Expatriates Management- A 21st Century Challenge
A Study among the Selected Expatriates from Indian IT Sector

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ABSTRACT:

Rapid business globalization, a clear comprehension of the identities, background and psychological well being of expatriates is necessary. Employees with global management skills are becoming a critical competitive resource for international organizations (Olsen & Martins, 2009; Kraimer, et al, 2009). MNC HR managers should enhance effective communication between expatriates and their families to reduce conflict and difference of opinion arising in moving to foreign countries for international assignments. Failure to comprehend expatriates and their stressful situations could lead to poor decision making and prevent certain individuals of a chance to pursue global careers.

The current paper is focused on assessing the expatriate environment prevailing, motives of expatriation and the problems associated with the expatriation. The study results reveal that, job safety, work experience and monetary benefits are the key motivators of expatriation. The issues are relating to cross culture environment, work load and interpersonal factors. The efforts in the form of cross culture training, competency development and communication/language training can help the employees to manage stress during expatriation.

Key words: Cross cultural issues- technical communications- interpersonal skills-conflicts at work, Expatriates, Stress

1. INTRODUCTION

Expatriate refers to foreign job assignments for a specific period of time (Wang, 2008). Many organizations that have currently succeeded in their national markets have taken their businesses globally. This globalization of businesses is increasing the demand for skilled expatriates to manage the operations of global firms (Olsen & Martins, 2009). For example, 80% of medium-sized and large-sized companies have employees abroad, and 65% expect the number to increase. Also, 54% of the expatriates are getting younger (20-39 years old up from 41%). The trend indicates that the number of women expatriates is also increasing by 21% from historical 15% (Ball et al., 2010). A survey by Mercer (2008-2009) also showed that international assignments are on the rise. This survey encompasses 243 MNCs who operate globally with 94,000 expatriates (compared to 50,000 in 2005-2006). About 47% of employees experienced an increase in the deployment of traditional expatriates. Also, there has been a 38% increase in those employees that are considered nomads who move from country to country on multiple assignments. This increased demand for international expatriate assignments has been driven by MNCs who have the desire to compete globally (Lockley, 2009).

An expatriate who may have to adjust and adapt with a very new way of life and an unfamiliar work/client environment unlike the expatriates is accustomed to in the home country faces high level of stress. Coping with stress has an impact on expatriates adjustment and their comfort in working and living abroad. Research studies showed that expatriates who are unable to adjust to work and life at host country locations are likely to perform poorly (Selmer & Leung, 2007). Many organisations focuses only on the employee, but HR managers of MNCs are realizing that families of expatriates play a vital role in the assignment failure or success. Moreover, Andreason (2014) points out that the family members of an expatriate play a significant role in the success or failure of the international expatriate. Hence, HR managers of MNCs must not only plan the training program for expatriates, but also train their families in native languages, social behaviors, and cultural norms to prevent the culture shock and encourage a smooth transition to the new country.

2. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Employees with updated management skills are becoming a critical competitive resource for international organizations (Olsen & Martins, 2009; Kraimer, et al, 2009). MNC HR managers should promote the discussion and communication between expatriates and their families to increase the exchange of opinions among family members to overcome the conflict and disagreement arising from international travel. Such an effective interpersonal relationships and cooperation of expatriates with their families will be significant for their adaptation to an international travel and work environment. This view suggests that sufficient communication between family members can reduce potential conflicts and enable expatriates to adapt and adjust to overseas life and work in order to perform effectively and efficiently (Wang, 2008).In addition, many other parameters related to work environment, cross culture, ethics and value system, behavioural issues at work can influence and have impact on the performance of an employee. Indian IT employees are known for their work diversity and cross cultural issues at work with the wide spread of job and position movements in their career. A host country may be new to them in terms of language, culture, demographics, environment and local customs. Hence, present study is conducted to know the issues and concerns of Indian IT expatriates. In addition, in the recent past the individuals are more willing to spare time with family and lot of uncertainty is prevailing on the social security and safety.

