



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***MEDIATED MODERATION OF ORGANISATIONAL AND GOVERNMENT
SUPPORT ON WORKPLACE ADAPTATION OF MALAYSIAN
PROFESSIONAL RETURNEES***

MAGESWARI KUNASEGARAN

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**MEDIATED MODERATION OF ORGANISATIONAL AND
GOVERNMENT SUPPORT ON WORKPLACE ADAPTATION OF
MALAYSIAN PROFESSIONAL RETURNEES**

By

MAGESWARI KUNASEGARAN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

December 2016

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2016

Chairman : Professor Maimunah Ismail, PhD
Faculty : Educational Studies

This study investigates the relationship between talent development environment (TDE) constructs and the workplace adaptation (WA) of Malaysian professional returnees as mediates by organisational support and moderate by the government support. Workplace adaptation refers to process of adapting and adjusting process in the new working environment. Professional returnees are defined as a group of individual who have left the country to further their study or work abroad and returned to Malaysia. This study aims to identify the returnees' characteristics, returnees' job location, the influences of mediator and moderator on WA. This study adapted the TDE model, which was frequently used in the sports science management into HRD context. There were eight independent constructs, one mediator and one moderator were used to analyse WA of the returnees. This study further adopted the Work Adjustment Theory, Person-Environment fit Theory, Organisational Support Theory and Social Exchange Theory in explaining WA.

There were 157 respondents participated in this study who were selected using snowball sampling technique. The data were analysed using the Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modelling version 3 (PLS-SEM) in a reflective-formative assessment structure. The results demonstrate mixed outcomes in the direct, indirect and moderation interaction effect. There was only one hypothesis relationship was supported, meanwhile through mediation effect, there was two hypothesis relationship were accepted. The organisational support has a strong mediation effect. Similarly, the government support also has a significant value but negative correlation in the WA study. The findings indicate that the job focus and long-term development were important constructs in WA study. This study reveals the importance of organisational support as mediator to help returnees to adapt in their WA.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PERANAN PENGANTARA DAN PENENGAH DI ANTARA SOKONGAN
ORGANISASI AND KERAJAAN DALAM PENGADAPTASIAN
TEMPAT KERJA DALAM KALANGAN PROFESIONAL
"RETURNEES" DI MALAYSIA**

Oleh

MAGESWARI KUNASEGARAN

Disember 2016

Pengerusi : Profesor Maimunah Ismail, PhD
Fakulti : Pengajian Pendidikan

Kajian ini mengkaji hubungan antara persekitaran pembangunan bakat (PPB) dengan adaptasi kerja (AK) bagi golongan profesional “returnees” di Malaysia dengan sokongan organisasi sebagai pengantara dan sokongan kerajaan sebagai penengah. Pengadaptasian kerja ialah proses menyesuaikan dan menyelesaikan diri dalam persekitaran kerja yang baharu. Golongan “returnees” profesional ditakrifkan sebagai sekumpulan individu yang telah meninggalkan negara ini untuk melanjutkan pelajaran atau bekerja di luar negara dan akhirnya kembali ke Malaysia. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti ciri-ciri “returnees”, lokasi kerja “returnees”, pengaruh pengantara dan penengah terhadap AK. Kajian telah mengadaptasi model PPB yang sering digunakan dalam pengurusan sains sukan ke dalam konteks Pembangunan Sumber Manusia (PSM). Terdapat lapan pemboleh ubah tidak bersandar, satu pengantara dan satu penengah untuk menganalisis AK. Kajian ini juga menggunakan Teori Penyesuaian Kerja (TPK), Teori kesesuaian Individu-Persekitaran (Person-Environment fit), Teori Sokongan Organisasi dan Teori Pertukaran Sosial dalam menerangkan tentang AK. Kajian ini menyumbang dari sudut teori dan praktis.

Sebanyak 157 orang responden terlibat dalam kajian ini yang telah dipilih dengan menggunakan teknik persampelan bola salji. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan Kuasa Dua Terkecil Separa-Model Persamaan Struktural dengan versi 3 (KDS-MPS) dalam penilaian “reflective-formative”. Dapatan menunjukkan terdapat pelbagai bentuk kesan interaksi langsung, tidak langsung dan penengah. Hanya satu hypothesis hubungan langsung yang berjaya disokong, manakala dua hypothesis melalui pengantara telah berjaya disokong. Sokongan organisasi mempunyai kesan pengantara yang kuat. Keadaan yang sama dengan sokongan kerajaan mempunyai kesan signifikasi tetapi hubungannya adalah negatif. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa penumpuan tugas dan pembangunan jangka panjang adalah pemboleh ubah yang penting bagi AK. Kajian ini menunjukkan kepentingan sokongan organisasi sebagai

pengantara bagi membantu golongan “returnees” profesional menyesuaikan diri dengan persekitaran kerja baru mereka.



