

Expatriate Failure: An Empirical Study in Oil and Gas Sector in India.

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Abstract--This article seeks to empirically examine the influence of inadequate selection process, cross cultural training & pre-departure support on the expatriate failure. By using Quota sampling, data was collected from 115 repatriates in major oil and gas industry comprising of Government sector and private sector companies. Binary logistic regression was used for testing the Proposed Theoretical Model. Findings of this study revealed that inadequate selection and cross cultural training were a significant cause for expatriate failure, while inadequate pre departure support was not. This study is highly beneficial for employees, corporate practitioners, academicians and researchers for guidelines and policies implementations of expatriation management practices.

Keywords--Expatriation, Expatriate failure, Expatriate Selection, Cross cultural Training, Pre-departure Support.

I. INTRODUCTION

Oil and Gas sector is one of the biggest commercial sector in the world in terms of revenues, using millions of workers across the globe and contributing to the global GDP. The oil and gas sector is among the eight core industries in India and plays a major role in influencing decision making for all the other important sections of the economy. Indian oil & gas industry is mainly divided into upstream (includes exploration & production) and downstream (includes refining & marketing and distribution) segments. The country's oil and gas sector has contributed significantly to the GDP, and the sector is expected to become increasingly critical for India's economic development, since it fuels the growth of other sectors.

The crude oil producing countries are scattered throughout the globe with major crude producing countries concentrate in Middle East Asia, American Sub Continent and Asia Pacific Region, the refining hubs lie in the USA, Western Europe, and Asia Pacific. This necessitates large-scale logistics and supply chain network, involving movement of goods, products, technology, and people across international borders making Oil and Gas sector a true gigantic international industry requiring mass flow of manpower. This gigantic and truly global nature of Oil and Gas Sector necessitates Indian Oil & Gas industry to allow flow of human talent across international boundary lines, often requiring short-term, medium term, and long term deputation of people in foreign, and sometimes remote locations. Hence, expatriate management, involving relocation to foreign land, and repatriation - rehabilitation back home after return of people is critical to the smooth functioning of operations in Oil & Gas sector. While it is easy to

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transfer goods, products and technology across international borders, deputing people in other countries with different culture as compared to the home country poses a human resource challenge (Cascio, 1995).

Thus for successful international assignments, HR Department has to create a system that ensures effective expatriation. According to I.M. Wang (2008) and Maley & Moeller (2017), assignments aimed at working overseas for a specific amount of time is termed as expatriation. Banerjee and Gaur (2012) and Andresen et al (2014) see an expatriate as an employee of a parent company transferred to its overseas branch to work for a particular amount of time (from several months to several years). McNulty (2015) with the similar views described expatriates as assignees working across the variety of assignment and involving international relocation with varied durations (long-term, short-term, and extended business travel assignments). Most of the organizations perceive expatriation as an attractive mode for accumulating foreign markets. The nature of the task to be accomplished and the purpose for which the employees are sent for the international assignments varies across different companies and is diverse in nature (Belderbos and Heijltjes 2005, Malinowski, Paik and Segaud 2002).

In spite of several advantages, there are plethora of evidences of expatriate failures too (Tung 1982 cited in Hill, 2005). There are many research conclusions which establish that in some cases expatriate returns to the home country or resigns from the job before the international assignment is finished whereby causing expatriate failure (Barbian, 2002 cited by Hill, 2005). Bruning and McCaughey (2005), Wild & Wild (2012) and Cullen & Parboteeah (2010) define expatriate failure as “an expatriate’s premature return from the international assignment”. The failure rate for expatriates in a developed country are between 25 and 40 percent, whilst the failure rate for expatriates in still developing countries are around 70 percent. The costs associated with expatriate failure are high and are dependent on the work location. The estimated direct costs of premature return of expatriates are between \$250.00 and \$1 million. The premature return of expatriates also yields indirect costs like missed opportunities of market development and revenues abroad (Farner & Luthans, 2002). Expatriate failure increases the cost for the home country company in form of additional recruitment cost, relocation expenses, premium compensation, repatriation and replacement costs, and the cost of poor job performance. Expatriates that choose to return home before the assignment is finished might face consequences as lost self-esteem and self-confidence. The expatriates’ consequences lead to more problems for the parent company, like reduced productivity and reluctance among other employees to accept international assignments (Medich, 1995). Several researchers have found varying reasons for expatriate failure from poor expatriate selection (Tung, 1982) to cross cultural adjustment, poor support pre and during assignment

In the present study one of the construct taken is selection practices. Expatriate selection procedures are very different from domestic selection procedures because of the crucial factor of cultural difference. According to Chew (2004) and Ronen (1989), expatriates possessing good interpersonal skills, language skills, low ethnocentrism tendencies and high empathy for other cultures are more likely to adjust to foreign cultures and subsequently less probable to fail. Hodgetts and Luthans (2003) identified adaptability to cultural change, independence and self-reliance, physical and emotional health, age, experience & education, technical competence, language training, motivation for a foreign assignment and spouses and dependents or work-family issues leadership

ability as the major criteria for expatriate selection. Following the same line Czinkota et al. (2005) refers to cross-cultural adaptability, language skills, knowledge of the foreign country and previous overseas experiences as some of the crucial factors in determining the ability of expatriates to succeed in an international assignment.

