



Quantitative Analysis of Career Advancement, Job Satisfaction and Retention of Repatriate Managers in The Information Technology Sector

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the problem of repatriate retention in Indian IT multinationals and how it is related to expectations of career advancement and job satisfaction. Regression analysis has been used to understand the relationship between retention of IT managers, dimensions of career advancement and dimensions of employee satisfaction. The results of regression analysis show that two dimensions of employee satisfaction, viz. intrinsic rewards and underemployment are the key factors that relate to retention.

KEYWORDS : – career advancement, retention, employee satisfaction, skills, rewards, promotion, job offers, intrinsic rewards, underemployment, organizational commitment, regression, expatriate, repatriate

Increasing globalization has enhanced competitive challenges faced by multinational corporations, particularly in terms of demands on human resources. The new global organizing paradigm demands seamless integration of not just the financial, manufacturing, marketing, and operational domains, but also of the people that constitute the organization. Geographical boundaries are becoming increasingly redundant in most modern firms; fluidity, and, adaptability are the new cornerstones of organizational success. As a result there has been a tremendous increase in the number of managers and employees going on expatriate assignments across the world. In this context, increasing expatriation and repatriation of employees, and, their successful integration into their work and social spheres has become an important concern for organizations today.

This paper focuses on the problem of repatriate retention in Indian IT multinationals and how it is related to expectations of career advancement and job satisfaction. Regression analysis has been used to understand the relationship between retention of IT managers, dimensions of career advancement and dimensions of employee satisfaction.

The present study has the following dimensions:

Career advancement: 1) skills - managerial, technical, intercultural; 2) extrinsic rewards -salary, monetary incentives, non-monetary incentives;3) prestige- social and professional; 5) promotion; 6)job offers.

Employee satisfaction : 1) underemployment-due to lower pay, lower hierarchical level and lower skill utilization than expected; 2)intrinsic rewards – sense of meaningfulness, sense of choice, sense of competence and sense of progress.

Retention – whether the respondent left their organization within one year of return from expatriate assignment or not.

Managers working for IT multinational corporations have been chosen as the locus of study as the IT sector sends a significant percentage of its workforce on expatriate assignments and also has a high attrition rate. The IT industry has a relatively high attrition rate of 15% which is the third highest after ITES (17%) and Advertising and media (16%) (Deloitte Compensation Trends Survey,2013-14).The geographic spread of Indian IT multinationals can be gauged from the fact that most large IT companies of India, have more offices in overseas locations than in India. For instance TCS is present in 12 national locations and 120 International locations including 21 in North America,, 14 in Latin America, 26 in UK and Ireland, 31 in Europe , 19 in APAC and 9 in Middle East and Africa (Source: TCS, Annual Report ,2013-14). TCS also spends 12.99% of total revenue on employee allowances paid overseas, while 36.5 % of total revenue is spent on total employee compensation and benefits (TCS, Annual Report, 2013-14). Hence overseas allowances are one third of total compensation and benefits to all employees. Infosys has 93 Delivery

Centers Globally including 36 in India ,18 in North and South America, 20 in APAC and 19 in Europe. 78 % of billed person months are from DC'S in India and remaining 22% from DC'S overseas. Thus, 22 % of the total staff of 160,405 in Infosys, is located overseas, including about 8000 foreign nationals. This implies that about 27,000 of Indian nations employed by Infosys are on expatriate assignments in overseas locations. (Infosys Annual Report, 2013-14). This study aims to explore if there is any linkage between sending and large fraction of employees on overseas assignments and high attrition rate in the Information Technology sector.

Literature Review

Research work in western academia, particularly in USA, has focused on issues related to expatriation and repatriation in the domain of psycho-social integration, career planning and retention, compensation and benefits, or family adjustment (Lazarova and Caligiuri, 2001; Lazarova, 2006; Black and Gregersen,1992 a; Black and Gregersen 1992 b; MacDonald and Arthur, 2004; Martin and Harrell, 1996; Mendenhall, 2001). There is however, a paucity of research work on India on this issue, and, it is this lacuna, that the present study aims to address through empirical investigation of experiences of Indian repatriates. Most studies in the area of expatriate –repatriate adjustment that have focused on American and European managers, have found that despite the strategic importance of international assignments, most managers feel that these do not enhance their careers (Mendenhall, 2001; Stroh and Caligiuri, 1998). For returning expatriates, international assignment is a double edged sword. On one hand it is a prerequisite for promotion to senior management ranks, but on the other hand studies have shown that most repatriates feel that their assignment re-entry into their home office is less challenging than the position they held abroad and also their organization does not take advantage of the skills they acquire overseas (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2001; Hammer *et al.*, 1998; Stahl *et al.*, 2002).