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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Maimunah Ismail, PhD

Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Roziyah Mohd Rasdi, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Ismi Arif Ismail, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

ROBIAH BINTI YUNUS, PhD

Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

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Name and Matric No.: Mageswari Kunasegaran , GS 32983

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Signature: _____

Name of Chairman
of Supervisory
Committee:

Professor Dr. Maimunah Ismail

Signature: _____

Name of Member
of Supervisory
Committee:

Associate Professor Dr. Roziah Mohd Rasdi

Signature: _____

Name of Member
of Supervisory
Committee:

Associate Professor Dr. Ismi Arif Ismail

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CR	Construct Reliability
GS	Government Support
GLCs	Government-linked companies
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait
HRDF	Human Resource Development Fund
HRD	Human Resource Development
NKEAs	National Key Economic Area sectors
MNCs	Multinational companies
MEF	Malaysian Employment Federation
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Model
P-E	Person-Environment fit theory
P-J	Person-Job fit
P-O	Person-Organisation fit
P-C	Person-Culture fit
OS	Organisational Support
OST	Organisational Support theory
REP	Returning Expert Programme
SHRD	Strategy Human Resource Development
SET	Social Exchange Theory
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SRSR	Standard Root Square Residual
Talent Corp	Talent Corporation
TDE	Talent Development Environment

VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
WA	Workplace Adaptation
WAT	Work Adjustment Theory



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the relationship between talent development environment (TDE) constructs and workplace adaptation (WA), mediated by the organisational support and moderated by government support of Malaysian professional returnees.

This chapter presents the background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, hypotheses, significance of the study, the assumptions of the study, limitations, and operational definitions of terms utilised in this study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Global mobility has led to a “war for talent” (McKinsey, 2008) and caused a shortage of talents (Pobst, 2014) in most developing countries. In order to achieve a high human capital index, it is vital to encourage the talented employees to return home. However, the returning process to the home country is challenging and involves a high investment (Black & Gregersen, 1999). Moreover, the returnees faced difficulties in adjusting themselves with culture variations, whereby 60% of the returnees experienced a reverse culture shock (Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall, 1992), and 25% of the returnees emigrated due to “variation of self-concept, conflict, unconfirmed expectations, and a sense of loss” (MacDonald & Arthur, 2005, p. 14).

This would jeopardise the government’s aspirations and its return on investment (ROI) in bringing back Malaysian talents (Talent Roadmap 2020, 2012). It automatically pushed the Human Resource Development (HRD) interventions to search and adopt new mechanisms to help the newly joined returnees to adapt in the local working environment (Pobst, 2014; Osman-Gani & Chan, 2009).

In the current study, the terms returnee and talent were interchangeably used. Professional returnees are a group of professionals who travelled abroad to study and/or work, and have returned to the home country with multiple skills and talents (Ismail, Kamaruddin, Umar Baki & Mohd Rasdi, 2014a). The returnees are recognised as unique resources, which the organisation should treat equally (Tansley, 2011). As claimed by the director of Ernest-Antoine, an HR consultancy agency in talent management and HR article, “the organisation must consider returnees as a valuable resource and part of human resource” (Vilet, 2012 p. 2). Garavan, Carbery, and Rock (2012) added that the returnees are talented resources who are capable of predicting a new direction at the workplace, and increase the organisation’s competitive values.

Most Malaysian returnees have returned through the incentive programme of Talent Corporation Malaysia Berhad (Talent Corp) or they were self-initiated (Lim, Krishnan

& Yap, 2014; Talent Roadmap 2020, 2012). Self-initiated returnees are known as independent career travellers (Andersen & Walther, 2012). The rest of returnees have returned through Talent Corp incentive efforts, or known as a diaspora network, or Returning Expert Programme (REP). The current study has included these two categories of returnees.

Furthermore, the local institutions also influence the returnees' WA. According to the study of Olds and Home-Walsh (2014), it was found that the local institutions were less supportive towards returnees. It is evident that the literature often debate about the challenges of the returnees and their struggle in adapting to organisations in the home country (Kraimer, Bolino & Mead, 2016; Osman-Gani & Hyder, 2008; Stahl, Chua, Calligiuri, Cerdin & Taniguchi, 2009). Moreover, less attention was given to addressing the issue of adaptation struggle (Siddiqui & Tejada, 2014).

