



RESEARCH PAPER

Encountering Reverse Culture Shock: A Study on Returnee Faculty Members in Universities of Balochistan, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the challenges that returnees face at universities in reverse culture shock, role of supervisors' support and the over all impact on job satisfaction and turnover intentions of the returning faculty members. Returnee-faculty of universities tend to leave their institutions and intend to find a better job after completing their foreign degree. This creates problems for universities in Pakistan regarding retaining employees after completion of their degrees abroad. This quantitative research is based on survey data, collected from 160 respondents. Snowball sampling technique was used to collect the data and was analyzed using PLS-SEM technique. Results indicated that the reverse culture shock faced by the returnee-faculty of universities of Baluchistan has a negative impact on job satisfaction and a positive impact on their turnover intentions. However, perceived managerial support does not impact the relationship between reverse culture shock-job satisfaction and reverse culture shock-turnover intention relationships. The findings suggest that the repatriation process of faculty returning after completing degrees from other counties should be made more compatible with the professional and intellectual needs of these faculty members, so that the employee turnover rate in Universities in Pakistan could be reduced.

KEYWORDS Returnee-faculty, Reverse Cultural Shock, Turnover Intention, Perceived Managerial Support

Introduction

People across the world settle in different geographical locations. They differ in terms of race, ethnicity, religious belief, political ideology, and culture. People, encountering a new setting, experience change in material and non-material aspects of society. Reverse culture shock is an experience that an individual goes through after returning home and engrossed in a new culture for some time, quite enough to result in emotional and mental reconciliation before proper functioning in a new environment. Culture shock has been studied widely and the problems of the people that they face in alien culture are discussed extensively. However, this study will focus on the problems and difficulties faced by the repatriates in their home institution. Research has shown that when a person returns to their homeland, they go through different behavioral, cognitive and psychological problems (Li et al., 2024; Kranz & Goedderz, 2020). Employees who leave their organization to foreign country for study or job become detached from their home organization and thus have reduced social connection with the employees back in their home country (Chen & Chen, 2024). Studies show that when employees' repatriation has not managed appropriately, the turnover intention will be the result (Yan et al., 2024). Managerial support is thus essential for retaining the employees. If repatriates don't get sufficient support from their employers, they may intend to leave their organization. A report has revealed that HEC has sent 1537 students abroad to complete their MS/Ph.D. degree out of which 428 students were

absconders (Dawn News, 2018). This data shows that HEC invests a huge amount in the students to complete their degrees from abroad but many of them don't return and among the employees who return, most of them intend to leave their parent organization and go abroad again. This is a huge loss for the universities and the HEC as well.

Another problem is that the employers/supervisors at home institute may not be that much supportive towards the repatriates. Many of the universities may not have enough resources to help their employees deal with reverse culture shock (Manzoor, 2016). The current study will therefore, highlight the effects of reverse culture shock in the form of job dissatisfaction and turnover intentions of the repatriates and will also highlight the role of perceived managerial support in this regard.

Literature Review

People experience culture shock after they happen to interact with a new cultural setting. Nevertheless, they gradually adapt to the social norms and values of the new environment, which results in the construction of a new social identity compatible with the host culture. When these expatriates return from abroad to their own country, they think that both these settings would be alike, but their experiences do not match their expectations which causes reverse culture shock (Huang & Jung, 2024). On their return, such people may feel some psychological problems that affect their routine work and academic performance. Such psychological problems are not only because of the changing attitude of family and friends but also colleagues. Moreover, because of the difference in both countries' working conditions, employees sometimes may feel like "big fish in small pond", as the working environment abroad is often extensive compared to the homeland.

Studies suggest that re-adjustment problems due to reverse culture shock cause lack of motivation and stress at the workplace (Greer & Stiles, 2016). Therefore, employees feel dissatisfied and do not take interest in work. After returning, employees face many changes in the organizational culture, policies, structure, and even staff which may result in reverse culture shock. Malik et al., (2020) found that reverse culture shock has a strong negative impact on the job satisfaction of returnees. Returning employees often have high expectations about their organization on return, and when their expectations are not met, they become dissatisfied. This gap between expectations and reality causes reverse culture shock, and it has a direct link with the satisfaction level of employees, means, higher the reverse culture shock experienced by a returnee, the lower the overall life satisfaction (Presbitero, 2016).

