



THE EFFECT OF PERCEIVED SUPPORT ON REPATRIATE KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER IN MNCs: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF REPATRIATE ADJUSTMENT

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	The present study examines the effect of perceived organisational and co-worker support on the adjustment of repatriates and its impact on their intention to transfer knowledge in multinational companies (MNCs). It also examines the relationship between perceived organisational support, co-worker support, and knowledge transfer through the mediating role of repatriate adjustment.
Background	The ability of acquiring and utilising international knowledge is one of the core competitive advantages of MNCs. This knowledge is transferred by MNCs across their subsidiaries efficiently through repatriates, which will result in superior performance when compared to their local competitors. But in MNCs the expatriation process has been given more emphasis than the repatriation process; therefore, there is limited knowledge about repatriation knowledge transfer. Practically, the knowledge transferred by repatriates is not managed properly by the MNCs.
Methodology	The proposed model was supported by Uncertainty Reduction Theory, Organisational Socialisation Theory, Organisational Support Theory, and Socialisation Resource Theory. The data were gathered from 246 repatriates working in Indian MNCs in the manufacturing and information technology sectors who had been on an international assignment for at least one year. The data obtained

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	were analysed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using AMOS 21 software.
Contribution	The present study expands prior research on repatriate knowledge transfer by empirically investigating the mediating role of repatriate adjustment between perceived support and repatriate knowledge transfer in MNCs. The present study also highlights that organisational and co-worker support during repatriation is beneficial for repatriate knowledge transfer. It is important that MNCs initiate support practices during repatriation to motivate repatriates to transfer international knowledge.
Findings	The results revealed that both perceived organisational and co-worker support had a significant role in predicting repatriate adjustment in MNCs. Furthermore, the results also revealed that perceived organisational and co-worker support increases repatriate knowledge transfer through repatriate adjustment in MNCs.
Recommendations for Practitioners	This study indicates the role of management in motivating repatriates to transfer their knowledge to the organisation. The management of MNCs develop HR policies and strategies leading to high perceived organisational support, co-worker support, and repatriate adjustment. They need to pay particular attention to the factors that affect the repatriates' intention to share knowledge with others in the organisation.
Recommendations for Researchers	Researchers can use the validated measurement instrument which could be essential for the advancement of future empirical research on repatriate knowledge transfer.
Impact on Society	The present study will assist MNCs in managing their repatriates during the repatriation process by developing an appropriate repatriation support system. This will help the repatriates to better adjust to their repatriation process which will motivate them to transfer the acquired knowledge.
Future Research	Future research can adopt a longitudinal style to test the different levels of the adjustment process which will help in better understanding the repatriate adjustment process. Additionally, this model can be tested with the repatriates of other countries and in diverse cultures to confirm its external validity. Furthermore, future research can be done with the repatriates who go on an international assignment through their own initiative (self-initiated expatriates).
Keywords	repatriates, repatriate adjustment, co-worker support, organisational support, repatriate knowledge transfer, structural equation modelling

INTRODUCTION

The concept of repatriation was initially proposed in the 1980s by Harvey (1982), which was the last phase of the international assignment when expatriates returned to their home countries after completing an international assignment (Sussman, 2011; Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Repatriation is the most difficult part of an international assignment for an expatriate in global organisations. On completion of an international assignment, the expatriate and his/her family are sent back to the home-country organisation, which can cause a high level of anxiety and stress. This condition sometimes becomes worse because there is a lack of organisational support for returning expatriates and various organisations do not realise that the repatriation phase is the most crucial in the whole expatriation process (Burmeister et al., 2015; Kumar & Aslam, 2019). During the repatriation phase, repatriates perceive their home environment as an unfamiliar environment in which they have to readjust. This process of readjustment (repatriate adjustment) will continue until the repatriates are satisfied with

the various aspects of the adjustment in the home environment (James, 2018; Sussman, 2000). When repatriates adjust better in the home environment, they feel accepted, secure, and psychologically comfortable and find themselves a better fit in the home organisation (Adler, 1981; Black et al., 1992). A better adjustment will have a positive influence on repatriates' retention, job performance, organisational commitment (Black et al., 1992), and knowledge transfer (Oddou et al., 2008). In contrast, repatriates who fail to adjust during the repatriation process feel uncertain, isolated, lose control, and stressed. These critical situations will negatively affect the intention of repatriates to transfer knowledge to the home organisation (Greer & Stiles, 2016; Oddou et al., 2013).

Knowledge is considered to be an important resource for organisations that should be acknowledged, managed, and integrated to create a competitive edge (Oddou et al., 2013). Within multinational companies (MNCs), valuable knowledge is transmitted on a routine basis between each host organisation and its parent organisation (Huang & Li, 2019). MNCs largely rely on their repatriates to successfully transfer the knowledge from the host country organisation (HCO) to its home country organisation (HMCO). Several studies have previously highlighted the competitive edge and the significance of knowledge gained during expatriation, but the factors affecting repatriate knowledge transfer (RKT) are grossly under-researched (Amir et al., 2020; Harzing et al., 2016; Rabbiosi, 2011). There is also a lack of studies that show a mediating role of adjustment between perceived support and knowledge transfer. The main purpose of the present study is to investigate the role of perceived organisational and co-worker support in predicting repatriate adjustment and repatriate knowledge transfer. Additionally, the present study also examines the effect of repatriate adjustment as a mediator on the relationship between perceived support and repatriate knowledge transfer

When expatriates are on international assignments, they have the opportunity to obtain, create, and transfer important knowledge both during expatriation and repatriation (Oddou et al., 2008). The process of transferring knowledge during repatriation is known as repatriate knowledge transfer also "reverse knowledge transfer" – the transfer of knowledge from HCO to HMCO. In the present study, we focus on repatriate knowledge transfer that takes place during the repatriation process. According to previous studies (Harzing et al., 2016; Szkudlarek, 2010), the expatriation process has been given more emphasis than the repatriation process; therefore, there is limited knowledge about repatriation knowledge transfer. Practically, the knowledge transferred by repatriates is not managed properly by the organisations. An empirical study on expatriate knowledge transfer revealed that organisations do not emphasise managing this knowledge transfer process and strategies to use and disseminate this knowledge upon repatriation (Stoermer et al., 2020). The hypothesised model is presented in Figure 1.

