

Social and Process Innovations Applicable in Employee Retention Strategies Concerning Adult Third Culture Kids

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Abstract

This paper examines the effectiveness of process and social innovations implemented within employee retention strategies targeting the identity group of Adult Third Culture Kids. Using an exhaustive literature review method, 37 scientific articles and 7 electronic resources were consulted. The analysis revealed that social innovations such as, but not limited to, creating a sense of community and belonging, and process innovations such as providing opportunities for career development as well as flexible working options, have a positive impact on the retention of the working force, especially diverse force and Adult Third Culture Kids. The findings are twofold. First, they suggest that organizations should make additional efforts towards understanding more nuanced characteristics that certain diverse identity groups within the active workforce, such as Adult Third Culture Kids, possess. Second, findings indicate that organizations could improve employee retention by implementing social and process innovations into employee retention strategies that address this demographic group's unique needs and challenges. This study contributes to the literature on employee retention strategies as well as to the literature on Adult Third Culture Kids in business environments thus providing new knowledge to the field and practical recommendations for managers seeking to improve retention rates together with the knowledge on diversity. Additionally, this study offers various options for further research in the field of innovations within cross-cultural management, diversity and inclusion and employee retention.

Key words: HR Management, Retention, Diversity, Innovations

1.0 Introduction

When discussing the primordial role of innovations in today's business processes and business environment characterized by ever-changing circumstances, especially within employee retention strategies as the focal point of this research, it is only logical to account for the new identity groups, namely the Adult Third Culture Kids, who have emerged as a result of abovementioned circumstances as well. As per Pollock et al., (2017) a traditional Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has been living in country/countries different than his/her own passport country or passport country of one or both of parents during his/hers formative years (until 18 years of age) due to parent(s) career choices or advancement. The Adult Third Culture Kid (ATCK) is a TCK who has grown into adulthood. In this paper, the abbreviations TCKs and ATCKs are going to be used moving forward. The relevance of the ATCKs lies in the general notion that they are the prototypes of employees for the 21st century, as they possess all the skills, knowledge and global mindset that make them potential global leaders (Stokke, 2013). However, not much is known about their specific nuanced and complex culture, especially its effect on their behavior and expectations in business surroundings. As employee retention strategies are gaining more importance and arising to their rightful place as one of the pillars of competitive advantage nowadays (Rabbi et al., 2015) the exploration of innovations that could enhance the sensitivity of employee retention strategies to more complex and multidimensional, cultural backgrounds of employees is recommended. Furthermore, the importance of awareness and acknowledgment of different employees' cultural backgrounds and their identity group affiliations has already been addressed in various research, such as "Navigating the cultural minefield" by Erin Meyer (Meyer, 2016). Furthermore, Meyer (2016) notes that not only awareness of employees' diverse cultural backgrounds is needed, but also the skills and knowledge to avoid the pitfalls of stereotyping and generalizing leadership and employee retention strategies. Since Adult Third Culture Kids, who are counting multiple millions worldwide (Iyer, 2013) are a significant part of the workforce, and are considered to be highly skilled, highly educated, leaders with a global mindset and expanded, three-dimensional worldview, ideal candidates for expatriation who cherish mindful work, people with strong cross-cultural intelligence (cultural chameleons) and openness towards inclusion and diversity as well as problem solvers (Bonebright, 2010; Crossman, 2016; Jurtan, 2011; Molteno, 2014; Pollock et al., 2017; Stokke, 2013; Westropp et al., 2016), the necessity for further exploration of how employee retention strategies could be innovated to accommodate requirements of ATCKs is evident. Thus, I would like to respond to a perceived gap in research in terms of insufficient and almost nonexistent data provided on acknowledging and considering the needs of ATCKs perceived as an identity group within employee retention strategies. Consequently, this research will offer more detailed insight and explore *in which way social innovations and process innovations could be implemented in order to enhance retention strategies in regard to Adult Third Culture Kids and their unique traits*. This research provides extensive overlook into the general topic as well as into the potential modes and benefits of social and process innovations when discussing managing and retention of Adult Third Culture Kids, thus profounding and adding new knowledge to the field of employee retention. Furthermore, I will conclude by offering recommendations for further research in the area of ATCKs in a business environment. The purpose of this paper is to explore if and how social and process innovations could provide positive effects when implemented into employee retention strategies in regard to ATCKs.

The objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. To review the literature on social and process innovations.
2. To review the literature on employee retention strategies.
3. To review the literature on the relevance of ATCKs.
4. To identify the factors of social and process innovations that could contribute to employee retention strategies concerned with ATCKs.
5. To identify possible applications of social and process innovations that could improve employee retention strategies concerned with ATCKs.

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Social and process innovation literature review

The definition of social innovation that will be referred to in this paper is the "development of new concepts, strategies and tools that support groups in achieving the objective of improved well-being" (Dawson & Daniel, 2010, p. 10). When elevated to the corporate level, it becomes corporate social innovation, which is capable to create both, shareholder and social value while enhancing employee motivation and the company's competitive advantage (Dionisio & deVargas, 2020). Additionally, more concrete types of social innovations that have been applied in organizations in the past, and could be implemented in employee retention strategies as well, areas follows (but not limited to): developing more organic management systems; nourishing innovative and interdisciplinary project organization; implementing simultaneous performance of innovate functions (research, development, manufacturing engineering, industrial engineering, systems analysis, operations research), boosting employee participation through horizontal or vertical job enlargement and anonymous work groups, or various combinations of abovementioned (Holt, 1971).

Process innovations, defined as the changes to the manner by which products and services are created and provided, especially the ones focusing on organizational and managerial processes rather than on technological changes in operations (Huang & Rice, 2012) are the object of this research as well. Few models of process innovations have been identified in the existing literature: incremental innovation model, disruptive/transformational innovation model, sustaining innovation model, radical innovation model and open innovation model (UNext Editorial Team, 2023). Process innovations in Human Resource Management could be implemented in various areas, however, the most common are: Recruitment, Onboarding, Learning and Development, Talent Management and employee retention and Performance management (Verlinden, 2022). We will concentrate on the innovations within employee retention in this paper.

The models in which social and process innovations could be applied in employee retention strategies in regard to ATCKs followed by a practical example are going to be discussed in chapter Four (4), Results and Discussion of this paper.

2.2 Employee retention strategies literature review

One of the simplest definitions of employee retention strategies which grasp the basic concept is “Employee retention is commonly considered to mean the ability to maintain a stable workforce” (Rothwell & Sherwani, 2007, p. 9). The literature analyzed portrays a chronologically significant shift in defining the importance of employee retention. Starting from the underappreciated method compared to employee acquisition and recruitment as a means to ensure the competitive advantage of the organizations (Musser, 2001) towards its current status as one of the vital roles in the development and sustainability of the organization in which “competitive advantage is determined and driven by human resources” (Singh, 2019, p. 425) where “professionals should proactively address only dysfunctional turnover” (Rombaut & Guerry, 2020, p. 1) or turnover of highly skilled and talented employees that could harm the profitability or the reputation of the company.

