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THE IMPACT OF FAMILY ADJUSTMENT IN EXPATRIATE SUCCESS

ABSTRACT

Family adjustment to a new country plays a significant role in expatriate success. This paper investigates the reasons behind expatriate failure relative to personal characteristics of partner, family characteristics, and cultural distance. The authors discuss family related issues and contribute to the better understanding on the problems that cause expatriate failure through identity theory and investigate how organizations could support the expatriate experience by taking into consideration the role of the spouse and family, along with cultural distance to the expatriate destination. There are only a few studies that link experiences of expatriate family and partner to international assignment success. We add to this research by examining the spouse and family adjustment process through the use of identity theory. We provide guidelines on the impact of family adjustment in expatriation literature to help organizations better equip both the expatriate employee and their family with sufficient cross-cultural training and social learning opportunities. Our contribution provides a level of analysis on determining expatriation success factors and guiding organizations in facilitating the cultural adjustment of expatriates and their families. The paper provides implications to industry and practice on key success factors needed to reduce failure.

Key Words: expatriate success, family adjustment, expatriate partner, cultural distance, identity theory, international human resource management

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INTRODUCTION

Cross-national distances among countries have become a critical element in international business research in the last two decades and are regularly invoked to explain successes and failures of mergers, product introductions, alliances, investments, and management practices (Newman, 2012). The annual value of worldwide cross-border acquisition and mergers has reached record rates of growth during the recent past years. As more corporations expand internationally, demand for expatriate employees continues to increase (Gregersen, Black, and Morrison, 1998; Hill, 2015). Expanding operations across national boundaries presents international companies, managers, employees, and their families with new challenges and opportunities. The international movement of human resources has generated the development of research that targets the adjustment of expatriates in foreign cultures (Altbach and Teichler, 2001).

Often, the expatriate failure rate is culturally rooted. Failure is defined as the early return or loss of an expatriate whereby a real or inferred financial loss can be calculated by the organization. Research shows that for American expatriates, the premature return rate is between 16 to 40 % in developed countries and approximately 70 % in the developing countries where the culture is more significantly different (Black and Gregersen, 1999). These high failure rates result in high costs for business and other associations. The cost of one failed international assignment can range from USD 250,000 to USD 1 million for some organizations (Valner and Palmer, 2002; Yeaton and Hall, 2008). Understanding why international assignments fail is an valuable research task as 10% to 45% of all expatriate managers are reported to return early for a variety of reasons (Laabs, 1998) including cultural shock, lack of cross-cultural training, family problem, spouse dissatisfaction, and inability to adjust in the host country (Kupka and Cathro, 2007; Chiotis Leskowich, 2009; Gupta and Gupta, 2012; Ko, 2014). Both professional and personal identity issues appear to have a role in expatriates adjusting to their new environment. However, past research indicates that expatriate adjustment is an important indicator of enabling the expatriate to perform to the best of his/her ability (Khan, Khan, and Rahman, 2011). Expatriate adjustment can be conceptualized as the degree of adjustment experienced by the individual or the degree of comfort, familiarity, and ease that the individual feels toward the new environment (Gupta and Gupta, 2012).

There is abundant research examining expatriate managers' adjustment into the foreign environment, such as in studies like, Holopainen and Bjorkman (2005) who did a critical review of the literature and identified a number of key characteristics of the expatriate

manager: relational ability with hosts, communication skills, and stress tolerance. However, individual identity factors which affect the stable state to which an expatriate partner and family will evolve has not been thoroughly researched. Although many expatriate assignments involve a significant other and/or a whole family, the negative impact of failed family experiences on companies is lacking.

Scholars posit that social learning theory (SLT) provides a strong theoretical basis for understanding cross-cultural learning, training, and adjustment (Black and Mendenhall, 1990). The connection between SLT, the family, identity construction, and cross-cultural training is strong. Bandura (1977) argued that, “learning takes place both by the effects reinforcement has on behavior and by imitating or modeling the behavior of others and symbolically or vicariously making associations between behavior and consequence without direct, actual experience.” SLT research provides strong evidence to suggest that the candidate’s family, especially the spouse, is a very important factor to consider (Black, 1988).

