

# The adjustment of spouses and expatriates and its relationship with expatriate's performance in international assignments

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## ABSTRACT

The adaptation of an expatriate is a function of several factors and family issues have been identified as potential influencers in the process. However, little is known about the effect of the existing role of the spouse in the adaptation of the expatriate. Thus, the objective of this study is to evaluate the relationship between the adjustment of expatriates and their spouses with the performance of the expatriate. It is a quantitative study with 217 couples in which one member of the couple occupied the expatriate position. The results showed no significant relationship between the adjustment of the spouse and the performance of the expatriate, but revealed that the adaptation of expatriate moderates the relationship between these variables. These results suggest that the adaptation of the spouse can have an indirect relationship on expatriate performance, via the expatriate's adaptation. These findings support the idea that companies should invest in organizational support to facilitate a better fit of the expatriate and his spouse to the host country culture and to promote a higher individual performance.

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## 1. Introduction

International trade plays an important role in the global economy and dominates considerable part of the activities of world trade (Santos, Bronzo, Oliveira, & Resende, 2014). Interactions across national boundaries have permeated companies' daily activities around the world, impacting the increase in the number of expatriates (Kumar, Rose, & Ramalu, 2008; Mohr & Klein, 2004). Given the high failure rates of managers in international missions, researchers and managers have sought to develop a more strategic view of the global personal system (Selmer & Leung, 2003; Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007) and better understand factors that facilitate or hinder the achievement of expected results in expatriation processes (Takeuchi, Lepak, Marinova, & Yun, 2007).

In this context, some authors have suggested that one of the main reasons for the expatriates' lack of adaptation to international assignments is precisely the spouse's adaptation difficulties (Andreason, 2008; Cole, 2011). About 80% of expatriates are accompanied by spouse/partner during their international missions (BGRS, 2014). Thus, to reduce failure rates in the assignments and improve the expatriate's performance, their adaptation becomes indispensable and many companies have invested in costly benefit packages for expatriates and their spouses in order to promote their adaptation (Bauer & Taylor, 2001; Cole, 2011). Although that is a recurring practice, research has shown conflicting results regarding explaining to what extent expatriates' adaptation can be influenced by their spouses' adaptation (Davies, Kraeh, & Froese, 2015;

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Lee & Kartika, 2014; Van Erp, Van Der Zee, Giebels, & Van Dujin, 2014).

In order to fill this gap in the literature, the objective of this study is to evaluate the relationship between expatriates and their spouses' adaptation with the expatriate's performance. The contributions of this study take place by the advance in the literature knowledge on International Human Resource Management about the relationship between the spouse and the expatriate's adaptation and the expatriate's performance so that this result is added to those already carried out to better understand the relationships among the variables. In practical terms, it provides information for decisions to invest in support packages for expatriates and their spouses.

## 2. Expatriates' performance

Expatriates' performance is an issue of utmost importance for organizations, since the investment in international assignments is costly (McNulty, De Cieri, & Hbutchings, 2009). For organizations, satisfactory performance is understood as the successful development of obligations abroad, including the achievement of specific objectives or defined projects (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005). Some expatriates satisfactorily meet their assignments, continuing the expatriation, even without being in proper conditions to have a satisfactory performance. However, measuring performance is not a simple task.

The literature shows, from various theoretical perspectives, explanations on performance at international assignments. These explanations, however, are not intended to cover all possible dimensions, but to identify the main variables that predict the expatriates' performance from personality characteristics to the cultural adaptation issues. In this sense, theoreticians have approached personality characteristics, expatriates and their families' adaptation, adaptation to the environment, establishment of social networks, culture, structure and organizational governance (Reis, Fleury, Fleury & Zambaldi, 2015; Claus, Lung, & Bhattacharjee, 2011) as component aspects of expatriates' performance.

Some authors have proposed dimension structures for performance measurement. For example, Foster and Johnson (1996) have suggested three dimensions, namely: cross-cultural adaptation, compliance with international assignment and

performance during the assignment (Caligiuri & Tung, 2001; Schuler, Fulkerson, & Downing, 1991). Claus, Lung, and Bhattacharjee (2011), in turn, highlight the dimensions of individual, labor or social performance. Caligiuri (2000) has proposed five major personality traits for performance evaluation. As for Kraimer and Wayne (2004), they assess performance in tasks and the intention to complete them.

