
Repatriation of academics: re-socialisation and adjustment

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Abstract: Despite a large and growing body of literature that has investigated the return of corporate repatriates, the repatriation of academics has not been sufficiently discussed in the literature. The literature on repatriation of corporate employees has identified several antecedent conditions that facilitate or hamper the process of repatriation adjustment and its implications for corporate organisations and repatriates. But, it is not clear whether the antecedents and consequences of repatriation adjustment are the same for both corporate and academic repatriates. This study applies the extant literature on repatriation and three socialisation theories: organisational socialisation theory (OST), socialisation resources theory (SRT), and uncertainty reduction theory (URT) to identify and examine the role of organisation, individual and group in the process of adjustment and the influence of adjustment on repatriates' work engagement and retention. We particularly identified and discussed the repatriation adjustment of academic repatriates, consequences of unsuccessful adjustment and how universities and repatriates can effectively manage the repatriation transition.

Keywords: repatriates; repatriation; adjustment; socialisation; re-socialisation; theory.

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“An improved understanding of repatriation has the potential to not only contribute to the personal and professional development of repatriates, but also to organizations’ wishing to improve and develop effective international human resource management programs and practices to motivate and retain one of their most valuable resources: the repatriate.” [Chiang et al., (2018), p.218]

1 Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) operate and compete in a worldwide environment of knowledge creation and innovation. Retaining talented academics at universities is fundamentally important for the quality of the research and teaching, and the reputation and competitive position of the university (Baruch, 2013; Lorange, 2006; Van den Brink et al., 2013). Though some universities seek talent in the global academic market, other universities make the massive investment to develop their own talent. However, maintaining top talent has become a vital strategic concern of human resource management of universities (Baruch et al., 2014). In particular, the internationalisation of education has increased the importance of retaining academics with global expertise at universities, and making use of them in the process of enhancing the reputation and competitive position of universities.

Furthermore, the internationalisation of education has blurred the boundaries of national academic careers (Altbach and Lewis, 1996; Baruch, 2013; Froese, 2012) and has influenced the nature and functions of universities (Baruch and Hall, 2004; Lane, 2011; Richardson and McKenna, 2002). Universities sign agreements with other universities to be jointly involved in research projects and exchange of staff members and students, establish satellite campuses in other countries and for sabbatical assignments (Altbach and Knight, 2007; Lane, 2011). As a result, the curriculum and teaching-learning processes of universities have incorporated international, cross-cultural and global content (Knight, 2004). The internationalisation of higher education could lead to knowledge enrichment as repatriates develop tacit skills and knowledge and can provide a source of competitive advantage to home country institutions with a more global mindset, improved management and language competencies, and extended global networks (Davoine et al., 2018).

However, despite considerable progress in our understanding of the expatriation phase of international assignments, the literature on repatriation remains disjointed and incomplete. Plagued with problematic re-adjustments, high turnover rates, and a range of other obstacles, there is an urgent need for an improved understanding of repatriation (Chiang et al., 2018). Over the last decade, research scholars have paid attention to the expatriation of academics and causes and consequences of expatriation adjustment (Jonasson et al., 2017; Richardson and McKenna, 2002; Selmer and Luring, 2011, 2010; Trembath, 2016), yet the repatriation of academics has not been sufficiently discussed in

the literature (Garson, 2005; James, 2018). Perhaps this bias in the literature is because repatriation is often deemed a 'non-issue' in comparison to going abroad (Chiang et al., 2018). Nevertheless, it is argued that returning home after working abroad constitutes a critical step for an individual's future career (Akkan et al., 2018). Adjustment theorists in the area of domestic relocation (Ashford and Taylor, 1990; Nicholson, 1984), overseas adjustment (Black et al., 1991), and repatriation adjustment (Black et al., 1992) noted that moving to a new place creates uncertainty and there is the need for individuals to reduce uncertainty.

Over the last few decades, the literature on corporate repatriation has stressed the importance of successful management of repatriation, and has highlighted the fact that unsuccessful management of repatriation leads to employees suffering from problems of adjustment resulting in stress and loss of motivation at work (Black et al., 1992; Greer and Stiles, 2016; Suutari and Brewster, 2003). For instance, many repatriates assume positions upon return that can be referred to as career derailment, because they have less hierarchical value and responsibility than before (Breitenmoser and Bader, 2019). The lack of strategic utilisation of repatriate knowledge (Breitenmoser and Bader, 2019) has dire consequences for organisations such as high turnover, low morale and commitment among repatriates (Chiang et al., 2018).