This paper proposes to review research results within the literature and better understand the impact of family adjustment in expatriate success by focusing on the importance of the personal characteristics of spouse, characteristics of family, and cultural distance explained with the use of Identity Theory (Burke, 1991). This review offers an overview on what and why of expatriation as well as a better understanding on the problems that cause expatriate failure. We examine the reasons behind expatriate failure focusing on personal characteristics of spouse and family, highlighting the role of the family and discussing the influence of cultural distance on how an individual thinks feels and behaves (Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, and Ferzandi, 2006: 111).

The paper discusses how to reduce failure by identifying key success factors, which may have a positive impact on expatriate adjustment (Kraimer, Wayne, and Jaworski, 2001). Here we contribute a level of analysis on the determining factors of success and how organizations could support the expatriate experience by taking into consideration the characteristics of the spouse and family along with their cultural distance to the expatriate destination. Information on the impact of family adjustment in expatriate success through identity theory is rare and needed. Our contribution may help organizations better equip both the expatriate employee and their family with sufficient cross-cultural training utilizing social learning in order to prevent disruptions in identity (Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou, 1991; Shaffer and Harrison, 2001) and identity loss (Shaffer and Harrison, 2001).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Expatriation, why?

The definition of expatriation may be summarized as one who chooses to live abroad but does not go so far as to immigrate. This in turn points to a non-permanent move that does not seek full integration into the new culture. According to Altbach and Teichler (2001), one of the most important elements of mobility and expatriation has been the growth of a global labor market. This has allowed more managers than ever before to seek temporary employment abroad. The expatriate experience is not a new phenomenon to the world of management. Expatriate managers are needed because businesses are becoming increasingly international. As Enterprises pursue business opportunities in the current era of rapid globalization, one of the greatest challenges is how to manage human resources on a worldwide scale. To be successfully implemented, a global business strategy requires equally global human resource systems and a globally competent workforce (Hung-Wen and Ching-Hsiang, 2006). Globally competent managers can help the organization understand the multi-faceted nature of their employees' identities and maximize the potential of each employee. This points to the critical importance of understanding the identities and traditions of these managers and those working under their direction.

Both ethnocentric and geocentric policies drive organizations using expatriate managers extensively (Hill, 2015). Multinational corporations employ ethnocentric policy to recruit qualified home country nationals for their foreign subsidiaries, maintain a unified culture worldwide, and gain spillover efficiency. Spillover efficiency usually refers to transfer of knowledge and managerial skills from home country to host country. Alternatively, geocentric policy is practiced to hire most effective and efficient candidates regardless of nationality and to build a strong global corporate culture. While expatriation holds a number of advantages, the failure rate in international assignments is very high, and it represents the most expensive staffing strategy for the multinational corporation. Yet, this geocentric approach remains a viable method for increasing the corporation's understanding of international operations. While organizations may perceive expatriation as an attractive method for accumulating foreign markets, they face the challenges of selecting, adjusting and managing appropriate individuals. Thus, factors contributing to the successful expatriation experience are significant to MNCs, arguably, understanding the reasons behind expatriate failure is needed.

Cross-cultural adjustment

Cross-cultural adjustment is generally defined as the process of adaptation to living and working in a foreign culture. It is the perceived degree of psychological comfort and familiarity a person has with the new host culture (Black, 1988; Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou, 1991). Huang-Wen and Ching-Hsiang (2006)'s work on examining the relationship between independent variables (job satisfaction, family support, learning orientation, organizational socialization, and cross-cultural training) and the dependent variable (cross-cultural adjustment) in a proposed model of cross-cultural adjustment demonstrates how these characteristics play an important role in impacting expatriate adjustment and success.

The processes that companies use to select expatriates for their domestic and foreign operations have many similarities. For either assignment, the candidate should have the technical knowledge and skills to do the job as well as the intelligence and people skills to be a successful manager (Soloman, 1994). However, foreign assignments are different. According to Doz and Prahalad (1986), this requires expatriates who have a sensitivity to local conditions and who can understand, work with, and direct people from various cultures. In many cases, the need to cope with colleagues whose culture is different, and the feeling of being alone can lead to stress and low performance at work.