WA is one of the key determinants for the adaptation of the returnees in home country organisations (Siddiqui & Tejada, 2014). Currently, the existing literature on adaptation focused mainly on cross-cultural adaptation and social-cultural adaptation (Alami, 2016; Chaban, Williams, Holland, Boyce, & Warner, 2011; Black et al., 1992; Black & Gregersen, 1991), but related research on the WA of returnees in developing countries, such as Malaysia, still is lacking. It would be greatly misleading to assume that the professionals who returned to their homeland face no difficulty whatsoever in adjusting to new working environments. Thus, investigating the WA of the professional returnees who remained in the country is crucially needed (Stahl et al., 2009).

1.1.1 An Overview of Workplace Adaptation

WA caught the attention of HRD practitioners when HRD researchers began to focus on organisational socialisation as a way to improve the employees' motivation (Reio, 1997), satisfaction, retention, and performance (Reio & Sutton, 2006), as well as to encourage the returnees to stay longer in multinational corporations (MNCs) (Chan, 2014). In fact, WA has a strong impact on organisational performance compared to any other form of adaptation, such as social-psychological, cross-cultural, socio-politics, family, and lifestyle (Tamura & Funham, 1993; Gill, 2012; Chiang & Liao, 2008; Siddiqua & Tejada, 2014). Despite its importance, researchers have examined and argued the domination of the internal and external factors of WA. The internal factors of WA are associated with the assimilation process that commonly occurs among newcomers in the organisation (Reio & Sutton, 2006). On the other hand, the external factors of WA are influenced by acculturation, such as cross-cultural communication, intercultural, social-cultural, and family commitment (MacDonald & Arthur, 2005; Black et al., 1992). Nevertheless, WA is not a straightforward process (Chan, 2014).

Most of the returnees experience challenges due to the differences in cultural values and thinking styles (MacDonald & Arthur, 2005), reverse culture shock (Black et al., 1992), community hazards (Fussel, 2007), self-conflict that leads to isolation (Hao,

Wen & Welch, 2016), and communication barriers (Chan, 2014; Siddiqui & Tejada, 2014) as a way of rejecting WA in the new working environment. This prolongs the adaptation process of the returnees in local organisations (Chan, 2014). For instance, a local study has highlighted that Malaysian returnees were re-migrating silently due to the institutions' ignorance of their needs (Lim et al., 2014). Thus, this clearly indicates the importance of setting adaptation measures to ensure that the returnees do not make a U-turn. Returnees re-migration would decreased the government investment and human capital competitive index that weaken the local institutions development (Black & Gregersen, 1999).

According to Osman-Gani and Hyder (2008), a well-structured talent development model is capable of reducing re-migration intentions and is able to increase the confidence of the returnees. The past study has analysed one part of talent development predictors, which was training and development with Work Adjustment Theory (WAT) (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). It focused on the relationship between training (training programmes, training contents, duration and delivery modes) and effective training methods with work adjustment among Singaporean returnees. A similar conclusion was driven from the study of Garavan et al. (2012), which states that an advanced talent development perceptive would increase job satisfaction among talented employees, as well as their ability to adjust according to the organisation's environment. In the HRD context, the talent development perspective is a primary key to booster the confidence of the returnees, especially the self-initiated at the new workplace (Nery-Kjerfve & McLean, 2011). Researchers have empirically proven that a proper talent development framework would be able to influence the adaptation patterns of the returnees and their sustainability in the home country organisation (Jonkers & Cruz Caster, 2013; Osman-Gani & Hyder, 2008). Therefore, HRD is in a pivotal position to recognise the key issues that may have an effect on talent development and management.

Beyond that, there is a need to further investigate the WA of the returnees from the talent-related perspective (Iles, Chuai & Preece, 2010). Therefore, the study has proposed TDE constructs, which was developed by Martindale, Collins, and Daubney (2005) to optimize the adaptability, motivation and performance of talented athletes, to be put into the HRD context. Eight potential exogenous constructs were adopted from Martindale, Collins, Wang, McNeill, Lee, Sproule and Westbury (2010) and used in the present study; they are communication, job focus, work-life balance, quality preparation, networking, long-term development, environmental challenges, and supportive environment. These exogenous constructs were similar with other bodies of knowledge. For instance, job flexibility (Nawab, Li & Nisar, 2011), cross-cultural communication (Black et al., 1992), career development, work-life balance (Cerdin & Le Parguex, 2010), long-term development (Osman-Gani & Hyder, 2008), networking (Stahl, Bjorkman, Farndale, Morris, Paauwe, Stiles, Trevor & Wright, 2007), and challenging and supportive environment (Arunasalam, 2013; Roberts, 2012; Iles et al., 2010). With these inclusive constructs, the elements proposed by Martindale et al. (2010) were applicable to HRD studies.

