

# **Significations of family social structure and friendship relationships in affecting expatriate experience: From the lens of Malaysia public university expatriate community**

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper provides an understanding of the social structure, which is seen as a phenomenology that refers to one's thinking about the interpretation and meaning of life experience based on the presence of individuals in economic position, political scenario, statehood, and education system in a country that is not his country of origin. Thus, the interpretation among these independent expatriates is debated by taking into account the role of social structures such as family institutions and the environment of friendship in relation to the significance of expatriate experiences in the host country. In other words, the discussion presented in this paper is to achieve the objective of the study in unravelling the expatriate's interpretation of the expatriate decision, whether it is closely related to the experience of his family members during the expatriate service in the host country. The research was conducted by utilising qualitative methods of in-depth interviews with 30 expatriate academics selected from four Malaysian public universities. The appropriate respondent criteria include the following characteristics, namely (a) has resided for at least a year in Malaysia using a valid employee visa, (b) has been offered a position as academic staff and has renewed his service contract, (c) is an expatriate with his own initiative in expatriating and (d) works full time and is not classified as an exchange staff between universities or those on sabbatical leave. The study results show that the interpretation of family members on the meaning of expatriation experience gives justification for expatriate to remain in the host country. While moral support from friendship provides a positive indication of expatriate's performance in the context of work throughout performing international duties. Further supporting social networks relationship with the local community is also one of the determinants of expatriate success in adapting to the host country environment.