

Influence of Previous Company Support on Intentions to Accept a Future Global Assignment

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[Abstract] This study examined the relationship between previous international relocation experience and willingness to accept an additional future international assignment by surveying 316 employees from several corporations who had recently repatriated to the U.S. Employees assessed 37 items relating to the nature of support provided by their organizations during their international assignment. These items focused on three factors: adjustment support, financial support, and career support. Using hierarchical regression, financial support was related to employee willingness to accept an additional international assignment. Contributions and future research are discussed.

[Keywords] expatriate, international assignment, organizational support

To support global strategies, many organizations use expatriates for such activities as filling roles where local talent is insufficient, managing international projects, transferring knowledge and technology, starting up new operations, managing business expansion, developing employees, and increasing home-country oversight of a host-country business (Baruch, Altman, & Tung, 2016; Belderbos & Heijltjes, 2005; Brewster, Bonache, Cerdin, & Suutari, 2014; Harzing, 2001; Park & Mense-Petermann, 2014; Zaidman & Brock, 2009). Demand for expatriate managers remains strong with the expected number of assignments increasing or remaining the same (Atlas World Group, 2018; KPMG, 2018; Santa Fe Relocation, 2018). Consequently, multinational companies are faced with the task of encouraging employees to accept foreign assignments (de Eccher & Duarte, 2018). Yet, they are often reluctant to accept a foreign assignment due to concerns related to compensation, family issues, and the effect on career (Dupuis, Haines, & Saba, 2008; Konopaske, Robie, & Ivancevich, 2009; Stahl, Miller, & Tung, 2002; van der Velde, Jansen, Bal, & van Erp, 2017).

Research also indicates that expatriates who are reluctant to accept assignments have more difficulty adjusting to their new setting and assignment than do those who are eager for their new experience (Feldman & Thomas, 1992; Nicholson, 1984). Consequently, with many employees hesitating to accept international assignments while the need for expatriate managers remains strong, greater understanding is needed concerning the antecedents of an individual's willingness to relocate internationally (WTRI).

Some factors that may affect relocation intentions have been underexplored. For instance, little is known about certain aspects of previous international assignment experience on WTRI. In particular, little is known about the support provided by the organization during the international assignment and its effect on the manager's willingness to accept a subsequent foreign assignment. It is not uncommon for expatriates who have returned from successful overseas assignments to fulfill an additional international assignment during their career (Black & Gregersen, 1991b). Yet, research examining intentions to accept an international assignment often uses as subjects graduate students, recent MBA graduates, or employees in companies with international locations who typically do not have previous international assignment experience (e.g., Konopaske et al., 2009; Tharenou, 2003; van der Veld, Jansen, Bal, & van Erp, 2017; Wagner & Westaby, 2009). When subjects with varying degrees of experience have been used, the effect of experience factors on WTRI, such as location of assignment (Andresen & Margenfeld, 2015; de Eccher & Duarte, 2018; Wagner & Westaby 2009), overall adjustment in and satisfaction with assignment (Pinto,

Cabral-Cardoso, & Werther, 2012), career skills acquired (Dickmann, Doherty, Mills, & Brewster, 2008), or foreign language fluency, have been studied. What is missing is an analysis of the employee's perceptions of specific aspects of organizational support provided during an international assignment, which is quite extensive (see Cartus, 2018; KPMG, 2018), and its effect on WTRI. Consequently, the main purpose of this study is to examine the effect of previous international experience on the willingness to accept an expatriate assignment. Experience with several facets of organizational support provided during an international assignment are examined in relation to an individual's willingness to accept an additional assignment.

