The influence of expatriate spouses’ coping strategies on expatriate and spouse adjustment

An interdependence perspective

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Abstract

Purpose – Drawing upon Folkman and Lazarus’ (1984) coping framework and interdependence theory (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959), the purpose of this paper is to investigate how expatriate spouses’ coping strategies (problem-focused and emotion-focused) affect expatriate spouse adjustment and expatriate adjustment. In addition, the authors also examine the mediating effect of expatriate adjustment on the spouse coping strategies-spouse adjustment relationship.

Design/methodology/approach – To test these relationships, the authors collected multi-source data from 191 expatriate spouses and their expatriate partners living in 37 countries.

Findings – The results revealed that problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies positively and negatively, respectively, influenced all types of spouse adjustment: personal, interaction, and cultural. Both forms of spouse coping also influenced expatriate adjustment. The authors also found that expatriate adjustment mediated the relationship between expatriate spouses’ coping strategies and spouse adjustment.

Practical implications – The results suggest that multinational organizations should pay equal attention to the adjustment of both their expatriates and their spouses. Both expatriates and their spouses should be included in the initial selection process and in pre-departure training to get well equipped before the international assignment. Training spouses to adopt problem-focused coping strategies would help to facilitate the effective adjustment of both spouses and expatriates.

Originality/value – The research provides one of the first examinations that investigate expatriate spouses’ coping strategies and their impact on expatriate and expatriate spouse adjustment. This research also highlights the interdependency of expatriates and their spouses.

Keywords Expatriate adjustment, Coping strategies, Expatriate spouse, Spouse adjustment

Paper type Research paper

Consistent with expatriate research spanning the last three decades, about 80 percent of today’s expatriates relocate with a spouse or partner (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2015). Expatriate spouses represent an important asset or liability for multinational organizations (Arthur and Bennett, 1995; Davies et al., 2015), and the importance of their adjustment and their international assignment experience has been well documented. For example, spouse adjustment can positively affect expatriate’s adjustment and performance (Caligiuri et al., 1998; Van Erp et al., 2014), and spouse maladjustment can significantly influence expatriate premature return and psychological withdrawal (Forster, 1997; Takeuchi et al., 2002), and may even lead to marriage dissatisfaction and divorce (McNulty, 2015). Indeed, research has shown that a happy and supportive spouse is one of the most important success criteria for both male and female expatriates (McNulty, 2005; Teague, 2015).

Previous research has mainly investigated the issue of assignment failure from the expatriate’s perspective (Arthur and Bennett, 1995; Caligiuri, 2000; Mendenhall and Stahl, 2000). Organizations have also tended to ignore spouses’ adjustment issues and the
consequences of poor spouse adjustment on expatriate failure (Bauer and Taylor, 2001; Cole, 2011; Lauring and Selmer, 2010; Shaffer and Harrison, 2001) even though research has indicated that expatriate spouses play a critical role in terms of expatriates’ willingness to accept the assignment, assignment completion, expatriate adjustment, and expatriate performance (Lazarova et al., 2010). While there has been a tremendous increase in research on expatriate adjustment, we still know relatively little about the adjustment of expatriate spouses – the forgotten partners of international assignments (Shaffer and Harrison, 2001; Takeuchi, 2010). Only a few studies to date (Black et al., 1991; Shaffer and Harrison, 2001; Takeuchi et al., 2002; Van Erp et al., 2014) have empirically examined the antecedents of expatriate spouse adjustment and identified a variety of precursors such as expatriate spouses’ self-efficacy, intercultural personality, language proficiency as well as organizational support, family support, social network, and environmental factors (Black and Gregersen, 1991; Gupta et al., 2012; Malek et al., 2015; Shaffer and Harrison, 2001; Van Erp et al., 2014). Little is known, however, about how spouses cope with the uncertainties and stressors of an international assignment.

Based on the Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response Model (FAAR) (Patterson, 1988), expatriates and their families encounter three main sources of demands: stressors (i.e. discrete events such as moving abroad), strains (i.e. ongoing unresolved tensions as a result of stressors or of not meeting demands), and daily hassles (i.e. trouble with neighbors, traffic problems, unpleasant air quality). The FAAR model also proposes that if the family’s capabilities suffice to address the demands experienced, adjustment will occur (Haslberger and Brewster, 2008). Of all family members who embark on an international assignment, it is the expatriate spouse who tends to experience more difficulties, including stressors, strains, and daily hassles (Cole, 2011). Research has demonstrated that the experiences of expatriate spouses differ markedly from that of expatriates both in nature and degree (Black and Gregersen, 1991; Black and Stephens, 1989). According to Andreason (2008), expatriate spouses have the most difficult role of any family member during the international assignment because they are often more immersed in the host country culture than either the expatriate or the children. Whereas expatriates have the organization and job structure that continue from the home country to the host country, and children have the continuity and routine of school, expatriate spouses often leave behind many of the most important aspects of their lives, including friends, relatives, and even their careers. In addition, many expatriate spouses experience major interruptions to or loss of their career, leaving them feeling diminished and unrecognized. Due to the loss of their social identity, social support, and even decreasing self-efficacy, expatriate spouses might become victims who have the least capabilities/resources but who have to cope with the most demanding foreign cultural situations.