Other constructs taken in the study are Cross-cultural training and Pre departure support given to the expatriates. Once an employee has been selected for an expatriate position, the next step is the pre-departure training. Tung (1982), defined cross-cultural training (CCT) as any intervention intended to increase an individual's ability to adjust and work in a foreign environment. Parkinson & Morley (2006) and Briscoe & Schuler (2004) in their study state that Cross-cultural training increases the probability of success of international assignments. Cross cultural training aids for the betterment of cross cultural adjustments by reducing the uncertainties that prevail in a new situation (Black & Mendenhall 1990). Intercultural preparations enable the expatriates to overcome cultural shocks more easily and help the expatriates to create more realistic expectations in a different cultural surrounding (Fink, Meierewert & Rohr, 2005).

Research strongly suggests that pre-departure support for expatriates is also crucial for the success of the international assignment. Support activities to expatriates can be manifold. Social mentor in the host country (MacLennan 1995, Mezas & Scandura 2005, Crocitto, Sullivan & Carraher 2005), peer support (Scullion & Collings 2007, Shen & Kram 2011, Dowling & Welch 2004), familiarizing spouses with the norms and culture of the host country (Black and Gregerson 1991, Copeland and Norell 2002, Mohr and Klien 2004, Smart 2011), employment assistance for trailing spouses (Cherry 2010, Gupta et al. 2012, McNulty 2012), education for children (Bhatti, Battour and Ismail 2013, Kraimer et al, 2001, Mahajann and De Silva, 2012) are found to be the significant pre-departure support that contribute to the successful adjustment of an expatriate in the foreign country.

Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

There is an increasing trend of employees send abroad for international assignments (Aycan and Kanungo 1997). Successful international assignments upsurges the organizations' profits as well as its international reputation (Lee, 2005). The time period of cross border assignments of employees ranges from 5 months to 6 yrs (Aycan and Kanungo 1997). Expatriation is the most expensive staffing strategy for multinational organizations, but still it is a viable method for increasing the organizations' understanding of international operations.

Since, the cost of expatriates is high (Price Water House Coopers 2006, as cited in Dowling et al 2008, p.81, others), a key issue in international staffing literature is expatriate failure and its cost. Utilization of poor expatriate selection methods are one reason to expatriate failure (Chen & Tye, 2005). Another reason to the high rate of expatriate failure could be inappropriate expatriate training and development programs (Farner & Luthans, 2002). According to Medich (1995) the most frequent reason for expatriate failure is the expatriate's and/or spouse's inability to adjust to the foreign environment. The inability to handle relations with people from other cultures and poor personal adjustment to the new environment is found to be the most prominent reasons leading to premature return of expatriates.

The discussion above suggests that ineffective expatriate management can lead to expatriate failure. Although there is abundant literature that postulate on the reasons that cause expatriate failure globally across industries, there is a shortage of literature on the robustness of the causal factors of Expatriate failure in oil & gas sector in India. Hence, oil & gas sector has been selected to study the influence of inadequate selection process, cross cultural training & pre-departure support on the expatriate failure. The same has been depicted symmetrically in Figure 1.

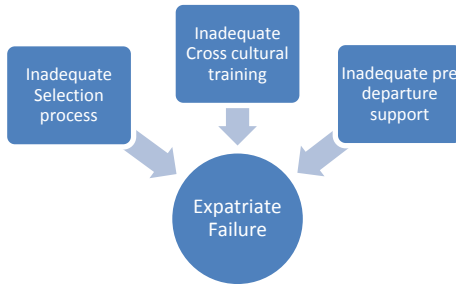


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Source: The author.

This article aims to determine the association between Expatriate failure and the three independent variables derived through rigorous literature review; namely inadequate selection process, Inadequate Cross Cultural Training and Inadequate pre-departure arrangements in the context of oil & gas sector in India and in doing so, to fill the gap in extant literature. To achieve this objective, links between expatriate failure and the three independent variables (selection process, Inadequate Cross Cultural Training and Inadequate pre-departure arrangements) have been analyzed while observing the overall effect of these variables on overall expatriate failure. It is therefore proposed:

Hypothesis-1: Inadequate selection process, Cross Cultural Training and pre-departure arrangements lead to failure of an expatriate

H1a: Inadequate selection process leads to failure of an expatriate

H1b: Inadequate Cross Cultural Training leads to failure of an expatriate

H1c: Inadequate pre-departure arrangements and support leads to failure of an expatriate

II. METHODOLOGY

The study variables: Inadequate selection process, Inadequate Cross Cultural Training & support of an expatriate were measured on a five point likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3= can't say, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree).