Another hidden factor that contributed to the failure of returnees was the unawareness of managements, and overlooking or under reporting these issues due to the structure of the organisation (Olds & Home-Walsh, 2014; Chan, 2014). Chan (2014) added that the complex working environment with various types of business entities also influenced the adaptability of the returnees.

In the context of Malaysia, business entities are divided into government-linked companies (GLCs), multinational corporations (MNCs), family businesses, small and medium businesses; this division has influenced management practices as well as newcomer satisfaction (Bhaskaran & Sukumaran, 2007). Different types of business entities have a different set of organisational support (Kraimer et al., 2016), which subsequently choreographs the adaptation of the returnees. For instance, studies have proven that self-initiated returnees are not equally compensated by the MNCs in Denmark, France and Germany (Cao, Hirschi & Deller, 2014).

Therefore, the current study has responded to the recommendations of Garavan et al. (2012), Cao et al. (2014), Iles et al. (2010), Reio and Sutton (2005) to further investigate the integration between talent related development, such as the TDE model with WA (Martindale et al., 2012). Furthermore, research on professional returnees is appropriate in managing the available Malaysian returnees, despite the shortage in talented individuals. The current study is theoretically supported by the WAT (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984), Person-Environment (P-E) fit Theory (French, Caplan & Harrison, 1974), Organisational Support Theory (OST) (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson & Sowa, 1986), and Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

1.1.2 Context of the Study

1.1.3 The needs of Professional Returnees in Malaysia

The study of WA is relevant in supporting the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011-2015) which emphasises the need to nurture, attract, and retain the world-class talents, which directly implies to those returnees who have returned to Malaysia. A concurrent positive growth has been recorded in the human capital ecosystem in Malaysia via the Tenth Malaysian Plan (2011-2015), Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020), and Talent Roadmap 2020 (2012); including a series of recorded achievements, such as the 1.8 million employment opportunities, 55% of female participation in top management, and a 133% improvement in public universities' research citation from 2010 to 2013 (Hong, 2012; Eleventh Malaysia Plan Report, 2016-2020).

Furthermore, the Institute for Labour Market Information and Analysis (ILMIA) was established through the Tenth and Eleventh Malaysia Plan, as well as worked closely with Talent Corp and the Economic Planning Unit in the Prime Minister's department to address talent issues in the country. It was also set up to strengthen the Malaysian workforce market. The Economic Planning Unit declared that 28% of the Malaysian workforce were considered skilled workers (i.e. professionals, managers, technicians, and associated professionals) in the year 2015, and it is expected to increase to 35%

in the year 2020 (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, 2016-2020). Human capital development is the core benchmark to determine a country's growth on global competitiveness. Moreover, Malaysia is undergoing a new paradigm shift where it is moving away from the manufacturing industry to the service industry, in which human capital has been tagged as a yardstick of the country's achievement. Similarly, most countries in the Asia Pacific region are calling back their own talents and are practising global talent strategies, which signalled Talent Corp to speed up their strategies.

However, the International Safety Research (ISR) has shown that Malaysian companies still lack professional talents in few critical sectors. This is probably contributed by the 47% of talented employees who left to other countries (Osman, Oman, Mahphotn & Hashim, 2013). International statistics (World Bank Report, 2010-2011) have indexed that there are more than one million Malaysians living abroad (Hong, 2012). Recently, the World Bank Report stressed on Malaysia's need for its professional returnees to support the government in achieving its aspiration to become a high-income nation and to fulfil the country's skill gaps (World Bank, 2015). In addition, the Global Talent Competitive Index Report 2011-2012 showed that Malaysia was ranked in the 39th place out of 60 countries in the competitive talent ranking, and it declines due to brain drain issues and the lack of supporting programmes (Schwab, 2011). There was an improvement in the talent index of Malaysia in the year 2016 where it climbed to the 36th place in the Global Talent Competitive Index Report 2015-2016 (Lanvin & Evan, 2015). However, this is not perceived as sufficient to persuade Malaysian expertise to return. Hence, it is felt that a new manifestation is required to re-strategise the human capital development, including an investigation on WA among the returnees.

1.1.4 Talent Corporation: Its role in the development of Returnees

Talent Corp is a government agency, which was established under the Prime Minister's Department on 1st January 2011 to attract and encourage Malaysian experts to return and assist in achieving the nation's aim. It started with three primary objectives, namely i) to optimise Malaysian talents; ii) to attract and facilitate global talents; and iii) to build talent networks.

