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Employee Commitment and the Manager-Employee Relationship. An International Work Environment Leadership Model

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Abstract

Aim: The primary objective of this article is to thoroughly explore the issue of employee commitment within the context of the manager-employee relationship and proposing a model of the process of preparing manager to build superior-subordinate relation and form employee commitment in the organisation's foreign branch.

Methodology: The qualitative method of research was implemented in the form of individual in-depth interviews (IDIs) conducted with top managers of internationally operating organisations.

Results: Manager-employee relationships evolve. To make the process more satisfactory for both sides, the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory and Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) concept should be integrated in it. Both concepts are inherently linked to employee management in the international environment. Furthermore, LMX is evolving towards relational leader-member exchange (RLMX). The process of adaptation to a new work environment is connected not only with the cultural,

but also personal characteristics of managers and their experience in operating in international organizations. Cultural differences can significantly affect supervisor-superior relation and employee commitment. Nevertheless, it also seems that universal virtues such as respect and trust, shape the dynamism of the process, which consists of stages described in the conceptual model.

Implications and recommendations: To reduce or actually minimise the impact of cultural factors on relations between managers and employees, it is necessary to find the appropriate style of leadership and adjust it to each individual. What makes the process successful is the recognition of local employees' needs as well as the implementation of positive motivation methods.

Originality/value: The article aims to contribute to the discourse on LMX and POS in the context of leadership style in international work environment (IWE). Both approaches should be studied in parallel to identify the key determinants of a manager's success, reaching beyond the cross-cultural dimension. Contrary to the models presented in the literature, the proposed model is based on managers' perception of the process of adaptation to the host country's culture.

Keywords: employee commitment, manager-employee relationship, international work environment (IWE), leadership, leader-member exchange (LMX)

1. Introduction

The entry of a foreign manager into an organization, or delegation to a subsidiary abroad, presents challenges in terms of the necessity to supplement one's knowledge and managerial experience in a culturally diverse environment. There is a wide range of literature in this area that emphasises the significance of cultural differences and their implications for employee management (Bartosik-Purgat, 2006; Gesteland, 2000; Hofstede, 2000). However, taking into account the fact that culture as such changes over time, including language (Kankaanranta and Lu, 2013), system of rules, behaviour, values and attitudes (Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014; Tung and Stahl, 2018) as well as organizational culture (evolving as a result of enterprise's development and maturation), it is advisable to delve deeper into the universal values conducive to creating a desirable manager-employee relationship and strengthening employee commitment. The key determinants of an efficient leadership style in such a complex work environment identification is also crucial. In these situations, shaping high-quality relations and strengthening subordinates' commitment requires the manager to possess a range of skills, including reconciling the organization's culture with local workplace conditions, identifying appropriate attributes of relationship, and establishing desired level of the relationship's formality to achieve the organizational goals. A set of real-life scenarios describing cross-cultural interactions, leading to conclusions how to avoid emerging misunderstandings, the so-called culture assimilators are still the methods of cross-cultural training supporting expatriate managers. However, the training programmes are unable to anticipate all the situations that may cause organizational difficulties or even a crisis.

It can be noted that researchers have focused on both the negative and positive types of experience associated with conducting activities in culturally diverse environments (Ashkanasy and Härtel, 2014; Iskhakova and Ott, 2020). Stahl and Tung (2015) found a higher share of publications on the negative rather than positive aspects of culturally diversified work environments. This imbalance in their survey of international business literature metanalysis was a 17:1 ratio of negative over positive theoretical assumptions made in international business contexts. Similar observations, although with indication of smaller disparities, have also been made in studies by Margolis and Walsh (2003) and Cameron (2008), leading to the conclusion that there is certain bias that people's experience of working in international organizations is more negative rather than positive, which may stem from the disruption of certain balance of capitals in the host country, as well as in the enterprise that delegates its resources and takes the risks associated with foreign expansion.

The study followed the structure outlined below. First, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to examine employee commitment and the manager-employee relationship within the international work environment, aiming to establish the current state of knowledge. Second, the employed research methodology was elaborated upon, and finally, the primary research findings and the conclusions derived from them were presented.

