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The Antecedents and Outcomes of Expatriate Adjustment of Self-initiated Expatriates: A Theoretical Framework

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Abstract

The percentage of expatriates in the total workforce is increasing worldwide and is reaching substantial figures in some countries especially in the GCC region. Therefore, the ability of organizations to attract and manage expatriate workers effectively is expected to be an important factor in their success. Self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) face a unique job situation that raises many research questions but the topic is still severely under-researched. This study presents a theoretical framework which examines the broad work environment of SIEs and relationships between factors driving the decision to expatriate, individual characteristics of the SIE, expatriate adjustment in the new environment, expatriate experience in the host country, allegiance to home country, and intentions to repatriate.

Key Words: self-initiated expatriates, motives to expatriate, motives to stay, expatriate adjustment, meaning of home, intentions to repatriate.

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Introduction

One of the key manifestations of the globalization of world economies today is an increasing numbers of professionals and other workers who are pursuing employment opportunities outside their home countries on their own initiative. It is estimated the number of self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) entering the OECD countries in the year 2004 to be over 1.5 million (OECD, 2006). The GCC region has been a major importer of SEIs over the past several decades due to a severe shortage of local workforce in both absolute numbers and skill endowments in a time when demand for labour was escalating in order to staff major infrastructure projects funded by revenues from the booming oil and gas industry. The percentage of expatriates in the total workforce reaches substantial figures in some countries especially in the GCC region; the number of foreign workers in the UAE stood at 2.5 million or 90 percent of the total workforce in 2005 (TANMIA, 2006). Therefore, the ability of organizations to attract and manage expatriate workers effectively is expected to be an important factor in their success in the future, especially in certain professions and industries where the local expertise are in short supply.

Self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) face a unique job situation that raises many research questions but the topic is still severely under-researched. This study intends to add to our knowledge in this field. The study examines the broad work environment of SIEs with focus on factors that drive the individual's decision to expatriate and the determinants of SIEs' adjustment, career performance, and repatriation intent.

Objectives of the Study

Although individuals who take on expatriation on their own initiative have been acknowledged as a distinct expatriate population, empirical research on this population is extremely scarce (Bozionelos, 2009). As is the norm for research in newly acknowledged social phenomena, the limited extant research, though insightful, has been mainly exploratory and descriptive (i.e., see Inkson and Meyers (2003); Richardson & McKenna, 2002; Suutari & Brewster, 2000 ; Vance, 2005). Research of deductive character that tests relationships between factors is lacking (Bozionelos, 2009). The differences between this group and expatriates under corporate sponsorship raise doubts as to whether the accumulated knowledge concerning factors affecting expatriation success—which, as well is still incomplete—can be applied to self-initiated expatriates (Suutari & Brewster, 2000).

Therefore, development of the theoretical underpinnings of this phenomenon is extremely important to take research in this field to more rigorous levels. This will allow for more empirical research of a deductive nature on self-initiated expatriates to be conducted.

The current study intends to add to our knowledge in this field. The study will examine the broad work environment of SIEs and propose a theoretical framework with focus on factors that drive the individual's decision to expatriate and the determinants of SIEs' adjustment, career performance, and repatriation intent.

Self-initiated expatriates versus company expatriates

Tung (1988) describes how boundaries between countries are becoming more permeable and careers more fluid leading to the emergence of a new breed of expatriate – the self-initiated expatriates (SIE) – who has recently been

recognized as an important element of the global workforce. Inkson, Arthur, Pringle, & Barry (1997) identified several distinctive characteristics of self-initiated foreign employees (SIEs). First, they are not employees of multinational organizations. Instead of being assigned to work in a foreign culture, they themselves make the decision to go abroad to face the challenges of living and working in an unfamiliar environment. Second, SIEs tend to see their international experience as a means of developing themselves personally; achieving specific company goals is not a primary motivational force for becoming an international worker.

Third, while traditional expatriates usually have generous relocation packages, SIEs often fund their own relocation expenses through personal savings. Fourth, SIEs do not follow a traditional career path within an organization; they have no boundaries in their career development. They are willing to move around the world and work in foreign countries for their self-development or for other personal agenda.

Because of the unique employment conditions and challenges faced by SIEs, the topic has attracted researcher interest recently and a growing body of knowledge is being produced, although understandably most of the research in this area is still in an exploratory stage. Several studies were conducted by Richardson and colleagues who focused on the experience of expatriate academics in their work (Richardson, 2003; Richardson & Mallon, 2005; Richardson & McKenna, 2003; Richardson & McKenna, 2006). They found that individual desire for adventure, life change, and family concerns were key incentives driving decision to expatriate for academics and that the expatriation experience has enriched their career experience (Richardson et al., 2005).