A potential resource for expatriate spouses, however, is the expatriate him/herself. Before the international assignment, both expatriates and their spouses have their lives intertwined with others such as colleagues, relatives, friends, and community contacts. But this may all change upon arrival in the new country and expatriates and their spouses find that they only have each other. In other words, they become more interdependent and the attitudes and behaviors of each can more easily influence the attitudes and behaviors of the other (McNulty, 2012). Indeed, the FAAR model indicates that the capabilities (e.g. skills, coping behaviors) of one family member might facilitate the adjustment of other family members (Patterson, 1988). While prior studies on the expatriate-spouse interface have mostly focused on the effects of spouse adjustment on expatriate adjustment (e.g. Takeuchi et al., 2002; Malek et al., 2015), we know much less about how the behaviors of spouses, such as the coping strategies they adopt, influence expatriate adjustment and how expatriate adjustment contributes to spouse adjustment.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to understand the coping strategies that expatriate spouses use when on an international assignment. Because expatriate spouses...
may have to deal with greater stressors, strains, and daily hassles on the foreign assignment when compared to expatriates and because they generally have fewer organizational resources available (Andreason, 2008; Konopaske et al., 2005; McNulty, 2012), our first objective is to clarify which coping strategies are effective in facilitating expatriate spouse adjustment. To achieve this, we draw on Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) coping framework and examine the problem-solving and emotion-focused strategies adopted by expatriate spouses. Also, given the interdependence of expatriates and spouses, our second objective is to consider the influence of the spouse on expatriate adjustment and the influence of the expatriate on spouse adjustment. To achieve this, we draw on interdependence theory (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959) to assess the crossover effects (Westman and Vinokur, 1998) between expatriates and their spouses as well as the mediating effects of expatriate adjustment on the relationship between spouse coping strategies and spouse adjustment.

Through this study, we endeavor to make three contributions. First, drawing on Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) coping framework, we enhance our understanding of expatriate spouses’ adjustment by examining their use of coping strategies to deal with the demands of an international assignment. This responds to the call from expatriate researchers for more attention to be devoted to the expatriation experiences of multiple international assignment stakeholders, including expatriate spouses (Reiche et al., 2014). Second, drawing on the coping framework (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984) and interdependence theory (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959), we examine the mechanism through which expatriate spouses’ coping strategies cross over to influence expatriate adjustment, and how expatriate adjustment, in turn, contributes to spouse adjustment. This heeds a recent call for understanding the dynamics and experiences of global employee families including expatriates and their family members (Shaffer and Westman, 2015). Third, we empirically test the proposed model using multi-source data from a diverse sample of 191 expatriates and their spouses working around the world. This not only increases the generalizability of our results but also provides a more holistic view of the expatriate-spouse interface during the international assignment.

**Theoretical framework and hypotheses**

Based on the model of spouse adjustment proposed by Shaffer and Harrison (2001), we consider three different types of spouse adjustment: personal, interaction, and cultural. Personal adjustment is defined as a sense of becoming part of, belonging to, or feeling at home in a foreign environment. Interaction adjustment refers to the perceived comfort of interacting and building relationships with host country nationals. Cultural adjustment refers to adaptation to various foreign environmental and situational conditions, such as local customs, transportation, and health systems. These latter two forms of spouse adjustment parallel expatriate interaction and cultural adjustment (Black and Stephens, 1989).

Although Shaffer and Harrison (2001) asserted that expatriate spouse adjustment depends on their ability to cope with the stress of living in a foreign environment, they did not explicitly assess spouses’ coping behaviors. To clarify the role of coping strategies on expatriate spouse adjustment, we apply Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) coping framework to examine how expatriate spouses draw on problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies to adjust to the international assignment. To extend this theory and consider possible crossover effects from spouse coping strategies to expatriate adjustment and from expatriate adjustment to spouse adjustment, we introduce interdependence theory (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959) as an explanation for the dynamic interplay between expatriates and their spouses. According to this theory, individuals who share a common social structure and who are mutually dependent on each other will, through the process of interacting with each other, influence each other’s outcomes (Kelley and Thibaut, 1978; Kelley et al., 2003).
Westman (2001) refers to this as crossover, whereby the affect, attitudes, and behaviors of one individual may influence those of another individuals. Thus, we contend that the coping behaviors of spouses will affect the adjustment of their expatriate partners, and that expatriate adjustment will directly influence spouse adjustment and play an intervening role in the relationship between spouse coping strategies and spouse adjustment. The proposed model is depicted in Figure 1.

Expatriate spouse coping strategies and spouse adjustment
Coping refers to an individual’s cognitive and behavioral efforts to regulate or reduce the stress derived from environmental or internal demands, and the conflicts among them, which tax or exceed an individual’s resources (Lazarus and Launier, 1978; Lazarus, 1980). In the context of expatriation, coping refers to the techniques to manage the demands of relocating and adapting to a foreign environment (Sanchez et al., 2000). For expatriate spouses, coping consists of strategies they can use to manage, reduce, or overcome the environmental demands (e.g. cultural novelty, visa restriction, underemployment) and internal demands (e.g. identity disruption, feelings of isolation, lack of recognition) they encounter during the international assignment.

According to Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) coping framework, there are basically two types of coping strategies: problem-focused and emotion-focused. Individuals who engage in problem-focused coping demonstrate coping behaviors aimed at changing the problematic person-environment relationship that is perceived as the cause of the stress felt. For example, an expatriate spouse who actively learns the host country language, expands the social network in the host country, and tries to find a job to alleviate his/her perceived lack of recognition is using problem-focused coping strategies. In this case, expatriate spouses target the problem “head on” and seek out needed training, education, and resources to solve the problem actively. On the other hand, individuals who engage in emotion-focused coping aim to address the symptoms (i.e. stress) and regulate their emotions that result from the stress. For example, an expatriate spouse could feel better about his/her current situation during the international assignment by telling him/herself that someday s/he will be returning to the home country or by spending most of the social time with other expatriate spouses because of the fear of interacting with host country nationals. Research investigating problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies generally report positive and negative correlations between problem- and emotion-focused

![Figure 1. A mediated model of expatriate spouses' coping strategies on spouse adjustment](image-url)
strategies, respectively, and individual well-being (Sonnenstag and Frese, 2003). It is typically believed that active attempts to change the environment (problem-focused coping) could lessen or eliminate the cause of the stress, while passive efforts to handle negative consequences of stress (emotion-focused coping) may drain a person’s energy without affecting or eliminating the source of the problem (Feldman and Thomas, 1992).

