

# A causal-comparative study of American expatriate adjustment in Russia and job-specific attributes

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## ABSTRACT

Employees of US-based MNCs working in other nations on expatriate stints must cope with cross-cultural adjustment and work-performance problems that affect their employer operations, productivity and profitability, and organizational morale. Americans' adjustment in Russia is the subject of this work, specifically the role of job characteristics, rank, and previous overseas experience. Following a quantitative causal-comparative research design, a purposive sample of 197 expatriates from the American Chamber of Commerce in Russia (ACCR) completed an anonymous online survey developed from the Peltokorpi-Cultural Adjustment scale. A one-way ANOVA did not show a significant difference for job type or position for adjustment, but prior international stay was found significant ( $p < .05$ ). Among the implications of the study are: First, managers of U.S.-based MNCs should use these findings in their operations; Second, recommendations call on the U.S Chamber of Commerce to develop support programs for better expatriate adjustment. Some of the areas for further research could be a closer look at the effectiveness of the pre-assignment training done and a closer look at how different facets of job characteristics influence adjustment.

**Keywords:** Expatriates, cross-cultural adjustment, international experience, expatriate adjustment scale, organizational performance, productivity.

**Article originality and practical implications:** This study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing the adjustment of American expatriates in Russia, highlighting the significance of prior international experience. It suggests that U.S.-based MNCs should prioritize expatriates with such experience and tailor pre-assignment training to enhance cultural adaptation. The findings also recommend developing support programs for better adjustment and urge further research on the effectiveness of these programs and the role of job characteristics in expatriate adaptation.

## INTRODUCTION

When organizations send their employees to work in other countries, which may seem very basic and simple by all measures, it is not just because adapting to a new organizational culture entails several factors at the workplace and outside of work (Bhatti et al., 2013; English, 2015). Peltokorpi and Froese (2012) noted that adjustment (adjustment) could be a process through which an expatriate makes himself or herself at home in the host country. Lack of enough awareness in these adjustment issues leads to an 80% failure rate (Peltokorpi, 2008) and early contract cancellation (Kolancian, 2012). When relatives are there, change also affect the family set up as well (Qin & Baruch, 2012). Haworth and Wood (2010) have noticed that these issues are important because that affects the quality of expatriates' work and non-work adjustment as well as performance. Scholars state that it is quite possible for the U.S. MNCs to improve the general performance and subsequent profitability by creating versatile human capital (Freeman & Olson-Buchanan, 2013). Russia has experienced doing business with scarcity of labor and stiffness of funding, particularly as MNCs begin penetrating its market. Since its accession into WTO in 2012, Russia modernized industries and cut import tariffs which added its market.

Globalization facilitates market growth, and it's a way to reduce costs, and goods internationalization (Wood, 2010). There is need for American companies to launch programs to support the expatriates when they get to the host country (Kolancian, 2012; Wood, 2010). It is not just a linguistic process; there are other client resilience features, cultural acculturation, and general comprehension of norms in the host country (English, 2015). When expatriates fail to adapt, performance reduces and escalation of conflict between the expatriates and the HCNs emerges which is unhealthy to both parties (Okoro, 2012; Ramalu et al., 2011). It emerged that the challenges posed to US expatriates result in job performance compromise, subsequent financial loss and reduced morale (Green, 2012). Adjustment is related to type of job and occupation (Kolancian, 2012; Kraimer et al., 2009; Peltokorpi, 2008).

Job satisfaction has a direct bearing on turnover with least turnover rates being recorded (Kolancian, 2012). Previous experience living in another culture aids the expatriate to overcome new assignments' challenges (Varma et al., 2012). Expatriate adjustment is also challenged by political rivalry between Russia and the United States of America (Morley, 2014).

The general issue was low employee motivation that manifest itself in poor performances and early return to home country by the U.S. expatriates (Bashir, 2012), and the specific issue was poor adjustment among the expatriates on the Russian assignment depending on the nature of their performance. The following research questions informed this study:

- i. To what extent do levels of expatriate adjustment of American employees who live and work in Russia differ based on type of job?
- ii. To what extent do levels of expatriate adjustment of American employees who live and work in Russia differ based on type of position?
- iii. To what extent is expatriate adjustment of American employees who live and work in Russia influenced by their prior-international experience?