Hypotheses Development

Theoretical Framework

International relocations inherently cause uncertainty. Consequently, the theoretical concept of uncertainty reduction provides a useful rationale from which to study issues surrounding job relocation (Kramer, 1993) and explain why the nature of past experience should affect international relocation intentions. Scholars touching on uncertainty reduction suggest that when employees feel some uncertainty about their ability to adapt to new and unfamiliar situations, they are motivated to seek information that can lessen the uncertainty (Berger & Bradac, 1982; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Terry & Jimmieson, 2003). Job relocations inherently generate feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. Those feelings can be magnified in an international transfer due to the dissimilarities between the home and host country settings (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991) and the physical and psychological crossing of national borders (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). While a relocation within a country from one city to another may involve differences in the work context, most of the non-work contexts (i.e., cultural, social, political, economic, language) remain fairly similar (Black et al., 1991). However, in an international relocation, the non-work as well as work contexts change (Baruch et al., 2016). Moving from Los Angeles to Seattle, for instance, will produce fewer uncertainties than a move from Seattle to Tokyo where the novelty of change is greater.

Feelings of control can reduce anxiety and uncertainty (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2002). One source that individuals may use to acquire those feelings of control and reduce uncertainty associated with an international transfer is their personal experience with previous transfers. Since past experience with a foreign assignment can help individuals better predict what to expect with a future assignment (Black et al., 1991; Louis, 1980), previous international relocations may play a role in WTRI by helping to reduce the uncertainty involved with the international move. A manager's experience with prior international assignments may affect the desire to repeat or avoid the occurrence of a future foreign assignment.

Construct of Willingness to Relocate

Research on employee decisions to accept a foreign assignment have typically measured the intent to relocate (e.g., de Eccher & Duarte, 2018; Konopaske et al., 2009; van der Velde et al., 2017). Studies have found correlations between .36 to .44 between relocation willingness and the actual decision to move (Brett & Reilly, 1988; Speare, 1974), indicating that intention to relocate is a relatively good predictor of the ultimate relocation outcome. Brett and Reilly (1988) state that the intent to relocate for employment reasons should correlate with the actual relocation decision provided that continued employment is not dependent on the move.

This study should provide a stronger connection between relocation intentions and the subsequent acceptance or rejection of the move since the subjects are former expatriates with international relocation experience. Research indicates that attitudes and intentions developed through direct experience have greater stability and are more indicative of subsequent behavior than attitudes formed through indirect experience (Petty & Krosnick, 1995; Vogel & Wanke, 2016).

Organizational Support Activities

Employees may look to the organization for support to reduce uncertainty caused by the fear, stress,

and lack of control felt during an international transfer (Borstorff, Harris, Feild, & Giles, 1997b; DiFonzo & Bordia, 2002). Company support provided to an expatriate and family during an international assignment tends to cover more aspects of the work and non-work domains than support provided in a domestic position (see KPMG, 2018; Cartus, 2018; Baruch et al., 2016). However, practitioner surveys of global mobility report increased refusal of foreign assignments as employees receive less support from the organization (Crown World Mobility, 2018). In addition, Cole and Nesbeth (2014) found, similar to other findings (e.g., McEvoy & Buller, 2013; McNulty, 2012), that various types of organizational support covering areas of compensation, career, company policies, everyday adjustment, and training were the main reasons for leaving an assignment early.

Consequently, it is important to know if employee perceptions of support expenditures affect willingness to accept an additional foreign assignment. Since research on expatriate management can increase understanding of real problems that would assist practitioners (McEvoy & Buller, 2013), it seems reasonable to focus on areas of support that are of the greatest importance to the expatriate, his or her spouse or partner, and family. Following this line of reasoning, and based on a review of the international relocation literature, organizational support activities in the areas of financial issues, career assistance, general assistance, and training seem particularly important (see Koponaske & Werner, 2005; McEvoy & Buller, 2013). Thus, experience with these aspects of organizational policy will be examined in relation to WTRI.

Financial support. The financial support provided by companies to expatriates is a concern for both the company and the expatriate. The cost of expatriate assignments is expensive, often two to three times the yearly home-country salary of the employee (Baruch et al., 2016). Practitioner surveys of global workforce mobility policies indicate considerable effort is expended managing and attempting to control costs regarding expatriate compensation packages and their various elements, such as tax equalization and compliance, housing, and various allowances to maintain a suitable standard of living (Cartus, 2018; KPMG, 2018; Santa Fe Relocation, 2018).