Most of the research on the use of coping strategies within the expatriation context has examined expatriate’s coping strategies and consequent expatriate outcomes such as expatriate adjustment and intention to remain on the assignment. Selmer (1999), in a study of expatriate managers in the People Republic of China, found that expatriates engaging in problem-focused coping strategies were better adjusted than their counterparts engaging in emotion-focused coping strategies. In addition, on the basis of a survey of US expatriates in more than 50 countries, Tung (1998) reported that problem-focused strategies were more useful in improving adjustment to a host culture when compared with emotion-focused strategies. In a study by Selmer and Leung (2007), the use of emotion-focused coping strategies had an adverse effect on the socio-cultural adjustment of female expatriates. Herman and Tetrick (2009) also studied repatriate adjustment and found that problem-focused coping was related to better adjustment on return, while emotion-focused coping was related to poorer adjustment. In addition, in a study of British expatriates in Singapore, approach (problem-focused) and avoidance (emotion-focused) strategies, respectively, were positively and negatively related to psychological adjustment (Ward and Kennedy, 2001). Taken together, these results provide some preliminary support that problem-focused coping strategies have a positive influence on expatriate adjustment, whereas emotion-focused coping strategies have a negative influence. Results from all these studies suggest that expatriates or repatriates who used problem-focused coping strategies were better adjusted, regardless of whether they were abroad or when they returned to the home country.

While we are unaware of any study that examines the impact of coping strategies on expatriate spouses, the domestic literature suggests that individuals who applied problem-focused coping strategies tend to have positive emotional and psychological well-being and individuals who applied emotion-focused coping are more likely to experience emotional burnout and other types of psychological ill-being (e.g. frustration) in different contexts such as salespeople (Lewin and Sager, 2008), teachers (Gustems-Carnicer and Calderón, 2013), and customer service providers (Ben-Zur and Yagil, 2005). Following the same vein, we expect that expatriate spouses will have more positive emotions and experience psychological well-being when using problem-focused coping, but they will experience more negative emotions and psychological ill-being when using emotion-focused strategies. Based on the theoretical framework and the above arguments, we offer the following:

\[ H1. \] Problem-focused coping strategies will be positively associated with expatriate spouse (a) personal adjustment, (b) interaction adjustment, and (c) cultural adjustment.

\[ H2. \] Emotion-focused coping strategies will be negatively associated with expatriate spouse (a) personal adjustment, (b) interaction adjustment, and (c) cultural adjustment.

**Expatriate spouse coping strategies and expatriate adjustment**

During the international assignment, expatriate families often become more isolated from their psychological and physical support systems (e.g. relatives, friends, and colleagues) they had in the home country and this isolation constitutes an important loss of support for both expatriates and their spouses (Guzzo and Noonan, 1994; Harvey and Buckley, 1998; Van Erp et al., 2014). This loss of support is especially critical for spouses who often fall...
under the radar of organizational support systems. Given that expatriates and their spouses are isolated from most of their external support systems, they are more likely to depend on one another for support and they are strongly influenced by each other’s psychological well-being because partners’ lives become more interdependent in the host-country situation (Haslberger and Brewster, 2008). From an interdependence perspective (Van Lange and Rusbult, 2012), this mutual dependence creates a stronger context in which the expatriates’ (spouses’) experiences and emotion can easily crossover to their spouses (expatriates).

Crossover, a key element in interdependence theory (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959), is the term used to describe the contagion of positive as well as negative experiences between individuals in the same social environment (Bakker et al., 2009; Westman, 2001). With respect to positive crossover experiences, Bakker et al. (2005) found that work engagement crosses over from husband and wife and vice versa in different occupational settings. Couples also have experienced negative crossover experiences such as anxiety (Westman, Etzion and Horovitz, 2004), burnout (Bakker and Schaufeli, 2000), and depression (Howe et al., 2004). From an interdependence theory perspective (Kelley and Thibaut, 1978; Kelley et al., 2003), we expect that the behaviors or coping responses of expatriate spouses, either positive or negative, will cross over and influence expatriates’ adjustment. For example, expatriate spouses who adopt problem-focused coping strategies will more effectively navigate the stresses of the international assignment; in so doing, they become a resource for their expatriate partner’s adjustment. In contrast, expatriate spouses who respond to the challenges of the international assignment with emotion-focused behaviors are more likely to become a stressor that adversely affects their expatriate partner’s adjustment. Thus, we offer the following:

**H3a.** Expatriate spouses’ utilization of problem-focused strategies will be positively associated with expatriate adjustment.

**H3b.** Expatriate spouses’ utilization of emotion-focused strategies will be negatively associated with expatriate adjustment.

**Expatriate adjustment and spouse adjustment**

Just as spouse behaviors may influence relevant expatriate outcomes, we anticipate that expatriate experiences (i.e. adjustment) will cross over to contribute to spouse adjustment (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959). Due to spouses’ personal status (e.g. unable to work due to immigration visa) and lack of access to resources (relative to expatriates), expatriate spouses may not have enough resources to adapt to international assignment stress. So who can come to the rescue? Van Erp et al. (2014) found a resource compensation effect in that when expatriates or expatriate spouses have insufficient resources at their disposal, they will attempt to utilize external resources, such as their partner’s intercultural personality, to obtain better cross-cultural adjustment. Specifically, these authors found that expatriates or expatriate spouses’ intercultural traits (emotional stability, social initiative, open-mindedness) may facilitate their partner’s adjustment. Briefly, Van Erp and her co-authors (2014) found that open and curious expatriates will provide a less open-minded partner with essential information and support to adjust effectively and sociable expatriates will also facilitate their spouses to receive easy access to socio-cultural interactions.

