

**THE INTENTION TO REPATRIATE AMONG  
SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATES: THE ROLE  
OF HOME AND HOST COUNTRY PULL  
FACTORS**

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OF HOME AND HOST COUNTRY PULL  
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by

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*So remember Me; I will remember you. And be grateful to Me and do not deny Me. O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient.*

(Al-Baqarah: 152-153)

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**NIAT UNTUK REPATRIAT DI KALANGAN EKSPATRIAT-KENDIRI:  
PERANAN FAKTOR TARIKAN NEGARA ASAL DAN NEGARA HOS**

**ABSTRAK**

Isu *brain drain* atau penghijrahan keluar golongan profesional adalah rangka utama bagi kajian ini. Pergerakan keluar golongan profesional menyebabkan kerugian ketara terutama dalam kalangan negara-negara membangun. Selain kehilangan tenaga pakar dan profesional, penghijrahan keluar golongan ini dari negara asal akan memberi kesan negatif terhadap pertumbuhan per kapita negara, dan seterusnya menjejaskan pertumbuhan ekonomi. Justeru, kajian ini mengkaji faktor-faktor tarikan dari negara hos yang menjejaskan niat repatriasi dan faktor-faktor tarikan dari negara asal yang mendorong niat repatriasi. Kajian ini juga menilai hubungan antara faktor kejutan repatriasi iaitu kejutan positif dari negara asal dan kejutan negatif dari negara hos dengan niat repatriasi. Sebagai tambahan, faktor galakan keluarga dari negara asal dinilai sebagai pembolehubah penyerdehanaan terhadap niat repatriasi. Sejumlah 145 respon daripada ekspatriat-kendiri telah dianalisis dalam kajian ini. Dapatan kajian mendapati bahawa faktor keterikatan kerjaya mempengaruhi niat ekspatriat-kendiri untuk kekal bekerja di negara hos. Sebaliknya, faktor keterikatan dengan masyarakat dan faktor perapatan anak-anak tidak mempengaruhi niat repatriasi di kalangan ekspatriat-kendiri. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa gaya hidup di negara asal dan jangkaan peluang pekerjaan menjadi faktor yang mendorong ekspatriat-kendiri untuk pulang ke negara asal. Namun, identiti nasional dan program yang dilaksanakan oleh kerajaan tidak

menjadi teras utama dalam menarik golongan ini untuk berhijrah semula ke negara asal. Kajian ini mendapati bahawa faktor kejutan positif dari negara asal berhubungan secara positif dengan niat repatriasi, berbanding dengan faktor kejutan negatif dari negara hos. Akhir sekali, galakkan keluarga menyederhanakan hubungan antara keterikatan kerjaya dengan niat repatriasi. Secara keseluruhan, kajian ini mempunyai implikasi terhadap golongan ekspatriat-kendiri, organisasi dan polisi kerajaan. Berdasarkan limitasi yang mempengaruhi pelaksanaan kajian ini, kajian-kajian masa hadapan diharap dapat mengisi jurang penyelidikan dalam bidang ini.



**THE INTENTION TO REPATRIATE AMONG SELF-INITIATED  
EXPATRIATES: THE ROLE OF HOME AND HOST COUNTRY PULL  
FACTORS**

**ABSTRACT**

The issue of brain drain was the basis for this study. The outbound movement of professionals from a developing country constitutes a significant loss for the developing country in terms of economic growth and development. Losing such qualified and skilled workforce will bring difficulties for the home country in achieving high per capita income thus undermining the economic development. Thus, this research was conducted to examine the pull factors from the host country that affected the intention to repatriate and the pull factors from the home country that determine the intention to repatriate. Besides that, repatriation related shock namely home country positive shock and host country negative shock was examined to see their relationship with intention to repatriate. Furthermore, home country family encouragement was proposed as a moderator between the host country pull factors towards intention to repatriate. A total response of 145 self-initiated expatriates were used in this study. Findings revealed that for host country pull factors, only career embeddedness affected the intention to repatriate among self-initiated expatriates. Community embeddedness and children attachment were found as insignificant towards self-initiated expatriate's intention to repatriate. Lifestyle instrumentality and perceived alternative employment opportunity as home country pull factors is significant towards self-initiated expatriate's intention to repatriate.