3. FACTORS INFLUENCING WORK PERFORMANCE OF EXPATRIATES:

In general, expatriates will encounter greater work stress when working in different countries. Work stress became a highlighted concern in this study since it will have negative impact on expatriates' mental and physical health. Fitzgerald (2004) suggests that work stress will significantly impact expatriates' performances. The demand for IT professionals is increasing in foreign countries. Indian companies are competing to win the contract abroad and send IT expatriates to foreign country. The companies are spending high budget in Training, Visa processing and many other facilities to comfort expatriates. In spite of the effort taken by those companies, Expatriates faces challenges in the host country which creates stress resulting in low performance and premature return. It is significant to know about the stress factors and thereby in future, these IT organisation's can focus on those factors and take decisions which benefits both expatriates and the organisation. The family of the expatriates experience cultural shock in the host country. Unlike, expatriates, no specific training is provided to the family members, hence it is a challenging job for them. Expatriates wife and kids are in to major trauma in handling the cultural differences in almost all the places including schools, shopping places, neighborhood areas, etc. Thus, this stress is imposed on expatriates as they need major support from their family members to perform their work effectively.

According to the 2011 Global Relocation Trends Survey report from Brookfield GRS, there was a 61% increase in expat assignments in 2011 following a downturn the previous year that resulted from economic pressures. Moreover, the study highlighted the role of family dynamics in expatriate assignments and cited the top challenges as partner resistance (47%) and family adjustment (32%).

4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study covers the expatriates from major sector of IT and a very few from other sectors. The sample respondents should have expatriated at least to one country. There are many respondents are expatriated to many countries and spent a long tenure of period as expatriate. The study is focused on expatriate's problems, motivating factors and the expatriate environment prevailing in the country. The study findings reflect the motives and issues of Indian expatriates in abroad. This can help the organizations to take necessary precautions to make the expatriation successful and fruitful.

5. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study is a postmortem exercise to establish a theoretical back ground to take necessary precautions before selection of the employees for expatriation. This could also help to prepare the employees mentally to take up expatriation assignments without hesitation. The kind of cross culture environment and the work place professionalism and to equip themselves for the foreign assignments. Each employee knows the issues of expatriation in a limited nature. Hence, the current study is taken up to explore the various dimensions of motives, issues and the nature of expatriate environment and the required skills and coping skills of expatriation in the dimension of stress and cross cultural issues during expatriation. Hence, the present study is titled as stress and cross cultural issues of expatriation among the executives from IT sector. The reason behind coining IT is due to the large number of expatriates in the sample area is from IT sector with the constant increase in the number of expatriates' year on year.

6. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the motives and problems of expatriate environment and its impact on coping skills and performance of employees from IT sector.
2. To find out the suggestions for the expatriate problems in the cross cultural environment to manage the stress and performance.

7. METHODOLOGY

Employees who had travelled on overseas assignments for a minimum period of six months to three years were considered as respondents for this study. The respondents were chosen by snowball sampling technique because of difficulty in identifying international travelers. Snowball sampling may be defined as a technique for gathering research subjects through the identification of an initial subject who is used to provide the names of other actors. These actors may themselves open possibilities for an expanding web of contact and inquiry. The strategy has been utilized primarily as a response to overcome the problems associated with understanding and sampling concealed populations such as the deviant and the socially isolated (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997).A total of 407 expatriates were chosen for the study and only 334 had responded for a response rate of 82 percent. The study was conducted in Chennai, India. Structured questionnaire along with semi-structured interviews were used for collecting data. The questionnaire consisted of personal details of expatriates, followed by questions relating to job, motivational factors, and cultural issues of expatriates. The questionnaire was formulated using a multiple options and 5 point likert's scale. All the demographic profile of expatriates were collected through multiple choice responses and the problems, stress concerns, motivators and the suggestions to overcome expatriates problems are collected through Likerts scale responses. Majority of the responses were collected personally as well as through email. Twenty six respondents were accepted to meet in person and to answer the semi-structured interview schedule. Appointments were fixed over telephone/mail and then the respondent was interviewed as per the convenience of the researcher and the respondent. During the interview the respondents was allowed to explain his own experiences and problems during expatriation leading to fewer questions from the researcher. This helped the researcher to identify micro level difficulties of expatriates. The questionnaire tested for cronbach's alpha revealed 0.823, 0.811 and 0.824 on job-related, work related and socio culture related questions respectively.

8. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics showing the mean and SD of expatriate management environment and prevailing culture

Expatriate Management Environment And Prevailing Culture	Mean	S.D
Less paper work and complications	**3.74**	1.3
Employment habits and expectations	**3.65**	1.286
Free from red tapism	**3.59**	1.33
Free from Bureaucracy and influences	**3.56**	1.376
Availability of embassies and information centres	**3.48**	1.333
Well defined and unique procedures	**3.46**	1.394
Technical skills and mode of training	**3.42**	1.348
Awareness on socio cultural aspects	**3.39**	1.335

Awareness on expatriate procedures of the visited country	*3.38*	1.25
Training on cross cultural management	*3.37*	1.283
Money and political laundering	*3.32*	1.428
Adequate facilities of domestic country's embassy to get help from work place/ hostile country	*3.29*	1.43
Availability of Counseling services	3.13	1.385
Government support and shelter for expatriates	3.13	1.424
Well informed differences of habits, work priorities and work culture	3.13	1.42
Favorable bilateral agreements between the countries	3.13	1.405
Constructive and productive relations	3.12	1.47
Clarity in information on requirements	3.11	1.43
Differentiated treatment and time delay	3.1	1.471
Frequent changes in the formats and procedures	3	1.438
Valid N (listwise)		

Source: Primary data/Questionnaire

It is observed from the table 1, that the expatriate management environment and prevailing culture prevailing in the economies are classified into three major types on the basis of mean value score observed in the sample survey. The first kind of environment prevailing is highly positive and systematic and hassle free. These countries are developed countries in terms of expatriate management. These are represented with the statements like less paper work and complications with the mean value of 3.74, employment habits and expectations with the mean value of 3.65; Free from red tapism with the mean value of 3.59; Free from Bureaucracy and influences with the mean value of 3.56; Availability of embassy and information centers with the mean value of 3.48; well defined and unique procedures with the mean value of 3.46; technical skills and mode of training with the mean value of 3.42. This indicates that government policy on expatriation and attracting the foreigners by providing health and best possible help. It is required for the acquiring the best talents and to have sustainable development in the long run. IT also helps in optimizing the utilization of resources in the country.

The second kind of countries are trying to get the best of services from the expats where the environment is in the process of design and developing state. These are developing countries. The factors representing the same are Awareness on socio cultural aspects with the mean score of 3.39, Awareness on expatriate procedures of the visited country with the mean score of 3.38; Training on cross cultural management with the mean score of 3.37; Money and political laundering with the mean score of 3.32 and Adequate facilities of domestic country's embassy to get help from work place/ hostile country with the mean score of 3.29.

The next kind of countries where a hostile expatiate management culture is prevailing and trying to improve on the expatriate management culture and management. The factors are represented with the mean score values are given in the following lines. Availability of Counseling services with the mean score value of 3.13;Government support and shelter for expatriates with the mean score value of 3.13; Well informed differences of habits, work priorities and work culture with the mean score value of 3.13; Favorable bilateral agreements between the countries with the mean score value of 3.13;Constructive and productive relations with the mean score value of 3.12;Clarity in information on requirements with the mean score value of 3.11;Differentiated treatment and time delay with the mean score value of 3.10 and Frequent changes in the formats and procedures with the mean score value of 3.0.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics showing the mean and SD of Motivating factors of expatriation/ Intensions

Motivating factors of expatriation/ Intensions	Mean	SD
Gain experience and exposure for future positions with headquarters	**3.14**	1.393
Gain experience and exposure for future positions with foreign operation	**3.12**	1.393
Ensure that headquarters' policies are carried out locally	**3.09**	1.387
Job security at site	**3.08**	1.387
Coordinates subsidiary's activities with overall activity of parent unit.	**3.06**	1.371
Improved communication between subsidiary and headquarters	**3.04**	1.402
Cross cultural understanding and experience	**3.02**	1.379
Transfer of technical administrative or management Know-how	2.96	1.387
Financial security and better level of compensation	2.95	1.376
Career prospects for future	2.85	1.401

Source: Primary data/Questionnaire

The motivating variables of expatriation and intentions of expatriation by the employees in the sample survey are presented in the table 4.16. The motivating variables in the order of priority are Gain experience and exposure for future positions with headquarters with the mean score value of 3.14; Gain experience and exposure for future positions with foreign operation with the mean score value of 3.12;Ensure that headquarters' policies are carried out locally with the mean score value of 3.09; Job security at site with the mean score of 3.08; Coordinates subsidiary's activities with overall activity of parent unit with the mean score value of 3.06,Improved communication between subsidiary and headquarters with the mean score value of 3.04; Cross cultural understanding and experience with the mean score value of 3.02; Transfer of technical administrative or management Know-how with the mean score value of 2.96, Financial security and better level of compensation with the mean score value of 2.95 and Career prospects for future with the mean score value of 2.85.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics showing the mean and SD of Problems faced by the expatriates/ Challenges

