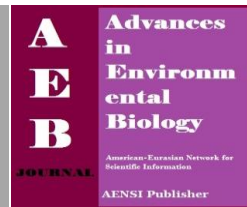




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Determinants of Expatriate Manager Failures in the International Assignment

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ABSTRACT

The international assignment requires an organization send their staff abroad for high potential career development, to coordinate global lines of business, transfer the organization knowledge in abroad, expand into new markets worldwide and also manage an international subsidiary. A successful expatriate manager is generally requires an extensive amount of time and financial but a failed expatriate can be even more costly for an organization. Therefore, this study is very important to investigate the determinant factors of expatriate manager failed in their international assignment. Generally, there are many factors influencing the expatriate's manager failed in their international assignment such as lack of knowledge and skill, inability to cope with new culture, personal conflicts and so on. However, the current study will be focusing on the several factors; difficulties to cope with new culture, language problem, family problem and emotional immaturity. The objectives of the study are to examine the relationship between family problems, inability to adapt with new culture, language problem and emotional immaturity towards expatriate failure. Then, to determine the most factor contribute towards expatriate manager failure. This study is using quantitative method by randomly distributed 140 set of questionnaires to expatriate managers. The result of the study revealed that the family problems and emotional immaturity is supported and influence the expatriate manager failure while inability to adapt with new culture and language problems are not supported of the current study. Finally, the most factor contribute to the expatriate manager failure in their international assignment is emotional immaturity.

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INTRODUCTION

Expatriate failure and success are obviously critical and related issues for global firms. Expatriate failure defined as the premature return of an expatriate that is, a return home before the period of assignment is completed [8]. Expatriate as defined by Gerhart & Fang [10] is an employee who is working and temporarily residing in a foreign country. Expatriate manager is also refer to home country national which is usually for an employee of the firm, who is sent abroad to manage a foreign subsidiary. The term is used in the context of professionals working in another country. Besides that, an expatriate is expected to relocate abroad with or without family for a short period of six months to a year depending on the types of international assignment whether short, extended or long term international assignment. Organization use international assignment to send their staff abroad for high potential career development and to coordinate global lines of business, as well as transfer the organization knowledge in abroad, expand into new markets worldwide and also manage an international subsidiary. However, expatriate assignments can be costly for organization because of the special compensation packages, housing and relocation cost, pre-departure training and so on. Harzing, [13] stated that a success of expatriate is generally requires an extensive amount of time and money but a failed expatriate can be even more costly for an organization.

There has been some discussion in the previous literatures by Yehuda [36] and Naumann [26] on the usefulness of defining expatriate failure so narrowly. For example, an expatriate may be ineffective and poorly adjusted, but if not recalled, the person will not be considered a failure. In such of case, an expatriate failure represents a selection error, often compounded by ineffective expatriate management policies. There are many factors influencing the expatriate failure in their international assignment amongst the reasons are an inability to either effectively handle new responsibilities or to adjust to the country of assignment is likely to contribute to diminished performance levels. These results may not be immediately apparent but it can have long-term

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negative consequences or a failure in the Host Country National (HCN) that is subsidiary performance [8]. Again, according to Harzing [13], from 1970 through the 1990's expatriate manager failure rates were somewhere from 30% to 70% that depending on the country. With the globalization of business, opportunities and challenges, the need for expatriate in international location becomes a requirement. Consequently, the Global Human Resources Manager actually needs to understand the potential of international assignment failure and the impact on the business since the international assignment involved direct and indirect costs of failure.

Therefore, the main aim of this paper is to investigate the determinant factors of expatriate manager failed in their international assignment. Even though, there are many determinants factors contribution to the expatriate failure in their international assignment such as inability to either effectively handle new responsibilities or to adjust to the country of assignment however the paper will be focusing on the several factors such as difficulties to cope with new culture, language problem, family problem and emotional immaturity. Meanwhile, the objectives of the study are to examine the relationship between family problems, inability to adapt with new culture, language problem and emotional immaturity towards expatriate failure. Finally, the overall paper will be ended with the conclusion.

The debate on the degree to which expatriate failure occurs has been accompanied by investigation and speculation about why this failure occurs. Basically, there is several factors influence the expatriate failure such as difficulties with the new culture Adler [1], language problem , family issues and emotional immaturity [3]. The reviews of each factor will be discussed further in the following paragraph.