Various models have been used in the study of repatriation (Black et al., 1992; O'Sullivan, 2002; Chiang et al., 2018), but these models focus mainly on issues related to the repatriation of corporate repatriates. Though Garson (2005) noted that the experiences of both expatriation and repatriation of academics are parallel in the literature, the causes and coping strategies for adjustment of academic repatriates may be different from the repatriation of corporate repatriates. For example, role clarity is a significant predictor of work adjustment of corporate repatriates (Black, 1994; Gregersen and Stroh, 1997) but it may not be an influential factor in the adjustment of academic repatriates, as academics almost play a similar role before, during and after their overseas assignment.

Universities might not be aware of how to manage the repatriation of academics. Academic repatriates might not also be aware of how to manage their repatriation to meet their expectations upon return to their home universities. Therefore, this study seeks to fill these gaps and improve an understanding of the repatriation process and its potential benefits and improve *an understanding of repatriation* process and its potential benefits as suggested in the opening quote by answering the following three questions in relation to academic repatriates:

- 1 What are the determinants of successful adjustment of academic repatriates?
- 2 What are the consequences of unsuccessful repatriation adjustment of academics?
- 3 How can universities and repatriates effectively manage the repatriation process?

Answers to these questions will provide an in-depth and better understanding of the repatriation process of academics and offer guidelines for universities for better management of academic repatriates.

2 Literature review

Repatriation adjustment is a process of re-adjusting into the home context, having stayed overseas for a significant period (Chiang et al., 2018; Littrell and Salas, 2005). Researchers and practitioners have failed to adequately address the issue of returning employees from their foreign assignments (Lazarova and Caligiuri, 2001). However, literature has been consistently suggesting that the process of repatriation adjustment was more severe than what repatriates expected, and their overseas adjustment (Akkan et al., 2018; Black et al., 1992; Chiang et al., 2018).

Upon repatriation, repatriates experience reverse cultural shock and can last approximately a year to a year-and-a-half for repatriates to fully adjust (Adler, 1981; Akkan et al., 2018; Black et al., 1992). When repatriates experience adjustment difficulties they feel alienation, uncertainty, stress and loss of control (Black et al., 1992). In some cases, repatriates leave their home organisation within two years after their repatriation (Lazarova and Caligiuri, 2001; Chiang et al., 2018). When there are high percentage of turnover among repatriates, organisations' ability to recruit future expatriates may be negatively affected (Chiang et al., 2018). Black et al. (1992) found that 42% of repatriates were willing to leave their organisations upon their repatriation, while 74% showed dissatisfaction in working their home organisation. In addition, majority of the repatriates (79%) felt that there was high demand for their international experience and they could easily find better alternative jobs with other organisations.

In the repatriation context, although repatriates may return to the organisation in which they were previously socialised, the information they previously learned may become less helpful (Oddou et al., 2008). Moreover, repatriates may feel the same surprise and uncertainty that newcomers feel (Stroh et al., 2000). Thus, to reduce surprise and uncertainty and become an acceptable member of the group, repatriates need to be re-socialised to their home organisation (Feldman, 1989; Oddou et al., 2008; Stroh et al., 2000).

2.1 *Re-socialisation and repatriation adjustment*

Socialisation and re-socialisation are part of all work-role transitions both into and within organisations (Louis, 1980; Saks and Asforth, 1997; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). Re-socialisation is the individual's process of re-establishing the role-set, rebuilding the connection between the self-image and the role-images and achieving a real and acceptable social status (Bar-Yosef, 1968). Re-socialisation is required for individuals who have been out of the context for a lengthy period of time. For example, when employees return, after a long break, to the context where they previously worked/socialised, they would need to learn the prevailing organisation context in order to reintegrate into it because their previously learned norms and values may have become inappropriate in the present context. In other words, they need to re-socialise to the existing context to become an acceptable member in it. Though the term socialisation and re-socialisation differ in terms of whether an individual learns the norms and values of a new context (socialisation) or those of a context into which he/she has previously been socialised (re-socialisation), the processes are similar.