We find that the influence of the spouse on the expatriate is most extensively studied in adjustment literature. Recent studies mention the importance of the spouse (and family) with reference to international assignment success (e.g., Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, and Luk, 2005; Caligiuri, Hyland, and Joshi, 1998; Lazarova, Westman, and Shaffer, 2010; Shaffer, Harrison, and Gilley, 1999; Takeuchi, Yun, and Tesluk, 2002, Takeuchi, 2010; van Erp, Giebels, van der Zee, and van Duijin, 2011). Expatriates and their families face many complexities and pressures, such as learning a new language, finding new friends, and dealing with everyday issues as buying groceries, shopping, banking, and providing education for their children. Overlooking the needs of family or spouse is unwise, as 60% of expatriates are married and 81% are accompanied by their spouse or partner. In addition, 34% of assignment refusals are caused by family concerns and 17% are caused by the career needs of the spouse or partner. Further, 17% of failures in expatriate assignments are due to a spouse or partners' career and 11% by other family concerns (Global Relocation Trends Survey Report, 2012). In some aspects, the spouse faces more challenges than the expatriate employee. While the employee has his or her job and people at work, the spouse often has an empty house, no friends, and isolation (Black, 1988). One study asked 338 international assignees from various countries and organizations to specify which traits were important

for the success of managers on foreign assignments: job knowledge and motivation, relational skills, flexibility/adaptability, extra-cultural openness, and family situation such as the spouse's positive opinion and willingness to live abroad play a very important role in the expatriates' success. Interestingly, family situation was generally found to be the most important factor in the cases that were looked by Winfred and Winston (1995). The identity of the family and spouse do not only influence the expatriate's success in a foreign posting, but whether or not to consider taking the job abroad in the first place (Ko, 2014). Important family context variables are found to be an influential factor in causing withdrawal (Shaffer and Harrison, 1998), which indicates an indirect influence of the spouse on the international assignment success.

The role of the spouse and family

Regarding partner characteristics, relational ability refers to the degree to which the partner is able to develop social relationships with the hosts. Communication skills are directly related to the capability of the individual to actively seek out dialogue. Multiple factors combine in preventing spouses from adjusting in a foreign country. Some of the most important include lack of familiar network of friends and family, an inability to speak the local language, and sacrificing career for family (Hill, 2015). Personal characteristics such as introversion would only exacerbate these problems. Stress tolerance is concerned with the ways in which an individual handles stress-provoking factors such as ambiguity and a loss of control. The acknowledged hypotheses is that the stronger these key characteristics of an individual are, the better they will be able to adapt in the foreign environment. Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley, and Luk, 2001: 115) found that the expatriate must find a balance between the family and work domains. This interplay can be more specifically described in terms of spillover and crossover effects. Crossover effects refer to the influence of one individual on another individual. This means that stress or strain experienced at work or at home by an individual (the expatriate), is influential to the stress or strain of the significant other (the spouse/partner), and vice versa (Takeuchi et al., 2002). As a result of the absence of a social support network in the new country many spouses will become partner dependent for this support (Deen, 2011). Since the influence of the spouse on international assignment success is acknowledged, Deen (2011) asks the question, what organizations can do to reduce the intensity of spillover and crossover effects and eventually prevent spousal caused withdrawal of their employees.

The family unit as a whole in terms of family member's relationships with one another, the extent to which family members are concerned and committed to the family and the degree to which family members are helpful and supportive of each other have been found to play a very important role in expatriate adjustment (Moos, Insel, and Humphrey, 1974; Mansor, Hamid, Kamil, and Abu, 2014). Often the expatriate is too busy with work and his/her spouse stays at home lonely (Ko, 2014). In many cases, the spouses do not have any friends or family members who could be of any assistance, and as a result, face problems adjusting in a foreign country. This may lead to negative consequences for the expatriate, such as superficial performance and premature return. In many cases, the expatriate's family returns home earlier than planned. Soon after, the expatriate manager returns without completing the assignment because of adjustment difficulties and the psychological hardship related to family separation.

Consequently, the authors have identified that identity and role of the spouse and family predict the following outcomes: First, adjusting the spouse and children to their new environment is a major factor effecting the success or failure of an international assignment. Second, expatriate success is largely dependent on strong support from one's spouse and family. Third, having support increases smooth adjustment in a culturally different environment.

The link between expatriate adjustment and the foreign country is influenced heavily by the amount of cultural distance between the expat's home country and the guest country. In the next section, we will explore cultural distance and its effect on culture shock and acculturation.

