

Chapter 18

Factors Related to Readjustment to Daily Life: A Study of Repatriates in Japanese Multinational Enterprises

Yoko Naito
Tokai University, Japan

ABSTRACT

This study explores issues arising from cross-cultural transitions, focusing on Japanese multinational enterprises (MNEs) and readjustment to daily life in general after international assignments. Employee readjustment to the home country needs to study from two perspectives: work and private life. However, most studies of repatriates focus on the work aspect, and few focus on the aspect of private life. Using structural equation modeling based on the questionnaire data, this study empirically examines nine variables that may possibly affect readjustment to daily life in general after returning to Japan. In this process, this study deals with “readjustment to daily life in general” from a viewpoint outside the organization. Based on these findings, this chapter suggests emphasizing management practices that provide assistance and support to repatriates in their readjustment to daily life in general, along with the importance of readjustment to the organization.

INTRODUCTION

Migrations and exchanges of people across cultural borders have rapidly increased since the second half of the 20th century. These changes in the social environment have led to a rapid increase in the number of people who live in non-native cultures and interact with the people in the host countries. These interactions inspire people to become aware of and interested in different cultures and in many things and customs of their home countries. At the same time, many people experience culture shock involving psychological stress and other difficulties while they are in non-native cultures. The challenges and problems associated with interactions in a host country cannot be resolved easily. When individuals who have been socialized in their home cultures begin to have contact with people in a host culture, they are

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influenced by cultural differences in numerous ways as they confront a variety of challenges. Particularly when they remain in a host culture for several years, people gradually adjust to the culture through their experiences (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003).

The difficulties that people experience during stays in host cultures are not necessarily alleviated after they return home. In general, people return home after spending time in different countries and are confronted by unexpected challenges after they return (Brabant, Palmer, & Gramling, 1990; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2008). A stay in a host culture involves experiencing a different cultural context, and reentry similarly involves experiences of readjustment to the home environment, which has changed over time (Gama & Pedersen, 1977; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Sussman, 1986). Returning to the home country is not generally regarded as difficult, but from a practical standpoint it is not easy. People returning home reportedly experience readjustment problems, commonly referred to as reentry shock (Black, Gregersen, Mendenhall, & Stroh, 1999; Brabant et al., 1990; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Kim, 2001; Uehara, 1986). Some people who have experienced the transition claimed that the difficulties of reentry are more challenging than their adjustments to the host cultures (e.g., Adler, 2002; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2008; Stroh, Black, Mendenhall, & Gregersen, 2004).

This study focuses on one aspect of the readjustment of repatriates of multinational enterprises (MNEs); namely, readjustment to daily life in general.¹ It examines factors associated with readjustment and suggests organizational practices that might facilitate their readjustment. Previous relevant studies in Japan have pointed out a lack of organizational career support for repatriates (Yashiro, 2015). This study focused on daily life because aspects of daily life have a ripple effect on the work aspects described below.

Mainly based on a literature review, Naito (2012b) suggested factors that might influence repatriates' readjustment to daily life in general. The present study reports the results of an analysis based on a questionnaire survey to examine the factors identified by that review. The following some sections present a condensed version of Naito (2012b) and quote a part of Naito (2016). This paper is mainly based on Naito (2015; in Japanese, "Kaigai haken kininsya no seikatsu ippan eno saitekiou: Nikkei takokuseki kigyō deno chosa kara" [Factors related to readjustment to daily life: A study of repatriates in Japanese multi-national enterprises], *Journal of the Faculty of Political Science and Economics*, 47, 159-177, Tokai University) which has been translated here into English, and uses a part of Naito (2016).

BACKGROUND

A growing number of studies of adjustment to host cultures have been conducted as the number of people living in foreign countries has grown. However, readjustment research, which addresses the circumstances and problems faced by repatriates returning to their home cultures, is scarcely represented in the literature (Szkudlarek, 2010).

Adjustment to Host Cultures and Readjustment to Home Cultures

The problems of culture shock experienced during a stay in a host culture are widely known. Nevertheless, difficulties related to reentry shock or reverse culture shock experienced upon returning home are not well known (Brabant et al., 1990; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). In early studies of readjustment, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), for example, found that the readjustment of overseas returnees followed

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