Research conducted by other scholars including Black and Gregersen (1999 a) has shown that retention of repatriates has become increasingly challenging for most organizations. Black and Gregersen (1999a) found that some European and American companies have lost 40% to 55% of their repatriate employees within three years of return from expatriate assignment. Stahl *et al* (2002) propose that the notion of 'boundryless career' explains this trend as repatriates mostly focus on their internal careers and therefore organizational and global boundaries seem redundant to them. DeFillippi and Arthur (1994) define a boundryless career as 'sequence of job opportunities that go beyond boundaries of a single employment setting'.

Career opportunities and career success transcend the organization, and the locus of career advancement is the individual employee (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Hall,1996). Repatriates with this boundryless career attitude, instead of viewing international assignment as means of advancing within their organizational hierarchy, see their international experience as a competitive asset that makes them valua-

ble in the external labor market. In their study sample of 561 German and 260 Singaporean respondents, Stahl and Chua (2003), found that more than one half of German and one-third of Singaporean respondents indicated that they were willing to leave their present company for a better position in another company. Another quarter in each country said that they could be persuaded to leave for an attractive job offer. Thus companies risk losing a substantial portion of repatriates through voluntary turnover due to 'boundryless career' attitude.

Objectives of Present Study

The present study seeks to explore if Indian repatriates have the same experiences as their western counterparts in terms of their career advancement, job satisfaction and retention outcomes. Do Indian repatriates also feel that their skills remain relatively underutilized?; or upon repatriation they did not get the salary, rewards and promotion they expected? Do they suffer from a sense of underemployment and low intrinsic rewards? Within this context, the study at hand attempts to understand the relationship between repatriates perception of career advancement, job satisfaction and their retention outcomes. Retention is understood both in terms of it's qualitative dimensions (job satisfaction) and, quantitative dimension represented as 1-turnover. The qualitative dimensions of retention or employee satisfaction in the present study are underemployment and intrinsic rewards. These are linked to actual numerical retention through two outcome variables, viz. organizational commitment and turnover intention. Based on the above, the three broad dimensions of this study have been identified as follows:

Dimensions of career advancement

Dimensions of employee satisfaction

Retention (turnover intention)

In the present study, career advancement is conceptualized in terms of five dimensions; skills, extrinsic rewards, prestige, promotion and job offers.

The following table summarizes the dimensions of Career Advancement and Employee Satisfaction:

DIMENSIONS OF CAREER ADVANCEMENT DIMENSIONS OF EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

<p>SKILL ENHANCEMENT (Schein , 1990; Stahl et al. 2002)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managerial skills • Technical skills • Intercultural skills <p>EXTRINSIC REWARDS (Porter and Lawler, 1968 ; Weatherly 2001)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salary • Monetary Incentives • Non- Monetary Incentives <p>PRESTIGE ENHANCEMENT (O'Sullivan 2002; Saikkariinen , 2013)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Prestige • Professional Prestige <p>PROMOTION (Stahl et al. 2002 ; Black et al 1992 ;(b); Tung, 1998; Korman, 1997)</p> <p>JOB OFFERS (March and Simon 1958)</p>	<p>UNDEREMPLOYMENT (Feldman , 1996 ; Feldman et al.2002)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower pay than deserved • Lower level in organizational hierarchy than deserved • Lower skill utilization than expected <p>INTRINSIC REWARDS (Porter and Lawler, 1968; Thomas, 2009)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningfulness • Choice • Competence • Purpose • Progress
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Methodology

The present study falls within the purview of descriptive research, as employees of MNC's who have returned from expatriate assignment, have not been randomly assigned to go or return from expatriate assignment by researcher. Further there is no control group. Independent variable like expatriate assignment and dependent variables like perceptions of career advancement, job satisfaction and retention cannot in any way be manipulated by the researcher. Thus the scope of this research is understand the relationships between the variables of the study by gathering data through the survey method.

