

Staying close while living apart: The impact of expatriate and partner interplay on expatriate's success

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ABSTRACT

Expatriate population is continued to grow. The majority of expatriates are married or in a committed relationship. Hence, for them, working in an international environment is a work commitment, but, it has some important implications for them, as well as their families. Expatriate research has consistently emphasized the important role of family for expatriate success. However, research has tended to focus on how family influences the decision to accept international employment, and, how do they together with their partners experience international employment. While, these studies have advanced the field in the past years, several questions remained unanswered. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore how dispersed expatriates (expatriates who have family, but, live apart), experience international relocation, and how do expatriate and partner interactions influence expatriate's decision to repatriation. Moreover, this study extends the prior research on social support by exploring the important role of organizational and co-worker support in reducing expatriate's repatriation intention and elucidating the individual level boundary conditions. Likewise, the present thesis aims to deliver vital implications to expatriate-family literature.

The purpose of study 1 was to examine the influence of partner co-location on important expatriates' outcomes, i.e. cross-cultural adjustment and absenteeism. Drawing upon conservation of resources theory, we hypothesized that expatriates living apart from their partners have detrimental effect on expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment, which in turn, lead to increase

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absenteeism from work. We further hypothesized that resource investment from other sources, e.g., organization, can offset the negative effect of living apart. The findings obtained from a two-wave dyadic survey of 149 expatriates and their partners suggested that expatriates living apart from partners have lower general and work adjustment. The detrimental effects of living apart reduce more frequent communication among partners and increased level of perceived organizational support. Further, the results suggested that expatriate general and work adjustment are negatively associated with absenteeism. Our results informed the literature, expatriates are better-off with their partners rather without them.

Drawing upon interdependence theory, study 2 intended to understand the expatriate and partner dyadic interplay and its impact on expatriates' behavioral outcomes. We examined the joint effects of expatriate and partner non-work attitudes, i.e. marital satisfaction and depression on expatriates' decision to repatriate. Results from polynomial regressions coupled with response surface methodology of data from 244 expatriate-partner dyads, showed that congruence (similarities) of expatriate and partner marital satisfaction is associated with a higher likelihood of expatriates' repatriation. Moreover, we found that expatriates are more likely to repatriate, when expatriate's depression is higher than the partner's depression. Illustrating the dyadic interplay among expatriates and partners, our findings accentuated the importance of simultaneous consideration of expatriate-partner joint attitudes on expatriates' success outcomes.

Study 3 empirically examined the importance of social support from two distinctive sources of support: organization and co-workers, in lessening expatriates' repatriation intention. The study 3 draws upon social support theory and to analyze the model, we collected data from 167 expatriates at two-points in time. The findings suggested that increased level of perceived organizational support and co-worker support reduce expatriates' repatriation intention. In

addition, results of moderation analysis suggested that low/non-managerial rank expatriates, and expatriates who are at the initial stages of their new job need more co-worker support to reduce their repatriation intention. Moreover, our results showed that, prior international experience moderates the association between perceived organizational support and repatriation intention.