However, national identity and government programme have been found to have no significant relationship to self-initiated expatriate's intention to repatriate. Additionally, positive home country shock was found as significant towards self-initiated expatriate's intention to repatriate whereas negative host country shock was not found to be significant. Finally, home country family encouragement moderates the relationship between career embeddedness and intention to repatriate. In conclusion, this research has an implication for the self-initiated expatriates, organizations and government policy. Based on the limitation discussed in this study, future studies are welcome to fill the gaps to strengthen the research in this area.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of Study

*“Globalization has created a fierce competition for talent, forcing companies and government to recognize that people are the most valuable goods.”*

*(New Economic Model for Malaysia 2010, p. 8)*

In every part of the globe, there is a rising competition to obtain the best talent. Due to the fact that talented people possess great skills, the desire to migrate from one country to another to improve their education and for employment purpose is high. The cross border movement of professionals constitutes a significant loss especially for developing country in terms of economic growth and development. This phenomenon has been labelled as brain drain (Docquier & Rapoport, 2012; Nunn, 2005). Malaysia for instance is no stranger to the brain drain terminology which is used to describe the migration of people endowed with critical human capital skills and knowledge. Human capital is very crucial for the development of the country that it requires extra attention.

The number of brain drain increases over the years which threaten the government of the country. Table 1.1 indicates the top 15 destination countries for high-skilled Malaysian emigrants for year 2013. Clearly from the table it shows that most of the Malaysian brains are in Singapore with a total of 145,864 number of brain drain from the age 25 and above, besides Australia, United States, United Kingdom and other developed countries. Singapore was chosen by Malaysian expatriates most probably because of the accessibility and it is short distance from Malaysia. Some Malaysian

chose to work in Singapore by themselves, and not sent by an organization, which makes them self-initiated expatriates.

Table 1.1

*Top 15 Destination Countries for High-Skilled Malaysian Emigrants, 2013*

Host country	Diaspora (age 0+)	Brain drain (age 25+)
Singapore	414,710	145,864
Australia	109,515	56,224
United States	64,393	37,770
United Kingdom	71,073	17,918
Canada	25,278	13,005
New Zealand	17,678	7,708
Japan	6,270	1,215
India	19,381	6,251
China	9,906	3,797
Taiwan	9,031	3,337
Germany	4,008	1,380
Ireland	2,242	889
Switzerland	1,247	297
Netherlands	3,727	657
France	2,919	800

*Note.* Adopted from “Exporting Grey Matter: What is the Brain Drain Costing Us?” by Lim Kim-Hwa and Yap Jo-Yee, 2014, *Penang Monthly*, 6.14, p. 35.

Self-initiated expatriates are those who are self-financing their journey and finding their own job in the host country without any attachment with the home country organization. The movement of these self-initiated expatriates resembles a talent circuit in which the outflow movement will continue until the intention to return is initiated by the self-initiated expatriates himself.

The scattering of professionals beyond their homeland received much attention among the government as well as the academician. As cited by Johan Mahmood Merican, the CEO of Talent Corp Malaysia Berhad, where there is a situation of

insufficient talent, business and companies will obviously not be able to grow or invest (People's Edge, 2013). In order to reduce the ongoing impact of the insufficient talent, academicians stood up to conduct studies on the migration of self-initiated expatriates who work abroad.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Multinational Corporation has used expatriation of talent as a mean to ensure the survival and continuity of their international operation overseas (Hébert et al., 2005; Huynh et al., 2007). However, for a country or local businesses, continuous migration of talents may cost a country's healthy growth and survival of local businesses. It is much more alarming when talents take full control of their movement overseas for career development, i.e. self-initiated. Past research on expatriation mostly studying company-assigned expatriation (Adler, 1981; Ali, 2003; Black, 1992; Bonache et al., 2001; Bonache et al., 2010; Lazarova et al., 2010; Peltokorpi & Froese; 2012; Yusoff & Ramayah, 2007; Surlenty & Ahmad, 2004). There is limited empirical evidence with regards to self-initiated expatriates especially in Malaysian context. Therefore, there is an urgency to further investigate the relevant factors relating to the talent migration issues on self-initiated expatriates. Problems such as pursuing longer tenure in overseas, talent shortages and economic loss are some of the problems that could arise from the continuous expatriation.