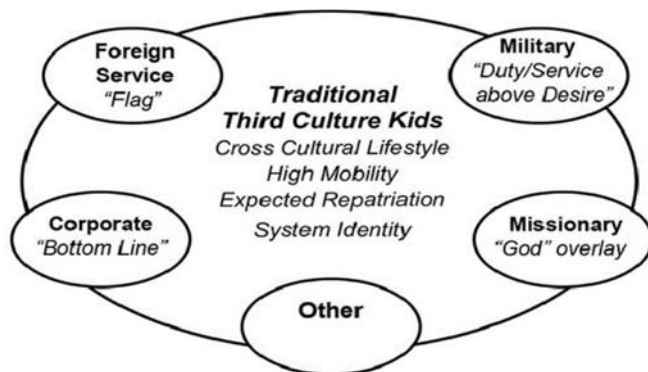
Furthermore, Lahkar, Das & Baruah (2013) identified three dimensions of employee retention: social (referring to contacts that employees have within the organization), physical (namely, compensation and working conditions) and mental (characteristics of the work). Other authors, such as Ramlall (2004) have been investigating the areas in which the most common employee retention strategies are fortified alongside the respective motivation theories linked to them. Slight modifications and differences in factors affecting retention strategies have been noted in the works of other authors such as Musser (2001) and Rombaut & Guerry (2020), with the addition of job security and employee empowerment, however, we could agree that the above-mentioned factors are the most common ones. Finally Padmanabhan et al. (2016) identified a few factors that affect employee retention such as: recruitment and selection, manpower planning, salary and wages, training and development, working hours, work-life balance, rewards and recognition, employee relations, working environment, employee motivation and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, HR policies and practices, welfare benefits, and exit procedures, that could vary in significance in different industries or taking into consideration different demographic characteristics of employees. The most recent trends in the employee retention field have truly emphasized the fact that organizations have understood the importance of employee retention and their willingness to implement innovative solutions. Consequently, we can witness the emergence of Sustainable Human Resource Management and positions such as Employee retention specialists that aim to brand the organization as an attractive employer by improving overall work-life balance and working with different cultural backgrounds (Singh, 2019). The relevance of employee retention was analyzed from the angle of “Great resignation” appearance in recent, post-Covid times as well, again promoting various strategies to encourage retention in virtual or hybrid working environments (Ng & Stanton, 2023). Among the most recent studies in the field, we could witness emphasizing the need for adopting HR strategies to focus more on people management and the value of human capital, combined with urges to retain crucial talent in Industry 4.0 environment (da Silva et al., 2022) and this trend only grows in its influence in Industry 5.0 setting alongside with the embracement of the “gig economy” (Singh, 2019), and the arising of serial “job-hoppers”, which would be millennials who are frequently changing organizations if not having sufficient reasons to remain and are the largest segment of the active workforce (Narayanan et al., 2019). Based on estimated numbers of ATCKs worldwide who are part of the same workforce, consequently, their retention becomes imperative as well. Following the current topics in the field, three challenges in employee retention nowadays have been identified: competition from rival companies, brain drain and the inability of companies to predict future requirements of its employees and thus failure to provide solutions in a timely manner (Singh, 2019).

2.3 Relevance of ATCKs literature review

The term Third Culture Kids (TCKs) was first introduced in the mid-1950's by Dr. Ruth Hill Useem, when she defined them as children who follow their parents to another country due to their career choices and included military brats, missionary kids, corporate kids and foreign service kids (Tan et al., 2021) under the umbrella of this identity group, as shown in Figure 1 (Pollock et al., 2017, p. 16). In this notion, the third culture is portrayed as “an abstract, interstitial culture created from the shared experiences of people from various cultures but living the same mobile international lifestyle” (Tan et al., 2021, p. 82). As previously discussed, ATCKs are considered to be “prototype citizens of the future” (Pollock et al., 2017, p. 6), versed in variety of skills, well educated (Bonebright, 2010) and ideal candidates for the expatriates’ missions who are mainly interested in international careers (Westropp et al., 2016), thus being exemplar employees in the current global economic environment (Stokke, 2013). Furthermore, authors such as (Bonebright, 2010), claim that the Adult Third Culture Kids believe that their vast set of international skills is often unrecognized and unutilized in organizations, which leads not just to dissatisfaction of ATCKs as employees, but is equally harmful to the employer company since large budgets are directed to solving problems that could be solved internally if the full potential of ATCKs was recognized and explored. The same author refers to ATCK as “under-tapped source of high-quality employees” and states that “international organizations could leverage this potentially well qualified workforce by providing an environment that welcomes adult TCKs and promotes their engagement by providing opportunities to exercise their international skills” (Bonebright, 2010, p. 357).

Figure 1

Original Third Culture Kids



Source: David C. Pollock, Ruth E. Van Reken and Michael V. Pollock (2017)

The literature review has also revealed challenges that ATCKs could face in business surroundings such as cultural differences and cultural marginality, defined as a tendency not “to fit perfectly into any one of the cultures to which they have been exposed but may fit comfortably on the edge, in the margins, of each” (Reken & Bethel, 2005, p. 8). Additionally, we should mention the notion of hidden diversity, understood as a various and diverse experiences that form a person’s life, but are not so apparent to others like classic diversity traits (ethnicity, race etc.) (Reken & Bethel, 2005). Consequently, the possible identity and belonging issues as well as confused loyalties could be detected (Pollock et al., 2017; Sellers, 2011).

Regarding the statistics linked with ATCKs and TCKs, per se, unfortunately, there is none available. Reasons could be multiple, such as the novelty of the concept in most parts of the world and many identity groups that are comprised in the concept. This being said, many authors have tried to assess the number of TCKs realizing their growing importance within global society. Following, Mr. Pico Iyer in his TED talk in 2013 stated that there are more than 220 million TCKs worldwide with a trend of exponential growth (Iyer, 2013, 04:34). The significance of TCKs and ATCKs could also be seen in the fact that one of the most developed countries in the world, Japan, follow this identity group for decades, even appointing them with a local term, *kikoku - shijos* and modifying its educational system in such a way to accommodate their needs (Cottrell, 2007).

