

Intention to Leave among Self-initiated Academic Expatriate in Public Higher Education Institution

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Abstract

This study seeks to investigate the intention to leave among self-initiated academic expatriate in the public universities in Malaysia. Objectives of this study are threefold. Firstly, to identify the difference in perception of human resource practices, organizational commitment and intention to leave based on demographic background. Secondly, to examine the relationship between human resource practices and organizational commitment with the intention to leave. Finally, to identify the most significant human resource practices that influences the intention to leave. Questionnaire data were collected from public higher education institutions in Malaysia. The subjects are 88 self-initiated academic expatriates attached to various public universities in Malaysia particularly in the Klang Valley. Test of difference and multiple regression analysis methods are used to test the hypotheses. Findings indicated that intention to leave is strongly associated with human resource practices, followed by organizational commitment. The analysis also suggested that training and career development, and challenging opportunity are two elements of human resource practices contributing to intention to leave. The findings implicates the importance of rewards, recognition and job growth opportunities in order to retain the self-initiated academic expatriate. These were some highlights that could be used in strategizing internalisation among public universities in Malaysia.

Keywords: Human Resource Practices, Intention to Leave, Organizational Commitment, Public Higher Education Institution, Self-Initiated Academic Expatriate

Introduction

In the last decade, the internationalization of business has resulted in a pressing need to better manage global operations and expatriates. In order to gain an advantage, the focus of business enterprises has shifted more to hiring competitive human resource. As a result of this trend, the nature and purpose of expatriates have gradually become more complex and this has led to an emerging of new roles and career paths for the expatriates. The general assumption is that expatriating mainly focuses on organizational assignments, usually sent by

the parent company to fulfil a particular task. However, the recent trend of internationalization is witnessing a self-initiated expatriate whereby individuals choose to relocate voluntarily and independently (Doherty, 2013) for reasons related to their career path without having any direct association with an organization from their own country. There are a number of reasons for doing so, among which are limited career opportunities in their own country (Doherty, Dickmann & Mills, 2011), a boundaryless career (Arthur, Khapova & Wilderom, 2005), to travel abroad and being adventurous (Inkson, Arthur, Pringle & Barry, 1997) and feeling less commitment to the organization (Andresen, Biemann & Pattie, 2012).

The self-initiated academic expatriates are considered to be highly knowledgeable, professional with valuable non-homogeneous skills but are easily transferable which makes them highly mobile and organizationally mobile (Biemann & Andresen, 2010). Self-initiated expatriates are increasingly seen in academia, particularly in developing countries like Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei and some African countries. This has been happening more in recent years due to the opportunities offered by the developing countries as a result of liberalisation in education policy. Driven to become Asian higher education hubs, most Asian countries have embraced the internationalization policy as their strategy of going global. Several other Asian countries like Singapore, South Korea and Hong Kong are also deemed to have become more competitive of late in the international higher education market (Dessoff, 2012) which contributed to the increased number of international academic staff in the regions. Furthermore, the increasing demand for tertiary education in large countries such as China and India also plays a part in the increasing numbers of the international workforce.

Intention To Leave And Demographic Background

Intention to leave can be referred as the likelihood of an action to take place regarding desire to leave an organization (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982). It is not the actual act of leaving, rather the final stage of a sequence in the withdrawal cognition process (Mobley, Horner & Hollingsworth, 1978). There are three elements involved in this cognitive process; thoughts of quitting, the intention to search for another job elsewhere, and the intention to quit (Carmeli & Weisberg, 2006). Although the cognitive process does not include the element of actual turnover, the possibility of actual leaving could take place at a later stage.

From an organizational perspective, employee intention to leave and turnover have impacted organizational costs incurred by the activities of recruitment, selection, training and professional development. The cost is even higher when it involves international employees as they need more time and space for various kinds of personal and environment adjustments. Studies suggest that high-involvement work practices will affect employee retention (Mudor & Tooksoon, 2011) by shaping employees' behavior and attitude towards their work and organization. Equally, it also provides positive changes to the organization as it might experience new and fresh ideas with the contribution from new people. However, Tetley (2006) argues that while individuals who move to other organizations may contribute to the specific activities of that organization, their departure could potentially affect teamwork performance and consequently, lessen knowledge production and dissemination.