2.2 *Socialisation theories*

The process of socialisation has been explained through four theoretical perspectives (Saks and Ashforth, 1997):

- 1 Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) model of socialisation tactics (also called organisational socialisation theory (OST)/socialisation tactics theory)
- 2 uncertainty reduction theory (URT) (Berger and Calabrese, 1975; Berger, 1979; Berger and Bradac, 1982)
- 3 cognitive and sense-making theory (Louis, 1980)
- 4 social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 1997).

There is criticism that the socialisation literature has failed to adequately identify and examine current socialisation practices. To address this, Saks and Gruman (2012) introduce a new, more complete and integrated approach to organisational socialisation called socialisation resources theory (SRT).

This study mainly focuses on the re-socialisation of repatriates, and how re-socialisation can facilitate repatriation adjustment and its' consequences. To support the study we employ insights from three theories: OST, SRT, and URT. These theories can adequately explain how and why variables adopted in the present research are related to repatriation adjustment of academics. We discuss these three theories in detail in relation to repatriation adjustment.

2.2.1 *OST and repatriation*

Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) typology of organisational socialisation can be described as one of the best theoretical models of socialisation (Ashforth et al., 2007). The first and most fundamental assumption of this theory is that "individuals undergoing any organizational transition are in an anxiety producing situation. In the main, they are more or less motivated to reduce this anxiety by learning the functional and social requirements of their newly assumed role as quickly as possible" [Van Maanen and Schein, (1979), p.214], and that "organizational socialization and the learning that is associated with it does not occur in a social vacuum" (p.215).

As Van Maanen and Schein (1979) suggested, OST explains the socialisation process of employees who cross the boundary besides newcomers. For example, Black (1992) empirically examined the effect of socialisation tactics on the socialisation outcomes of expatriates and found a positive relationship. According to Saks and Ashforth (1997), a variety of contextual variables such as extra-organisational (national culture, law), organisational (strategy and structure), group (size and diversity), and job/role (job design) variables influence the socialisation factor, which include three levels of variables: organisational level, group level, and individual level. These variables can reduce uncertainty and facilitate learning and adaptation to the new environment. Better learning leads to proximal outcomes such as role clarity, person-job fit, person-organisation fit, social identification, personal change, role orientation, social integration and skill acquisition. These proximal outcomes lead to distal outcomes at the three levels: organisational level, group level and individual level. This model clearly highlights that there are three levels of socialisation tactics that facilitate uncertainty

reduction (adjustment), and that unsuccessful adjustment leads to outcomes that negatively affect individuals as well as organisations.

In sum, the theory of organisational socialisation and related empirical investigations suggest that during socialisation, individuals attempt to reduce uncertainty that socialisation tactics facilitate;

- a uncertainty reduction
- b better adjustment to the work role and work environment leading to organisationally preferred outcomes.

In other words, socialisation tactics lead to socialisation outcomes through proximal outcomes. The content and the process of this theory are applicable to those who cross the boundaries, such as newcomers, expatriates, and repatriates.

Repatriation transitions are often characterised by anxiety and stress (Black et al., 1992; Black and Gregersen, 1991; Harvey, 1982; Howard, 1974; Stroh, 1995), reverse culture shock, cultural identity conflict, depression, anxiety, and interpersonal difficulties (Sonnenschein et al., 2019) and create surprise and uncertainty (Black et al., 1992; Stroh et al., 2000). A successful re-socialisation process facilitates adjustment of repatriates (better fit) to the organisation's environment, thus leading to positive outcomes such as the repatriate's intention to stay and work engagement. Further, although Van Maanen and Schein (1979) did not specifically mention that turnover intentions and work engagement are outcomes of the socialisation process, subsequent empirical investigation of socialisation tactics and outcomes confirmed this fact (Jones, 1986; Kim et al., 2005; Riordan et al., 2001). Through the re-socialisation process, repatriates can reduce uncertainty and adjust better to their organisation's environment. According to OST, organisations that wish to facilitate their employees' socialisation processes need to use tactics that suit a particular context. In the repatriation context, organisations need to retain their repatriates and get better outcomes from them by using their newly acquired skill and knowledge.