The agenda began with building a Malaysian diaspora network via professional networking series in developed countries, organising meetings and interviews with Malaysian professionals or associations abroad, and finally, assessing the profiling of the returnees (Personal Communication, 2015). Talent Corp has successfully developed three talent retention programmes, such as the Returning Expert Programme (REP), the Scholarship Talent and Retention (STAR), and the Talent Acceleration in Public Service (TAPS). The REP has established to assist the Malaysian diasporas, and offer incentive packages, such as a flat tax rate of 15%, tax exemption on imported cars, and permanent resident status for foreign spouses and children (Talent Roadmap 2020, 2012). Over time, the Malaysian government attempted several returning programmes such as Malaysian Scientists in 1995, Returning Malaysian Experts Program in 2001, Brain Drain Malaysia in 2006, and REP in 2011.

Table 1.1 : Returning programmes in Malaysia.

Year	Programmes
1995	Malaysian Scientists
2001	Returning Expert Initiative
2006	Brain Drain Malaysia
2011	Returning Expert Programme (REP), by Talent Corp

Sources: Adapted from Wang (2010) and Talent Roadmap 2020 (2012)

The government had identified the brain drain as a serious issue long time ago. The Malaysian government established the first returning programme by calling back Malaysian scientists in 1995 (see Table 1.1). This was followed by the Returning Expert Initiative programme and Malaysia's Brain Drain programme, in 2001 and 2006, respectively. However, those packages were not attractive enough to call back the experts to serve the nation. In the spirit of encouraging Malaysian expertise to return home, the Malaysian government added more incentives to Malaysian students and professionals abroad, especially in critical sectors such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

The Human Resource Ministry and Talent Corp recorded 680 Malaysian returnees from 1995 to 2015 (2011), 1,300 returnees in 2012, and 3,750 returnees in 2014 (Talent Roadmap 2020, 2012; Lim et al., 2014). According to the selection committee board, Malaysian returnees were selected based on four steps, namely: i) online application; ii) screening process to identify the eligibility of the returnee to assess the government's incentives; iii) decision announcement; and iv) approval for the returnee to return with the REP packages. This effort was in accordance with the government's mission to reduce the talent shortage in National Key Economic Area sectors (NKEAs). Beside this, there was on going programmes organise by Talent Corp to assist returnees in new working environment such as

1.2 Problem Statement

The returned professionals should be assisted by the local institutions to speed up their adaptation process at the workplace. The lack of preparation for the returnees has reached the critical point as local institutions ignored the knowledge and ability of the returnees in the organisation (Lim et al., 2014) and because less attention was given to them by government agencies (Cao et al., 2014). The inefficient WA in the home country organisations had financially burdened the managements and affected job satisfaction.

Between 1995 and 2015, more than one million Malaysians have migrated overseas, whereby 80% of them are professionals, and that occurs regardless of the

government's spending of millions of dollars on diaspora's activities abroad (Lim et al., 2014). The return percentage was comparatively small (3,750) compared to those who had left the country (Talent Roadmap 2020, 2012). Therefore, as Malaysia moves forward into holding a developed country status by 2020, WA is a crucial element for the survival, adaptation, and retention of Malaysian returnees. By studying WA among the returnees, the research gap will be filled, and the expenditure of the government and organisations will be minimised.

Researchers have explored the phenomenon of returnees in their home countries, which yielded concepts such as entrepreneurs' adaptation (Wei, Ning, Xuejun & Jianchun, 2012), knowledge sharing adjustment (Wang, 2012a; Roberts, 2012), cross-cultural adaptation (Chaban et al., 2011; Black et al., 1992), children's adjustment (Tamura & Funham, 1993), postgraduates' adjustment (Gill, 2012; Chiang & Liao, 2008; Siddiqua & Tejada, 2014), and military adaptation (Westwood, McLean, Cave, Borgeon & Slakov, 2010). Sadly, WA of professional returnees is poorly researched. Moreover, in the Malaysian context, most of the studies were related to expatriates' cross-cultural work adjustment (Mohd Tahir & Ismail, 2009; Ramalu, Wei & Rose, 2011), push and pull factors of Malaysian diasporas (Jauhar & Mohd Yusof, 2011), leveraging Malaysian diasporas (Talib, Sofian, Mohamad, Senin, Kadir & Aslan, 2012), reverse brain drain (Ismail, Kunasegaran, & Mohd Rasdi, 2014b), and perceptions on career aspirations of professional returnees (Ismail et al., 2014a).

It was also found that most previous studies had acknowledged the influences of organisational support as a mediator on WA, however, only a few empirical tests were carried out (Nery-Kjerfve & McLean, 2012; MacDonald & Arthur, 2005). Riding and Lapke (2013) added that the survival of the returnees in the home country organisation was dependent upon the organisational support as a mediator, which acts partly as an encouragement to the newcomers. In addition, the literature also shows an interactive effect between WA and the government's interference on the returnees, such as returning program packages (Wang, 2012a; Li & Yang, 2013). A mutual collaboration between the government and the organisations would speed up the adaptation process of the returnees, as well as enhancing the national development (Correa d'Almeida, 2010). Furthermore, a study by Yussof and Ramayah (2007) showed that social support was a significant moderator in work adjustment.