Consequently, we could conclude that the ATCKs occupy a large share of the active workforce nowadays and are high-potential employees, thus innovation of the organization’s processes in order to accommodate their requirements is not only recommended but necessary if the goal is to maintain competitive advantage and to achieve long term retention of ATCKs.

This research was conceptualized by drawing and integrating the principles from several theories that could be seen as its theoretical pillars. Building on the aforementioned social and process innovations and delving into additional fundamental theoretical frameworks, such as the Theory of Motivation, specifically Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which posits that self-actualization is the pinnacle of psychological development, where individuals strive for the fulfillment of their full potential (Alex Acquah et al., 2021), and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory which delineates that intrinsic factors, akin to Maslow's concept of self-actualization, are critical for achieving job satisfaction, implying that opportunities for personal growth and achievement are vital motivators in the workplace (Alex Acquah et al., 2021) are the ones that were frequently revisited. Furthermore, the Theory of Employee Engagement which focuses on the deep involvement and enthusiasm of employees in their work, where engagement is described “as positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74) provided valid insights as well. Lastly, very interesting realizations were inferred from the Theory of Work Adjustment, which highlights the satisfaction derived from the congruence between an individual’s needs and the workplace’s offerings (Rounds et al., 1987). Based on the abovementioned theoretical pillars, this study explores and posits that social and process innovations applied in employee retention strategies applicable to ATCKs can harmonize their intrinsic motivators and engagement levels with the adaptive demands of the work environment, thereby enhancing job satisfaction and retention through a tailored alignment of their unique needs and the reinforcing attributes of the workplace, thus providing a roadmap of work environment where ATCKs could thrive and engage over the long term.

3.0 Research Methodology

The method used in this research is content analysis, more precisely an integrative or critical literature review, since it is applicable when one does not intend to systematically cover all the articles published in the field, but when one would like to combine perspectives from different fields regarding its subject matter, which would occasionally allow emergence of new perspectives (Snyder, 2019). Since a perceived gap or insufficiency of research in the field of the retention of ATCKs exists, this qualifies as a new perspective that this research is set out to portray. To achieve this goal, the first step was to determine the type of data I will use and the relevant databases. Following, secondary data was used, namely articles and publications obtained through an excessive search on electronic databases, such as Google Scholar, PubMed, EMERALD as well as online publications published on reliable sites, such as the official websites of the UN. The second step was determining the set of combination of search terms of keywords that were used while searching databases and abstracts of the publications: "third culture" OR "third culture kid" OR "adult third culture kid" OR "employee retention" OR "employee retention strategies" OR "social innovations" OR "process innovations" OR "social and process innovations in employee retention strategies" OR "statistics on expats" OR "cultural background" OR "cultural background and business success". The third step was to agree on inclusive and exclusive criteria. In this regard, I have decided to consult only articles in the English language, articles that have a contribution to the theoretical background of the field, articles that are linked with innovations and the business environment of TCK and not the articles that were targeting strictly psychological characteristics of TCK. No publishing time limit was determined due to the fact that some of the classical works in this field would be excluded if it was done so, although I did try to focus on the novel sources. The fourth step was deciding how to conduct the review and how to select the sample. I have opted to read the abstracts of the papers first and read full-text articles after preselecting them based on abstract reading after which I made a final selection. Following, the fifth step was assessing the quality and eligibility of the chosen articles. I would double-check the currency and ethical requests as well as the methods used in each article. Sixth step was to decide how to abstract and present appropriate information from the articles, and I have determined to use the form of describing findings and effects instead of presenting this in the form of a table including the names of authors, date of publication and other vital information. This is to achieve a more natural flow and organic structure as well as easy to read overview for the paper.

The literature search based on keywords entered yielded 150 results according to the databases used. After the application of inclusive criteria, only 65 articles and 15 electronic resources were perceived to be specifically relevant for this literature review. A more detailed analysis and reading of the full text revealed 50 articles relevant articles and 11 electronic resources. The last scan application brought me to a total of 37 articles and 7 electronic resources. Lastly, the systematization and the presentation of the findings occurred.