Previous studies identified demographical factors such as age, gender, race, and marital status as important retention factors in an organization. These demographic backgrounds such as family relations, career (Greene & Debacker, 2004), reason to travel (Jang & Wu, 2006) and financial issues has long been found associated with expatriates. For instance, turnover ratio would vary among married faculty members as family commitments restrict their time and movement (Ambrose, Huston & Norman, 2005). Employees at an older age have a low

probability of resigning from their current post due to the limitation in options or in search for a new employment. Furthermore, the longer the employee has been in service, the higher the chances of the employee to earn higher salaries, job promotions, more paid leave, better pension benefits and other retirement facilities. These have increased the employee's loyalty to their organization and subsequently might reduce the possibility of leaving the job.

On the issue of gender, studies had found that female faculty members showed more tendency towards leaving an institution as compared to their counterparts (Johnsrud & Heck, 1994). In contrast, the male faculty was found to be more interested in not only leaving the institution, but the entire academia (Barnes, Agago & Coombs, 1998). This also involves turnover among the upper-ranked faculty members. High turnover was observed among the full-time female professors who showed a high tendency to switch jobs or to relocate to another profession (Ehrenberg, Kasper & Rees, 1990). A similar pattern was also observed among the mid-level administrators; however those who were credited for their work have less intention to leave their job (Rosser, 2004). In the case of expatriates, the gender challenge is different depending on which host country that they are attached to. As argued by Adler (1987) in several Asian countries, women were found to be less relevant in terms of social interactions and career attainment. This might account for their refusal to continue their job tenancy abroad.

Intention to leave among faculty members in higher education institutions varies according to their respective disciplines and career advancement (Zhou & Volkwein, 2004). Apparently, for those who came from the *soft-pure* discipline, workplace stress, less years of serving at the university and higher research productivity were some factual reasons to consider leaving for another university. However, for those who belonged to the *hard-applied* disciplines, factors such as not having a spouse or partner, lack of support, lack of fitness, and family commitment issues and dissatisfaction with certain aspects of the faculty job were some of the driving forces to leave the organization (Ryan, Healy & Sullivan, 2012). A similar behavioural pattern also can be seen among the full-time faculty members from medical schools. Feeling moral distress at work and lack of engagement, feeling irrelevant, personal/family issues and retirement were some of the main reasons to leave the academic world of medicine altogether (Pololi, Krupat, Civian, Ash & Brennan, 2012).

In the case of self-initiated academic expatriates, the demographic background might affect perceptions due to the nature of their job, such as career trajectories, high knowledge intensity, flexibility and mobility and different incentives to look for when employed abroad. Therefore, this study also considered demographic background of self-initiated academic expatriates as an important aspect associated to human resource practices, organizational commitment and the intention to leave.

Intention To Leave And Human Resource Practices

Employees' decision either to stay or to leave also involves other determinant factors such as opportunities for a career advancement within the institution (Smith, 1979), pay satisfaction (Shields, Scott, Bishop & Goelzer, 2012), tenure status (Hom, Roberson & Ellis, 2008) and seniority (Smart, 1990). In addition, Johnsrud and Heck (1994) identified that time pressure and work overload on a faculty member are also associated with faculty turnover behaviour along with other factors such as faculty participation, high interest in research (Blackburn & Havighurst, 1979), facilitation and support towards professional activities (Rosser, 2004).

Compensation is also another factor that indirectly relates to faculty retention. Salary for instance, could be a manifestation of equity and achievement when it is linked with

performance and achievement (Siti Salwa, Shafiq, Azman & Ishak, 2015). Evidence from previous studies (Shields, Scott, Bishop & Goelzer, 2012; Treuren & Frankish, 2014) had shown a negative relationship between turnover and promotion and salary growth whereby an increase in pay satisfaction is associated with a decrease in intention to leave among the employees. Similarly, a study in Malaysia found that feeling dissatisfied with pay and promotion system is positively related to a low retention rate among academic workforce (Morris, Yaacob & Wood, 2004).