As well as Cheng and Lin (2009), this study has used only the third dimension (performance during the assignment) of Foster and Johnson (1996) as representative of performance because it is understood that adaptation and meeting the assignment are discriminant constructs related to performance, although not reflecting its concept. According to the adaptation done by Cheng and Lin (2009) for measuring the authors mentioned above, the understanding was adopted in this study that the expatriate's performance during the assignment (one of the three component dimensions of the expatriate's performance) is also three-dimensional and consists of the following dimensions:

- **Management efficiency**, related to meeting production goals with efficiency and quality;
- **Local employees management**, related to supervision, implementation of HR policies and reducing turnover rates;
- **Reading the environment**, with regard to support to the subsidiary through establishing a social network with the local government and other influential people, forecasting regional trends and a more active participation in industry associations.

This approach makes it possible to understand performance through expatriates' ability to proceed to an effective environmental reading in order to get the best performance from local employees, thus achieving management efficiency in production, quality and time and resources optimization. This study delineates the interest in evaluating expatriates' cross-cultural adaptation as an antecedent for their performance, which leads us to the next topic.

## 3. Expatriates' Transcultural Adaptation

Expatriates' cross-cultural adaptation concerns the ease or difficulty faced by people in various aspects of life and work in international assignments (Lee & Vorst, 2010). Well-adjusted expatriates shall feel

comfortable regarding their tasks and interaction with the people of the country welcoming them, reflecting on the perception of an increased performance from their managers (Kraimer, Wayne, & Jaworski, 2001). Over time, the reduction of uncertainties through learning behaviors appropriate to the new culture shall bring greater harmony to the international mission (Black, 1988). Although often cited as a component of expatriates' performance (Schuler *et al.*, 1991), we present in this study cultural adaptation as a distinct construct, with its proper substantive content.

Because of the growing importance of the "Transcultural Adaptation" construct, the issue became the subject of theoretical and empirical initiatives in order to identify its dimensions. Black (1988) prepared a model featuring three facets of expatriates' cross-cultural adaptation: general adaptation (involving climate, food and housing), adaptation to work (involving expectations and values relating to own work tasks) and finally adaptation to interaction (involving interpersonal relations). These three facets do not occur in isolation. Instead, they influence each other. Thus, the lack of language knowledge can minimize success in social interactions, as well as the development of certain activities in their own work, shopping, and displacements, and therefore impair general adaptation (Selmer & Fenner Jr., 2008).

Cross-cultural adaptation is reported in the literature with a theoretical precondition for international assignments success. Difficulties in adapting to the culture in international assignments bring expatriates' performance below expectations (Pattie & Parks, 2011; Shih, Chiang, & Hsu, 2010) and they can prematurely end the assignment or culminate in an actual employment termination (Caligiuri & Tung, 2001; Ramalu, Wei, & Rose, 2011; Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, & Ferzandi, 2006). As expatriations have become an advantageous option for the development of global skills (Takeuchi *et al.*, 2007), therefore creating a competitive advantage to the organization (Collings, Scullion, & Morley, 2007; Shih *et al.*, 2010), researchers and managers should have a more strategic view of the global personal system (Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007; Selmer & Leung, 2003), mainly because expatriation has become a necessary step for managing executive careers (Takeuchi *et al.*, 2007).

It is also possible to find in the literature empirical evidence for the positive relationship between expatriates' adaptation and performance (Kraimer *et al.*, 2001; Kumar *et al.*, 2008; Shih *et al.*, 2010; Wu & Ang, 2011). Kraimer, Wayne, and Jaworski (2001) have found that expatriates' failure in their work activities is often a result of poor adaptation. Kumar, Rose, and Ramalu (2008) argue that expatriates' cross-cultural adaptation reduces the assignment stress and tension, which aids in improving performance, as it helps expatriates to save energy and efforts in their work.

Thus, faced with such evidence, it is expected that individuals with better overall adaptation and interaction be able to perform in higher levels in their work activities. From the relationship between expatriates' adaptation and performance the first hypothesis of this study arises.

**H1: *Expatriates' performance is positively related to their adaptation.***

#### **4. Expatriates' spouses/partners transcultural adaptation**

If the expatriates' adaptation has been widely explored in the literature, the same cannot be said in relation to the adaptation process that occurs with husbands and wives. The spouses' adaptation is not well understood and what is known about the expatriates' adaptation is not enough to understand the difficulties with which the spouses are faced (Andreason, 2008; Bauer & Taylor, 2001). Studies on spouses' adaptation are more likely to empirically evaluate the factors involved in this adaptation than to provide a proper definition (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Black & Stephens, 1989; Takeuchi *et al.*, 2007; Van Der Zee, Ali, & Salomé, 2005).

