

The Strategic Role of Expatriates in International Human Resource Management on Factors Affecting Global Assignment Success and Failure

Muhammad Rafi Rihansyah¹, Gadis Nofenti^{2*}, Didin Hikmah Perkasa³

Universitas Paramadina, Jakarta, Indonesia

Email: muhammad.rihansyah@students.paramadina.ac.id¹,

gadis.nofenti@students.paramadina.ac.id², didin.perkasa@paramadina.ac.id³

Correspondence: gadis.nofenti@students.paramadina.ac.id*

| KEYWORDS | ABSTRACT |
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| International Human Resource Management; Expatriates; Assignment Success; Assignment Failure; Cultural Adaptation; Repatriation | In the era of globalization, the role of expatriates in International Human Resource Management (IHRM) has become increasingly important, especially for multinational companies operating in various countries. Expatriates not only act as liaisons between headquarters and overseas branches, but also act as agents of change, knowledge transfer, and local network development. However, successful expatriate assignments are not always guaranteed. Challenges such as cultural adaptation, family support, expectation management, and lack of support from the company are often the deciding factors between assignment success and failure. The purpose of this study is to analyze the factors that influence expatriates' success and failure in global assignments. The research method used is library research, by reviewing relevant literature related to the role of expatriates, success, and challenges of global assignments. The results show that expatriate success is influenced by cultural adaptation readiness, family support, training provided, and continuous company support. Conversely, failures often occur due to lack of training, adaptation issues, and poor expectation management. In addition, repatriation management also plays an important role in ensuring expatriates continue to contribute after returning home. |

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Introduction

In the rapidly growing era of globalization, the role of expatriates in International Human Resource Management (IHRM) is becoming increasingly important and strategic. As more multinational companies expand across national borders, the need for a workforce capable of adapting and working effectively across different cultures and countries also increases (Hack-Polay & Mahmoud, 2021). Expatriates, or employees assigned to work in a foreign country for a period of time, play a key role in bridging the cultural, social, and economic differences that occur in global business operations. Effective management of expatriates in IHRM is not only important to

ensure the success of their assignment in a foreign country, but also contributes significantly to the company's long-term business strategy, especially in the increasingly fierce global competition (Bonache & Festing, 2020).

Expatriate assignments are often motivated by strategic reasons, such as business development in new markets, technology and knowledge transfer, and strengthening corporate culture in the destination country. Multinational companies rely on expatriates to introduce established business practices at headquarters, as well as to build relationships with local partners and local governments. Expatriates play the role of change agents, bringing innovation and specialized expertise from their home country to the destination country. However, despite the potential success of expatriate assignments, there are challenges that often cause global assignments to fail. Factors such as cultural adaptation, family support, stress management, and management of expectations from headquarters and branch offices play an important role in determining whether an expatriate can succeed or fail (Bonache et al., 2020).

One of the main factors that influence the success or failure of expatriate assignments is cultural adaptability. The different work culture in the destination country is often a major challenge for expatriates (Fan et al., 2022; Thirlwall et al., 2021). Differences in social norms, work ethics and communication styles can lead to misunderstandings that affect an expatriate's performance. For example, an expatriate who comes from a country with an individualistic work culture may find it difficult to adapt to a country with a collectivist work culture, where decision-making is done collectively and interpersonal relationships are highly valued. In these situations, expats need to have good cross-cultural communication skills and a deep awareness of cultural differences to be successful. Without the ability to adapt to the local culture, expatriates will not only have difficulty in performing their duties, but may also cause tension and conflict with local coworkers or partners, which will ultimately hinder the company's business success in the destination country (Fan et al., 2021).

In addition to cultural adaptation factors, family support is also one of the important factors that influence the success of expatriate assignments (Von Glinow & Milliman, 2022). Many expatriates bring their families with them when they are deployed abroad. The role of expatriates' spouses and children in supporting expatriate adaptation and performance is often overlooked by companies. In fact, problems faced by family members, such as difficulties adapting to a new life, language differences, and social isolation, can have a direct impact on expatriate performance. Studies show that high stress levels in expatriate families are often one of the main causes of global assignment failure (Zhong et al., 2021). Therefore, support from companies in the form of cultural training programs, counseling, as well as facilities that support the adaptation of expatriate families is necessary to ensure the success of their assignments.

The role of International Human Resource Management in supporting the success of expatriate assignments is also very important (Crawshaw et al., 2020). IHRM is responsible for the selection, training, and development of expatriates in order to succeed in the destination country. The selection of the right expatriate candidates is crucial to minimize the risk of failure. Candidates with leadership skills, international experience and the ability to adapt quickly will have a greater

chance of success. After the selection process, pre-assignment training becomes one of the important components in preparing expatriates. This training includes an understanding of the local culture, language, social norms, and economic and political conditions in the destination country. Without adequate preparation, expatriates may experience cultural shock, which can hinder their productivity and success (C.-H. Wang & Varma, 2020).