Thus, the goal of the causal-comparative quantitative study was to establish whether there are differences in adjustment of U.S.-based American MNCs' expatriates who lived and worked in Russia depending on the job-specific characteristics, including the type of job and the type of position, and expatriate-specific characteristics. Closely related, this study also explored the possibility of the variation depending on their job characteristics: the type of the job, the type of the position, and expatriate characteristics such as prior overseas experience. The reason used to apply the above limitation was because: cultural issues and management practices are country-specific, thus might affect the extent of adjustment of American expatriates as compared to the rest of the world's nationals (Hofstede, 2009).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review section provides an overview of employee adjustment and performance, adjustment of American expatriates, general adjustment of American expatriates, interaction adjustment of American expatriates, work adjustment of American expatriates, job role Influence on adjustment of American expatriates, and international experience influence on American expatriate adjustment. Existing studies were reviewed that showed the issues which impair or impede adjustment and performance. Previous studies also were discussed to investigate the influence of well and poor adjustment on expatriates, MNCs, HCNs, and host countries.

### ***Historical Overview***

It is not easy for expatriates to adapt to the local cultures of the host countries was established by Black (1988) when studying American expatriates in Japan. Black was able to identify first that expatriate role ambiguity was positively related to role discretion and prior international experience, while expatriate adjustment and performance were also positively related to role discretion. Those expatriates who reported high levels of role satisfaction had better adjustment levels and high performance, while high levels of role ambiguity were associated with lower levels of expatriate adjustment and poor performance.

Peltokorpi (2008) explored factors affecting adjustment of expatriates both at individual and contextual and work levels in Japan. Cross-sectional results indicate that Japanese language proficiency and self-selected personality dimensions most strongly predicted adjustment, and gender had no effect on adjustment, contrary to prior findings. The research conclusions could be beneficial to MNCS in enhancing on expatriate training and assistance.

Kraimer et al. (2009) explored the qualitative approach on expatriate and expatriate management experiences The results shown that positive organizational career advancement supports enhanced expatriates' adjustment and repatriation retention. Adjustment weakness also affected MNCs' image in the host countries and its participants. MNCs attempted to modify their selection methods to enhance the chance to identify high expatriate adjustment. The study also showed that employees who were not themselves on overseas assignments saw expatriate failure as organizational because of lack of support. Thus, the lower rates of intervention, and negative attitude, compromise the commitment of the employees to international assignments (Kraimer et al., 2009). They provided recommendations for MNCs, including cross cultural training, changes in the employee's housing, and repatriation assistance. There were outcomes where some employees were able to meet or do their assignments well but poor conditions which resulted in no proper adjustment and hence underperformance.

### ***Employee Adjustment and Performance***

Many scholars have looked at factors determining expatriate adjustment and performance. Therefore, Kolancian (2012) revealed that personal factor had a statistical relation with expatriate turnover, while work related factors had no such

relation. Only the organizational factors were found to have a positive correlation with turnover, while the environmental factors no association with the turnover. According to Green (2012), prior researchers have argued that adjustment influences performance, but this has not been well established. The relationship, which he established between adjustment and performance of the U.S. government employees posted in other countries is moderate, though unsound, theoretically. Koveshnikov (2012) investigated expatriates in Russia and found an agreement to their proposition that language, culture knowledge, and respect towards Russian traditions such as assertiveness of the leaders are important determinants of expatriates' adjustment. But it was not sufficient to rely upon cultural knowledge alone.

A study done by Bashir (2012) in UAE revealed a positive relationship between organizational support and work as well as general adjustment and called for improvement of support programmes. According to Ramalu et al. (2010a) cultural intelligence, prior international experience and language affected/exacerbated expatriate's stress. However, there was no relationship between cultural intelligence and task performance, but cultural intelligence influenced contextual performance. Wu and Ang (2011) compared companies' support with expatriates, such as pre-departure preparation, and revealed a highly positive effect on adjustment and output in Singapore. Moreover, the main findings of this study were the positive role that cultural intelligence played in adjustment and that emotional intelligence acted as the moderator.

Varma et al. (2012) researched about the bonding of expatriate with Chinese nationals and concluded that HCNs' support depends on their cultural resemblance with expatriates. Cultural dissimilarities that were directly related to the home country affected the likelihood of support that HCNs received: self-rated technical expertise of expatriates and selection of expatriates based on cultural compatibility were supported by the study findings. American employees must cope with adjustment and performance issues in Russia, and these difficulties impact the MNC and result in losing money (Green, 2012). Consequently, there is a dearth of research that requires future exploration in cross cultural adjustment specially in Russia (Bashir, 2012). Zhang (2012) discover job type, previous international experience and adjustment factors are interrelated. Recent research has identified three dimensions of adjustment: of general, interaction and work adjustment (Ramalu et al., 2010a). Transition is multifaceted hence includes subjective feelings and more organizational aspects (Green, 2012). Pre-arrival stage, expatriate responsiveness to change is determined by factors such as job satisfaction and prior international assignment experience (Varma et al., 2012). This has a bearing on cross- cultural adjustment of American expatriates on international assignments.