In the literature, different perspectives are noticeable for the understanding of what constitutes the spouses/partners' adaptation. Shaffer and Harrison (1998), for example, have concluded that the spouses' adaptation consists of three dimensions: how spouses fit in the local customs and culture, how they build relationships with local citizens, and the meaning given by them to being part of that culture, feeling at home. Thus, the adaptation in these three dimensions depends on the establishment of their identity in the new culture (Bauer & Taylor, 2001).

In turn, Mohr and Klein (2004) have identified three dimensions of the spouses' adaptation by

studying American spouses in Germany. In this aspect, two of the dimensions suggested by Black and Gregersen (1991) were confirmed (general adaptation and adaptation to the interaction) but a third dimension was added: the adaptation to the role of an expatriate's spouse. Mohr and Klein (2004) observe that overall adaptation and adaptation to the role are positively associated with previous international experiences, although such experiences have had a negative relationship with the adaptation to the interaction. This can be explained by cultural differences between the previously visited country and the current housing country. This research however has aimed to know the spouses' adaptation history (Mohr & Klein, 2004). This study is based on these authors to operationalize the spouses' adaptation.

It is important to note that although many people think of the role of a wife, when referring to the expression "expatriate's spouse" this is not always the case. Although expatriates are mostly male, the presence of women in international assignments is increasing (Andreason, 2008). Presently, 18% of expatriates are women (BGRS, 2014), who assume their responsibilities accompanied by spouses who leave a career in the country of origin and must deal with the possibility of not finding a job in the destination country due to not mastering the language or to the temporary nature of the assignment (Andreason, 2008). In general, the adaptation for a female partner may be less difficult than for a male one. Otherwise, the difficulties for finding a job in the culture of destination for spouses who have a career (dual couple career) are greater and this reflects in a proportionate difficulty of adaptation compared to the spouses without a career before the international transfer (Cole, 2011; Harvey, 1998; Harvey, Napier, & Moeller, 2009) due to having more obstacles to overcome in an attempt to create a new professional network and a support system autonomously while their partner spends long hours at work and frequently travels (Kupka & Cathro, 2007; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001). Even when they get a job abroad, they have no benefits as those provided to the organizational expatriate, such as training on the local culture and language (Andreason, 2008; Anderson, Ones, Sinangil, & Viswesvaran, 2001). Such factors may justify the fact that dual-career families resist more to carrying out work abroad (Harvey et al., 2009).

There has been much empirical evidence for a positive relationship between the spouse and the expatriate's adaptation (for example, Andreason, 2008; Bauer & Taylor, 2001; Black & Stephens, 1989; Brown, 2008; Harvey et al., 2009; Konopaske, Robie, & Ivancevich, 2005; Kupka & Cathro, 2007), although there are also those with divergent results (Davies et al., 2015; Lee & Kartika, 2014; Van Erp et al., 2014). In general, these studies suggest that the support offered by the spouse emotionally, of organization of family life, counseling and synchronization of interests with local social networking and the country of origin tend to support the expatriate's adaptation to the destination country in the international assignment, as well as their professional performance.

Thus, the following hypotheses are presented:

**H2: *The spouse's adaptation is positively related to the expatriate's adaptation.***

**H3: *The spouse's adaptation is positively related to the expatriate's performance.***

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 Data collection

The research individuals are couples formed by an expatriate and a spouse/partner who accompanied them during the assignment to work in Brazil. Both structured questionnaires applied (one with questions designed to the expatriate and another with questions for their spouse/partner) were hosted on a Website. The links for access to the questionnaires were sent in an e-mail to a group of 523 organizational expatriates (OE) in assignments in Brazil. For the answers obtained from expatriates and their spouses, it was clarified in the e-mailed invitation that the interest of the research relied in the participation of expatriates who were married or had a partner.

Through Weblogs, digital social networks on expatriates in Brazil and contacts with the Human Resources department of 53 companies receiving foreigners on international assignments in Brazil a list of e-mails was developed over 12 months to which the survey link was sent. After finding the first expatriates by means of these sources, the snowball sampling technique was adopted (Heckathorn, 1997) and expatriates were asked to nominate other participants who would make up the desired sample,

which could increase the base of e-mails used to collect the data for this study. This strategy has been used in recent research with expatriates (for example, Araújo, Teixeira, Cruz, & Malini, 2014).

Data collection was carried out over 18 days in May 2012 and an intermediary communication was sent on the 13th day. From the 226 feedbacks received, 9 were eliminated due to the repetition of the responses, a criteria appointed by the ESS-EDUNET – *European Social Survey Education Net* (2009), which recommends 23.8% and 76.2% for repeat answers as an acceptable percentage of missing data. From the questionnaires, 217 were considered valid and with no missing values, reflecting a 41.50% rate of return. By the empirical rule of five to ten cases per variable (Hair Jr., Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 2005), the sample of 217 couples may be considered as an appropriate size for the study purposes, as the data collection instrument had 29 assertions.