Other qualitative studies were conducted by Napier and Taylor (2002) on women professionals abroad. There are also few quantitative studies undertaken in the field of self-initiated mobility. Bhuian et al. (2001) have investigated the characteristics of people on self-initiated foreign experiences in

Saudi Arabia, while in New Zealand, Inkson and Myers (2003) have examined the attributes and attitudes of New Zealanders living and working abroad.

Suutari and Brewster (2000) indicate that SIEs are a more heterogeneous group than traditional expatriates and include both people in their early careers as well as more experienced people who chose to pursue their career abroad. They also found using a sample of Finish expatriates that SIEs and those on expatriate assignments differ with regard to individual characteristics as well as employer and task related variables.

Among the key differences between the corporate sponsored and the self-initiated expatriates are those related to the motives or reasons to expatriate and the expatriate adjustment process. While corporate sponsored expatriates are often selected and motivated to expatriate by their employer, SIEs independently take the initiative to seek employment outside their home countries. Also, while traditional expatriates leave their home country but stay within the boundaries of their employing organization, the challenges and uncertainties that SIEs face are greater as they often move into completely foreign territories. Both the motivation to expatriate and the expatriate adjustment processes are expected to have significant impact on the expatriation experience as well as expatriates' behavior and intentions to repatriate.

Expatriate Adjustment

expatriate adjustment has been defined primarily as the degree of psychological comfort the expatriate feels regarding the new situation (Black, 1988). Berry (1992, p. 73) defines adjustment as "a state whereby changes occur in the individual in a direction of increased fit and reduced conflict between the environmental demands and the individual attitudinal and behavioral inclinations". The importance of this fit stems from the fact that it is

often marked by reduced conflict and stress and increased expatriate effectiveness (Aycan, 1997). There is evidence that expatriate adjustment is a predictor of an expatriate's job performance (Parker & McEvoy, 1993) and turnover (Black & Stephens, 1989).

The multidimensional process of adjustment has been discussed in both the acculturation and expatriation literatures. In the expatriation literature, Black and Stephens (1989) identified three facets of adjustment: adjustment to work, adjustment to interacting with host nationals, and adjustment to the general environment. Work adjustment reflects the degree of psychological comfort regarding different work values, expectations, and standards. It involves adjustment to job responsibilities, supervision, and performance expectation. Interactional adjustment refers to the degree of psychological comfort regarding different communication and interpersonal styles used in the host culture. General adjustment refers to the degree of psychological comfort with regard to various aspects of the host cultural environment (Black et al., 1989; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). While the issue of adjustment has been widely studied in the case of corporate sponsored expatriates, I am not aware of any studies that addressed the nature and determinants of adjustment in the case of self-initiated expatriates.

A Theoretical Framework of Expatriate Adjustment for SIEs

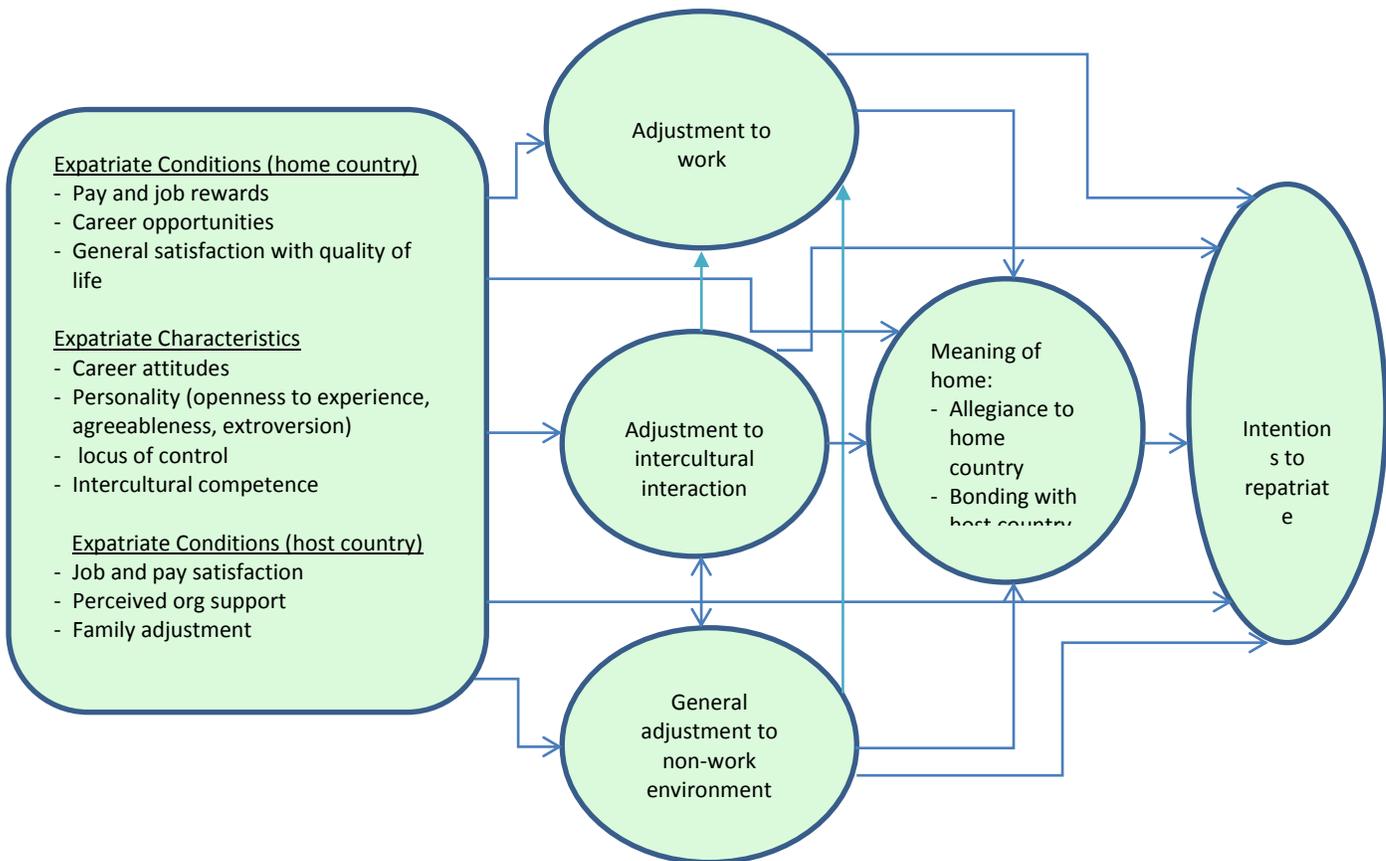
Expatriate adjustment can be characterized as the degree of fit between the expatriate and the new environment in both work context and the surrounding environment. Adjustment enables an individual to maintain a "balanced psychological state" (Torbiorn, 1982) marked with reduced conflict and stress and increased effectiveness (Aycan, 1997).