In the light of expatriates, cultural sensitivity is a substantial personal characteristic that was found strongly and positively related to their job performance. The ability of expatriates to grasp the local culture will promote an appropriate and effective behaviour and adjust the behavioural process to reduce stress and job uncertainty as well as when dealing with the complexity of cross culture and developing a global mind-set (Claus, Lungu & Bhattacharjee, 2011). In addition, different kinds of support such as financial, family support, and general assistance like mentoring and counselling (Erbacher, Netto & Espana, 2006), informational, cooperation, emotional and career support are always handy for the expats as they need to develop an understanding for the host country culture and workplace culture (Toh & DeNisi, 2007). Studies had shown that expatriate adjustment is positively related to job performance whereby job performance is uplifted when they are accustomed to the host country's general environment (Lee & Sukoco, 2010).

Although ample studies have looked into human resource practices, few are focusing on the relationship between human resource practices and the intention to leave among self-initiated academic expatriates. It is anticipated that there is a relationship between the two variables; whereby human resource practices is positively related to intention to leave.

Intention To Leave And Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is one of the important construct for employee attachment. It relates to the concept of psychological contact between employee and employer that places emphasis on the "balance" of contribution; which is what employee puts into an organization and what employer gives in return (Chew, 2009). The relationship takes on a form of unwritten reciprocal condition between employees and the organization. Employees that agreed to contribute towards the benefit of an organization present strong belief accept the organizational goals and values, show willingness to exert considerable efforts on behalf of the organization (Lambert, Hogan & Barton, 2001) and intention to remain within the organization. On the other hand, an organization that cares about their worker's physical and emotional well-being is also providing job satisfaction, employee advancement as well as reasonable and sufficient returns (Huselid, 1995). Hence, organizational commitment is achieved when employees and organization commitment are "equally balanced" in a reciprocal way (Solomon, 1992).

However, researchers have differing opinions regarding commitment on the basis of attachment. Some researchers agreed that organizational commitment is negatively associated with absenteeism and the intention to leave, and positively associated with job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviours and job performances (Su, Baird & Blair, 2009). Commitment is also considered to be a strong belief in acceptance of the organization's goals and values (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974), which exercises a substantial effort on behalf of the organization, after which said organization subsequently directs a distinct aspiration to maintain organizational attachment. Thus, values play an important role in defining commitment within organizations. It develops a clear contention when the

employee's personal values match the organizational operating values as opposed to a person whose personal values differs from the organization's.

An employee is said to have committed when he/she has at least three of the following characteristics: (a) a strong belief and acceptance of values and goals of the organization; (b) willingness and readiness to work hard for the organization; (c) and desire or requirement to remain in the organization (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982). In addition there are other measures to indicate an employee's commitment, for example, willingness to stay with the organization; productivity exceeding expectations (Meyer & Allan, 1991); altruistic behaviour (Laabs, 1996) and reciprocal commitment between employees and the organization (Solomon, 1992). Apparently, if an employee believes that the organization is less committed to them, then they may retaliate and act the same way towards their organization.

Outstanding employees may leave if they are dissatisfied, feeling that they are underpaid, not receiving training or not getting any opportunity in promotion and growth. On the other hand, satisfaction could be less likely to influence one's decision to leave. As posited by Knight and Leimer (2010), the decision to leave depends on the context of their job and its tenure system or perhaps due to the limited number of other similar institutions or immobility of the employees themselves. Similarly, just because someone has a high level of organizational commitment does not conclude that they are necessarily bound to their organization (Weng & McElroy, 2012). Other factors can also influence an employee to be within their comfort zone and remain with/within the organization. Salary, academic promotion, and career development are among the highest factors contributed to academic staff retention (Selesho & Naile, 2014). People who perceive lack of opportunities for career advancement and feel under rewarded in terms of getting promotion or compensation would feel there is nothing to lose by leaving the organization (Salamin & Hom, 2005).