For most potential expatriates, the primary concern regarding acceptance of a foreign assignment relates to the financial ramifications (McEvoy & Buller, 2013). One study indicated that the financial package offered was a significant determinant in the expatriate's decision to accept the international assignment (McEvoy & Buller, 2013), especially since many expatriates will be forgoing the spouse/partner's second income (Santa Fe Relocation, 2018). Also, compensation that appropriately rewards for the hardships that occur with an international relocation and helps to maintain a suitable standard of living can signal to expatriates that their assignments are valued and the organization is committed to help support their performance in those assignments (McEvoy & Buller, 2013). Therefore, this area of organizational support activity should be especially significant to international assignees in their intentions to accept additional foreign assignments.

Career support. The career support provided by an organization (e.g., career planning, being kept well-informed, etc.) before and upon return to the home country is an important consideration because of the gap between its importance to the expatriate and the experience many receive. Employees accepting a foreign assignment often expect to gain career development and advancement as a result (Baruch, Steel, and Quantrill, 2002; Benson & Pattie, 2008; Kulkarni, Lengnick-Hall, & Valk, 2010; Pinto et al., 2012). However, the reality can be frustration, and there are few opportunities to actually utilize the knowledge and skills gained in the foreign assignment (Black & Gregerson, 1999; Stahl, Chua, and Caligiuri, Cerdin, & Taniguchi, 2009; McEvoy & Buller, 2013), resulting in high levels of turnover for returned assignees (Baruch et al., 2016; Baruch et al., 2002; Jassawalla & Sashittal, 2009; Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007; Paik, Segaud, and Malinowski, 2002).

The repatriation process is often not as formal or well planned as it should be (Baruch et al., 2016; Baruch et al., 2002; Harris & Brewster, 1999; Kulkarni et al., 2010; McEvoy & Buller, 2013). In one survey 78% of companies reported not planning for repatriation until 6 months or less of the assignment remained, while almost 10% reported not planning for repatriation at all (KPMG, 2018). Another study found that such lack of repatriation career planning resulted in foreign assignees looking for external job opportunities

before returning home (McNulty, DeCieri, & Hutchings, 2013).

Many firms adopt an out-of-sight, out-of-mind attitude toward the expatriate manager, resulting in the expatriate being left out of the information pipeline (Andreason & Kinneer, 2004; Benson & Pattie, 2008; Black & Gregersen, 1999; McEvoy & Buller, 2013). Since the organization cannot leave a management position vacant for one to three years while the expatriate is absent, often few (if any) positions are open when the expatriate returns. Consequently, it is important to learn if career support activities on and after an assignment affect future international assignment intentions, since career benefits do not always match expectations.

General/family support. In addition to financial and career support activities, the relocation literature indicates that expatriates and their families seem particularly concerned about the quality of their lives in their country of assignment distinct from the expatriate's work situation. Family issues, such as spouse/partner work prospects or children's education, are often cited as a leading cause for declining an international relocation. One survey found that family issues were the reason for refusing an international assignment 46% of the time, and almost 40% of companies provided no assistance for the spouse or partner in finding employment in the foreign host location (Atlas World Group, 2018).

The overall success of the expatriate has been shown to be negatively affected by family issues such as spouse/partner dissatisfaction or inability to adjust to the new setting (Andreason, 2008; Baruch et al., 2016; Lee 2007; McNulty, 2012). One study found family issues were the second most common reason for assignment failure (Cole & Nesbeth, 2014), while another found that satisfaction with living conditions lowered the likelihood that an expatriate would leave his or her assignment before completion (Black & Gregersen, 1990). Spouse/partner adjustment is seen by many international HR managers as a more extensive problem than employee adjustment (McEvoy & Buller, 2013), while spouse career issues are one of the top concerns affecting the success of expatriates (Santa Fe Relocation, 2018). Therefore, organizational support practices that assist the expatriate and his or her family in their lives outside of the expatriate's work domain (e.g., locating housing, locating schools for children, career assistance for spouse, etc.) would seem especially salient to the willingness to accept an international assignment.