While the concept of adjustment as defined above might be the same in principle for both company sponsored and self-initiated expatriates, the process leading to adjustment and its determinants and outcomes are expected to differ significantly given the differences in the context between the two groups. Although company sponsored expatriates leave their job and home country in pursuit of their foreign assignment, they still work for the same employer and therefore are more connected with their home country in many ways than the self-initiated expatriate who deals with much more uncertainty and bears much more risk in the move abroad as he steps into a completely new territory and environment (Tams & Arthur, 2007).

A typical company sponsored expatriate works in a foreign subsidiary of a multinational corporation for a period ranging from two to three years and then return to continue his or her career with the parent company (Guzzo, Noonan, & Elrone, 1994). However, the stay abroad for the self-initiated expatriate might take significantly longer periods and there are no guarantees of finding suitable employment upon returning to the home country.

Figure 1 below presents a theoretical model of the determinants of expatriate adjustment in the case of self-initiated expatriates and its relationship with the strength of relationship with the home country and intentions to repatriate.

Figure 1: Expatriate adjustment model of SIEs



While the concept of adjustment as defined above might be the same, in principle, for both company sponsored and self-initiated expatriates, the process leading to adjustment and its determinants and outcomes are expected to differ significantly given the differences in the context between the two groups. Also, the operationalization of task adjustment might be slightly different in the case of self-initiated expatriate. This is because the work context is completely new in this case unlike the company sponsored expatriates who is still working for the same company, although in different environment, and whose work assignment in the foreign subsidiary often shares many common aspects with his or her previous assignment within the home branch of the multinational corporation.

Although company sponsored expatriates leave their job and home country in pursuit of their foreign assignment, they still work for the same employer and therefore are more connected with their home country in many ways than the self-initiated expatriate who deals with much more uncertainty and bears much more risk in the move abroad as he steps into a completely new territory and environment (Tams et al., 2007). The model depicted in Figure 1 postulates that the level of expatriate adjustment will be determined by three sets of variables including the expatriate characteristics, the expatriate's conditions within the home country, and the conditions encountered after expatriation within the host country. The expatriate characteristics affecting adjustment include career attitudes and goals, personality, and intercultural competence. The second sets of factors that determine adjustment are related to the context or conditions within which the individual expatriate operates, at the home country, before departure including the career opportunities, pay and financial compensation, and general satisfaction with the quality of life.

The expatriate adjustment model also predicts that the level of adjustment will be affected by conditions encountered after expatriation within the host country context including job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, perceived general organizational fairness, and adjustment of family members to the general environment in the host country.

The model posits that expatriate adjustment (or lack off) will determine a key concept in the context of self-initiated expatriates which is the 'meaning of home' or allegiance to the home country. The three facets of adjustment in addition to allegiance to home will also determine the expatriate's intention to stay or voluntarily repatriate to the home country.