Self-initiated expatriates are different from assigned expatriates in terms of the decision to stay in the host country. An assigned expatriate would return after a designated period of time while self-initiated expatriates are likely to pursue longer tenure in overseas (Inkson et al., 1997; Suutari & Brewster., 2000). Usually, those who went overseas seek better career opportunities and were attracted to the higher

quality of life as presented by the developed countries. This may have social and economic impacts. Socially, over a period of time it will become much more difficult for one to transfer an established career and social structure that have been developed over the years. An expatriate would have developed a reputation that is important to progress in a career (Carr et al., 2005). Furthermore, one would have grown accustomed to the living lifestyle and support system experienced in the host country. Transition to the home country will be made difficult if the general environment of the home country is lower in terms of quality than the host country. This will be difficult for children who have been brought up in the adopted country. Hence, career opportunities and social causes may cause sojourners to stay longer.

As sojourners decided to stay overseas, the home country will lose its talents. Over time, as more and more people decided to move from the home country, the country would face talent shortages. For example, a total of 308, 833 numbers of highly skilled Malaysians were working outside of Malaysia in 2013 (Kim-Hwa & Jo-Yee, 2014). Usually high skilled are those that are also knowledgeable and capable in doing the job. One associated problem with the reducing numbers of knowledgeable human resources available is the impact on the productivity level that the firm within the countries will face (World Bank, 2011). Productivity is achieved through new innovation which is usually important for the long term growth of businesses. Innovation is the result of talented minds. Thus, self-initiated expatriates may lead to continuous shortages of talent which may affect a long term survival of local businesses. Caulfield (2008) added that future research in this area should include more diverse sample of occupation. Different occupational background might explain why certain location was chosen by the self-initiated expatriates. Thus, this

research further the suggestion by collecting the data from diverse occupational background of the self-initiated expatriates.

In addition, the impact from the continuous shortages of talents will eventually hinder the rapid growth of a country's economy (World Economic Forum, 2016). The increasing number of Malaysian emigrants have created huge losses in government's income and consumption taxes. Based on a report by Kim-Hwa and Jo-Yee (2014), Malaysia loses US\$ 271 in income tax and US\$ 300 in consumption tax yearly for each high skilled Malaysian who emigrates. For instance, in year 2013, the amount of lost in tax revenues from these highly skilled emigrants annually was calculated at US\$ 135 million. This amount of lost is almost equivalent to the amount of revenue received from Malaysia's medical tourism for year 2012 with a total of RM 603 million (US\$ 136 million) (Pillay, 2017). These losses represent the economic losses that Malaysia has been suffering from the exit of Malaysian expatriates. Thus, the outgoing movement of skilled and talented Malaysian posed as a disadvantage to the country's economy. Previous study conducted in this area might be significant for developed countries (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). Therefore, the literature to confirm the relationship within developing countries are still lacking. Thus, this research moves the frontier to investigate the intention to repatriate among developing country, namely, Malaysia.

The above discussion has identified the problems that needs further attention. The problems highlighted in this study include: 1) pursue longer tenure in overseas; 2) talent shortages; 3) huge losses in government's income and consumption taxes. Therefore, this study aims to examine the factors related to intention to repatriate among self-initiated expatriates. These factors cover economic, social, political and

environmental factors. To the best of the researcher's knowledge factors examine in this study is a relatively new study field in Malaysia. Therefore, it is important to further investigate this area of research to confirm the relationship in Malaysian context.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

There are four key research questions that will be answered in this study.

1. What are the host country pull factors (career embeddedness, community embeddedness and children attachment) that affected the intention to repatriate among self-initiated expatriates?
2. What are the home country pull factors (national identity, lifestyle instrumentality, perceived alternative employment opportunities and government programme) that determine the intention to repatriate among self-initiated expatriates?
3. What is the relationship between repatriation related shock (home country positive shock and host country negative shock) and the intention to repatriate among self-initiated expatriates?
4. Does home country family encouragement moderate the relationship between host country pull factors (career embeddedness, community embeddedness and children attachment) towards intention to repatriate among self-initiated expatriates?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

There are four key research objectives in this study.