Cultural distance and acculturation

Many cultural differences exist between home and host locations, consequently, expatriates and their families face adjustment difficulties in regards to time, language, geography, food, and climate (Gupta and Gupta, 2012). Peoples' values, beliefs, perceptions, and background can be quite different. Ward and Kennedy (1994) argue that the larger the cultural difference between the home country and the host country, the more difficult it seems to identify with members from the host country. This implies that intercultural adaptation will be particularly difficult if the expatriate family and spouse relocate to a host country which scores opposite on each of the cultural dimensions. As so, it would be assumed that expats from different dimensions (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005), may find it more difficult to work in contextual dimensions that are of the opposite dimension,

The construct of cultural distance is negatively related to successful cross-cultural training and adjustment (Black and Stephens, 1989, as cited in Holopainen and Bjorkman, 2005). Geert Hofstede from 1967 to 1973 conducted a massive study at IBM into how cultural values differ in the workplace. Through this and subsequent studies, four cultural dimensions have been identified that help explain the characteristics of a culture and express cultural distance. Hofstede (2001) defined the four dimensions as:

- *Power-distance*: The degree to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country accept and expect power is distributed unequally (p. 46).
- *Individual-collectivist*: Individualism can be defined as a preference for a loosely-knit social framework in which individuals are expected to take care of only themselves and their immediate families. Its opposite, collectivism, represents a preference for a tightly-knit framework in society in which individuals can expect their relatives or members of a particular in-group to look after them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (p. 76).
- *Uncertainty avoidance*: The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown actions. The fundamental issue here is how a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known: should we try to control the future or just let it happen (p. 167).
- *Masculine-feminine*: In the business context Masculinity versus Femininity is sometimes also related to as "tough versus tender" cultures. The Masculinity side of this dimension represents a preference in society for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material rewards for success. Society at large is more competitive. Its opposite, femininity, stands for a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and quality of life. Society at large is more consensus-oriented (p. 120).

Consensus points us to the realization that the further apart the two cultures are, the more formidable the process of acculturation. Hofstede (2001) stated that high context cultures (e.g., Arab world, Mexico, China and India) differ quite significantly from the low context cultures (e.g., Canada, USA, UK, Finland) in that there is more inequality due to higher power-distance, they are far more collectivist in nature, and some countries are not as comfortable with uncertainty. Each of these dimensions will have an effect on the experiences of expatriate managers and their families.

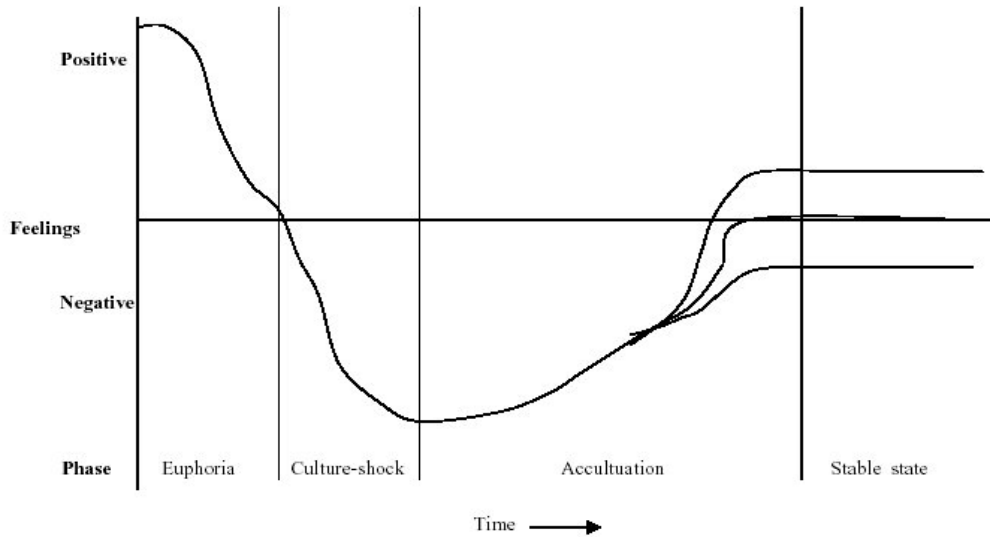
While his work is not without its critics (e.g., Shenkar, 2001; Steenkamp, 2001), others have validated the strengths of the dimensions over time (Barkema and Vermeulen, 1997, shown his framework to have greater impact than any other (Sivakumar and Nakata, 2001), and shown that his dimensions predict outcomes similarly to other measures of values (Berry, Guillen, and Zhou, 2010; Drogendijk and Slangen, 2006; Kim and Gray, 2009).