### ***Cross-Cultural Adjustment of American Expatriates***

A correlational quantitative study that was conducted by Wood (2010) investigated the relationship between multiple post-arrival interventions, the adjustment and performance of American employees living and working in Hong Kong. The results suggested the importance of MNCs to consider post-arrival performance interventions in addition to pre-departure interventions, and two primary areas emerged with high significance (Wood, 2010). The preceding study found that reducing role ambiguity had a significant relationship with all three adjustment constructs and performance, and secondly, findings lent support to the concept of organizations providing additional support to the spouse and family as a means of increasing adjustment and performance of expatriates.

Adjusting well to work is also strongly related to expatriates' willingness to stay the intended duration of employment contract (Wood, 2010). This was reaffirmed in the quantitative design study by Kittler et al., (2011) on the work role and its influence on adjustment of German expatriates who worked and lived in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Russia. The study confirmed that there was a connection between poor general adjustment and conflict at work. Also, the study found that there were positive relationships between work adjustment and role flexibility but did not find a negative relationship between adjustment and with role novelty. The study also found that, language is an important component that assisted German expatriates to adjust in the host countries and should be part of expatriates' readiness training.

According to Wood (2010), the element that impacted general adjustment and interaction adjustment of expatriates and their spouses was cultural novelty. Almost invariably, an international assignment means that the employee is not only expected to be exposed to a new group of coworkers, supervisors, and underlings but also must adjust to new living arrangements, modes of transportation, food, social circles, language and communication, and the overall cultural environment (Wood, 2010). The study also found that, the recognizing the importance of employee adjustment, MNCs should facilitate effective employee adjustment by making reasonable attempts to support their expatriates to settle in the host countries and connect with HCNsT.

### **Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development**

This study's theoretical framework is based on three key theories related to expatriate adjustment: Hofstede's (2009) cultural dimension theory, Wortman et al., (1991) spillover theory, and Allport's (1954) contact theory. Hofstede's points focus on how culture influences the behavior of people. Spillover Theory assesses how household and work interferences affect expatriates' adjustment. Based on Allport's Contact Theory, interactions of expatriates with HCN's characterize adjustment,

particularly on the interpersonal relationship and cultural assimilation levels. Combined, the theoretical ideas form the theoretical basis of studying expatriate adjustment in culture, person, and context.

**Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory:** Hofstede (2009) proposed the theory of cultural dimensions where management practices were country-specific and may have affected expatriates' adjustment in host countries. In this study, Hofstede's (2009) theory of cultural dimensions served as a component of the theoretical framework to highlight cultural differences that exist between and among different countries as the theory has suggested that some of the major cultural differences between Russian and American employees are power distance, individualism, collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, femininity, masculinity, and orientation (Hofstede, 2009).

**Cultural dimensions theory:** This theory suggests that value systems of community members are influenced by their cultural norms (Pillay & Dorasamy, 2010) and suggests that vast cultural differences exist between certain home and host countries that may affect expatriate adjustment (Hofstede, 2009; Wood, 2010). The cultural dimensions theory helped in understanding that the adjustment process of expatriates was indispensably related to HCNs behavior towards them (Ramalu et al., 2011).

**Spillover Theory:** Wortman et al. (1991) spillover theory suggested that effects of non-work-domains may have implications in work-domains and may aid understanding of the inextricable link between many issues such as (a) investment in new knowledge and technological opportunity, (b) fear of home foreclosure to the workplace, and (c) successful or unsuccessful non-work and work adjustment. Spillover theory also highlighted the link between non-work and work adjustment, which is a poor adjustment, and may lead to high-stress levels, employee underperformance, and even early repatriation.

**Contact Theory:** Allport's (1954) Contact theory is relevant to the subject of this study, which is expatriate adjustment and performance, and when contact is made among group members based on appropriate principles, it may reduce biases, misconception, and misunderstanding. The theorist also discussed how some people form opinions based on what they have heard from others. For example, some participants in Allport's theory expressed the following opinions about Americans, French, and Russians based on what they had heard. "Americans are rich and smart because they made the atomic bomb, French are carefree and dirty, and Russians seek any opportunity to start wars." Some cultural misconceptions may result from lack of understanding and inadequate knowledge of other cultures (Bickle & Harrill, 2010). Alltrop (1954) noted that prejudice may be reduced through meaningful personal interaction as contact theory suggests that a reasonable frequency of communications and interactions among different cultures nurtures better understanding of other cultures, which reduces intergroup conflicts.