2.2.2 SRT and repatriation

SRT (Saks and Gruman, 2012) is a new, more complete and integrated approach to organisational socialisation (Gruman and Saks, 2013). SRT focuses on the resources that facilitate newcomers' successful adjustment to their work, work group, and organisation. SRT proposes that role transition is basically challenging and stressful, and that offering newcomers the resources to cope with these challenges is the best way to facilitate their adjustment and successful integration. SRT focuses on the resources newcomers need and practices and programs to provide them. The theory proposes complete sets of resources and suggests providing newcomers with resources that facilitate and accelerate their adjustment, with positive effects on both proximal and distal socialisation outcomes. According to SRT, resources facilitate better adjustment of employees to their organisations and successful adjustment and socialisation lead to positive individual- and organisation-level outcomes.

OST and SRT acknowledge that different resources have different degrees of influence on various socialisation outcomes. Resources relate differently to proximal and distal outcomes. For example, proactive encouragement can be strongly related to perceptions of person-organisation fit, whereas job resources and feedback can be related

to job performance. This theory further suggests that each resource has a different degree of influence on proximal or distal socialisation outcomes. For example, supervisor support may have less effect on turnover intention (distal outcomes) but may have more effect on perception of person-organisation fit (proximal outcome).

SRT highlights that not only the organisation but also co-workers need to provide necessary resources and individuals need to attempt to accumulate resources to gain energy to get rid of transition stress and adjust to their transitions better. Also, repatriates experience uncertainty and surprise similar to what newcomers tend to experience (Stroh et al., 2000). Like new entrants, repatriates return to their organisations with certain expectations and needs. However, the reality they see may be different from what they expected. Such situations can create challenges, exhaust repatriates' physical and mental resources, and cause stress. According to SRT, resources enable repatriates to overcome their problems during the transition period (Gruman and Saks, 2013; Hobfoll, 2002; Saks and Gruman, 2012). Selvarajah (2008) carried out a study among New Zealand expatriate managers and found that organisational support such as mentoring and training are important for managing the transition process. Agyapong et al. (2019) found organisation support reduces the negative effect of employees' stress. Isfahani and Rezaei (2017) noted that organisational support leads to employees' positive work outcomes such as commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour. Further, Monica (2019) found individual resources such as core-self evaluations and pro-active personality significantly influence work engagement. Therefore, resources facilitate repatriates to adjust to their repatriation transition better, thus leading to positive organisational and individual outcomes such as repatriates' retention and work engagement.

Organisations need to develop realistic expectations through career counselling for repatriates to help them overcome the challenges of re-entry. Additionally, training focused on building realistic expectations of repatriates' adjustments is crucial, for in their study of expectations of returned Chinese graduates, Sonnenschein et al. (2019) observed that returned graduates have unrealistic expectations about their work assignments. Also, repatriates should "avoid elitist attitude and sense of superiority" [Sonnenschein et al., (2019), p.1] and focus on building trusting relations with colleagues for it is argued that trusting relationships with other academics is key to survival in academia (Jonasson et al., 2017). SRT focuses on socialisation resources rather than practices. First it focuses on the resources newcomers need, and then on methods to satisfy such needs. When organisations provide the necessary resources for newcomers, they can better adjust and perform well in the workplace. Also, organisations can enjoy the individual-, group- and organisation-level positive outcomes that increase the success of the organisation through finding the exact practices or bundle of practices, and the necessary resources that facilitate newcomers' adjustment. SRT suggests the ways that newcomers can build their personal resources associated with success, well-being and positive outcomes that enable individual and organisation to survive in an uncertain and increasingly challenging global environment (Gruman and Saks, 2013).

2.2.3 URT and repatriation

URT (Berger, 1979; Berger and Bradac, 1982; Berger and Calabrese, 1975) was originally an interpersonal communication theory. The core of this theory is that individuals are naturally inclined to reduce or eliminate uncertainty. When individuals experience unpredictability that causes uncertainty they attempt to reduce uncertainty and

increase predictability (Berger and Calabrese, 1975). When uncertainty decreases, intimacy increases, and an individual can fit with the environment.