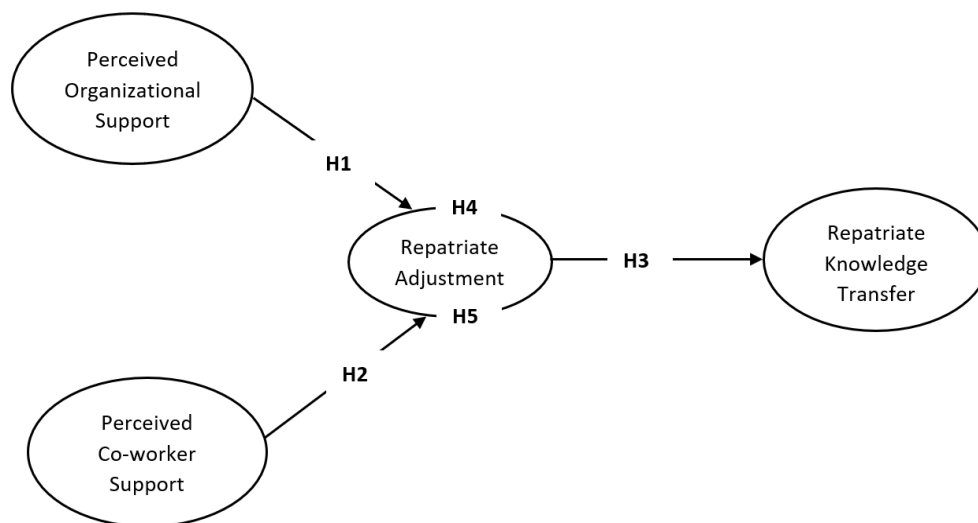


Figure 1. Proposed research model and hypotheses

LITERATURE REVIEW

PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT

Organisational support theory states that when the organisations are concerned about their employees' well-being and appreciate their contributions, their level of perceived organisational support (POS) will increase (Black et al., 1992; Eisenberger et al., 2001; Greer & Stiles, 2016). Organisational support is considered to be one of the most valuable resources for both expatriates and repatriates (Bader, 2017; Reiche, 2012). Therefore, this concept has received a lot of attention from researchers and is generally described as a situation wherein the employees are appreciated for their valuable contributions (Eisenberger et al., 2001). Prior studies revealed that POS has a positive relationship with key employee outcomes like retention, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and performance (Rockstuhl et al., 2020). In this regard, we suggest that perceiving support from HMCO to repatriates' concerns during repatriation will help in overcoming the difficulties related to the repatriation process. Due to the difficulties faced by the repatriates during the repatriation process, their turnover rate becomes high (Howe-Walsh & Torka, 2017). These difficulties result in unfulfilled expectations of the repatriates regarding their career, a lack of appreciation for the acquired global knowledge and expertise, or a loss of self-sufficiency (Bader, 2017; Black et al., 1992). Accordingly, providing support for creating a balance between repatriates' expectations and what they face during repatriation appears to be important for motivating them to transfer knowledge upon repatriation.

PERCEIVED CO-WORKER SUPPORT

Co-workers are an essential component of any organisation, and they comprise the social environment in the organisation (Kim et al., 2018). Co-workers can be concerned about employees' well-being and assist them in resolving work-related challenges (Greer & Stiles, 2016). They provide support related to the task direction, mentoring, and a friendly working environment. Specifically, when the repatriates are in uncertain organisational surroundings, co-workers play an essential role in providing important information regarding how to deal with uncertainty related to the repatriation (James, 2019). For instance, when the repatriates are not able to recognize the work environment and they fail in predicting expected behaviour, co-workers help them in understanding the working environment of the organisation and co-workers tell them what behaviours are expected from the repatriates. Such information becomes valuable in reducing ambiguity and making sense of the work environment. According to Ducharme and Martin (2000), there are two forms of co-worker support: affective support and instrumental support. The literature reveals that the repatriation phase is generally painful and supporting behaviour from the co-workers can ease this pain, but at the same time, this pain can be increased by the negative attitudes and behaviour of organisational members (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Froese et al., 2021). Organisational members fear that the repatriates' existence may obstruct their growth or affect their existing status because repatriates excelled themselves by obtaining international knowledge and experience (Amir et al., 2020). This behaviour of organisational members can increase the challenges in the process of repatriate adjustment during repatriation (James, 2019).

REPATRIATE KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

The topic of RKT has gained the interest of scholars after the study done by Berthoin Antal (2000). However, there is limited research that emphasises RKT and nearly half of them are conceptual (Burmeister et al., 2015). Reverse knowledge transfer from HCO to HMCO such as RKT may be far more complicated than and distinct from traditional knowledge transfer practices (Harzing et al., 2016; Kogut & Mello, 2017; Oddou et al., 2013). Even though at the strategic level it was recognised that knowledge gained during the international assignment is important for MNCs operations (Bader, 2017), individuals at HMCO should realise the importance and significance of the international knowledge (Rockstuhl et al., 2020). Although HMCO may realise the value of international

knowledge acquired by repatriates, in theory, the co-workers of the HMCO may not accept those repatriates in practice (Oddou et al., 2013). In fact, it was revealed in previous studies that repatriates encounter active and passive opposition when they attempt to share their international knowledge and expertise (Nery-Kjerfve & McLean, 2012). From such findings, it can be assumed that the MNCs cannot expect the repatriates to just simply transfer the knowledge rather than they should be convinced to transfer their acquired knowledge (Yang et al., 2008). Therefore, the present study examines the effect of organisational support and co-worker support on RKT and also the role of repatriate adjustment in predicting RKT.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

