EXPATRIATE LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES AND PERFORMANCE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Abstract: Leadership competencies are skills and behaviors that contribute to enhanced performance. While some leadership competencies are essential to all firms, some distinctive leadership attributes may be particularly relevant to organizations possessing a large expatriate community. This research investigates leadership competencies of expatriate managers working within the UAE and identifies if these competencies are unique from those needed in their home country. Additionally, the study aims to identify new competencies expatriate leaders have developed while in their current position and how this enhances their ability to better manage staff in the UAE. Personal interviews and stratified sampling were employed to examine the qualities and skills relating to expatriate managers' success in leading UAE organizations. The research design did not differentiate between the origins and ethnicities of the leaders. The leaders, whether American, European, Indo-Pakistani or Asian, were treated as one entity. Factors such as communication ability, team building qualities and ability to handle local nationals were found to have a significant effect on expatriate adjustment and success in managing UAE organizations. By investigating specific competencies and skills that expatriate managers need to lead organizations in the UAE and the broader Gulf region the study informs organizations on how they can better identify and develop leadership skills that lead to enhanced performance.

Keywords –Adjustment, Expatriate,Competencies, Culture.