1. To investigate the relationship between the host country pull factors (career embeddedness, community embeddedness and children attachment) and the intention to repatriate among self-initiated expatriates.
2. To examine the relationship between the home country pull factors (national identity, lifestyle instrumentality, perceived alternative employment opportunities and government programme) and the intention to repatriate among self-initiated expatriates.
3. To study the relationship between repatriation related shock (home country positive shock and host country negative shock) and the intention to repatriate among self-initiated expatriates.
4. To examine the extent to which home country family encouragement moderate the relationship between the host country pull factors (career embeddedness, community embeddedness and children attachment) and the intention to repatriate among self-initiated expatriates.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study is the self-initiated expatriates. This study focuses on the intention to repatriate from the self-initiated expatriate's perspective only. Besides that, this study also focuses on the intention to repatriate from the individual level of self-initiated expatriates and will not be generalized to the organizational level. The sample of this study covers self-initiated expatriates from all parts of the world to understand the different motivation factors on their intention to repatriate. Thus, self-initiated expatriates who are currently abroad were employed as the subject for this study to identify the intention to repatriate.

## **1.6 Significant of the Present Study**

### **1.6.1 Theoretical Contribution**

There are several theoretical contributions highlighted for the benefit of those in the academic and research areas. Firstly, this study extends the migration theory of push and pull factors into the expatriate's literature. A framework on intention to repatriate has been developed and tested explaining both factors from the home and the host country that either affected or influence the intention to repatriate among self-initiated expatriates. The framework consists of nine independent variables with one moderator variable to test the relationship with intention to repatriate. This study contributes to the area of intention to repatriate and theory building associated with the self-initiated expatriates as the subject. The overall model may be useful in providing additional information on this research area of intention to repatriate among self-initiated expatriates.

Secondly, a novel contribution was the investigation on the role of home country family encouragement as a moderating effect variable between the host country pull factors (career embeddedness, community embeddedness and children attachment) that was hypothesized to affect intention to repatriate. Home country family encouragement were important aids to enhance the intention to repatriate among self-initiated expatriates. Previous literature on intention to repatriate does not examine the role of home country family encouragement as a moderating variable between the construct. Instead, home country family encouragement was significant as one of the predictor of intention to repatriate (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). Additionally, in 1974, Minuchin proposed in family systems theory that an individual's actions are affected by the actions of other primary actors in the family system (as cited in Brett

& Stroh, 1995). Past research just examines the direct effect of home country family encouragement. Therefore, this study provides a significant contribution to the theory by testing the role of home country family encouragement as a moderator in intention to repatriate model.

Thirdly, this study offered empirical evidence contributing to the role of perceived alternative employment opportunity on intention to repatriate among self-initiated expatriates. This study contributes to broadening the discussion on perceived alternative opportunity beyond organizational level of turnover into intention to repatriate. This study proposes a path to see the self-initiated expatriate's perception whether they believe there are jobs opportunity available for them to work in the home country like Malaysia. The past research in this area are still scarce as the literature most likely to confirm that expatriates migrate to other country because of job factors (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010).

Fourthly, a contribution was made by proposing children attachment as one of the host country pull factors affecting intention to repatriate. This study postulates that children attachment is one of the variable that reduce the intention to repatriate among self-initiated expatriates. The rational was that previous literature scarcely see the role of children as one of the underlying factors affecting intention to repatriate. Therefore, this study moves the frontier to test the role of children attachment in intention to repatriate study.

Furthermore, a contribution was made by proposing government programme as the determinant to intention to repatriate. In line with the programme implemented by TalentCorp Malaysia, an organization hired by the Malaysian government, this study further investigates the effectiveness of the returning expert programme which was

implemented to call upon expatriates. The push and pull theory (Lee, 1966) mention that factors relating to geographical origin associated with the home country consist both the positive and the negative factors that influence migration. Therefore, government programme is one of the factors tested in this study. This study examines the likelihood of the returning experts programme to have an impact on the self-initiated expatriate's intention to repatriate. This study improves the understanding of self-initiated expatriates towards the programme provided for them.

Finally, this study further investigates the limitation of past research in this area as to strengthen the model. Tharenou and Caulfield (2010) highly recommended that a study on intention to repatriate should be conducted in a developing country to further confirm the factors that influence the professionals to repatriate to developing countries. This study is conducted in Malaysian context to compare the outcome from developed countries.