- i. **H1<sub>0</sub>.** There is no significant difference between levels of expatriate adjustment by type of job of American employees who live and work in Russia.
- ii. **H1<sub>A</sub>.** There is a significant difference in levels of expatriate adjustment by type of job of American employees who live and work in Russia.
- iii. **H2<sub>0</sub>.** There is no significant difference between levels of expatriate adjustment by type of position of American employees who live and work in Russia.
- iv. **H2<sub>A</sub>.** There is a significant difference between levels of expatriate adjustment by type of position of American employees who live and work in Russia.
- v. **H3<sub>0</sub>.** There is no significant difference between levels of expatriate adjustment and prior-international experience of American employees who live and work in Russia.
- vi. **H3<sub>A</sub>.** There is a significant difference between levels of expatriate adjustment and prior-international experience of American employees who live and work in Russia.

Therefore, three theories comprised the theoretical framework of this study: cultural dimensions theory, spillover theory, and contact theory as they were relevant to adjustment and performance of American expatriates when posted abroad and directly applied to the current study (Koveshnikov, 2012; Wood, 2010). So based on this theoretical background the above hypothesis is developed to determine possible differences in the adjustment process for American employees who lived and worked in Russia based on type of job, type of position and prior-international experience.

U.S. expatriates of U.S.-based MNCs on overseas assignments face unique adjustment and job-performance issues that have been shown to affect employer operations and has resulted in financial loss and expatriate low morale (Green, 2012).

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative approach. Qualitative research could have been appropriate if the study was a quantitative one involving direct interviews, or if it was guided by the overall objective of establishing the specific features contributing to the adjustment enterprise (Vogt, 2007). Quantitative research examines the perceptions that subjects may have in relation to social and human problems, from their verbal response, rather than a figure (Black, 1999; Vogt, 2007). However, this study quantified the research variables and conducted hypothesis testing to confirm relationships which were generalized based on the test outcomes.

To determine the difference in adjustment based on type of job, type of position and prior international experience a between-group comparison was conducted. Qualitative research does not offer procedures for measuring differences on a probability level (Black, 1999; Vogt, 2007) and cannot measure the amount or/and intensity of the relationships which is why a quantitative method was employed. There are various approaches to undertaking quantitative research, but the assumptions of this study pertain to a causal-comparative method (Vogt, 2007).

The independent variables referred to 'intact groups', this called for no randomization of subjects thus making the study non-experimental in nature (2008). Statistical methods compared average values of the dependent variable by grouping the cases because of independent variables This is why this approach was preferred (Mertler & Vannatta, 2010).

The dependent variable was expatriate adjustment, and it was assessed with the use of the Peltokorpi-Cultural Adjustment survey, developed by the researcher Peltokorpi in 2008. Kolancian (2012) and Peltokorpi (2008) have mentioned type of job as one of the factors that predict adjustment. Type of position has also been associated with adjustment (Varma et al., 2011a). Wood (2010) opined that prior-international experience such as having worked in a foreign country possess the potential to influence adjustment. Concerning the study variables, expatriate adjustment was a measure with a range of scores while job type and position type were dummy variables. Prior-international experience was a count variable with prior to graduation years as the count of prior-year international experience.

### **Population and Sample**

The study target population was the estimated 4,000 Americans working abroad in Russia for US-based MNCs that are members of The American Chamber of Commerce in Russia (ACCR), which has almost 500 member firms. The study target population included American expatriates employed by American companies that are members of ACCR, which represented diverse industry sectors such as accounting, aerospace, auto manufacturers, beverages, banking, consulting, drug manufacturers, financial services, insurance, law firms, medical appliances and equipment, and technology.

Simple random sampling was used to collect data for this study. A response rate of 4-6 percent was expected for this survey providing a range of possible returned surveys of 160 to 240 to meet the simple random sampling criteria and minimum sample size. The expected minimum sample size was 197 as determined by a G\*Power analysis ( $\alpha=0.05$ ; effect size = 0.3; power = 0.8) for F-based ANOVA models to ensure a rigorous sample (Faul et al., 2007).

### **Ethical Assurance**

This research followed the necessary research ethical standard implicitly entailed in protocols of the Northcentral University IRB to respect the rights of all participants in the research. For the current study, the Northcentral University IRB approval was sought prior to data collection and participants were drawn from the list of American Chamber of Commerce in Russia (ACCR) membership. The people involved were doing so on their own free will, and they knew all the about the research process alongside the potential risks and gains. Subjects were asked and provided their informed consent to participate in the study due to an understanding of its rationale, conducts, and subjects' freedoms. Members could opt out at any given point in time and no monetary refund would be given for volume discounts that have been accorded.