Previous research indicates that the three types of adjustment are interrelated (Ayca, 1997; Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Black & Gregersen, 1991a; Gregersen & Black, 1990). However, the casual direction of the relationship between the three constructs is not clear. Ayca (1997) proposed that general adjustment and intercultural adjustment are antecedents of work adjustment in the context of traditional expatriates. This might be true

also in the case of self-initiated expatriates. The reasoning for that is simple; as Aycan (1997) argues - citing Moghaddam et al. (1993) -, "it is much easier to accomplish die required tasks if one feels good and gains acceptance and assistance from others."

Bahgat (1983) criticized organizational literature for ignoring the influence of stressful life events on individual behavior in organizations. Also, numerous previous studies confirmed the significant effects of general and intercultural adjustment on various facets of work adjustment and performance. For example, Searle and Ward (1990) showed that psychological adjustment was the best predictor of task-effectiveness for sojourners. Aycan (1997) cites several other studies which found that manager's inability to adapt to different physical and cultural environments reduced work performance and increased incidents of failure (Kealey, 1989; Stening & Hammer, 1992; Tung, 1987).

The amount of uncertainty and stress encountered during the expatriation experience might be a determining factor in the person's intention to stay or leave (Gregersen et al., 1990).

Proposition 1: General adjustment and adjustment to intercultural interaction are the most immediate predictors of adjustment to work among self-initiated expatriates.

Expatriate Conditions (home country)

Motives to Expatriate

Literature on the selection of traditional expatriates refers to the recruitment process that takes place within the internal labor market of multinational corporations. The selection process in this case is a joint effort between the employer and the potential candidates to identify the best person for the

assignment within the company (McKenna & Richardson, 2007). However, SIEs are totally self-selected. There are many reasons why such professionals decide to become independently mobile which are significantly different from those related to the traditional expatriate. Previous exploratory research offered some insight towards understanding the various reasons that might induce professionals to become internationally mobile (Banai & Harry, 2004; Richardson & McKenna, 2002). Banai and Harry (2004) classified self-initiated expatriates - whom they referred to as 'international itinerants' – into six categories including the failed expatriates, those with unique expertise, the cosmopolitans, the mavericks, the returning nationals, and novelty seekers. They indicated that those professionals offer employers many advantages over traditional expatriates such as lower costs, flexibility, and more commitment to their assignments.

In their research on expatriate academics, McKenna and Richardson (2007) used metaphors to classify SIEs based on the reasons why they choose to expatriate. Their classification includes the following:

- Mercenary reasons: those who seek better rewards, lifestyle, and benefits.
- Architects: who pursue their careers independently of organizational structures.
- Refugees: those who desire to escape from certain conditions at home.
- Explorers: who seek to experience the adventure of new environment abroad.
- Seekers: who seek something for their personal life such as self-knowledge, etc.
- Tightrope walker: individuals looking for risk and challenge.
- Missionaries: who want to do good to others and bring advancement to other parts of the world.

Because of the variety of motives driving the self-initiated expatriation process, Suutari and Brewster (2000) suggest that the profile of people pursuing self-initiated expatriate careers is more heterogeneous than that of the traditional expatriate. It must be noted also that self-initiated international careers are not always voluntary since the largest number of career moves are made by individuals seeking economic or political betterment (Carr, Inkson, & Thorn, 2005). Suutari and Brewster (2000) identified in their study of Finish graduate engineers six groups of self-initiated expatriates: young opportunists with relatively independent family situations; job seekers escaping unemployment at home; officials working for international organizations; localized professionals who have decided to stay abroad permanently; international or global specialists who follow jobs around the globe; and dual career couples. They also found that many of them pursued self-initiated international careers because of high unemployment and perceived constraints of the domestic labor market.

Therefore, we can generally classify the motives to pursue self-initiated expatriate careers into four categories including seeking better pay and job rewards, escaping poor career opportunities at the home country, general dissatisfaction with quality of life at the home country, and seeking adventure by moving abroad.

Motives to expatriate are expected to have an impact on the expatriate adjustment into the new environment. The theoretical foundation of this relationship can be found in the concept that beliefs determine intentions which in turn explain behaviors. The nature and strength of the motives to expatriate will determine the individual's intentions to expend extra effort in adjusting into the new environment as long as his or her expectations are met. The theory of reasoned action (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) proposes that attitudes and subjective norms represent the foundation for behavioural intentions, which in turn leads to volitional behaviour. Motives to expatriate represent an individual's beliefs about the possible gains he might be able to achieve as a result of pursuing a specific career opportunity abroad.