PERCEIVED ORGANISATIONAL SUPPORT AND REPATRIATE ADJUSTMENT

Upon repatriation, repatriates' experiences are painful with regard to readjusting to work and general environment (Black et al., 1992; Greer & Stiles, 2016), and organisational support is very crucial during this process (Black et al., 1992; Howe-Walsh & Torka, 2017). Organisational assistance reduces uncertainty related with readjustment (Black et al., 1991), and as a result it can help repatriates to adjust better through uncertainty reduction. Takeuchi et al. (2009) conducted longitudinal research revealing that support from organisations is positively related to expatriate adjustment. Another study conducted by Burmeister et al. (2015) revealed that assistance from the organisation leads to enhancing the opinion of repatriates regarding their organisation and improving repatriation adjustment. However, there is a lack of empirical research on the effect of social organisational factors on repatriate adjustment.

Nevertheless, it can be evident that repatriates with overseas experience are capable of transferring their gained experience to HMCO. They return to their home organisation hoping that they get betterment in their overall position in the organisation (Bader, 2017; Bailey & Dragoni, 2013; McNulty et al., 2013). Organisational socialisation theory (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) and socialisation resource theory (SRT) (Gruman & Saks, 2013; Saks & Gruman, 2012) revealed that the support from organisations that repatriates get after their return enables them to overcome the stress and difficulties related to the return. Keeping in mind, one may assume that more organisational support enhances repatriation adjustment for repatriates. Therefore, we predict:

H₁: Perceived organisational support positively influences repatriate adjustment.

PERCEIVED CO-WORKER SUPPORT AND REPATRIATE ADJUSTMENT

Co-workers help in providing important information related to the job, workgroup, social, and cultural related aspects (James, 2019; Kumar et al., 2021), which helps reduce the stress of repatriates rising due to ambiguity and unpredictability. In contrast, when co-workers have negative attitudes and actions (Kim et al., 2018), it will lead to challenges in repatriation adjustment. Co-workers may feel insecure from repatriates because they have gained international experience which makes them better, and the co-workers think that they might obstruct their growth in the organisation. Therefore, after repatriation, the co-workers might not be able to accept the repatriated employees in their team right away (James, 2019). Usually, this type of behaviour is prevalent in the organisation but returning repatriates suffer from stress and reverse cultural shock, which makes this type of behaviour a serious issue for them (Greer & Stiles, 2016) and ultimately obstructs repatriate adjustment.

When repatriates come back to their home organisation, they are required to go through a "re-socialisation" process that consists of adapting the system and procedures and reacquiring the official and unofficial rules and regulations of the organisation (Oddou et al., 2008). Therefore, it is crucial for repatriates to receive support from their co-workers to be aware of the organisational environment and to reduce the difficulties and stress related to the repatriation process. It can be assumed from the above discussion that co-workers' support helps in the better adjustment of repatriates. Therefore, we predict:

H₂: Perceived co-worker support positively influences the repatriate adjustment.

REPATRIATE ADJUSTMENT AND REPATRIATE KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Repatriates return with the intention of sharing the knowledge obtained during the international assignment in their HMCO and contribute to its growth (Bader, 2017; Burmeister et al., 2015; Huang & Li, 2019) but, due to a lack of organisational support, they fail to readjust and may result in knowledge withholding (Froese et al., 2021; Oddou et al., 2008). Adler (1981) described this situation as a “xenophobic response” in which organisations fail to acquire new knowledge and expertise from their repatriates. Organisations are not able to utilise the knowledge and expertise gained by repatriates (Huang & Li, 2019), and therefore, most organisations fail to obtain favourable outcomes from their expatriation investments (Black & Gregersen, 1999). Therefore, it is essential for organisations to have an effective repatriation adjustment process to utilise the important knowledge and expertise acquired overseas (Amir et al., 2020). Suutari & Mäkelä (2007) conducted a qualitative study in which they found that all repatriates had acquired leadership, management, and cross-cultural management skills when they were on international assignments. Therefore, it is important to utilise these acquired skills upon return, but it can be evidenced from the literature that there is a lack of such utilisation of skills (Burmeister et al., 2015; James, 2019; Pattie et al., 2010). Effectively managing the repatriation process helps to better utilise overseas knowledge (Newton et al., 2007; Oddou et al., 2013). Therefore, we predict the following:

H₃: Repatriate adjustment positively influences repatriate knowledge transfer.

MEDIATING ROLE OF REPATRIATE ADJUSTMENT

Lack of understanding and trust among repatriates and their co-workers and negative feelings from them regarding the acceptance and appreciation of repatriates’ overseas experience have a negative impact on their knowledge-sharing behaviour (Oddou et al., 2013). When an organisation’s HR policies and practices associated with repatriate management are supportive of repatriates then this will encourage them to utilise their overseas experience effectively (James, 2019). Repatriates’ willingness to share their knowledge with the organisation may reduce due to the unsupportive behaviour of their co-workers and lack of organisational support practices. Kim et al. (2018) observed that criticism from co-workers acts as a barrier to sharing knowledge in the organisation. According to Expectancy Theory, employees are motivated to work hard based on the reward they expect to receive from their organisation. Repatriates share their international knowledge with the MNCs only when they get favourable outcomes for sharing their knowledge. When repatriates return to their HMCO, they do not get respect or acceptance from their co-workers (James, 2019), their overseas experience and expertise are not utilised properly, and they do not receive any special opportunity for their personal and professional growth (Froese et al., 2021). This type of situation makes repatriates feel uneasy and distressed, and they face problems in adjusting to the repatriation adjustment process.