2. Literature Review

The foundations that can be considered in the exploration of determinants of efficient leadership style in a complex work environment are the LMX theory (Martin et al., 2016) and the POS concept (Glińska--Neweś, 2017; Rockstuhl et al., 2020). Both stress the importance of adjusting leadership methods to individual employees, not only to achieve organizational objectives but also to foster positive relations and implement efficient motivational systems. Both concepts have been subjected to varying degrees of deeper exploration in relation to international work environment (IWE). (Jain et al., 2014; Nahrgang and Seo, 2015; Rockstuhl et al., 2012). As it is natural that enterprises strive to increase their size through investments that can be implemented in various areas and one of them is expansion into foreign markets (Grzesiuk, 2018), they introduce additional conditions influencing the process of building relations between superiors and subordinates. Varma et al. (2001) drew attention to the importance of the proper selection of managers entrusted with tasks related to the company's international operations. The challenges they face concern both the relations with the local market (customers, suppliers and other stakeholders) as well as internal relations between their coworkers, including those between superiors and subordinates.

2.1. Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

According to the LMX theory, which assumes that the superior establishes different interactions with each of his/her subordinates, it is such an individual approach to the employee that allows for shaping one's organizational commitment (Austen et al., 2018; Bauer and Erdogan, 2015; Day and Miscenko, 2016; Wilson et al., 2010). The basic premise of LMX is that leaders form different relations with their subordinates in the workplace, distinguishing them as either *in-group* or *out-group* members (Krishnan, 2004). *Out-group* members are at increased risk of "workplace supervisory incivility" which reflects low quality relations (Thompson et al., 2018). On the other hand, a high-quality LMX results in the supported subordinates reciprocating by developing more positive attitudes toward, and stronger relations, with their leaders (Jain et al., 2014).

A significant study on a sample of over 63,000 respondents from 23 countries, was conducted by Terpstra-Tong et al. (2020), who found that the relation of LMX with organizational citizenship behaviour, justice perception, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and trust in the leader are stronger in the individualistic context (Western) rather than in the collectivistic one (Asian). Their second conclusion regarding national culture was that it does not affect the relation of LMX with task performance, organizational commitment, and transformational leadership. Martin et al. (2016) stated that in LMX relations, subordinates feel an obligation to pay back their leader by meeting work demands, which should make it less likely that they engage in behaviour that harms the leader or the organization itself (as this could impact on their performance levels). Diefenbach and Sillince (2012) pointed out that that relationship is almost always multidimensional as it is built in conditions of organizational hierarchy, which always exists, even where theoretically the structure is not significantly formalised. Munoz-Doyague and Nieto (2012) claimed that over time, the relationship between manager and employee strengthens, whilst becoming more and more informal. Since at the beginning of cooperation, their interactions are based mainly on the rules defined by the organization, formal relations prevail during this period. Over time, some of the formal dependencies established at the beginning of cooperation may be replaced by less formalised exchanges.

2.2. Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS)

The concept of POS assumes that leadership should be based on building friendly organizational climate, supporting high-quality relations between members of the organization, positive communication and emphasising the importance and sense of work performed by people employed in the enterprise (Glińska-Neweś, 2017; Karaszewski and Lis, 2016). This gives great importance to interpersonal relations and employee commitment which influence productivity and efficiency of organization (Cahill et al., 2015). As Aselage and Eisenberger (2003) stated, when an individual receives *positive treatment* from others, it generates psychological pressure and a sense of obligation to reciprocate, which may result in the development of retaliatory attitudes or behaviour. Within an organizational context, employees are inclined to provide more favourable feedback when they perceive that the organization values and acknowledges their contribution.

POS is an expanded perspective that is concerned primarily with the study of especially positive outcomes, processes and attributes of organizations and their members (Cameron et al., 2003). Bono and Ilies (2006) stated that a leader that expresses more positive emotions engenders the same emotions in a follower, who then perceives superior as more charismatic and effective. According to POS, when employees find meaning in the tasks performed, have sense of security and are provided with the necessary resources to perform their roles, the commitment evolves to the point described in literature sources as 'fully present' (Dewing and McCormack, 2015), i.e. a high level of organizational commitment. The research based on the POS theory (Sam et al., 2024) revealed that the personal economy and the personal appreciation dimensions were among the highest contributors in determining employee happiness, followed by support system, workstation environment, and trust. The fulfilment of the above-mentioned conditions for the expected level of employee attachment to the organization requires the participation of the direct representative of employer, namely the superior. Therefore, there is a need to build relations between managers and employees. What is more, a leader focusing on the positive influence on subordinates and treating each of them individually, can shape the organizational commitment of the team.