4.0 Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to research if the implementation of social and process innovations in employee retention strategies, with a particular focus on employee retention strategies concerning the Adult Third Culture Kids are possible and beneficial. In general, the research found that the implementation of social and process innovations in employee retention strategies targeting ATCKs is desirable and welcomed, which is supported by the conclusion that one of leading authors of all times in HR field, Ulrich (1998) made when emphasized the necessity of HR to create a model that supports the constant change and innovation of its strategies. If we contemplate on the notion that social innovations are focused on achieving welfare of people and communities (Dawson & Daniel, 2010) and add the conclusion that “certain retention tools are more effective in the retention of the diverse stuff than others” (Musser, 2001b, p. 66) followed by the supposition “that organizations and especially HR practitioners should support and stimulate innovative workplace practices” (Lazarova, 2019, p. 215) while knowing the above-discussed relevance of ATCKs as a diverse identity group and the issues they could face in business surroundings, we could see how these and other studies support the concept of implementing social and process innovations as a valid tool to ensure the retention of diverse groups and consequently of ATCKs as well. More specifically and after the excessive literature review, systematization and interpretation of the extracted knowledge, I was able to identify a few areas of employee retention strategies in which application of social and process innovations could be extremely useful when approaching ATCKs (a brief overview depicted in Table 1). Those areas were as follows: work organization (of flexible work arrangements), employee well-being and work-life integration, mentorship programs, organization of employee resource groups (ERGs), training (more precisely cross-cultural training), career development, performance management, employee motivation and engagement and finally, employee compensation and benefits. The practice of a multinational company that successfully implemented process and /or social innovations in its employee retention strategies will be presented as well.

4.1 Work organization

Process innovations implemented in work arrangements, usually serve to better their flexibility and could be seen as new technologies that impact the work organization processes and result in options such as telecommuting, flexible schedules, job-sharing, or interdisciplinary project organization, which could increase the efficiency of the ATCKs and consequently, their retention. Social innovations in the organization of the work could boost flexibility which resolves the challenges of ATCKs in terms of addressing their family obligations linked with issues of communicating with family members in different time zones, thus options that include remote working, working during different days than general or working in a different time zone could be beneficial for ATCKs. Offering these arrangements can demonstrate an organization's commitment to work-life balance and flexibility, which is highly valued among ATCKs.

4.2 Employee well-being and work-life integration

Process innovations in employee wellbeing and work-life integration could be understood as creating new means that support employees' personal needs, in this case, the needs of ATCKs. This could result in creating new mediums or platforms that offer services such as stress management tools, which could help with the overall well-being of ATCKs.

Social innovations implemented in employee well-being strategies could address issues and personal needs of ATCKs such as childcare or eldercare (ATCKs often have elderly parents or relatives in different countries and seek assistance in providing for them) or resources like health screenings and mental health counseling since the ATCKs value their mental health very highly (Jess & Jess, 2021).

Additionally, offering other benefits such as paid travel costs, car rentals, of international health security coverage is also something that ATCKs value, due to their usually highly mobile lifestyle. Support like this could create a culture of care that could foster loyalty and retention among ATCKs employees.

4.3 Mentoring program

Process innovation within a mentoring program would involve creating a novel, structured and organized approach specifically for matching ATCKs with experienced mentors. In light of previous research done on how technology can support, for example, distance mentoring (Nor & Kasim, 2015) and upcoming industry 5.0, these could be data-driven matching platforms or the creation of mentorship matching platforms, that would ideally allow algorithms fed with employees' and mentors' inputs, to suggest the best pairing. Following, this would provide much needed guidance to ATCKs, in regard to their professional development within the organization as well as in regard to the guides for navigating and understanding the organization's code of conduct, values and general expectations that employers and colleges might have. The program can include specific training, newly designed guidelines, and metrics to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the mentor-mentee relationship.