## 5.2 Measurements

Black's scale (1988) was the assessment tool for the degree of the expatriates' cross-cultural adaptation in the three aspects included: general adaptation, adaptation to work and, finally, adaptation to interaction. The same scale was used to assess the expatriate's spouse/partner's cross-cultural adaptation without, however, the third dimension (adaptation to work) being included, totaling 8 items for the spouses and 11 for the expatriates. The exclusion of this aspect for spouses was due to the fact that many of them would not be proceeding with a career in the host country nor be linked to an organization. Thus, expatriates' spouses only responded to the Black's scale (1988) assertions on the topics of general adaptation and interaction.

The instrument was presented in a Likert scale of 5 points, where "1" represents "not adapted" and "5" means "very well adapted." The scale was applied in its original version in English, a language mastered by expatriates of various nationalities.

Information on the executives' performance, whether they were expatriates or not, are difficult to access, since organizations hinder the provision of such data, treating them with greater confidence. For this reason, the performance dealt with in this work was the one realized by the expatriates themselves and not the one evaluated by the leaders. This strategy has been adopted in similar studies which

assess expatriates' performance (Hemmasi, Downes, & Varner, 2010; Lee & Sukoco, 2010).

To measure the expatriates' performance, the Cheng and Lin's scale (2009) was used, according to which the construct is presented in a three-dimensional form and is understood as the expatriate's capacity to make an effective environmental reading, getting the best performance from local employees, thus reaching management efficiency in production, quality and optimization of time and resources. The three dimensions of performance assessed in the 10 items of the scale were: "Management Efficiency," "Local Employees Management," and "Reading the Environment." The answers were arranged in a Likert scale of 5 points, where 1 represents "I completely disagree," and 5 represents "I completely agree." The scale was also applied in English. The scales can be obtained from the authors by direct correspondence.

The scales were chosen due to having their operational definitions aligned with the constituent definitions presented in the theoretical framework and their dimensions presenting Cronbach's alphas above 0.80 in their original applications (Black, 1988; Cheng & Lin, 2009).

## 5.3 Preliminary data analysis

After checking the missing (missing values) and atypical (outliers) data, first stage of the analysis, no respondent was eliminated. The responses of items using a reverse scale were recodified. The hypothesized relationships were analyzed using a structural equation modeling (*SEM*), estimating by the partial least squares regression (PLS regression) statistical method and *software* SmartPLS 2.0M3 (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005). The PLS method was chosen because the data are not normal. Then the measurement model (convergent validity, discriminant validity and reliability) was evaluated and evaluation of the structural model was performed.

## 6. Analysis and discussion of results

### 6.1 Demographic data

Table 1 shows that most participant expatriates are male (89%), legally married (66%), working in Brazilian subsidiaries of foreign-owned companies (69%), occupying managerial positions (94%) and are

**Tab. 1**  
Demographic data

Participants' profile		nº	%	The expatriates' country of origin	nº	%
Expatriates' gender	Male	193	89	The United States	43	19,8
	Female	24	11	Argentina	19	8,8
Expatriates' age group	Up to 35 years of age	33	15	Portugal	17	7,8
	Between 36 and 40 years	40	18	China	14	6,5
	Between 41 and 45 years	58	27	Mexico	14	6,5
	Between 46 and 50 years	51	24	Spain	12	5,5
	Over 51 years	35	16	England	10	4,6
Spouses' age group	Up to 35 years of age	44	20	Japan	10	4,6
	Between 36 and 40 years	60	28	Colombia	8	3,7
	Between 41 and 45 years	55	25	Peru	8	3,7
	Between 46 and 50 years	39	18	France	7	3,2
	Over 51 years	19	9	Italy	7	3,2
Time in Brazil	Between 12 and 24 months	55	25	Venezuela	7	3,2
	Between 25 and 36 months	58	27	Germany	6	2,8
	Between 37 and 48 months	91	42	Norway	6	2,8
	Over 49 months	13	6	Uruguay	5	2,3
Marital status	Married	143	66	Canada	4	1,8
	Living with the partner	74	34	Ireland	4	1,8
Amount of time as couples	Up to 5 years of age	29	13	Sweden	4	1,8
	6 – 10 years	48	22	Finland	3	1,4
	11 – 15 years	54	25	Netherlands	3	1,4
	16 – 20 years	51	24	Denmark	2	0,9
	Over 20	35	16	Australia	1	0,5
Number of children	None	53	24	Belgium	1	0,5
	1 child	82	38	Ecuador	1	0,5
	2 children	58	27	New Zealand	1	0,5
	3 children or more	24	11			
Nationality of the organization	Brazilian	68	31			
	Foreign	149	69			
Hierarchical level	Managerial position	203	94			
	Non-managerial	14	6			
Previous experience as expatriates	Yes	65	30			
	No	152	70			

Source: Research Data

in their first international assignment (70%). A total of 65% of participant couples has 1 or 2 children. These results are coherent with the expatriates' overall demographic profile identified by BGRS (2014).