In a similar vein, we expect expatriate adjustment will be an important resource for expatriate spouses. Specifically, expatriates who are more adjusted to the international assignment will be more capable of providing relevant and culture-specific information to their spouses. Expatriate spouses, after receiving the support from their expatriate partners, will have more resources to manage the stress they encounter during the international assignment.
Thus, in line with interdependence theory (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959) and consistent with Takeuchi et al.’s (2002) finding with respect to the crossover of expatriate spouse adjustment to expatriate adjustment, we expect a positive crossover of expatriate adjustment to spouse adjustment:

H4. Expatriate adjustment will be positively associated with expatriate spouses’ (a) personal adjustment, (b) interaction adjustment, and (c) cultural adjustment.

Mediating effects of expatriate adjustment during the crossover process
According to interdependence theory (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959), crossover is one mechanism whereby the attitudes and behaviors of one individual influence those of another. Elaborating on this notion, Westman and Vinokur (1998) specified three main mechanisms, one of which is an indirect mediating interaction process whereby an indirect crossover occurs when a stressor (resource) increases the strain (well-being) of a partner (Westman and Vinokur, 1998). Based on the mechanism, we argue that expatriate adjustment acts as a bridge between spouse coping strategies and spouse adjustment. We expect that when expatriate spouses use problem-focused coping strategies, the positive consequences such as confidence and perceived control will facilitate their interpersonal interactions with their expatriate partner, and this will facilitate expatriate adjustment. Expatriate adjustment will, in turn, contribute to spouse adjustment. However, when expatriate spouses use emotion-focused coping strategies, the negative consequences such as spouses’ increasing levels of frustration and lack of control could increase the strain of expatriates which leads to maladjustment of expatriates. The maladjustment of expatriates might then initiate or exacerbate a negative interpersonal interaction sequence with their spouses and lead to spouse adjustment problems. Some empirical results support how distress could increase conflict-based interactions (Schaefer et al., 1981; Westman, Vinokur, Hamilton and Roziner, 2004), which, in turn, augment depression and marital problems between couples. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

H5. Expatriate adjustment mediates the relationship between expatriate spouses’ use of problem-focused coping strategies and expatriate spouse (a) personal, (b) interaction, and (c) cultural adjustment.

H6. Expatriate adjustment mediates the relationship between expatriate spouses’ use of emotion-focused coping strategies and expatriate spouse (a) personal, (b) interaction, and (c) cultural adjustment.

Methods
Data collection and sample characteristics
To test our hypotheses, we used the purposeful sampling approach and collected data from 191 expatriate spouses and their partners originally from 24 countries and assigned with their expatriates to 37 countries around the world. The surveys were first developed in English and then translated into Japanese and German and back-translated to English. To collect the data, we sent the self-administered surveys to both expatriates and spouses via two main sources: first, seven American multinational firms who coordinated the distribution and return of questionnaires for their expatriates and accompanying spouses while on international assignments, and second, members of American, Australian, German, and Japanese associations (social organizations for expatriates and spouses) and the American Women’s Association in Hong Kong. German and Japanese-language surveys were sent to members of the German and Japanese associations, respectively. All others received English-language surveys.
We sent expatriate and spouse surveys to members of the different organizations and asked the recipients to forward the appropriate survey to their spouse/partner. Of the 600 surveys distributed by the MNCs, we received 172 from expatriates and 27 from spouses; of these we matched 15 expatriate-spouse dyads. For the English-speaking social organizations, we sent 1,500 surveys and received 171 from expatriates and 126 from spouses; we matched 108 dyads. To members of the Japanese association, we sent 800 surveys and received 105 expatriate surveys and 65 spouse surveys; we matched 58 dyads. For the German association we sent 350 surveys and received 75 from expatriates and 15 from spouses; we matched ten dyads. In total, we distributed 2,250 surveys to expatriates and received complete surveys from 523, for a response rate of 23 percent. We also received completed surveys from 233 spouses and we were able to match 191 of these with the expatriate. Thus, 36.5 percent of the participating expatriates were matched with their spouse.

Among the 191 expatriate spouses, only 11 were male and the rest female (94 percent). Average age was 42 years old and only 20.7 percent were employed, with the remaining 79.3 percent unemployed. More than 50 percent had at least a bachelor’s degree. Among the expatriates, the average age was about 44 years and approximately 90 percent of them had a bachelor degree or higher. The demographics of spouses and expatriates are comparable to those of previous studies (e.g. Shaffer and Harrison, 1998, 2001; Van Erp et al., 2014).

Measures
All constructs were measured with previously published and validated scales (see Table I for a summary). Spouses provided ratings of their coping strategies and adjustment. Expatriates provided ratings of their own adjustment.

Coping strategies. The Ways of Coping Questionnaire (Folkman and Lazarus, 1988) was used to measure various coping strategies. We used 28 items to assess problem-focused coping and 22 items to measure emotion-focused coping. Expatriate spouses rated the extent to which they had used certain coping strategies to deal with stressful situations during the past few weeks when they were on the international assignment. Sample items of problem-focused coping are “Talked to someone who could do something concrete about the problem” and “Came up with a couple of different solutions to the problem.” Sample items of emotion-focused coping are “I made a promise to myself that things would be different next time” and “Accepted sympathy and understanding from someone.” Responses for both problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies were made by expatriate spouses on a four-point scale (0 = does not apply/not used to 3 = used a great deal). Cronbach’s α for problem-focused coping is 0.90 and Cronbach’s α for emotion-focused coping is 0.88.