Social innovation implemented within a mentoring program could help to create a supportive environment for ATCKs in the organization, thus responding to challenges of belonging and mitigating the abovementioned hidden diversity challenges ATCKs often experience. The program provides a platform where ATCKs and mentors could meet, exchange experiences, discuss unclear or misleading issues and other, which can lead to increased job satisfaction, engagement, and retention of ATCKs. Additionally, the program can help to foster a culture of learning mentors, ATCKs could benefit from the Buddy system as well. This could be perceived as a loose relationship compared to a mentorship program. ATCKs could be paired with a peer that shares a similar background, interests and /or job description, again helping ATCKs to navigate through a particular organizational climate by providing the support, and sense of belonging alongside aiding in overcoming language barriers (especially if a corporation has a specific jargon used) and development within the organization, thus benefiting all employees. In addition to

4.4 Creation of Employee resource groups (ERGs)

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are considered to be voluntary employee led-groups that aim to provide both professional and social support to its members by creating a sense of belonging for member employees who share common interests, backgrounds, or experiences and to promote diversity and inclusion aligned with company's values. They often "work to pursue goals that help recruit and retain others like themselves and also work to improve the communities they live in and organizations where they work" (MacGillivray & Golden, 2007 as cited in Welbourne et al., 2015, p. 4).

As a process innovation, ERGs involve creating an innovative structured approach to forming employee-led groups that represent specific and different cultural or affinity groups (such as ATCKs) in the workplace and defining specific processes that will ensure smooth functioning of such groups. Therefore, the appearance of virtual ATCKs community groups, similar to virtual employee communities discussed in the study presented by Bertens (2009) and ATCKs resource portals (*Employee Portals: Key Features, Benefits & Development Guide*, 2023) would be a good solution to facilitate the operation of ERG ATCK. Furthermore, adopting the tradition of cultural awareness days that promote ATCKs as well as providing resources for employees podcasting or blogging would also be considered as a new approach to the functioning of ERGs that could aid in the retention of ATCKs.

As a social innovation, ERGs can aid in creating a more inclusive and diverse workplace culture that values the unique experiences and perspectives of ATCKs, thus clearly responding to the belonging, identity and social challenges that ATCKs face. Taking into account that ERGs provide a platform for employees to connect with others who share similar backgrounds, values, and experiences, this could lead to increased job satisfaction, engagement, and retention of ATCKs. Additionally, ERGs can promote cross-cultural understanding within the organization, which can benefit all employees.

4.5. Cross-Cultural and Cultural Awareness Training

Implementation of process innovation in the training matrix could result in cross-cultural and cultural awareness training which involves creating structured and organized methods for employees' training covering topics such as cultural values, norms, new trends in a globalized world and appropriate communication styles alongside respective processes that ensure its implementation. There are various options for delivering the abovementioned training, and some of the most popular ones are workshops and online modules. The beneficial strategy is to include the abovementioned training in the onboarding process, thus ensuring awareness of all employees regarding this matter from the beginning.

As a social innovation, cross-cultural and cultural awareness training can help to create a more inclusive workplace culture that values the diversity of its employees. By providing this training to all employees, including ATCKs, the organization can promote cultural sensitivity, build better understanding between employees from different cultures, provide information and basic knowledge regarding cross-culture and unique challenges of ATCKs, reduce misunderstandings

and prevent conflicts, thus responding to hidden diversity challenge ATCKs face. Additionally, cross-cultural training can lead to increased collaboration, teamwork, and following increased levels of job satisfaction and retention.

4.6 Career development

When process innovations are infused into career development strategies result is often creating or modifying approaches that support or provide training, coaching, mentoring, mapping the career paths and other resources that enable employees to advance and thrive in the organization. This could be done by introducing new methods to skills mapping and goal-setting processes that would allow more personalization and inclusivity. By constantly updating career development processes, the organization ensures the efficiency and effectiveness of the methods in place. ATCKs as well as most of the employees truly appreciate well-designed and highly upscaled career development planning, thus the effect on retention is almost guaranteed.

As a social innovation, career development opportunities can help to respond to challenges that ATCKs could possibly experience in the working environment, such as issues with inclusion and diversity (which could hinder the advancement), or issues with transparency and straightforwardness of the promotion policy. By providing career development opportunities that are tailored to the unique experiences, skills and requirements of ATCKs, for example by offering options for expatriate missions or rotation of positions, the organization can display its commitment to diversity and inclusion, thus promoting employee retention of ATCKs.

4.7 Performance management

Process innovations in performance management could create an innovative approach for evaluating, monitoring and improving employee performance, or in this case, the performance of ATCKs. The organization should establish clear performance goals and expectations, while at the same time, providing regular feedback and coaching, in order to aid employees in achieving their objectives. Process innovations could result in developing and using various novel user-friendly platforms and mediums that are specifically designed for this purpose, thus ensuring continuity, comfort and live exchange of data and sometimes, real-life correspondence, which could be really beneficial, especially in remote settings.

