



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, IT AND MANAGEMENT

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THE IMPACT OF REVERSE CULTURAL SHOCK AMONG REPATRIATES

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ABSTRACT

With the pressure of globalization, international job mobility is becoming a more common experience for a growing number of employees. It is critical for Multinational organizations to remain competitive in the area of international human resource development and management. Of all the Phases in IHRM, the last phase of repatriation is considered to be the most difficult one. If repatriates are not dealt with properly during the re-entry process, companies may have to incur huge losses, despite the fact that huge investment are made in various resources like money, time, training & development etc. in sending the employees on International Assignments. This paper focuses on the issues to be dealt after repatriation. In reviewing international human management studies, much attention is given to the process of expatriation; whereas less attention is given to repatriation. The Multinational organizations always assume that the re-entry to the parent country is non-problematic. However, research indicates that repatriation can be more difficult adjustment than expatriation. Thus, the main aim of this paper is to explore the impact of reverse cultural shock among repatriates after International Assignment. The study collected data from 50 respondents through questionnaire which had questions on a five point scale. Six hypotheses were framed and tested using ANOVA and Chi-square. Percentage Analysis was done for demographic factors like age, income, education, marital status, experience in the organization, duration of the international assignment etc. The study concluded that the MNC's have to identify right strategies to retain repatriates after international assignments.

KEYWORDS

International Assignment, Repatriates, Repatriation, Reverse cultural shock.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing globalization liberalization policies led to the promotion of international of companies. During internalization of companies, HRM is considered to be one of the crucial areas is to be handled carefully. (Brewster & Scullion 1997, Stroh & Caligiuri 1998, Scullion & Starkey 2000). One such challenge of IHRM is to establish proper HR practices for selection of expatriate, managing expatriate, providing cross-cultural training for expatriate, providing allowance for expatriate and the last is managing repatriate. Lisa Johnson, GPHR director of consulting services for Cendant Mobility argues "Most companies are failing at repatriation." A 2004 survey by Cendant Mobility "Emerging Trends in Global Mobility Policy and Practices survey, says "Only 49% of companies have repatriation programs." There are very few studies that analyze the final phase in expatriate process, the repatriation, despite the fact it is one of the most significant phase. The costs involved in recruitment, selection of expatriate is high. Hence, when the repatriation process ends in failure, the company loses the investment made on the expatriate in addition to the knowledge they acquired (Bossard & Peterson 2005).

Given the fact that 25% of repatriates leave parent company within one year of coming home and more than 50% of the executives in a survey of US corporations said they experienced social re-entry problems upon repatriation, returning home can be hazardous to the organizations. Repatriates usually face difficulties like loss of autonomy, lack of career development, family readjustment problems. As a consequence, retaining repatriates within the company is very important in order to reduce costs & increase the companies' competitiveness. The main purpose of this study is to analyze the effect of repatriate turnover with the repatriation process and to identify the main determinants of successful repatriation.

PROBLEM DEFINITION

Successful repatriation means that the repatriate acquires good career and personal development after international assignment experience. But this does not happen to all repatriates after international assignment. According to Geodesy survey, 33% of repatriates are promoted, 58% of repatriates stay at the same level, 9% demoted after returning from international assignment. Further, when the repatriates return to the home country, there is a general assumption that the repatriate will be able to settle quickly into the community. But, this does not happen and many repatriates face re-entry shock or reverse cultural shock. Individual expectations before repatriation, during expatriation and after repatriation do not match the organizations' expectation in terms of position, level of income et., This lack of understanding to integrate repatriates into the organization in terms of the knowledge and experience they gained during international assignment is a factor that often leads many repatriates to quit the organization. Thus, the problem identified for this study is the impact of reverse cultural shock and repatriates difficulty in adjusting after an international assignment.