It can be concluded from the above discussion that when repatriates receive support from their organisation and co-workers, they face fewer difficulties in adjusting during repatriation and become motivated to share knowledge in the organisation. Therefore, the association between perceived support, repatriate adjustment and knowledge transfer can be described as follows: when repatriates perceive that they receive support from their organisation and co-workers, then they can adjust better to their repatriation, and the higher the level of adjustment, the higher will be knowledge transfer by them in the organisation. This indicates that the association between perceived support and knowledge transfer is partially a result of repatriate adjustment. Therefore, we predict the following:

H₄: Repatriate adjustment mediates the relationship between perceived organisational support and repatriate knowledge transfer.

H₅: Repatriate adjustment mediates the relationship between perceived co-worker support and repatriate knowledge transfer.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

This study consists of samples of repatriates working in Indian MNCs in the manufacturing and information technology sectors who had been on an international assignment for a minimum period of one year (Minbaeva & Michailova, 2004). At the time of data collection, they had returned to their home country within the past two years. This time period of fewer than two years following repatriation was chosen to ensure that the repatriates are in or have recently passed the phase of adjustment (Adler, 1981; Harris & Moran, 2000; Sussman, 2011) to reduce the likelihood of bias. The snowball sampling method is used in the study. The repatriates were found initially from different sources including social media, publications of the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), HR managers from different organisations, trade journals, books, and company reports. These selected repatriates were requested to provide their responses and the references of other repatriates. The data were gathered by mailing the questionnaires (Appendix) with cover letters to approximately 650 repatriates to take part in the study. All participation was voluntary and unpaid, and the participants could take the survey at any time. The confidentiality of the entire process and questionnaire data was ensured. In total, 650 questionnaires were sent through emails, and the final response rate was 41% (267 respondents). Of these 267 responses, 21 responses were eliminated for two reasons: (a) more than 15% of a questionnaire's data were missing (15 responses) and (b) respondents had less than a year of international experience (6 responses). Therefore, we conducted this study with 246 usable responses. Table 1 reports the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 1. Demographic profile (n=246)

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	193	78.5%
Females	53	21.5%
Age group		
Less than 30 Years	46	18.7%
30 to 35 Years	109	44.3%
More than 35 Years	91	37%
Marital status		
Married	150	61%
Unmarried	96	39%
Time passed upon repatriation		
0-12 months	132	53.7%
12-24 months	114	46.3%
Work experience (in years)		
Less than 5	45	18.3%
Between 5-10	85	34.6%
Between 10-15	65	26.4%
More than 15	51	20.7%
Total experience of International Assignment (in years)		
Less than 3 years	83	33.7%
Between 3-6 years	89	36.2%
More than 6 years	74	30.1%

VARIABLES AND MEASURES

Repatriates try to eliminate ambiguity and attain a degree of fit with various facets of the home context during the repatriation adjustment process, and better-adjusted repatriates feel a better fit in their new environment (Black et al., 1992; James, 2018). For measuring the extent to which the repatriates adjust to their home company's environment, we used the person-organisation fit (PO fit) index which will be an important and helpful index for measuring the repatriates' adjustment.

The extent to which the repatriates believe they fit in their HMCO will show how well they have adjusted to their home organisation. Therefore, in this study, we measured the level of adjustment of the repatriates by measuring their extent of PO fit. Five items were used to measure PO fit (Bretz & Judge, 1994; Cable & DeRue, 2002), with slight modifications but with no change in the meaning of the items to ensure uniformity between other items. A sample item includes "The things that I value in my life are very similar to the things that my organisation values". The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was $\alpha=0.89$.

For measuring perceived organisational support (POS), a shorter version of the scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (1997) containing eight items was used for this study. A sample statement is "My organisation really cares about my well-being". The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was $\alpha=0.90$. To measure perceived co-worker support (PCS), a scale consisting of eight items developed by Ducharme and Martin (2000) was used in this study. A sample item includes "I feel appreciated by my co-workers". This scale focuses on how repatriates perceive that their co-workers will support them during a stressful scenario. A study conducted by Ducharme and Martin (2000) demonstrated an acceptable reliability coefficient, and this scale was found to have construct validity through its anticipated relationship with stress. Cronbach's alpha measure of reliability was $\alpha=0.87$.

Repatriate knowledge transfer (KT) was measured by nine items adapted from the existing scales developed by Bartol et al. (2009) and Minbaeva et al. (2003). A sample statement indicating the repatriates' perception is "I frequently share my knowledge by making helpful suggestions that benefit the knowledge recipient". Table 2 represents the summary of the variables used in the study. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was $\alpha=0.88$. All the respondents were asked to give their responses on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree.

The present research is based upon cross-sectional and self-reported data. Self-reported data may be appropriate when there is a need to focus on perceived experiences and in the present study, it is suitable for measuring repatriates' socialisation and adjustment level. However, there are chances of common method bias (CMB) in this type of data (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The presence of CMB will provide biased conclusions, which is not desirable in this study. To reduce this bias during the survey design phase, absolute anonymity and confidentiality were ensured. The unclear and unfamiliar words were eliminated, and every item was put as briefly as possible. The presence of CMB is examined with the help of the Harman single factor method (Podsakoff et al., 2003) and full collinearity assessment (Kock, 2015). The results reported that the estimated value of the variance explained with the help of a single factor is 44.4%, which is less than the cut-off value of 50%. The results of both tests indicated that CMB did not exist in the present data set. Thus, it can be concluded that the responses received against the different statements in the questionnaire are free from CMB problems. Thus, all the conclusions made in the study are free from bias and can be generalised.