Expatriate adjustment. Expatriate adjustment was measured with an overall scale comprised of the 14 items developed by Black et al. including three items for work adjustment, seven items for cultural adjustment, and four items for interaction adjustment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Coefficient α</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coping strategies</td>
<td>Folkman and Lazarus (1988)</td>
<td>Problem-focused: 0.90</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emotion-focused: 0.88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expatriate adjustment</td>
<td>Black and Stephens (1989)</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse adjustment</td>
<td>Black and Gregersen (1991) and Shaffer and Harrison (2001)</td>
<td>Personal: 0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural novelty</td>
<td>Torbiom (1982)</td>
<td>Interaction: 0.88</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Cultural: 0.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I. Summary of measures used in this study
A sample item of work adjustment is “How adjusted or unadjusted are you to specific job requirements,” a sample item of cultural adjustment is “How adjusted or unadjusted are you to the living conditions in general,” and a sample item of interaction adjustment is “How adjusted or unadjusted are you to interacting with host country nationals on a day-to-day basis.” Responses were rated by expatriates and were made on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = extremely unadjusted to 7 = extremely adjusted). Cronbach’s α for the overall assessment of expatriate adjustment is 0.87.

**Spouse adjustment.** Spouse adjustment was measured with a three-dimensional spouse adjustment scale modified from Black and Stephens (1989) and validated by Shaffer and Harrison (2001). It includes a three-item personal adjustment subscale, a two-item interaction adjustment subscale, and a seven-item cultural adjustment subscale. For personal adjustment, we asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they “belonged,” “were comfortable with,” and “felt at home” in the host country. Sample items for interaction adjustment and cultural adjustment are, respectively, “How adjusted or unadjusted are you to interacting with host country nationals on a day-to-day basis” and “How adjusted or unadjusted are you to the living conditions in general.” Responses for personal adjustment were made on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) and those for interaction and cultural adjustment were on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (extremely unadjusted) to 7 (extremely adjusted). We also conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to confirm the dimensionality of the spouse adjustment measure. Cronbach’s αs for spouse personal, interaction, and cultural adjustment are 0.89, 0.88, and 0.89, respectively.

**Control variables.** We controlled for several factors that had the potential to confound this study’s hypotheses. Given the negative association of cultural novelty, the unfamiliarity of host country culture, with expatriate/spouse adjustment (Selmer, 2006), we controlled for cultural novelty. This variable was measured with a seven-item scale modified from Torbiom (1982). A sample item of cultural novelty is “Compared to your home country, how similar or different are everyday customs that must be followed.” Responses for cultural novelty were made by expatriate spouses on a five-point Likert scale (1 = very similar to 5 = very different). Cronbach’s α for cultural novelty is 0.77. We also controlled for assignment duration (expatriate spouses were asked to report how many months they had been on their assignment), expatriate spouse age (in terms of years), and gender (male = 0 and female = 1).

**Data analysis and results**
Means, standard deviations, estimated reliabilities, and correlations between all of the variables are presented in Table II. As can be seen, all of the measures had acceptable internal reliabilities (above 0.70) and correlations between variables are consistent with their theoretical prediction. In addition, given that spouse coping strategies and spouse adjustment data were cross-sectional and from a single source, to alleviate the concern of common method variance, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis by confining all spouse coping strategies and spouse adjustment items into two factors. Results showed that spouse coping variables and spouse adjustment variables loaded on their designated factors. We conducted confirmatory factor analysis to evaluate the overall model fit for the full measurement model including six latent variables (problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, expatriate adjustment, spouse personal adjustment, spouse interaction adjustment, and spouse cultural adjustment) that were assessed by different sets of indicators. This measurement model provided an acceptable fit ($\chi^2(961) = 1,935.89$, $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.92, NFI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.06), so we proceeded to examine the data and test our hypotheses. We used hierarchical regression analyses to test the first four
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Spouse personal adjustment (spouse ratings)</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>1.15</td>
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<td>2. Spouse interaction adjustment (spouse ratings)</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>0.45**</td>
<td>(0.88)</td>
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<td>3. Spouse cultural adjustment (spouse ratings)</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>0.58**</td>
<td>0.63**</td>
<td>(0.89)</td>
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<td>4. Problem-focused coping (spouse ratings)</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.36**</td>
<td>0.31**</td>
<td>0.39*</td>
<td>(0.90)</td>
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<td>5. Emotion-focused coping (spouse ratings)</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>−0.31**</td>
<td>−0.27**</td>
<td>−0.31**</td>
<td>−0.53**</td>
<td>(0.88)</td>
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<td>6. Expatriate adjustment (expat ratings)</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.34**</td>
<td>0.30**</td>
<td>0.28**</td>
<td>0.31**</td>
<td>−0.22*</td>
<td>(0.87)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Cultural novelty</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>−0.28**</td>
<td>−0.29**</td>
<td>−0.32**</td>
<td>−0.05</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>−0.29**</td>
<td>(0.77)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Age (spouse)</td>
<td>41.54</td>
<td>8.15</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.21*</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Gender (spouse)</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>−0.05</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>−0.04</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>−0.04</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Length of stay (months)</td>
<td>31.19</td>
<td>33.71</td>
<td>0.16*</td>
<td>0.21**</td>
<td>0.21**</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.34**</td>
<td>−0.01</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>−0.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** Internal reliabilities (Cronbach’s α) are in parentheses on the diagonal. *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01
hypotheses that examine the direct effects between variables. We then applied Preacher and Hayes’ (2008) SPSS Macro to examine the mediation hypothesis.

$H1a-c$ predicted the direct effect of expatriate spouses’ problem-focused coping on spouse adjustment. The results from Table III indicate significant positive relationships of expatriate spouses’ problem-focused coping and spouse personal adjustment ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.01$), spouse interaction adjustment ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.01$), and spouse cultural adjustment ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$) which supports $H1a-c$. $H2a-c$ predicted the negative effect of expatriate spouses’ emotion-focused coping on spouse adjustment. The results from Table III provide support for negative relationships between emotion-focused coping and spouse personal adjustment ($\beta = -0.22$, $p < 0.05$), spouse personal adjustment ($\beta = -0.27$, $p < 0.01$), and spouse personal adjustment ($\beta = -0.26$, $p < 0.01$), which supports $H2a-c$.

