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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

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- Schemenner, R.W., Huber, J.C. and Cook, R.L. (1987), "Geographic Differences and the Location of New Manufacturing Facilities," Journal of Urban Economics, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 83-104.

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EXCELLENT PRACTICES OF EXPATRIATE RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (ERM) IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ENABLED SERVICE SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to investigate to what extent the excellent practices of expatriate relationship management are found in the organisations and to explore how organizations can better utilize these practices for achieving efficiency and effectiveness. A research study was conducted on 20 respondents from 5 Information Technology Enabled Services companies including Business Processing Organisations and Knowledge Processing Organisations. The opinion of the respondents on six variables and 15 questions relating to the expatriate relationship management was undertaken during a six week period. The results showed that the expatriates were satisfied with six variables on expatriate relationship management implementation with minor deviations in very few aspects (sharing of problems with seniors and updating of latest technology) of the expatriate relationship management practices. The study was conducted in only Information Technology Enabled Service sector (5 Companies), which may limit the broad-spectrum of the findings. The study suggested how organizations can nurture the various practices on expatriate relationship management for the betterment of the expatriates. In addition to this, organizations can also identify the appropriate social structure for their knowledge management purposes. The study also empirically verified the acceptance of various practices of expatriate relationship management and demonstrated that the concept can be used to guide top managers on how to improve their support to expatriates in their organization for successful accomplishment of the objectives.

KEYWORDS

Accenture, China, cross-cultural, international borders, stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION

One of the foundation stones of companies which attract, retain and motivate high performing expatriates is a positive and valuing attitude toward them. Successful organizations nurture ideas of employees and understand that employees are their assets. Technological advancement and innovation in the global business setting is resulting in significant challenges and opportunities for the IT industry. Driven by these challenges and opportunities, organizations are moving across national borders by establishing foreign-owned subsidiaries, entering into joint ventures and strategic alliances to align the organisation to the ever changing business needs and survive in the competitive market place (Duppada and Aryasri, 2011). The international movement of labour that has been concomitant with such expansion of international business has meant that issues associated with the management of human resources across international borders are increasingly important to international human resource managers. International businesses have increasingly turned their attention to issues such as expatriate management (employees being transferred by organizations to work outside their country of origin/permanent residence), managing in other cultures and managing diversity in multicultural domestic workforces. Deployment of expatriates in international subsidiaries can be a complex issue for multinational enterprises (MNEs). The global environment is increasingly integrated across national borders, and yet there remain critical differences among national environments. Consequently, expatriate employees can be an important resource as MNEs try to make sense of, and enact, their environments across the globe. (Riaz and Suhai, 2009). As companies continue to face challenges to succeeding in a globally integrated world, they look to the workforce to help differentiate themselves from their competition. To do so, they must find ways of identifying, developing and connecting talent and expertise from around the globe. Major business publications and conferences are now placing issues such as talent management and employee engagement at the forefront of the corporate agenda. (Eric Lesser, 2005) Organizations are now leveraging advanced technologies to enhance their HR efforts for competitive advantage. Such systems implementations free HR managers from mundane personnel administration activities, permitting a focus on strategic value-added personnel support and satisfaction activities (Yang et al., cited in DeSanctis 1986). Since people are the pre-eminent organizational resource, this is a critical focus (Yang et al., cited in Delaney & Huselid, 1996). In a continuously changing global marketplace, companies need stream-lined human resources departments that can create innovative methods for linking business strategies to people strategies. As a result, companies periodically need to tap into highly specialised HR expertise to handle large, demanding, or urgent projects that cannot be effectively completed by their existing personnel infrastructure (Lingham, 2011). Successful Expatriate assignments drive revenue, value and growth to the organization and have always been a driving and determining factor for the success of the organization's overseas operations. The expatriate managers become the cornerstones on which the international operations are built as they help in informal control mechanism, for knowledge transfer, and for international team development. Hence, an emerging view of foreign assignments is that it may create a unique competitive advantage which is difficult to imitate by competitors (Duppada and Aryasri, 2011). The present paper critically examines the growing importance of managing the expatriates in the international assignments, as recent research suggests that long-term assignments may become less dominant as new patterns of global staffing emerge.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Clegg & Gray, 2002, more and more countries engage in global competition, the imperatives of globally competent human capital indicate that the market for expatriates is changing and becoming more demanding. As such the need for understanding the dynamics of expatriate related issues are ever increasing. While the research focus of those investigating the IHRM field has expanded significantly in recent years, expatriate management issues remain a critical concern (Lazarova, 2006). In their article on "Cross-Cultural Challenges and Adjustments of Expatriates: A Case Study in Malaysia", Tahir and Ismail, 2007 define 'expatriate' as an individual who is not a citizen of the country of which he or she is assigned to work in. Richardson and McKenna (2002) referred to expatriates as professionals who are living in an overseas country on a temporary basis, but normally for more than one year. In general, besides monitoring and controlling the financial distribution and profit gain of the company, an expatriate is expected to extend their knowledge and skills in technology transfer (Shephard, 1996). In the opinion of Schuler et al., 1991, the three most common dimensions for evaluating expatriate success have been cross-cultural adjustment, completion of the global assignment and performance on the global assignment. Hence it is imperative that the cross-cultural challenges need to be addressed by the Multinational enterprises to have a better productivity.

Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000, allege that living in a new cultural environment, expatriates are bound to face challenges and make adjustments in their lifestyles in order to make their assignment effective.

According to Tahvanainen, et al, 2005, research on short-term international assignments suggests that attention should be paid to staff selection, pre-departure cross-cultural training, compensation, performance management, repatriation and family issues. This would be a starting point for the researchers on IHRM for global integration. They further suggested that as HR staffs are required to broaden their focus to develop policies and practices for non-standard assignments, this may necessitate a redefinition of the international HR role.

A survey of literature on expatriation shows that individuals from different cultures may encounter difficulties in comprehending each other's values and behaviour towards another that may lead to cultural clash. Due to the "cultural baggage" that has been nurtured based on the individual's own cultural orientation and reward or punishment systems, differences of beliefs in a multicultural setting becomes inevitable. The paper contributes to our understanding of international assignments by critically exploring the excellent practices of expatriate relationship management for international assignments in MNCs.

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH SITE

In 2012 April, the research on Excellent Practices of Expatriate Relationship Management had begun. The objective of the research is to explore the practices of ERM and the satisfaction level of the expatriates in ITES Organisations with respect to the same. The sample size selected for the study was 20 respondents working in the higher, middle and lower levels of management from 5 Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) companies of Bangalore. The companies chosen for the study included three Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) Companies namely Accenture Services, Capgemini and IBM from which 12 questionnaires were filled by the respondents. The two Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO) Companies from which 8 questionnaires filled were JP Morgan Chase and Society General SG. The study was conducted for six weeks between April and May 2012.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSES

The data was collected through two sources – Primary and secondary.

The primary data was collected from the various professionals of all the three levels of Management by structured questionnaire method specifically designed for the purpose of study after pretesting. A 5-point (1 = Strongly Agree, 5 = Strongly Disagree) Likert's Scale format designed is used to indicate subject's responses to the questionnaire. Secondary data collection was from previous research reports, magazines, articles, websites, journals and related books.

RESULTS

Data analysis from 20 respondents of 5 different ITES companies revealed the following results.

TABLE 1: SUBJECT'S BACKGROUND

Gender		Education		Years on Job		Monthly Income(Rs.)	
Male	14	Graduation	7	Below 1 Year	2	Below 10,000	1
Female	6	Post Graduation	13	1 - 3 Years	4	10,000 - 25,000	7
				3 - 5 Years	8	25,000 - 50,000	9
				5 - 10 Years	6	50,000 - 75,000	3
				Above 10 years	Nil	75,000 - 1 Lakh	Nil
Total				20			

The data collected from respondents (Subjects) regarding the personal details are shown in table 1. Due to some constraints this project has no ability to develop a well psychological and behavioural factors evaluation questionnaire for exploring the excellent practices of expatriate relationship management on subjects and the case firms.

However, based on subject's responses and above mentioned references, this paper designs and proposes an expatriate relationship questionnaire including six variables and 15 questions (table 2). By doing so, it is expected that the proposed method can contribute the efforts, experience, and findings on the research issue of expatriate relationship management.