Employees, on return, feel less important when they receive a lack of support, no gratitude, and no appreciation for their work (Saleem & Qamar, 2017; Chakraborty & Alam, 2024). They get into a shock called reverse culture shock, resulting in negative feelings and often turnover intentions of returnees. Reverse culture shock thus has a negative relationship with turnover intention (Chen & Chen, 2024). The re-adjustment issues that arise because of reverse culture shock are the main reason for the turnover of repatriates in an organization. Furthermore, some studies suggest that when repatriates adjust in their home organization, i.e. when they cope with the reverse culture shock, their intentions to leave the organization reduced (Yan et al., 2024). Research on the relationship between reverse culture shock and turnover intention among academics is lacking. However, the study assumes that reverse culture shock causes employees to leave their organization from the above literature.

Studies showed that managerial support has a positive relationship with job satisfaction and a negative relationship with workplace stress (Singh et al., 2024). Similarly, perceived managerial support has a positive impact on the job satisfaction of employees, which means employers' support can improve the job satisfaction of employees (Salama, 2024; Alkhateri, et al., 2018).

Supervisors play an essential role in retaining employees. Their support helps employees feel good at workplace thus never thinking of leaving their organization this support from managers and organization lowers the intentions of employees to leave the organization. (Jacobsen, 2024).

Hypotheses

Keeping in view the insights provided by existing literature, , the present study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H₁: Reverse culture shock is negatively related to job satisfaction.
- H₂: Reverse culture shock is positively related to turnover intention.
- H₃: Perceived managerial support moderates the relationship between reverse culture shock and job satisfaction.
- H₄: perceived managerial support moderates the relationship between reverse culture shock and turnover intention.

Conceptual Framework

The model for the present study has been adapted from the study of Lai (2020). Where, Lai (2020) has used cultural shock as an independent variable, job satisfaction as a mediator, turnover intention as dependent variable and perceived managerial support as a moderator. However, the present model is based on reverse culture shock (independent variable) and its impact on the job satisfaction and turnover intention (dependent variables). Perceived managerial support has been used as moderator.

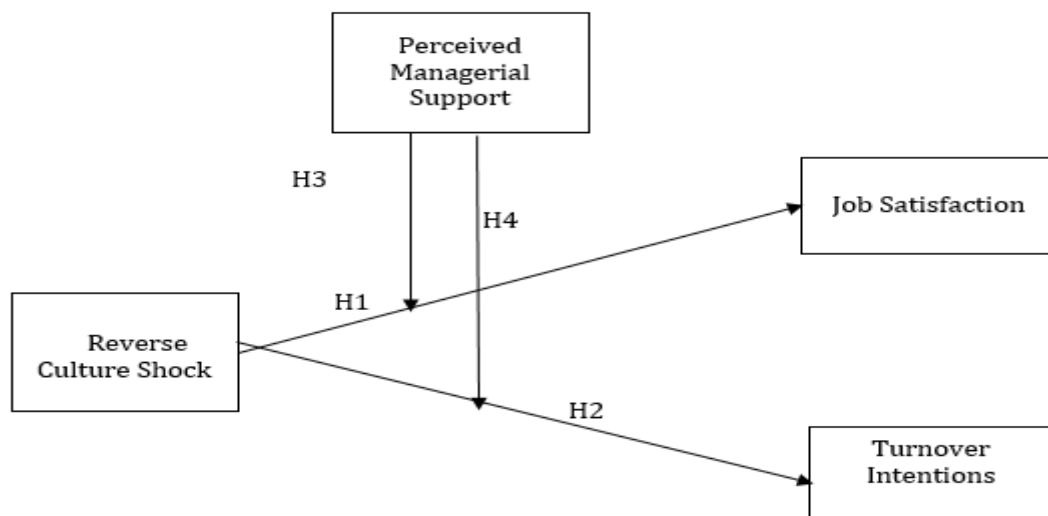


Figure 1. *Conceptual framework.*

Material and Methods

Research Design

The present study adopted a cross sectional, correlational research design.

Sample

The target population for the study is the repatriate employees of all the universities of Quetta. The respondents must have lived abroad for study for MS or PhD for at least 2 years. This study comprised 160 participants, approached and selected through snowball sampling

technique (Table 1). To select the sample, snowball sampling technique was used as there was no sampling frame available for the study. The participants were selected by meeting some members of the target population and asking them to reference the other members and so on (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

Instrument

The reverse culture shock was measured using a sixteen-item re-entry scale based on the work of Seiter and Waddell (1989). While job satisfaction was measured using the five-item scale (Judge, et al., 1998). The turnover intention was measured using 3 item scale of the Michigan Organizational assessment questionnaire (Cammann et al., 1979). The scale of perceived organizational support was adapted by replacing the term "Organizational" with the word "Manager" support in the same way as Lai (2020) did, with four items. All the instruments use 5 points Likert scale.