When requirements of social innovations are applied in performance management the result could be tailored performance management that addresses some of the issues and /or preferences of ATCKs, such as the need for their contributions and skills to be recognized, valued and rewarded. As previously mentioned, ATCKs often state that organizations do not use their full potential, due to the standardization of processes in place (Bonebright, 2010). Performance management which is more sensitive and inclusive towards specific skill sets of its employees as well as to specific experiences and to the need for constant feedback could create a more inclusive and collaborative workplace culture that promotes accountability and transparency which can have a positive effect on ATCKs retention statistics.

4.8 Employee engagement

Process innovation in employee engagement could be perceived through the development and implementation of new strategies and techniques that aim to engage and motivate employees in decision-making processes and delivering new ideas. This could be achieved by modifying and streamlining the communication in the organization again, by offering various platforms for that purpose.

Social innovations in employee engagement can be seen through its objective to improve the working environment and experience for employees or ATCKs by valuing their opinions and promoting engagement in decision-making processes (when applicable) or in promoting creativity at work. This responds to challenges that ATCKs often experience, namely the need for meaningful jobs and a creative work environment (Bücker, 2021). By providing a large window of opportunity for ATCKs engagement, organizations can increase job satisfaction, productivity, and retention.

4.9 Employee Compensation and Benefits

Process innovations applied in employee compensation and benefits systems could determine new efficient ways of changing policies and procedures in place that could result in a system that is more agile and equipped to accommodate the requirements of ATCKs. This could include flexible compensation packages, that would allow ATCKs to customize their package by allocating a portion of their compensation towards benefits that are of personal importance to them (such as healthcare or child support).

Social innovations infused in employee compensation and benefit systems could produce such options as assistance with language or cultural training, additional vacation time for ATCKs to visit their distant family and abovementioned covered travel costs, insurance costs and potentially offering of free healthy lunch options. All these options respond to some of the issues ATCKs face (language barrier) or accommodate the issues that they feel strongly about.

Table 1

Process and social innovations applicable to employee retention strategies targeting ATCKs

AREAS OF EMPLOYEE RETENTION STRATEGIES	INNOVATIONS THAT COULD HELP IN RETENTION OF ATCKS	
	Process innovations	Social innovations
Work organization	New technologies that result in telecommuting, job-sharing, interdisciplinary project organization.	Options for remote working, working in different time zones and working on different days of the week available.
Well-being and work life integration	New mediums and platforms for addressing various issues such as stress management.	Nurishing the culture of employee well-being and balance, by offering childcare or eldercare and /or health screenings, mental help counseling, paid international health coverage.
Mentorship	New approaches such as data-driven matching platforms or mentorship matching platforms, that would allow algorithms fed with employees' and mentors' inputs to	Promoting a culture of learning and development, ensuring that various platforms (online and in person) that allow ATCKs and mentors to meet regularly exist.

	propose a perfect matching.	
Employee resource groups (ERGs)	A new approach that would allow forming ERGs of ATCKs, such as establishing Virtual ATCK Community, ATCKs resource portal, organizing ATCKs cultural awareness days, ATCKs podcasts and blogs.	Promotion of inclusive and diverse workplace culture and cross-cultural understanding by creating a community of ATCKs.
Training	Creating workshops and online modules that cover topics such as cultural values, norms and new trends in cultural awareness.	Promotion of a more inclusive workplace culture that values diversity and is mindful of cultural sensitivity resulting in increasing collaboration, acceptance, teamwork and less conflicts.
Career development	Creating new approaches to skill mapping and goal-setting processes that allow personalization and inclusivity.	Nurture the culture of straightforwardness of the promotion policy that cherishes diversity and inclusion, for example by offering expatriate missions or rotation of positions.
Performance management	Creation of highly efficient platforms with opportunities for real-life correspondence that allow live exchange of data regarding evaluating the performance.	Promoting a culture of accountability and transparency while focusing on inclusivity and personalization tailored to the specific needs of employees (ATCKs), e.g. need for constant or periodic feedback.
Employee motivation and engagement	New processes that enable the streamlining of communication in the workplace and among different levels of management, by using platforms such as Slack, Zoom, AI-powered chatbots, or by creating Internal social media and Mobile Apps for employees.	Promotion of a culture that cherishes a creative work environment and offers meaningful jobs by encouraging engagement in decision-making processes, thus enhancing the experiences of ATCKs in business settings.
Compensation and benefits	Creating processes that support flexible compensation packages, thus allowing customization.	Supporting ATCKs by offering options personalized to their needs such as language training, additional vacation time or healthy lunch options.