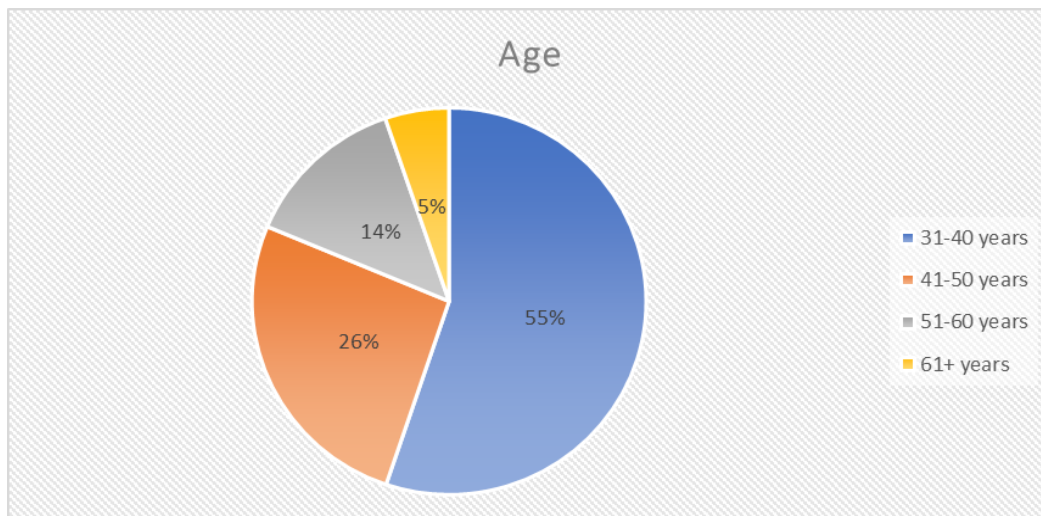
The names were changed to maintain anonymity of participants and all the data collected was kept anonymous. Participants' responses from surveys as well as their consent forms were well kept and only those who needed to view the results could do so. All collected data will be kept for seven years and then confidentially discarded following ethical standards.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were 432 returned responses. Six responses were excluded for invalid data and 200 responses due to a coding error. This resulted in a final sample size of 226 and a calculated return rate of 52%, which exceeded the expected minimum sample size of 197 needed for the study.

Many respondents reported age as 31 to 40 years (37.8%), followed by below 30 years (31.6%), 41-50 years (17.9%), 51-60 years (9.2%), and 61 years or older (3.6%). Many respondents reported marital status as married and living with their spouses in Russia (62.8%), and a small share of respondents (1%) reported being married but had their spouses living in the US. Others reported marital status as single (25.5%) and divorced, widowed or separated (10.7%).

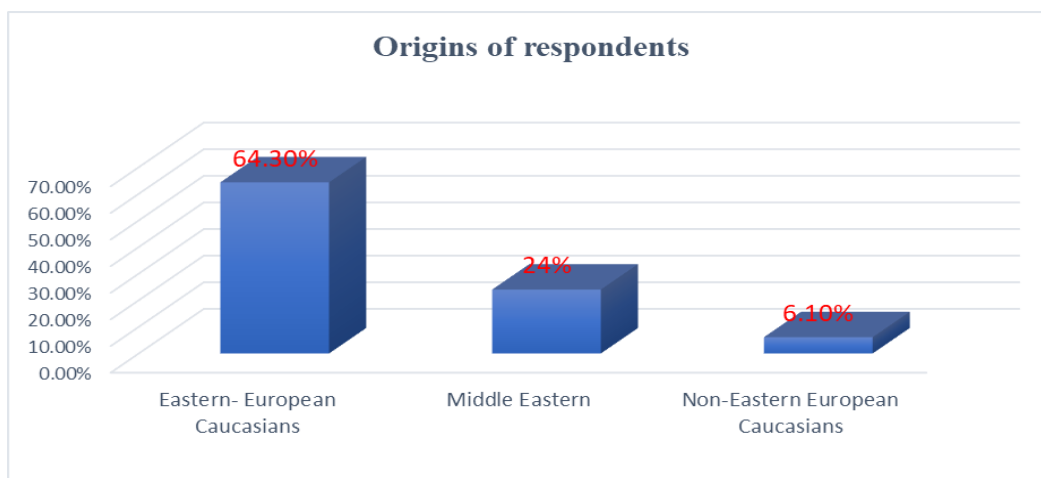
**Figure 1.** Age Respondents



**Note:** Author's development with the collected data

Many respondents were from either small organization with less than 100 employees (30.1%) or large organizations with more than 200 employees (35.7%).

