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THE EXPATRIATE EXPERIENCE: THE FACTORS OF INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENT SUCCESS

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ABSTRACT. *This article analyses the factors of expatriate international assignment success: the process, empirical level, the experience of expatriates on a national level. Theoretical and empirical analysis reveals that success depends mostly on the candidates selected, their motivation, ability to adjust to change, wish to improve, ability to adjust to a new environment, effectively act in order to achieve goals, the situation of an employee's family. The results of the research carried out showed that one of most complex stages of the expatriation process is the adjustment of expatriates during the international assignment which has significant impact on the international assignment success and satisfaction of individual expectations or various failures and emergence of individual problems.*

It has been proved that the success of the adjustment stage and the entire expatriation process is mostly influenced by the personal strengths of employees, their professional, social, adjustment skills, international experience, and a favourable situation of their families.

KEYWORDS: expatriate, international assignment, expatriation process, international adjustment.

JEL classification: O150, J610, M590.

Introduction

The expansion of globalization has impact on the internationalization of companies. An increasing number of foreign and Lithuanian companies expand their activities not only on the national, but also on the international scale. This process cannot be separated from the various new challenges in management, including those related to the importance of international human resource management, as a consequence of which employees have to form new working and communication skills within a short period of time in order to be able to keep up with the changes. Expanding activities outside the national borders challenges companies to invoke change related to the expatriation, i.e., the assignment of employees to work in a foreign subsidiary of a particular company for a certain period of time. This process includes selecting the most competent employees who have the necessary knowledge and skill, are open-minded and can act efficiently as well as adjust to a new environment quickly. After the completion of international tasks, the employees repatriate to their home country and continue their career in that same company or choose a different one according to the competencies and skills acquired during their international assignment. The Lithuanian context as well shows that, as Lithuanian companies are increasingly entering the international market, the issue of executives and managers expatriates abroad is becoming more and more important. An increasing number of companies send their best employees to carry out various tasks in subsidiaries in foreign countries. Despite this, the process of expatriation and its management in Lithuania is not sufficiently developed yet.

The analysis of scientific sources and studies oriented towards international human resource management reveals that these processes that acquire an increasing significance are specific of not only positive, but also problematic characteristics that are becoming a real challenge for the international companies. In order to avoid various difficulties and possible damage successfully implementing and managing the process of expatriation, companies pay a lot of attention and finance to the improvement of this process, analysis of their mistakes, and try to find the best solutions. This emphasizes the relevance and necessity of the expatriation topic and its research in the world of business.

It is important to note that the process of expatriation is analysed in the following aspects:

(1) analysis of expatriates' employment causes (technical, management, control competencies) (Ayoun, Causin, 2011), international assignment motivation (Mazumdar, Moulik, 2012);

(2) the stages of the expatriation process (Brewster, Suutari, 1998; Ashamalla, 1998; Brewster, Suutari, 2001; Malinowski *et al.*, 2002; Dowling *et al.*, 2008; Lee, Liu, 2008;

Olsen, Martins, 2009; Singh, 2010; Navickas, 2010; Che Rose *et al.*, 2010; Harzing, Pinnington, 2011);

(3) the impact of teaching (school, later on the working environment) on health and prevention of addiction (Feinstein *et al.*, 2008);

(4) issues of double career (Webb, Wright, 1996; Rothmann, Van der Bank, 2006; Lee, 2007);

(5) repatriation (Malinowski *et al.*, 2002; Hyder, Lövblad, 2007);

(6) the issues related to the process of expatriation (Selmer, 1999; Brewster, Suutari, 2001; Anderson, 2005; Björkman, Holopainen, 2005; Sedlmayer, 2009; Harvey, Moeller, 2009; Mazumdar, Moulik, 2012).

The object of the article is the factors of expatriate international assignment success.

The goal of the article is to analyse the factors of expatriate international assignment success.

The tasks of the article:

1. to investigate the process of expatriation by distinguishing the factors of international assignment success;

2. to analyse the empirical level of research within the framework of international assignment success;

3. to determine the factors of international assignment success on the basis of a case study performed on the experience of expatriates on a national (Lithuanian) level.

The methods of the article and research. The analysis of the theoretical and analytical premises of expatriate experience factors was performed by general scientific research methods: *analysis of scientific literature, synthesis*. The empirical study was performed using the qualitative research method, i.e., interview.