Survey Method

This section has been divided into 4 subsections for analytical clarity:

- 1)Survey Instrument ,2)Unit of Analysis, 3) Sampling 4) Description of Variables

Survey Instrument

The data on repatriate adjustment pertaining to career advancement, and, retention has been gathered through **structured questionnaires**. For analytical clarity, the survey questionnaire was divided into three sections –I, II, III. Section I included 6 items covering non-demographic background variables and 4 items covering demographics. The non –demographic background variables included total work experience, experience in the present organization , position, number of expatriate assignments lasting two or more years, years since return from expatriate assignment and whether they intend to go overseas again or not. Section II covered the themes related to dimensions of career advancement, viz. skill enhancement, extrinsic rewards, prestige, promotion and job offers. Section III included themes related to job satisfaction, viz. underemployment, intrinsic rewards, affective commitment, turnover intention and retention.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in the present study is the **individual repatriate manager** and not the organization (s) they worked for. Hence the specific IT organizations (s) in which they are or have been employed have not been described in the study. The term expatriate as used in this study refers to "... a person living outside their native country" (Oxford Dictionary, 2013) and the term repatriate refers to "...a person who has been repatriated i.e. sent back to their own country" (Oxford Dictionary, 2013).Only those Indian citizens who had returned from one or more long term expatriate assignments were eligible to participate in the survey. The term 'long term', as mentioned before is defined as two or more years of continuous deputation outside one's home country. Repatriate IT managers who had completed at least two years of continuous deputation outside their home country were considered for this study.

Sampling

For the present study, as is the case with many other studies in the field of HR Management, an accurate population frame was not available. According to Pauwels and Matthyssens (2004), without a listed population frame, it is not possible to estimate population variance thus is not possible to conduct random sampling. The sampling strategy used in this research was snowball sampling. About thirty repatriate respondents, who fulfill the criteria of the study, and were willing to participate, were initially identified. From their recommendations, the researcher reached out to other respondents who had completed at least two years of continuous assignment abroad. Since snowball sampling moves through a network of personal contacts, the response rate was slightly higher than what can be expected in convenience sampling. The respondents in turn, forwarded the survey through email or as link to survey monkey website to their own contacts and so on, creating a snowball effect of increasing number of respondents.

The following table 1 summarizes the survey and sampling method used:

Table 1 Summary of Survey and Sampling Method

Sampling method for Survey	Snowball Sampling
Unit of Analysis	Individual repatriate managers in IT Multinationals
Type of Questionnaire	Structured Questionnaire
Number of Respondents for questionnaire	262

Description of Variables

1. Dimensions of career advancement – Career advancement for the purpose of this study is conceptualized as a process that pertains to progress along, or, enhancement of, one or more of the following dimensions:

1.a Skills

Managerial skills - This refers to a perception of managers that a)

they have greater decision making capability, b) they that can take greater initiative, and c) can handle new and greater responsibilities (Stahl et.al, 2002).

Technical skills – This refer to a perception of managers that a) they have enhanced skills related directly to technical aspects of their job, b) they are be able to perform more efficiently the technical components of their job (Stahl et.al , 2002).

Intercultural skills- This refers to a perception of managers that a) they have greater sensitivity to cultural differences, b) greater ability to work across cultural boundaries c), a broader worldview for making business decisions (Stahl et.al, 2002).

1.b Extrinsic Rewards

Salary – monetary remuneration that the employer is bound to pay the employee at fixed pre-defined intervals (Nujjoo and Meyer, 2012).

Monetary incentives – these refer to money-based reward given when an employee meets or exceeds expectations. These include cash bonuses, stock options, profit-sharing (Kepner, 2001).

Non-Monetary Incentives- these are desirable opportunities or experiences that reward employee’s job performance. Non-monetary incentives include flexible work hours, training, pleasant work environment, and sabbaticals (Kohn, 2003).

1.c Prestige

Social Prestige - This implies enhanced respectability and standing in the social sphere.

Professional Prestige – This implies enhanced respectability and standing in the professional sphere.