While many companies recognize the important role of IHRM in supporting expatriates, many have not paid enough attention to this aspect of assignment management. Lack of support from headquarters, lack of cultural training programs, and an imbalance between company expectations and the reality on the ground are often to blame for expatriate assignment failure (D. Wang et al., 2022). For example, companies may have too high expectations of expatriates without considering the challenges they face in the destination country. This can lead to dissatisfaction and frustration on the part of expatriates, which ultimately impacts their performance (Bader et al., 2021).

Expatriate assignment failure can also be caused by a lack of effective stress management. Global assignments often involve high stress, both in terms of work and personal life. Expatriates have to face a new environment that may be very different from what they are familiar with, in terms of culture, climate and social systems. This can cause significant psychological distress, especially if they do not have a strong support network in the destination country. Without good stress management, expatriates are at risk of physical and mental exhaustion, which can affect their performance at work (Rees & Smith, 2021).

In the success and failure of expatriate assignments, it is also important to consider the company's role in supporting expatriates' reintegration after they complete their assignment. The reintegration or repatriation process is often a major challenge for expatriates, especially if the company does not have adequate programs to help them return to normal life in their home country. Without proper support, many expatriates have difficulty adjusting to their old lives, both professionally and personally. According to Fan et al. (2021) and Wang et al. (2022), this phase can lead to feelings of alienation, a decline in job satisfaction, and reduced organizational commitment. Therefore, companies need to ensure that the repatriation process is well managed to keep expatriates motivated and able to make maximum contributions after returning from a global assignment.

The success or failure of expatriate assignments in International Human Resource Management is greatly influenced by various factors, including cultural adaptability, family support, stress management, as well as support from the company through an effective IHRM program. Although the role of expatriates in the global strategy of multinational companies is very important, without proper management, the risk of global assignment failure remains high. Therefore, companies need to pay serious attention to every aspect of expatriate management, from the selection process, training, support during the assignment, to the reintegration process after the assignment is completed. Only with this holistic approach can companies ensure that their expatriates are successful and able to make a significant contribution to the success of the company's global business.

Research Methods

The research method used in this study is a library research, where the author collects and analyzes secondary data from various relevant literature, such as books, scientific journals, articles, and research reports that discuss the topic of International Human Resource Management (IHRM), specifically related to the role of expatriates in global assignments. The study also utilized various online resources and academic databases to obtain valid and up-to-date information regarding the factors that influence expatriate success and failure. The analysis conducted is descriptive and exploratory, aiming to understand the relationship between existing theories and phenomena that occur in the field and draw conclusions based on the literature review that has been researched.

Results and Discussion

The Role of Expatriates in International Human Resource Management (IHRM)

In multinational companies, the role of expatriates is strategic and diverse. One of the main functions of expatriates is as cultural brokers between headquarters and overseas branches. They often act as carriers of the values and business practices of the parent company to the country they are assigned to. This role is important in maintaining consistency of company operations across countries and ensuring that the company's core values are maintained despite cultural differences in different countries. Expatriates are also often agents of change in the countries where they work, introducing innovations and new ways of working that fit with the company's strategy at a global level.

On the other hand, expatriates are also tasked with understanding and adjusting to local conditions. They must be able to bridge the cultural, social and economic differences between their home and destination countries. In this case, the role of expatriates becomes more complex, as they need to be able to understand local dynamics and adapt business practices to fit the country's social, legal and economic landscape. Failure to understand these differences can lead to an inability to effectively carry out business operations, which will ultimately be detrimental to the company.

In addition, expatriates also play an important role in building professional networks with local stakeholders, including the government, business partners, and local communities. These networks are important to facilitate business operations, address licensing issues, and overcome regulatory and bureaucratic barriers that may exist in the destination country. In this case, the expatriate's ability to negotiate and communicate with local parties is invaluable to the company.

The role of expatriates in knowledge transfer is equally important. They are expected to transfer technical expertise, managerial knowledge, and best practices applied at the head office to branch offices in other countries. Thus, expatriates play a role in increasing the capacity of local human resources, so that branch offices can operate more independently and effectively in the long run. Therefore, the role of expatriates in International Human Resource Management is very strategic, as they are not only the ambassadors of the company abroad but also the carriers of innovation and expertise that are essential for business growth in international markets.

Expatriate Assignment Success Factors

The success of an expatriate assignment is not only determined by the competence of the individual concerned, but also by the support provided by the company and the work environment in the destination country. One of the main factors that influence the success of expatriate assignments is the individual's readiness to adapt to a new culture. Cultural adaptation is an important aspect of successful global assignments, as expatriates must be able to adjust to social norms, communication styles, and work ethics that may be very different from their home country.