$H3a$ and $H3b$ predicted the direct effect of expatriate spouses’ coping strategies on expatriate adjustment. As shown in Table IV, expatriate spouses’ problem-focused coping is positively related to expatriate adjustment ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$). On the other hand, expatriate spouses’ emotion-focused coping is negatively related expatriate adjustment ($\beta = -0.23$, $p < 0.05$). Thus, $H3a-H3b$ are both supported.

$H4a-c$ predicted the direct effect of expatriate adjustment on three dimensions of expatriate spouse adjustment. As shown in Table V, expatriate adjustment is positively related to spouse

### Table III
Results of regression analyses for coping strategies – spouse adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Personal adjustment</th>
<th>Interaction adjustment</th>
<th>Cultural adjustment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural novelty</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of stay</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent variable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-focused coping</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
<td>0.26**</td>
<td>0.28**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion-focused coping</td>
<td>-0.22*</td>
<td>-0.27**</td>
<td>-0.26**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall $R^2$</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall $F$</td>
<td>3.75*</td>
<td>8.75**</td>
<td>3.72*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>4,186</td>
<td>6,184</td>
<td>4,186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$

### Table IV
Results of regression analyses for coping strategies – expatriate adjustment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural novelty</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of stay</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem-focused coping</td>
<td>0.30**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotion-focused coping</td>
<td>-0.23*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall $R^2$</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall $F$</td>
<td>5.54**</td>
<td>6.97**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>4,186</td>
<td>6,184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$
personal adjustment ($\beta = 0.32, p < 0.01$), spouse interaction adjustment ($\beta = 0.30, p < 0.01$), and spouse cultural adjustment ($\beta = 0.27, p < 0.01$). Thus, $H_{4a-c}$ are all supported.

According to $H_{5a-c}$ and $H_{6a-c}$, expatriate adjustment will mediate the effects of expatriate spouses’ problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies on all three dimensions of spouse adjustment. We employed an SPSS Macro approach recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008) that uses a bootstrapping method (95% confidence interval (CI) based on 10,000 bootstrapping sample) to examine the mediation effects. If zero does not fall between the resulting CI of the bootstrapping method, one can conclude that there is a significant mediation effect (different from zero) to report. Results from the bootstrapping analyses indicated that expatriate adjustment mediated the relationships between problem-focused strategies and spouse personal adjustment (95% CI: 0.0378 to 0.1422), spouse interaction adjustment (95% CI: 0.0266 to 0.1741), and spouse cultural adjustment (95% CI: 0.0290 to 0.1959). In addition, results from the bootstrapping analyses indicated that expatriate adjustment mediated the relationships between emotion-focused strategies and spouse personal adjustment (95% CI: $-0.0751$ to $-0.1002$) and spouse cultural adjustment (95% CI: $-0.0448$ to $-0.1223$), but not spouse interaction adjustment. Therefore, $H_{5a-c}$ and $H_{6a}$ and $H_{6c}$ are supported, but $H_{6b}$ is not supported.

**Discussion**

Drawing upon Folkman and Lazarus’ (1988) coping framework and interdependence theory (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959), this study provides a theoretical explanation for the direct influences of expatriate spouses’ coping strategies on their own adjustment to the international assignment and for the indirect effects through the mediating mechanism of expatriate adjustment.

Two major findings accrued from this study. First, in line with Folkman and Lazarus’ (1988) coping framework, we found that expatriate spouses’ utilization of problem-focused coping strategy positively related to their own and their expatriate partner’s cross-cultural adjustment while the use of emotion-focused coping had a negative influence (Feldman and Thomas, 1992; Selmer and Leung, 2007; Tung, 1998). In addition, highlighting the importance of interdependence (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959), we found that expatriate adjustment positively influences expatriate spouse adjustment. The first finding regarding the direct effects contributes to the literature in several ways. Although researchers (i.e. Chen et al., 2015) have alluded to the issue of stress and resource crossover, many previous works have focused only on the crossover effect of negative states and strains. Our study examined both the positive and negative crossover of expatriate spouses’ coping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Personal adjustment</th>
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<th>Cultural adjustment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural novelty</td>
<td>$-0.13$</td>
<td>$-0.04$</td>
<td>$-0.06$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>$-0.02$</td>
<td>$-0.13$</td>
<td>$0.09$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>$0.04$</td>
<td>$0.06$</td>
<td>$-0.05$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of stay</td>
<td>$0.03$</td>
<td>$0.02$</td>
<td>$-0.05$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent variable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expatriate adjustment</td>
<td>$0.32^{**}$</td>
<td>$0.30^{**}$</td>
<td>$0.27^{**}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall $R^2$</td>
<td>$0.19$</td>
<td>$0.25$</td>
<td>$0.07$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>$0.18$</td>
<td>$0.21$</td>
<td>$0.0$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall $F$</td>
<td>$3.17^{*}$</td>
<td>$3.01^{*}$</td>
<td>$3.22^{*}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$df$</td>
<td>$3,187$</td>
<td>$3,187$</td>
<td>$3,187$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: $^{*}p < 0.05; ^{**}p < 0.01$
strategies and the positive crossover of expatriate adjustment, which responds to the call to investigate the possibility of positive crossover (Guttermann et al., 2017). More specifically, this study also demonstrated that stressors and resources associated with closely related persons can transfer to the well-being of the respective partner. Therefore, the results of this study are consistent with the principles of interdependence theory (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959), which explains the crossover of attitudes and/or behaviors from one individual to another.

In addition, because expatriate spouses have long been considered the “forgotten partners” of international assignments (Shaffer and Harrison, 2001), how they deal with stressful situations encountered during the international assignment has not received much attention. Thus, this study also contributes to expatriate research by identifying how expatriate spouses cope with the stressful international assignments they encounter and how their coping strategies influence their own adjustment as well as that of their expatriate partners. In general, expatriate spouses who used the constructive approach of applying problem-focused coping strategies tend to facilitate their own adjustment and expatriate adjustment. However, expatriate spouses’ attempts to regulate their feelings by applying emotion-focused coping strategies to minimize anxieties not only have a negative influence on their own adjustment but also negatively influence the cross-cultural adjustment of their expatriate partners.