RESULTS

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

The accuracy of the data was tested; all the values were found to be within the specified limit, and the mean, standard deviation, and correlation were found to be acceptable (Table 3). These reasonable values of correlation indicate the interdependence and suitability of the constructs for path model analysis. Furthermore, there was no straightlining or inconsistent response in the data. A two-

step structural equation modelling (SEM) process was applied in this study which was recommended by Hair et al. (2010). First, confirmatory factor analysis was used to validate the fit and constructs of the proposed model (Figure 2). After validating the proposed model, AMOS (version 26) software was used to test the structural model. An acceptable fit was achieved in the proposed model (Table 4 and Figure 3).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics, reliability, validity, and correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	CrA	CR	AVE	MSV	POS	PCS	RA	KT
Perceived organizational support (POS)	3.84	0.75	0.90	0.92	0.64	0.50	0.80			
Perceived co-worker support (PCS)	3.83	0.74	0.87	0.89	0.61	0.50	0.71	0.78		
Repatriate adjustment (RA)	3.73	0.84	0.89	0.91	0.57	0.50	0.63	0.70	0.76	
Repatriate knowledge transfer (KT)	3.75	0.73	0.88	0.90	0.52	0.46	0.61	0.55	0.68	0.72

Note: Bold diagonal figures are the square root of AVE, and shaded areas show a correlation between constructs; CrA = Cronbach's alpha, CR = composite reliability, AVE = average variance extracted

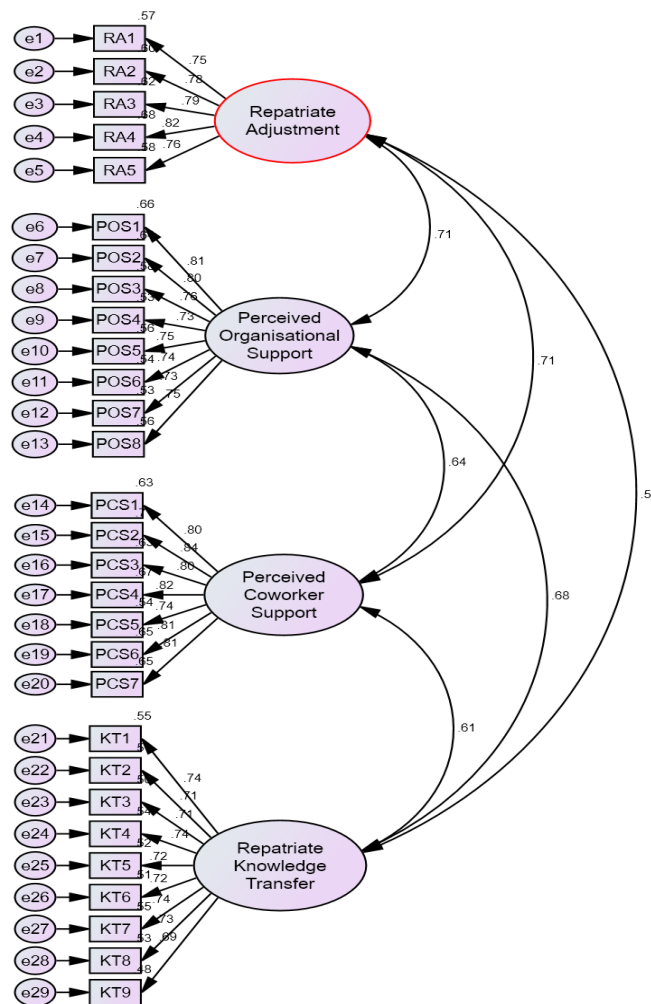


Figure 2. Confirmatory factor analysis

Table 4. Model fit summary

Statistical Fitness Index	CMIN/Df	GFI	AGFI	CFI	TLI	NFI	RMSEA
Estimated value	1.150	.896	.878	.987	.986	.908	.025
Expected value	Less than 3	Greater than 0.8	Greater than 0.8	Greater than 0.9	Greater than 0.9	Greater than 0.8	Less than 0.08

Note: CMIN/Df = Chi-square fit statistics/degree of freedom, GFI = Goodness of fit index, AGFI = Adjusted goodness of fit index, CFI = Comparative fit index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis index, NFI = Normed fit index, RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation

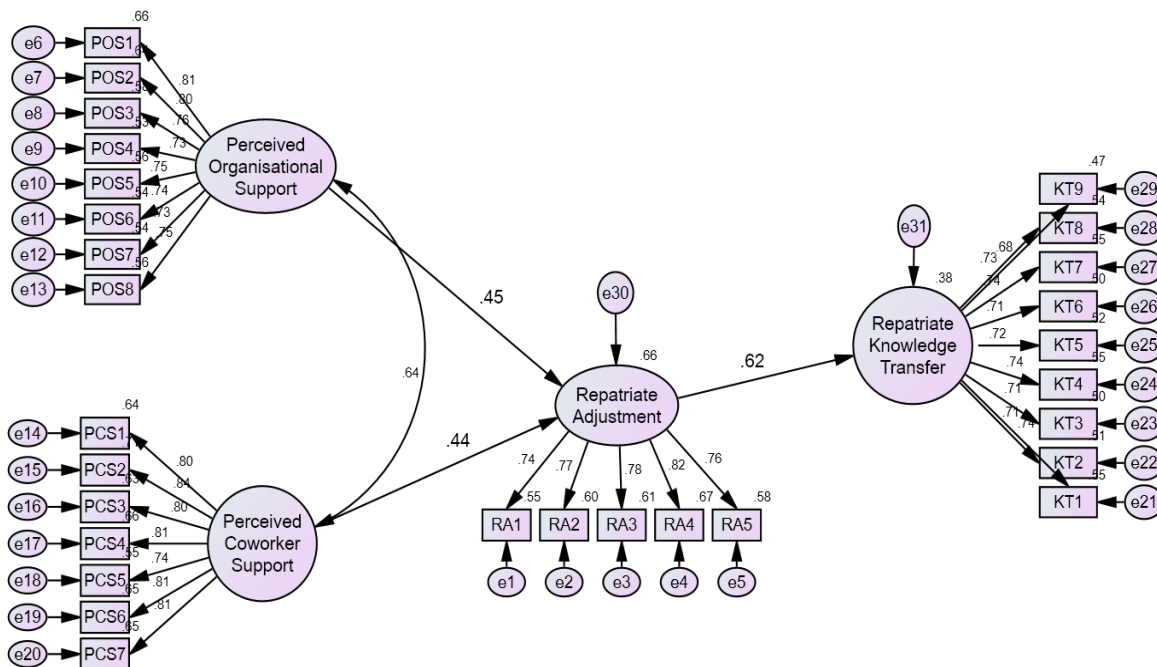


Figure 3. Structural model for SEM-AMOS analysis

Note: All variances are significant at the 0.05 level of significance.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

The reliability and validity of the model are found to be satisfactory. The internal consistency reliability in the responses represents the presence of consistency in the responses for all the included statements representing the factors provided by the repatriates. The expected values of the factor loading of each item, Cronbach's alpha (CrA), and composite reliability (CR) of each construct are greater than 0.7 (Bagozzi & Baumgartner, 1994; Hair et al., 2013). First, the validity of all the constructs was examined by convergent validity, which was calculated by standardised factor loadings. They are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), and the final factor loadings of each item are equal to or higher than 0.7. One item from the PCS was removed because of low loading ($< .4$). The internal consistency reliability for each construct was calculated using CrA and CR values that were higher than the acceptable value of 0.7 (Table 4).

The Average (AVE) variance extracted from all the constructs was above the acceptable value of 0.5 (Table 4), representing sufficient convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010). The discriminant validity of the measurement scale is measured with the help of the Fornell Larcker Criteria (Fornell & Larcker,

1981), where the square root of AVE should be greater than the inter construct correlations. Furthermore, the discriminant validity is also examined by comparing the AVE with the maximum shared variance (MSV), where the AVE should be greater than the MSV of each construct (Table 4). The results reported that both conditions are fulfilled, thereby ensuring the presence of discriminant validity.

HYPOTHESES TESTING

To test the proposed structural model, AMOS (version 16) software was used in the present study. To support the proposed hypothesised model, first, the importance of each path coefficient was measured by bootstrapping. There is no requirement for distributional assumption in the bootstrapping process (Preacher & Hayes, 2008), and it creates acceptable standard-error estimates (Tenenhaus et al., 2005). The present study uses Hayes' (2013) bias-corrected bootstrapping technique to verify the indirect effect of the model by taking 2,000 bootstrap samples to generate standard error and t-statistics.

The results of the path coefficient revealed that perceived organisational ($\beta=0.49$, $p<0.01$) and co-worker support ($\beta=0.45$, $p<0.01$) directly and positively influence repatriate adjustment which supports the previous findings by Bakker and Demerouti (2007), Greer and Stiles (2016), and James and Azungah (2019). Therefore, H_1 and H_2 were supported. Perceived organisational and co-worker support together explained 66% of the variance in repatriate adjustment. Furthermore, repatriate adjustment ($\beta=0.59$, $p<0.01$) directly and positively influences repatriate knowledge transfer and explained 38% of the variance in repatriate knowledge transfer which supports the previous findings by Burmeister et al. (2015), Oddou et al. (2013), and Suutari & Mäkelä (2007). Thus, H_3 was supported. These results suggest that the higher the level of support that repatriates get from their home organisation and co-workers, the higher the level of their adjustment, and the higher the level of repatriate adjustment, the higher the level of knowledge transfer.

MEDIATOR EFFECT ANALYSIS

In the present study the mediating effect of repatriate adjustment (RA) on the relationship between perceived support and repatriate knowledge transfer was examined using the "Process Macro" developed by Prof. Andrew Hayes (2013), where perceived organisational support (POS) and perceived co-worker support (PCS) were considered exogenous variables and repatriate knowledge transfer (KT) was assumed to be an endogenous variable (Table 5). The path coefficients of POS to RA ($\beta=0.619$) and RA to KT ($\beta=0.158$) were both significant. Therefore, the indirect effect of POS on KT through the mediator (RA) was $\beta=0.098$ (0.619×0.158), and the significance of the path was tested using bootstrapping taking 5,000 samples at the 0.05 significance level and 246 cases. The total effect was $\beta=0.554$ (direct effect= 0.456 plus indirect effect= 0.098). Both RA and POS were found to have a positive influence on the KT of repatriates. Thus, higher RA and POS in the organisation increase the intention to transfer the knowledge by the repatriates. The f-statistic (82.563**) indicates the significant statistical fitness of the regression model. The R square of the model is 40.58%, indicating that the effect of POS on KT is explained by the indirect relationship between POS and KT, which is mediated by RA. Therefore, H_4 was supported.

The results also revealed that the path coefficients of PCS to RA ($\beta=0.636$) and RA to KT ($\beta=0.216$) were both significant. Therefore, when the mediator RA was added to the path, the indirect effect of PCS on KT was $\beta=0.137$ (0.636×0.216), and the significance of the path was tested using bootstrapping with 5,000 samples. The total effect was $\beta=0.509$ (direct effect = 0.372 plus indirect effect = 0.137). The RA and PCS are both found to have a positive influence on the KT of repatriates. Thus, the higher the RA and PCS in the organisation, the higher the intention to transfer the knowledge by the repatriates. The f-statistic (64.805**) indicates the significant statistical fitness of the regression

model. The R square of the model is 41.29%, indicating that the effect of the PCS on KT is explained by the indirect relationship between the PCS and KT, which is mediated by RA. Therefore, H₅ was supported.