Training support. The existing international relocation literature suggests that training supplied by an organization can be a key element in an expatriate's preparation and, consequently, has the potential to affect future relocation intentions. International assignment training is typically designed to provide the expatriate with information about the overseas position and the culture in which the job is located, often occurring before departure (Black & Gregersen, 1991a). Those in international HR charged with providing support for expatriates on assignments believe that cross-cultural training is an important element of assignment preparation for both the expatriates and their families (Baruch et al., 2016; McEvoy & Buller, 2013). Previous studies on cross-cultural training found evidence that it improves the odds of the expatriate's success in the assignment (Littrell, Salas, Hess, Paley, & Riedel, 2006; Mendenhall & Stahl, 2000), and individuals who believe they will receive language and cross-cultural training are more willing to accept an international assignment (Konopaske & Werner, 2005). Yet, there is indication that language training and cross-cultural training, while offered in most organizations to the assignee, spouse/partner, and, often, children (KPMG, 2018), are not getting enough emphasis pre-departure (McEvoy & Buller, 2013). Such training is becoming more common as an "if requested" benefit, with many assignees showing lack of interest (Cartus, 2018; McEvoy & Buller, 2013). Thus, it is important to determine if actual experience with training support affects intentions to accept a future foreign assignment.

In summary, organizational support provided in past assignments in the areas of financial compensation, career assistance, family assistance, and training would seem particularly relevant to employees as they assess their future international relocation intentions. Since positive experiences with organizational support in these areas would reduce the uncertainty in both work and non-work domains in any subsequent international assignment, organizational support in the four areas discussed should be positively related to international relocation intentions.

Hypothesis 1: WTRI will be positively related to financial support provided by the organization during a foreign assignment.

Hypothesis 2: WTRI will be positively related to career support provided by the organization during a foreign assignment.

Hypothesis 3: WTRI will be positively related to general/family support provided by the organization during a foreign assignment.

Hypothesis 4: WTRI will be positively related to training support provided by the organization during a foreign assignment.

Methodology

Respondents

Questionnaires were sent to 716 individuals from eight Fortune 500 companies who had returned to the U.S. within the last 36 months from a long-term foreign assignment (i.e., a duration of 9 or more months). Of these, 316 usable surveys were returned for a response rate of 44.1%. The subjects for this assignment were all long-term assignees (average length of most recent international assignment was about 3 years), so the composition of 89.2% male survey respondents is similar to other studies using actual long-term assignee expatriates or repatriates as subjects (see McEvoy & Buller, 2013; Pinto et al., 2012). The foreign assignments occurred in over 30 countries in most regions of the world, and the average time home was 13.7 months. Respondents were 43 years old on average and worked with their current company for 17 years. Middle managers encompassed 32.7% of the sample, followed by 23.2% for technical/non-management, 21.2% for lower management, 15.5% for senior management, and 5.4% for executive. The majority of respondents worked in the following functional areas: 34.7% engineering/technical; 20.2% general management; 15.2% marketing; 9.8% production/operations.

Measures

Demographic Data. Several self-report demographic data items were collected from the employee. Age, gender, length of most recent assignment, time since returning, and current position level were gathered for use as control variables in the regression analysis.

Organizational support activities. Respondents were asked to indicate on a seven-point scale the degree to which they agreed (1 = slightly disagree 7 = strongly agree) with 37 statements pertaining to organizational support policies and activities. Scales were adopted from research conducted by Borstorff, Harris, Feild, & Giles (1997a) and Aryee, Chay, & Chew (1996). Slight modifications in wording were made since the Borstorff et al. (1997a) study assessed perceptions of future encounters with organizational policies, whereas assessments in this study were based on actual previous experience with organizational support. Items assessing support in the areas of career support, financial support, training support, and general/family support were created to coincide with the hypotheses.

To test the dimensionality of the four proposed facets of organizational support, the 37 items were examined using principle components analysis. The resulting factor matrix was rotated using an orthogonal varimax rotation to minimize the correlation among the factors. A three-factor, rather than the expected four-factor, solution resulted (see Appendix). In essence, the proposed variables of training support and general/family support collapsed into one factor (cultural adjustment support). The remaining three variables were labeled cultural adjustment support (9 items, $\alpha = .93$), financial support (6 items, $\alpha = .93$), and career support (5 items, $\alpha = .85$). Cultural adjustment support focuses on the adequacy of organizational assistance in such areas as cross-cultural training, helping the spouse find employment, and providing a support network for the family. Financial support items deal with organizational financial assistance in such areas as cost of living adjustments, foreign assignment premiums, accommodation allowance, and sufficiency of the compensation package in total. Career support items focus on the adequacy of the organization's attempts to keep the expatriate's career on track, as well as keep him/her informed on how the foreign assignment fits into the organization's plans. The three-factor solution

explained 69% of the variance in the factor item scores.

