



REPATRIATION ASSISTANCE, WORK SATISFACTION, AND FAMILY MEMBERS' LIFE SATISFACTION: A STUDY ON REPATRIATES OF A TAIWAN'S PUBLIC INSTITUTE

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we tried to find out the relationship among repatriation assistance, work satisfaction of repatriates, and life satisfaction of their family members. 180 questionnaires were sent out via friends, directly or indirectly, to repatriates and their spouses in a Taiwan's public institute. With a response rate of 58.33%, 105 returned questionnaires were completed and usable. Applying multiple regression models, we found out that work satisfaction positively and significantly affected family members' life satisfaction; repatriation assistance positively and significantly affected work satisfaction and family members' life satisfaction, respectively. For further studies, cross-lagged correlations and nonrecursive models will be introduced in the work satisfaction-life satisfaction relationship model.

Keywords: Repatriation adjustment, repatriation failure, work satisfaction, life satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Accompany with globalization, more and more organizations sent out employees oversea for varied reasons and for different length of time. When those employees accomplished their missions oversea, they had to return home countries. Based on studies in the past, repatriation adjustment took time and the percentage of repatriation failure was high. Allen & Alvarez [3] stated that there are three costs of repatriate failure for organization: loss of key personnel, underutilization of repatriates, and difficulty of recruiting future expatriates. Therefore, the providing of effective repatriation assistance to employees and their family members is necessary.

However, based on previous studied, not much MNCs have formal repatriation policies or process to assist repatriates and their family [17][26] [31].

In the other hand, there are lots of research on work satisfaction and life satisfaction, and some are on the relationship between them [8][18][21][27][20][28] [30]. Findings have concluded that work satisfaction and life satisfaction are related to each other and both have impacts on turnover rates, job performance, and so on. However, not much literature have focused on the work satisfaction of repatriates and on the life satisfaction of repatriates' family.

Moreover, even though many articles have tried to explain the expatriates and spouse adjustment during their oversea missions [6][24][37], and some studies has focused on the repatriation policies and process [2][14][15][19], only few researches have discussed the relationship of repatriate adjustment and spouse adjustment [15][16]. Repatriate adjustment and spouse adjustment may affect work satisfaction of repatriates and life satisfaction of their family, and further affect the company.

Therefore, in this study, we intend to explore the relationship between work satisfaction of repatriates and the life satisfaction of their family members, and find out how repatriation assistance provided by organizations can help them.

The rest of the study is organized as the following. Literature review is in the next section, followed by the discussion of the methodology applied to the study. The section of results and analyses presents in the next. Conclusions and suggests are presented in the last.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Work satisfaction and life satisfaction

People evaluate the fulfillment of their goals, needs and wishes in their daily life and the subjective evaluation decides their life satisfaction [12] [10]. Most of life satisfaction studies have paid attention on the adults [10], undergraduates students [5][11] [38] and elders [25], but not much on life satisfaction of repatriates family.

Iverson & Maguire [18] mentioned that there have been three theoretical models trying to link work satisfaction and life satisfaction. Those were on spillover, compensation and segmentation perspectives. The spillover model asserted a positive relationship between work satisfaction and life satisfaction [36], but debated on the directions. Schmitt & Mellon [30] declared a 'spillover' effect of life satisfaction to work satisfaction [20]. However, in the other hand, Adams et al [1] found that work satisfaction had a stronger effect on life satisfaction than vice versa [8][21][28]. Moreover, the spillover model implied that life-work satisfaction and work-life satisfaction cannot happen at the same time [29].

The compensatory model concluded a negative relationship between work and life satisfaction. George & Brief [13] asserted that an unhappy employee would seek a happier non-work life to compensate his/her miserable work life. Beside supporting the negative relationship between work and non-work satisfaction, Loscocco [23] believed that it was from work to non-work direction. The third model believed that employees would separate their work and non-work life and therefore there is no linkage between work satisfaction and life satisfaction.