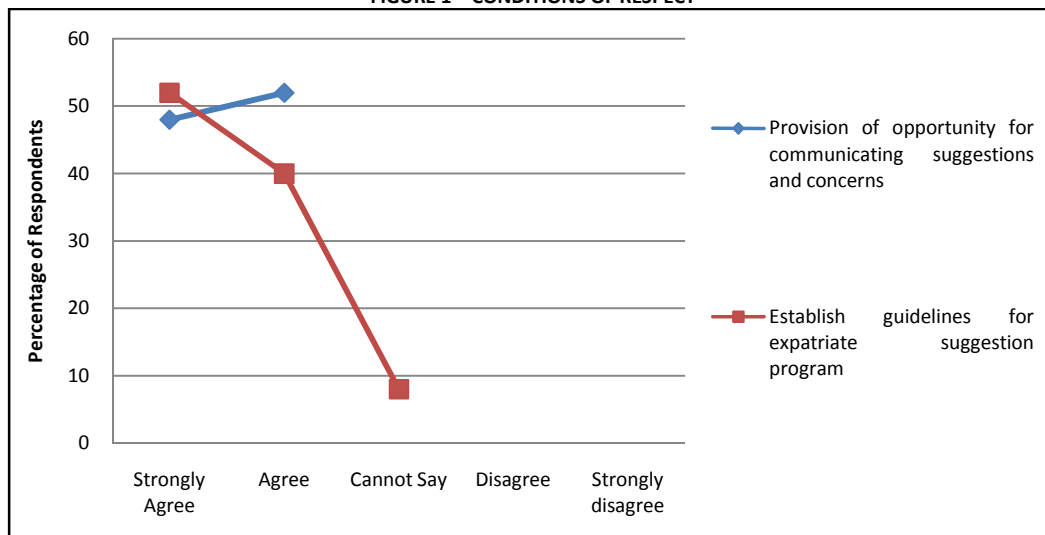
TABLE 2: QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

Variable	No. Questions/content
Conditions of respect	1. My Organization Provide a well-designed outlet for expatriates to communicate suggestions and concerns to management
	2. Establish guidelines for the expatriate suggestion program.
Conditions of support	3. Key Result Areas are clearly defined in the beginning of the job or the financial year
	4. I have necessary resources to do my job efficiently
Relationships with Superiors	5. Organization provides ample opportunities to work in various projects
	6. Management makes decision on consultative basis and gives expatriates sufficient liberty in performing their role
Learning Opportunities	7. Expatriates feel comfortable in sharing the problem with seniors
	8. My manager/supervisor encourages high achievement by reducing the fear of failure
Recognition	9. My department gets support and teamwork from other areas within the organization
	10. There is personal growth along with the organizational growth
Self-satisfaction	11. Provides required level of up gradation with the latest technology
	12. My organisation has leadership interaction with expatriates at all levels
	13. My organisation arranges for Social outings, Expatriate forums and focus groups, Personal recognition
	14. My manager/supervisor provides me with continuous feedback to help me achieve the target
	15. Overall I am very satisfied with my job

CONDITIONS OF RESPECT

Data analysis revealed that 48 percent of respondents strongly agree whereas 52 percent agree with provision of a well-designed outlet for them to communicate suggestions and concerns to management. With regard to the guidelines for expatriate suggestion program, 52 percent respondents strongly agree with it, 40 percent respondents agree whereas 8 percent of them are neutral in their opinion on the expatriate suggestion program. No respondent is dissatisfied with the above mentioned variable.