URT clearly articulates that people have goals, and act in a way to achieve their desired goals. In uncertain environments, to achieve their goals they have to increase predictability (reduce uncertainty) and make sense out of the events they perceive (Berger and Calabrese, 1975). In the process of uncertainty reduction, individuals can use a passive strategy (individual observations and accumulation of information), an active strategy (proactive effort to get to know the target, for example collecting information from other people than the object of uncertainty), or an interactive strategy (directly interacting with the object of uncertainty and gathering information from the object) (Antheunis et al., 2012; Berger, 1979). Though people use different strategies, these are primarily proactive strategies intended to reduce uncertainty and make sense of the environment (Berger and Calabrese, 1975).

Although URT was originally developed to explain the initial interaction between individuals in the uncertain environment, Parkers and Adelman (1983) and Levine et al. (2010) argue that it also demonstrates the ongoing interactions of individuals. Further, this theory was widely used to describe individual adjustment in organisational settings. For example, Kramer (1993) examined this theory in relation to employees who transfer to another job or another location within the same company. He found that transferees, who experienced high uncertainty, were more proactive (requested more feedback from their co-workers) than others.

According to URT, during the role transition, employees experience a high degree of uncertainty and are motivated to minimise their uncertainty by creating a more predictable, understandable and controllable work environment (Falcione and Wilson, 1988; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). They use a range of sources such as supervisors and co-workers to accumulate the information necessary to reduce their uncertainty and make the environment predictable (Louis et al., 1983).

In sum, URT suggests that when individuals are in an uncertain environment, they attempt to reduce uncertainty and make sense of the environment to achieve their desired goals. URT has also been applied in organisational settings where employees experience uncertainty, and the theory thus provides a platform for examining the repatriation adjustment process. According to URT, in an uncertain situation, repatriates seeking to reduce uncertainty and increase predictability tend to be proactive through information seeking, role negotiation, networking, and positive framing. When repatriates are in certain and foreseeable situations, they feel more comfortable.

2.3 Combining the three socialisation theories

Research scholars often explain a phenomenon by viewing it through multiple theoretical lenses, in order to provide holistic explanations for the occurrence of the phenomenon, and is regarded the best way to establish the internal validity of a theory (Christensen, 2006). Also, combining different theoretical lenses provides new ways to see the problem, and open new important areas for further investigation (Subrahmanyam, 2008).

Combining multiple theoretical lenses brings challenges, but these can be overcome by considering the proximity of the theoretical lenses and the compatibility of the assumptions. When the different theoretical lenses explain the common characteristics of the phenomenon and/or were developed based on similar assumptions, a researcher can

combine such theories. Such combinations can explain the occurrences of the phenomenon clearly in different perspectives.

However, Okhuysen and Bonardi (2011, p.8) note that “proximity between the phenomena explained and compatibility in underlying assumptions are not the requirements for successful combination of theoretical lenses.” Further, they suggest that if the researcher needs to connect unrelated areas of research to explain the new phenomenon, he or she can combine theoretical lenses that do not have proximity and do not share similar underlying assumptions. Also, such combination becomes more important in the area of research where related theoretical antecedents are lacking.

URT, OST, and SRT explain how an individual can adjust to an uncertain environment. These three theories focus mainly on why individuals experience uncertainty and why and how they can manage such uncertain environments. URT proposes that in order to create a predictable environment, individuals are motivated to attempt to reduce uncertainty, while OST primarily assumes that individuals will attempt to reduce uncertainty. Also, SRT accepts the similar notion that stress and uncertainty created by transition can be reduced by providing resources. Moreover, these three theories argue that uncertainty reduction leads to better fit with the *object*: in the URT, this object is an individual, but in OST and SRT the object is the organisation’s environment (e.g., people, task).

Though there are similarities between the phenomena that each theory examines, one theory on its own is insufficient to explain the complexity of the context (Christensen, 2006; Okhuysen and Bonardi, 2011). Each theory describes a particular portion of the model and provides a different explanation why such a proposed relationship exists. URT explains individuals’ needs to be proactive in uncertain environments. OST explains the organisation’s and co-workers’ roles in helping employees to better adjust, and consequences of adjustment. SRT also describes the importance of the organisation’s, co-workers’, and individuals’ proactive behaviour to adjustment and implications of adjustment. These three theories jointly explain that when individuals enter a new environment, they experience unpredictability, uncertainty, and surprise. Also they explain that organisation’s and co-workers’ support and individuals’ proactive behaviour enable individuals to overcome the challenges and stress of the uncertain environment, and reach the state of adjustment to the new environment. Better adjustment leads to positive socialisation outcomes.

