



Beyond Borders, Beneath Expectation: The Indian Professionals' Experience In Global Organizations

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Abstract: International work is widely viewed as a pathway to professional growth, global exposure, and career advancement. Indian professionals have become a significant part of the global workforce. However, existing research suggests that many Indian professionals working abroad often fall short of these expectations. This paper examines why global work frequently feels less rewarding than anticipated for Indian professionals, despite strong technical competence and motivation. The paper argues that unmet expectations are largely produced by organisational and structural factors rather than individual limitations. By adopting a human-centered and experience-oriented perspective, the study highlights how standardised global mobility practices and uneven social inclusion shape global work experiences. The paper concludes by emphasising the need for more inclusive and context-sensitive organisational approaches to international work to improve both employee well-being and organizational effectiveness.

Key Words:- Indian Professionals, International Work Assignments, Cultural Intelligence, Organizational Support, Workplace Inclusion.

I. Introduction

Global labour mobility has grown rapidly in recent decades, with Indian professionals playing an important role in the international workforce. The dominance of Indian professionals has been observed across fields such as IT, engineering, healthcare, and management.

With international assignments comes the promise of fast career growth, better pay, skill development, and wider professional recognition. However, behind this optimistic narrative lies a quieter reality, the research states. Many Indian professionals working abroad and having technical skills don't always lead to positive work experiences, and often do not experience these benefits fully. Many studies that are based on comparing different professionals' work experiences in different regions, it suggest that many professionals from **non-western counties** faces challenges mainly related to cultural differences, adjustment, inclusion, and organisational support. These challenges are mainly overlooked in expatriate management practices.

In addition to this research also highlights the importance of cultural intelligence in enabling individuals to make effective cultural judgments, adapt to new environments, and perform well in cross-cultural work settings. Therefore, this study aims to explain why the experience of international professionals while working on their international assignment doesn't match their expectations.

II. Understanding Global Work Through Lived Experience

Traditional research on international assignments mainly focuses on how expatriates adjust to new jobs, cultures, and social environment these are termed as adjustment models. However, through these models we can examine how each adapts to the change, but at the same time these models often treat these adjustment problems of the expatriate as personal difficulties that are supposed to be handled by themselves.

Recent research shows that the professional may do their technical work very well but still feel socially isolated and professionally undervalued. With this, it clearly states that the adjustment challenges are not just limited to only an individual process, but they are also influenced by the workplace environment, culture, social relationships, leadership style, and organizational support.

Research also suggests that successful international work experience depends on three interconnected factors:

- psychological comfort,
- social inclusion, and
- organisational support.

If any one of these factors is weak, the overall international work experience is negatively affected.

III. Patterns In The Overseas Work Experiences Of Indian Professionals

Research shows that Indian professionals working overseas show a consistent pattern.

Firstly, the cultural adjustment plays a significant role in shaping job satisfaction and overall performance. An international professional who performs well technically may also struggle socially and culturally, resulting in confusion, anxiety, stress and social isolation.

Secondly, organizational support also makes a difference, which is often ignored. Research demonstrates that practices carried out during ON ASSIGNMENT TRAINING, like coaching, like proving guidance by the Senior Manager and Supervisor, mentoring and support from experienced expatriate or the local managers, emotional support, regular evaluation and performance feedback play a crucial role in shaping the overall international work experiences. But the real issue here is that the organisations limit their support to relocation, logistics, and on the assumption that the professionals will “FIGURE OUT” the rest on their own.

Finally, social inclusion remains uneven. Research reveals that Indian professionals are often technically integrated but socially ignored, and this affects their visibility and long-term career opportunities.

Together, these findings suggest that Global work challenges are less about competence and more centered on how organisations structure support, recognition, and inclusion.

IV. The Role of Cultural Intelligence and Communication

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is widely recognized as a critical factor in helping professionals work effectively across different cultures. Research shows that the professionals with higher metacognitive CQ adapt more successfully to unfamiliar cultures by adjusting to the communication styles, reading social cues and managing ambiguity in unfamiliar cultural settings.