Culture shock is a topic that is recurrent in the literature because of its significance. Issues such as cross-cultural understanding of traditions, customs, values and language barriers are key factors that affect adjustment and culture shock. The phases of acculturation, the impact of personal characteristics of spouse and family, and the degree to which the cultures differ will be examined.

Acculturation

Expatriate adjustment can also be referred to as acculturation (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1995), adaptation and adjustment (Benson, 1978; Stening and Hammer, 1992). Possible reasons why expatriates and their families return before the completion of the assignment may be homesickness, or inability to adjust to housing conditions, health care facilities, leisure activities, the job, the business environment, or the broader cultural circumstances (Bhanugopan and Fish, 2004). Moving from your own culture to another, which is unfamiliar often causes culture shock. The learned experiences of the persons entire lifetime means that they will have difficulty understanding the covert underlying values and possibly the overt social rituals that constitute this other culture. With this lack of comprehension comes the “feelings of distress, of helplessness, and of hostility toward the new environment” (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005: p. 323). This is but one phase, albeit the darkest, of the acculturation process however. Figure 1 illustrates the phases of the acculturation process from the initial euphoria, to culture shock to acculturation and finally to the stable state.

Figure 1. Acculturation curve



Source: Hofstede and Hofstede (2005)

The euphoric first phase is generally the shortest, full of excitement, enthusiasm and optimism for everything in the host culture. This phase quickly makes way for culture shock, where feelings of negativity ranging from irritability to hostility, anxiety to panic is set in. The foreigner discovers that their learned cultural behaviors and values are no longer appropriate. They must relearn as adults what has developed over a lifetime- this is similar to the stages of grief (Hofstede, 2001). Anomie or acculturation begins as the expatriate slowly adapts to living and working in the new culture. It is a gradual recovery of equilibrium and objectivity. They may get more proficient with the language and comfortable with the customs until they progress towards their stable state. Acknowledging the positive and negative aspects of both cultures and acceptance of the new culture is critical. This final state is often dependent upon personal characteristics of the individual and the distance between the home and host cultures.

Another study that discusses the early stages of the spouse adjustment process is conducted by Shaffer and Harrison (2001). They state that the spouse adjustment process can be explained with the use of Identity Theory (Burke, 1991). The authors state that in a familiar setting of the home country with a specific culture, the individual is familiar with his or her identity. A familiar identity results in specific personality traits, which are defined

as the relatively stable and enduring patterns of how an individual thinks feels and behaves (Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, and Ferzandi, 2006: 111). Identity is shaped by three types of identification: personal (within oneself), social (from interaction with others), and situational (from interactions with one's situational context or environment (Ogden, 1995; Shaffer and Harrison, 2001). Because of this identification, specific social and personal roles can be fulfilled. In case of an international relocation, a disruption causes the familiar setting to become unfamiliar (Black et al., 1991). This unfamiliarity causes disruptions in the identity, which may affect personality traits. Because of the perception and interpretation of a different environment, including its new demands (e.g., different family responsibilities) and (missing) resources (e.g., language skills, social network support), the individual may experience high levels of uncertainty, insecurity, confusion and stress (Shaffer and Harrison, 2001).

Deen (2011) found that the first period of the journey turned out to be the most difficult period for spouses, which conforms to Shaffer and Harrison (2001)'s identity loss explanation. Despite the difficulty, the first period of the journey is also found to be the most exciting period. This period of exhilaration is consistent with Punnett (1997)'s early-assignment's —honeymoon-stage|. However, Deen (2011) found indications that point in another direction than the established sequence of a positive adjustment issue stage followed by a negative adjustment issue stage. Deen (2011) also noted to the small amount of information that is found for the adjustment issues in the late-stage. Although spouses experience less positive and negative adjustment issues because of an increased balance, the quantity of information might be distorted by the spouse's decreasing motivation to discuss late-stage experiences after the in-depth discussion of several pre-stage and early-stage experiences. Deen (2011)'s study does not include post-stage experiences of spouses, yet it was found that spouse's statements indicated the importance of repatriation adjustment issues. Researchers can consider incorporating the final stages of the journey and the early-stages in the home country in future research.