1.d Promotion

This refers to elevation of an individual employees’ rank or position in an organization. Most workers perceive increased responsibility or widening of their organizational duties and roles as promotion, even if this does not involve a formal change in rank or position (Pergamit and Veum, 1999).

1.e Job Offers

These refer to an offer/offers of employment from another company or organization in the external labour market.

2. Dimensions of Employee Satisfaction

The present study includes the following two dimensions of employee satisfaction:

2.a Underemployment

The present study adopts Feldman’s (1996) conceptualization of underemployment. Underemployment is a subjective feeling that one is overeducated, overqualified, under challenged or working in a lower quality job relative to one’s education, or prior work experience (Feldman, 1996).

Underemployment due to lower pay than deserved –the employees feel they are getting less remuneration for their level of education, skill and experience

Lower hierarchical level than deserved- the employees feel they are at a lower hierarchical level or their level of education, skill and experience

Lower skill utilization than expected – the employees feel that their skills and expertize are not being utilized by their job.

2.b Intrinsic Rewards

The present study adopts Thomas’s (2009) definition of intrinsic rewards. Intrinsic rewards are psychological rewards that employees get from doing meaningful work and performing it well (Thomas,2009). Thomas (2009) identifies the following intrinsic rewards:

Sense of meaningfulness- The employee feels that they have an opportunity to accomplish something of real value—something that matters in the larger scheme of things.

Sense of Competence- The employee feels free to choose how to accomplish their work—to use his/her best judgment to select those work activities that make the most sense to and to perform them in ways that seem appropriate.

Sense of Choice- The employee feels that they are handling their work activities well—that their performance of these activities meets or exceeds their personal standards, and they feel are doing good, high-quality work.

Sense of Purpose – Employee feels that their efforts are really accomplishing something. They feel that their work is on track and moving in the direction of career and personal advancement.

3. Retention – this is conceptualized by the researcher to whether or not the managers actually left their parent organization within one year of return from expatriate assignment.

Regression Analysis

In order to understand how ‘employee retention’ relates to dimensions of career advancement and employee satisfaction, ‘desire to leave’ was taken as the dependent variable (criterion) in regression. **The variable ‘turnover intention’ was taken as a proxy for variable ‘retention’, as the latter was a categorical variable and could not be used in regression analysis.** Tett and Meyer (1993, p. 262) defined turnover intention as: ‘... the conscious and deliberate willfulness to leave the organization’. Several studies have found a strong correlation between ‘turnover intention’ and actual retention or 1- turnover (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Jaros, Jermier, et. al 1993; Muliawan et al., 2009; Tett & Meyer, 1993). Hence the two can be used as analytical equivalents.

The following table presents the summary results of the regression analysis between dependent (criterion) and independent (predictor) variables.

Table 2 Results of Regression analysis

De- pendent Variable	Independent Variables	R square	F	P value
Turnover intention	Managerial skill enhance- ment Technical skill enhance- ment Intercultural skill enhance- ment	.015	1.21	.305 (n.s)*
Turnover intention	Salary Monetary Incentives Non-monetary Incentives	.123	10.86	.000
Turnover intention	Social Prestige Professional Prestige	.000	.022	.978* (n.s)*
Turnover intention	Promotion Job Offers	.176	26.09	.000
Turnover intention	Underemployment due to lower pay than expected due to lower hierarchical level than expected due to lower skill utiliza- tion than expected	.269	31.05	.000
Turnover intention	Intrinsic Rewards Meaningfulness Choice Competence Purpose	.292	26.12	.000

***n.s =not significant**

Analysis

As far as the skill enhancement dimension of career advancement is concerned , all three regressors taken together (managerial skills,

technical skills and intercultural skills) explain only 1.5% of variance in desire to leave. The above table shows that skill enhancement has no significant relationship with 'desire to leave'. Relationship between 'desire to leave' (dependent variable) with all three independent variables taken together (Managerial skills, Technical skills, Intercultural skills) taken together ($F(3,241) = 1.21, p = .305 > .05$) was not significant.