Ethical Considerations

The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and written informed consent was taken. Participants were also told that they could withdraw from the study at any stage. Confidentiality was ensured and approval from departmental research ethics committee was formally taken.

Pilot Study

Pilot study was carried out with 40 participants selected through purposive sampling,, with at least two years of studying and staying abroad for post graduate degrees. All the four scales, reverse culture shock, job satisfaction, turnover intention and perceived managerial support indicated acceptable Cronbch's alpha values, .72, .78, .81and .70 respectively for the population in the present study.

Data Analysis

Smart-PLS version 3.2.9 software was used to run PLS-SEM on the model. PLS-SEM can analyze models having many variables and complex paths (Hair et al., 2021). Moreover, the technique does not require the condition of normal distribution of data, and it does not apply the condition of large sample size for analysis. Therefore, PLS-SEM has resolved the issue of data set used in thesis as it can function efficiently with a small sample size (Hair & Sarstedt, 2019). PLS-SEM is based on a predictive approach that provides explanations for cause-and-effect relationships (Wold, 1985).

Results and Discussion

Data were analyzed through questions on gender (male, female), marital status (single, married), organization (BUIITEMS, UoB, SBKWU) and education (MS, PhD). Out of a total of 160 respondents, 121 were males, and 38 were females. Most of the respondents were married (80%), while only 20% were single (Table 1).

Table 1
Demographics

| Variables | Values | Frequencies | Percentages |
|----------------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| Gender | Male | 121 | 76 |
| | Female | 38 | 24 |
| Marital-status | Single | 31 | 20 |
| | Married | 129 | 80 |
| Organization | BUIITEMS | 91 | 57 |
| | UoB | 53 | 33 |
| | SBKWU | 16 | 10 |
| Education | MS | 35 | 22 |

| | | |
|-----|-----|----|
| PhD | 125 | 78 |
|-----|-----|----|

Analysis of measurement model

The reliability of scales was measured by the values of composite reliability (CR) and the Cronbach's alpha values. The values of CR and Cronbach's alpha were greater than 0.7, which shows that the internal consistency of the indicators is achieved. Similarly, convergent validity of the construct was measured by AVE values which were greater than 0.5 (Table 2), which means that explained variance is greater than error variance (Garson, 2016). Therefore, convergent validity was achieved.

Table 2
Measurement Model Assessment

| Latent Construct | Loadings | Cronbach's Alpha | CR | AVE |
|-------------------------------------|----------|------------------|-------|-------|
| Job Satisfaction | | 0.784 | 0.861 | 0.612 |
| J1 | 0.765 | | | |
| J2 | 0.827 | | | |
| J4 | 0.877 | | | |
| J5 | 0.639 | | | |
| Perceived Managerial Support | | 0.837 | 0.902 | 0.754 |
| P1 | 0.866 | | | |
| P2 | 0.902 | | | |
| P3 | 0.836 | | | |
| Reverse Culture Shock | | 0.828 | 0.875 | 0.539 |
| R10 | 0.741 | | | |
| R11 | 0.665 | | | |
| R12 | 0.693 | | | |
| R15 | 0.717 | | | |
| R4 | 0.767 | | | |
| R5 | 0.813 | | | |
| Turnover Intention | | 0.840 | 0.904 | 0.759 |
| T1 | 0.923 | | | |
| T2 | 0.926 | | | |
| T3 | 0.755 | | | |

The final step is determining the Discriminant validity was measured by FL criterion test (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity can also be determined by assessing the value of HTMT (heterotrait-monotrait) ratio. The threshold value for HTMT ratio is less than 0.85. Both the conditions are met and can be seen in table 3, which proves that discriminant validity is achieved .

Table 3
Discriminant Validity

| Fornell & Larcker | JS | PMS | RS | TI |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| JS | 0.782 | | | |
| PMS | 0.455 | 0.868 | | |
| RS | -0.265 | -0.172 | 0.734 | |
| TI | -0.542 | -0.393 | 0.543 | 0.871 |
| HTMT Ratio | JS | PMS | RS | TI |
| JS | | | | |
| PMS | 0.543 | | | |
| RS | 0.333 | 0.202 | | |
| TI | 0.675 | 0.447 | 0.641 | |

Note: JS = Job Satisfaction, TI= Turnover Intention, PMS= Perceived Managerial Support and RS = Reverse Culture Shock.

