

# Factors Related to the Adjustment of Japanese Expatriate Managers in Pakistan

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## 1 INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

A significant challenge underlying geographic expansion of multinational corporation (MNCs) is the greater need for coordination and control toward the achievement of an efficient and integrated organization (Bartlett and Ghoshal 1991). And expatriation, or the assignment of home-country managers to overseas subsidiary locations is a crucial element in multinational corporation's (MNCs) strategy is to obtain and maintain this integration (Boyacigiller 1991). A potential advantage of expatriation is the organizational learning that is facilitated by the expatriate's experiences overseas (Boyacigiller 1991), expatriation is therefore a tool by which organizations can gather and maintain a resident base of information about the complexities of international management. Some organizations however remain too detached from the local influences to glean this knowledge (Hendry and Perkins 2001). The enormous investment involved in this type of strategy challenges the organization to select, retain and successfully repatriate the appropriate individual through sound human resource management policy (Bonache and Brewster 2001). Therefore, factors contributing to the successful expatriate experience are of significant

interest to MNCs. In view of the strategic developmental importance of such assignments, researchers and organizations alike are increasingly concerned with ensuring expatriate success. Although the Asian region is of great importance to international operations and is recording the highest rate of expatriate assignments, yet research on expatriation to date has focused largely on expatriates posted to and from North American and European countries. Pakistan is of particular strategic importance to many organizations (including those of Japan) that are relocating, and/or expanding their Asian operations.

An inevitable consequence of the increasing globalization of business is deployment of managers to affiliates and subsidiaries in all corners of the world (Brewster and Scullion 1997). Finding the right people for these assignments and ensuring that they remain in the host country for the duration of their assignments, however is a challenging task. The reason being, expatriates working in a foreign environment with very different political, socio-cultural, and economic conditions often face both job-related and personal problems (Birdseye and Hills 1995). If ignored, these problems result in stress and dissatisfaction inside and outside of an

expatriate's professional life and may lead to employee turnover. Indeed, failure rates among expatriates (those who return prematurely), can reach staggering proportions and be quite costly not only to the companies which transfer the employee and his/her family abroad but also to the expatriates themselves.

Optimizing the performance of expatriate employees may be defined as sending an employee to a host country operation capable of achieving the best results for the expatriate, the organization and the host country in terms of adaptability to political, business, cultural and social sensitivity. Achieving such adaptability and sensitivity involves significant attention being given to careful selection of expatriates for the culture in which they will be employed, coupled with ongoing support by their organizations. These needs are greater in instances of large gaps between home and host nation cultures (Hofstede 1980; Hofstede & Bond 1988)

## 2 BRIEF INFORMATION OF PAKISTAN AND ITS CULTURE

### 2.1 Facts and Statistics

- **Location:** Southern Asia, bordering Afghanistan 2,430 km, China 523 km, India 2,912 km, Iran 909 km
- **Capital:** Islamabad
- **Population:** 159,196,336 (July 2004 est.)
- **Ethnic Make-up:** Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashtun (Pathan), Baloch, Muhajir (immigrants from India at the time of partition and their descendants)
- **Religions:** Muslim 97% (Sunni 77%, Shi'a 20%), Christian, Hindu, and other 3%

### 2.2 Languages in Pakistan

- Urdu is the national language of Pakistan, although English is generally used as the official language. English is the lingua franca of the Pakistani elite and most of the government ministries.
- Urdu is closely related to Hindi but is written in an extended Arabic script rather than in Devanagari. Urdu also has more links with Arabic and Persian than Hindi.

- Many other languages are spoken in Pakistan, including Punjabi, Siraiki, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi, Hindko, Brahvi, Burushaski, Balti, Khawar, Gujrati and other languages with small number of speakers.

### 2.3 Pakistani Society & Culture

#### a) Islam

- Islam is the religion of the majority of Pakistanis that governs their personal, political, economic and social lives. Cultural hybridization has however influenced some of the norms and values that are contrary to what Islam preaches.
- Among certain obligations for Muslims are to pray five times a day- at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and evening.
- During the holy month of Ramadan, all Muslims must fast from dawn to dusk during which eating, drinking, smoking etc. are not allowed. During this month local and multinational companies reduce the working hours from eight to six hours per day.