Difficulties with New Culture:

Culture consists in patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and transmitted mainly by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups [16]. A difficulty to adapt with new culture is one of the factors that can contribute to the expatriate manager's failure in international assignment. Basically international assignment ends with failure due to the challenges that they need to face and the difficulty to adapt with new way of life, new tasks in the host countries.

According to Rothmann [30], expatriate should have the strong awareness and tolerance for cultural differences, adaptability and comfort with risk and drive the new experiences during international assignment. Prior taking the international assignment, expatriates need to research and learn about the country in which he or she want to go whether it seems to be the right time, the right job and the right location before depart to the host country. Besides that, Barker [2] found that the western project managers working in Asian region encounter various challenges such as cultural differentiation. Culture differences can give impact to the adaptation of the expatriate to the international assignment and job effectiveness during the international assignment. Inability to face with challenges of new culture and failure to adapt it, can contribute to expatriate failure to complete their international assignment. Generally, when the expatriate are sent abroad for an international assignment, they have to adjust the cross-culturally includes the interacting with nationals of the respective nation and adjusting to the new culture's environment inside and outside the workplace. The U-curve in Figure 1 visualizes several stages are honeymoon, culture shock, adjustment and mastery.

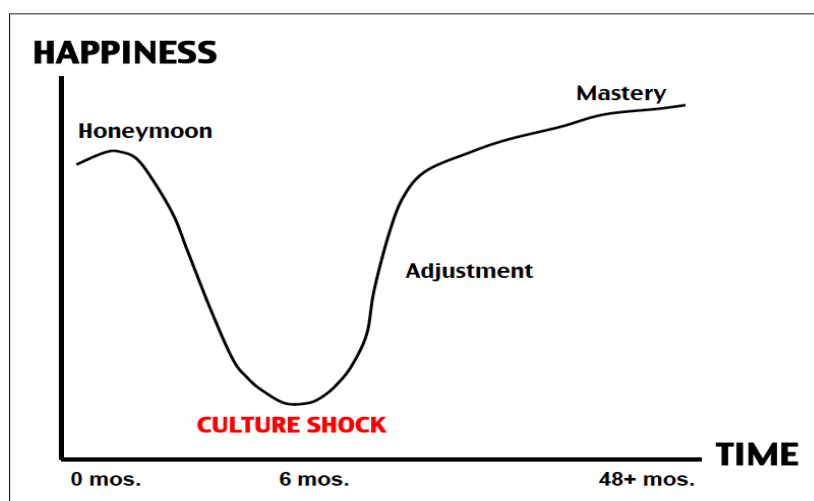


Fig. 1: The Culture Shock Cycle Adler [1].

Language Problem:

Basically, language is the important part when carried out the international assignment in foreign country. The ability to speak local language is an aspect often linked with cross-cultural ability. Language skills may be

regarded as critical importance for some expatriate positions but lesser in others though. Some would argue the knowledge of the host country's language is an important aspect of expatriate performance.

Differences in language are recognized as barrier to effective cross-cultural communication. Fixman [9] stated that, the foreign language skills were rarely considered an important part of international business success. Actually, the language is important in an international assignment. Whenever expatriate fail to adapt or inability to speak either one any foreign language, it will difficult to expatriate to communicate and to manage the employees in the workplace. The instruction given to the subordinates may not understand and will indirectly affect the daily operation and job performance of the expatriate.

According to Naumman [26], the task organization characteristics are significantly related to job satisfaction and it show the effectiveness in speaking other country language. The language problem can cause of the communication problems. The possibilities for communication and interactions are considerably enhanced if managers are proficient in the language of the culture in which an expatriate is operating [24]. Expatriates should be aware of the foreign country language despite which it forms a hurdle for their existence.

Family Issues:

According to Gregersen and Black [11], the spouses and family issues is one of major factors that influence the expatriate failure. The importance of family when managing international assignment is critical. Again, Tung [21] found that the spouse is inability to adjust in the new environment as the main reasons of the expatriate failed.

Most expatriate are challenged and excited to be in their new posting. They need to spend a lot of time at work since they are under pressure to adapt new culture and the overall responsibilities are often larger than they have experienced before. Other than that, the wife is usually dealing with problems in which she has no previous experience. In addition, family issues found to be primary causes of an international assignment failure indicates in a survey of eight U.S MNCs uncovered some important facts about the reasons for corporate expatriate failure. The personal and family problems are the main issues towards the expatriate failure. Besides, it is reported by Black [3], many countries such as America found that between 10 to 40 percent of their manager's return before completion of their international assignment due to family inability to adjust with new environment. It means that, the family problem is the degree of unfit between expatriate family and the new socio-cultural environment. These include "for spouses and families, unfamiliar transportation, housing, food, healthcare and education problems [5].