However, a quantitative study by Li and Yang (2013) did not find any significant impact from government support in WA. Therefore, the current study on WA has considered the government support as a necessary moderator to measure its efforts in assisting the returnees to adapt, because part of the Malaysian returnees are self-initiated and they expect equal recognition and appreciation from the government and the organisation. Moreover, previous studies separately either focused on the relationship between the organisational support and WA (Riding & Lapke, 2013; MacDonald & Arthur, 2005) or the government's influence on WA (Correa d'Almeida, 2010). The current study closes the gap by addressing them in the context of mediated moderation effect on WA, which is by default an extended WA.

In addition, most of the studies on the WA of the returnees were examined based on qualitative approaches to understand the phenomena of WA (Zweig, Huiyoo, & Xiaohua, 2011; Gill, 2012; Cerdin & Le Pargeux, 2010; Li & Yang, 2013), and very few attempted quantitative methods (Wang, 2012a; MacDonald & Arthur, 2005). Analysis the current study in a quantitative method through Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Model (PLS-SEM) (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2014) in a reflective-formative assessment structure has added new insights to WA.

Evidences have proven that WAT mainly focused on job satisfaction, work stress, and career development (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984, Dawis, 2005). It is intensively used in psychological, social, and financial contexts, and lately it has been applied to work adjustment (Abdul Wahab, 2008; Chiang & Liao, 2008). However, there is little concern in understanding the WAT on WA from the perspective of talent development (Iles et al., 2010). It is important to analyse WA from the talent perspective because professional returnees are recognised as talented employees in the workforce. Furthermore, the current study will bridge the research gap by integrating with theories of P-E fit, OST and SET to clarify the behaviour of returnees on WA. Thus, the study attempts to examine the application of the integrated theories on WA.

Based on the reviews above, the associations between TDE constructs with WA, specifically the integration of adjustment, assimilation, and acculturation of professional returnees are clearly stated, and the effects of the organisational and government supports as mediated moderation was inconclusive. Thus, the current study aims to explain the direct, indirect (mediation) and the moderation effect from the reflective and formative viewpoints.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework was adopted from the conceptualisation of the reflective and formative approaches in PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2014). The endogenous construct (WA) was formed based on formative structure and the exogenous constructs (predictors) were designed based on reflective structure. Meanwhile, the mediator (organisational support) and moderator (government support) were evaluated based on the reflective structure. The WA term was driven from the socialisation process (Reio & Sutton, 2006), WAT (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984), and the combination of the adjustment, assimilation, and acculturation process of an individual (returnees) at workplace (Chung-Yan, 2005).

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to understand the WA among Malaysian professional returnees. This includes the self-initiated returnees and those who came through Talent Corp efforts in last 7 years (2010 to 2017). The initial purpose is to identify the factors that contribute directly to the WA of professional returnees in Malaysia. The second purpose is to investigate the role of Organisational Support as a mediator between the predictors and WA. Finally, to identify the government's influence through

moderation effects between the Organisational Support and WA. This current study provides an umbrella view on WA in the home country organisations. The integration of mediated moderation framework has a comprehensive meaning and it influences on predictors of WA.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the above-mentioned discussion, the present study has considered five research questions, namely:

- i) What are the characteristics of Malaysian professional returnees?
- ii) What is the distribution frequency between professional returnees and their working environment?
- iii) What is the direct relationship between TDE constructs and WA of professional returnees?
- iv) What is the mediating role of Organisational Support between TDE constructs and WA of professional returnees?
- v) What is the moderator role of the Government Support in influencing the relationship between Organisational Support and WA of professional returnees?

1.6 Research Objectives

This study aimed to determine the relationship between TDE constructs and WA, which is mediated by the Organisational Support and moderated by the Government Support among professional returnees in Malaysia. The specific research objectives were:

- i) To determine the characteristics of Malaysian professional returnees.
- ii) To identify the locations of professional returnees in Malaysian business environments.
- iii) To examine the direct relationship between TDE constructs (individual-related factors, organisational-related factors, and organisational climate-related factors), and WA of professional returnees.
- iv) To assess the role of Organisational Support as a mediator between TDE constructs and WA of professional returnees.
- v) To examine the moderating effect of Government Support on the relationship between Organisational Support and WA of professional returnees.

1.7 Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses were formulated based on the research objectives, research questions, and literature review (Chapter 2). The hypotheses are as follows:

Individual-related factors

H1a: Communication has a positive effect on the WA of professional returnees.