#### b) The Family

- Extended family is the basis of the social structure and individual identity.
- It includes the nuclear family, immediate relatives, distant relatives, tribe members, friends, and neighbors.
- Loyalty to the family comes before other social relationships, even business.
- Nepotism is viewed positively, since it guarantees hiring people who can be trusted, which is crucial in a country where working with people one knows and trusts is of primary importance.
- The family is more private than in many other cultures.
- Female relatives are protected from outside influences. It is considered inappropriate to ask questions about a Pakistani's wife or other female relatives.
- Families are quite large by Western standards, often having up to 6 children.

## c) Hierarchical Society

- Pakistan is a hierarchical society.
- People are respected because of their age and position.
- Older people are viewed as wise and are paid respect. In a social situation, they are served first. Elders are introduced first, are provided with the choicest cuts of meat, and in general, are treated much like royalty.
- Pakistanis expect the most senior person, by age or position, to make decisions that are in the best interest of the group.
- Titles are very important and denote respect. It is expected that people while addressing others will use their official title and their surname unless one has permitted others to use his first name.

## 3 CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS

The cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates has been extensively studied by numerous academicians. The best known theoretical model of international adjustment has been developed by Black (1991). In this framework, adjustment has been divided into three facets: adjustment to work, adjustment to interact with host nationals, and adjustment to the general environment. Furthermore, it has been reported that adjustment problems related to work responsibilities commonly appear in connections such as manager-subordinate interaction, functioning of organizations, communication, and task environment (Brewster, C. & Larsen, H. 1992). Adjustment problems related to the general living environment typically include issues concerning housing, food, shopping, banking, entertainment, legal regulation and health care (McEvoy and Parker, 1995). These classifications have been applied in the present study. The model proposed by Black(1991) also specifies different antecedent variables of adjustment and classifies them into four major groups: individual, work, organization and non-work variables. However, such antecedents are not included in the present study and thus deserve no further discussion here.

Thus far, research on expatriation has focused primarily on financial losses to organizations when expatriates

return prematurely from foreign assignments or resign from organizations shortly after returning to the home country (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Black, et al., 1991; Brewster & Larsen, 1992). However, this limited definition of expatriate failure as initially identified in the literature (Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991; Nicholson et al., 1990; Tung, 1982) takes insufficient account of the expatriates who remain in the foreign posting and continue with the organization but have nonetheless failed in adapting to the host country culture. It is this lack of cultural sensitivity, as a result of being poorly selected, and supported, which leads to failure to adapt on business and social levels. The problem of significance is not only the financial costs which organizations incur in the short-term if expatriates return prematurely or depart from their organization, but also their technical skills, expertise and experience to competitors (for an analysis of those at risk of premature departure, see Garonzik, Brockner & Siegel, 2000).

The growing body of literature recognizes the need to facilitate expatriate experiences, particularly through the enhanced cross cultural adjustment of the expatriate and his or her family (Black and Stephens, 1989). While cross-cultural issues are unique to the international setting, Naumann (1993) points out that other attitudinal dimensions (e.g. job satisfaction and organizational commitment) have been more prevalent in the domestic organizational behavior literature, particularly as predictors of turnover and hence organizational effectiveness. Therefore, identifying factors which enhance satisfaction could potentially reduce the number of expatriate failures, or premature returns, from overseas assignments. Naumann further notes that “there appears to be no reason that satisfaction’s relationship to turnover should be weaker in the international context”. A logical step, then, in extending our research in organizational behavior to the international arena would be to pay close attention to expatriate job satisfaction. Of particular interest are those factors which predict job satisfaction among expatriate managers. In other words, assignees must be motivated to stay abroad long enough to make the assignment worthwhile (Fontaine, 1997). Expatriate satisfaction may be attributed to a variety of factors,

many of which have been found to affect other expatriate success outcomes, such as organizational commitment (c.f. Banai and Reisel, 1993) and expatriate and repatriate cross-cultural adjustment (c.f. Black, 1994). Determinants may include skills and abilities, behavioral patterns, family issues (Black and Gregersen, 1991), organizational training efforts (Black, J., 1992; Earley, 1987), financial inducements (Gregersen, 1992), mentoring programs (Feldman and Tompson, 1993), the host culture (Black and Stephens, 1989; Mendenhall, M. & Oddou, 1987), housing conditions (Black, 1994), and the stability of the political environment (Boyacigiller, 1991).