Analysis of Structural Model

A structural model was assessed by following steps; assessing the significance of β values; assessing collinearity among exogenous variables; coefficient of determination (R^2); and value of blindfolding-based cross-validated redundancy (Q^2) for predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2019). At first, the bootstrapping procedure was used to determine the significance of β values and generate the t-statistics (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). Second, the issue of collinearity can be assessed through VIF (variance inflation factor) value. The result shows that The VIF values for both the exogenous latent variables were less than three (Table 4). Hence, there is no problem of multicollinearity (Singh, Mittal, Mehta, Singla, 2020).

The value for R square measures the variance in the outcome variable caused by one or many explanatory variables (Elliott and Woodward, 2007). According to the table, reverse culture shock explains a significant variance of 24% in job satisfaction and 38% variance in turnover intention.

The value of Q square is used to measure the predictive validity of the model (Chin, 2010). The table shows that the value of Q square for job satisfaction and turnover intention is 0.131 and 0.278, respectively, which shows that the model has predictive relevance (Table 4).

Table 4
Collinearity Diagnostics

| Latent Exogenous Construct | (VIF) Job Satisfaction | (VIF) Turnover Intention |
|------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Perceived Managerial Support | 1.031 | 1.031 |
| Reverse Shock | 1.031 | 1.031 |

Table 5
Model Fit

| | R^2 | Q^2 |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Job Satisfaction | 0.243 | 0.131 |
| Turnover Intention | 0.387 | 0.278 |
| Perceived Managerial Support | | |
| Reverse Shock | | |

Note: JS = Job Satisfaction, TI= Turnover Intention

Results revealed that hypotheses 1 and 2 are supported. Reverse culture shock has significant negative impact ($\beta = -0.193$, $t = 2.612$ and $p = 0.005$) on the job satisfaction. The negative sign shows the negative correlation, t value is greater than 1.96 which is threshold value and the p value is less than 0.05 which is a threshold value. Therefore, H1 is supported. Likewise, Reverse culture shock has significant positive impact ($\beta = 0.484$, $t = 7.514$ and $p = 0.000$) on turnover intention. Positive value shows positive correlation, t value is greater than 1.96 which is threshold value and the p value is less than 0.05. therefore, H2 is supported. However, H3 and H4 are not supported (table 6 and figure 3) and it can be seen their values are not significant.

Table 6
Structural Model Assessment

| Hypotheses | B | T-Value | P-Values | Decision |
|---------------------------|--------|---------|----------|---------------|
| RS \rightarrow JS | -0.193 | 2.612 | 0.005 | Supported |
| RS \rightarrow TI | 0.484 | 7.514 | 0.000 | Supported |
| PMS \rightarrow RS x JS | 0.014 | 0.180 | 0.428 | Not Supported |
| PMS \rightarrow RS x TI | 0.049 | 0.720 | 0.236 | Not Supported |

Note: JS = Job Satisfaction, TI= Turnover Intention, PMS= Perceived Managerial Support and RS = Reverse Culture Shock

Description of the Structural Model

Below is the structural model that explains the significance of the loadings and significance of the beta values i.e. T value. The T values of reverse culture shock and job satisfaction, reverse culture shock and turnover intention, are greater than 1.96. and thus are significant. However, the t values of moderation path are not significant as their values are less than the threshold level.