- H1b: Organisational Support mediates the relationship between Communication and WA of professional returnees.
- H2a: Job focus has a positive effect on the WA of professional returnees.
- H2b: Organisational Support mediates the relationship between Job Focus and WA of professional returnees.
- H3a: Work-life balance has a positive effect on the WA of professional returnees.
- H3b: Organisational Support mediates the relationship between the Work-life balance and the WA of professional returnees.

Organisation-related factors

- H4a: Quality preparation has a positive effect on the WA of professional returnees.
- H4b: Organisational Support mediates the relationship between quality preparation and WA of professional returnees.
- H5a: Networking has a positive effect on the WA of professional returnees.
- H5b: Organisational support mediates the relationship between networking and WA of professional returnees.
- H6a: Long-term development has a positive effect on the WA of professional returnees.
- H6b: Organisational support mediates the relationship between long-term development and WA of professional returnees.

Organisational-climate related factors

- H7: Environmental challenges has a positive effect on the WA of professional returnees.
- H8: Supportive environment has a positive effect on WA of professional returnees.

Mediation effect

- H10: Organisational Support has a positive effect on WA of professional returnees.

Moderation effect

- H11: Government Support moderates between Organisational Support and WA of professional returnees.

1.8 Significance of the Study

1.8.1 Theoretical Significance

The current study will provide new insights from the theoretical perspective for policy makers, researchers, and scholars. First, this study will extend the six values in the core theory, i.e. WAT (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). Besides that, it also further clarifies the integration of adjustment, assimilation, and acculturation of returnees. Furthermore, the formulation of WA through a formative assessment will give an accumulative value. In agreement with that, it is considered a collective adjustment process. Moreover, the combination of WAT and P-E fit sub-theories will add new values by grouping the exogenous constructs as individual-related, organisational-related, and organisational climate-related constructs (Kristof-Brown, 2000; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005; Delle, 2013). Previous studies were mainly focused on career development, job satisfaction, and cross-cultural adjustment in using both of the theories (Abdul Wahat, 2008; Chung-Yan, 2005). Furthermore, the current study also will identify the logical consequence of the term “fitting” in the WA study (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The fitting perception has the ability to influence the returnee in their adaptation process at the workplace.

Secondly, the integration of OST (Eisenberger et al., 1986) and SET (Cropanzon & Mitchel, 2005) as a mediator and a moderator in this study will provide a new landscape. It will indicate a trade value in their exchange of returning and working in the home country with what has been offered by the government. Meanwhile, organisational support with the OST would confirm the degree of appreciation offered by the Malaysian organisations to returnees. Moreover, it is a new attempt to integrate the SET (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) in WA studies by using government support as a moderator. The roles of government support and organisational support should bring about new insights into WA literatures (Cho, Hutchings & Marchant, 2013; Riding & Lapke, 2013). Hence, as a summary, the current study may provide a significant contribution to HRD by adapting the TDE constructs from sports science management as exogenous constructs to this study.

Thirdly, in terms of methodology, the study will suggest a new dimension through applying the reflective-formative assessment structure through PLS-SEM. Numerous studies were conducted using a qualitative approach to understand the experiences and psychological responses of the returnees in relation to their challenges and opportunities in the local working environment (Olds & Home-Walsh, 2014). The quantitative approach in the current study will give a novel viewpoint to HRD practitioners to evaluate the WA of returnees from the TDE constructs, organisational support, and government support perspective.

1.8.2 Practical Significance

The current study is expressively attempting to apply a proper adaptation method in the home country organisation. This study also directly benefits practitioners and policy makers in HRD, as well as planners of human resources strategies.

The findings of the study will indicate which construct is important in a WA study. Moreover, it also will assist practitioners to understand the nature of business entities in Malaysia. The role of organisational support as a mediator and government support as a moderator will provide a new understanding to the HRD practice. Therefore, the practitioners will be able to plan beyond the business environment. Thus, by addressing the group of returnees, the shortage of talents in critical NKEA sectors is minimised. Furthermore, it will encourage the government agencies to prepare contingency plans.

The integration of the government and organisational support will help to re-strategise the internal and external factors of HRD strategy. With this, HRD practitioners would be able to optimise the opportunities provided by Talent Corp as a government arm to sustain talented returnees through participation in open exhibitions and conferences where issues of returnees are discussed. Ideally, this study will also help HRD practitioners to build internal and external networking between policy makers, planners, and returnees. Furthermore, a mutual collaboration between Talent Corp and local institutions will increase the human capital index in the country. Identifying the role of government support in the WA study will set the right measurements to help the returnees to adapt in the home country organisations.