## 4 FOCUS OF THIS RESEARCH

This research examines the need for careful selection and in-post support of expatriates in Pakistan and argues that expatriates should be (a) those who possess realistic pre-departure expectations, and cultural awareness and knowledge, and (b) those are provided with in-post support, including work-related skill development, mentoring, and consultative groups. Moreover, this research broadens the focus from a literature that is largely about Japanese in North American and European organizations. As yet, little research has been conducted examining the selection and/or support of expatriates in Japanese organizations operating in Asia. This paper tries to fill in this gap in our knowledge.

Japanese organizations recognize the worth of Pakistan however very little attention has been given to recognizing the cultural and social knowledge required to do business effectively in this expanding market (Fish & Wood, 1994). Such attention is obviously required in view of the large cultural "distance" between Pakistan and Japan. As Pakistan is a major target market for Japanese organizations, the HR departments of these organizations should be more careful in the development of the criteria for the selection of the expatriates to enter such a promising market and ensure that the expatriates are not doing irreparable damage to future relations between the two nations. In order to examine the issues of selection and support, this article begins by reviewing the literature on expatriate selection and in-post support, especially in relation to Pakistan and

Japan. The selection and in-post support policies and practices are explored by studying Japanese organizations operating in Pakistan. The author has based his analysis and has identified implications for practice and theory on the interviews with expatriate managers in Japanese organizations.

## 5 EXPATRIATE SELECTION AND IN-POST SUPPORT

The intensification of the pace of internationalization suggests that in order to survive, most organizations must become internationally focused, this has enhanced the need to meet the demands of correct selection and support of expatriates to achieve high cross-cultural performance is affecting a large number of organizations (Goldsmith, 1996; Piore & Sable, 1994). Literature has consistently highlighted the expatriates inherent problems and conflict because of lack of cross-cultural skills (Seligman, S. 1999) and in some cases this has been determined by perceptions of local employees about the expatriates (Selmer, J. & Ling, E. 1999). Literature has highlighted the need for acculturation and adaptation (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999), the need to make sense of, and understand other cultures (Osland & Bird, 2000; Osland, DeFranco & Osland, 1999) and the need to adapt managerial styles via intercultural adaptation (Osland, Snyder & Osland, 1998). The need to develop cross-cultural skills in expatriates is even greater where the gap between home and host nation cultures is very wide, or indeed as Kaye & Taylor (1997) mention about Pakistan, where the culture shock experienced is marked.

### 5.1 Selection

The question which organizations must address when recruiting for international subsidiaries is: What are the advantages of selecting an expatriate manager, known as a parent country national (PCN) over a host country national (HCN)? PCNs generally have disadvantages in not knowing local labor markets, ignorance of the local education system, language and cultural problems and unfamiliarity with techniques and practices used in other countries (Scullion, 1992). They do, however, have the benefits of familiarity with corporate culture (Kobrin, 1998), the possibility of personal development through



a series of expatriate postings. They are more likely than HCNs to be able to train local employees in understanding corporate systems and the introduction of technology (Phatak, 1989). It is also likely that PCNs have stronger informal linkages back to decision-makers in the parent company. For these reasons, and despite the drawbacks, many organizations choose to send their home country employees to foreign subsidiaries rather than train local employees for these managerial positions even though this may be their long-term policy. In many organizations, there is an increasing tendency to employ third country nationals (TCNs) for international assignment, as they are often highly skilled, multilingual and have significant experience in foreign assignments (Brook, 1988).

In the case of organizations choosing to send PCNs on foreign assignment, the literature identifies a number of factors that need to be taken into consideration to predict expatriate success. These factors include technical competence on the job, personality traits, environment variables, and family situation (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). In addition, Phatak (1989) and Tung (1981) highlighted the importance of selecting expatriates who exhibit tolerance toward differences in race, creed, culture, customs and values, which can be viewed as expressing cultural empathy. High motivation is also identified as a factor predicting the success of the expatriate on foreign assignment (Heller, 1986). A final criterion is that of behavior, being defined as non-judgmental, showing tolerance for ambiguity and display of respect. Scales have been developed to assess the fitness of the person selected for the organization and the host country culture (Chatman, 1989).