1. Theoretical Aspects of the Expatriation Process

As a consequence of economic globalization, the global activities of companies are becoming inseparable from the international assignments. As a result, the development of international human resource management provides an increasing amount of significance to the processes of the expatriation and repatriation which are often described as a prospect for multinational companies. In order to reveal the essence of international assignment, it is first and foremost necessary to find out the meanings of the main concepts. One of the clearest definitions of expatriation and repatriation is introduced by Briscoe, Schuler (2004). According to them, expatriation should be perceived as a process of movement from the main company or central headquarters to subsidiaries abroad. The main aim of this relocation is to carry out the assigned tasks in the foreign subsidiary of a particular company. Repatriation, according to the aforementioned authors, is an opposite process to expatriation, which includes going back to the home country and the main company after the international assignment. Authors Harzing, Van Ruysseveldt (2004) add that the term “expatriation” is usually used to describe the process of international assignment of executives or managers. Expatriates are normally those citizens of a particular country who are assigned to work for a predetermined period of time (usually 2 to 5 years) in the foreign subsidiaries of international companies.

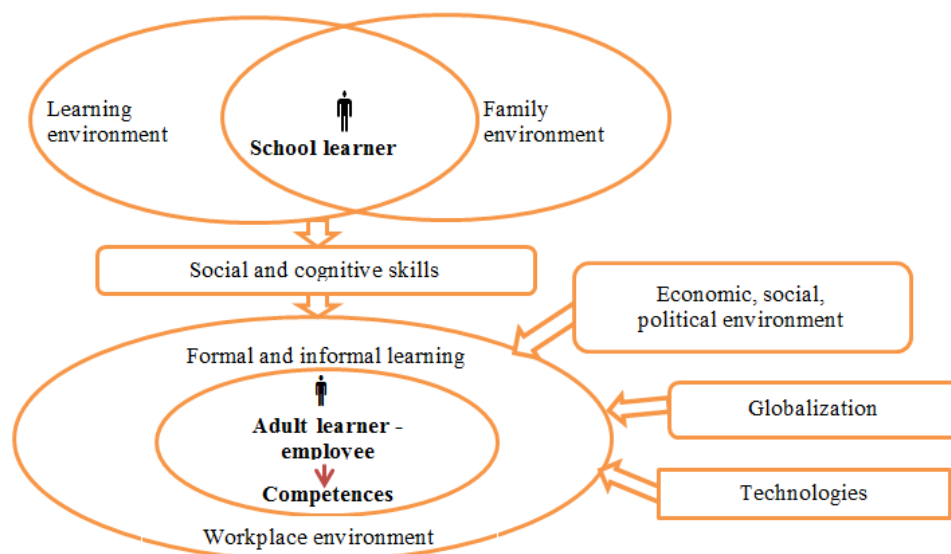
According to Ayoun, Causin (2011), the three most important reasons of employing expatriates are the technical competence, development of management and its control. Local employees, due to their knowledge and necessary skills, are assigned to work in those foreign subsidiaries that lack competent specialists, and the training of current employees in terms of

time and money is unacceptable to the company. While analysing the second reason, the authors maintain that expatriation is somewhat a part of the career development process. The acquired international experience, knowledge and skills are considered a valuable achievement which often creates new opportunities and invokes positive changes within the career field. As for the last reason, it can be noted that expatriates know the culture of the international company better than the local employees and, thus, become part of the strategy to coordinate, control, and develop more efficient communication between the subsidiaries. Speaking of those reasons that encourage employees to agree to international assignments, it can be said that expatriates are mostly motivated by new international experience, personal improvement, higher salary, and future career prospects (Mazumdar, Moulik, 2012). In order to have a better understanding of the expatriation process, it is relevant to figure out the components of this process, the most important stages and determine the characteristics. According to the analysis of scientific sources (Brewster, Suutari, 2001; Malinowski *et al.*, 2002; Singh, 2010), it can be added that the main stages of the expatriation process are the following: (1) selection of candidates and their training; (2) relocation and adjustment to the new environment; (3) implementation of the task and salary; (4) ending of the process by repatriation. It is important to note that all the aforementioned stages of the expatriation process are closely interrelated; they require close attention and financing from international companies. The effective and responsible implementation of each stage has a big amount of impact on the success of the expatriation process and the implementation of personal and organizational goals. The main aspects of each stage within the framework of their relevance will further be discussed in more detail.