The relationship between beliefs and attitudes regarding a specific behavior which subsequently determine whether to engage in the behavior is explained by Fishbien and Ajzen's (1975) expectancy-value model. According to this model, attitudes develop reasonably from the beliefs people hold about the object of the attitude (pursuing an expatriate career opportunity in this case). For example if a person believes that an expatriate work opportunity will enable him to achieve desired financial gains (better income) or better career opportunities, then he will develop a favorable attitude towards expatriation and subsequently will spend all needed efforts to make the whole process successful. These efforts in the context of expatriate adjustment will be represented by an expatriate's adoption of certain coping strategies to achieve adjustment. Coping is defined as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Feldman and Thomas (1991) found that active coping strategies, such as changing the work environment and seeking out information and training, have positive impact on expatriate adjustment outcomes. Ashford and Black (1996) demonstrated that in order to enhance their feeling of personal control during organizational entry, individuals engage in proactive activities such as information and feedback seeking, relationship building, job-change negotiating, and positive framing.

Therefore, we can make the following proposition:

Proposition 2: The strength of an expatriate's motives to expatriate including perceptions about pay and rewards, career opportunities, and general satisfaction with life in the home country will have a positive impact on his or her adjustment to work, adjustment to intercultural interaction, and general adjustment to non-work environment in the host country.

Expatriate Characteristics

The expatriate adjustment is a complex and multidimensional process which involves interaction of several cognitive, dispositional, and behavioural elements that determine eventually the state and level of comfort or equilibrium a person feels within his or her surroundings. Previous research on expatriate adjustment examined the effects of various individual level competencies and characteristics on expatriate adjustment (Banai et al., 2004; Black, 1990; Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003; Huang, Chi, & Lawler, 2005; Tucker, Bonial, & Lahti, 2004). These studies were intended basically to identify the key qualities that companies should be looking for when selecting candidates for expatriate assignments. Among the key factors reported in previous studies to have significant effects on adjustment are career attitudes, personality traits, and specific qualities such as locus of control and intercultural competence.

Career Attitudes

Self-initiated expatriates have self-managed careers because they do not have the continuous support of an employer (Banai et al., 2004). This fact is well articulated in the following statement by a British banker working in the Middle East as quoted by Banai and Harry (2004): “I manage my own career. I keep in contact with the market and have a good network with former colleagues and recruiters. My career is like a product that has to be kept in the market. I keep my eyes open for opportunities.”

The concepts of protean career introduced by Douglas Hall (1976, 2002) and the boundaryless career introduced by Michael Arthur (Arthur, 1994) are very useful to understand the career attitudes of self-initiated expatriates. Hall (2002) define the protean career as a career where the individual, rather than

the organisation, is in charge. Protean individuals value individual freedom and growth and define career success in terms of psychological criteria, such as the degree of job satisfaction, self-actualisation, personal accomplishment and a feeling of fulfillment (Hall & Chandler, 2005). The perceived psychological contract (Rousseau, 1995) in this case involves more of a transactional relationship than a long-term employment with prospects of promotion within the same organization.

In operationalising the construct of protean career attitude, Briscoe et al. (2006) identified two key components, namely, (1) a self-directed attitude in terms of take an independent role in managing their vocational behavior and (2) a value-driven attitude where one's own values rather than the organizational values are used to guide the career decisions. Related to the concept of protean career is the boundaryless career attitude which emphasizes mobility across physical and psychological career boundaries (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005). A person with a boundaryless career mindset "navigates the changing work landscape by enacting a career characterized by different levels of physical and psychological movement" (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006).

Given the uncertainty typically encountered by self-initiated expatriates as they pursue their international careers, a protean and boundaryless career attitude towards one's career can be very helpful in preparing the person to adapt with the uncertainty and changing circumstances involved in expatriation. Grey's (1994) perspective on career as a "project of the self" therefore becomes very relevant in the context of self-initiated expatriates.

Proposition 3: The protean and boundaryless career attitudes will be positively related to a self-initiated expatriate's adjustment to work, adjustment to intercultural interaction, and general adjustment to non-work environment in the host country.

Personality traits, intercultural competence and locus of control

Previous research on expatriate adjustment identified several characteristics and traits of individuals who are able to adjust better in cross-cultural work and social contexts (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991b; Kets de Vries & Mead, 1991; Teagarden & Gordon, 1995; Tucker et al., 2004). The general observation on this literature is the use of variety of conceptualizations and measures of personality traits. The lack of consistent classification of personality traits such as the Big Five framework (Barrick & Mount, 1991) makes it difficult to compare and validate findings of various studies. Therefore, the existing literature regarding a theory-based linkage of personality traits to expatriate adjustment is still underdeveloped (Huang et al., 2005). For example, Tucker et al. (2004) found that those who adjust well to other cultures are tolerant to different conditions, have an internal locus of control, are flexible, show interest in other people. On the other hand, Teagarden and Gordon (1995) found that open-mindedness was related to expatriate adjustment, while Kets de Vries and Mead (1991) suggested the personality trait of curiosity was a factor in the level of adjustment. However, inspection of various operationalizations of personality traits might show that they are not much different from the Big Five theory (Huang et al., 2005). For example, the two traits of 'open-mindedness' and 'curiosity' appear to belong to the construct of 'openness to experience' in the Big Five framework.