Seventeen items were dropped from the solution. Reasons for dropping items include loadings less than .50 (items were not considered “practically significant” - see Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black, 1998, p. 111), multiple low loadings on several factors, items loading on a single factor, and communalities less than .50 (meaning less than half of the variance in the item can be explained by the factor solution). The exploratory nature of the factor analysis may have resulted in the seventeen items being excluded from the final factor solution. While several researchers had created measures of organizational support (see Aryee et al., 1996; Borstorff et al., 1997a) with each testing the dimensionality of the facets of support via factor analysis, the resulting facets of organizational support varied in terms of categories of support, number of items in each category, and the reliability of the resulting measures. Consequently, due to the lack of a clear set of existing measures to draw upon regarding organizational support practices, a variety of support items considered to be of importance to the expatriate and his/her family based on a review of the literature were included in the survey. The resulting factor solution indicates that only a few key items may be needed to assess organizational support rather than the more comprehensive list attempted in this study.

Employee WTRI. A one-item measure developed by Brett and Stroh (1995) was used to assess willingness to accept a foreign assignment. The use of a single-item measure is common in international relocation literature, often using a variation of one by Noe, Steffy, and Barber (1988) or the Brett and Stroh measure (see de Eccher & Duarte, 2018; van der Velde, Bossink, & Jansen, 2005; van der Velde et al., 2017). Employees were given five choices ranging from 5 (I will move internationally) to 1 (I will not move internationally for any reason) regarding their intentions toward accepting a future international assignment.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

The demographic control variables were chosen for their potential to correlate with both the dependent variable and the other independent variables entered into the regression model. As shown in Table 1, only employee age ($r = -.12$) and current position level ($r = .09$) were related to the dependent variable of employee WTRI. All measures of organizational support had a modest positive relationship with employee WTRI (financial support, $r = .23$; career support, $r = .11$; cultural adjustment support, $r = .14$). In terms of the correlations among the independent variables, employee age was negatively correlated with financial support and cultural adjustment support. Zero-order correlations revealed positive correlations between gender and two facets of organizational support. Length of assignment was negatively related to cultural adjustment support. Time since returning to the US was negatively related to perceptions of the adequacy of financial support provided during the international assignment.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations

Variable ^a	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 employee WTRI	3.94	0.99	---								
2 employee age	44.61	7.85	-0.12	---							
3 sex ^b	0.09	0.29	-0.03	-0.22	---						
4 length of assignment ^c	33.50	18.22	-0.04	0.18	-0.10	---					
5 time back ^d	14.45	8.49	-0.03	0.16	-0.08	0.16	---				
6 current position level ^e	2.54	1.19	0.09	0.12	-0.03	0.02	-0.04	---			
7 financial support	4.72	1.49	0.23	-0.14	0.11	-0.09	-0.10	0.03	---		
8 career support	3.65	1.51	0.11	0.00	0.05	-0.06	-0.02	0.08	0.27	---	
9 cultural adjustment support	2.81	1.37	0.14	-0.13	0.18	-0.13	-0.07	0.02	0.42	0.41	---

Notes:^a values of n ranged from 133 to 315^b coded as 0=male, 1=female^c recorded in months^d recorded in months^e coded as 1=technical/non-management, 2=lower management, 3=middle management, 4=senior management, 5=executive**bold** $p \leq .05$; **bold and underlined** $p \leq .01$ ***Regression Analysis***

To test the relationship between the three organizational support measures as a whole and employee WTRI, a hierarchical regression model was created by entering the demographic control variables in step 1 and the three measures of organizational support in step 2. The significance of the change in R^2 from step 1 to step 2 provides a test of whether the set of predictor variables in step 2 explain a significant amount of the variance in employee WTRI beyond what is explained by the control variables. Regression results are shown in Table 2. Standardized regression weights (beta) are reported for ease in comparing the strength of the relationships between employee WTRI and the predictor variables in the regression model. Based on the results of the factor analysis of the organizational support items (see Appendix) discussed in the measures section, results examining the relationship between cultural adjustment support and willingness to relocate (i.e., revised hypothesis 3) are included rather than relationships involving general/family support (i.e., original hypothesis 3) and training support (hypothesis 4).