Incorporating Social Learning Theory in cross-cultural training

The family and cross-cultural training under SLT can be examined under culture novelty, job novelty, and degree of interaction: Cross-cultural training incorporating SLT is a process of determining the extent of training the family needs to adjust to the foreign culture, which begins with an assessment of the family's own cultural novelty. The process of assessing the novelty of the culture obtained in relation to the candidate can be used for

the family with two important qualifications. First, the final assessment of the host country's culture novelty must be made relative to the family's previous experience. Second, children under the age of about thirteen may need much less preparation than older children because they seem to have less difficulty adjusting to foreign cultures (Tung, 1984). According to Black (1988), "spouses must be given nearly as much consideration as the candidate is given because their adjustment or lack of adjustment can be a critical determinant of the candidates' success or failure in the foreign culture."

Job novelty involves the novelty of the job and its related tasks. The more novel the tasks of the new job in the new culture, the more assistance the individual will need through rigorous training to produce the desired and necessary behaviors to be effective in the new job. Black (1988) suggests, "individuals in international assignments adjust differentially to the culture and the job, which suggests that while the novelty of the new job and culture can be linked they are not necessarily intertwined."

Degree of interaction deals with the amount of consideration that is needed to be given to the spouse considering the degree of expected interaction in determining the level of cross-cultural training rigor needed to prepare him or her for living and functioning effectively in the foreign culture. This can be measured through frequency and intensity that is similar to the way the candidate can be measured. However, there are some important differences between candidate and spouse. According to Black and Stephens (1989), "most spouses do not work in the host culture even if they worked before the foreign assignment." Secondly, according to Tung (1988), "even if spouses are not required to interact with host country nationals, lack of ability to interact can lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness, which can be the reason for the inadequate adjustment to the host culture and an early premature return for the entire family." Black and Stephens (1989) further concluded that "even if the interaction between spouse and host country nationals is low, the spouse will be better adjusted if he or she has the ability to interact effectively."

Ultimately, research confirms that the greater the culture novelty, required interaction, and job novelty, the greater the need for rigorous cross-cultural training of the employee and his or her family.

DETERMINING FACTORS OF SUCCESS

Expatriate failure largely begins with the firm's selection policies. In many cases companies focus only on the technical skills of a manager while cultural skills are widely ignored. Consequently, he/she will fail since the family issue and cultural skills were not addressed

during the selection process (Solomon, 1994). As such, improving selection procedures can actually reduce the expatriate failure rate. Often, human resource managers appraise the domestic and international performance potential with the same standards. However, local and overseas assignments could be widely different. An employee who excels in the home country may not be equally competent in a foreign cultural setting. Some studies focus on the organizational support values of spouses. Examples of spouse values are preparation time, support to assist in the process of learning to cope with negative psychological reactions, and reassurance about the move (Forster, 2010). Focusing on the process of organizational support content, two studies give a more detailed overview of organizational support of spouses over time. The first example is conducted by Punnett (1997). Study outcomes refer to effective management of spouses in which practical implication suggestions for organizations are made with the purpose of improving the expatriation process for the accompanying spouses. A study conducted by Harvey (1998) was focused on the unique needs of dual career couples during an expatriation assignment. This study gives different organizational support suggestions for spouses with a career.

To be effective in an unfamiliar culture, expatriates and their family members need to develop cross-cultural literacy through extensive pre-departure and post-departure training programs. Yet, only 30 % of expatriate managers received training before going to an international assignment (Dowling and Welch, 2005) despite the fact that training can help expatriates and their spouses to adjust in a foreign environment and reduce the failure rate.

According to Hill (2015), cultural training, language training, and practical training are essential to lessen expatriate dissatisfaction. The training program should include the whole family to provide vital knowledge about host country's culture and business practices. It is also important to arrange a familiarization trip before the actual transfer. Language training is effective to establish business and social rapport with the host country nationals. Even if an expatriate is far from fluent, an eagerness to speak in the host country's language can build strong relationship with local employees. Ability to communicate in local language will also help the spouses to develop social network of friends in the host country. Practical training refers to aiding the expatriate and his/her family to adjust daily life in a foreign nation. Firms could play an imperative role to find existing expatriate community for the new expatriate family which could be a valuable source of information and assistance to adjust in a foreign country. Firms can assist the now foreign manager and their family in establish ties with social organization such as international clubs, health organizations, recreational facilities (Caligiuri et al., 1998).