Accumulated evidence shows that there exist five personality factors, called the Big Five, which include extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience. These five categories form the widely accepted taxonomy of the 'higher order' personality traits and account for a majority of the variances in personality measures (Wiggins & Trapnell, 1997). Definitions of these five traits are as follows: extroversion is the degree to which

a person is talkative and sociable and enjoys social gatherings. Agreeableness is the tendency of a person to be interpersonally altruistic and co-operative. Conscientiousness is the degree to which a person is strong-willed, determined and attentive. Neuroticism is associated with negative emotional stability, showing characteristics of nervousness, moodiness and a temperamental nature. Openness to experience involves active imagination, attentiveness to inner feelings, preference for variety, and intellectual curiosity (Goldberg, 1993).

Several researchers have examined expatriate adjustment more systematically through the Big Five framework, taking into account expatriates' general personality traits (Caligiuri, 2000; Huang et al., 2005; Ones & Viswesvaran, 1999; Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, & Ferzandi, 2006). For example, input from 96 managers shows that Conscientiousness is the strongest of the Big Five traits in its perceived influence on cross-cultural adjustment, interactions with HCNs, retention, and dimensions of expatriate effectiveness (Ones et al., 1999). Further, a study with 126 American expatriates and 17 inpatriates in one large multinational company (MNC) shows that Agreeableness, Emotional Stability, and Extroversion are negatively related with expatriate withdrawal cognition (Caligiuri, 2000).

Moreover, a study with 83 American expatriates in Taiwan shows that Extraversion has a positive impact on interaction and general adjustment, Agreeableness a positive impact on interaction adjustment, and Openness to Experience a positive impact on work and general adjustment (Huang et al., 2005). Finally, a meta-analysis with several sources of expatriate data shows that Conscientiousness is positively related with general adjustment, Agreeableness positively related with interaction adjustment but negatively with work adjustment, and Extraversion positively related with general and work adjustment (Shaffer et al., 2006).

In the context of self-initiated expatriates, it is believed that personality factors as defined in the Big Five model will have impact on the three facets of

expatriate adjustment. SIEs face a great deal of uncertainty and need challenges in navigating the waters of building their career in a foreign environment. At least four of Big Five personality factors, namely, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extroversion, and openness to experience, are expected to have significant effect of expatriate adjustment. People high on conscientiousness would have the personal ability to cope with the stress and uncertainty of the expatriate career through various coping strategies such as information seeking, training, and positive framing, etc. Also, being high on the other three personality factors would provide the kind of flexibility and open mindedness that is needed to adjust in a cross-cultural environment.

Therefore, we can make the following proposition:

Proposition 4: Four of the Big Five personality factors including conscientiousness, agreeableness, extroversion, and openness to experience would have a positive relationship with a self-initiated expatriate's adjustment to work, adjustment to intercultural interaction, and general adjustment to non-work environment

Beside the personality traits, two other individual characteristics, namely locus of control and intercultural competence, have been found to have an impact on expatriate adjustment. Black (1990) and Tucker et al. (2004) found that people with internal locus of control are better adjusted to their overseas assignments. People who think their lives can be controlled by their own efforts are called the 'internal locus of control type'. People who believe that their lives are controlled by chance, fate, opportunity and other unpredictable forces are called the 'external locus of control type'. Persons with internal locus of control would put more effort into controlling their environment, and thus, gain better results (Rotter, 1966). They would be more concerned with obtaining and using information important to themselves and they would be better in obtaining and using such information than people with external locus of control.

Proposition 5: Internal locus of control will be associated with higher levels of self-initiated expatriate's adjustment to work, adjustment to intercultural interaction, and general adjustment to non-work environment.

Many studies (Bell & Harrison, 1996; Caligiuri, 2000; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Selmer, 2006) have shown that expatriates who develop close relationships with host country nationals are generally better adjusted and more productive in their international assignments than expatriates who do not develop such friendships. Bell and Harrison (1996) indicated that interacting with host nationals helps in diminishing the culture shock among expatriates. Aycan (1997) explains that the expatriates' interaction with others in the new culture enables them to learn about appropriate behavior in work and non-work contexts, which enhances the expatriates' understanding of the host nationals and facilitates their adjustment. The ability to build such relationships relies on a person's intercultural competence which is defined as "a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself" (Fantini, 2009).

People with high intercultural competence have the ability to step beyond one's own culture and function with other individuals from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Self-initiated expatriates with high intercultural competence are expected through building effective relationships with others in the host country to achieve higher levels of expatriate adjustment.

Proposition 6: Intercultural competence will be positively related to self-initiated expatriate's adjustment to work, adjustment to intercultural interaction, and general adjustment to non-work environment.