The second major finding in this study is that, drawing on interdependence theory, we identify expatriate adjustment as a mediator between expatriate spouses’ utilization of coping strategies and their own adjustment. This deepens our understanding of the expatriate-expatriate spouse interface by examining the crossover mechanism of their well-being not just from the expatriate’s perspective. This finding corresponds to previous research on the mediating role of interpersonal exchange in the context of crossover effects (Westman and Vinokur, 1998) in the expatriation research domain.

Taken together, this study suggests that for expatriate spouses, employing a coping strategy (e.g. problem-focused coping) that directly aims at changing the problematic person-environment relation that is perceived as the cause of the stress will bring them and partners more positive outcomes compared to expatriate spouses who attempt to minimize anxieties through physical or mental withdrawal from the situation or by avoiding the problem (e.g. emotion-focused coping). Moreover, our research indicates that getting adjusted abroad for both expatriates and their spouses is not only a matter of who you are, but also who you are with on the assignment. Unlike most expatriate studies that focused on expatriates as the major stakeholder, this study suggests that expatriate spouses and their utilization of coping strategies can have a direct influence on expatriate adjustment. On the other hand, in line with the resource compensation perspective (Van Erp et al., 2014), our results suggest that expatriate spouses can also rely on their partners’ cross-cultural adjustment to obtain more resources to facilitate their own adjustment. Specifically, in the situation that an expatriate spouse’s own coping resources do not suffice, high levels of their partner’s resources (i.e. expatriate adjustment) may act as a complementary external resource to benefit one’s adjustment. Along the same line with interdependence theory (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959), this study also suggests the importance of a mutually dependent and significant other for the adjustment of expatriates and their spouses. Specifically, expatriates and their spouses who are interdependent tend to experience less cultural stress and show better cross-cultural adjustment, especially when problem-focused coping strategies are used.

Practical implications for organizations
This research has important implications for multinational organizations and their overseas subsidiaries. Our findings indicate that when expatriate spouses are able to actively deal
with the causes of the problem, this action can facilitate cross-cultural adjustment for expatriates and themselves. By providing extra resources (such as extra guidance in finding a job, and social contacts) to help expatriate spouses actively cope with stress, organizations can influence the adjustment of expatriates and their spouses.

The positive crossover effect of expatriate adjustment on spouses’ cross-cultural adjustment also underscores the importance of expatriates’ adjustment as a complementary coping resource for their spouses. Given the large investment loss regarding expatriate failure and the strong influence that expatriate spouse adjustment has on expatriate success, we suggest that multinational organizations should pay closer and equal attention to the adjustment of both expatriates and their spouses. Instead of focusing on expatriates only, expatriates and spouses should be included in the initial selection process and in pre-departure training to get well equipped before the international assignment. Specifically, pre-screening and selecting expatriates and spouses who have certain personality (e.g. open-mindedness, cultural intelligence and emotional stability) might ensure that they both have more personal resources to actively cope with stressors when they are on an international assignment (Van Erp et al., 2014). Providing language training and realistic previews regarding foreign countries’ customs and living conditions might also help expatriates and their spouses better equip themselves before departure and, thus, have more resources to implement problem-focused coping strategies. It is also essential to provide various support systems to both expatriates and their spouses during the international assignment (e.g. sponsoring participation in expatriate associations or assigning an expatriate with more experience/a host country national to expatriates and their spouses as a mentor, and providing extra guidance in finding a job for the expatriate spouse to rebuild their self-identity) may also be very useful to help both expatriates and their spouses (Teague, 2015). Surprisingly, although researchers have long advocated for more attention to be given to expatriate spouses, it seems that support is still primarily aimed at the expatriate and not the expatriate spouse (Cole, 2011). We also encourage organizations to implement training for expatriate spouses, not just expatriates, to help them develop more problem-focused approaches to the demands of an international assignment. This could be done by providing them with information about available resources in the host country (language training, counseling service, etc.) as well as ensuring a contact person for them in the host country.

Limitations and suggestions for future research
As with any empirical studies, our study has several limitations. First, a major limitation of this study is that the data are cross-sectional and correlational, increasing the probability of tentative causal conclusions. It is particularly important to understand the effect of time lag in human behavior studies (McGrath and Kelly, 1986). For example, how long does it take for different kinds of spouses’ coping strategies to influence expatriate adjustment? Along the same vein, researchers also claimed that acculturative stress and adaptation is a process characterized by phases of stress and adjustment (Berry, 2006; Demes and Geeraert, 2015). Thus, future research should incorporate longitudinal designs to investigate the causal relationships proposed in this study.

Second, we measured expatriate adjustment as a combined global construct, and we only examined two broad types of coping strategies. Researchers have long suggested that more attention be paid to the dimensionality of the criterion domain (Austin and Villanova, 1992). While the use of global measure of adjustment is not uncommon in expatriate research (e.g. Malek et al., 2015) and the purpose of this study is to examine whether expatriate adjustment overall can serve as a coping resources to facilitate expatriate spouse adjustment, future research with a larger sample size should still
incorporate different dimensions of expatriate adjustment (e.g. work, cultural, and interaction). Similarly, the two categories of coping strategies, although descriptive, do not completely reflect the complexity and richness of the unique coping strategies comprising each category. For example, research by Lazarus et al. identified a variety of more specific coping strategies included within these two major categories. Problem-focused strategies include confrontive coping, planful problem solving, positive reappraisal, and seeking social support; emotion-focused strategies include distancing, self-controlling, accepting responsibility, and escape avoidance. Thus, it would be insightful for future research to further investigate the diverse effects of coping strategies and their influence on expatriate adjustment[1].