The most present nationalities among the participant expatriates are American (19.8%), Argentinian (8.8%), Portuguese (7.8%), Chinese (6.5%), and Mexican (6.5%). With the exception of only a Norwegian expatriate and another Spaniard, who are married with Brazilian women, all participants' spouses have the same nationality of the expatriates who are their partners.

## 6.2 Evaluating the Measurement Model

The analysis of the measurement model was conducted prior to the verification of the relationship among the constructs. Convergent and discriminant validities and composite reliability were analyzed. The existence of convergent validity was indicated by the observation of all latent variables, of first and second order, which had an average variance extracted (AVE) higher than 50%, meeting the criteria proposed by Chin (1998) and Hair Jr., Anderson, Tatham, and Black, (2005), as presented on Tables 3 and 4. As for the higher than 0.6 composite reliability, it indicates the construct reliability in studies using structural equations (Chin, 1998). As illustrated in

Tab. 2  
Cross-loading matrix

1st order Latent Variables	Indicators	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Overall adaptation (expatriate)	AGE_1)	<b>0,74</b>	0,69	0,31	0,18	0,26	0,47	0,54	0,57
	AGE_2)	<b>0,80</b>	0,73	0,17	0,08	0,15	0,55	0,59	0,62
	AGE_3)	<b>0,85</b>	0,81	0,22	0,12	0,22	0,54	0,63	0,64
	AGE_4)	<b>0,77</b>	0,71	0,30	0,20	0,29	0,51	0,57	0,60
	AGE_5)	<b>0,70</b>	0,68	0,41	0,35	0,35	0,55	0,57	0,64
	AGE_6)	<b>0,92</b>	0,83	0,51	0,25	0,33	0,64	0,72	0,77
2. Adaptation to the interaction (expatriate)	AIE_1)	0,88	<b>0,93</b>	0,37	0,29	0,32	0,59	0,68	0,71
	AIE_2)	0,84	<b>0,92</b>	0,36	0,27	0,35	0,55	0,69	0,71
3. Adaptation to work (expatriate)	ATE_1)	0,32	0,33	<b>0,81</b>	0,63	0,59	0,40	0,44	0,47
	ATE_2)	0,23	0,23	<b>0,80</b>	0,65	0,51	0,36	0,42	0,41
	ATE_3)	0,37	0,33	<b>0,70</b>	0,27	0,21	0,33	0,38	0,45
4. Overall adaptation (spouse)	AGC_1)	0,30	0,33	0,55	<b>0,82</b>	0,65	0,29	0,35	0,34
	AGC_2)	0,18	0,24	0,54	<b>0,88</b>	0,73	0,26	0,24	0,27
	AGC_3)	0,22	0,25	0,64	<b>0,85</b>	0,61	0,27	0,36	0,35
	AGC_4)	0,22	0,27	0,56	<b>0,90</b>	0,70	0,30	0,31	0,33
	AGC_5)	0,20	0,25	0,54	<b>0,85</b>	0,65	0,24	0,27	0,27
	AGC_6)	0,17	0,21	0,59	<b>0,84</b>	0,65	0,21	0,28	0,25
5. Adaptation to the interaction (spouse)	AIC_1)	0,31	0,34	0,50	0,63	<b>0,89</b>	0,27	0,33	0,34
	AIC_2)	0,30	0,32	0,52	0,76	<b>0,92</b>	0,28	0,32	0,37
6. Managerial performance	DG_1)	0,49	0,45	0,35	0,24	0,24	<b>0,70</b>	0,55	0,54
	DG_2)	0,44	0,42	0,32	0,16	0,11	<b>0,65</b>	0,52	0,42
	DP_3)	0,51	0,44	0,33	0,24	0,29	<b>0,76</b>	0,59	0,59
7. Performance for reading the environment	DLA_1)	0,51	0,52	0,44	0,31	0,27	0,51	<b>0,72</b>	0,60
	DLA_2)	0,59	0,57	0,39	0,25	0,28	0,68	<b>0,77</b>	0,65
	DLA_3)	0,57	0,54	0,35	0,25	0,22	0,52	<b>0,70</b>	0,57
	DLA_4)	0,52	0,53	0,38	0,21	0,29	0,53	<b>0,70</b>	0,59
8. Production performance	DP_1)	0,60	0,60	0,49	0,29	0,31	0,51	0,60	<b>0,74</b>
	DP_2)	0,69	0,65	0,48	0,26	0,30	0,61	0,71	<b>0,82</b>
	DP_3)	0,60	0,55	0,40	0,28	0,33	0,60	0,65	<b>0,79</b>

Source: Research Data

Tables 3 and 4, in this research all the latent variables showed reliability higher than 0.6, indicating the reliability of the measurement model.