**Figure 2.** Origins of respondents



**Note:** Author's development with the collected data

**Descriptive analysis.**

Descriptive analysis was conducted for all study variables to describe frequencies of the categorical independent variables (see Tables 1-3) and mean and standard deviation of the dependent variable (see Table 4) prior to hypothesis testing. Many respondents (54.6%) reported work in technical jobs, and the remaining were distributed almost evenly among other types of jobs (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Independent Variable 1 (Type of Job)

Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Marketing and Sales	30	15.3	15.3
Operations	29	14.8	14.8
Finance	29	14.8	14.8
Technical	108	55.1	55.1
Total	196	100.0	100.0

**Note:** N=196

**Table 2.** Independent Variable 2 (Type of Position)

Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Employee	111	56.6	56.6
Supervisor	50	25.5	25.5
Executive	35	17.9	17.9
Total	196	100.0	100.0

**Note:** N=196

For type of position, 53.5% were employees and the remaining were either supervisors or higher- level corporate executives (see Table 2). Almost half of those surveyed had less than one year of prior-international experience (see Table 3). For the criterion variable, expatriate- employee adjustment mean, and standard deviation were calculated prior to one-way ANOVA (M=194.4, SD=20.4) (see Table 4).

**Table 3.** Independent Variable 3 (Prior-international Experience)

Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Less than one year	93	47.4	47.4
1 or 2 years	35	17.9	17.9
3 to 5 years	41	20.9	20.9
6 to 9 years	13	6.6	6.6
10 years or more	14	7.1	7.1
Total	196	100.0	100.0

**Note:** N=196

**Table 4.** Dependent Variable (Employee Adjustment)

	Min	Max	M	SD
Expatriate Adjustment	140.00	248.00	194.418	20.380

**Note:** N=196

**Hypothesis testing**

In hypothesis 1, differences in expatriate-employee adjustment were tested for existence differences based on type of job (IV1). Results of a one-way ANOVA indicated no difference existed for expatriate adjustment based on type of job (F (3,192) =1.226, p=0.302). Therefore, null hypothesis 1 could not be rejected.

**Table 5.** Research Question 1(Type of Job and Expatriate Adjustment)

Category	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1521.926	3	507.309	1.226	.302
Within Groups	79469.768	192	413.905		
Total	80991.694	195			

**Note.** N=196

In hypothesis 2, differences in expatriate-employee adjustment were tested based on type of position (IV2). Results of a one-way ANOVA indicated no differences existed for expatriate adjustment based on type of position (F (3,193) =0.121, p=0.886). Therefore, null hypothesis 2 could not be rejected.

**Table 6.** Research Question 2(Type of Position and Expatriate Adjustment)

Category	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	101.600	2	50.800	.121	.886
Within Groups	80890.094	193	419.120		
Total	80991.694	195			

**Note.** N=196

In hypothesis 3, differences in expatriate-employee adjustment were tested based on prior-international experience (IV3). Results of a one-way ANOVA indicated a statistically significant difference existed for expatriate adjustment based on prior-international experience (F (4,191) =2.772, p=0.029). Therefore, null hypothesis 3 was rejected, and support existed for alternate hypothesis 3.

**Table 7.** Research Question 3 (Prior-international Experience and Expatriate Adjustment)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4443.301	4	1110.825	2.772	.029
Within Groups	76548.393	191	400.777		
Total	80991.694	195			

**Note.** N=196

Results from testing the three stated hypotheses in this study produced mixed results. While significant differences were observed in employee adjustment based on length of prior-international experience, employee adjustment was not significantly affected by type of job or type of position. In hypothesis 1, results indicated no difference in the level of expatriate adjustment among American employees who lived and worked in Russia based on type of job, and null hypothesis 1 could not be rejected. In contrast to the hypothesis 1 outcome in the current study, several researchers had concluded that type of job influenced expatriates' adjustment when working abroad (Kolancian, 2012). Peltokorpi (2008) studied the adjustment of employees who lived and worked in Japan and revealed that type of jobs was relevant to expatriates' work satisfaction and adjustment. This was consistent with the findings of Kolancian (2012) and Kraimer et al. (2009), who also noted that expatriates' type of jobs had direct influence on their adjustment.

For hypothesis 2, results indicated no difference in the level of expatriate adjustment among American employees who lived and worked in Russia based on type of position, and null hypothesis 2 could not be rejected. In contrast to the hypothesis 2 outcome in the current study, several researchers concluded that type of position influenced expatriates' adjustment when working abroad (Varma et al., (2011). Studies by Varma et al. (2011) revealed that the type of position the expatriate was hired into directly influenced expatriate's adjustment. Expatriate-employee's type of position typically influenced the level of interaction between host country nationals (HCNs) and an expatriate-employee. Expatriate-employee's type of position also influenced the level of support given by HCNs to an expatriate-employee, which impacted adjustment. In hypothesis 3, results indicated a significant difference in the level of expatriate adjustment among American employees who lived and worked in Russia based on the length of prior international, and null hypothesis 3 was rejected ( $p < .05$ ). This finding was comparable to Varma et al. (2011a; 2011) who found that familiarity with other cultures derived from prior-international experience might influence the level of preparedness of expatriates to adjust to new work environments in a foreign location.