Selection and training. It can be noted that the selection of expatriates is usually a lot more complex than the local employees. The international candidate selection stage begins with recruitment; later on, a thorough analysis of the candidates' internal and external environment follows together with the evaluation of the necessary competencies, the candidates' suitability, and, finally, the most suitable candidates are selected (Harvey, Novicevic, 2001). Summing up the insights of the several authors (Ashamalla, 1998; Dowling *et al.*, 2008; Singh, 2010), the following candidate selection criteria can be distinguished as the most frequently used in practice: (1) interpersonal, linguistic, and work-related skills; (2) cultural empathy and knowledge related to a particular country; (3) ability to adjust to the new environment and work conditions; (4) personal motivation to work and live abroad; (5) previous international experience and other relevant personal qualities.

It should be noted that it is important to evaluate the marital status of the candidates in the selection stage as well as the situation of their family; this is due to the fact that a large part of an expatriate's success depends on his/her family's opinion, support and acceptance of new living and working conditions.

Another important point to make is that the success of the selection process is relatively highly influenced by the learning through life experience of an individual (*Figure 1*), when the social and cognitive skills developed by the teaching environment (school) and family environment influence an individual's success in his/her working environment where he/she is gradually improving as a result of formal and informal training. The working environment is influenced by globalization, technologies, economic, social, and political environments. The effect of all these impacts forms an employee's competencies.



Source: created by the authors.

Figure 1. Learning through Life Conception

Learning and educational experiences can generate wider benefits, form and generate positive life chances, prevent many negative outcomes: individual social exclusion and community breakdown encompassing crime, anti-social behaviour, intolerance of diversity, mental health problems, drug abuse and social immobility, etc. (Feinstein *et al.*, 2008).

According to Feinstein *et al.*, (2008, p.40), “education can increase uptake of preventative care which may lead to long-run savings but short-term increases in health care costs. Those with more education are more likely to take advantage of health care provision. However, education and some forms of illicit drug use and sometimes alcohol use have been found to be positively associated: i.e. education is associated with increased use. Finally, although education appears to be protective against depression, it has been found to have less substantial impacts on general happiness or wellbeing”.

After the selection stage, the next important step is training. According to Farner, Luthans (2002), this stage is extremely important in order to decrease the number of international assignment failures and to achieve quicker adjustment and successful activity in a foreign country. As Singh (2010) and Kumpikaitė (2009) maintain, during the organization of training for candidates, it is important to anticipate the length of the assignment, local business norms, knowledge and skills necessary for the assignment and successful activity in a foreign country. The evaluation of all these aspects can help to select the most purposeful direction in training and choose the most effective training programs. According to Olsen, Martins (2009), the preparation of international training programs requires consideration of the existing experience that the candidates possess, their linguistic and professional skills, other personal characteristics, and evaluate how these aspects are related to the characteristics of the foreign country. Such individual mode of preparation can be more useful because general training methods cannot prepare different individuals for the specific challenges equally, thus, creating obstacles for expatriates’ success. It is important to prepare such training programs which would universally prepare future expatriates that they would feel safe abroad and would be informed both about their new position and about life in a foreign country, its differences from the home country. Effective training programs should be oriented towards human resources before, during, and after the assignment. In order to achieve this,

various training programs, informational packages are developed, mentors in foreign countries are assigned, and employees who have come back are encouraged to share their experiences.

It is important to note that the representatives of international companies should pay attention not only to the candidates selected, but also to their family members during the training. If it is possible, they should as well be presented with the most essential information related to the international assignment, life in a foreign country, another culture; if it is necessary, the purposeful training should be organized (for instance, with the aim to improve linguistic skills). Webb, Wright (1996) maintain that paying attention to family members may help to avoid part of the problems in the future and add to expatriate's success. Having passed the first stage of the expatriation process, the next step is one of the most important and, often, the most problematic one, i.e., relocation and adjustment of the employee in a foreign country.

Relocation and adjustment. Quite a few authors have dealt with the issue of expatriate adjustment. Authors: Brewster, Suutari (1998), Lee, Liu (2008) analyse a theory that describes adjustment to expatriation. According to this theory, the arrival of expatriates to a new country is firstly related to a short period of "honeymoon". After that follows a long period of "culture shock", then, the "adjustment" period, and, finally, the "mastery" period. The first – "honeymoon" – period starts in the very beginning of the arrival. During this period, the employees are fascinated by the new surroundings and different culture. After some time, when the newcomers settle and face everyday life, the second – "culture shock" – period begins; this period is related to disappointment and animosity with the country and local citizens. After the "culture shock" period, the third period – "adjustment" – ensues when the employees who have arrived adjust to the new environment, conditions, norms, and are able to act more successfully than before. Finally, the last period is "mastery"; during this period, individuals are able to function efficiently in the new culture (Lee, Liu, 2008).