FIGURE 1 – CONDITIONS OF RESPECT

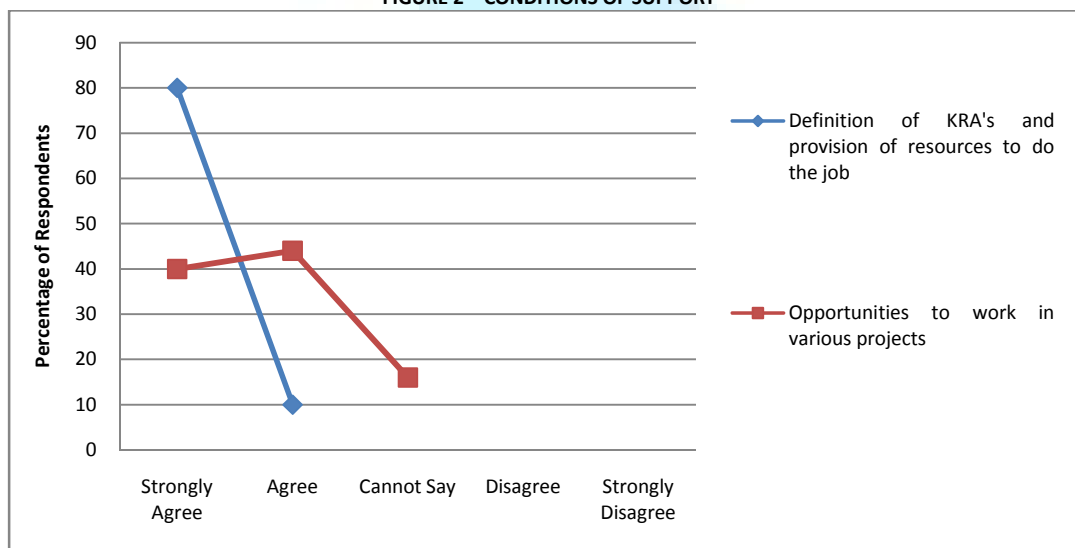


Source: Survey Data

CONDITIONS OF SUPPORT

With respect to definition of Key Result Areas and provision of resources for doing the job effectively, 80 percent of the respondents strongly agree and only 20 percent of them agree with it. When it comes to the opportunities to work in various projects, 40 percent strongly agree and 44 percent agree with the question whereas 16 percent are of neutral opinion. In this case also no respondent is having a negative opinion.

FIGURE 2 – CONDITIONS OF SUPPORT



Source: Survey Data

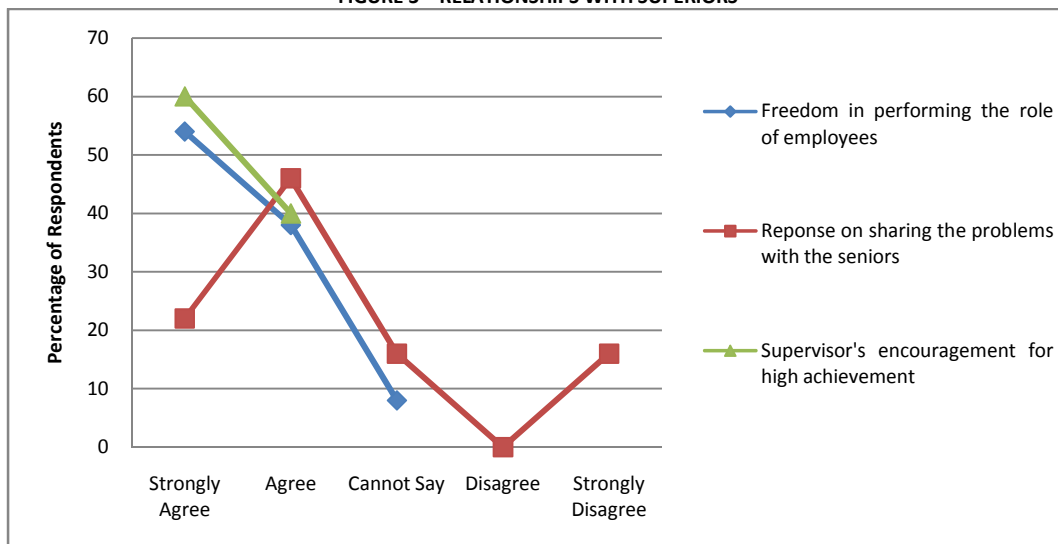
RELATIONSHIPS WITH SUPERIORS

ERM is designed to treat expatriates as important stakeholders of the firm, rather than simply track their activities, collect information and profile them for differential treatment as CRM systems do with customers. The collected data shows that 54 percent expatriates strongly agree that they had freedom in performing their role, 38 percent agreed about their freedom and 8 percent of them were neutral in their opinion on the expatriate involvement in decision making.

Conversely, 22 percent expatriates strongly agree and 46 percent expatriates agree about their response on sharing the problems with the seniors comfortably. In this case 16 percent of expatriates were neutral as well strongly disagree with fact that they are comfortable in sharing the problem with seniors.

With regard to the supervisor's encouragement for high achievement, 60 percent respondents strongly agree and 40 percent agree with the fact.