The hypothesis 3 finding contrasted with previous findings of several researchers who had concluded because there were differences in countries' cultures and business ideologies, expatriates with prior-international experience found it difficult to adjust in host countries (Blanco-Jiménez et al., 2013). In other studies, American expatriates even with prior-international experience were challenged to adjust in other countries, because American corporate culture was based on low-power distance and high-individualistic values. In many Arab countries and Russia, the organizational culture was based on high-power distance and high-collectivistic values (Ryan, 2012; Hofstede et al., 2010).

### Discussion summary

U.S. expatriates of U.S.-based MNCs on overseas assignment face unique adjustment and job-performance issues that have been shown to affect employer operations, low employee morale, and financial loss (Green, 2012). Low morale exhibited by U.S. expatriates contributed to employee underperformance and even early repatriation (Bashir, 2012). The specific problem in this research was addressing the question of poor adjustment of American expatriates on overseas assignment in Russia, which had been reported in the past to vary by type of job and type of position (Kolancian, 2012; Kraimer et al., 2009; Peltokorpi, 2008).

The purpose of this causal-comparative study was to examine whether there were differences in the process of adjustment among American expatriates who lived and worked in Russia based on their type of job, type of position, and prior-international experience. No significant differences were identified for hypotheses 1 and 2, and null hypotheses could not be rejected. Null hypothesis 3 was rejected, as a significant difference in expatriate adjustment was found based on prior-international experience.

The hypothesis 1 outcome contrasted with prior research that had suggested differences in adjustment process existed for employees with different types of jobs (Kolancian, 2012; Kraimer et al., 2009; Peltokorpi, 2008). The hypothesis 2 outcome also contrasted with prior research that had demonstrated the importance of the type of position on adjustment (Varma et al., 2011a). The hypothesis 3 finding was comparable to Varma et al. (2011a; 2011) who had found that familiarity with other cultures derived that prior-international experience might influence the level of preparedness of expatriates to adjust to new work environments in a foreign location. However, these findings also contrasted with those by other authors who had concluded that American expatriates, even those with prior-international experience, were challenged to adjust in other countries (Blanco-Jiménez et al., 2013).



## **Implications**

The number of employees that chose to work abroad has been on the increase since the 2008-2009 global-economy slowdown (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, LLC, [Brookfield] 2014). These expatriates on international assignments cannot only be exposed to a new group of coworkers, supervisors and underlings (Froese & Peltokorpi, 2012) but must also adjust to new living arrangements, modes of transportation, food, social circles, language and communication, and the overall cultural environment (Bhatti et al., 2013; English, 2015). Inadequate preparation when working in other countries has resulted in almost 80% of expatriates not completing their employment contracts (Kolancian, 2012).

The study focused on American expatriates who lived and worked in Russia. The justification for limiting the study to American expatriates was because cultural issues and management practices were country-specific and may have influenced American expatriates' adjustment in Russia differently from other nationalities (Hofstede, 2009; Wood, 2010). According to Hofstede (2009) and Wood (2010) there are similarities in some cultures such as Canada and the United States, but both countries are culturally different from European countries. For example, there are major cultural differences between Russia and America in terms of power distance, individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, and long/short-term orientation (Hofstede, 2009). It was for the cultural and nationality-related challenges faced by expatriates that this study focused on Americans working in one cultural context, Russia. The study findings may offer beneficial information to assist American companies who do business in Russia and their employees with cross-cultural adjustment and performance, and implications of results may be important to U.S.-based MNCs such as reduction in expatriates' early repatriation, mitigate financial losses, and prevention of reputation as unreliable institutions (Green, 2012; Kolancian, 2012; Wood, 2010).

The hypothesis 1 outcome identified no differences among American expatriates in Russia based on type of job. The first implication of hypothesis 1 outcome was that American expatriates who lived and worked in Russia had challenges to adjust and perform but likely not due to type of job (Kolancian, 2012). The second implication of hypothesis 1 outcome was that American expatriates who lived and worked in Russia and did not have challenges due to type of job were less likely to terminate their employment prematurely (Kolancian, 2012).

The hypothesis 2 outcome identified no significant difference for American expatriate adjustment in Russia based on type of position. The first implication of hypothesis 2 outcome was that American expatriates who lived and worked in Russia had challenges to adjust and perform but likely not due to type of position (Varma et al., 2011). The second implication of the hypothesis 2 outcome was that host country nationals (HCNs) did not contribute to those challenges, specifically, based on American expatriates' type of job (Kolancian, 2012).