In a more thorough analysis of the adjustment to expatriation periods, it can be noted that one of the most complex is the adjustment period which consists of the following three levels (Andreason, 2003; Dölling *et al.*, 2003; Harzing, Pinnington, 2011): (1) adjustment to the general environment (to the recipient country's cultural environment, for instance, weather, food, living conditions); (2) adjustment to the work situation (related to psychological adjustment to different work standards, expectations, and evaluation); (3) adjustment to the interaction with the recipient country's citizens (to a different communication style, other communication and cultural differences). The analysis of scientific sources allows claiming that the expatriates' adjustment has to do with various factors, the most important of which can be divided into the following three groups (Andreason, 2003; Dölling *et al.*, 2003; Singh, 2010):

1. *individual factors* (personal traits and skills that make adjustment to the new environment easier (e.g., cultural flexibility, interpersonal communication skills, stress management, ability to solve conflicts and make individual decisions, personal motivation, strong linguistic and professional skills, other), previously acquired international experience, and family situation);

2. *organizational factors* (organizational culture, efficiency of the expatriation process management, organizational support and training for expatriates, maintenance of mutual communication, other);

3. *environment* (the degree of cultural difference between the home and the recipient countries, economic and political stability of the recipient country, development level and other).

Revealing the factors that determine adjustment allows distinguishing four variables which, according to Feldman, Tompson (1993), are grounded indicators of adjustment to the

new work tasks. These variables are as follows: general positive satisfaction with work, intention to stay in the company, psychological wellbeing, quality and quantity of activity that the important executives expect. Thus, these criteria show that satisfaction with the international assignment is mostly designated by the emotional state of the expatriate, general feeling of safety, satisfaction with the new position, positive evaluation of the company and its expatriation process management practices. In order to achieve successful implementation of the adjustment process, which significantly conditions the success of the entire international assignment, it is important to consider all the factors that determine this stage and form the implementation plan for the expatriation process with regard to them. It is as well important to note that in this stage, as in the first one, it is important to take into consideration the expatriate's family members because their successful adjustment determines the faster adjustment of the employee, better results of his/her activity and the success of the entire expatriation process. Successful implementation of the relocation and adjustment stage enables going into the third stage which is the task implementation and salary.

Task implementation and salary. As it has been mentioned, the success of expatriates' activity, task implementation, and achieved results depend on both their best personal qualities and skills and the effective training and successful adjustment. It is no less important than the fact that the outward bound employees would get the necessary help and purposeful training during the task implementation stage as well.

Speaking about the level of expatriates, several authors notice that the expatriation process is often related to large expenses. The fact that expatriates are considered one of the most expensive resources in an organization is mostly related to the fact that their salary package has to be higher than that of local employees, since going to a different country one needs to consider the currency difference, a different economic situation, a different health care system and other factors (Sedlmayer, 2009). According, to Navicko (2010), expatriates' salaries are usually considered a pay for loyalty to a particular company, or attempts to implement its goals, tasks; this salary is higher than that of the local employees due to the following reasons: (1) salary of a candidate selected for the international assignment has to motivate him/her in such a way that he/she would agree to go abroad for work in a particular company's subsidiary; (2) expatriates find it more difficult to make a living in a foreign country; thus, living compensation is introduced whose size is usually sufficient to pay all taxes without causing a decrease in actual income of the expatriate; (3) a higher salary is sometimes related to a higher position, which is a stimulus to go to a foreign country; (4) salary promotion is as well treated as a compensation for inconveniences experienced during the secondment (different environment, climate, household, and other conditions).

Authors Lucas *et al.* (2006) notice that expatriates relate to different assignments, which is a reason why their compensation packages should be different. According to the aforementioned authors, it is possible to distinguish the following main components to expatriates' salaries: basic salary, payouts, variable or conditional salary, benefits, and non-financial support. Excluding the main parts of expatriates' compensation packages, it can be said that there are several existing structures and models designed to calculate expatriates' salaries. The most popular are the following methods: balance method, recipient country method (otherwise called market norm method, i.e., expatriates are paid according to the recipient country's salaries in similar jobs), other methods (for instance, negotiation method, fixed sum method, regional systems method). When all the assigned tasks are carried out, and the desired salary is received, repatriation – the last stage of the expatriation process – follows.