2.3. Employee Commitment

Employee commitment includes work engagement and organizational commitment (Kmiotek, 2016). The former means a high level of dedication to work (Sulea et al., 2012), while the latter is an attitude towards the enterprise (Men, 2015). Organizational commitment may be a strong desire to remain a member of the organization resulting from a sense of obligation (normative commitment). This willingness, however, may be dictated by fear of potential costs associated with leaving the enterprise, which encourages continuation of employment in it (continuance commitment), which may, however, sometimes negatively affect work commitment (Farndale et al., 2014). Dedication to the organization may also involve a sense of identification with its goals and values, without any calculation aimed at achieving specific benefits from the efforts made (emotional commitment). In such cases, the employees experience an identification with their place of work (Jalilvand and Vosta, 2015), they actually feel part of it.

The complexity of the discussed issue appears to be greater in corporations operating on an international scale, which is the result of additionally overlapping cultural differences, which often makes interactions between superiors and subordinates a sensitive matter (Yahiaoui et al., 2021), requiring special attention from the manager. Research on management methods in multicultural organizations is a significant challenge due to not only cultural differences, but also the diverse structure of enterprises and limited access to information about them and their processes in individual countries (Parry et al., 2021), where their foreign branches are located. According to Budzanowska--Drzewiecka et al. (2016), the dimensions of the differences revealed in international organizations include as primary ones: race, ethnicity, gender as well as mental and physical characteristics. The secondary dimensions are: religion, culture, sexual orientation, thinking style, geographical origin,

family status, lifestyle, economic status, political orientation, professional experience, education, language and nationality. The third-order dimensions are: beliefs, assumptions, perceptions, attitudes, emotions, values, group norms. Managing diversity understood in this way should involve taking actions aimed at creating and maintaining an organizational climate in which the potential of diversity will have a positive impact on the implementation of the organization's tasks.

To sum up, sustaining or strengthening employee commitment in IWE sets a particular challenge for managers. Taking that into consideration, the following research questions were formulated:

RQ1: How do leaders perceive manager-employee relations?
RQ2: Considering cross-culture conditions, what determines managerial success in building high quality relations with employees and increasing their level of commitment?
RQ3: What stages of expatriate manager adaptation in the host country should be considered to efficiently build relations with local employees and increase their level of commitment?

3. Methodology

The formulated research questions required a qualitative approach. To achieve that, individual in-depth interviews were designed and conducted with managers from prominent international organizations, which shed light on the core components of high-quality relations between superiors and subordinates in IWE. Glińska-Neweś and Escher (2018) noted that many phenomena related to the functioning of organizations are of a qualitative nature, which is rather difficult to capture and describe using quantitative methods. The subject scope of the research included respondents with experience in building relations with people of national origins different than their own. The time range of the empirical research was from 2021 to 2022. No restrictions were introduced in the territorial scope of the study. The respondents were managers with no less than three years of experience in managing employees from countries other than their own in at least two host countries.

Table 1. Respondents characteristics

Characteristics	Minimum	Average	Maximum
Age (years)	40	49	57
International experience (years)	3	12	27
Host countries number – experience	2	6	16
Number of current subordinates	4	96	450
Organisational position	top management		10
	medium level		4
Organisation type	global		3
	international		11
Organisation capital	Europe, North America, South America		
Respondents location	Poland, Germany, Austria, France, UK, Canada, Brazil		
Respondents origin	Poland, Germany, Austria, Spain, France, UK, India		

Source: own elaboration based on qualitative research.

As far as the size of the sample is concerned, one of the rules of qualitative research is that the selection of the respondents is based on the experience of other researchers carrying out research on similar subjects, and the typical size in that type of research is 12-16 interviews (Stefańska and Olejnik, 2021). The criteria of selection of the respondents included a minimum three years of experience in MNC organisations. IDIs were conducted with 14 top managers having such international experience. Their characteristics are presented in Table 1. The interviews were organized in the form of video-conferencing. Despite limited scope of non-verbal communication, the undoubted benefits of this way of conducting interviews were as follows:

- access to the respondents in different locations (including those residing in North and South America while the researcher was in Europe),
- time flexibility (end of time agreed for the interview did not result in finishing it, but only in making an appointment for a new date for its continuation),
- openness of the respondents to participate in the research (probably due to the comfort of not having to confirm physical participation in the interview).

