

A Study on Enhancing the Adaptability and Satisfaction of Expatriate Employees Through Health and Welfare Strategies in Human Resource Management

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Abstract. When multinational companies assign employees to international roles, they often prioritize performance indicators and overlook the health and well-being of their expatriates. The aim of the present study is to highlight the importance of health and well-being policies for expatriates and multinational companies and to explore how such strategies can enhance expatriates' adjustment and satisfaction. Through a systematic literature review and qualitative analysis, this study examined several high-quality studies on expatriate adjustment and satisfaction. The findings show that organizational support, self-regulation, and job adjustment have a significant impact on employees' adaptation. However, these findings are often based on fixed employee samples, which limits their generalizability and long-term applicability. By empirically validating a theoretical model of employee well-being, combined with HRM strategies from an internationally renowned multinational company, this study fills a gap in existing research and highlights the important role of health and well-being strategies in expatriate employee adjustment and satisfaction.

Keywords: Expatriate employee well-being, organizational support, self-regulation, job adjustment, managerial recommendations.

1. Introduction

Against the backdrop of increasing economic globalization, global multinational companies are confronted with an urgent need to achieve their global strategic goals, and therefore, it has become a top priority to deploy expatriate employees. However, many multinational companies still fail to address the work adaptability and satisfaction of internationally assigned employees, nor do they make sufficient investments in this area. This gap leads to challenges for expatriates who deal with cultural shocks and work pressures. Their failure to effectively cope with these challenges will reduce their adaptability and satisfaction, which in turn negatively affects their performance and retention rate, as well as the overall performance of the company. Existing research suggests that health and well-being strategies in human resource (HR) management play an important role in employee adaptability and satisfaction. For example, a study by Arokiasamy et al. suggests that organizational support, such as training, counselling and family support, greatly helps employees cope with culture shock and work stress [1]. However, these studies focus mainly on specific cultural and industry contexts, which limits their generalizability.

In addition, Guest explored the importance of self-regulatory capabilities for employee adaptation to new environments, though this study mainly surveyed employees from developed countries and overlooked expatriate employees from other cultural backgrounds [2]. Salas-Vallina et al. studied the importance of work adjustment strategies, especially the positive impact of flexible work arrangements on employee adaptability, but there was a shortage of long-term data to fully assess the lasting impact of these strategies [3].

This study aims to explore how health and well-being strategies in HR management can enhance the adaptability and satisfaction of expatriate employees and provide practical guidance for multinational companies to optimize their HR management strategies.

A systematic literature review and qualitative analysis methods were adopted. By screening databases such as Web of Science, Google Scholar and ResearchGate, high-quality literature that supported the research perspective was obtained. In addition, this study incorporated personnel strategies adopted by internationally renowned multinational companies to analyze the impact of the theoretical model proposed on the adaptability and satisfaction of expatriate employees.

2. Literature Review

Workplace adaptability refers to the ability of employees to effectively adapt to different cultures and work environments. According to the Oxford Handbook of Organizational Psychology, job adaptability includes the ability of employees to handle new job responsibilities, adapt to changing environments, and integrate into new cultures [4]. This adaptability is considered a key determinant of employee performance and career success. In contrast, job satisfaction is related to employees' overall satisfaction with their work environment and tasks, including compensation, working conditions, career development opportunities, and relationships with colleagues and management. It is a multidimensional concept that directly impacts job performance and employee retention.

For a conceptualization and definition of health and well-being strategies in HR management, a systematic review by Sabine Sonnentag, Louis Tay, and others explored strategies to promote workplace health and well-being [5]. The literature suggests that health and well-being are broad concepts that include multiple components of physical, psychological, and social health. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” This definition highlights that health and well-being are not limited to the individual level but also involve dynamic processes at the team and organizational levels, emphasizing the fluidity of strategies that must adapt to specific workplace events and contexts.

A study by Arokiasamy suggests the importance of systematic training, counselling and family support for improved employee adaptability and satisfaction, especially in cross-cultural environments [1].

Guest argues that self-regulation is crucial for employee adaptation to new environments and effective emotion and stress management, suggesting that a new analytical framework is needed, although further empirical research is required to define its specific compositions and applicability [2].