However, CQ alone is not enough, as highly culturally intelligent professionals can struggle in workplaces that lack inclusivity. For many Indian professionals, this leads to constant self-monitoring and adaptation in daily interactions, creating an additional layer of emotional and cognitive efforts that extends beyond formal job roles.

V. Organizational Practices That Fall Short

Many Global mobility systems are mainly designed for operational efficiency rather than employee experience. While organizations often manage visas, relocation, and compensation effectively, they give far less attention to mentoring, social integration, and long-term career planning. Research identifies recurring gaps, such as limited mentoring after relocation, weak integration with host country teams, unclear career paths, and little preparation for social and cultural challenges.

As a result, internationally mobile professionals are often expected to adapt on their own once the assignment begins. This assumption overlooks the ongoing support needed to navigate workplace norms, build networks, and gain visibility in new organizational contexts. Even high-performing professionals may feel disconnected or confused about how their international role fits into their broader career trajectory.

Studies further reflect that organizations with more mature global mobility practices mean the organisation that treats international assignments and work as a long-term developmental process rather than a temporary short-term assignment, professionals report stronger adjustment, higher job satisfaction, retention outcomes, and greater commitment to the organization. Such approaches help ensure that global assignments create lasting value for both employees and organizations, rather than becoming temporary experiences with limited long-term impact.

VI. Why Expectations Remain Unmet

When everything is viewed together, it clearly points toward a conclusion that the expectations that are mainly unmet in global work are largely structural rather than individual. An international professional, while taking on international assignment roles, enters with strong skills and motivation. Yet their experiences are undermined not because of their inability but limited social inclusion, uneven organizational support, and implicit cultural bias embedded in workplace practices.

As a result, global work often becomes an ongoing process of adjustment rather than meaningful professional expansion, managing differences, proving competence repeatedly, and navigating unspoken norms. Over time, the gap between expectations and real experiences leads to frustration, slower career progression, and a sense that the international assignment delivered less than it promised.

VII. Implications for Global Organizations

Organizations that rely on global talent can no longer afford to ignore the patterns highlighted in this study. International work is not just a logistical exercise but a complex human experience that shapes employee motivation, performance, and long-term career outcomes. To make global assignments truly effective, organizations need to rethink how international work is designed and supported. Research suggests the following practical steps: -

- Treating international work as a long-term development process, not just a short-term assignment. Proper role expectations, visible career pathways, and post-assignment planning can help professionals see international work as a meaningful investment in their future.
- Focus not just on relocation but invest in mentoring, social integration, and coaching. Assigning local mentors, encouraging cross-cultural team interactions, and supporting informal networking can significantly improve adjustment and engagement.
- Recognizing gender specific and cultural challenges. Flexible work arrangements, safety considerations, and inclusive workplace norms are essential to ensure that international opportunities are equally accessible and rewarding for all professionals.
- Creating a performance feedback mechanism that allows professionals to voice their concerns safely. Regular check-ins, anonymous feedback channels, and culturally sensitive performance evaluations can help identify issues early and build trust. Such changes do not merely improve employee well-being; they enhance retention, performance, and leadership diversity.

VIII. Conclusion

Global work remains a symbol of opportunity, development, and mobility for Indian professionals. It represents access to global markets, development, and growth. However, as this paper illustrates, the reality of global work does not always meet these expectations. While global work presents Indian professionals with access to new and exciting opportunities, the experience within these work environments often fails to meet the expectations of support and inclusion that professionals seek. The difference between the two is rarely based on the ability of the individual or their adaptability, but instead on the systems that are not adequately prioritizing inclusion and support.

Global mobility, therefore, is not simply the movement of talent across borders. Instead, it is the quality of the work environment that organisations create. International assignments become rewarding only when professionals feel a part of the team and are included in the transition. Essentially, global work is successful not simply through geographic movement but through organisational practices that create a sense of belonging and equity.

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