Other than that, the role of children needs to be noted. Number and age of the children are also important for expatriate to adjust their families into new environment. According to Naumann [26] equated that successful an international assignment with fewer younger children. The problems for these expatriates start when they turn back to home because their small children are grown in a different culture. It is more likely that expatriates with the bigger children will be less willing to accept an international assignment. Again, the education of children will be a major problem that expatriates face when they are assigned to an international assignment. Children generally experience that language and new schools are the problems in a new social and cultural environment. The quality of school is relatively important concepts that expatriate are careful about.

Emotional Immaturity:

Emotional immaturity is referring to the problem that expatriates faced during international assignment [18]. Moving the country for a new job and leaving the family and home is cause of stress to expatriates. With the respect of new job in abroad and new impressions will increase the level of stress. Expatriates might find themselves in situations that they do not understand or regard as not being ethical. In addition, when expatriates start work in new country, they often see themselves confronted with increase the responsibilities. Back in their country, they might be have worked as middle managers and when they are relocated in an Asian country for example, they might be on a higher hierarchical before.

According to Quick & Nelson [29], emotions are referring to the short lived states which are likely to be intense and focus on the specific cause. Its display the rules to determine in social norms which specify the emotions that can be expressed publicly or privately felt and it is consist of societal, occupational and organizational norms. This displays the rules that basically related with the emotions. In addition, George & Jones [12] stated that ego, emotions, anger, frustration and pride tend to be associated with the expatriate and these emotions have little regard for others. Generally, there are several problems that can contribute to the emotional immaturity among expatriate. These problems could make expatriate feel loneliness, dissatisfaction with quality of life in foreign country, lack communication with other employees, dissatisfaction on appropriate compensation packages and so on. Nikolaeva [28], there is no simple solution to this problem of loneliness when move to overseas. When the expatriate's loneliness, it develops stresses and may not focus to the task given. It causes expatriates failure in their international assignment. Lastly, the problem on emotional immaturity among expatriate is expatriate did not get an opportunity to prove themselves that they can success in the international assignment. This problem might be occurs when the company fail to provide sufficient

opportunity to the expatriate. Some company thinks the expatriate from certain country could fail in the international project assigned to them.

Theoretical Framework:

After reviewed on previous literature reviews, the following theoretical framework was illustrated the relationship between difficulties with new culture, language problem, family issues and emotional immaturity that can cause the expatriate failure. Most of the previous researchers and scholars stated that all these factors relatively to the expatriate failure. Thus, the theoretical of the study can be illustrated as Figure 2 below:-

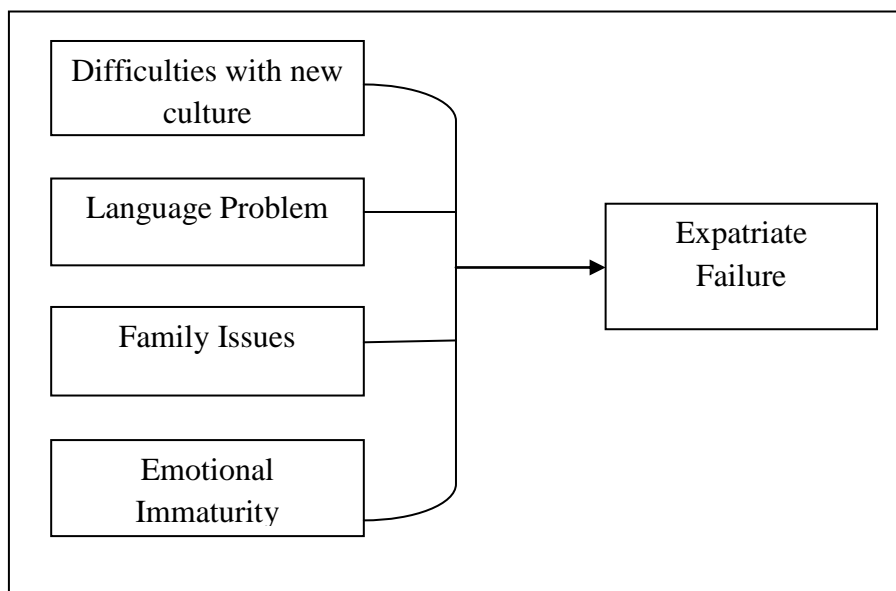


Fig. 2: Theoretical Framework.