The significant overall F score (2.72, $p \leq .01$) indicated that the total set of predictor variables was significantly related to employee WTRI. In addition, the set of predictor variables explained 11 percent (adjusted $R^2 = .07$) of the variance in the dependent measure of employee WTRI. Based on the change in R^2 shown in Table 2, the organizational support variables explained an additional 6 percent of the variance in employee WTRI above the 5 percent already explained by the control variables. In examining the incremental effect of the three organizational support variables, only financial support explained unique variance in employee WTRI as revealed by the significant t-score ($p \leq .05$) associated with the beta weight.

Taken together, these results provide support for hypothesis 1. The data did not support hypothesis 2 or a revised hypothesis 3. While the zero-order correlations showed a significant relationship between employee WTRI and both career support $r = .11$) and cultural adjustment support $r = .14$), the more stringent test involving the regression model indicated that these two areas of organizational support provided no unique explanation to the variance in employee WTRI.

Table 2

*Hierarchical Regression - Employee WTRI on Organizational Support Measures
Hypothesis 1 - Hypothesis 3 (revised)*

	<u>Willingness to Relocate Internationally</u> ^a			
	<u>β</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>ΔR^2</u>	<u>ΔF</u>
Step 1			.05	2.06 ⁺
<u>Control variables</u>				
Age	-.11	-1.40		
Sex	-.02	-0.20		
Length of assignment	-.08	-1.10		
Time back in U.S.	.08	1.06		
Current position level	.14	1.87 ⁺		

Step 2:		.06	3.67 **
<u>Org. support variables</u>			
Financial support	.24	2.92 *	
Career support	.04	0.54	
Cultural adjustment support	-.02	-0.19	
Overall R^2 and F		.11	2.72 **
Adjusted R^2		.07	

Notes:

^a n = 185

^b Beta weights and t-values reflect results for the full model and subsequent models

⁺ $p \leq .10$; * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$

Discussion

The results of the regression analysis revealed that financial support was related to an employee's willingness to accept an additional foreign assignment. Each of the three aspects of organizational support examined in this study (i.e., financial support, career support, and cultural adjustment support) were modestly correlated with employee WTRI (see Table 1), but when all three factors of organizational support were included in the regression analysis to allow an examination of the incremental effects of each variable on the dependent measure, only financial support explained unique variance in employee WTRI (see Table 2). This may be due in part to the multicollinearity between the measures of organizational support. Since the zero-order correlations between the organizational support measures and employee WTRI were modest to begin with, the fact that the intercorrelations between the three independent variables ranged from .27 to .42 (see Table 1) may have resulted in the lack of findings for the cultural adjustment support and career support factors.

The overall variance in employee WTRI explained in the regression analysis was a modest 11 percent (see Table 2). One explanation for the small effect size may be that elements of organizational support do not have much influence on the employee relocation decision. Other factors, such as the spouse or partner's dissatisfaction with the assignment or difficulty adjusting to the host country culture, may have a stronger influence on an employee's attitude toward international relocations (see Andreason, 2008; Baruch et al., 2016; Lee 2007; McNulty, 2012).

Another explanation for the low variance explained in WTRI by the experience variables may be the existence of mediating relationships. In such a case, the actual relationship of experience factors, such as organizational support, would have little or no direct effect on employee WTRI. Instead, the experience variable would be related to a mediating variable, which, in turn, would be related to employee WTRI. Future research should examine the potential for mediating as well as moderating effects between experience factors and WTRI.

