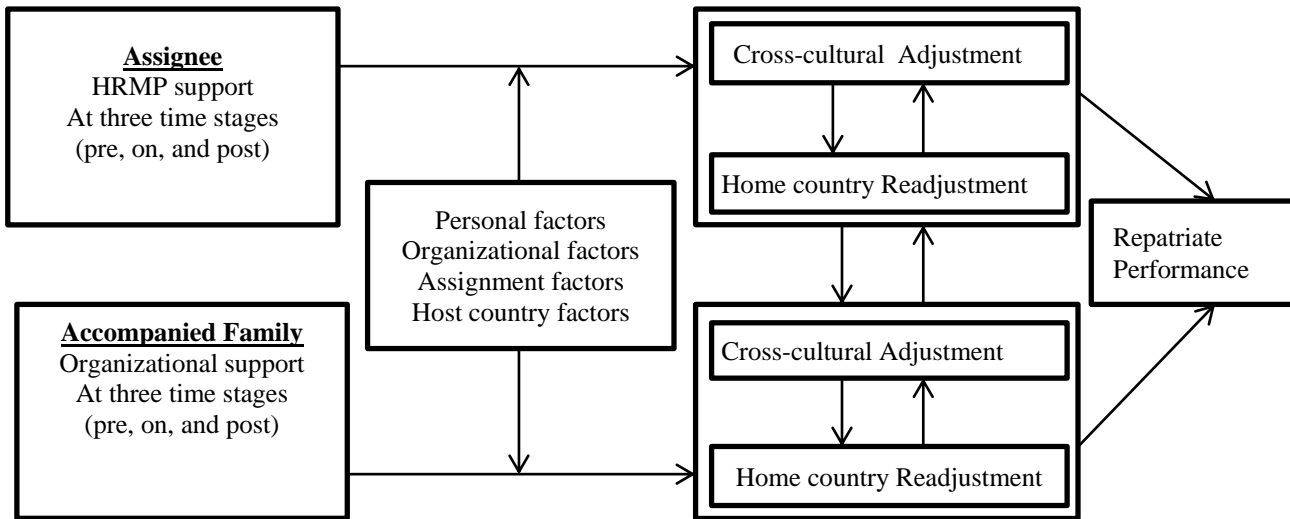
Expatriate cross-cultural adjustment or readjustment requires involvement in a learning process, which means social learning theory provides a theoretical framework from which cross-cultural adjustment can be examined (Black and Mendenhall, 1990). This theory was mainly developed around how individuals learn under what circumstance. Bandura (1977) initially introduced four main stages that explain what realize one’s learning in a new cultural setting. They are (a) observations of others’ behavior (b) associated consequences and (c) imitation of others behavior (Bandura, 1983). Although behaviors learned in one cultural context appear to transfer returning to home country, it is unclear whether coping behaviors learned in expatriation transfer effectively to repatriation (Susman, 2002). However this is not extensively researched and the nature of these relationships is unclear because of conflicting findings across studies. According to Suutari and Valimaa (2002) expatriate and repatriate adjustment are negatively related, because some of them are fully adapted to live abroad without being in 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 wider experiences, broader job responsibility, bigger challenges, and greater autonomy acquired to the home country upon their return (Shen and Hall, 2009). Experiences of host country transfer to current practice would apply their learning upon return (Furuya *et al.*, 2009). For an example logical pattern of work experience building desired cognitive and technical skills to enhance home country work adjustment up to some extent. In general, the international experiences from similar cultural setting can significantly influence the repatriates’ adjustment in a positive manner (Osland, 2000). In this study it was 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.

Research Gap 6- Does host country work group support intensify the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates

Other expatriates in host location are important information sharing channel to make expatriate aware of the working culture (Briody and Chrisman, 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 (Fontaine 1986). Emotional support 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).

For the purpose of developing a strong theoretical foundation on ERM in Sri Lanka, the following conceptual framework shows the necessary directions further.

A research framework for future implications



This model enriches the available literature on ERM in the Sri Lankan context to emphasize the necessity of proactively managing expatriates, repatriates, and accompanied family members before they relocate to a host country as well as after return to the home country back. This seemingly indicates that the importance of Sri Lankan organizations to facilitate traditional “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 performance of Sri Lankan repatriates in which to confirm short-term market survival as well as to capture global competitiveness in the long run.

VII. CONCLUSION

ERM is an emerging field in the Sri Lankan context, and has a great potential to serve for achieving global competitiveness which is a must for sustaining development of Sri Lanka. Adopting a desk research strategy, it was attempted to present a brief introduction to ERM, to explore ERM related research findings in line with two theories of contingency theory, and social exchange theory and, to present certain research gaps in ERM in the Sri Lankan context. It resulted in identifying six research gaps. A research framework was developed by positioning all the research gaps considered. Future research studies with scientific foundation need to be carried out to fill the identified research gaps in ERM in the Sri Lankan context.

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