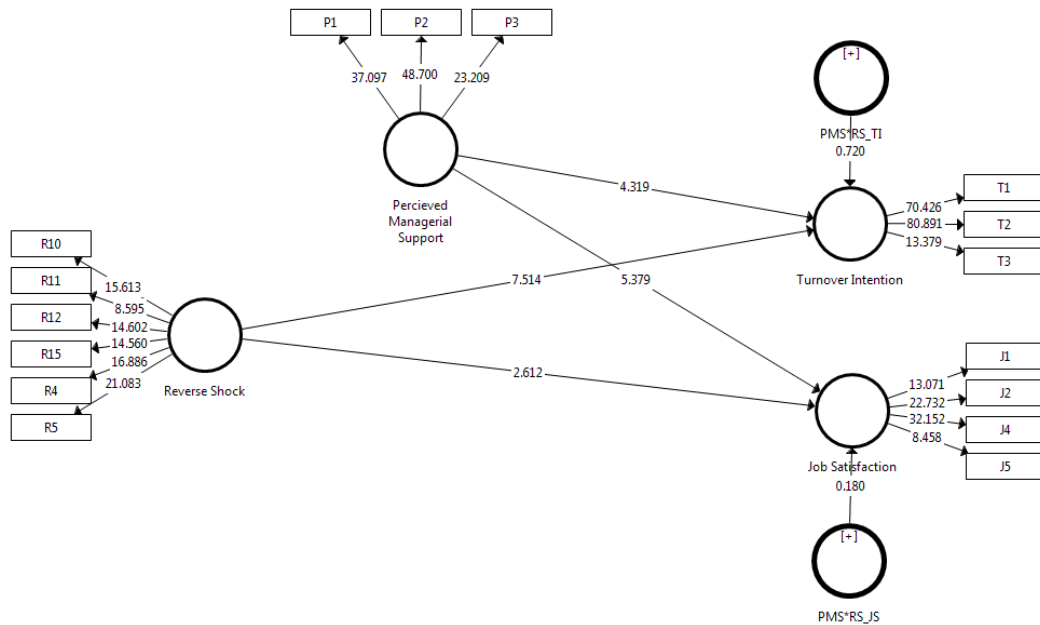


Fig 3. Structural model

Discussion

The results of the study add novel information in the literature as, many studies highlight the challenges of returnee that they face in terms of adjustment, knowledge management, returning immigrants, emotional challenges of repatriates, the turnover intention of repatriates, experience of returnees and their spouses, the experience of sojourners, the international identity of repatriates (Huang & Jung, 2024; Muddangala et al., 2025). However, the job satisfaction and turnover intentions of repatriates in terms of reverse culture shock has received scant attention in academic works.

The results of the study are consistent with the hypotheses except for hypotheses 3 and 4. It has been found that reverse culture shock has a significant negative impact on the job satisfaction of the returnee-employees. Employees often expect that they will be given more responsibility, autonomy, task variety, opportunities for learning, and opportunity to apply the knowledge they have learned abroad. When these expectations are not met, employees get demotivated and dissatisfied with their job. Further, our findings show that reverse culture shock has a significant positive impact on the turnover intention of the returnee-employees. Employees feel they should search for better opportunities as they have got more knowledge and skills now. Several studies have validated these findings (Malik et al., 2020; James & Azungah, 2019). Also, a pay rise can result in lower turnover intentions as these are the motivators that can encourage more employees to complete their studies from foreign countries.

However, the moderating effect of perceived managerial support on the reverse culture shock-job satisfaction and reverse culture shock-turnover intention has been found non-significant. This means that there might be several other factors that affect the satisfaction and retention of employees in their home institute, such as cultural intelligence

(Singh et al., 2024). If a person is culturally intelligent, he can better adjust to any place/culture and experience less shock on return. This can have an impact on the relationship between reverse culture shock-job satisfaction and reverse culture shock-turnover intention. Secondly, identity problems can impact the reverse culture shock experienced by the returnees. This may have an impact on the relationship between reverse culture shock-job satisfaction and reverse culture shock-turnover intention (Kulp et al., 2024). If offered a good job offer, repatriates can leave their job instantly as they are always searching for a better career and future. Similarly, if employees are not helped with their problems at the home institution, poor adjustment will result. Returnees always want the autonomy to transfer the skills and knowledge they have learned from abroad so if they are not given autonomy on return can cause job dissatisfaction and turnover from the organization (Kaur & Kaur, 2024). So, the results basically suggest that organization should create policies to make the employees adjustment phase easy, and this can be possible by counselling the employees regarding what is awaiting them on their homecoming.

Conclusion

This study is one of the novel attempts to discover if the shock that returnees experience on return will affect their jobs at their home institution. There is a considerable difference between Pakistan and other first world countries in every aspect; health, education, infrastructure, employment opportunities and other facilities. In Pakistan, Balochistan mainly is considered one of the most backward provinces-adjustment at home institute becomes very difficult after returning from foreign, which affects their job. The results show that they do not feel satisfied with the working conditions, behavior of their colleagues, the autonomy they are given, reward system and the favorable environment to do research, they try to quit their job and find a better one. The mismatch between their host and home identity, may cause depression in the returnees, so they are always in search of an opportunity to go back to their host country or any other country better than Pakistan.

Recommendations

The study only focuses on the returnees of universities from Quetta. However more interesting and useful conclusions can be drawn if a study compares the experiences of returnees of different universities of Pakistan. The intensity of reverse culture shock may vary as Baluchistan is socio-economically weaker than other provinces. Second, this study does not consider the impact of gender and marital status on the reverse culture shock- it does not compare the difference between the intensity of reverse culture shock experienced by the male and female or married and unmarried returnee-faculty of universities. Interesting results can be revealed if a study can compare the gender or marital status of the participants.

The findings of this study can help the organizations to understand the dissatisfaction of returning faculty members due to reverse cultural shock. The organizations can focus on retaining their qualified employees by increasing managerial support. Also the findings of current study can help the organizations in reducing turnover intentions of returnees.

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