Table 5. Path coefficient, standard error, T-statistics, F-statistics, and P-value

Proposed Paths	Path Coefficient	Standard Error	T-statistics	F-statistics	P-values
POS→ RA	0.619	0.048	6.933	166.646	0.000
RA→ KT	0.158	0.059	2.691	82.563	0.000
POS→ KT	0.456	0.057	7.971	82.563	0.000
PCS→ RA	0.636	0.049	13.099	171.607	0.000
RA→ KT	0.216	0.062	4.478	64.805	0.000
PCS→ KT	0.372	0.061	6.072	64.805	0.000

Note: POS = *perceived organisational support*, PCS = *perceived co-worker support*, RA = *repatriate adjustment*, KT = *repatriate knowledge transfer*

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Repatriates with international experience in MNCs have high expectations from their HMCO to value their foreign experience and provide them with the opportunity to utilise this global expertise for their professional and personal growth. In line with “Uncertainty reduction theory” and “Organisational support theory”, the results revealed that repatriates feel better and have more positive energy to get rid of repatriation stress when they perceive that the HMCO takes care of their wellbeing and provides them with an opportunity to utilise their expertise (Rockstuhl et al., 2020). Therefore, it can be concluded that when repatriates receive proper support from the HMCO upon their return, they will show a higher level of adjustment during the repatriation phase. Better repatriation adjustment will encourage the repatriates to use their gained overseas experience in improving the productivity of the home organisation by suggesting changes and improvements in the current practices of the organisation. Therefore, MNCs should facilitate the transfer of knowledge gained by the expatriates and repatriates for obtaining a competitive advantage.

In line with “Socialisation resource theory” and “Organisational socialisation theory”, support from co-workers allows repatriates to better utilise and promote their current resources, which will reduce their stress and anxiety during the repatriation phase and enables them to adjust better (James, 2019; James & Azungah, 2019; Kim et al., 2018). Consistent with these studies, the present study highlighted that the higher the level of support that repatriates receive from their co-workers, the higher the level of their adjustment. Furthermore, the results of the present study validate the prior studies that argue that the repatriate adjustment process can become easier through organisational supporting activities (Bader, 2017; Greer & Stiles, 2016; James, 2019).

This study also suggests that repatriate adjustment positively influences repatriate knowledge transfer in MNCs. Upon return, when the repatriates were successful in adjusting to the HMCO, they will develop a feeling of comfort which results in motivating them to share their knowledge. Therefore, it is essential for MNCs to concentrate on effective repatriation adjustment processes to utilise important global expertise and knowledge (Amir et al., 2020; Huang & Li, 2019). Our results are consistent with these views that when repatriates show a higher level of adjustment during the repatriation phase, they will be motivated to share the acquired overseas knowledge. The findings of the study also revealed the significance of the indirect effect of perceived organisational support on repatriate

knowledge transfer. Therefore, it can be concluded that perceived organisational support indirectly affects the transfer of knowledge by repatriates in their HMCO. It can be assumed that during the repatriation phase, when the repatriates feel that their HMCO have supporting HR policies and practices to help them to adjust better, they will show a higher level of intention to transfer the acquired knowledge. “Uncertainty Reduction Theory” focuses on the role of social support and an individual’s desire to learn to adjust to the new environment. This theory states that when individuals enter a new environment, they feel surprised and uncertain, and to reduce this uncertainty, they must either adjust themselves to the surroundings or the surroundings to fit them. “Organisational Socialisation Theory” focuses on the role of organisations and the set of strategies that helps the repatriates to get to know the environment. According to both “Uncertainty Reduction Theory” and “Organisational Socialisation Theory”, organisational and co-worker support helps repatriates successfully adjust during repatriation which increases their intention to transfer knowledge.

The most unique finding of the present study was the mediating role of repatriate adjustment between co-worker support and repatriate knowledge transfer in MNCs. Previous studies on repatriation highlighted that repatriate adjustment and co-workers’ support predict repatriate knowledge transfer (Bader, 2017; James, 2018; Kim et al., 2018; Yogeswaran et al., 2017) but the mediating role of adjustment was not explored. The present study revealed the indirect effect of perceived co-worker support on repatriate knowledge transfer in MNCs by performing mediation analysis which was found to be significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that perceived co-workers’ support indirectly affects the transfer of knowledge by repatriates through repatriate adjustment. In other words, repatriate adjustment plays a mediating role between co-worker support and repatriate knowledge transfer in MNCs.

The findings of the present study revealed that perceived organisational support had a greater effect on repatriate adjustment than perceived co-worker support which strongly affects repatriate knowledge transfer in MNCs. Therefore, the present study highlights the importance of perceived organisational support in repatriate adjustment and knowledge transfer. The present study proposes repatriate adjustment as a stronger predictor of repatriate knowledge transfer among repatriates in MNCs which highlights the significance of repatriate adjustment in motivating repatriates to transfer the acquired international knowledge.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The present study validated and tested the suggested model among corporate repatriates in India, thus providing a model for additional empirical investigation. This model can be tested with the repatriates of other countries and in diverse cultures to confirm its external validity. Furthermore, this model can be tested with the repatriates who go on an international assignment through their own initiative (self-initiated expatriates), which will differentiate between the adjustment process, if any, among the two groups. Individual-level factors such as proactive behaviour, PsyCap, and emotional intelligence can also be included in the model, which will help to better understand the role of repatriates in the adjustment process.