Although there is no standard framework for understanding the self-initiated academic expatriate turnover process as a whole, there is a need to shed light into the issues relevant to the intention to leave among them. In particular, the impact of government policy towards internationalization strategies in public higher education institutions has triggered the need for some enlightenment. Therefore, this study puts forward two main assumptions; organizational commitment is positively related to intention to leave and human resource practices is the significant predictor for intention to leave.

Malaysia National Higher Education Strategic Plan In Context

Changes in the educational system have prompted countries across the globe to restructure, strategize and strengthen their higher learning institutions to ensure they align with the overall competitive global market. Parallel to the liberalisation in education policy, Malaysian higher education is experiencing a high international demand for places in various courses. The number of international students has increased gradually, set to reach the target of 200,000 enrolments, set by the Ministry of Higher Education for year 2020 (MoHE, 2012).

In the context of Malaysia, two main blueprints were launched by the Government namely National Higher Education Strategic Plan Beyond 2020 and National Higher Education Action Plan 2007 - 2010. The main aim of these blueprints is to help Higher Education Institutions achieve world class standard and make Malaysia a hub for higher education in Southeast Asia (MoHE, 2007). Seven strategic thrusts have been laid out to ensure the central agenda of higher education institutions in Malaysia is congruent with the government's aspirations. The seven strategic thrusts are as follows:

1. Widening access and enhancing quality
2. Improving the quality of teaching and learning
3. Enhancing research and innovation
4. Strengthening the institution of higher education
5. Intensifying internationalization
6. Enculturation of lifelong learning
7. Reinforcing Higher Education Ministry's Delivery System

It is in the light of the fifth thrust that this research is driven. The target of the fifth thrust is for Malaysia to become an international hub of excellence for higher education by the year 2020. One of the approaches is to intensify internationalization in the universities not just for students and study programmes, but most importantly in recruiting international staff. This is so as to serve as a catalyst for enrichment via interaction, experience and exposure for students from local higher education institutions into the global arena (MoHE, 2012). Higher education institutions in Malaysia aim at achieving a 15 percent target for international staff recruitment by 2020, under the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (2007-2020) (MoHE, 2011). Basically, the international academic staff in public higher education institutions in Malaysia were hired as individuals on a contractual basis offered by their respective universities. They were neither transferred nor sent overseas by a parent organization since their employment abroad would violate their bonded contract with their organization. Therefore they are considered as foreign national employees living as 'ex-patria' (Richardson & Zikic, 2007). In this case however, they are also known as self-initiated academic expatriates.

The number of international academic staff from the year 2007 until 2013 is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of international academic staff in public and private higher education institutions in Malaysia for the year 2007 – 2011

Year	Public HEIs	Private HEIs	Total
2007	1,027 (4.35)*	1,376	2,403
2008	1,634 (6.51)	1,261	2,895
2009	1,403 (5.54)	4,605	6,008
2010	1,681 (6.25)	5,003	6,684
2011	1,765 (6.43)	2,196**	3,961
2012	2,151 (7.78)	n.a	
2013	2,847 (8.75)	6,555	9,402

Source: *Ministry of Higher Education (various years)*

*Figure in brackets showing the percentage of international academic staff based on overall number of academic staff in Public HEIs

**Data of private HEI for 2011 is as of 31 December 2011 based on 87.69% Private HEIs that provide completed data

Based on Table 1, the number and percentage of international academic staff in public higher education institutions from 2007 – 2013 showed a slightly slow but steady increase. The majority of the public universities in Malaysia are still struggling to increase as well as to retain the number of their international academic staff, in order to meet the national 15 percent target of international academic staff in public higher education institutions in the year 2020.

It raises many questions of the human resource practices followed by the public higher education institutions. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the intention to leave among the foreign faculty members. Three objectives have been developed as follows:

- a. to identify the different perceptions of human resource practices, organizational commitment and intention to leave based on demographic background of the self-initiated academic expatriates at the public higher education institutions in Malaysia.
- b. to examine the relationship between human resource practices and organizational commitment with the intention to leave among self-initiated academic expatriates serving in public higher education institutions in Malaysia.
- c. to identify the most significant human resource practices which influences the decision of self-initiated academic expatriates to leave the public higher education institutions in Malaysia.