Contributions

While some of the hypothesized relationships did not produce favorable results, the study still provides several contributions to the literature and gives direction for future research. First, the results provide empirical support for the assumption that organizational support policies and practices can help reduce uncertainty and affect relocation intentions. Also, the factor analysis conducted in this study provides a basis for categorizations in assessing organizational support provided in an international assignment. It suggests that the list of items needed to assess organizational support may be much fewer than the more extensive list used in this study. In addition, the usefulness of academic research to HR practitioners has been questioned (Klimoski, 2007; Rynes, 2007). This study provides a contribution to the literature by

examining practical issues related to expatriate management and by using subjects with actual international assignment experience.

The fact that financial support was uniquely related to employee WTRI provides a contribution to our understanding of which policies and practices should be of concern to organizations. The findings of the current study suggest that organizations need to be especially concerned about financial issues with expatriates while on assignment if they want the expatriates to accept future international assignments. This builds upon the findings of McEvoy & Buller (2013), which found that potential overall financial compensation and assistance was a key factor for individuals accepting an international assignment. The findings also validate the emphasis that employers place on developing compensation packages for expatriate assignments (Cartus, 2018; KPMG, 2018; Sante Fe Relocation, 2018).

Future Research

In addition to needing more research examining organizational support on the expatriate WTRI, such as searching for mediating and moderating relationships, as mentioned earlier, some of the zero-order correlations provide suggestions for future research. For instance, the length of assignment was negatively correlated with cultural adjustment support. As the assignment lengthens and the honeymoon period ends, do expatriates see a greater discrepancy between the difficulties of cultural adjustment and the assistance organizations provide in this area? Also, the longer an international assignee has been back was negatively correlated with perceptions of financial support. This could be due the reality that salaries for returned expatriates are no different than those who remained in domestic assignments, despite the expectation by expatriates that fulfilling an overseas assignment will enhance their long-term compensation (Benson & Pattie, 2008). This is also an area for future exploration.

Limitations

Several cautions relating to the study need to be mentioned. To begin with, the results may only apply to U.S. expatriates. Since data was gathered only from individuals returning to the U.S., the results may not apply to expatriates of other nationalities. In addition, potential limitations exist, since the data were all gathered through a survey method. Common method variance can accompany such methods. However, to limit such variance, response formats and anchors were varied in the survey to help reduce response bias sets.

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Appendix: Factor Analysis of Organizational Support Items

Item	Factor Loadings ^a		
	1	2	3
Organization offered useful training in practical aspects of living	<u>.88</u>	.15	.17
Training for spouse training offers realistic preview of what to expect	<u>.85</u>	.16	.16
Spouse training is well thought out	<u>.84</u>	.28	.14
In general, training provided by organization was excellent preparation	<u>.84</u>	.13	.23
Family and spouse receive adequate help dealing with culture shock	<u>.79</u>	.29	.10
Usable training in culture and living-related skills was provided	<u>.79</u>	.07	.09
Training for foreign assignments is supported by top management	<u>.73</u>	.15	.27
Spouses receive adequate career assistance	<u>.72</u>	.26	.09
The organization assists spouses to find a support network	<u>.66</u>	.16	.13
Overall financial assistance was sufficient	.26	<u>.88</u>	.08
Compensation offset increases in cost of living in foreign location	.19	<u>.86</u>	.03
Compensation premium was adequate	.26	<u>.85</u>	.06
Adequate housing/accommodations differential was provided	.12	<u>.84</u>	.09
Making financial ends meet was not a problem	.11	<u>.80</u>	.11
Compensation package was competitive in relation to other organizations	.26	<u>.74</u>	.11
I understand how current position fits into company plans	.15	.09	<u>.83</u>
I know how international assignment fits into my overall career	.17	.05	<u>.81</u>
I had a clearly planned career path upon repatriation	.23	.08	<u>.79</u>
I am pleased with position received upon repatriating	.13	.02	<u>.77</u>
I understand how my international assignment fits into company plans	.12	.25	<u>.71</u>
Eigenvalue	6.02	4.56	3.38
Percent of variance explained	.30	.23	.17
Coefficient alpha reliability	.93	.93	.85

^aNote

Factor 1 = Adjustment support

Factor 2 = Financial support

Factor 3 = Career support