The present study expands prior research on repatriate knowledge transfer by empirically investigating the mediating role of repatriate adjustment between perceived support and repatriate knowledge transfer in MNCs. The present study also highlights that organisational and co-worker support during repatriation is beneficial for repatriate knowledge transfer in MNCs. It is important that MNCs initiate support practices during repatriation to motivate repatriates to transfer international knowledge. From the perspective of practical implications, the present study assists both MNCs and repatriates in their success. The present study confirms that support from the organisation plays an important role in predicting repatriate adjustment, knowledge transfer by repatriates and utilising their overseas expertise in HMCO. MNCs should have proper support systems for repatriates during the repatriation phase, and these systems should provide sufficient resources to overcome the stress and problems related to repatriation. Additionally, MNCs should develop a system that recognizes

and respects repatriates' overseas knowledge and provides them the opportunity to utilise their overseas experience in their HMCO (Garson, 2005; James, 2018; Valk et al., 2014). Further, the present study will assist the management of MNCs in developing HR policies and strategies for managing their repatriates by recognizing the impact of perceived organisational support, co-worker support, and repatriate adjustment on repatriate knowledge transfer. The present study also assists repatriates by providing a clear understanding of the difficulties related to repatriation and allowing them to develop their own approaches to handle the repatriation phase and contributing to the success of their HMCO.

LIMITATIONS

There are a few limitations of the present study that lead to additional examination. First, the study is based on cross-sectional and self-reported data and there are chances of common method bias (CMB) in this type of data (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To minimise CMB during the survey design phase, absolute anonymity and confidentiality were ensured. At the time of analysis, Harman's single factor method (Podsakoff et al., 2003) and full collinearity assessment (Kock, 2015) were applied to check the probability of bias and both tests indicated that there was no evidence of bias in the present data set. Second, due to the presence of cross-sectional data, repatriate adjustment can be measured only at a given point in time. Repatriate adjustment must be measured from beginning to end for a better understanding of the repatriate adjustment process. Future research can adopt a longitudinal style to test the different levels of the adjustment process which will help in better understanding the repatriate adjustment process (Sánchez Vidal et al., 2008). Finally, some minor changes have been made to the items of the existing scale used in this research. These changes have been done to match the scale with the repatriation context and to maintain uniformity with other scales. However, the reliability coefficient of the adjusted scales was nearly identical to the average reliability coefficient of prior scales.

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APPENDIX: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: Demographic Measures

This section contains questions regarding your background. Read each question. Select the option from the dropdown menu that most accurately describes you or your experience.

1. How old are you?
 - ☐ Less than 30 Years
 - ☐ 30 to 35 Years
 - ☐ More than 35 Years
2. What is your gender?
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female
3. What is your marital status?
 - ☐ Married
 - ☐ Unmarried
4. Total time passed since latest repatriation in months?
 - ☐ 0-12 months
 - ☐ 12-24 months
5. How many years have you worked for your current company?
 - ☐ Less than 5
 - ☐ Between 5-10
 - ☐ Between 10-15
 - ☐ More than 15
6. How many years of total experience of International Assignment (in years) you have?
 - ☐ Less than 3 years
 - ☐ Between 3-6 years
 - ☐ More than 6 years

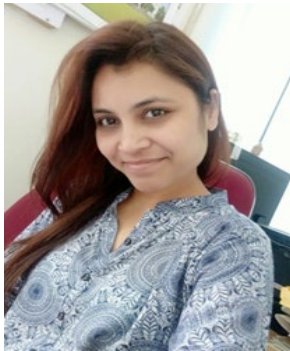
Section B: Read each statement. Click the option that most accurately describes you or your experience after returning from the International Assignment.

Repatriation Adjustment Measures (RA)			
1. The things that I value in life are very similar to the things that my organisation values	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
2. My personal values match my organisation's values and culture	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
3. My organisation's values and culture provide a good fit with the things that I value in life	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
4. My organisation encourages and rewards loyalty	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
5. My organisation makes promotions based mostly on individual performance	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree

Repatriation Adjustment Measures (RA)			
Perceived Organisational Support (POS)			
6. My organisation cares about my opinions	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
7. My organisation really cares about my well-being	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
8. My organisation strongly considers my goals and values	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
9. Help is available from my organisation when I have a problem	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
10. My organisation would forgive an honest mistake on my part	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
11. My organisation shows concerns for me	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
12. My organisation is willing to help me if I need a special favour.	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
13. If given the opportunity, my organisation would not take advantage of me.	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
Perceived Co-worker Support (PCS)			
14. My co-workers really care about me	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
15. I feel close to my co-workers	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
16. My co-workers take personal interest in me	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
17. I feel appreciated by my co-workers	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
18. My co-workers are friendly with me	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
19. My co-workers would fill in while I am absent	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
20. My co-workers are helpful in getting job done	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
21. My co-workers give useful advice on job problems	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
Repatriate knowledge transfer (KT)			
22. I frequently share my knowledge by making helpful suggestions that benefit the knowledge recipient.	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
23. I keep others in the work group informed of emerging developments that may increase their work effectiveness.	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
24. I actively seek helpful information to share with the group	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
25. I share information that I have when it can be beneficial to others in the work group.	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
26. I readily share my expertise to help resolve work group problems	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
27. I willingly aid others in the group whose work efforts could benefit from my expertise.	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree
28. I offer innovative ideas in my area of expertise that can benefit the group's work.	Strongly Disagree	1---2---3---4---5---6---7	Strongly Agree

Repatriation Adjustment Measures (RA)			
29. I readily pass along information that may be helpful to the work of the group.	Strongly Disagree	1----2----3----4----5----6----7	Strongly Agree
30. I make an effort to transfer the acquired knowledge in the home organisation	Strongly Disagree	1----2----3----4----5----6----7	Strongly Agree

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