Recent literature coming from the Asian region has highlighted the necessity to understand the importance of the cultural adaptability skills of the expatriates themselves. Such literature has examined the adjustment of expatriates and their cross-cultural skills (see Selmer, 1992; Selmer & Ling, 1999), in no small part related to expatriates being selected on the basis of their existing knowledge of the host nation's language and cultural differences.

The development over the last few years regarding the introduction of competency frameworks into selection policies has added an additional dimension to the selection of expatriate managers. It is perhaps the development of competency framework lists that has generated the superhuman image of the international manager largely due to the lack of agreement about competencies that are considered important, or through a general lack of communicating externally those competencies that are utilized internally. Whitley, R. (1992) is in no doubt that there are generic management competency dimensions, which he calls "universal" competencies, as does Dulewicz (1989) who calls them "supra" competencies. Tung's research indicated that a universal competence of "communicative ability" crossed all job types in the contingency approach. Recent research substantiates the idea that there are a limited number of key variables. For example, a study conducted by Whitley, R. (1993) suggests that international managers require three "universal competencies" (leadership, communication and adaptability): The recent exposition of the foreign assignment selection test (FAST) (Fuchsberg, 1994) outlines six dimensions of success (cultural flexibility, willingness to communicate, ability to develop social relations, perceptual abilities, conflict-resolution style, and leadership style).

In the international environment, the difficulty of specifying competencies for each job, and for each geographical region makes it impossible not to rely on core competencies in the selection of international managers. As with personality variables, the multitude of existing competencies are characterized by minor semantic differences of a much smaller number of core competencies that would deliver successful behavior in an international environment over and above those that would normally be included in organizationally specific selection decisions.

Another important aspect of correctly identifying an expatriate who has the potential to succeed in a foreign posting is carefully analyzing the expatriate's spouse and family. Tung (1982) identified four major areas of expatriate failure, two of which involved the attitudes of the expatriate's family towards the assignment. These include: the spouse's inability to adjust; the employee's

inability to adjust; the employee's personal or emotional immaturity; and other family problems.

It has been argued that selection should be based on personality-based criteria for evaluating the suitability of candidates for expatriate postings (Jordan & Cartwright, 1998, 89) and indeed various studies have highlighted tests that can be undertaken to assess an employee's (and their family's) suitability for a foreign assignment, such as psychological testing, interviewing, overseas assignment inventory profile and cross-cultural adaptability profile (Kelley & Meyers, 1987)

It has also been argued that the cross-cultural training for expatriates may be beneficial but only in cases where expatriates themselves have been pre-disposed to undertaking a posting in the first instance (Caliguiri, 2000) or possess certain factors which make them willing (Borstof 1997). Furthermore, the selection process should also involve a psychological contract with the expatriate which clearly articulates the needs and expectations (Lewis, 1997, 279). It is also evident from the literature that selection should include consideration of the previous experience in expatriation of potential candidates as well as cultural and language knowledge (Shaffer, Harrison & Gilley, 1999). Last but not least career motivation of the expatriate is part of the equation (Fish & Wood, 1997)

## 5.2 Understanding Pakistani Culture

Understanding relationships from the Pakistani perspective (and hence being effective as an expatriate operating in Pakistanis-based societies) has relied upon knowledge of the synthesis of culturalist and institutionalist explanations "constituted by combinations of models from formal market and hierarchy perspectives and informal network perspectives". Studies of Pakistan have also focused on family network (traditional), friendship, and other particularistic ties (institutional) to gain an understanding of Pakistani business.

## 5.3 In-post Support

Whilst literature has acknowledged that in addition

to being carefully selected for their cross-cultural skills, expatriates require on-going assistance in the form of in-post support; little attention has been given to the form this support should take. Factors which are considered in the literature include, regular up-dates from the home country organization, information about performance expectations, medical and psychological assistance (Harris, 1989), and counseling (De Cieri, et al., 1991). Moreover, the importance of on-going support to spouse and family has also been cited (De Cieri et al., 1991; Fontaine, 1997). To this end, the importance of providing information on housing, health, schooling, language and communication training has been acknowledged (Nicholson et al., 1990).