### **1.6.2 Practical Contribution**

There are several practical contributions highlighted for practitioners and policy makers. This sections highlight several suggestions based on the findings that could be beneficial for Malaysian government, TalentCorp Malaysia, managerial organizations and self-initiated expatriates in both the home and the host country.

There are three areas of practical contribution that the researcher is focusing on. First, this study encourages the self-initiated expatriates to value their knowledge and ideas which they gain and make use of it by adapting it into the home country. Moreover, this would eventually lead to the creation of more job opportunities like opening their own businesses in the home country. For example, the self-initiated

expatriates can open training centre relating to their specialty and apply the knowledge they acquire in the host country to introduce it to the home country.

Secondly, for the organization especially the local company, the information assists the manager to better understand what is expected from the expatriates thus it can be incorporated as appropriate strategies, promotion or programs that can attract the expatriates to work with the organization. The organization may also start promoting job availability and interviewing the expatriates when they are still in the host country. The organization would gain plenty of benefits such as building a network with the international company available in the host country. Furthermore, the organization may start a joint venture, collaboration or create programmes that benefit both organizations in the home and the host country.

Thirdly, for the country, this study helps the government to thoroughly understand what are expected from the self-initiated expatriates. Hence, the programs and advertising campaign created must be in line with the self-initiated expatriate's needs to ensure they are attracted to return. This is particularly noteworthy for countries and regions that are currently facing issues of skilled labour shortages that affected the country's development.

### **1.7 Definition of key Terms**

This section defines the important terminologies used in this study. Below are the operational definitions that comply with this study.

1. **Intention to Repatriate:** Intention to repatriate occurs when professionals came across their mind about visiting or going back to their home country after spending a significant number of years in another host country.

2. **Expatriates:** Expatriates refer to a citizen of one country residing in a foreign country for career purpose with intention to return to their home country at some point of time (Zilber, 2009 as cited in Wilkins, 2013)
3. **Self-Initiated Expatriate:** Expatriates who are self-financing their journey and finding their own job in the host country without any attachment with the home country organization.
4. **Host Country Pull:** Host country pull refers to the pull factors associated with the host country that trigger the expatriates to stay in the host country.
5. **Career Embeddedness:** Career embeddedness is the forces from the work environment in the host country organization that pull the expatriates to stay abroad rather than repatriating back to the home country.
6. **Community Embeddedness:** Community embeddedness is the forces from the social environment in the host country community that pull the expatriates to stay abroad rather than repatriating back to the home country.
7. **Children Attachment:** Children attachment is conceptualised as factors associated with the children of expatriates who have been living with the expatriates in the host country causing them to be attach with the host country living environment.
8. **Home Country Pull:** Home country pull refers to the pull factors associated with the home country that influence the expatriates to return to the home country.

9. **National Identity:** National identity is a degree to which expatriates see themselves as having the same characteristics that they believe define them as within a nation which is Malaysia.
10. **Lifestyle Instrumentality:** A sense of belief or expectation held by the expatriates that repatriation to their home country will provide lifestyle benefits for their long term living.
11. **Perceived Alternative Employment Opportunity:** perceived alternative employment opportunity was defined as the self-initiated expatriate's perception of the availability of alternative jobs in the home country, Malaysia.
12. **Government Programme:** Government programme refers to the policy implemented by the government with the aim of attracting and pulling the self-initiated expatriates to return to the home country.
13. **Home Country Positive Shock:** Home country positive shock refers to the shocking event that pulls the expatriates to the home country (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010).
14. **Host Country Negative Shock:** Host country negative shock refers to the shocking event that pushes the expatriates out of the host country (Lo et al., 2012).
15. **Home Country Family Encouragement:** The home country family system that influences the self-initiated expatriates on having the thoughts on intention to repatriate back to the home country.

## **1.8 Organization of Chapters**

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter one provides the background of the study which discusses the issue of brain drain. The research problem together with the research questions and objectives were then highlighted to clarify the rationale of conducting this research.

Chapter two of this study consists a literature review that explains the relationship between the studied variables. Theories and models presented by previous researcher were discussed to support the present study. Furthermore, the theoretical framework for this study were presented at the end of this chapter.

Chapter three illustrates the methodology aspect of this study. This chapter specifies the method used to answer the research questions including the research design, the sampling design, the measures, the questionnaire design, pilot study and data analyses.