Repatriation adjustment

It is common nowadays to assign high-level employees to abroad for MNCs. They can gain international knowledge and share the experience with colleagues in parent company upon returning home country. However, based on the research in the past, the repatriation adjustment was not easy. The process generally takes about 1 to 1.5 years [22]. Therefore, high percentage of repatriates left the parent company within two years of returning home country. That is, repatriation failure increases the turnover rate of repatriates.

Besides that, Allen & Alvarez [3] indicated the other two costs of repatriation failure. The first cost is the opportunity cost of underutilizing the international experience of repatriates. The second cost is unable to recruit key employees for future foreign assignments due to negative image in failed repatriates.

Three dimensions of repatriation adjustment have been studied: the dimension of work adjustment, socio-culture adjustment, and psychological adjustment. The work adjustment included the adjustment of being less responsibility and having less financial returns than expatriate position upon return home country. The socio- culture adjustment involved life style adjustment, relationship adjustment and financial condition adjustment. The psychological adjustment concerned the problems causing by different expectations and stress [9][19] [35].

In addition, Gregersen & Stroh [15] studied Finnish spouse repatriation adjustment. The reversed culture shock hit the spouses hard. It was worse than the culture shock of host country to the spouses. The study found that unexpected changes in inter-personal relationship and housing conditions, and international experience being ignored or envied have made spouse repatriation adjustment more difficult.

Nevertheless, very few MNCs have offered formal repatriation assistance to repatriates and their family, either before or after they completed assignment abroad [17][26][31].

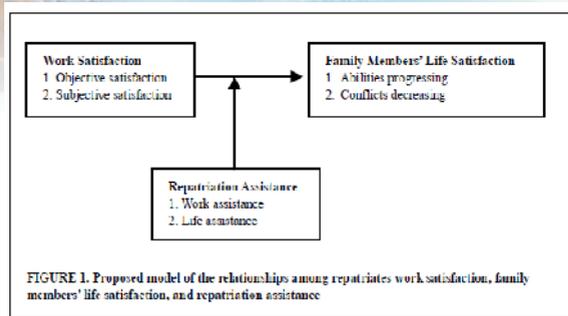
The proposed relationships among repatriates work satisfaction, family members' life satisfaction, and repatriation assistance are shown in Figure 1.

We formed hypotheses as the follows:

H₁: Repatriation assistance positively and significantly affected repatriates' work satisfaction.

H₂: Repatriation assistance positively and significantly affected the life satisfaction of repatriates' family.

H₃: Repatriates' work satisfaction positively and significantly affected their family members' life satisfaction.



For instance, including “Domestic work opportunities/ information were provided by government prior to repatriation” and “Assist with getting information of promotion opportunities prior to repatriation” were used to measure the work assistance. The rest of the nine questions including “The information regarding to children’s education was provided prior to repatriation” and “The information of work opportunities for spouse was offered prior to repatriation” were used to measure life assistance. The Cronbach’s alpha for reliability of the repatriation assistance measure for the present sample was 0.880.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling and Procedure

For difficulty of contacting with those who worked overseas for government and still work in public sectors in Taiwan, questionnaires were sent out by convenience sampling via friends directly and indirectly. 180 questionnaires were sent out in total. With a response rate of 58.33%, 105 returned questionnaires were completed and usable.

Of the respondents, 83.8% were males and 16.2% were females; 4.8% were aged under 25, 26.7% were aged 26-30, 37.1% were aged 31-35, 15.2% were aged 36-40, 10.5% were aged 41-45, and 5.7% were aged 46-50. In terms of marital status, 62.9% of the respondents were married and 37.1% of the respondents were single. In terms of occupational status returned country, 35.2% were journal-level employees, 56.2% were middle-level managers, and 8.6% were upper-level managers. In terms of the length of sojourn, 12.4% were 1/2 year, 29.5% were 1 year, 39.0% were 2 years, 15.2% were 3 years, 1.0% were 4 years, and 2.9% were 5 years and above. In terms of the area of staying, 20% were in the European, 27.6% were in the America, 43.8% were in the Asia, and 8.6% were in the other areas.