DEFINITION

- a. **Expatriate:** "One who works and lives in a foreign country but remains a citizen of the country where the employing organization is head quartered" (Deresky, 2003, P.551)
- b. **Repatriation:** "The process of the reintegration of an expatriate into the Headquarters organization and career ladder as well as into the social environment." (Deresky, 2003, P.551)
- c. **MNC's:** Enterprise operating in several countries but managed from one (home) country.
- d. **Reverse Cultural Shock:** Reverse Culture Shock, or "re-entry", is a term associated with the phenomenon of returning to one's own country and culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researches on repatriation found that the culture shock of coming home is usually more difficult than the culture shock of going overseas (Adler, 1981; Black, Gregersen, Mendenhall &Stroh, 1999). Poor repatriation is costly, reduces the effective utilization of human resources, and often leads to a loss of talented

personnel (Adler, 1991; Black & Gregersen 1991, Black & Gregersen & Mendenhall 1992). Furthermore, poor repatriation could possibly represent the number one reason for employee hesitancy to accept overseas assignments (Feldman & Tompson, 1993).

CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

The concept of “cross-cultural adjustment” began with earlier work on culture shock. The term Culture shock was introduced by an anthropologist, Dr. Kalervo Oberg (1960), to describe the trauma suffered by people when they are suddenly introduced to a culture that is very different from their own. In 1988, Befus described culture shock as “an adjustment reaction syndrome caused by cumulative, multiple and interactive stress in the intellectual, behavioral, emotional and physiological levels of a person recently relocated to an unfamiliar culture and is characterized by a variety of symptoms of psychological shock. Oberg (1960) described four stages of adjustment.

A. U-CURVE THEORY OF ADJUSTMENT:

This theory represents the emotional stages of adjustment. It is divided into 4 stages

I. HONEYMOON PHASE

It is the period where expatriates will have initial enthusiasm to interact with host nationals. It is a period lasting less than 2 months (Adler, 1986; Black and Gregersen, 1991; Gullahorn, 1962; Harris Moran, 1979; Torbiorn, 1982).

II. CULTURE SHOCK

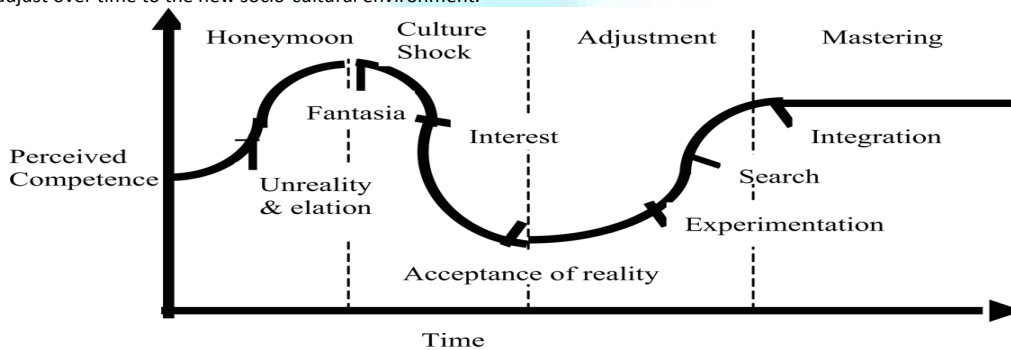
Here, the individual have to cope up with the new culture on a day-day basis. In this stage, individual lacks understanding the culture inhibits awareness of what is appropriate or inappropriate, behavior in the new cultural environment, resulting in confusion, frustration, tension and depression (Adler, 1986; Black and Gregersen, 1991; Brisling, 1981).

III. ADJUSTMENT PHASE

It is characterized by increased ability to ‘fit in’ in the new culture.

IV. MASTERY PHASE

Here, adjustment is almost complete as possible, and anxiety is over. In short, individuals deputed on an international assignment first feel excited, then face problems and finally adjust over time to the new socio-cultural environment.