As a conclusion, the institutional support in the WA study will provide a new perspective for practitioners to understand HRD strategies. The study would draw new milestone for government arms such as Talent Corp to upgrade its efforts to meet the needs of the returnees, and organise productive events in the future. Moreover, open communication and networking will encourage the returnees to connect with Talent Corp as a one-stop solution for returnees. This study will also provide a solution to overcome the issues of global mobility, talent circulation, or talent exchange instead of losing the talented employees because of the institutions' lack of awareness on WA.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

Despite the efforts of conducting this study in a meticulous manner, there were some limitations that might have affected its contributions and generalizability. Firstly, the sample size was the major limitation of this study due to the difficulties of accessing and tracing Malaysian professional returnees. The sample size was relatively small compared to the number of tested constructs in the study. This was partially contributed by the lack of cooperation from the returnees and the institutions. Consequently, a long duration was taken to achieve the targeted sample size. Furthermore, the respondents of this study consisted of self-initiated respondents and REP (Talent Corp) recipients. The independent returnees who returned before the implementation of Talent Corp might not appreciate the efforts of the government due to the entry mode to the country.

Moreover, the lack of literature that used quantitative methods has constrained the evidences to support this study. Most of the previous studies were conducted in a qualitative manner, which limited the application of research instruments and empirical evidences. Finally, the study only focused on respondents who have returned and worked in Malaysian working environments for at least a year, thus, excluding the postgraduate returnees.

1.10 Assumptions of the Study

There were four relevant assumptions to this study. First, the study employed a snowball technique to collect the data with the assumption that the respondents would sincerely participate in the research activity. It was assumed that the respondents were able to understand the scope of the study and pattern of the questionnaire, in order to fully participate in the research. It was also believed that a sufficient amount of time was allocated for respondents to willingly participate. Moreover, it was also assumed that the returnees have worked abroad more than a year to share their experiences, and are employed in Malaysian business entities.

1.11 Conceptual and Operational Definitions of Terms

The operational definitions of terms in this study are as follows:

Workplace Adaptation

Workplace adaptation is the process of adjustment (Chung-Yan, 2005), assimilation, and acculturation (Reio & Sutton, 2006) of an individual in the new working environment. Workplace adaptation was operationalised as a combination of adjustment, assimilation, and acculturation.

Professional returnees

Professional returnees refer to a group of Malaysian professionals who studied and/or worked abroad and then returned to the home country (Ismail et al., 2014b). The term professional returnees were operationalised as a group of professionals who returned from abroad and are currently working in Malaysia.

Talent Development Environment (TDE)

The original TDE model consists of eight constructs, namely job focus, communication, work-life balance of returnees, quality preparation, networking, long-term development, environmental challenges, and supportive environment (Martindale et al., 2010).

Communication

Communication refers to the communication networks that occur between the host and home countries (Gill, 2012). Communication construct was operationalised as open communications, multi-language ability, and communication networks.

Job Focus

Job focus refers to job modification, which includes job flexibility and opportunity in employment (Bercovitz et al., 2013). It was operationalised as job flexibility, job expectation and job continuity.

Work-life balance

Work-life balance means that the individual interest, expectation on career progress, and socialisation are all equal (Cerdin & Le Parquet, 2010; Maphanga, 2014). Work-life balance of returnees was operationalised as career progress, aspirations, and needs.

Quality Preparation

Quality preparation refers to the provision in terms of added value assessment and performance evaluation based on accumulated knowledge and skills of the returnees (William & Hodges, 2004). Quality preparation was operationalised as pre-entry preparation and assessment performance.

Networking

Networking refers to the collaboration work between the host and home countries in terms of research network, incubation projects, technology hubs, and research development (Wright, Liu & Filatotchev, 2008). It was operationalised as networking connection, participation, and research support.

Long-term development

Long term development refers to long-term planning in terms of continuous training and development opportunities (MacDonald & Arthur, 2005). Long-term development was operationalised as an on-going development, succession planning, and training.

Environmental Challenges

Environmental challenges refer to various types of challenges, such as language barriers, reverse culture shock, and culture variation (Martindale et al., 2010). It was

operationalised as an uncomfortable environment due to red tape procedures and culture shock.

Supportive Environment

Supportive environment refers to the support of the organisation, such as co-workers and encouraging words (Gill, 2012). A supportive environment was operationalised as the support received from the management, co-workers, superiors, and programmes.

Organisational Support

Organisational support means supportive characters, which refers to organisational concern, well-being, and care (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). It was operationalised as care and well-being concerns towards the returnees in the working environment.

Government Support

Government support means providing of services, such as incentive programmes, HR policy modification, and research funding (Correa d'Almeida, 2010). The government support was operationalised as an external factor that boosts the returnees through various incentive programmes and policy adjustments.

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