The scenario of interviews was accepted by the Committee of Ethical Science Research conducted with the participation of humans at Poznań University of Economics and Business. The interviews, with the consent of the participants, were recorded, transcribed and then a content analysis of the collected material was performed. The analysis of words, interpretations, synonyms and associations was applied.

4. Results

The determinants of leadership style perceived by the surveyed leaders were based on assumptions of LMX and POS implementation. Both the individual approach to each employee and the conveyance of positive messages contributed to the creation of high-quality superior-subordinate relations and the reinforcement of employee commitment.

The leadership styles of the research participants shared certain common characteristics: openness to other cultures, alignment with represented organization and its values, respect to subordinates and fostering vertical trust. The differences identified during the interviews included: varying levels of openness to build relations with local employees, permission to transform formal relations to informal ones, application of empowerment and collaborative decision-making process.

The managers' experiences confirmed that a relation is the totality of contacts that a superior and a subordinate have. Leadership style in IWE is conditioned by many factors. It must be adapted to both the needs of the moment and of the local subordinates, as in each workplace there are employees who need to be given more freedom, and also those who need to be set certain limits. Some of the respondents pointed more to communication, exchange of information, issuing understandable orders and verifying whether manager's intentions are properly understood. It should be based on cooperation, a common goal and communicating the superior's vision to subordinates. Leadership style has a strong impact on manager-employee relations as the level of respect for employees is associated with it. It must be based on respect and sense of confidence as well as on honesty and transparency, and emotions are also an important aspect of building a relation. According to one respondent, the superior-subordinate relation is a way in which both parties get involved in joint activities, both formally and informally.

The respondents shared their own experience in adapting their leadership style: *In Australia, where I worked, in many cases I would make subordinates resign from their jobs, if I treated them in an authoritarian way. Explaining to employees what work needed to be done and then asking them how much time they needed to complete the task was the right solution*. Moreover, the subordinates had to be aware of the consequences of failure in completing the task. *My style was different when working in Poland, Germany or Russia. In Poland, I was both a superior and a colleague. Employees came to me with various problems, even personal ones. In Russia I was perceived as a high-rank manager with whom no one entered into polemics, while in Germany I had to pay attention to the way information was conveyed because the subordinates wanted to learn their goals in order to accept them*.

To summarise, the leadership style in IWE is built in two areas: one covering the technical aspects of cooperation, such as defining positions in the organization's hierarchy, issuing orders by the manager and controlling the way they are carried out by the employee, and the other, in which the human factor plays an important role, based on building common bonds and on communication understood as the mutual exchange of information.

The results of the research indicated two important dimensions of the manager-employee relation (Figure 1): *human* (based on emotions and building bonds between the parties) and *technical* (whose function is to regulate the rules of cooperation). As the latter is most often related to the organizational culture of the company (although corporate regulations cannot conflict with the most important local rules), the former should be subject to the special attention of the expatriate manager in the host country, which refers to the POS concept. This resulted in addressing Research Question 1 (RQ1).

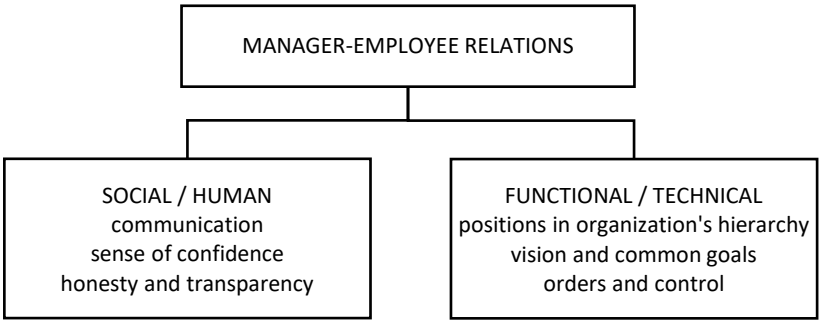

Figure 1. Perception of the manager-employee relation

Source: own elaboration based on qualitative research.

Another issue underlined in the reviews is the integration of the POS concept and the LMX theory. The managers combined both in their everyday work – to apply individual approach in relations with subordinates and at the same time apply positive stimuli to achieve organizational goals. The concept of LMX in IWE is often based on the lower barriers of communication and higher quality of relations based on honesty and transparency which are key elements of trust. Additionally, they support sharing vision and the organisation's goals.