Chapter four reports the data analyses results to confirm the relationship among the studied variables. This study applies structural equation modeling using partial least square software to analyse the data.

Chapter five is the final chapter which discusses the implication of the results. After that, the contribution of this study, both theoretically and practically were discussed. The limitation of this study was then presented for future researcher to further in depth this research area. Finally, the chapter closes with the conclusion pertaining to the whole research.



## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

The literature review in this study contained the most pertinent studies, which were related to this research area, intention to repatriate. Throughout this section, readers will be accompanied with variables applied in this study. This study serves as a meaningful groundwork and a logical framework to determine the major purpose of this study. The theoretical framework together with the hypotheses development will be available at the last section of this chapter. Before proceeding to the variables, the researcher will first discuss the term self-initiated expatriates, that is the subject of this study.

#### 2.2 Historical Context of Self-Initiated Expatriates

The "Global Expatriates: Size, Segmentation and Forecast for the Worldwide Market" report stated that there are roughly 50.5 million expatriates worldwide, and the figure is expected to reach 56.8 million by 2017 which is 0.77 percent of the total global population. The report stated that Saudi Arabia has the most expatriates and India has the highest rate of citizens expatriating. The statistic confirmed that the number of expatriates are on rise and it is expected to continue over the next few years.

The word 'expat' derive from the Latin prefix *ex* (out of) and *patria* (home country) (Expatriate, 2017) which refers to people who are temporarily or permanently living in a different country than the one they were born in or whose nationality they have. In this study, expatriates refer to a citizen of one country residing in a foreign

country for career purpose with intention to return to their home country at some point of time (Zilber, 2009 as cited in Wilkins, 2013). Therefore, expatriation denotes a form of an international work experience (Linder, 2016) that includes self-initiated expatriates and assigned expatriates.

Traditionally, attention was given to the assign-expatriates, who were sent to work abroad by their organization (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001; Peltokorpi & Froese; 2012; Surlenty & Ahmad, 2004). Recently, high attention was deviated to individual who was independently working abroad which is known as self-initiated expatriates (De Cieri et al., 2009; Doherty, 2013; Peltokorpi & Froese, 2012; Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). This section discusses the historical background of the self-initiated expatriates.

The term 'self-initiated' began in 1997 by scholars namely Inkson and some of his colleagues. Inkson et al., (1997) came out with the term overseas experience to describe independent expatriates with a personal motivation to explore and learn while abroad. Usually, the movement made by these individuals began with the purpose of having a personal and a career development (Shaffer et al., 2012) together with an overseas experience (Inkson et al., 1997).

Not long after, the term varied reflecting these individuals as 'Self-Designed Apprenticeship', 'Self-Sponsored Overseas Experienced' and 'Self-Employment' (Arthur et al., 1999). Arthur et al. (1999) assert that these types of individual create their own development path with no conclusive learning objectives or target job in hand. Besides seeking for experience, they also went abroad to upgrade their skills and self-insights with no predetermined end-point regarding the length of their stay.

The experience they gain has made it easy for them to adapt with new surroundings like cross inter-job, inter-company, and even international boundaries.

In year 2000, more scholars began to concede the importance of these groups of expatriates. Suutari and Brewster (2000) describe these types of individual as 'Self-Initiated Foreign Work Experienced'. Suutari and Brewster (2000) suggested that the word 'foreign' instead of 'overseas' is more relevant as some of the expatriates are expatriating within Europe itself. Moreover, Myers and Pringle (2005) described their respondents, whose motivation was to search for career opportunities abroad as 'Self-Managed International Career'. In general, there were many terms used to describe the independent expatriates which commonly known as self-initiated expatriates.

Comparison between assigned expatriate and the self-initiated expatriates have been observed by scholars. Jokinen et al., (2008) use the term self-initiated expatriates to describe the professionals who manage to find new job in the host country at their own cost. As for the assigned expatriates, the cost of travelling to the host country were incurred by the organization. In 2009, Thorn used the term self-initiated mobility to describe the highly educated individual circulating between countries who self-initiate their own movement. Besides all the above term being mentioned, self-initiated expatriates were repeatedly being used recently to study these independent professionals working abroad (De Cieri et al., 2009; Doherty, 2013; Froese & Peltokorpi, 2013; Selmer & Luring, 2010; Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010; Tharenou, 2013).