Another neglected area of in-post support that is highlighted in the literature is repatriation. Poor repatriation can not only mean the loss of high quality expatriates from organizations (Halcrow, 1999), but can also result in employee reluctance to accept overseas positions (Allen & Alvarez, 1999, 29). The tensions associated with such circumstances may also hinder the effectiveness of their expatriate assignment. Despite Harris's (1986, 108), assertion that the "third stage (following selection and training), on-site support is the least understood but perhaps the most important part of the process" and it remains a neglected aspect of the assistance provided to expatriates by their organizations.

In-post support needs to incorporate elements of on-site socialization of the expatriate manager (Katz & Seifer, 1996, 42), and ideally this should follow an extensive cross-cultural training process. It is argued that support systems should be established and coordinated between repatriated staff, senior expatriated staff and new expatriates, and that this network should provide information on both cultural topics of the host nation, as well as, organizational information about domestic operations while the manager is overseas (Katz & Seifer, 1996, 42). Borstof et al. (1997) conclude that support should be a process from the beginning to the end of expatriation and include support regarding career

planning, selection, adequate lead-time, training, mentor, compensation, family assistance, and repatriation. Given the importance of this issue, there are grounds for suggesting that lack of in-post support is a major problem area for Japanese expatriates in Pakistan, and this, along with selection, is very much in need of the development of a best practice model for HR departments.

## 6 METHODOLOGY

The information on which this study is based was obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted with expatriate managers in Karachi, Pakistan in summer, 2006. Qualitative interviews were conducted with the expatriates with the aim of hearing in detail why their companies selected them for their international assignment, and the in-post support offered by their organizations.

### 6.1 Procedure

From databases of Japanese organizations operating in Pakistan maintained by the Foreign Chamber of Commerce Karachi, Pakistan and the Japanese Consulate In Karachi, Pakistan, 14 organizations were selected for the study. These Organizations were selected on the basis of two criteria: one they had 500 or more employees; and two they had operations in Pakistan for at least five years. These criteria were used because of the following reasons. First, it was felt that, given their size and financial resources, large employers would be more likely to have developed some form of cross-cultural and expatriate training program. Second, it was reasoned that organizations which have had operations in Pakistan for at least five years would be more likely, (than more recent investors) to have developed a host nation profile and be acquainted with the cultural demands of operating within Pakistan. The Organizations were also chosen across industries to avoid the possibility of industry-specific practices obscuring the findings.

Of the 14 organizations that met the criteria, 12 organizations agreed to participate in the research. A semi-structured interview questionnaire was

designed with a targeted interview of one hour duration. In practice, interviews were between forty minutes and two hours in duration. The interview notes were transcribed and, where necessary, returned to the interviewees for clarification and further comment. At the interviewees' request, interviews were not audio-recorded. At all stages throughout the process, expatriates were assured that only that information would be sought which they would want to disclose voluntarily. Moreover, they were assured that their names, their employees' names, and the names of their organizations would not appear on any data collected, and would be kept strictly confidential.

### 6.2 Sample

The sample of 12 Japanese organizations and expatriates were drawn from various industries operating on a joint venture or direct foreign investment basis with the condition that senior management of the organizations must be non-Pakistani. The ethnic background of the participants was Japanese. The majority of respondents were male, although efforts were made by the researcher to seek interviews with fairly equal numbers of males and females by requesting to interview female managers. For biodata of the expatriates interviewed and surveyed, see Table 1. For confidentiality of participants, pseudonyms for organizations are used throughout. The table highlights the gender of the respondents, the respondents' industry placing, years of experience in Pakistan and elsewhere. Their language proficiency (in addition to Japanese), as well as their culture training/education in Pakistan is also noted. The majority of the respondents held the position of CEO or Senior Manager in the Pakistan operation. Eight of the twelve respondents were married and the rest were single. The ages of the respondents ranged from 25 to 45 with the average age being 33. Expatriates were selected by the organizations contacted. As noted the majority of the interviewees held the most senior positions in the host nation operation and hence were the first point of contact in the organizations.