Additionally, training programs can assist expatriates by providing accurate information on educational standard of the host country. This is vital for their children's education and adjustment (Ko, 2014). Firms should consider education of expatriate's children in the selection process because evidence showed that many expatriates rejected overseas assignments in order to avoid disrupting their children's education (Scullion and Brewster, 2001). It follows that multinational companies should aid expatriates to find a competent schooling. Some companies even established their own school for the children of their expatriates. For instant, Royal Dutch Shell built schools for the children of their expatriates where the concentration of expatriates was high (Mainwaring, 2012). To mitigate the challenges of dual-career couples they also set up a job placement center for expatriates' spouses to provide career counselling and to find employment.

Although some multinational corporations select managers with suitable overseas experience and adaptability, the adaptability and personal characteristics of the family and spouse in most cases are overlooked by many companies. They fail to assess the families' adaptability and provide training to the expatriates family members.

According to Schell (1997), "the selection process is fundamentally flawed, expatriate assignments rarely fail because the person cannot accommodate to the technical demands of the job. Expatriate employee selections are made by line managers based on technical competences. They fail because of family and personal issues, and lack of cultural skills that have not been part of the process." Providing realistic previews of what is expected, careful screening, improved orientation and training, as well as improved benefits packages may help. These are more of the obvious solutions; however, in one study conducted by Garonzik, Brockner, and Siegel (2000), the less obvious solution was when institute procedures ensure that the firm treats its employees fairly by treating them with respect, providing an appeal process, and so on.

In a pivotal study, Tung (1981) identified that inability of spouse to adjust was the most critical reason for expatriate failure. Since then other researchers confirmed Tung's finding. For instant, Solomon (2000) found lack of spouse satisfaction as the most common reason for expatriates' premature return. Studies also found that lack of career development is a critical reason for spouse dissatisfaction and consequently spouse dissatisfaction has a negative impact on expatriate performance (van ERP et al., 2011). In another study, Sarkiunaite and Rocke (2015) found that partner's employment and children's education are the two biggest challenges of expatriate's adjustment. Often, spouse's career opportunity is limited by immigration restrictions. Thus, to address this challenge companies must arrange

a suitable employment and valid work permit for the spouse in the host country (Gupta and Gupta, 2012). Expatriates' poor performance and/or premature return are often caused by spouses' unwillingness to give up their own career. This is particularly true for dual-career couple. Having a career in the host country will help an expatriate's spouse to build a network of friends and colleagues and eventually to adjust smoothly in a foreign nation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Including family members in the expatriate training programs can be quite expensive for a firm. However, pre-departure and post-departure trainings are unarguable necessities for expatriates and their family. Surprisingly, as discussed earlier, many companies ignore the importance of cross-cultural training for spouse and children, which is a prerequisite to reduce cultural shock in the host country.

The importance of providing cross-cultural training

Caligiuri, Lazarova, and Tarique (2005) pointed out that cross-cultural training aims at helping employees feel comfortable living and working in a host country, thus enhancing their cross-cultural adjustment and strengthening their ability to understand and appreciate multiple cultural perspectives. According to Kristof and Wudunn (1995), "a nation's philosophical, historical, and religious underpinnings may have a deep bearing on the content and values inherent in national culture." For this reason, expatriates should be able to recognize the influence of their own cultural backgrounds and be sensitive to cross-cultural differences. Cross-cultural training for expatriates and their family members will prepare them to understand cultural differences and avoid culture shock. Research shows that adjusting to the culture and interacting with host country nationals is more difficult than doing the actual job (Black and Stephens, 1989). Lack of cultural awareness will result into inability to successfully live and work in another country for the employee and his or her family.

Training programs

Cultural orientation programs can range from a few hours to a few weeks long. They are usually arranged by human resource departments and are best targeted to the specific needs of the new staff members. Bennet, Aston, and Colquhoun, 2000 described a special training program used by one firm, which has a four-step approach (see Table 3). The need for expatriate training is not just for the individual candidate's development but is important

for the organization's success. For this reason, any training program should be tailored to the specific needs and adapted accordingly to the individual organization (Grahn and Swenson, 2000). Furthermore, people in different societies develop different learning style preferences. According to Rodrigues, Bu, and Min, 2000, a training approach that is effective with trainees from one culture will not necessarily be successful with trainees from another culture.