Problems faced by the expatriates/ Challenges	Mean	SD
Priorities and free time is not matching	**4.15**	0.949
Proud off's and embarrassments	**3.66**	1.254
Nationality, religion and inheritance	**3.54**	1.381
Likes and dislikes	**3.47**	1.409
Adjustability and accommodating with new environment	**3.46**	1.428
Bureaucracy and employment	**3.42**	1.407
Making new friends	**3.33**	1.292
Working conditions and work culture	**3.33**	1.366
Finding a place to live	**3.31**	1.394
Adjustability and accommodating with new environment	3.46	1.428
Learning the local language	3.26	1.452
Society and Social interaction	3.18	1.219
Safety and security (terrorist activities)	3.17	1.385
Healthcare issues	3.03	1.372
Relationship problems	3.03	1.387

Food and apatite related issues	3.02	1.349
Loneliness	3.00	1.37
Adaption or bi-culturalism	2.96	1.376
Cost of living	2.94	1.355
Finding a school for kids	2.92	1.428
Uncertainty	2.91	1.384
Irritation and hostility	2.87	1.413
Cultural differences	2.85	1.368
Civil riots against the government	2.83	1.429
New culture and habits	2.79	1.193
Sorting out finances and healthcare	2.76	1.335
Adjustability and accommodating with new environment	3.46	1.428
Valid N (listwise)		

Source: Primary data/Questionnaire

Problems faced by the expatriates in the sample are represented through responses and the same should be taken care by government. The problems in the expatriation process and experience are indicated as Priorities and free time is not matching with the mean score of 4.15; Proud off's and embarrassments with the mean score of 3.66; Nationality, religion and inheritance with the mean score of 3.54;Likes and dislikes with the mean score of 3.47;Adjustability and accommodating with new environment with the mean score of 4.36 Bureaucracy and employment with the mean score of 3.42;Making new friends with the mean score of 3.33;Working conditions and work culture with the mean score of 3.33;Finding a place to live with the mean score of 3.31;Adjustability and accommodating with new environment with the mean score of 3.46;Learning the local language with the mean score of 3.26; Society and Social interaction with the mean score of 3.18; Safety and security (terrorist activities) with the mean score of 3.17; Healthcare issues with the mean score of 3.03;Relationship problems with the mean score of; 3.03Food and apatite related issues with the mean score o3.02;Loneliness with the mean score of3.00; Adaption or bi-culturalism with the mean score of 2.96, Cost of living with the mean score of 2.94; Finding a school for kids with the mean score of2.92, Uncertainty with the mean score of 2.91; Irritation and hostility with the mean score of 2.87; cultural differences with the mean score of 2.85; Civil riots against the government with the mean score of 2.83; New culture and habits with the mean score of 2.79 and Sorting out finances and healthcare with the mean score of 2.76

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics showing the mean and SD of Suggestions to Improve Expatriate Climate

Suggestions To Improve Expatriate Climate	Mean	SD
Pay for the work- Fair reward system	**3.97**	1.133
Society and social interactions with locals	**3.96**	1.027
Satisfied experience with the expatriation process	**3.94**	1.035
Positive and motivated expatriate environment	**3.88**	1.206
Level of trust	**3.84**	1.265
Interpersonal relations and cross cultural training	**3.55**	1.327
Closed and nurturing peer behaviour	**3.5**	1.392
Job security and reliability of employment	3.47	1.413
Career growth prospects	3.44	1.444

Transparent and systematic Management of the organization	3.43	1.433
Working Conditions	3.24	1.391

Source: Primary data/Questionnaire

The above table 4.18 suggestions given on employee performance as existed in the sample are as follows. The Pay for the work- Fair reward system with the mean score of 3.97; Society and social interactions with locals with the mean score of 3.96; Satisfied experience with the expatriation process with the mean score of 3.94;Positive and motivated expatriate environment with the mean score of 3.88; Level of trust with the mean score of 3.84, Interpersonal relations and cross cultural training with the mean score of 3.55;Closed and nurturing peer behaviour is with the means score of 3.5;Job security and reliability of employment with the means core of 3.47;Career growth prospects with the mean score of 3.44, Transparent and systematic Management of the organization with the mean score of 3.43 and Working Conditions with the mean value of 3.24. This indicates that there is a positive mind set looking the opportunity.