The discriminant validity was also confirmed in the measurement model due to all indicators having higher loads in their constructs than in any other

Tab. 3  
Pearson correlation and Descriptive Statistics of the 1st order Latent Variables

1st order Latent Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. The expatriate's overall adaptation	1,00							
2. Adaptation regarding the expatriate's interaction	0,93	1,00						
3. Adaptation regarding the expatriate's work	0,41	0,39	1,00					
4. The spouse's overall adaptation	0,25	0,30	0,67	1,00				
5. Adaptation regarding the spouse's interaction	0,34	0,37	0,57	0,78	1,00			
6. The expatriate's overall performance	0,68	0,62	0,47	0,30	0,31	1,00		
7. Performance for reading the environment	0,76	0,75	0,54	0,35	0,36	0,78	1,00	
8. Production Performance	0,81	0,77	0,58	0,35	0,40	0,73	0,83	1,00
Average	2,69	2,62	2,73	2,78	3,03	3,61	3,18	2,71
Median	3,00	3,00	3,00	3,00	3,00	4,00	3,00	3,00
Standard deviation	0,96	0,82	0,92	1,19	1,26	0,83	0,78	0,77
Average variance extracted	0,64	0,85	0,59	0,74	0,81	0,50	0,52	0,61
Composite reliability	0,91	0,92	0,81	0,94	0,90	0,75	0,81	0,83

Source: Research Data

Tab. 4

Pearson correlation and Descriptive Statistics of the 2<sup>nd</sup> order Latent Variables – Structural Model

2 <sup>nd</sup> order Latent Variables – Structural Model	1	2	3
1. The spouse’s adaptation	1	0	0
2. The expatriate’s adaptation	0,4191	1	0
3. The expatriate’s performance	0,389	0,8523	1
Average	2,84735	2,688731	3,166359
Median	3	3	3
Standard deviation	1,211032	0,928213	0,863411
Average variance extracted	0,879103	0,72272	0,8531
Composite reliability	0,93552	0,94904	0,979687

Source: Research Data

latent variable (see Table 2). Since the PLS models do not have *Goodness of fit* indices, the quality of the proposed structural model was evaluated by the dependent variables R<sup>2</sup> and Stone-Geisser Q<sup>2</sup> to test the predictive relevance (Chin, 2010). Since the values were stable for omitting distances and much of the Q<sup>2</sup> was positive, it was understood that the model shows an adequate stability.

### 6.3 Evaluating the Structural Model

The structural model relates the variable “Spouse’s Adaptation” with the construct “Expatriate’s Adaptation” and this one with “Expatriate’s Performance,” which, according to the model, is also directly related to “Spouse’s Adaptation.” In other words, what is tested is if the “Expatriate’s Performance” is directly influenced by the “Spouse’s Adaptation” and indirectly by means of the