The hypothesis 3 results indicated a significant difference for expatriate adjustment in Russia based on length of prior-international experience ( $p=0.029$ ). The first implication of the hypothesis 3 finding was that American expatriates who lived and worked in Russia had different level of adjustment experience. Expatriates with less than 3 years prior-international experience had low adjustment, 3-5 years had high adjustment, and more than 5 years had low adjustment. American expatriates with prior-international experience were challenged to adjust in other countries, because American corporate culture was based on low-power distance and high-individualistic values (Hofstede, 2009), whereas in many Arab countries (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010; Ryan, 2012) and Russia (Hofstede, 2009) the organizational culture was based on high-power distance and high-collectivistic values. The second implication of the hypothesis 3 finding was that American expatriates who lived and worked in Russia had challenges to adjust and perform based on length of prior-international experience, which may have caused expatriate low morale, premature termination of his/her employment contract, and discouraged non-expatriate-employees to accept international assignments (Green, 2012; Kolancian, 2012; Kraimer et al., 2009). The approximate cost of each employee's failure has been estimated to be approximately \$1 million (Bashir, 2012). The study results contributed to theory for American expatriate adjustment in Russia. Hypothesis outcomes indicated that U.S.-based American MNCs' expatriates who lived and worked in Russia had challenges to adjust and perform but likely not due to type of job or type of position.

## **Recommendations**

The study findings have highlighted several points that may have implications academically and professionally on American MNCs' expatriate-employee selections and their expatriates' adjustment and performance when assigned to work abroad. The following sections outline recommendations for practice and future research.

The first recommendation for practice was to encourage American U.S.-based MNCs that do business in Russia to incorporate the hypothesis 3 finding, prior-international experience, into the employment selection process, training, and selection process of their expatriates (Bashir, 2012; Kraimer et al., 2009). More specifically, companies may benefit from recruitment of American employees with three-to-five years of prior-international experience for an overseas assignment in Russia to mitigate expatriate adjustment (Bashir, 2012; Kolancian, 2012). The second recommendation for practice was for

the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) to create programs that would assist member firms to develop a knowledge base and recruitment practices related to the hypothesis 3 finding for the effect of three- to-five years of prior-international experience on American U.S.-based MNCs' expatriates' adjustment in Russia. In other words, the Chamber could stress that all employees being transferred to Russia have three-to-five years prior-international experience (Bashir, 2012; Kraimer et al., 2009).

The first recommendation for future research was to conduct a causal-comparative study to evaluate pre-assignment training as a moderating factor to explain differences in adjustment for employees with different types of job and types of position. Prior studies have indicated the importance of pre-assignment training, including cross-cultural and language training on expatriate adjustment (Selmer, 2010). The second recommendation for future research was to conduct a quasi-experimental study to further assess interactions among the current study variables as to the influence on expatriate-employee adjustment. While no significant differences were found in the current study for expatriate adjustment based on type of position or type of job, it could be possible that expatriate adjustment for employees in different type of positions depend on their length of prior-international experience.

## **FINAL REMARKS**

The purpose of this causal-comparative study was to investigate whether there were differences in the process of adjustment among American expatriates who lived and worked in Russia based on their type of job, type of position, and prior-international experience.

The implications for hypothesis 1 outcomes were that American expatriates who lived and worked in Russia had adjustment challenges. However, they were less likely to terminate their employment prematurely because of type of job (Kolancian, 2012). The implication for hypothesis 2 outcomes was that American expatriates who lived and worked in Russia had adjustment challenges. However, the host country nationals (HCNs) did not contribute to those challenges, specifically, based on American expatriates' type of position (Kolancian, 2012; Kraimer et al., 2009, Varma et al., 2011a; Varma et al., 2011a). The implication for hypothesis 3 finding was that there were significant differences for American expatriate adjustment who lived and worked in Russia based on length of prior-international experience ( $p=0.029$ ). The finding showed that American expatriates with less than 3 years prior-international experience had low adjustment, 3-5 years had high adjustment, and more than 5 years had low adjustment.

Two recommendations for practice included (a) encouragement of U.S.-based MNCs that do business in Russia to incorporate the finding of this study, and (b) for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to create programs to assist member firms to develop a knowledge base and recruitment practices for better adjustment of American expatriates in Russia (Bashir, 2012; Kraimer et al., 2009). Two recommendations for future research included (a) a causal-comparative study to evaluate pre-assignment training as a moderating factor to explain differences in adjustment for employees with different types of job and types of position, and (b) a quasi-experimental study to further assess interactions among the current study variables as to the influence on expatriate-employee adjustment (Bashir, 2012; Kolancian, 2012; Selmer, 2009; Wood, 2010; Wu & Ang, 2011; Zhang, 2012).

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