Third, common method bias may be a concern, especially with respect to the direct relationships between spouse coping strategies and spouse adjustment. However, we relied on multi-source data to examine the crossover effects. Specifically, spouse-rated coping strategies predicted expatriate-rated expatriate adjustment and expatriate-rated expatriate adjustment predicted spouse-rated spouse adjustment. As such, common method bias might not be a serious issue in our study. However, to alleviate potential concern, we followed recommendations by Podsakoff et al. (2003) and calculated a confirmatory factor analysis letting all measurement items load on one single factor. The result provided a worse fit ($\chi^2(1,022) = 2,277.14, p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.76, NFI = 0.82, RMSEA = 0.19). Thus, common method bias might not be a serious issue to influence the validity of this study.

Last, Lazarus et al. argued that the outcome of any coping strategy is highly context dependent and not inherently effective or ineffective. Stahl and Caligiuri (2005) also found that the effectiveness of expatriate coping strategies was contingent on the role of cultural distance during the international assignment. Future research should also consider the role of international assignment context (e.g. time on assignment, assistance from host country nationals) and type of international assignment (e.g. traditional expatriates, self-initiated expatriates) on the relationship among spouses’ utilization of coping strategies, expatriate adjustment, and spouse adjustment (Baker and Cluk, 2015). For example, while spouses of traditional expatriates are vulnerable, self-initiated expatriate spouses may be in an even worse situation given that self-initiated expatriates as well as their spouses generally receive very limited or insufficient assistance from employers (Howe-Walsh and Schyns, 2010). In this circumstance, the support from the organization would become more important.

Conclusion
Our finding that expatriate spouses’ utilization of problem-focused coping strategies leads to better spouse and expatriate adjustment reveals a very important message that expatriate spouses who are able to proactively cope with stress will facilitate their own cross-cultural adjustment as well as that of their expatriate partners. The positive crossover effect of expatriate adjustment on expatriate spouse adjustment also highlights the critical supporting role of expatriates on their spouses. To conclude, findings from this study imply that multinational companies should deal with expatriate adjustment issues in a more comprehensive dynamic perspective by considering the needs of both expatriates and their spouses. This will not only help multinational organizations to better predict and understand how expatriate couples will successfully adjust abroad but also prepare expatriate couples for the challenges they will face together.

Note
1. We indeed attempted to address this void by conducting a post-hoc regression analysis between different types of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies on expatriate adjustment. While our small sample size does not allow us to provide sufficient effect sizes, the
preliminary result demonstrated some preliminary results indicating that planful problem solving, defined as deliberate problem-focused, analytical efforts to alter the situation or solve the problem, positively influenced spouse personal adjustment (β = 0.23, p < 0.01), spouse interaction adjustment (β = 0.23, p < 0.01), spouse cultural adjustment (β = 0.19, p < 0.05), and expatriate adjustment (β = 0.32, p < 0.01). Positive re-appraisal, which describes efforts to create positive meaning by focusing on personal growth, also positively influenced spouse personal adjustment (β = 0.21, p < 0.01), spouse cultural adjustment (β = 0.20, p < 0.05), and expatriate adjustment (β = 0.24, p < 0.05). We also find that seeking social support positively influenced spouse personal adjustment (β = 0.26, p < 0.01), spouse interaction adjustment (β = 0.17, p < 0.05), spouse cultural adjustment (β = 0.20, p < 0.05), but not expatriate adjustment. Interestingly, confrontive coping, defined as aggressive efforts to alter the situation and suggests some degree of hostility and risk taking, negatively influenced spouse personal adjustment (β = −0.21, p < 0.05), spouse interaction adjustment (β = −0.18, p < 0.05), spouse cultural adjustment (β = −0.23, p < 0.01), and expatriate adjustment (β = −0.18, p < 0.05). This result might imply that when expatriate spouses are lack of coping resources, dealing with stressors aggressively will bring them more frustration. In terms of emotion-focused coping, we found that accepting responsibility, which acknowledges one’s own role in the problem with a concomitant theme of trying to put things right, negatively predicted spouse personal adjustment (β = −0.22, p < 0.05), spouse interaction adjustment (β = −0.24, p < 0.01), spouse cultural adjustment (β = −0.25, p < 0.01), and expatriate adjustment (β = −0.29, p < 0.01). We also found that escape-avoidance, which describes wishful thinking and behavioral efforts to escape or avoid the problem, negatively influenced spouse personal adjustment (β = −0.27, p < 0.01), spouse interaction adjustment (β = −0.29, p < 0.01), spouse cultural adjustment (β = −0.31, p < 0.01), and expatriate adjustment (β = −0.36, p < 0.01). Last, We found that distancing, which describes cognitive efforts to detach oneself and to minimize the significance of the situation, negatively influenced spouse personal adjustment (β = −0.26, p < 0.01), spouse interaction adjustment (β = −0.27, p < 0.01), spouse cultural adjustment (β = −0.17, p < 0.05), and expatriate adjustment (β = −0.36, p < 0.01). Thus, though we are not able to make a solid conclusion due the statistical power, we recommend researchers who plan to conduct similar studies to consider the multi-dimensionality of coping strategies when developing and examining their research model. We also reported the internal reliability for each coping items as follows: confrontive coping (6 items; Cronbach’s alpha = 0.76). Seeking social support (6 items; Cronbach’s alpha = 0.77). Planful problem solving (6 items; Cronbach’s alpha = 0.81). Positive re-appraisal (6 items; Cronbach’s alpha = 0.81). Distancing (6 items; Cronbach’s alpha = 0.70). Self-controlling (7 items; Cronbach’s alpha = 0.73). Accepting responsibilities (4 items; Cronbach’s alpha = 0.62). Escape avoidance (8 items; Cronbach’s alpha = 0.76).

References


Further reading


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