**Table 1: Biodata of Expatriates**

Respondent Code	Years in Pakistan	Years as expatriate elsewhere	Other Languages (other than Japanese)	Pakistanis culture Education/familiarity with Pakistani language
1 Bac-X-JM	5	2	English/Chinese	Yes
2 Elec-X-JM	1	1	English Chinese	No
3 Elec-X-JM	3		English	Yes
4 Man-X-JM	3	2	English	Yes
5 Educ-X-JM	5	3	English / Arabic	Yes
6 Cat-X-JF	2		English	No
7 Educ-X-JM	4		English	Yes
8 Trans-X-JM	5	2	English/Spanish	Yes
9 Man-X-JM	2		English	Yes
10 Educ-X-JF	1	1	English	Yes
11 Man-X-JM	1	1	English	No
12 Man-X-JM	6		English	Yes

**Respondent Codes:**

Industry type: Bac = building and construction industry; Elec = electronic and components industry; Trans = transportation industry; man = manufacturing industry; Cat = clothing and textiles industry; Educ = education and training industry;

**Nationality:** J = Japanese national

**Gender:** M = Male; F = Female

**6.3 Measurement**

In the interviews, expatriates were asked to state the reasons for their selection, the in-post support received by them and other areas in which there was a need for

greater assistance. The questions were developed on the basis of areas of need identified in the literature and questions were specifically adapted to the cultural and business practices of Pakistan.

**7 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

One of the key findings of this study was that organizations still give very little attention to in-post support. They are however making a greater effort to choose expatriates who have language and cross-cultural knowledge skills, and have, in many cases, completed other foreign postings. This suggests that organizations are still not prepared to invest monetary and time resources in preparing and/or supporting their expatriates, but at least they acknowledge that the demands of operating in a foreign environment are quite different from that of the home environment. They recognize that there is a need to choose people who already possess some of the cultural and language skills, which makes them more successful than managers who do not have these skills.

**7.1 Selection**

As noted earlier, when filling expatriate positions, organizations seem to be giving much more attention to the need to select employees who already have some knowledge of the country in which they will live and work. Moreover, it is consistent with the literature that argues that in addition to technical competence, those expatriates should be chosen who exhibit personality traits which make them more suitable for expatriate posting. Many of the expatriates interviewed in this group have had some cultural and social training in Pakistan. Certainly this is likely to suggest that they will exhibit greater tolerance to the values of this society and make them a better choice for posting to Pakistan than expatriates without prior experience of this country. As one interviewee noted, "it is hard to make generalizations." But, I have worked in Hong Kong then in the US. My company appreciated my industry experience, language skills and customer knowledge base. I knew something about the culture I was operating in and perhaps this makes me a more suitable applicant than someone who does not have this knowledge (of the culture)." (1Bac-X-JM).



Or as another interviewee emphatically claimed: “It was definitely because of my good understanding of Pakistani Language Urdu and culture and being capable of relating to clients.” (9Man-X-JM).

Moreover, interviewees consistently argued that their previous experience, where they had some, was a key factor in their being selected for their current assignment in Pakistan. It was also stressed as an argument for these individuals being more motivated to succeed in this environment (Heller, 1986). As one interviewee remarked: “I worked in Taiwan. It showed I could adapt. Companies do not want to invest in people who will not stay. It needs to be more than just a career choice; lifestyle also needs to be considered. People need to be chosen who are prepared to give up aspects of lifestyles they have in the West to further their careers”. (2Elec-X-JM).

And as another argued: “The fact that I had lived and worked in Pakistan...I was available, I was single and I had the skills they required”. (10Educ-X-JF).

Despite the evidence that organizations are giving undiminished attention to expatriate selection there is a need for greater cultural training of expatriates. An expatriate argued that he would like his own organization to have been more attentive in selecting someone with Pakistan (or Pakistani culture) experience. As he argued; “They (management) need to consider who to select. Quality local staff and quality expatriate staff who have worked with the Pakistanis before and understand such things as attitudes to time management and “rubber” time. Pakistanis are reactive, not proactive... They have different attitudes... This can be difficult for someone without Pakistani knowledge (culture) to understand” (3Elec-X-JM).

Further, as another expatriate highlighted: “Correct selection is vital. We need to ask, Do the people really want to be in Pakistan? Are they adding value?...Foreign managers need to be carefully selected with a mind to their cultural adaptability”. (8Trans-X-JM).

## 7.2 In-post Support

Interviewees were questioned about whether they were provided with any in-post support, and if so, what it entailed. They were also asked whether they believed their organizations could have provided more in-post support and if so, how? Despite in-post support being perhaps the most important part of the adjustment process, less than half of the expatriates examined in this study reported that they received such support. Six of the interviewees said they had received some in-post support, which was, in all cases, the appointment of a mentor from within an organization on an informal basis. This mentoring role operated on a social level. As one expatriate noted: “The people here already had contacts...This is highly informal. I already had a lot of information, but certainly could have used more”. (1Bac-X-JM).