Expatriate Conditions (host country)

Studies on the factors affecting the working environment and job satisfaction of self-initiated expatriates are very limited. In a study that highlighted the unique conditions of SIEs, Forstenlechner (2010) used samples from UAE and Austria to examine SIEs reactions to perceptions of justice at the host country level. He found that SIEs perceive justice and support from their host country in a similar way to how employees perceive organizational justice, though the consequences may not follow negative perception as quickly as they do in the organizational context. In another study that examined the impact of perceived organizational justice on job satisfaction in the UAE, Fernandes and Awamleh (2006) found that reactions to perceived organizational injustice differed between local workers and SIEs. McKenna and Richardson (2007) noted the very limited research on SIEs and highlighted unique research questions with regard to managing SIEs in areas such as selection, orientation, rewards, and performance management and called for empirical research to examine these issues.

In international assignments in general, a positive relationship is consistently found between adjustment and job satisfaction; in particular between work and general adjustment, and job satisfaction (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Hechanova et al., 2003). Satisfaction with the job and the pay in the host country are expected to improve the overall well-being of self-initiated expatriates and this might be reflected in better expatriate adjustment.

Proposition 7: Job and pay satisfaction of a self-initiate will be positively related to his or her adjustment to work, adjustment to intercultural interaction, and general adjustment to non-work environment.

Also, it is expected that the way that expatriates perceive their organization in terms of perceived organizational support and perceived organizational fairness

will be instrumental in shaping overall quality of work and life of self-initiated expatriates in the host country and enhance their ability to adjust into their work and social environment. Social support can be broadly defined as "the availability of helping relationships and the quality of those relationships" (RL., 1983). Research on social support indicate that individuals may obtain support from various sources such as organizations, coworkers, supervisors, friends, and families (Caplan, Cobb, French, Harrison, & Pinneau, 1975).

Perceived organizational support (POS) refers to employees' general beliefs about the extent to which their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986). POS represent an employee's overall assessment regarding all organizational members who control that individual's resources and rewards.

Research showed that POS is positively related to organizational commitment (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990; Guzzo, Noonan, & Elron, 1994; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997), attendance rates, job performance, and pro-social behaviours (Eisenberger et al., 1990; Eisenberger et al., 1986).

Proposition 8: Perceived organizational support will be positively related to a self-initiated expatriate's adjustment to work, adjustment to intercultural interaction, and general adjustment to non-work environment.

Studies on expatriate adjustment have emphasized the importance of adjustment of family members as one of the key antecedents of expatriate adjustment (Black et al., 1991a; Black et al., 1989; Torbiorn, 1982; Tung, 1988). Problems of family adjustment related to such issues as the new school environment for children and employment problems for the spouse may be some major sources of stress for the expatriate (Aycan, 1997). Those managers whose family members have adjustment difficulties are most likely to feel responsible for their unhappiness which is expected to elevate stress. On the other hand, well-adjusted families provide social support which reduces stress for the expatriate and facilitates general adjustment. Family adjustment is

also expected to have an impact on expatriate work adjustment. If a family member is experiencing difficulty in making cross-cultural adjustment, performance and commitment may be adversely influenced as a result of high level of stress and discontent (Bhagat, 1983).

Proposition 9: Family adjustment in the host country environment will be positively related to a self-initiated expatriate's adjustment to work, adjustment to intercultural interaction, and general adjustment to non-work environment.

Meaning of home

The adjustment of expatriates into the host cultural and work environment calls into attention the effect that this adjustment might have on their perception of their home culture and identity. The expatriate's attitude towards how to integrate into the new culture could influence his/her adjustment (Aycan, 1997). In the acculturation literature, acculturation attitudes are considered to be important for a successful adjustment. The model of acculturation attitudes (Berry, 1992) addresses two critical issues. The first issue is whether or not an individual values maintaining his/her own cultural characteristics. The second issue is whether or not maintaining relationships with members of the host society is considered to be of value.

The model identifies four types of expatriates based on their mode of acculturation: Assimilation occurs for those whose response for the first issue is 'no' and to the second issue is 'yes'. This is the option when an acculturating individual does not wish to maintain his/her cultural characteristics but seeks relations with groups in the larger society. 'Separation' as opposed to assimilation, occurs when there is a strong urge to maintain one's own culture and identity and not to interact with groups in the host society. 'Integration'

happens when there is an interest in interacting with others, while preserving the cultural identity. Finally, 'marginalization' occurs if an individual is interested in neither maintaining the culture of origin nor interacting with others in the larger society. Among the four acculturation attitudes, integration was found to predict good mental health and low stress, whereas marginalization predicts poor mental health and high stress (Aycaan, 1997). Inability to adjust into the host culture results in expatriates' perception of outsidersness, which according to findings by Richardson and Mckenna (2006) will lead to increased intentions to repatriate.