Methodology

The population of this study comprises 20 public higher education institutions in Malaysia, and sample was taken from five universities around Klang Valley. Initially the details of foreign faculty members were taken from the university's website, however, later it was discovered that information was not updated. An email was sent to the university's Human Resource Department for consent and clearance. A total of 40 questionnaires were distributed to each of the five universities via the HR office, which was then distributed by the HR to the respondents. Out of the 200 questionnaires distributed only 88 responded. This study employs the use of a survey questionnaire adapted from Chew (2009). The questionnaire consists of four sections; human resource practices consisting of four factors namely organizational fit, reward and recognition, training and career development, challenge and opportunities; organizational commitment; intention to leave and background information. The Cronbach alpha values of the 31 items are 0.884, indicating acceptable internal consistencies of the items.

Based on the 88 respondents, 63 (71.5 percent) were male and 25 were female (28.5 percent) which indicates that this position is more favourable to men than women. Respondents spanned the range of age categories from below 29 to 49. This sample comprises of 17 percent from respondents aged 29 or below. Majority of the respondents comes from the age group between 40 – 49 years old and 30 – 39 years consists of 42 percent and 32 percent respectively. Meanwhile, only 9 percent represent respondents above 50 years old. The analysis also reveals that the majority of the respondents originate from India, Australia and United Kingdom which had 21, 17 and 11 respondents respectively. This is followed by Indonesia (9), Brunei Darussalam (6) and United States of America (6). The rest of the foreign staff comes from other countries such as Pakistan, Turkey, New Zealand and South Korea.

The majority of the foreign staff held positions such as associate professor and senior lecturer which consists of 36.0 percent and 32.0 percent respectively. Only 19.0 percent held a professor position and 12 percent were appointed as a lecturer. Most of the foreign staff had PhD. degrees which consists of 74.0 percent followed by Masters Degree holders 21.5 percent and others at 4.5 percent. As far as the length of service was concerned, 53.0 percent of the respondents had less than a year's working experience at the university that they were attached to. Another 42 percent had been working at their respective universities for a period of between 1 to 3 years. Only a handful of respondents (5.0 percent) had more than 4 years of working experience at their respective universities.

Results And Discussions

There are three main hypotheses that have been developed based on the three objectives of this study:

- H_{01a}: There is no significant difference of human resource practices based on demographic background of the self-initiated academic expatriate.
- H_{01b}: There is no significant difference of organizational commitment based on demographic background of the self-initiated academic expatriate.
- H_{01c}: There is no significant difference of intention to leave based on demographic background of the self-initiated academic expatriate.
- H_{02a}: There is no correlation between human resource practices and intention to leave.
- H_{02b}: There is no correlation between organizational commitment and intention to leave
- H_{03a}: Human resource practices are the significant predictors to intention to leave.

Table 2 shows the results of independent sample *t*-test for equality of mean for human resource practices, organizational commitment and intention to leave by three demographical characteristics. The result revealed that the mean scores for human resource practices, organizational commitment and intention to leave are not statistically significant difference by gender. However, the mean score for human resource practices among senior self-initiative academic expatriate (age 40 and above) was lower than the younger category (below 40) by 5.113. The *p*-value is 0.019 therefore the *t*-test is significant. The same pattern was also found for intention to leave, whereby the younger self-initiative academic expatriate preferred to stay longer than their counterpart. Understandably the young expatriates are more adventurous, flexible and more mobile (Jang & Wu, 2006; Robbins & Judge, 2012). They are more likely the experience seekers who would like to explore and gain knowledge and ultimately become value-added human resource.