Employee commitment involves both dedication to one's work as well as attachment to the company understood as the group of people that create it. The employee's organizational commitment is possible if the enterprise allows the individual ambitions of employees (who can count on recognition from the employer) to be realised. The commitment involves understanding and accepting the company's strategy. Appealing to company values is usually more effective in the case of local employees (loyalty to the domestic company) and less effective regarding foreign ones, especially those from cultures with a high level of individualism. Some people might be enthusiastic about the organization as a 'great place to work', while others are focused on building their own careers. A committed employee finds joy and satisfaction in his/her work and moves the organization forward. Such an employee shows initiative, goes beyond the defined scope, is critical and provides positive emotions to the rest of the team.

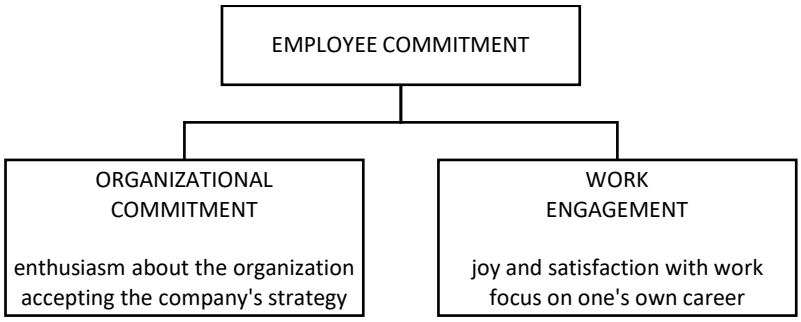

Figure 2. Employee commitment

Source: own elaboration based on qualitative research.

Employee commitment usually consists in both work engagement and organizational commitment (Figure 2) although their proportions might vary, depending on one's personality, superior-subordinate relations, working conditions and other factors. To increase the level of employee's organizational commitment in IWE, a manager should respect and support the individual ambitions of employees. In return, understanding and acceptance of the company's strategy, mission and values should be provided. When the enterprise's location is the host country of the employees, achieving a high level of their organizational commitment might be more challenging as the local loyalty effect cannot be used. In such cases the manager needs to pay more attention, and make greater effort in selecting right motivation tools.

Another issue underlined by managers working in an international environment is overcoming barriers that limit employee commitment and weaken achieving organisation goals. Although knowledge of the local language is not necessary, it is worth learning at least the basics, which can help gain recognition for the manager's effort. Thanks to this, employees become more open. Additionally, it allows receiving more information as a manager who does not know the host country's language hears only what the employees want their superior to hear. Moreover, knowledge of the local language creates a natural bond between the manager and employees, although knowledge of the local language may be less important in large, especially global, organizations where the emphasis is on using one corporate language. The knowledge of local culture is also appreciated by employees and allows the manager to be perceived as credible, which helps to build his/her authority and has a positive impact on relations. Without the knowledge of the host country's culture, the superior is doomed to failure in building relations with subordinates. One needs to learn the local culture to avoid embarrassment or offending others. Knowing the local culture allows to avoid the majority of typical mistakes that could make it harder to gain the trust of local employees. For instance, it is important to know that some cultures value relationality, whereas for others, those from high-context cultures, collectivism is important. According to one of the managers, *cultural differences are a key issue, but one does not need to fully understand them, but to be aware of their most important aspects*. However, failure to familiarise oneself with the basic aspects of the other party's culture is simple ignorance that may make building relations impossible (Figure 3).

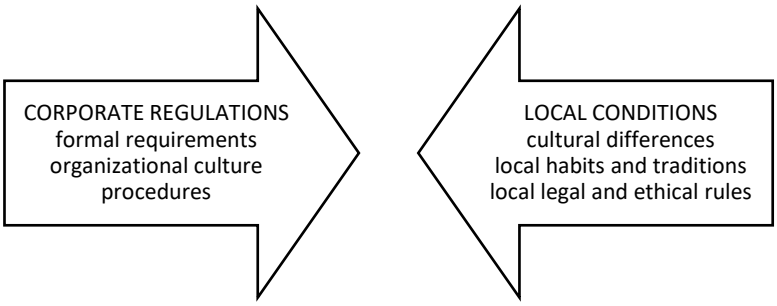

Figure 3. Compromise sought by a manager in a host country

Source: own elaboration based on qualitative research.