Based on the relationship in figure 2, the following hypotheses were developed for testing.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between difficulties with new culture and expatriate failure.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between language problem and expatriate failure.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between family issues and expatriate failure.

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant relationship between emotional immaturity and expatriate failure.

Research Methods:

The survey is used in the study. It involves using adaption and modification of questionnaires from Shahzad Ghafoor [31] and Neal [27] in collecting data. Such questions are direct and offer concrete option which is respondent may choose to represent their views. Then, it classified into fields according to the needs of the study. This method was chosen due to easy to collect the data and facilitate to analyze it. There are 140 respondents consists expatriates among Malaysian and Non-Malaysian working in Malaysia as well as in abroad to undergo the survey. The respondents were randomly picked from business and education industries for the sample. The selection of the subjects was done by select the respondents from any position they worked. The selection of subject also randomly selected across the gender and background. To ensure the result reliable, the respondents were selected equally from every position.

SPSS 17.0 (Statistical Package for Social Science) program for Windows is used to analyze the data and used to evaluate the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable. Statistical tools used to analyze the data are to meet the objectives of this study. To determine which factors can attribute to expatriate failures, the means and standard deviation of difficulties with new culture, language problem, family issues and emotion immaturity were computed. Next, to identify the positive correlation between the difficulties with new culture, language problem, family issues and emotion immaturity towards expatriate failure, correlation analysis was used to determine if there is a significant between the factors to expatriate failure.

Findings:

The analysis has been carried out from the data gathered. Several analyses are made consist of descriptive analysis on respondent profiles and variables, reliability, correlation as well as regression analysis. Table 1 below shows the sample profile of the questionnaire. A total of 140 questionnaires were distributed randomly among selected respondents. However, only 100 questionnaires were collected back, which made up 71% of total questionnaires distributed.

Table 1: Sample Profile.

Items	Total Questionnaire
Number of Questionnaire Distributed	140
Number of Questionnaire Collected Back	100
Response Rate	71%
Number of Questionnaire Used for Analysis	100

Table 2 summarizes all demographic data of respondents including gender, age, marital status, nationality, education level and length of service. It can be seen that out of 100 respondents, there were more female respondents rather than male. The results show that 54% are female and the remaining 46% are male. The majority of respondents were aged between 21-25 years old (70%), 26-35 years old (27%), and only (3%) were between 36-45 years old. None of them were 46-55 years old and 56 above. A total of 63 (63%) respondents were single and 37 (37%) were married. Besides, the nationality is major refer to 59 (59%) respondents come from Malaysian and 41 (41%) come from non-Malaysian. In terms of education levels, 53 (53%) are represent undergraduate and 47 (47%) are represent postgraduate respondents. As for length of services, majority respondents have been working as expatriates form 2-5 years (74%). Besides, the other respondents working as expatriates are less than 1 years (15%), 6-9 years (9%) and 10 years (2%).

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	46	46.0
	Female	54	54.0
Age	21-25	70	70.0
	26-35	27	27.0
	36-45	3	3.0
	46-55	-	-
	56-Above	-	-
Marital Status	Single	63	63.0
	Married	37	37.0
Nationality	Malaysia	59	59.0
	Non-Malaysia	41	41.0
Education Level	Undergraduate	53	53.0
	Post-graduate	47	47.0
Length of service	Less than 1 year	15	15.0
	2-5 years	74	74.0
	6-9 years	9	9.0
	10 years above	2	2.0

Descriptive Analysis among all Variables:

Based on Table 3 below, mean for all variable ranges is 3.2075 to 3.1500. The mean and standard deviation for independent variables measures which are difficulties with new culture were 3.1650, language problem were 3.1586, family issues were 3.1657 but the highest value on standard deviation which is .84154 and the highest mean is emotional immaturity which is 3.2075 respectively. Next, for the mean of expatriate failure is 3.1500 which is the lowest mean with standard deviation of .61904. This is show that, the mean of tested five variables is approaching to 4 as it can be assumed as the respondents agree with the tested variables.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis.

Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation
Expatriate Failure	3.1500	.61904
Difficulties with new culture	3.1650	.54119
Language problem	3.1586	.57031
Family Issues	3.1657	.84154
Emotional Immaturity	3.2075	.55312

Reliability Analysis:

Table 4 shows Cronbach's and item of each dependent variable namely Expatriate Failure. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha values for all factor that range from 0.720 to 0.891 indicated good inter-items consistency for each factor. Cronbach's alpha was 0.720 for difficult with new culture, 0.741 for language problem, 0.779 for emotional immaturity and 0.826 for expatriate failure and 0.891 for family issues. The Cronbach's of family issues is higher from other reliability. The consequences of low or negative interrelation statements correlation

can cause reduction in the value of the reliability. Hinton *et al.* have suggested four cut-off points for reliability, which includes excellent reliability (0.90 and above), high reliability (0.70-0.90), moderate reliability (0.50-0.70) and the low reliability (0.50 and below).

Table 4: Reliability Test.

Variables	Number of Items	Items Dropped	Cronbach Alpha	Indicator
Expatriate Failure	8	-	0.826	High Reliability
Difficulties with new culture	8	-	0.720	High Reliability
Language problem	7	-	0.741	High Reliability
Family Issues	7	1	0.891	High Reliability
Emotional Immaturity	8	-	0.779	High Reliability

Correlation Analysis:

Tables 5 below, the results had shown the correlation coefficient analysis. The table was interprets a good relation within the variables. The language problem and emotional immaturity are strongly correlate with the expatriate failure which is .509 and .631 respectively. As this independent and dependent variables were approaching to 1, be said that these variables have a strong relationship. Then, the difficulties with new culture and family issues are weak correlation which is .460 and .365. Besides, the value of Pearson correlation (r) also shows the positive value, thus there was positive correlation. Since the Pearson correlation is positive, it can be assumed that the language problem and emotional immaturity is the most factor influence expatriate failure during an international assignment.

Table 5: Correlation Coefficient Analysis.

Variables		Expatriate Failure	Difficulties with new culture	Language problem	Family Issues	Emotional Immaturity
Expatriate Failure	Pearson Correlation	1	.460**	.509**	.365**	.631**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
Difficulties with new culture	Pearson Correlation	.460**	1	.403**	.137	.715**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.174	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
Language problem	Pearson Correlation	.509**	.403**	1	.253*	.656**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.011	.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
Family Issues	Pearson Correlation	.365**	.137	.253*	1	.350**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.174	.011		.000
	N	100	100	100	100	100
Emotional Immaturity	Pearson Correlation	.631**	.715**	.656**	.350**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	100	100	100	100	100

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlations is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Regression Analysis:

Based on result shown in Table 6, the variation of expatriate failure is 44% (R square) affected independent variables. The remaining of 56% is affected by other factors. In addition, the value of beta presents the positive rate of change by dependent variables (.404 and .170) with both independent variables are found to have positively correlated and highly significant relation ($0.000 < 0.05$). First, hypothesis 1 stated that, there is a significant relationship between difficulties with new culture and expatriates failure, since the significant relation is .480 which means more than .05, thus the hypothesis was rejected. Second, hypothesis 2 stated that, there is a significant relationship between language problem and expatriate failure. This show that the significant relation is .102, thus the hypothesis was rejected. Next, hypothesis 3 stated that, there is a significant relationship between family issues and expatriate failure, the significant relation is .044 which means less than .05, thus hypothesis was accepted and lastly is hypothesis 4 stated that, there is a significant relationship between emotional immaturity and expatriate failure, so the significant relation is .005 which means less than .05, the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 6: Result of Regression Analysis on Expatriate Failure.

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.435	.345		1.262	.210
	Difficulties with new culture	.091	.129	.080	.709	.480
	Language Problem	.184	.111	.169	1.653	.102
	Family Issues	.125	.061	.170	2.044	.044
	Emotional Immaturity	.452	.157	.404	2.869	.005

R square = .440

Durbin-Watson = 1.523

F = 18.662

Sig. F = .000

Summarily, based on the analysis carried out the results of hypothesis tested as below Table 7.

Table 7: Hypothesis Testing

No. of Hypothesis	Statement of Hypothesis	Results
H ₁	There is a significant relationship between difficulties with new culture and expatriate failure.	Rejected
H ₂	There is a significant relationship between language problem and expatriate failure.	Rejected
H ₃	There is a significant relationship between family issues and expatriate failure.	Accepted
H ₄	There is a significant relationship between emotional immaturity and expatriates failure.	Accepted

Discussion:

The present study was conducted to examine how the factors such as different with new culture, language problem, family issues and emotional immaturity towards the expatriate failure. To recall the independent variable of the present study, the factors of expatriate failure can be divided into four components which are differences with new culture, language problem, family issues and emotional immaturity. The main objective of the study is to investigate the determinant factors of expatriate manager failed in their international assignment. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to examine the relationship between family problems, inability to adapt with new culture, language problem and emotional immaturity towards expatriate failure.