Salas-Vallina emphasized that flexible work arrangements and simplified initial tasks can facilitate employee adaptation to new environments and increase their satisfaction [3].

These three studies demonstrate the relationship between employee well-being and work performance and highlight the importance of HR management for employee well-being—to improve not only work performance but also overall well-being. However, many of these studies often focus on specific contexts, such as the international education sector in Vietnam or on general aspects of employee well-being and performance. However, there is a lack of detailed analyses across diverse cultural contexts, longitudinal studies and insufficient attention to employee diversity. These findings highlight the important relationship between HR management practices and employee well-being. However, further cross-cultural, longitudinal and diversity-inclusive research remains to be conducted to deepen existing understanding of such relationships.

This study integrates the core of the above literature, with organizational support, self-regulation and work adjustment as the elements of the proposed theoretical research model.

3. Case Introduction

In the context of a globalized economy, Toyota, as a leading multinational corporation, has always been committed to the adaptability and satisfaction of its employees through its excellent HR strategies. As described in the HR resources strategy section of the Toyota Tsusho Group's 2023

Integrated Report, Toyota provides comprehensive support to expatriate employees through a range of health and welfare initiatives, which not only help employees cope with culture shock and work-related stress but also improve overall employee satisfaction.

Toyota facilitates employee integration into a multicultural environment through systematic training, counselling, family support and flexible work arrangements. The company has developed a curriculum to cultivate future global leaders, with a focus on cross-cultural communication and management skills. The curriculum includes practical knowledge lectures, government-funded technical training courses, and practical training in line with the Toyota Tsusho Group's guidelines. In addition, Toyota has partnered with leading international business schools to attract diverse talent and has established a language trainee system for expatriate employees. In terms of health management, Toyota has implemented workplace reforms based on the principles of employee health and workplace vitality, with eight healthy habits as key performance indicators (KPIs) to promote healthy business practices. Employees also receive additional paid leave each month. In addition, Toyota has expanded telecommuting options and renovated office facilities. These measures serve as strong empirical evidence for the model in that they are consistent with the research findings and support the theoretical model of organizational support, self-regulation, and job adjustment.

Toyota's practices show that systematic and diverse training, as an integral part of organizational support, improves their adaptability and satisfaction with international assignments as these practices enhance employees' confidence and control over their work. The development of self-regulatory skills through various health indicators helps employees manage physical health, emotional stability and stress tolerance so that they exhibit greater adaptation to new environments. In addition, flexible work arrangements, such as shorter core hours and expanded telecommuting policies, provide employees with greater autonomy and a better work-life balance, which are important measures for work adjustment.

In addition, Toyota also emphasizes the dynamic evaluation and adjustment of health and welfare strategies to ensure their effectiveness in different cultural and industry contexts. This sustained strategic optimization has not only improved the adaptability and satisfaction of Toyota employees but also provided valuable insights for other multinational companies in HR management strategies.

Based on theoretical models from the literature with Toyota's HR strategies, this case study illustrates the importance of health and welfare strategies for the adaptability and satisfaction of expatriate employees. It also provides insights for future research and applications in this area.

4. Analysis of the Health and Well-being Strategies for Expatriate Employees in the Aforementioned Enterprises

Toyota's 2023 annual report emphasizes that systematic training, health indicators, and work reforms facilitate employees' adaptation to international assignments and demonstrate improvements in short-term adaptability and satisfaction. However, existing organizational support strategies mainly focus on short-term adaptability and are short of continuous tracking to evaluate their long-term impact. This is consistent with the study by Arokiasamy et al., who identified the limited generalizability of these strategies across cultural and industry contexts; specifically, their effectiveness may vary significantly among employees from different cultural backgrounds and industries [1].

Enhancement in the capacity of employees for self-regulation through vocational training and mental health support is crucial for their management of stress and challenges in a cross-cultural work environment. However, current strategies are mainly based on employee samples from developed countries, with less consideration given to the specific needs of expatriate employees from different cultural backgrounds. Guest's research also pointed out that self-regulatory capabilities are crucial for employee adaption to new environments but suggested further verification of its applicability in varying cultural contexts [2].