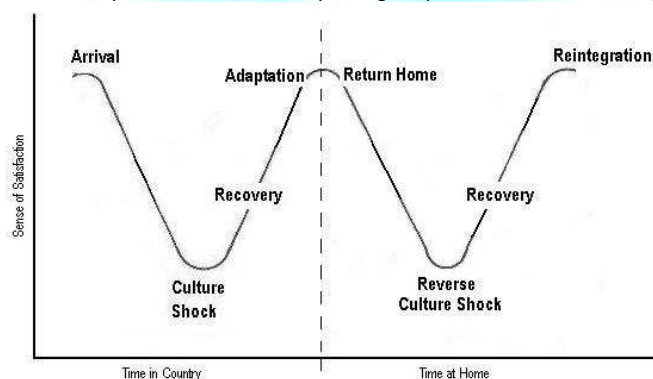


Source: by the authors drawing from the literature reviewed

Subsequently, researchers found that not all sojourners experience the same level of anxiety, or experience anxiety for the same length of time (Church, 1982; Stening, 1979). This resulted in the study of cross-cultural adjustment as an individual difference criterion, which could potentially be predicted, rather than as a fixed period of anxiety that all sojourners will necessarily experience when they enter a new culture (Black, 1990).

A. W-CURVE THEORY OF ADJUSTMENT

Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1963) argue that the cross-cultural adjustment process which led to a U-Curve can be applied to repatriation process as well. Harvey argues that the longer one spends away from home; more changes can happen in home country. This leads to greater uncertainty upon return. The literature review of culture shock indicates that an individual may not function effectively during the period of cross-cultural adjustment.



REPATRIATION ADJUSTMENT

Repatriation adjustment issues were identified in the literature in the 1950s and 1960s (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). Adler (1981), discovered that “employees found reentry into their home country and home company more difficult than the initial move to the foreign culture.” Once the individual returns to the home country, the process of in-country repatriation adjustment begins.

Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall (1992) state that the two most affected work areas of repatriation adjustment are performance and turnover. Based on their research, they found that failing to pay attention to repatriation adjustment may lead to low intention to stay with the firm. (Black et al.,1999).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study investigated the impact of reverse cultural shock on repatriation adjustment. The survey was sent to 75 repatriates. 50 Repatriates had responded to a mail survey. IT Industry, ITES, OIL & GAS, BANKING industries constituted this survey. The collected data were encoded so that it was possible to analyze the data which was done by Mail Survey. The repatriates represented many industries, held various positions of different levels, had varied backgrounds regarding their education, experiences and the time periods of their assignments. They were of different ages, marital status, gender who were assigned to different

countries. Items in the survey measured the reverse cultural shock, cross-cultural training, language training, relocation support, which was provided by the company.

REPATRIATES – FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION
CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON AGE

TABLE NO.1.1

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<25 yrs	7	14.0	14.0
25-35	34	68.0	82.0
36-45	8	16.0	98.0
>45 yrs	1	2.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Questionnaire

From table 1.1, it is found the distribution of respondents belonging to the age group of below 25 years as 7 respondents occupying 14% followed by 34 respondents occupying 68% in the age group of 25-35. 8 respondents occupying 16% from the age group between 36-45 and 1 respondent constituting 2% in the age above 45 years.

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON GENDER

TABLE NO.1.2

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	47	94.0	94.0
Female	3	6.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Questionnaire

The distribution of sample respondents according to gender is shown in table No.1.2. It reveals out of the total 50 respondents 3 are Female occupying 6% and 47 in Male category occupying 94%. It is clear that the majority of the respondents are male.

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON MARITAL STATUS

TABLE NO.1.3

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Single	17	34.0	34.0
Married	33	66.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Questionnaire

From table No.1.3, it reveals that 33 respondents occupying 66% belongs to the married category and 17 respondents possessing 34% belongs to single category.

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON INCOME LEVEL

TABLE NO.1.4

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<15,000	2	4.0	4.0
15,001-25,000	6	12.0	16.0
25,001-35,000	6	12.0	28.0
>35,000	36	72.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Questionnaire

Table No.1.4 divulges the number of respondents on the basis of their respective income levels, 2 respondents occupying 4% belongs to the category of income below 15,000. This is followed by 6 respondents (12.0%) belonging to the income group of 15,001-25,000. This is followed by 6 respondents (12.0%) belonging to the income group of 25,001-35,000. This is followed by 36 respondents occupying 72% belongs to the category of income above 35,000.