Table 2. Independent *t* test for equality of mean

Factors	Gender (Male - Female)		Age (40 and above - below 40)		Tenure (Professor – Lecturer)	
	Mean Difference	t value (p-value)	Mean Difference	t value (p-value)	Mean Difference	t value (p-value)
Human Resource Practices	-0.782	-0.319 (0.750)	-5.113	-2.388* (0.019)	-4.195	-1.926 (0.057)
Organizational Commitment	-0.066	-0.068 (0.946)	-0.831	-0.959 (0.340)	-1.214	-1.400 (0.165)
Intention to Leave	-0.398	-0.521 (0.604)	-1.427	-2.328* (0.037)	-1.375	-2.072* (0.046)
Sample	63	25	45	43	49	39

Note: * significant at 0.05 level

This result is aligned with our findings in the last column of Table 2, which revealed that lecturers tend to stay longer in the same organization as compared to Professors and

Associate Professors. Therefore, in relation to the first hypothesis, it was found that the mean score for human resource practices is not significantly different by gender and tenure, but varies by age group; hence, H_{01a} cannot entirely be rejected. However, the evidence showed that there is no significant difference for organizational commitment among the sample, rejecting H_{01b} . In contrast, it was found that the mean score for the intention to leave by age and tenure categories showed significant results, therefore the hypothesis for H_{01c} is rejected.

Table 3 illustrates the correlation between human resource practices and intention to leave based on hypothesis generated as H_{02} . The results showed that r coefficients for Pearson's correlations were significant at 0.01 level, which is evidently shown by the positive relationship. There was a significant correlation between organizational commitment and intention to leave. The strongest correlation was expressed between human resource practices and intention to leave with a value reported at 0.789, as compared to organizational commitment and intention to leave where the r value was reported as 0.438. Therefore, the relationship between human resource practices is strongly associated with intention to leave.

Table 3. Correlations

Variables	HRP	OC	IL
Human Resource Practices (HRP)		0.452**	0.798**
Organization Commitment (OC)	0.452**		0.438**
Intention to Leave (IL)	0.798**	0.438**	

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

The findings revealed a positive significant relationship between human resource practices and organizational commitment with intention to leave. Several research studies have shown that employee's commitment to the organization is derived from their perceptions of the employers' commitment in supporting their behaviour. Employees interpret human resource practices as indicative of the personified organization's commitment and employees respond to their perception accordingly (Wayne, Shore, Bommer & Tetrick, 2002). It is suggested that for an employee to be significantly committed to an organization, employees must also believe that a positive working experience is a result of effective management policies (Mudor & Tooksoon, 2011; Nelson & McCann, 2010). Therefore, considering the fact that international staff come from various backgrounds and embrace different cultures, for them to be organizationally committed they need to trust the values that the organization upholds. In this context, the human resource practices need to be versatile in introducing the culture and values of the Malaysian public universities as well as understanding the government aspirations in making the region as an education hub.

The findings also confirmed a significant relationship between organizational commitment and intention to leave (Chew & Chan, 2008). This is also parallel with the work of Meyer and Allen (1991) where they found that a positive relationship can be observed between affective commitment and employee retention. Both affective and continuance commitment are expected to increase the likelihood that an individual will not leave the organization. The hesitation in many organizations to support self-initiated expatriates is due to lack of organizational commitment among the self-initiated expatriates themselves (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2014). This is proof of the effect of reciprocity, where both parties felt that they are not given the chance to grow and perform. This can be seen as a driving factor for the

employees to leave the organization and find employment elsewhere (Lee, 2005; Lee & Sukoco, 2010).

The third hypothesis, H_{03} was explained by Table 4. This table showed the regression results of human resource practices as an independent variable and intention to leave as a dependent variable. A model summary showed that the R square is 0.814, adjusted R square of 0.805 with a standard error of 1.421. This suggests that the variation of human resource practices explained the predicted value of retention by about 80 percent. The model was significant with the value of $F(4, p = 0.000) = 90.956$. In Table 4, there are four elements of human resource practices as predicted parameters. Coefficients showed that both factors; 'training and career development' and 'challenging and opportunity' were associated with the retention among self-initiated academic expatriate. In contrast, two elements of human resource practices (organizational fit and remuneration and recognition) did not contribute to intention to leave among staffs. The finding suggests that training and career development are the important factors contributing to intention to leave across the sample, where the value of this parameter is reported as 0.749 followed by challenging and opportunity.