Table 1. Four phase training

Training Phase	Objective
Phase 1	Training focuses on the impact of cultural differences, and on raising trainees' awareness of such differences and their impact on business outcomes.
Phase 2	Aims at getting participants to understand how attitudes (both negative and positive) are formed and how they influence behavior. For example, unfavorable stereotypes may subconsciously influence how a new manager responds to and treats his or her new foreign subordinates.
Phase 3	Training provides factual knowledge about the target country.
Phase 4	Provides skill building in areas like language and adjustment and adaptation.

Source: Bennet et al. (2000)

There are several trends in expatriate training and development. First, rather than only providing pre-departure cross-cultural training, more firms are providing continuing, in-country cross-cultural training during the early stages of an overseas assignment. Second, employers are using returning managers as resources to cultivate the global mind-sets of their home office staff. For example, Bosch, the automotive equipment producer holds regular seminars in which newly arrived returnees pass on their knowledge and experience to relocating managers and families. According to Mendenhall and Stahl (2000), "there is also increased use of software and the Internet for cross-cultural training. For example, Bridging Cultures is a self-training multimedia package for people who will be traveling and/or living overseas. It uses short video clips to introduce case study intercultural problems, and then guides users to selecting the strategy to best handle the situation." Although many companies would think that coming home would be inconsequential, Adler (1986) found that most managers found returning to the US more difficult than adjusting to the foreign country.

CONCLUSION

Firms from different cultures have to expand their operations internationally in order to succeed. Accordingly, cooperation and communication between people from different cultures will be increasingly required. Throughout this paper, much of the focus has been on expatriate employees and their family especially the spouse. We have found that with the new culture, language problems, family issues, and tolerance for stress play important parts. Cross-cultural training becomes necessary for repatriated employees and their families before, during and after the foreign assignment with a strong link to culture and job novelty as well as degree of interaction.

By conducting this study, we seek to contribute to the spouse adjustment process through the use of identity theory. We find that the spouses' perception and interpretation of the unfamiliar foreign environment as well as its new demands such as inability to deal with everyday life issues (e.g., buying groceries, shopping, banking), unfamiliarity with social structure and language of the host country not only increases high levels of uncertainty, insecurity, confusion and stress (Shaffer and Harrison, 2001); it also plays a significant role in expatriate failure experience. Moreover, the spouses' feelings of isolation and being far from their usual support system (e.g., family, friends, close colleagues) increase failure rate and disruptions in the identity, which may affect personal characteristics of the spouse. In addition, we found that the characteristics of the family also have an important impact on expatriate failure experience. Most importantly, lack of family preparation to the foreign culture results in critical challenges for the family in their adjustment. At this time, the family members' relationships and concerns for one another contribute towards expatriates' success and failure experience. In parallel, cultural distance in regards to values, norms, beliefs, and perceptions are strongly correlated to the expatriates' failure experience. The larger the cultural differences between the home country and the host country the more difficulty towards the expatriates' experience. However, through organizations better equipping both the expatriate employees and their families with needed cross-cultural training we find that disruptions in identity (Black et al. 1991; Shaffer and Harrison, 2001) and identity loss (Shaffer and Harrison, 2001) are better managed.

Here we also contribute the key success factors, which may have a positive impact on expatriate adjustment. We specifically focus on how organizations could support the expatriate experience by taking into consideration pre-departure and post-departure training programs align to the characteristics of the spouse and family along with their cultural distance to the expatriate destination. Our findings determine that expatriate employees and

their families who receive sufficient cross-cultural training, incorporating social learning as part of it contributes as a key success factor. Therefore, we recommend organizations helping expatriate employees and their family members by providing them training to equip them with sufficient knowledge, skills, and cross-cultural awareness prior to assign the family and their family for any international assignment. Successful expatriate experiences for employees and their families generally require an extensive amount of support and training by the organization, but a failed expatriate experience can be costly for all involved. In view of that, organizations should better prepare all involved by incorporating social learning theory in cross-cultural training.

While the literature reveals a very high failure rate of expatriate managers, it does not provide sufficient empirical studies on spouse and/or children. Future stream of research within expatriation literature should focus on the role of spouses and children of expatriate employees as they have a significant impact on adjustment and success. More research is needed in the investigation of the relationship with reference to the influence of spouse adjustment determinants like personal characteristics. Future research can also consider the possibility to investigate organizational support as a separate determinant of spouse adjustment. Deen (2011) recommended examining the extent to which organizational support influences other adjustment influencing determinants.

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