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of some demographic information like age, gender, marital status, monthly income, educational qualifications and job designations held by the expatriates. In the later part of questionnaire, the respondents were asked to rate the strength of selection criteria involved in the selection process

of the expatriates, Cross cultural training provided and the extent of professional support provided. Item No. 24 in the data collection instrument captures rate of success and failure of the expatriates (independent variable).

The expatriates were asked to tick one of the following options:-

24. You returned from the foreign assignment :-

- After completion of the project and after the expiry of the duration of the assignment (S1)
- After completion of the project but before the expiry of the duration of assignment (S2)
- After the expiry of duration of assignment, without completing the project (F1)
- Before completing the project and before the expiry of duration of assignment (F2)

From the review of literature it is established that option 1, and 2 above which are encoded here as S1, and S2 for ease of understanding are incidences of successful expatriate performance, while option 3, and 4 above encoded as F1, and F2 respectively are incidences of expatriate failure.

Data Collection

Quota sampling was used to collect the data. The population for the study consisted of Repatriates in major oil and gas industry comprising of Government sector and private sector companies. A total of 203 questionnaires were distributed personally and through e-mail to the expatriates at select oil and gas companies. 88 questionnaires were rejected due to more than 3 avoided questions in the data collection instrument. Therefore the number of valid questionnaires used for the study was 115 only. The demographic distribution of the sample is represented in Table 1.

Table-1Frequency Table for Demographic Variables Taken up in the Study

Demographic variable	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	99	86
Female	16	14
Total	115	100
Marital status		
Single	63	55
Married& Separated	3	3
Married	49	42
Total	115	100

Educational Qualification		
Under Graduate	19	17
Graduate	32	28
Graduate Diploma	15	13
Postgraduate	49	42
Total	115	100
Age		
25-40	56	49
41-56	45	39
57 and above	14	12
Total	115	100
No of Children		
Zero	71	62
One	17	15
Two	23	20
More	4	03
Total	115	100
Designation		
Executive Director	7	6
Vice President	9	17
General Manager	19	8
Manager	53	46
Sr. Executive/Executive	27	23
Total	115	100
Duration of Assignment in Yrs.		
6 Months - 1 Year	14	12
1 Year - 2 years	23	20
2 Years – 3 years	41	36
3 Years - 4 years	29	25
4 years - 5 years	8	7
Total	115	100

Reliability and Validity

In order to check the reliability and validity of scales developed by the authors, questionnaire was pilot tested with a small sample of 35 respondents. Data reliability was checked through construct reliability and

Cronbach's alpha. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were more than 0.80 for all study measures, indicating sufficient consistency.

Analysis of Data

Binary logistic regression was used for testing the Proposed Theoretical Model. According to Kleinbaum, Kupper, Nizam and Muller (2008), logistic regression quantifies the relationship between the dichotomous dependent variable and the predictors using odds ratios. Odds ratio is the probability that an event will occur divided by the probability that the event will not happen. In this study the odds ratio is the probability that an expatriate will return after completing his/her foreign assignment (success) divided by the probability that expatriate will not return before completing his/her foreign assignment (failure).

Table 2: Classification Table

Observed		Predicted		Percentage
		Success Vs Failure		Correct
		Success	Failure	
Success Vs Failure	Success	88	0	100
	Failure	27	0	0
Overall Percentage				76.5

- a. Constant is included in the model.
- b. The cut value is .500

The model with only constant correctly classifies only 76.6% of the cases (i.e. expatriate failure). A three-predictor variables logistic model was fitted to the data to test the research hypotheses regarding the relationship between the likelihood of an expatriate success versus failure and three independent variables namely inadequate selection process, inadequate cross cultural training and inadequate pre-departure arrangements. The logistic regression was carried out to predict the likelihood of expatriate failure relying on a survey data collected from 115 repatriates and fitted the following model:

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \text{Predicted logit of (Expatriate failure)} \\
 & = 1.7320 + (3.585) * \text{inadequate selection} + (3.007) * \text{inadequate training} + (0.928) \\
 & \quad * \text{inadequate pre – departure arrangements}
 \end{aligned}$$

To check whether the model presented in the above equation is really effective in predicting expatriate failure from independent variables namely inadequacy of selection process, inadequacy of training and inadequacy of pre-departure arrangements, the soundness of model is assessed. The model is assessed based on overall model

evaluation, the goodness-of-fit statistics, statistical tests of individual predictors and validations of predicted probabilities using the classification plot.