Pre-assignment training provided by the company is also very important in preparing expatriates for cultural challenges. This training includes an understanding of the local culture, language, as well as business practices in the destination country. Expatriates who receive comprehensive training tend to be better prepared to deal with cultural differences and adjust more quickly to the new environment. In addition, this training also helps expatriates to manage their expectations of the assignment, so that they do not experience "cultural shock" which can hinder productivity.

Another factor that influences expatriate assignment success is family support. Many expatriates bring their families with them on overseas assignments, and the success of family adaptation also affects expatriate performance. Psychological and emotional support from family is essential in dealing with the challenges that exist in the destination country. Therefore, companies often provide support programs for expatriate families, such as cultural training for spouses, international schools for children, and family counseling. When expatriate families are able to adapt well, the stress felt by expatriates will be reduced, so they can focus more on work.

Support from the company is also another important factor. Companies that provide strong support to expatriates, such as effective communication between headquarters and branch offices, adequate facilities in the destination country, and security and welfare guarantees, tend to have higher assignment success rates. Companies should ensure that expatriates feel professionally and personally supported during assignments, as this will increase their motivation to perform to their full potential.

In addition, the success of an expatriate assignment also depends on expectation management. Expatriates who have a realistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities they will face in the destination country are more likely to be able to face difficulties and adapt well. Therefore, companies should communicate clearly and openly about the purpose of the assignment, the targets to be achieved, and the challenges that may be faced during the assignment. Thus, expatriates will have realistic expectations and be better prepared to face the actual situation in the field.

Expatriate Assignment Failure Factors

While many expatriates are successful in their assignments, there are also those who fail. One of the main causes of failure is the inability to adapt to the local culture. Expatriates who have

difficulty in understanding and adjusting to the social norms, work ethics, and communication styles of the destination country tend to have difficulty in carrying out their duties. Too great a cultural difference between the home and destination countries is often the cause of assignment failure. For example, differences in the way decisions are made, the approach to time, and the way bosses and subordinates interact can lead to misunderstandings that impact expatriates' performance.

Lack of support from family can also be a cause of failure. When expatriate family members, especially spouses and children, have difficulty adapting to a new life abroad, this can cause significant stress for the expatriate. This stress will ultimately affect the expatriate's performance and productivity at work. Therefore, support for expatriate families is essential to ensure a successful assignment.

Lack of adequate preparation is also a common failure factor. Many expatriates are sent abroad without sufficient training on the culture, language and working environment of the destination country. Without an adequate understanding of the local conditions, expatriates will find it difficult to adapt and deal with the challenges at hand. This often leads to failure in the assignment, as expatriates are not prepared to deal with the realities on the ground.

In addition, assignment failure can also be caused by a lack of support from the company. Expatriates who do not feel adequately supported by the company, in terms of facilities, security, and communication, tend to feel isolated and lose motivation to work. When companies do not pay enough attention to expatriates' well-being, this can have a negative impact on their performance and productivity.

Poor expectation management is also a common cause of expatriate assignment failure. When expatriates have unrealistic expectations regarding conditions in the destination country, they will feel disappointed and frustrated when faced with actual challenges. For example, expatriates who expect that the destination country will have similar conditions to their home country may be surprised and struggle to adapt when faced with significant cultural differences. Therefore, it is important for companies to ensure that expatriates have a clear and realistic understanding of the situation they will face in the destination country.

Repatriation Management and its Impact on Expatriate Careers

After completing an overseas assignment, expatriates often face challenges in the repatriation process. These challenges are often overlooked by companies, despite their significant impact on expatriates' careers. One of the main issues in the repatriation process is the difficulty in readjusting to the culture and working environment back home. Expats who have spent extended periods of time abroad may feel alienated when returning to headquarters, especially if they feel that their international experience is not valued or recognized by the company.

In addition, many expatriates feel that their careers do not progress after returning from assignment. Although they have developed new skills and gained valuable international experience, companies often do not provide a clear career path for them after the assignment ends.

This can lead to disillusionment and demotivation, with many expats choosing to leave the company after the assignment is over.

Therefore, companies should have a good repatriation management strategy to ensure that expatriates can return smoothly and feel valued. Companies should provide support programs for returning expatriates, such as repatriation training, career counseling, and opportunities to utilize the skills and knowledge they have gained during their assignment. By doing so, companies can maximize the potential of expatriates and ensure that they remain motivated to contribute to the company after returning from a global assignment.

Conclusion

The role of expatriates in International Human Resource Management (IHRM) is very important and strategic in managing cross-border business operations, especially in bridging cultural differences, transferring knowledge, and building local networks. The success of expatriate assignments is greatly influenced by factors such as cultural adaptability, family support, adequate pre-assignment training, and ongoing support from the company. Conversely, assignment failures are often caused by a lack of cultural preparation, inadequate family support and poor expectation management. In addition, the repatriation process is also a challenge that requires special attention so that expatriates can return and contribute optimally to the company. Effective management of each stage of an expatriate assignment, both during the assignment and afterwards, is key to a company's success in executing its global business strategy.

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