FIGURE 3 – RELATIONSHIPS WITH SUPERIORS



Source: Survey Data

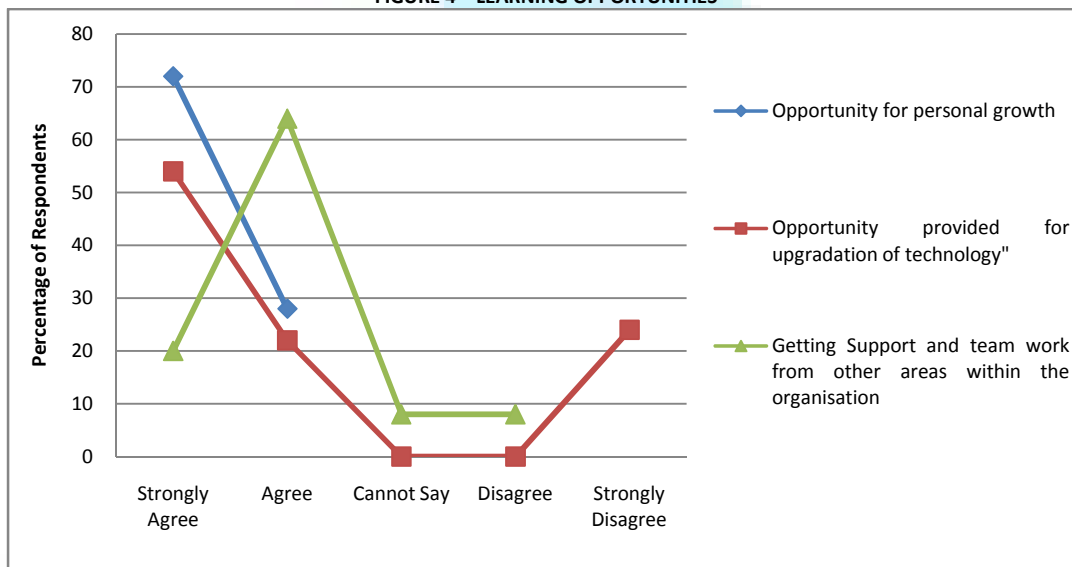
LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Most expatriates (72%) reported that they strongly agree about the personal growth opportunities whereas 28 percent agreed with the same and no one expressed any kind of negative opinion in this regard.

But when asked about the opportunity provided for up gradation of technology, 24 percent of them expressed strong dissatisfaction regarding the same while 54 percent of them strongly agreed with the fact that technology up gradation is provided from time to time.

20 percent expatriates strongly agree and 64 percent agree with the aspect of getting support and teamwork from other areas within the organisation. Only 8 percent of them were neutral and 8 percent disagreed with the fact.

FIGURE 4 – LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES



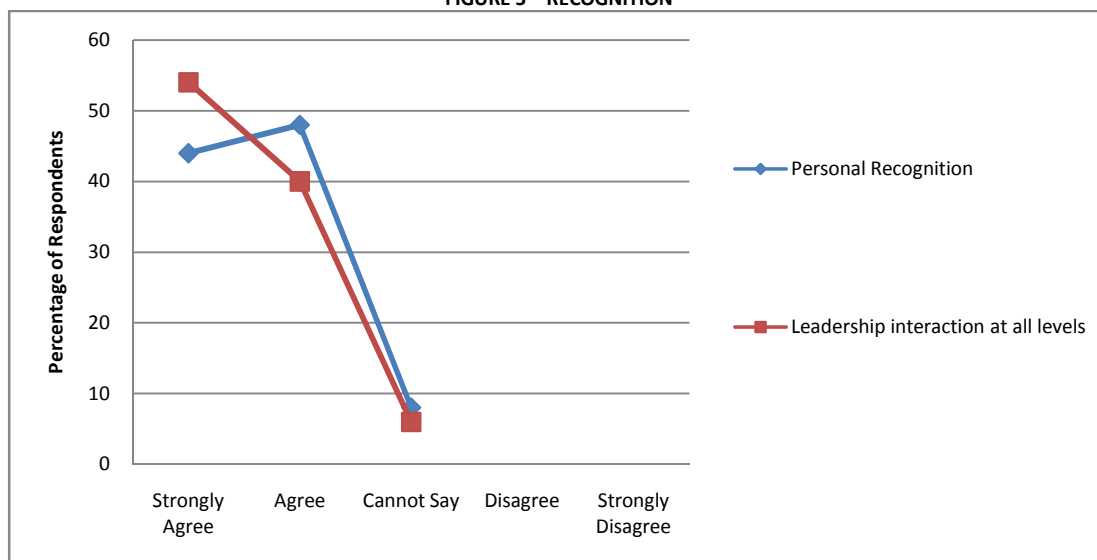
Source: Survey Data

RECOGNITION

Employee recognition is one of the important factors in determining the expatriate relationship management. Majority of the respondents (44%) strongly agree and (48%) agree with the recognition programs provided by the companies while few of them (around 8%) had a neutral opinion in this regard.