The respondents also stressed the importance of differences other than cultural ones related rather to local conditions and customs: *organizing a business meeting on Monday at 9:00 would be a big disgrace for Italians, especially if it required leaving home on Sunday, whilst for Americans shortening the weekend would not be a big problem. In Poland or Italy, presentations could have a free form, including telling jokes. In Russia, such an approach would be negatively perceived, as seriousness is expected from a person of a certain standing. French people like to talk about wine, tennis and opera. A person who decides to come to that country should also show willingness to learn about what its inhabitants like. In Brazil, people make physical contact when talking.* There are also topics that should not be discussed with representatives of other cultures or should be treated with extreme caution, and there might also be nuances related to working time or private life such as the time the work starts and ends, whether people invite each other to their homes.

To sum up, managers should not break the enterprise's rules as they are a part of organisational culture and standards. However, in IWE it is important to convince the group's management that slightly different rules should be created for the needs of a foreign branch, tailored to the reality of the host country, as *compliance with all global rules may lead to breaking local ones*. This is contrary to the headquarters' expectations that organisational culture values and norms should be respected everywhere because they build its identity and reputation. However, everyday operations require from expatriates flexibility to combine both sides. Furthermore, contemporary trends follow sustainable development goals and implement diversity-equity-inclusion (DEI), organisational openness and acceptance of cultural diversity.

5. Discussion

The adoption of the leadership style and the application of POS and LMX principles raises the question that appears in the literature: whether it is necessary to analyse what most managers are like- in order to provide such knowledge to people who want to manage people (descriptive approach), or whether one should focus on what leaders should be like and how they should manage (normative approach) (Hannah et al., 2014). The research lead to the conclusion that creating a set of rules of conduct in building relations with employees is of particular importance in the IWE. First, the respondents perceived the need for managers to take into account cultural differences and local conditions when managing employees in the host country. This should be conducted by participating in local employees' activities and meeting different stakeholders (e.g. customers, contractors), as well as openness to information shared by them, similarly to the study by Tutar, Altinoz and Cakiroglu (2014). The interviewed managers also added that they believe in their significance for their advantage and that they have the skills to turn cultural differences into their advantage. However, there were concerns regarding the incorrect interpretation of phenomena unrelated to national culture as being related to it, as well as the risk of a negative impact resulting from considering the cultural differences of some employees on the involvement of others. One of daily duties of a manager in a foreign branch of an international enterprise is to find compromise between corporate regulations and local conditions that often seem to contradict each other (Figure 3). As Vlad and Stan (2018) noted, managers need to be sensitive to cultural differences and to promote respect, motivation, creativity, respect, and good leadership. Staff in the host country do not expect their foreign superior to know their culture in detail, but at least its most important elements, and also to be aware and accept the differences between their culture and the manager's own national culture. Awareness of cultural differences seems to be more important than speaking the language of the subordinates. In organizations where cultural differences are perceived as important and are effectively managed, employees get closer to each other and become more committed to their workplace. An individual approach to each employee is recommended, which is in line with assumptions of the LMX theory. Referring to the POS concept, shaping employee's commitment (by their manager) based on positive interactions may be of particular importance in IWE when both parties do not have full knowledge of the differences between them (not only cultural ones), but – assuming their positive intentions – have similar sensitivity to universal principles and values based on respect for other people. Since POS focuses on dynamics that are typically described by words such as excellence, thriving, flourishing, abundance, resilience, and virtuousness (Cameron et al., 2003), the research confirmed that conclusion.

Table 2. Knowledge of host country language by foreign manager

SHORT TERM basic phrases	LONG TERM advanced language knowledge
employees' appreciation of the effort openness of the local employees good start for building relation	receiving more information better awareness of company situation independence from local employees

Source: own elaboration based on qualitative research.

Moreover, a manager leading people of different national origin does not need to know the language of the employees proficiently, although it is worth learning at least basic phrases in the local tongue in the short term, as well as learn the language if the stay in the host country is going to be long term. The main reasons why it is necessary to make effort to improve local language skills are presented in Table 2, leading to the answer to Research Question 2 (RQ2).

