



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICES ENHANCING POSITIVE JOB ATTITUDES OF EXPATRIATES ON INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

by

ILZE SWARTS

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

With specialisation in Organizational Behaviour

in the

FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Study leader:

Dr Yvonne du Plessis

PRETORIA

APRIL 2008



DECLARATION

I, Ilze Swarts, declare that the thesis “**ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICES ENHANCING POSITIVE JOB ATTITUDES OF EXPATRIATES ON INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS**” which I hereby submit for the degree Ph.D Organizational Behaviour at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and that all the sources that I used or quoted have been indicated with complete references and acknowledgements. This thesis has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

I, Ilze Swarts, declare that the thesis was edited by P.J. Ahrens, BA (Hons.) STD.

ILZE SWARTS

DATE



ABSTRACT

ORGANISATIONAL PRACTICES ENHANCING POSITIVE JOB ATTITUDES OF EXPATRIATES ON INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

by
ILZE SWARTS

STUDY LEADER: DR YVONNE DU PLESSIS
FACULTY: ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
DEGREE: PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR (Organizational Behaviour)

With increasing foreign revenues, multinational corporations' need for expatriate assignments shows little sign of slowing down. Maintaining an expatriate is a costly and complicated process, and if the expatriate fails in his/her assignment, the expatriate exercise becomes even more costly for all involved. A prominent issue in international staffing literature is the premature return of an expatriate to his/her home country or resignation during or shortly after the foreign assignment. An expatriate may be defined as an employee who works for a firm but is not a citizen of the country in which the firm is located (host-country). However, he is a citizen of the country in which the organisation is headquartered (parent country). Losses and damages resulting from expatriates returning prematurely or resigning during or shortly after a foreign assignment add up to considerable costs. Considering these costs, it is imperative that expatriate assignments are managed effectively.

The above raises the following *research questions*:

- *What is the relationship between job attitudes and expatriate managers' intention to return prematurely from foreign assignments or to resign during or shortly after foreign assignments?*

- *What specific aspects of job attitudes are perceived by expatriate managers' as critical to their adjustment while on a foreign assignment?*

The main aim of this research is an empirical investigation into the variables influencing expatriates' job attitudes and a statistical examination of the relationship between job attitudes and expatriates' intention to quit or return prematurely. The envisioned result is to identify organisational practices that will facilitate expatriate adjustment during a foreign assignment. Successful adjustment will ultimately reduce the number of expatriates returning prematurely and resigning from a foreign assignment, thereby saving multinational corporations considerable expenses.

The research was conducted through self-administered questionnaires. A convenience sample with purposive characteristics, comprising of South African managers on foreign assignments, was used. Response was received from 71 managers. The study relied on descriptive and inferential statistical procedures to analyse the quantitative data and analytical induction to analyse the qualitative data.

The results of the study showed a negative relationship between certain favourable job attitudes and intention to quit a foreign assignment. Using the Spearman's rho test the following correlations proved to be significant: role conflict (-.369), job characteristics (-.391) and co-workers (-.349). Job characteristics (-.107), promotional opportunities (.282) and role conflict (-.312) were identified, using logistic regression, as the variables playing a critical role in the expatriates' decision to quit. The qualitative data analysis added the following critical adjustment aspects: commitment to the vision of the organisation, supportive supervision, organisational support practices, reasonable compensation packages, and realistic expectations.

Based on the variables identified as critical, an organisational best practice framework is proposed. This framework can serve as a managerial guideline for South African multinational corporations to facilitate expatriate adjustment.



DEDICATION

To my husband ***Niel***, and my children ***Daniel and Leana***, for your love and support which fuelled my commitment to this task and whose involvement in this chapter of my life did not allow me to quit.

To my parents ***Pieter and Leana Lodder***, who inspired and motivated me to grow.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- My study leader, Dr Yvonne du Plessis for your creativity and constant support that motivated me to stay the course.
- My employer, the Tshwane University of Technology for creating the opportunity for further study.
- My colleagues, Dr Sonia Swanepoel, Dr PA Botha and Dr Rose Laka-Mathebula for paving the way and providing guidelines I could follow.
- The statisticians, Rita Olwagen and Solly Millard.
- The language editor, Peggy Ahrens.
- Technical editing and typing, Anneliese Blom.
- All the other people who helped and guided me along the way.
- Most importantly my Heavenly Father who blessed me with the ability and granted me this privilege.



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