A test of comparison between the full model against a constant only model was statistically significant, indicating that the predictors as a set reliably distinguished between the expatriate failure versus success (chi square = 92.929, $p < .000$ with $df = 2$). The model containing only the constant has a poor fit indicating that the predictors do have a significant effect and create essentially a different model.

Table 3: Variables not in the equation

Variables	Score	Df	Sig.
Inadequate selection process	46.553	1	Sig.
Inadequate training	40.646	1	.000
Inadequate Pre-departure arrangements	36.519	1	.000
Overall Statistics	64.694	1	.000

Table-4: Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

		Chi-square	Df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	92.929	3	.000
	Block	92.929	3	.000
	Model	92.929	3	.000

The overall prediction rate was 90.43 % (85.18 % for expatriate failure and 70.435 % for the non-case). The classification plot or histogram of predicted probabilities was created to demonstrate the correct and incorrect predictions. It was exhibited in the classification plot that most of the expatriate failure cases have correctly been classified as expatriate failures, further indicating the robustness of the proposed model in predicting expatriate failure.

Table-5: Classification Table

Observed	Predicted		Percentage Correct
	Success	Failure	
Success	81	7	70.435
Success Vs. fail			
Fail	4	23	85.185
Overall Percentage			90.43

The cut value is .500

Further, the Wald statistics demonstrated that all of the independent variables contributed significantly to the prediction of a person's expatriate failure at type-I error rate of .05 ($p < 0.05$). All beta coefficients except for pre-departure arrangements are found to be positive and corresponding EXP (beta) are more than 1 signaling their positive association in predicting expatriate failure. While dependency of expatriate failure on inadequate selection process, and inadequate training is established, pre-departure arrangements fail to be a predictor of expatriate failure at 5% level of significance. The inadequate selection turned out to be the most significant contributor in the prediction of expatriate failure.

Therefore, the null hypothesis-1 is partially rejected at 5 % level of significance.

Table 6: Wald Statistics

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Inadequate selection process	3.585	1.163	9.506	1	0.002	3.028
Inadequate training	3.007	1.146	6.881	1	0.009	2.049
Inadequate Pre-departure Arrangements	0.928	0.633	2.151	1	0.103	0.627
Constant	1.732	6.183	12.938	1	.00	5.65814

III. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of the study conclusively established that inadequate selection and training were a significant cause for expatriate failure, while inadequate pre departure support was not. Thus Hypothesis 1a and 1b were accepted at 5% level of significance while Hypothesis 1c was rejected.

Table 7. Summary of hypotheses testing of the proposed model

Hypothesis and its Description	Results
H1a: Inadequate selection process leads to failure of an expatriate	Supported
H1b: Inadequate training process leads to	Supported

failure of an expatriate	
H1c: Inadequate pre-departure support leads to failure of an expatriate	Not Supported

The inadequate Selection turned out to be the most significant cause of expatriate failure. The present finding is consistent with the results of earlier study by Briscoe and Schuler (2004) that established errors in the selection process have a negative impact on the success of an organization's overseas operations. Chen & Tye (2005) also found in their study that utilization of poor expatriate selection methods are one of the reasons to expatriate failure. The selection process greatly influences the success of the international assignment and aids the international firms to compete predominantly in the international business (Tung, 1982). Technical competence is one of the most common used criterions for selection of an expatriate for an international assignment. The technical competence and management skills of the expatriate are important but still the cross-cultural aspect of the foreign environment need other competencies to succeed (Chen & Tye, 2005). Since, identifying and comparing the cross-cultural strength of individuals is time consuming and difficult, the criterion is rarely used by the companies (Medich, 1995).

Further the findings identified that the inadequate cross cultural training was the second most significant cause of expatriate failure in the oil & gas companies. The present findings are consistent with findings of Black & Mendelhall, (1990) and Parkinson & Morley (2006), who proposed the importance of cross cultural training in expatriate's adjustment overseas. Chew, (2004) also postulated that expatriate's inability to adapt in a different culture is one among the most prominent reason for expatriate failure. Alleviating culture shock is thus essential for a successful international assignment. It can be alleviated by selecting people with required competencies and by imparting necessary training to fill the competency gaps, if any, before relocating an expatriate abroad (Krapels, 1993 cited by Chaney, 2004

Limitations and Future Research

The present study is restricted to only three variables. Therefore, it provides opportunity to the future researchers to explore further factors contributing to expatriate failure. In addition, future research can also identify and examine repatriation practices of the companies in oil & gas sector. The researchers can explore the factors leading to turnover intention amongst the repatriates. Since, the study is conducted in the oil & gas sector in India, its results cannot be generalized in other sectors. In future, more multi-national studies can be conducted

Conflict of Interest

This research is purely conducted for academic purposes. There is no role of any organization or sponsor in the study design, data collection process and analysis & interpretation of data. The conclusions are solely based on the collected data.

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