5.1. International Work Environment Leadership Model

International organisations have many years of experience in developing training programmes for expatriates. However, although the process of a manager's preparation to operate in a host country is extensively described in literature, it often reflects the organisation's point of view, whilst the manager's perspective is also important. The publications pay much attention to recruitment and selection of managers (Avril and Magnini, 2007; Waxin and Brewster, 2020) as well as their personality and cultural adjustment capacity (Liu and Lee, 2008; Peltokorpi and Froese, 2014; Stoermer et al., 2021). Nevertheless, it is crucial for expatriate managers to follow a certain code of conduct, no matter whether their employer selected them following guidelines based on their readiness to go abroad, or just appointed somebody available due to their certain personal situation (e.g. without family responsibilities). Research Question 3 (RQ3) concerned the stages of an expat manager's adaptation in the host country that should be considered in order to efficiently build relations with local employees and increase their level of commitment. Figure 4 presents the model of preparation for the managerial role in the host country, divided into two stages: actions performed before departure, and during the stay abroad. As the awareness of cultural differences is of key importance, it is crucial to learn the most important aspects of the host country's culture and to analyse how it differs from one's own national culture. The first step should be made before travelling abroad, and should be initiated by the organization sending the expatriate (Gohi et al., 2022; Waxin and Brewster, 2020). Additionally, the training process can be supported by individual efforts, such as reading scientific literature, guide books and websites on the subject. The process should be continued in the host country, probably with support from local employees, who can also introduce their new manager to other local conditions. At the beginning of working with the new team it is worth establishing the rules of mutual communication as well as to conduct open conversations about the differences between the national culture of the superior and of the local subordinates. The manager should not avoid occasions allowing for integration with local community, to an extend accepted by local customs. Learning the local language should also be considered in the case of a longer stay in the country.

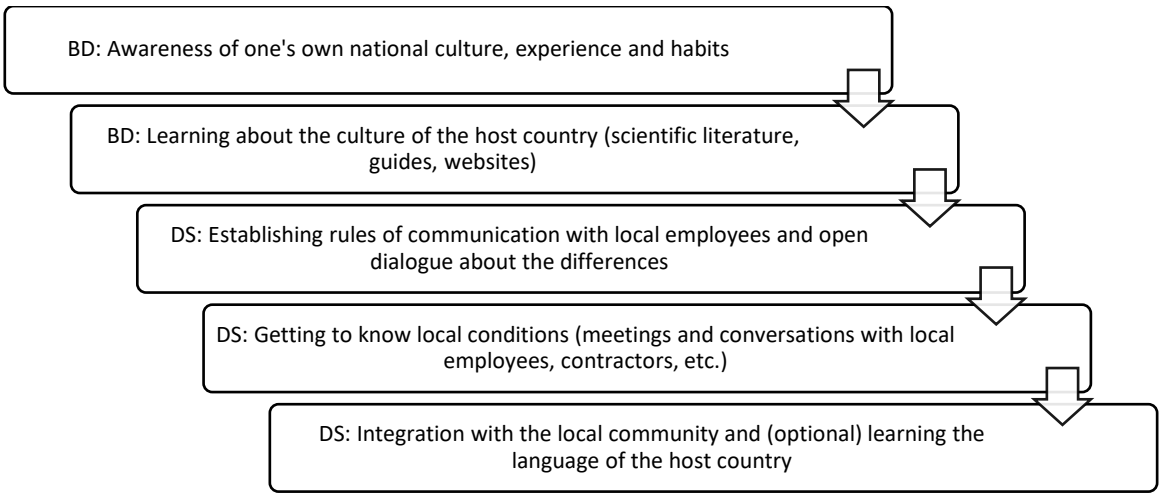

Figure 4. Preparation for the role of a manager in the host country before departure (BD) and actions performed during the stay (DS)

Source: own elaboration based on qualitative research.

The presented model emphasizes not only the need for a thorough preparation of a manager to work in a new cross-cultural environment, but also recognition of the needs of coworkers regarding relational attributes and methods of strengthening commitment, in a given organizational as well as national culture. It is worth noting that expatriate assignments in non-headquarter subsidiaries typically last for several years before they move to the headquarters or another subsidiary. The accumulated experience allows them to adapt more easily to changes and select motivation tools more efficiently.