Measurements

Respondents were asked to use Likert’s 5-point scales (from 1 as “extremely unsuccessful” to 5 as “extremely successful”) to answer the questions in the questionnaire, except for the personal information, such as gender and marital status.

Repatriation assistance was measured with nine questions in the questionnaires. Four of the nine questions were related to work assistance measure.

In the questionnaires, we used fourteen questions to measure work satisfaction. The seven of them including “New occupational status meets my expectation” and “The expatriate experience helps to get promotion” to measure objective satisfaction and seven questions including “The expatriate experience helps on communication at work” and “The expatriate experience helps on improving relationship with colleagues” to measure subjective satisfaction. The Cronbach’s alpha for the scale of work satisfaction was 0.914.

Seven questions were used in the questionnaires to measure family members’ life satisfaction. Five of them including “The experience of expatriation helps family members to get better global views” and “The expatriate experience helps family members to be with better ability on language” were used to measure abilities progressing. The rest two questions including “The expatriate experience helps spouse on career development” and “Family members have never suffered by cross-culture difficulty in home country” were used to measure conflicts decreasing. The Cronbach’s alpha for the measure was 0.841.

RESULTS AND ANALYSES

The Pearson correlation coefficients of repatriation assistant measure, work satisfaction measure, and family members’ life satisfaction measure are summarized in Table 1. Based on the results in Table 1, we conclude that repatriation assistance measure and work satisfaction measure are positively and significantly correlated at the 0.001 significant level; repatriation assistant measure and family members’ life satisfaction measure are positively and

significantly correlated at the 0.001 significant level; the work satisfaction measure and family members' life satisfaction measure are also positively and significantly correlated at the 0.001 significant level. In one word, the three measures are positively and significantly correlated to each other in statistical sense.

TABLE 1. PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENT, CRONBACH'S ALPHA AND KMO VALUE

	Cronbach's Alpha	KMO	1	2	3
1. Repatriation Assistance	0.880	0.880	1		
2. Work Satisfaction	0.914	0.893	0.433***	1	
3. Family members' Life Satisfaction	0.841	0.854	0.672***	0.349***	1

***Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (two-tailed).

In order to find out the causal relationship of the three measures, multiple regression models are used in the study. The estimates of coefficients for work satisfaction are summarized in Table 2. Based on the results in Table 2, both beta coefficients of objective satisfaction model and of subjective satisfaction model are positive and significant. **Hypothesis 1, therefore, cannot be rejected in our sample.** The F-values are 1103.47 ($p < 0.001$) and 705.25 ($p < 0.001$) for objective satisfaction model and subjective satisfaction model, respectively. The R-square is 95.5% for objective satisfaction model and is 93.2% for subjective satisfaction model. The statistics indicates that the work assistance measure and the life assistance measure can explain both objective work satisfaction and subjective work satisfaction extremely well. Moreover, the largest beta coefficient is life assistance measure for both work satisfaction models. They are 0.631 ($p < 0.001$) and 0.643 ($P < 0.001$), respectively.

We conclude that, in our sample, work assistance and life assistance both contribute to work satisfaction of repatriates. Nevertheless, life assistance contributes

more to work satisfaction of repatriates.

TABLE 2. ESTIMATES OF COEFFICIENTS FOR WORK SATISFACTION MODELS

Independent variables	Work satisfaction	
	Objective satisfaction	Subjective satisfaction
Work assistance	0.319**	0.382**
Life assistance	0.631***	0.643***
F value	1103.47***	705.25***
R ²	0.955	0.932

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

The estimates of coefficients for life satisfaction of repatriates' family are summarized in Table 3. Based on the results in Table 3, both beta coefficients of abilities progressing model and of conflicts decreasing model are positive and significant.