Toyota's HR strategy also promotes flexible work arrangements, such as remote work and flexible hours, which have proven particularly effective during the COVID-19 pandemic as they significantly improve employee adaptability and satisfaction. However, these strategies have focused mainly on short-term work adjustments, with a lack of comprehensive research and evaluation of their long-term impact. Salas-Vallina et al. also demonstrated that despite the short-term effectiveness of flexible work arrangements, their long-term impact remains underexplored without support from reliable data [3].

5. Results

Organizational support, including training, counseling, and family support, can help expatriate employees cope with culture shock and work-related stress. However, the effectiveness may vary across cultural and industry contexts. Employees with stronger self-regulation exhibit effective adaptation to new environments and superior emotion and stress management skills. Nevertheless, the generalizability of these findings is limited, and further validation with different employee samples is needed. Moreover, flexible work arrangements and simplified initial work can facilitate adaptation, though their long-term effectiveness remains underexplored.

In summary, health and well-being strategies have a positive impact on adaptability and satisfaction among expatriate employees through various means. While the specific effectiveness of different strategies may vary across cultural and industry contexts, it is overall suggested that appropriate organizational support, enhanced self-regulatory capacity, and reasonable work accommodations can significantly improve adaptability and satisfaction among expatriate employees.

Multinational enterprises should explore the specific needs of employees from different cultural backgrounds and optimize health and well-being strategies accordingly to ensure their effectiveness across global employee populations. Long-term evaluation mechanisms, supplemented by continuous follow-up and feedback, are crucial for comprehensive evaluation of the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of these strategies. In addition, concrete efforts should be made to strengthen dynamic adjustment and response mechanisms. Companies should work to increase the frequency of health and well-being strategy adjustments and establish more flexible response mechanisms. These measures will help ensure timely adjustments to strategies based on the external environment to maintain their relevance and effectiveness.

6. Conclusion

This study deepens the understanding of expatriate employees' adaptability and satisfaction through a systematic review and empirical analysis of existing literature. First, the study confirms the importance of organizational support, self-regulation, and job adjustment for employee adaptability and satisfaction. Although existing theoretical models provide a preliminary framework for these factors, their general applicability in different cultural contexts remains to be further verified. This research, with Toyota as a case study, confirmed the broad applicability of health and well-being strategies in multinational companies and emphasized their importance for employee adaptability and satisfaction.

However, the study also revealed that current organizational support strategies generally focus on short-term adaptability, and there is a lack of continuous monitoring and evaluation of long-term effects. Additionally, there are certain challenges related to the applicability of these strategies in different cultural contexts. Despite the dynamic adjustments made by the Toyota Tsusho Group, the feedback mechanism and adjustment frequency may not be sufficient to cope with the rapid changes in the global environment. Future research should focus on systematic long-term evaluation mechanisms to enhance the applicability of these strategies in varying global cultural contexts.

The study highlights the importance of self-regulation in employee adaptation. However, existing strategies are mainly based on samples from developed countries, with expatriate employees in

different cultural contexts largely overlooked. Future research should further validate these strategies in non-Western contexts to ensure their global applicability.

In conclusion, this study concludes the important role of health and well-being strategies in expatriate employees' adaptability and satisfaction. Specifically, organizational support, self-regulation, and job adjustment have a significant impact on employees' cross-cultural adaptability and satisfaction. Practical insights from Toyota's human resources strategies further verifies the global effectiveness of these strategies.

However, this study has certain limitations. First, the research focuses mainly on Western cultural contexts and lacks extensive verification in other cultures and industries. Future research could be extended to diverse contexts to improve the generalizability of the findings. To effectively improve the adaptability and satisfaction of expatriate employees, multinational companies should design and implement targeted health and welfare strategies based on specific situations. It is recommended to strengthen organizational support, improve self-regulatory capabilities, optimise work adjustment strategies, and establish systematic long-term evaluation mechanisms to ensure the continued effectiveness of these strategies. These measures not only improve the work adaptability and satisfaction of expatriate employees but also strengthen talent retention amidst global competition, thereby boosting overall international competitiveness.

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