On a business level, as noted by another expatriate: “The mentor function is provided informally - it is someone to ask questions, provide advice, oversee the expatriates. This serves as a transition process - they provide a good introduction to Pakistan.” (4Man-X-JM).

Where support exists, it tends to be limited to information about the home country organization and performance expectations as well as practical assistance in the form of information about medical and shopping facilities. No expatriate had been provided with family training in language and communication skills, which must be viewed as essential to a successful expatriate posting.

Almost all interviewees argued that some form of in-post support, if only on an informal basis, is warranted. Seventy percent of the expatriates agreed that in-post support is a necessity for individuals to adapt on a social level and to assist them in being culturally sensitive in social and business settings, and hence ensuring that expatriate failure is much less likely to occur. Interviewees were also questioned about whether they believe that their organizations could have provided them with more in the way of in-post support. To this, one expatriate responded: “Perhaps there should be more access to formalized channels. There is a lot of

informal support amongst expatriate wives, but that makes it difficult for an expatriate female worker as women are excluded. Business-wise it is a fairly close network - in some ways this is easier than being at home...But no, the [home] company has not really provided it.” (4Man-X-JM).

Moreover, one expatriate suggested that: ”I would have liked better communication and support from headquarters. I felt isolated initially because of time differences, lack of e-mail and the remote nature of the factory.” (11Man-X-JM).

Another expatriate suggested “There is real need for a support hotline in HQ. A lonely planet guide for Pakistan might have helped...There is a very gross assumption that as an expatriate you should know how to do everything.” (3Elec-X-JM).

### 7.3 Other Issues Mentioned by Expatriates

Expatriates were also given an opportunity to respond to an open-ended question regarding whether there were any other issues associated with their expatriate experience, their selection and their support that they would like to discuss. They were also asked whether there were any other areas in which their organization could have provided support that would have made their expatriate experience more positive when viewed from their own perspective, that of the organization, and the host country. Expatriates responded that there were many social and business issues that were not addressed by their organizations, and that there was a desperate need for organizations to recognize the importance of cultural understanding to ensure expatriate success at individual, organizational, and country levels. On a social level, the most common theme was that there was insufficient support for families regarding their adjustment needs. As one expatriate argued:”there needs to be advice provided on spouse and family adjustment. Wives have the frustration of living in a new environment and not being able to work and speak the language. It requires a very outgoing nature. So, there are problems for both married and single and these adjustment issues are still not being addressed by organizations in terms of

support” (1Bac-X-EM).

On a business level, expatriates argued that they had arrived in Pakistan insufficiently prepared about the culture in terms of issues like, corruption, and handling conflict. One expatriate suggested that: ”there is too much discussion (in Pakistan) without resolution. Pakistan has very different business practices. Leadership in the home country do not understand what it is like in Pakistan. People fail because the company denies there are problems. I simply did not have this knowledge before being posted to Pakistan. (4Man-X-JM).

With reference to their own difficulties they believed that organizations need to do more to prepare them for their foreign assignment. Expatriates suggested that there was a greater need for training in cultural practices: “It is very difficult and different in a country like this. I was totally unprepared and for the first two years I did not venture outside my hotel. (8Trans-X-JM).

It was also suggested that organizations need to prepare expatriates more regarding how different Pakistan would be in terms of facilities and resources: “Good guide books are crucial to provide advice on food, medicine, medical help, drinking water, finding food on the streets, acceptance of weather conditions, clubs and activities. (8Trans-X-JM).

And knowing about living conditions ”the pollution complete change to the lifestyle I am enjoying in Pakistan.” (6Cat-X-JF).

From the perspective of the organization, expatriates also argued that they needed to be much more culturally prepared in order to avoid simple business faux pas that can damage home and subsidiary company relations. As one expatriate claimed: “How to deal with Pakistanis business practices? If fully immersed in Pakistani culture you would learn quickly but most expatriates do not immerse. You do need someone to hold your hand initially.” (3Elec-X-JM).