Cerdin and Selmer (2014) wrote an article proposing four key conceptual criteria for defining self-initiated expatriates to differentiate it with other international movers.

The criteria include: 1) self-initiated international relocation (an international move independent from the support of the organization within the home country); 2) regular employment (intention); 3) intention of a temporary stay; 4) skilled or professional qualifications.

In this study, self-initiated expatriates refer to the expatriates who are self-financing their journey and finding their own job in the host country without any attachment with the home country organization. They are not sent to work outside countries by multinational companies (Bhuiyan, Al-Shammari and Jefri, 2001; Lee, 2005) which would not require specific time frame on deciding when to return. They have the freedom to decide for themselves when to return to their home country (Crowley-Henry, 2007; Suutari & Brewster, 2000) or move onto a third country where they have never previously worked before (Lo et al., 2012).

### **2.3 Intention**

*It is narrated on the authority of Umar ibn Al-Khattab who said: I heard the messenger of God say: "All actions are judged by motives, and each person will be rewarded according to their intention." (Saheeh Al-Bukhari, Saheeh Muslim)*

The above statement portrays that every action by a human begins with the development of intention. When a man says 'I am going to do such-and-such', this was an expression of intention (Anscombe, 1957). Anscombe (1957) describes intention as "the description or expression of a present state of mind, a state which has the properties to characterize it as an intention." Dulany, in his Theory of Propositional Control, has argued that a person should do what he intends or tries to do and claims that intention will lead the person to response (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

In 1967, Fishbein extended Dulany's theory and define the term intention as the psychological probability that a person will implement a certain action. Behavioural intention therefore refers to the psychological probability that a person will perform certain behaviour that he has intended. The formation of intention within an individual begins with the creation of belief and the person's attitude towards that belief. Once the intention has been developed, the probability of the actual behaviour taking place is probable. Therefore, intention can be considered as a plan created by the individual influence by the surrounding factors that makes it possible to become an action. Next section will discuss the focus of this study, which is the intention to repatriate.

### **2.3.1 Intention to Repatriate**

Customarily, once the assigned-expatriates have settled with their international assignment, they are likely to return to their organization in the home country, which is known as the repatriation phase. Literature describes repatriation as the returning phase of an expatriates to their home country after they have completed an international job post (Adler, 1981; Black, 1992; Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001). The decision to return might be different for the self-initiated expatriates as they are not bounded with any organization in the home country. The self-initiated expatriates are likely to developed an intention to repatriate before making the final decision.

Intention to repatriate would best describe a condition when professionals are motivated but not yet repatriated to their home country after spending years and years abroad (Lidgard & Gilson, 2002). Literally, the intention to repatriate arises when professionals came across their mind about visiting or going back to their home country after spending a significant number of years in another host country. Goel et

al. (2011) described intention to return as the idea of returning to their home country after having such an expatriate experience.

Research in this area received attention among scholars to further understand the underlying factors that caused the intention to repatriate. Past studies confirm that social factors such as family, friends and lifestyle are among the highly ranked factors that causes the intention to repatriate among self-initiated expatriates (Inkson et al, 2004; Tharenou & Caulfield. 2010). Conversely, De Cieri et al., (2009) conducted a study in Australian context and found that personal network (e.g. relationship between the expatriates with their family and friends) was not significant to intention to repatriate. De Cieri et al., (2009) argued that most of their respondents have been in overseas for more than six years, which is likely that these expatriates have created a new personal network in the host country. Furthermore, Tharenou and Caulfield (2010) conducted a longitudinal study revealed that self-initiated expatriates are motivated to repatriate when there is a weak host country pull (career and community embeddedness) and strong home country pull (career instrumentality, lifestyle instrumentality, national identity and family encouragement).

Undoubtedly, career factors such as salaries and business opportunities, were likely to reduce the intention to repatriate among self-initiated expatriates. They are more incline to stay in the host country as they believed they would gain more income and benefits from the host country organization. Al-Waqfi (2012) reported that bonding with the host country is positively related to the intention to stay in the host country instead of going back to the home country. Since the expatriates have enter the adjustment stage of expatriation process, they are likely to adapt with the host