When asked about the leadership interaction at all levels, 54 percent strongly agreed while 40 percent agreed with it. Only 6 percent were of neutral opinion.

FIGURE 5 – RECOGNITION

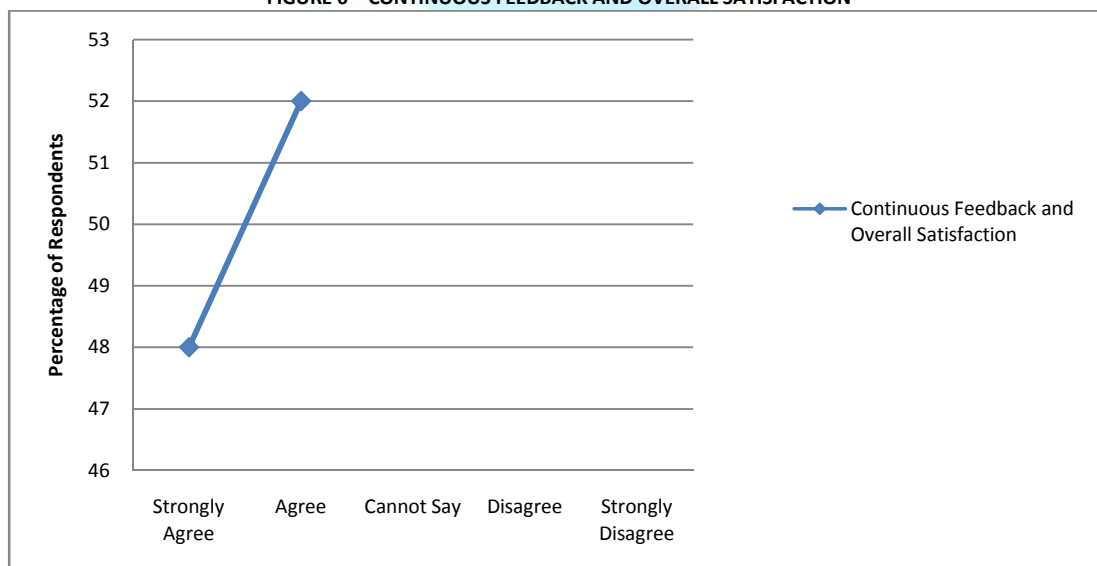


Source: Survey Data

SELF – SATISFACTION

In an attempt made to find out the overall satisfaction of the expatriates in their job, majority of the expatriates (48%) strongly agreed and 52 percent agreed about the aspect, which shows that the expatriates are self-satisfied irrespective of some minor obstacles at their workplace.

FIGURE 6 – CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK AND OVERALL SATISFACTION



Source: Survey Data

DISCUSSION

FINDINGS AND IMPLICATION

Research findings indicate that the expatriates across five information technology enabled services organisations are satisfied with the six variables mentioned in the analysis. They agree that the variables serve as some of the excellent practices in expatriate relationship management. For expatriates to be truly vibrant there should be active participation in knowledge-exchanging activities: engaging in live-chats, Question & Answer sessions, providing asynchronous feedback on previous postings, etc. (Hayes and Walsham, 2000). In the present research study, some of the expatriates have showed their discontent towards the comfort zone of sharing problems with the seniors. They feel that the superiors' co-operation and willingness in listening to the problems of the juniors and arriving at an amicable solution is the need of the hour.

Defining the Key Result Areas of work and providing necessary resources to carry out the job is one of the main criteria for successful accomplishment of objectives in an enterprise. These systems are designed to serve expatriates, and to the extent that they provide benefits and information prized by the expatriate, the organizational outcomes will be beneficial. This will require some dedication on the part of managers to discerning what benefits and information expatriates desire to have self-service and access to various resources (Yang et al., 2011).