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

TABLE NO.1.5

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
MBA	11	22.0	22.0
MBA*	2	4.0	26.0
MCA	6	12.0	38.0
ME	3	6.0	44.0
N/A	27	54.0	98.0
PGDM	1	2.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Questionnaire

The table No.1.5 exposes the number of respondents on the basis of educational background. The study has considered 50 respondents consisting 22% with M.B.A qualification, 2 respondents occupying 4% with M.B.A in progress, followed by 6 respondents with 12% completed MCA, 3 respondents with 6% with M.E Degree, 27 respondents consisting 54% responded as not applicable, 1 respondent consisting 2% completed PGDM

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON DURATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENT

TABLE NO.1.6

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Below 6Mths	30	60.0	60.0
6 Mths – 1 yr	7	14.0	74.0
1+ to 2 yrs	7	14.0	88.0
2+ to3 yrs	3	6.0	94.0
Above 3 yrs	3	6.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Questionnaire

From table 1.6, it is found the distribution of respondents based on duration of the international assignment. 30 respondents comprising of 60% had deputed for International Assignment below 6 months, 7 respondents comprising of 14% had deputed for International Assignment for a period of 6 months to 1 yr, 7 respondents comprising 14% had deputed for international assignment for a period of 1+ to 2 yrs, 3 respondents comprising of 6% had deputed for international assignment for a period of 2+ to 3 yrs, 3 respondents comprising of 6% had deputed for international assignment for a period of above 3 yrs.

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON THE TOTAL YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE ORGANIZATION

TABLE NO.1.7

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<2 yrs	9	18.0	18.0
2 to 4 years	8	16.0	34.0
4+ to 6 years	14	28.0	62.0
6+ to8 yrs	2	4.0	66.0
>8 Yrs	17	34.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Questionnaire

From table 1.7, it is clear that 9 respondents occupying 18% has been working below 2 years, 8 respondents constituting 16% of the respondents has been working between 2-4 years, 14 respondents forming 28% has been working between 4+to 6 years and 2 respondents occupying 4% has been working between 6+ to 8 years, 17 respondents constituting 34% has been working above 8 years.

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON THE COUNTRIES DEPUTED FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENT

TABLE NO.1.8

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Switzerland	13	15.5	15.5
Germany	11	13.1	28.6
England	4	4.8	33.3
UK	23	27.4	60.7
UAE	3	3.6	64.3
Malaysia	1	1.2	65.5
Denmark	2	2.4	67.9
U.S.A	23	27.4	95.2
Australia	2	2.4	97.6
Finland	2	2.4	100.0
Total	84	100.0	

Source: Questionnaire

From table 1.8, it is clear that 13 respondents occupying 15.5% were deputed to Switzerland, 11 respondents constituting 13.1% of the respondents were deputed to Germany, 4 respondents occupying 4.8% were deputed to England, 23 respondents occupying 27.4% were deputed to UK, 3 respondents occupying 3.6% were deputed to UAE, 1 respondent occupying 1.2% was deputed to Malaysia, 2 respondents occupying 2.4% were deputed to Denmark, 23 respondents occupying 27.4% were deputed to U.S.A, 2 respondents occupying 2.4% were deputed to Australia, 2 respondents occupying 2.4% were deputed to Finland.

CLASSIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS BASED ON THE RESPONDENTS PREVIOUS INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENT EXPERIENCE

TABLE NO.1.9

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	9	18.0	18.0
2	6	12.0	30.0
3	1	2.0	32.0
5	1	2.0	34.0
none	33	66.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

Source: Questionnaire

From table 1.9, it is clear that 9 respondents occupying 18% were deputed on international assignment by the previous company once, while 6 respondents occupying 12% were deputed on international assignment by the previous company twice, 1 respondent occupying 2% was deputed on international assignment by the previous company 3 times, 1 respondent occupying 2% was deputed on international assignment by the previous company 5 times, 33 respondents occupying 66% never had previous international assignment experience.