Table 5: Showing the overall level of expatriate management
Prevailing in the markets

Dimensions of expatriate management	Percentile 25	Median	Percentile 75
Overall Expatriate Management Environment and Prevailing Culture	62	67	**70**
Overall Motivating factors of expatriation/ Intensions	24	30	**36**
Overall Problems faced by the expatriates/ Challenges	73	79	**86**

Source: Primary data/Questionnaire

On the basis of quartiles of the scores, it is observed that, the overall expatriate management environment prevailing, Overall Motivating factors of expatriation/ Intensions and Overall Problems faced by the expatriates/ Challenges is observed as positive and encouraging in nature among the countries in the globe. The issues like terrorism, regionalism and localism are becoming the issues in expatriation and immigration of the employees to work in on site projects. The uniformed patterns of immigration, mutually protective bilateral agreements can help to exchange the human capital for the benefit of the business and to the society at large.

9. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. **Expatriate management environment** and prevailing culture prevailing in the economies are broadly classified into three types on the basis of mean value score observed in the sample survey. The first kind of environment prevailing is highly positive and systematic and hassle free. These countries are developed countries in terms of expatriate management. These are represented with the statements like less paper work and complications with the mean value of 3.74, employment habits and expectations with the mean value of 3.65; Free from red tapism with the mean value of 3. 59; Free from Beaureucracy and influences with the mean value of 3.56; Availability of embassies and information centres with the mean value of 3. 48; well defined and unique procedures with the mean value of 3. 46 and Technical skills and mode of training with the mean value of 3. 42. This indicates that government policy on expatriation and attracting the foreigners by providing health and best possible help. It is required for the acquiring the best talents and to have sustainable development in the long run. IT also helps in

optimizing the utilization of resources in the country.

2. **The motivating variables** in the order of priority are Gain experience and exposure for future positions with headquarters with the mean score value of 3.14; Gain experience and exposure for future positions with foreign operation with the mean score value of 3.12;Ensure that headquarters' policies are carried out locally with the mean score value of 3.09; Job security at site with the mean score of 3.08; Coordinates subsidiary's activities with overall activity of parent unit with the mean score value of 3.06,Improved communication between subsidiary and headquarters with the mean score value of 3.04; Cross cultural understanding and experience with the mean score value of 3.02; Transfer of technical administrative or management Know-how with the mean score value of 2.96, Financial security and better level of compensation with the mean score value of 2.95 and Career prospects for future with the mean score value of 2.85.

3. **The Challenges in the expatriation** process and experience are indicated as Priorities and free time is not matching with the mean score of 4.15; Proud off's and embarrassments with the mean score of 3.66; Nationality, religion and inheritance with the mean score of 3.54;Likes and dislikes with the mean score of 3.47;Adjustability and accommodating with new environment with the mean score of 4.36 Bureaucracy and employment with the mean score of 3.42;Making new friends with the mean score of 3.33;Working conditions and work culture with the mean score of 3.33;Finding a place to live with the mean score of 3.31;Adjustability and accommodating with new environment with the mean score of 3.46;Learning the local language with the mean score of 3.26; Society and Social interaction with the mean score of 3.18; Safety and security (terrorist activities) with the mean score of 3.17; Healthcare issues with the mean score of 3.03;Relationship problems with the mean score of; 3.03Food and apatite related issues with the mean score o3.02;and Loneliness with the mean score of3.00.

10. SUGGESTIONS

Suggestions given on employee performance as existed in the sample are as follows. The Pay for the work- Fair reward system with the mean score of 3.97; Society and social interactions with locals with the mean score of 3.96; Satisfied experience with the expatriation process with the mean score of 3.94; Positive and motivated expatriate environment with the mean score of 3.88; Level of trust with the mean score of 3.84, Interpersonal relations and cross cultural training with the mean score of 3.55; Closed and nurturing peer behaviour is with the means score of 3.5; Job security and reliability of employment with the means core of 3.47; Career growth prospects with the mean score of 3.44, Transparent and systematic Management of the organization with the mean score of 3.43 and Working Conditions with the mean value of 3.24. This indicates that there is a positive mind set looking the opportunity.

11. CONCLUSION

The results of the data analysis indicate that the expatriate environment prevailing in the countries of expatriation is mixed in nature. The basis issues of cross cultural, in the form of personal, self ego, cultural, social, safety and environmental indicates the need for improvement of the level of awareness of the environment in the dimensions of social, cultural, environmental, and behavioural aspects of expatriate country. This can be possible only through training to the employees on off-shore culture and frequent short trips to understand the working conditions, language, culture and behaviour of employees at work. This can help in improving the

confidence of the employees and to take up the off-shore expatriation, in times of need to the organization. A committed co-operation along with positive attitude towards the problem from all the stake holders is a key in the success of improving the expatriation management environment in the multi stake holder environment.

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