The social structure – comprising occupational roles – has, to a large extent, been created and institutionalised by the operation of the technological system (Trist & Bamforth, 1951, p.5). In terms of envisioning expatriate satisfaction in the workplace, Smith (1992) made the intuitive analogy of a river with small tributaries (satisfaction with specific aspects of work life) that converged into ever-larger branches (satisfaction with general 'facets' of work life), eventually converging into a sea (general satisfaction with life). Adapting the analogy to the Information Age for developing a systems satisfaction measure, computers and interactions with computers have become a central aspect of work. To that end, Smith's (1992) 'river and tributaries' conceptualization can be construed in the context of user satisfaction with workplace technology in the tributary role and the subsequent impact of technology on overall expatriate satisfaction as the analogy of the confluence to a river. Identifying opportunities for up gradation of the latest technology in the organisation will help the top management in reducing the disappointment often experienced with investments. A chunk of respondents of the current research indicate a kind of negative opinion in this regard.

"I think the power and role of a leader is to release the potential of an organisation," explains Richard O. Brajer, CEO of Lioscience, Inc. "This means not to take my brain and replicate it in the brains of the people around me, but to release their potential to work toward an agreed-upon direction." The leadership obviously has the potential to profoundly influence the individual-organisation interface. The leadership typically sets direction, defines boundaries, shapes

values and sets priorities. 94 percent of the respondents of the research study agree that their organisations have leadership interactions at all levels. Successful ERM implementation hence needs leadership interaction.

Glasscock and Gram noted in *National Productivity Review* that effective recognition methods should be sincere; fair and consistent; timely and frequent; flexible; appropriate; and specific. They go on to explain that it is important that every action which supports a company's goals is recognized, whether through informal feedback or formal company-wide recognition. Likewise, every expatriate should have the same opportunity to receive recognition for their work. Recognition also needs to occur in a timely fashion and on a frequent basis so that an expatriate's action does not go overlooked and so that it is reinforced to spur additional high performance (Encyclopaedia of Business, accessed 4th April 2012). Expatriates of the ITES Companies selected for the study do express the same opinion. Businesses in their usual highly price-sensitive nature have been swift to respond to this need and have been responsible for pioneering some of the leading new developments in this area (Lee, 2005).

When asked about the overall satisfaction on the job, majority of the expatriates stated that they are satisfied to a greater extent with their jobs. Expatriate satisfaction mapping can be the key to a better motivated and loyal workforce that leads to better organizational output in the form of better products and services and results in the overall improvement of an organization (DIR Journal Web Directory, accessed 4th April 2012).

FUTURE RESEARCH

As a single-site (Information Technology Enabled Services Sector) case study, the reported study is limited in its generalizability. Other Services and Manufacturing sectors should be identified before it can be concluded that ITES companies are not entirely atypical. It is also limited in its temporal frame, as it does not address ways that practice and identity emerge over time. However, before these issues can be investigated, research must show that, in fact, what constitutes the best practices of expatriate relationship management, as what have been reported in this paper.

Having done so, researchers can move forward and establish new research streams. The foremost one can be in the nature of the relationships between various cultures of different nations. In particular, Chinese culture is considered one of collectivism that values achieving collective goals more than pursuing personal interests and that motivates people to contribute to group accomplishments (Earley, 1989; Wagner, 1995). Research has suggested that Chinese culture has a positive influence on both offline (Michailova and Hutchings, 2006) and online (Ardichvili et al., 2006) knowledge sharing with the employee community. More studies should be conducted to investigate the extent to which Chinese culture has made this particular group so engaged in its practice and how Chinese culture may limit the generalizability of the findings to other work cultures.

CONCLUSION

Expatriate Relationship Management systems in the firm provide attractive opportunities for managers to increase organizational efficiencies and organizational effectiveness by way of improving expatriate job satisfaction. This is accomplished through the study of important HR practices of ERM on 20 expatriates of 5 different BPO and KPO companies. Expatriates were investigated with regard to their judgments and perceptions of six variables in ERM implementation, and it was determined that the degree to which the system provided important services and benefits to expatriates and the quality with which such services were provided strongly impacted expatriate satisfaction, with subsequent implications for organizational performance.

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