Extrinsic rewards taken together account for 12.3% of variance in 'desire to leave'. Relationship between 'desire to leave' (dependent variable) with all three extrinsic rewards taken together (Salary, Monetary Incentives, Non-Monetary Incentives ($F(3,233) = 10.86, p = .000 \leq .05$) was significant. With every unit increase in salary, 'desire to leave' decreases by .227 units. With every unit increase in monetary incentives, 'desire to leave' decreases by .210 units. Thus extrinsic rewards are more important in explaining variance in 'desire to leave', than skill enhancement.

Prestige does not account for any variance in 'desire to leave'. Relationship between 'desire to leave' (dependent variable) with both dimensions of prestige taken together taken together (Social Prestige, Professional Prestige ($F(3,254) = .022, p = .978 > .05$) was not significant. Promotion and job offers explain 17.6% of variance in desire to leave. The both have a highly significant relationship with desire to leave as (Promotion, Job Offers ($F(3,252) = 26.09, p = .000 \leq .05$) was significant. With every unit increase promotion opportunity, desire to leave decreased by -.412 units and, with every unit increase in job offers, desire to leave increased by .211 units.

Underemployment dimensions taken together explains 26.9% of variance in desire to leave. Relationship between 'desire to leave' (dependent variable) and all three dimensions of underemployment taken together (lower pay, lower Level in organizational hierarchy, lower skill utilization than deserved ($F(3,253) = 31.05, p = .000 \leq .05$) was significant. With every unit increase in underemployment due to lower pay, lower hierarchical level and lower skill utilization, desire to leave increases by .212 units, .262 units and .161 units respectively.

Finally compared to other regressors, all four dimensions of intrinsic rewards taken together explain maximum variance in desire to leave, i.e. 29.2%. Relationship between 'desire to leave' (dependent variable) and all four dimensions of intrinsic rewards taken together (meaningfulness, choice, competence and purpose ($F(4,254) = 26.12, p = .000 \leq .05$) was significant. With every unit increase in meaningfulness, sense of choice, sense of competence, sense of progress respectively, 'desire to leave' decreased by .178, .130, .124, and .219 units respectively.

Thus from the results of regression analysis we can infer that overall intrinsic rewards and underemployment are the key factors that relate to desire to leave. When employees feel underemployed or they have a lower sense of feeling intrinsically rewarded by their jobs, they tend to leave the organization. Underemployment accounts for 25.9% of variance in 'desire to leave', while intrinsic rewards account for 29.2% of variance in 'desire to leave'. Tangible, extrinsic rewards are not as important factors predicting employee 'desire to leave', as intangible internal states of mind reflected in underemployment and intrinsic rewards. Extrinsic rewards account for only 12.3% of variance in 'desire to leave'. Promotion and job opportunities are also more important that extrinsic rewards as they account for 17.6% of variance in 'desire to leave'. Skill enhancement and prestige enhancement have no significant relationship with 'desire to leave'. Thus organizations need to focus on underemployment and intrinsic rewards as they two key focal points in enhancing employee retention.

Conclusion

In order to reap benefits of the international experience of repatriates, and to ensure effective knowledge transfer, organizations must ensure that repatriates stay with the parent organization for the long-term. However, the retention of repatriates is the key challenge for organizations. In the present study 36.6% of respondents left their parent organization, within one year of return from expatriate assignment. This figure is lower than the figure of 40% to 55% that Black et.al (1999a) found their study of European and American managers, although the time frame of their study was longer, i.e. three years. Organizations need to understand that unless they specifically look at

the problems associated with repatriation, and sincerely seek to address them, retention of returning expatriates will remain a problem.

Scholars like Bolino (2007), and, Lazarova and Caligiuri (2001), have made recommendations to enhance repatriate retention. Bolino (2007) recommends connectivity mechanisms like back home mentors and sponsors, adjustment assistance like help with housing, financial planning, taxation etc. and career development plans which utilize the skills and experience of repatriates. Lazarova and Caligiuri (2001) propose organizational support practices like pre-departure briefings on what to expect during repatriation, career Planning sessions, guarantee/agreement on what type of position repatriate will be placed in, mentoring and reorientation programs, financial counselling and lifestyle counselling among others to facilitate assimilation of repatriates. Not high salaries or job titles that make people stay with the organization. Employees who feel fairly treated, have low sense underemployment and perceive that they are getting rewards in proportion to their education, skills and, contribution, form strong and enduring pillars of organizational success.

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