EMPIRICAL MODEL

The statistical package SPSS was used. Descriptive statistics was done. The statistical method used was analysis of variance(ANOVA) which analyzed the statistical difference among Repatriates Adjustment. The Welch test and the brown-forsythe test, both of which have a significance level of .05 in SPSS, were also used for the variables on which the ANOVA had been performed.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE STUDY

TABLE SHOWING THE DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF VARIABLES USED IN THIS STUDY OF 50 REPATRIATES

Table No. 2.1

	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation
Age	2.06	2.00	.620
Gender	1.06	1.00	.240
Income	3.52	4.00	.863
Exp_Org	3.20	3.00	1.512
Marital status	1.66	2.00	.605
Family Size	2.04	2.00	.605
Duration of Intl. Assignment	1.84	1.00	1.235
Country deputed for Intl. Assignment	4.71	4.00	2.771

Source: Primary Data

The descriptive statistics in table no. 2.1 shows that the mean value and the median value of Age is 2.06 and 2 respectively, while the standard deviation is 62% variability. The mean and median of Gender is 1.06 and 1 respectively, while the standard deviation is 24% variability. The Income level is having a mean value of 3.52 and median of 4, while the standard deviation is 86.3% variability. Experience of the repatriates in their organizations has a mean of 3.20 and median period of 3. The standard deviation is 151.2. The marital status has a mean of 1.66, while the median is 2 and the standard deviation shows 60.5% variability. The Family size is having a mean value of 2.04 and median of 2 while the standard deviation is 60.5 % variability. The duration of the international assignment is having mean value of 1.84 while the median value of 1%, while the standard deviation has reported 123.5% variability. The country to which the repatriates were deputed on international assignment has a mean of 4.71, median value of 4 while the standard deviation is 277.1% variability.

ONE-WAY ANOVA

H₀: There is no significant difference between Duration of the International Assignment and Repatriates Adjustment.

H₁: There is significant difference between Duration of the International Assignment and Repatriates Adjustment.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.113	4	1.028	2.533	.053
Within Groups	18.270	45	.406		
Total	22.383	49			

Source: Primary Data

RESULT

The ANOVA table indicates that p value is 0.053 which is greater than 0.05. So we reject our null hypothesis. Therefore there is significant difference between Duration of the International Assignment and Repatriates Adjustment.

ONE-WAY ANOVA

H₀: There is no significant difference between Intention to leave and Repatriates Adjustment.

H₁: There is significant difference between Intention to leave and Repatriates Adjustment.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	15.023	7	2.146	12.247	.000
Within Groups	7.360	42	.175		
Total	22.383	49			

Source: Primary Data

RESULT

The ANOVA table indicates that p value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05. So we reject our null hypothesis. Therefore there is significant difference between Intention to leave and Repatriates Adjustment.

ONE-WAY ANOVA

H₀: There is no significant difference between Cultural Re-entry and Repatriates Adjustment.

H₁: There is significant difference between Cultural Re-entry and Repatriates Adjustment.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	13.081	13	1.006	5.206	.000
Within Groups	6.958	36	.193		
Total	20.038	49			

Source: Primary Data

RESULT

The ANOVA table indicates that p value is 0.000 which is less than 0.05. So we reject our null hypothesis. Therefore there is significant difference between Cultural Re-entry and Repatriates Adjustment.

ONE-WAY ANOVA

H₀: There is no significant difference between Cross-cultural preparation and Repatriates Adjustment.

H₁: There is significant difference between Cross-cultural preparation and Repatriates Adjustment.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	10.098	11	.918	2.840	.008
Within Groups	12.285	38	.323		
Total	22.383	49			

Source: Primary Data

RESULT

The ANOVA table indicates that p value is 0.008 which is less than 0.05. So we reject our null hypothesis. Therefore, there is significant difference between cross-cultural preparation and Repatriates Adjustment.