Further, it was argued by expatriates that it was essential that organizations send them to Pakistan fully prepared

for the demands, as expatriate failure not only affects organization's business dealings in Pakistan, but also has the potential of broader ramifications of damage to foreign relations. One expatriate suggested that the key to success for expatriates is to learn diplomacy (and ideally to have learned this prior to the posting!). "Not to do so can cause irreparable damage to relations...if there are culturally insensitive practices - such as frustration and bribery. People need to have institutionalized knowledge of how to do business, what are social and cultural practices and what is economically, politically and socially acceptable. The hardest thing about being in Pakistan for me is the ethics. There is the establishment of relationships to have things done through bribery. There is a fundamental difference between the Pakistan and Japan. The scarcity of the Pakistan means you need bribery to survive...but you also need to have company knowledge and ethical standards". (1Bac-X-JM).

## 8 CONCLUSION

### Implications for Practice

Current research suggests that expatriate selection is ad hoc in nature. This research suggests that organizations, are giving more attention to selection than has been noted in the literature and good results in terms of cross-cultural communication skills are the by-product of this where it occurs. It is evident, though, that expatriate preparation and cross-cultural adaptability skills need to be improved. There is a clear need for expatriates to be fully briefed prior to being sent on overseas postings, careful selection should be balanced with goal-setting, performance expectations, and awareness of socio-cultural limitations of operating from a business and social perspective in the host environment. It follows then that the more country specific is the experience of expatriate, the better. Knowledge of Pakistani culture, particularly in reference to knowledge of customs and business practices, are desirable aspects that need to be incorporated into the selection process.

Given that organizations continue to post parent company nationals overseas, the time spent on developing effective selection processes and ongoing

support would be money and time well invested, and could substantially reduce the problems associated with having expatriate managers who are emotionally and practically ill-equipped for the demands of the business and social environment of their host country operations. One possible strategy could be the sending of individuals and/or families on short visits to the country of expected posting, while such a strategy involves considerable expenditure of time and resources, the indirect benefits of such an initiative in terms of increased individual employee confidence and ability to adapt, and respect the local people and environment are probably substantial. Further, to extend such experience to the selection process would provide organizations with a committed group of individuals who can be transferred from place to place for international operations.

### Implications for Theory

As noted earlier, despite the breadth, of research into the need for more attention being given to expatriate selection, the focus has overwhelmingly been on North American and European cases. To this end, this research examining the adjustment of Japanese managers in Pakistan makes a valuable contribution to existing literature. Within the body of literature that has examined Pakistan and Asia, the focus has largely been on top-level managers experiences in work related sociological interactions, conflict resolution and general adjustment. Little attention has hitherto been given to non-work adjustment and the implications it has for work adjustment. Where it has been considered, the focus has been largely North America and Europe. Apart from research conducted by the author and mentioned briefly in other literature, no research addressing the need for in-post support for expatriates and their families from the perspective of Japanese managers could be found. This research not only broadens the existing literature. it also provides valuable insights for practice which may be generalized across the expatriation experience. This research also supports the generalizations in existing literature about Pakistan concerning the need for preparedness (and perhaps a more significant need given its greater cultural distance than previously examined nations). Despite the

convincing argument made in the literature for cultural preparedness and support for expatriates, organizations are still giving very little attention towards providing, or developing support programs. Much of the onus is on the expatriates themselves regarding finding their own areas of need and informally seek assistance.

## Implications for Future Research

This study makes two major contributions to existing literature and research. One, it examines selection of, and support of, expatriates for operations in Pakistan; this is a significant contribution given that most of existing literature focuses on North America and Europe; two, the research provides for organizations to follow in selecting and supporting their expatriates for foreign postings to ensure their cultural preparedness and improve their ability to adapt to the local

environment. At the same time, the limitation a) the research in terms of the small sample size, there is a need for further research based on a larger sample size to validate the result of this study. A larger sample could also include a wider range of cultural backgrounds for the expatriates examined. It is also suggested that further research may be undertaken to broaden this initial study to include a quantitative survey of expatriates, as well as, the expatriates' local employees. Future researches may also focus on other aspects beyond the scope of this research, which affect the ability of expatriates to adapt and be culturally sensitive. For example an important factor, which is covered elsewhere in the literature but has not been examined in the context of Pakistan is the influence of spouses and families to adjust to the foreign environment and its implications on employee performance.

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