Firstly, the researcher will present the accepted hypothesis and will be followed by rejected hypothesis. Based on the findings, there were positive relationships between family issues and emotional immaturity towards the expatriate failure. Hypothesis 3 examines the relationship between family issues and expatriate failure and the hypothesis is accepted. This shows that the family issues or family problem is cause of expatriate failure during an international assignment. This result is in line with the previous researchers done by Wagner & Moulik [35]. They stated that the return of expatriates from international assignments was related with the family reasons. This statement also supports from previous study on expatriate failure that show the inability of spouse to adapt the new environment in foreign country is the causes of the expatriate failure [21]. Basically, the major challenge as expatriate is family adaptation towards new culture. This is because the family had comfortable with the environment in their own country. Chew, [7] also stated that, for expatriate with children will have the problems in overseas such as difficulty of adapting to new schools, new friends, children also must learn the new language and culture. In generally, family is play an important role to expatriate in order to ensure the success in the international assignment, however the family also can cause of the expatriate failure if without support from them. Affect from that, the expatriate performance during an international assignment will be problem. The result shows that, family issues or family problem is factor may influence expatriate failure.

Hypotheses 4 examine the relationship between relationship between emotional immaturity and expatriates failure. In generally, emotional immaturity is one of the factors that can contribute to expatriate failure such as problem on expatriate fail to get suitable compensation, loneliness and so on. According to Vesa & Christelle [34], neuroticism or emotional stability explains personality traits such as moody, tense and anxious. Besides that, emotional immaturity can influence the expatriate failed in their job. When expatriate getting stress, the focus to the job will be affected their performance during an international assignment. Basically, emotional problems or immaturity is the main factors that can contribute to expatriate failure due to failure to manage expatriate that cannot manage their emotion effectively.

However, intriguing findings revealed that, Hypothesis 1 examines the relationship between difficulties with new culture. This hypothesis is rejected due to some expatriate able to perform and manage their situation effectively when they in abroad. In addition, many of expatriates can manage their time efficiently and ability to adapt with new culture since there is a pre-departure training program has been provided to them prior to undergo the international assignment.

Finally, is hypothesis 2 examines the relationship between language problem and expatriate failure. Differences in language are considered a main obstacle for the communication of expatriate from different countries areas and also a reason for culture shock. According to Tilli [32], mentioned that the knowledge of the other foreign language is important for the successful in international assignment. It is because, the company

managed to hire the expatriate with inability to communicate more than one languages. It shows that, the company had provides the language training program prior to depart in the foreign country. Language skill is important part to ensure the successful of expatriate in international assignment. Besides that, the company may use the translator to help them in certain communication problem.

Conclusion:

It is concluded that, there many factors contributing to the expatriate managers failure in their international assignment. Among the factors could contribute to that failure are inability to either effectively handle new responsibilities or to adjust to the country of assignment is likely to contribute to diminished performance levels, lack of knowledge and skill, inability to cope with new culture, personal conflicts and so on. However the current study focused on several variables such as difficulties to cope with new culture, language problem, family problem and emotional immaturity.

Furthermore, this study is very important to investigate the determinant factors consists of difficulties to cope with new culture, language problem, family problem and emotional immaturity towards expatriate managers failed in their international assignment. The study is very important since the expatriate manager failure rates were somewhere from 30% to 70% that depending on the country. Based on findings, the study found that the factors influenced the expatriate failure is the family issues and the emotional immaturity. However, the emotional immaturity is the most highly affected to the expatriate failure during their international assignment. Again, the result revealed that, the variation of expatriate failure is 44% affected by those independent variables studied. The remaining of 56% is affected by other factors.

By conducting this study, it contributes to the better understanding on the problems contribute to the expatriate failure. Therefore, the organization could help their expatriate by equipped their expatriate sufficient knowledge, skills and guideline prior to assign for any international assignment to their employees. Finally, a successful expatriate manager is generally requires an extensive amount of time and financial but a failed expatriate can be even more costly for an organization. In view of that, the organization should aware the exact causes contributing to the failure of their expatriate managers during international assignment.

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