ONE-WAY ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	14.908	7	2.130	1.669	.143
Within Groups	53.592	42	1.276		
Total	68.500	49			

H₀: There is no significant difference between experience of repatriates in their current position and Intention to leave after International Assignment.

H₁: There is significant difference between experience of repatriates in their current position and Intention to leave after International Assignment.

Source: Primary Data

RESULT

The ANOVA table indicates that p value is 0.143 which is greater than 0.05. So we accept our null hypothesis. Therefore, there is no significant difference between experience of repatriates in their current position and Intention to leave after International Assignment.

ONE-WAY ANOVA

H₀: There is no significant difference between Career Development programs and Repatriates adjustment.

H₁: There is significant difference between Career Development programs and Repatriates adjustment.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	14.609	18	.812	3.236	.002
Within Groups	7.774	31	.251		
Total	22.383	49			

Source: Primary Data

RESULT

The ANOVA table indicates that p value is 0.002 which is lesser than 0.05. So we reject our null hypothesis. Therefore, there is significant difference between career development programs and repatriates adjustment.

ONE-WAY ANOVA

H₀: There is no significant difference between experience of the repatriates in the organization and Repatriates adjustment.

H₁: There is significant difference between experience of the repatriates in the organization and Repatriates adjustment.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.312	4	.578	1.296	.286
Within Groups	20.071	45	.446		
Total	22.383	49			

Source: Primary Data

RESULT

The ANOVA table indicates that p value is 0.286 which is greater than 0.05. So we accept our null hypothesis. Therefore, there is no significant difference between experience of repatriates in their organization and repatriates adjustment.

CHI-SQUARE TEST

H₀: There is no relationship between Age and Repatriates Adjustment.

H₁: There is relationship between difference Age and Repatriates Adjustment.

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
READJ_Mean * AGE	50	100.0%	0	.0%	50	100.0%

Source: Primary Data

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	37.761(a)	39	.526
Likelihood Ratio	34.446	39	.678
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.042	1	.153
N of Valid Cases	50		

Source: Primary Data

a 55 cells (98.2%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02.

RESULT

The Chi-square table indicates that p value is 0.526 which is greater than 0.05. So we accept our null hypothesis. Therefore, there is no relationship between Age and Repatriates Adjustment.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The results of ANOVA Analysis indicated that repatriation adjustment was the strongest predictor of intent to leave the organization for Indian MNC's repatriates after repatriation. The repatriates who perceived a higher level of repatriation adjustment had a lower intent to leave. The results of ANOVA explored that there is significant difference between cross-cultural preparation and Repatriates Adjustment.

In addition to repatriation adjustment, chi-square results indicated that there is no relationship between age and repatriates adjustment. Duration of the International Assignment was significant as an effective predictor for repatriate's adjustment. However, experience of the repatriates in the organization as well as in their position does not have any impact on repatriates adjustment.

While there is still much to be learned about repatriates' turnover intention and its antecedents and outcomes, this study has made an attempt to identify the factors which contribute for repatriates adjustment. First, its results consolidate previous literature, by providing empirical evidence that repatriation adjustment and duration of the international assignment are positively related. Second, this study is the first research that identifies repatriates adjustment among INDIAN MNC repatriates. Therefore, the conceptual framework of this study can be a guide to future research in repatriates' adjustment.

With the globalization of economies, the large amount of capital invested in international personnel, the repatriation process requires further attention (Arthur, 2004). This study provides evidence about the difficulty of repatriation process and reports that cultural re-entry intention to leave and career development programs, duration of the international assignment were the major factors influencing repatriates' adjustment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study point to several ways in which global organizations can increase their chances of retaining valuable managers who return from international assignments, The following suggestions will help the Indian MNC's to manage the repatriates in a better way.

- a. Inform global managers about any constraints like cultural shock that might impede their performance in their new jobs.
- b. Keep repatriates informed as much as possible about the changes in the home country, so that reverse cultural shock will be less which will be experienced by them.
- c. Repatriation training can be provided to repatriates in order to retain the valuable repatriates.

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