The meaning of home would be inevitably different for SIEs than those who live and work their whole life in their native home country. For expatriates the meaning of home becomes a mix of their perception of their native home and the host country. The model presented in Figure 1 above postulates that the meaning of home for self-initiated expatriates is characterized by two constructs: 'allegiance to home country' which measures the extent to which the person identifies with the home country as his/her actual home. The other construct is 'the level of bonding' with the host country which measures the extent to which the person identifies with and adapts to the host country's environment. A successful expatriate adjustment would be in the case where a person is able to preserve his or her allegiance to home country and at the same time achieves a high level of acculturation and bonding with the host country.

The key to successful adjustment, therefore, is to achieve adjustment without losing the person's sense of cultural identity and meaning of home. This is a challenging task for self-initiated expatriates as their accumulated experiences in cross-cultural context within different institutional and normative realities may change them in fundamental ways that makes it difficult to preserve their cultural identity and their conception of 'home' in both its physical and normative connotations.

Proposition 10: An expatriate's adjustment to work, adjustment to intercultural interaction, and general adjustment to non-work environment will be positively related to his or her level of bonding with the host country.

Intentions to repatriate

In the context of traditional expatriates, most studies have found that well adjusted expatriates have fewer intentions to return home before completion of their expatriate assignments (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Gregersen et al., 1990; Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun, & Lepak, 2005). For example, Black and Stephens (1989) found that expatriates and spouses' interaction and general adjustment correlated positively with expatriates' intentions to stay, but work adjustment did not. Similarly, Gregersen and Black (1990), based on data from expatriates in the Pacific Rim and Europe, confirmed that expatriates' interaction and general adjustment were positive predictors of expatriates' intention to stay in the assignment, whereas work adjustment was not. In addition, Takeuchi, Tesluk, et al. (2005) found that Japanese expatriates who were well adjusted at work and to the general environment had fewer intentions to return earlier from the US than those less adjusted. Overall, Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. (2005) confirmed a negative association between adjustment and withdrawal cognitions.

Withdrawal intentions can be defined as a multi-dimensional concept (Carmeli, 2005) encompassing three separate dimensions: intentions to withdraw from the job; intentions to withdraw from the employer or organization; and intentions to abandon the selected career or occupation. This multidimensional concept of withdrawal intentions is particularly useful in the context of self-initiated expatriates, because expatriates may choose to leave the present job wishing to work for the same employer elsewhere or, they may wish to leave the employer, while keeping the same assignment and occupation by relocating to

another employer within the host country, or they may leave the employer and the host country and repatriate to the home country.

Building on this framework, a negative association between cross-cultural adjustment and withdrawal intentions is expected. In particular, a negative association is expected between adjustment and organization withdrawal intentions, and ultimately, organization and host country withdrawal intentions.

Proposition 10a: An expatriate's adjustment to work, adjustment to intercultural interaction, and general adjustment to non-work environment will be negatively related to his or her intentions to withdraw from the organization.

Proposition 10b: An expatriate's adjustment to work, adjustment to intercultural interaction, and general adjustment to non-work environment will be negatively related to his or her intentions to repatriate to home country.

Also, the level of 'bonding' with the host country will be positively related to his/her intention to stay in the host country while the level of allegiance to home country will be negatively related to the intention to stay in the host country.

Proposition 11a: An expatriate's level of bonding with the host country will be positively related to his or her intention to stay in the host country.

Proposition 11b: An expatriate's level of allegiance to home country will be negatively related to his or her intention to stay in the host country.

Conclusion

Expatriate adjustment has been studied extensively in the literature within the context of traditional company sponsored expatriates. However, to my knowledge, the topic has not been addressed at all within the context of self-initiated expatriates. This is strange given the growing interest in self-initiated expatriates and the unique work situation experienced by those who decide to leave their home country on their own to pursue career opportunities abroad. The literature available on SIEs so far is exploratory and very limited. Therefore, there is a need for studies that develop theoretical perspectives to understand this phenomenon as well as theory-driven empirical research to examine various issues related to self-initiated expatriates and the challenges and experiences they encounter in pursuing their international careers.

This study contributes to bridging the gap by proposing a theoretical model of antecedents and outcomes of expatriate adjustment in the case of SIEs. The model presents three sets of antecedents of self-initiated expatriate's adjustment including motives to expatriate emanating from career and life conditions in the home country, expatriate characteristics (including personality, career attitudes, and locus of control), and work and living conditions experienced in the host country. The theoretical model also addresses the impact of the expatriation and expatriate adjustment process on an individual's perception of and allegiance to his home country and its impact on intentions to return. Future empirical studies need to be conducted to assess the validity of the proposed theory and draw concrete conclusions on the lives and careers of this group of expatriates.

Policy Implications

Findings of this study are expected to have significant practical implication with regard to effective practices to attract, retain and manage performance of SIEs. Findings will also be helpful to individuals who consider pursuing career opportunities abroad.

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