These theories explain the same phenomenon from different perspectives. For example, both SRT and OST explain how the organisation’s support facilitates repatriation adjustment, but they provide different explanations for the occurrence of such phenomena. SRT explains that the transition creates uncertainty, and that when the organisation provides a platform for learning and reduces uncertainty, individuals can learn and reduce uncertainty. The reduction of uncertainty enables them to better adjust to the organisation.

3 Repatriation adjustment model based on OST, SRT and URT

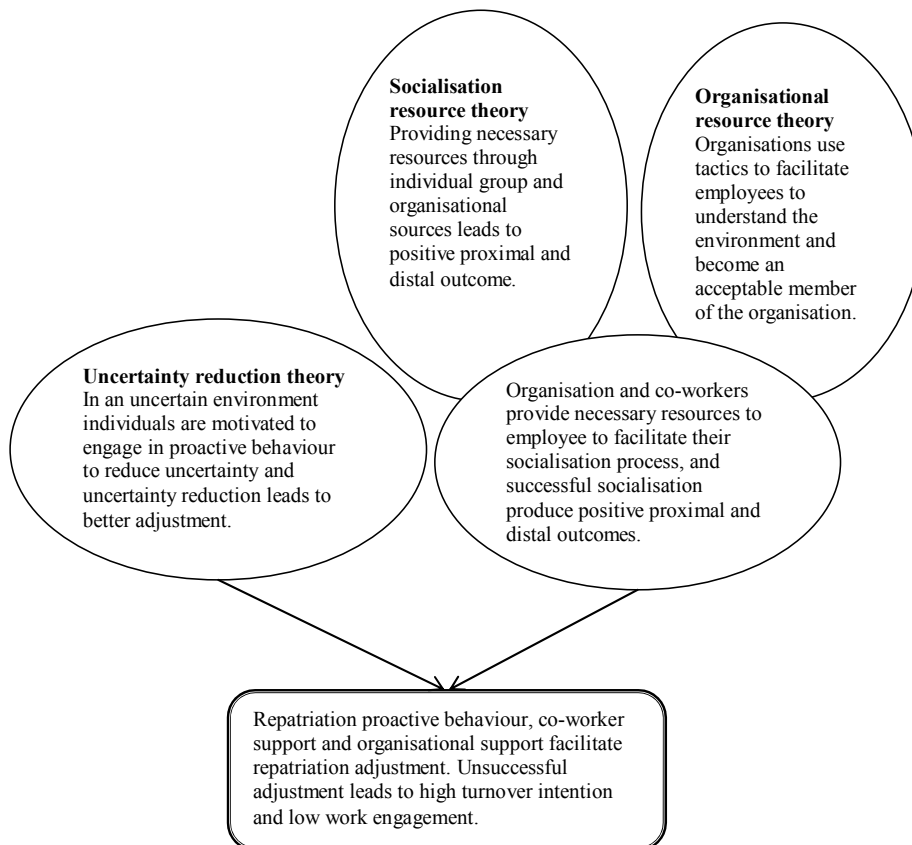
Figure 1 illustrates how these three theories together explain why and how repatriates’ proactive behaviour, perceived co-worker support and organisational support influence

their adjustment to repatriation, and why and how adjustment to repatriation influences repatriates' turnover intentions and their work engagement.

According to URT, upon repatriation, repatriates are in an uncertain and unpredictable environment and are motivated to engage in proactive behaviour that will reduce uncertainty and increase predictability. Engaging in proactive behaviour provides valuable resources (information) from which to learn about the uncertain environment and make predictions about that environment. Further, uncertainty reduction increases the intimacy between the organisation and the repatriates. In other words, when repatriates reduce uncertainty and find a predictable environment, they fit the organisation and adjust to their repatriation better.

SRT explains why repatriates need resources such as information, confidence, and social support, and how these resources lead to proximal (e.g., adjustment) and distal (e.g., turnover intentions and work engagement) outcomes. According to SRT, repatriation is challenging and stressful, and providing necessary resources makes repatriates less likely to experience stress, more capable of solving problems, better at using their existing resources, and able to cultivate more resources (Bakker et al., 2010; Gruman and Saks, 2013; Hobfoll, 2002; Saks and Gruman, 2012). In brief, SRT highlights resources that facilitate successful socialisation through overcoming repatriation transition stress and challenges.