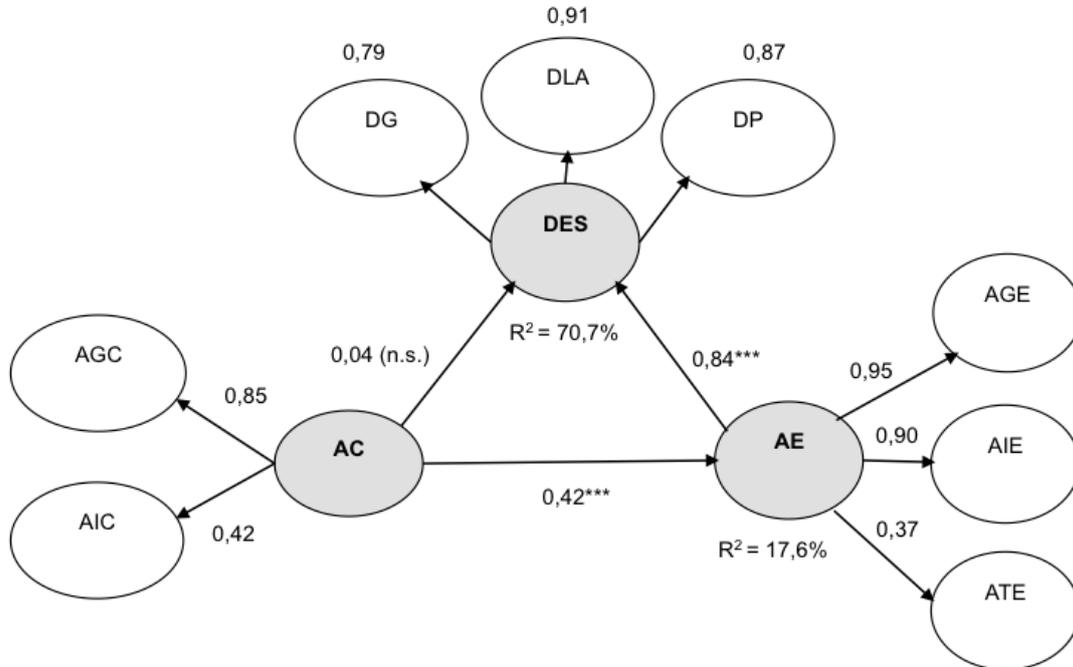


Fig. 1

Evaluating the Structural Model

Source: Research Data Note: SmartPLS 2.0.M3 (Ringle et al., 2005) software was used. (ns) = Nonsignificant. \*\*\* The correlation is significant at the level of 0.001. Significance was estimated with N = 217 and 1,000 repetitions by means of bootstrap. To simplify the figure, the indicators were omitted, but their factor loadings can be seen on Table 2. EOA = The expatriate’s overall adaptation; AEI = Adaptation regarding the expatriate’s interaction; AEW = Adaptation regarding the expatriate’s work; SOA = The spouse’s overall adaptation; ASI = Adaptation regarding the spouse’s interaction; MP = Managerial performance; PRE = Performance for reading the environment; PP = Production performance. A In the structural model, SA = The spouse’s adaptation; EA = The expatriate’s adaptation; EP = The expatriate’s performance.

"Expatriate's Adaptation." The analysis proposed having been carried out, the path coefficients were obtained, presented on Figure 1.

The structural model was estimated as the "path" weighting scheme and based in the model represented in Figure 1. It is important to highlight that, according to Cohen (1997), a  $R^2$  of 13% is classified as average and one of 26% as large. Thus, according to this criterion, the model presented shows a strong explanation for the expatriate's performance construct ( $R^2 = 70.7\%$ ) and moderate for the expatriate's adaptation construct ( $R^2 = 17.6\%$ ).

The results showed a positive and significant relationship between the expatriate's performance and adaptation (path coefficient = 0.84,  $p < 0.001$ ), which supports hypothesis 1 (the expatriate's performance is positively related to the expatriate's adaptation). This result is supported by previous studies that indicate a positive relationship among these constructs in different search contexts (Araújo, Teixeira, Cruz, & Malini, 2012; Kraimer *et al.*, 2001; Kumar *et al.*, 2008; Shih *et al.*, 2010; Wu & Ang, 2011), which also takes place in other more recent studies (Davies *et al.*, 2015; Lee & Kartika, 2014; Van Erp *et al.*, 2014). Together, these studies seem to position the expatriate's cross-cultural adaptation as a strong explanatory variable on their performance, which highlights the importance of the construct for research on International Human Resource Management.

Hypothesis 2 (the spouse's adaptation is positively associated with the expatriate's adaptation) was also supported, as a positive and significant relationship between the constructs indicated (paths coefficient = 0.42,  $p < 0.001$ ) was found. The association between the spouse and the expatriate's adaptation had already been reported in the literature in previous studies (Andreason, 2008; Bauer & Taylor, 2001; Kupka & Cathro, 2007; Lee & 2007; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Takeuchi, Yun, & Tesluk, 2002) and this study comes to be added to those in order to provide new evidence for this association. Brown (1997) has identified the fact that couples present a similar stress due to the reduced time available to be together and future uncertainties after the international mission. Another finding of this study is that the difficulty of make compatible family and professional demands is constituted as the main stressor for expatriates. Moreover, understanding

the association found receives input from spillover effects between the adaptation of both (Andreason, 2008).

In turn, the direct relationship between the spouse's adaptation and the expatriate's performance was not supported (path coefficient = 0.04, ns) and this took to rejection of H3. This finding is particularly interesting to the literature on International Human Resource Management, as it was still necessary to test this direct relationship in order to assess how the spouse's adaptation can support the achievement of results by the expatriate. This research presents evidence that the simple fact of offering support to the spouse does not generate, by itself, a direct association with the executive's performance in an international assignment. This effect has a moderating character, that is, it is present via expatriates' adaptation. In other words, the expatriate's spouse's adaptation seems to bring a positive impact on performance if this state also contributes to the executive's adaptation, which is not a rule. This result supports this idea in empirical terms, which had already been highlighted in previous studies (Van Erp *et al.*, 2014; Andreason, 2008).