Table 4. Regression Results: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	-.894	.919		-.973	.333
Organization fit	.063	.068	.052	.918	.361
Remuneration and recognition	-.048	.068	-.052	-.716	.476
1 Training and career development	.837	.073	.749	11.514	.000
Challenging and opportunity	.196	.067	.228	2.911	.005
F (4, p = 0.000)	90.956				
R Square	0.814				
Adjusted R Square	0.805				

a. Dependent Variable: Intention to leave

This also complies with training and career development which are seen as vital factors contributing to the intention to leave among the self-initiated academic expatriate followed by challenging and opportunity. Previous findings from the work of Mudor and Tooksoon (2011) and Rahmah, Rosnita and Liew (2015) also revealed that there is a positive relationship among these variables. In any human resource practice, training and development is an essential function as it provides opportunities for the employee to widen their horizons and individually advance within the hierarchy of the organization. Indeed, this is vital for the foreign staff because it gives them something valuable to pack and bring back home. As much as they want exposure and learning experience in another country, they also have the obligation to pursue their career later in the future. However, the current human practices in public higher education institutions do not seem to support their needs, as priority is given to the permanent staff as opposed to the contract employees. It is unfortunate particularly when these academics are considered the operational core of the universities and their contribution, to a large extent, attract a number of students locally and internationally, research funds and consultancy contracts (Rowley, 1996). Hence, improving and

strengthening the human resource work package, which includes attractive training and career development, might enhance the possibility for the self-initiated academic expatriate to prolong their stay within the organization (Salamin & Hom, 2005). When faced with difficulties in retaining international professionals, the human resource unit should consider incorporating or making adjustment to their internationalization policies so as to comfort and support the foreign employees' needs (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010). Some of the areas would be training and mentoring and career advancement as well as giving support to the personal issues such as ethical and cultural adjustment, accommodation and language (Froese & Peltokorpi, 2013).

As far as the rule of reciprocity goes, if an organization is committed to taking care of its employees, in return it will promote the same responding behaviour towards the organization. Indeed, this possibly becomes a vital catalyst for intensifying internationalization measures within public higher education institutions in Malaysia.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has progressed a substantial way towards answering its research question which was to investigate further the relationship between the intention to leave with the demographic background, human resource practices and organizational commitment among the self-initiated academic expatriates within public higher education institutions in Malaysia. This study was able to identify some key points which could possibly be useful in supporting the strategic decision to retain critical employees, subsequently intensifying internationalization measures in public higher education institutions in Malaysia. The findings highlighted the importance of rewards, recognition and job growth opportunities in increasing the number of foreign staff and reducing the intention to leave among the self-initiated academic expatriates within the public higher education institutions. Organizations do need expatriate employees for internalization and marketing strategies. Recruiting more self-initiated academic expatriates is seen as a catalyst for higher learning institution to expand globally.

The findings of this research have some limitations and future research suggestions. Firstly, there is a possibility that the subjects selected may not represent the overall population of foreign faculty members in public sector universities; and as a result, the findings of the study should be interpreted with caution when aiming to generalize the study in the context of Malaysian public higher education institutions. Therefore, sample size should be expanded covering more self-initiated academic expatriates from various faculties and universities. Secondly, it is restricted to public higher education institutions whereby the recruitment and retention activities are based upon public policies, for example budgetary, hiring quota and human resource process. Thirdly, it is also unclear as to what factors influence the success and the relationship between retention and internationalizations. Therefore, a longitudinal study will provide a more reliable evidence about employee retention and their withdrawal intentions and behaviours, such as intention to leave or to stay and actual turnover to an extent in which it has an impact towards internationalization strategy in public higher education institutions. Finally, based on the policy and hire contract, mobility of the foreign staff is limited, particularly between public and private universities. Follow-up research should re-examine these findings by expanding and comparing between private and public universities and how internationalization measures or policies operate and implicate within those respective universities.

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