Note. An abbreviation ATCKs stands for Adult Third Culture Kids

4.10 Practical examples of innovative employee retention strategies

As already mentioned, many companies, such as Google, Amazon and Zappos today resort to implementing innovative approaches within employee retention strategies, that could be applied to ATCKs as well.

Zappos.com LLC., one of the biggest online retailers of clothes and shoes, that was recently acquired by Amazon, has 85% of employee retention (Charlton, 2014). Some of the innovative approaches, that could be social or process innovations that the company is implementing are: providing a great work environment (company allows and supports employees to customize their office space), giving employees responsibility, offering healthy lunch options for free, recognition and rewarding of the employees (famous “Desk of epic glory” where the current major achievements of employees, both professional and private, are displayed or “Zollar store” where employees can redeem their Zollars obtained by achieving previously set goals) (Charlton, 2014).

4.11 Limitations

This study is not without limitations. I should mention the language factor, regarding the fact that only literature written in the English language was taken into account. This could result in some relevant literature not being consulted. However, I am of the opinion that the most significant literature that considers this topic is written or translated into English language. Furthermore, it is important to note that the literature review was done based on carefully selected keywords, which might hinder the representativeness of the studied demographic group. However, by implementing a diverse range of keyword sets combined with meticulous methodological transparency and rigor, minimization of the possible bias and better reflection of the complexity of the studied context was achieved.

4.12 Summary and the significance of the research

This paper investigated the possibility of incorporating process and social innovations in employee retention strategies targeting Adult Third Culture Kids and their role if the application is perceived as possible. Through an exhaustive literature review that resulted in analyzing 37 articles and 7 electronic resources that are current and relevant to the research purpose, several important findings have been identified. The research showed that both, social and process innovations such as: flexible working options, cross-cultural and awareness training possibilities, competitive base salary and wellness offerings, promotion of a work-life balance, recognition and rewarding the employees’ for their work and promoting employee engagement (Crail, 2023) are welcomed and recommended additions that can enrich and enhance the currency and relevance of employee retention strategies in general and in the case of a diverse workforce. The significant contribution this study offers is in the fact that this is the first study to investigate which innovations are suitable to be implemented within employee retention strategies in order to enhance retention of ATCKs, who have been perceived as a significant part of a global workforce and high potential employees. By doing so, this study adds new knowledge to the field of employee retention and is a valuable resource for HR Managers as well as for the ATCKs themselves.

5.0 Conclusion

To conclude, this paper was intended to identify social and process innovations that could be beneficial to the identity group of ATCKs if applied within employee retention strategies.

Additionally, the research intended to portray the relevancy of Adult Third Culture Kids as a major participant group in today's active working force as well as to emphasize the notion that their specific requirements merit the same consideration as the requirements of other diversity groups when planning and implementing employee retention strategies as one of the primary criteria for company's competitive advantage. It is my humble opinion that this paper succeeded in reviewing the most worthy literature currently, and was able to offer a significant positive contribution or a new knowledge to the field on how above-mentioned innovations could be more customized and sensitive towards the requirements of ATCKs, thus clearly responding to a perceived gap of almost nonexistent research on retention of ATCKs.

There could be multiple areas of future research in this field. Following, I would recommend further investigation in terms of how different groups that fall under the umbrella of ATCKs term differ from each other when discussing employee retention, thus providing further particularization of the topic. Additionally, a very interesting research topic would be how the implementation of another type of innovation, specifically green innovations within employee retention strategies could affect the retention of ATCKs.

Overall, I truly hope that this paper was able to inspire interested parties to comprehend that the future of work and human resource strategies, specifically employee retention strategies lies in perceiving them as an ongoing processes that have to be reviewed and innovated constantly and creatively in order to respond to never-ending changes in the workforce as well as to embrace and constantly acknowledge the needs of newly arisen participants in the global work market, such as Third Culture Kids.

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