6. Conclusion and Future Research

Working in an international environment is a great opportunity for personal development. It makes people more tolerant and open to others, broadens one's perspectives and provides much more experience than working only with people representing the same national culture. As one of the research participants said, the possibility of working internationally (in many meanings of the expression) helps to understand other people better due to having worked with *many versions of them*. On the other hand, it is also a great challenge and remarkable responsibility, especially in the role of a manager. Both POS and LMX play a significant role in employee management in an international work environment. Regardless of existing cultural differences, which managers are already aware of, the issue remains of the manager's individual approach resulting from their personality and/or accumulated experience. The conducted interviews indicated the importance of values significant in the POS approach. At the same time, due to the diversity of employees, elements of LMX are necessary, but in the form of RLMX – relational LMX.

Therefore, when starting such an adventure for the first time, it is extremely important not to treat the challenge as one of many missions before. One cannot use the copy/paste pattern trying to make the local people adjust to the foreign mode, but it should be the other way round, naturally to the extend acceptable to the manager's employer, namely the international enterprise. Managers should be open to the opinions of employees, and/or even include them in the leadership circles, or at least provide feedback after receiving those opinions (Stefańska and Grabowski, 2023) to make them feel that their participation in organization's activity is appreciated. The communication between the superior and his/her subordinates should provide information flow in both directions.

Although nowadays managers have access to much deeper knowledge about conditions of conducting business in culturally diverse countries, the fact remains that this knowledge is not always sufficient to prevent mistakes (Hurn, 2007); it takes many years to learn and internalise. Managers must not only become familiar with the main aspects of employees' culture, but also with their local conditions – it is crucial to be aware of the complexity. Furthermore, there exists a persistent dilemma regarding how far managers can transit their relations with employees towards being more efficient to achieve organizational goals in the IWE, where certain hidden factors may significantly influence both the process and employee commitment.

Finally, organisations delegating managers to host countries, as well as managers themselves, are aware of the need to be prepared to coexist with what is frequently a completely different culture. However, training programmes require time, which is often limited in the case of expatriates. The appointed managers change the location and leave the previous place of work. They are under pressure to finish as many tasks as possible before leaving, and pass on their duties to a new manager. As a consequence, they do not have enough time to be sufficiently prepared for their role in the new, culturally different work environment.

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Zaangażowanie pracowników a relacja menedżer–pracownik. Model przywództwa w międzynarodowym środowisku pracy

Streszczenie

Cel: Artykuł ma charakter eksploracyjny i jego głównym celem jest przybliżenie problematyki zaangażowania pracowników w kontekście relacji menedżer–pracownik oraz zaproponowanie w formie modelu procesu przygotowania menedżera do budowania relacji i kształtowania zaangażowania pracowników w zagranicznym oddziale organizacji.

Metodyka: W opracowaniu zastosowano jakościową metodę badania w formie indywidualnych wywiadów pogłębionych (IDI), przeprowadzonych z menedżerami najwyższego szczebla organizacji działających na arenie międzynarodowej.

Wyniki: Relacja menedżer–pracownik ewoluuje. Aby proces jej rozwoju był bardziej satysfakcjonujący dla obu stron, należy w nim zintegrować teorię LMX i koncepcję POS. Ten proces zmian związany jest z cechami nie tylko kulturowymi, ale także osobowościowymi menedżerów i ich doświadczeniem w działaniu w organizacjach międzynarodowych. Różnice kulturowe mogą znacząco wpłynąć na relacje i zaangażowanie pracowników. Wydaje się jednak, że także wartości uniwersalne, takie jak szacunek i zaufanie, kształtują dynamikę przebiegu tego procesu.

Implikacje i rekomendacje: Aby ograniczyć, a właściwie zminimalizować wpływ czynnika kulturowego na relację menedżer–pracownik, należy znaleźć odpowiedni styl przywództwa i dostosować go do każdej jednostki. O powodzeniu procesu decyduje rozpoznanie przez doświadczonego menedżera potrzeb pracownika i wdrożenie pozytywnych metod motywacji.

Oryginalność/wartość: Artykuł ma na celu włączenie się do dyskursu na temat integracji LMX i POS w kontekście stylu przywództwa w IWE. Obydwa podejścia należy badać równolegle, aby zidentyfikować kluczowe determinanty sukcesu menedżera wykraczające poza wymiar międzykulturowy.

Słowa kluczowe: zaangażowanie pracowników, relacja menedżer–pracownik, międzynarodowe środowisko pracy, przywództwo, LMX, POS