Hypothesis 2, therefore, cannot be rejected in our sample. The F-values are 1791.83 ($p < 0.001$) and 502.87 ($p < 0.001$) for abilities progressing model and conflicts decreasing model, respectively. The R-square is 97.2% for abilities progressing model and is 91.0% for conflicts decreasing model. The statistics indicates that the work assistance measure and the life assistance measure can explain both abilities progressing and conflicts decreasing life satisfaction of repatriates' family models extremely well. Moreover, the largest beta coefficient is life assistance measure for both life satisfaction of repatriates' family models. They are 0.855 ($p < 0.001$) and 0.497 ($P < 0.001$), respectively.

We conclude that, in our sample, work assistance and life assistance both contribute to life satisfaction of repatriates' family. Nevertheless, life assistance contributes more to life satisfaction of repatriates' family.

TABLE 3. ESTIMATES OF COEFFICIENTS FOR FAMILY MEMBERS' LIFE SATISFACTION MODELS

Independent variables	Family members' life satisfaction	
	Abilities progressing	Conflicts decreasing
Work assistance	0.202*	0.307*
Life assistance	0.855***	0.497***
F value	1791.83***	520.87***
R ²	0.972	0.910

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

The results of work satisfaction-family members' life satisfaction models are shown in Table 4. All beta coefficients are positive, but only the subjective work satisfaction measure is significant at the 0.001 level. The F-values are 951.230 ($p < 0.001$) and 732.624 ($p < 0.001$) for two life satisfaction of repatriates' family models. The R-square is 94.9% for abilities progressing life satisfaction model and is 93.4% for conflicts decreasing life satisfaction model. This statistics indicates that objective work satisfaction measure and subjective work satisfaction measure can interpret both family members' life satisfaction models extremely well. We conclude that, in our sample, subjective work satisfaction contributes to family members' life satisfaction. **We cannot reject Hypothesis 3 in our sample.**

TABLE 4. ESTIMATES OF COEFFICIENTS FOR WORK SATISFACTION -FAMILY MEMBERS' LIFE SATISFACTION MODELS

Independent variables	Family members' life satisfaction	
	Abilities progressing	Conflicts decreasing
Objective satisfaction	0.172	0.179
Subjective satisfaction	0.886***	0.646***
F value	951.230***	732.624***
R ²	0.949	0.934

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

In a globalized world, more and more organizations have sent out employees abroad for assignments. For a successful expatriation, organizations have to give their employees supports in varied stages during their international assignment. Throughout the expatriation in host countries, expatriates have accumulated international knowledge. Hopefully, they can contribute the international experience to parent companies after they completed the foreign assignments and return to home country. However, a huge percentage of those expatriates have left their parent company shortly after they return home country. And yet, this costs money!

In this paper, we intended to study the relationship among repatriation assistance, work satisfaction of repatriates, and life satisfaction of repatriates' family. By sending out 180 questionnaires to repatriates and their family in a Taiwan's public institute, with a response rate of 58.33%, we found out that work satisfaction of repatriates positively and significantly affected life satisfaction of repatriates' family. Especially, subjective work satisfaction contributed more on life satisfaction of repatriates' family. Probably, in our sample, repatriates concerned more on subjective work satisfaction, like "expatriate experience improves professional ability," and therefore had strong effects on the life satisfaction of their family.

We also found that repatriation assistance positively and significant affected the work satisfaction of repatriates and the life satisfaction of repatriates' family. Particularly, in our case institute, life assistance had stronger effects on both work satisfaction and life satisfaction. That is, in our sample, repatriates and their family appreciated more on the life assistance offered by the institute. Therefore, when MNCs set up formal repatriation policies and process, they should pay more attention on those of life assistance.

There are few more issues can be dressed in this study, if there were more financial support and time,

such as, nonrecursive models and cross-lagged correlations. Introducing nonrecursive models into life satisfaction and job satisfaction models can decrease the debates of direction of job-life satisfaction and life-job satisfaction.

In addition, Orpen [27] and Schmitt and Mellon [30] introduced cross-lagged correlations into their studies for job satisfaction-life satisfaction relationship. This can be done for further studies.

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