Globally, these results have relevance across the literature on the topic and studies previously developed in three ways: first, it provides empirical evidence of the indirect way in which the expatriates' performance can be influenced by their spouses' adaptation. Secondly, it provides specific evidence of the Brazilian context as a host environment, which is particularly relevant given the scarcity of this type of research in developing countries (Araujo, Bilsky, & Moreira, 2012; Araujo *et al.*, 2014). Thirdly, it is anchored on a meaningful sample, as compared to similar studies. Together, these three factors place this study in a position of relevance and originality in the field of studies on International Human Resource Management.

## **7. Final considerations**

This study has some limitations, which generates opportunities for future research. Firstly, the cross-sectional design does not allow statements of causal nature. It is suggested then that longitudinal studies be conducted so that the results are interpreted not only as associations, but also with causal relations. Secondly, the study is restricted to expatriates in the Brazilian context and it may be that idiosyncratic

characteristics of this environment have generated biases for the results. Thus, it is proposed that other studies be conducted with expatriates allocated in other countries for comparison in other host environments. Thirdly, the snowball sampling method has as limitation the fact of tending to generate biased and homogeneous samples because they are groups of persons nominated by others, who had already made up the database of the research participants. However, the size of the sample obtained seems to justify the choice of method. Anyway, for comparison purposes, it would be interesting to conduct a replication of the study, for example in a sample of managers of the same company or a database of expatriates to compare results. Fourthly, the study has not evaluated if the spouse and expatriate's adaptation is susceptible to the influence of organizational actions such as the *settling in* packages. In order to overcome this limitation, it is suggested that future research examine the relationship between the cross-cultural adaptation of the ones involved and organizational support.

The results allow suggestions for the practice of International Human Resource Management directed to companies that promote expatriation, the companies supplying support to the expatriates and their families' adaptation and to the expatriates themselves. For the companies, the study emphasizes the importance of considering the spouse's role in the selection and management of the expatriate's permanence during the period of the international mission. Interviews with family, a practice adopted by some organizations, seem to be necessary, since it is possible that as expatriates have values profiles more or less favorable to transcultural adaptation (Araujo *et al.*, 2012), it is reasonable to suggest that the same tends to occur with their spouses. Also, generating incentives to adapt the spouse seems to become an essential step in the process and this should include everything from pre-expatriation steps to settling in and repatriation. For companies that provide support to companies promoting expatriation, this research provides evidence of the relevance of their services and can be used as a scientific evidence of the need to extend the organizational support packages during the international mission to expatriates' spouses. In turn, the executive in expatriation can gain greater awareness of the need to manage family

relationships and pay attention to the emotional support demanded by their spouse.

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# Adaptação de Cônjuges e de Expatriados e sua relação com o Desempenho em Designações Internacionais

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DETALHES DO ARTIGO	RESUMO
<p><b>Histórico do artigo:</b> Recebido em 22 de julho de 2015 Aceito em 1 de abril de 2016 Disponível online em 31 de agosto de 2016</p> <p>Sistema de Revisão “Double Blind Review”</p> <p><b>Editor científico:</b> Eduardo Eugênio Spers</p>	<p>A adaptação de um expatriado é função de diversos fatores, e questões familiares têm sido apontadas como possíveis influenciadores nesse processo. Entretanto, pouco se sabe sobre o efeito existente do papel do cônjuge na adaptação do expatriado. Assim, o objetivo deste trabalho é avaliar a relação entre a adaptação de expatriados e seus cônjuges com o desempenho do expatriado. Trata-se de um estudo quantitativo, realizado com 217 casais com um dos cônjuges tendo ocupado a posição de expatriado. Os resultados não mostraram uma relação significativa entre a adaptação do cônjuge e o desempenho do expatriado, mas revelaram que a adaptação do expatriado modera a relação entre essas variáveis. Esses resultados sugerem que a adaptação do cônjuge pode exercer uma influência indireta no desempenho do expatriado, via sua adaptação. Esses achados suportam a ideia de que deve-se investir em suporte organizacional para facilitar um melhor ajuste do expatriado e seu cônjuge à cultura do país de destino e promover um desempenho individual superior.</p>
<p><b>Palavras-chaves:</b> Adaptação Expatriados Cônjuge Desempenho</p>	<p>© 2016 Internext   ESPM. Todos os direitos reservados!</p>

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