Figure 1 OST, SRT and URT repatriation adjustment model



Therefore, during the adjustment period support from the organisation and co-workers, and individual engagement in proactive behaviour, can be sources of valuable resources (Gruman and Saks, 2013; Saks and Gruman, 2012). These resources help repatriates to adjust better, and better adjustment motivates them to remain with the organisation and engage strongly in their work. Also, when repatriates receive resources through their proactive behaviour and support from their co-workers and organisation, their self-efficacy increases. Self-efficacy may help them to adjust their repatriation transition and motivates them to remain with their organisation and engage at their work. Therefore, SRT explains how and why proactive behaviour, co-worker support and organisational support influence adjustment to repatriation, and adjustment influences their turnover intentions and work engagement.

Similarly to SRT, OST explains the influence of organisational and co-worker support on repatriation adjustment and the influence of adjustment on repatriates' intention to leave and their work engagement. However, the explanations provided by these two theories are different. SRT argues that providing necessary resources gives energy to overcome repatriation stress and challenges, and facilitates repatriation adjustment, leading to positive proximal and distal outcomes, whereas OST explains the same relationship by referring to learning and uncertainty reduction. According to OST, when the organisation and co-workers provide support by employing appropriate socialisation tactics repatriates can learn the work and work role behaviour, reduce uncertainty and reach a state of adjustment. Moreover, satisfactory adjustment motivates repatriates to remain with the organisation and engage in their work.

4 Conclusions

Repatriation is a stressful experience to all re-entry groups including academic repatriates. On overseas assignment both employees and organisations make huge investments, but most of them get anaemic return on their investment. Literature on repatriation of corporate employees proposed many antecedents and consequences of repatriation adjustment, but most of them may not be relevant to repatriation of academics. This study, based on OST, SRT and URT, concludes that organisation support, co-worker support and individual engagement in proactive behaviour are the resources that enable repatriates to better adjust to their repatriation transition and the better adjustment enables them to engage in their work and remain at their home organisation.

5 Theoretical and managerial implications, limitations of the research and future research

By focusing on repatriation of academics, this paper seeks to extend prior studies of the international assignment literature which focuses largely on expatriate management practices, antecedents and consequences of expatriate adjustment and expatriate knowledge transfer (Chiang et al., 2018). The study seeks to provide a foundation of relevant literature in the field of repatriation to serve as a basis for developing further enquiries into contemporary issues concerning repatriation of academic repatriates and to

highlight possible areas for future research. The paper provides clarification on how universities can provide repatriation support in order to promote career development and retention rates of academic repatriates. Furthermore, unlike previous studies that focused primarily on the mitigating effect of organisational repatriation support, this study highlights the role of organisation, group and individual in order to comprehend the phenomenon of academic repatriation in a holistic manner.

This study can serve as a toolkit for academic institutions to assess critically the extent to which repatriation support meet the expectations of academic repatriates and to put in place human resource policies, practices and processes to enhance satisfaction and retention. For instance, the creation of opportunities for academic repatriates to receive recognition and gain visibility through the allocation of jobs deemed suitable can facilitate the repatriation process. Providing support for repatriates' overall wellbeing can minimise negative psychological consequences and improve the repatriation process (Aldossari and Robertson, 2018).

This article focused solely on academic journal articles and book chapters relevant to expatriation and repatriation published in English and it is possible that other salient analysis on the topic published in other languages are excluded from this study. A wider range of publications would have added more detailed and rich insight (Ahworegba, 2018) into the phenomenon of academic repatriates.

As noted above academic repatriates experience repatriation stress similar to that of corporate repatriates, but it is not clear if the causes for repatriation stress are similar to both. Therefore, future studies could empirically investigate to identify whether the factors influencing repatriation adjustment are similar to both academic and corporate repatriates or not. In case there are other issues influencing the adjustment of academic repatriates, then organisations and repatriates can design appropriate strategies to mitigate stress and challenges associated with repatriation of academics, and to meet expected outcomes from the investments of both academic and corporate repatriates.

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