Repatriation. The last stage of the expatriation process is an employee's who has worked in a foreign subsidiary of a company going back to the home country and reintegration to the activity of the main subsidiary. The main stages of the repatriation process are the following: preparation, relocation, and adjustment. Authors: Malinowski *et al.* (2002) distinguish three main factors that have an impact on the repatriation process, i.e., working environment, socio-cultural environment, and family. These authors notice of the fact that the process of coming back to the home country is usually related not only to the positive, but also to the negative aspects that normally emerge due to the expatriates or their families' difficult reintegration into the working or socio-cultural environment. With regard to the fact that repatriation poses various problems, this stage should as well receive attention from the responsible persons. In order to successfully finish the expatriation process, it is important to consider the employee and his/her family's comeback, organize purposeful comeback training, and, even when the expatriate is back, it is important to take care of his/her and his/her family's wellbeing and justify their career expectations, thus, aiming for mutual satisfaction, successful business continuity, effective application of the employee's international experience to the local activity and avoid possible failures and damages (Alvarez, Douglas, 1998; Hyder, Lövblad, 2007). According to some authors (Webb, Wright, 1996; Riusala, Suutari, 2000; Benson, Pattie, 2008), expatriation is often considered a developing experience which influences new skills, knowledge, and international outlook. This experience is considered a high-level experience by both the expatriates and international companies, even though not all organizations are able to evaluate, motivate, and support returning employees in practice. This shows that organizations should pay a sufficient amount of attention not only to those employees who are leaving, but also to those who have come back to the home country.

Having discussed the main stages of the expatriation process, it is relevant to mention that a successful implementation of this process is very important to both the international company and the employee, his/her future career. However, despite the fact that the expatriation process helps to implement a part of the goals that an international company has, this process is often related to various problems. According to the analysis of scientific sources (Selmer, 1999; Brewster, Suutari, 2001; Anderson, 2005; Sedlmayer, 2009), the following most important problems of the expatriation process can be distinguished: (1) problems relating to appropriate preparation and adjustment; (2) issues dealing with large expenses; (3) unsuccessful ending of the process, i.e., the repatriation stage; (4) various other individual, family-related, and organizational difficulties arising in international human resource and career management. All these insights reveal that international human resource management, which is especially related to the expatriation process, includes quite a few constraints that prevent effective implementation of this process. The article provides a more elaborate discussion of the most relevant problems of the international assignment.

Adjustment difficulties. One of the biggest problems of the expatriation process is the difficulties of adjusting. As it has been mentioned, the largest number of the problems arise during the long "culture shock" period and the "adjustment" period. According to the analysis of the scientific sources (Björkman, Holopainen, 2005), the following most relevant problems relating to adjustment to the new environment, new working and living conditions can be distinguished: (1) various psychological problems (for example, stress experienced by the expatriate); (2) various work environment and activity related problems arising due to different organizational and management systems; (3) unsuccessful adjustment usually deteriorates the relationship between the expatriate and the main subsidiary, worsens the implementation of organizational agreements, and decreases motivation; (4) problems relating

to communication with the locals; (5) various problems related to the employee's family's support (for instance, issues relating to the partner's employment, children's education and adjustment in a new environment).

All these difficulties arising from difficult adjustment emerge because of both individuals (due to the lack of required skills, strong motivation, a positive outlook of the family members) and an organization (ineffective management of the expatriation process, ineffective training programs, lack of attention to the employer or his/her family members etc.). Considering the fact that successful adjustment adds to the faster achievement of the goals set as well as the satisfaction of an individual and organizational expectations, both organizations and potential expatriates should not hesitate in paying attention, putting effort and investments into this stage.

Various family related problems. Analysis of the problems relating to the expatriation process reveals that expatriation is negatively affected by the intense demographic change, increase in the number of double careers, the hesitation of the partners of the chosen candidates to refuse their career, to change the environment, difficulties of partners and children to adjust to the new environment (Selmer, 1999). As it has been mentioned, a fluent adjustment of the partner and family during the international assignment positively conditions the entire expatriation process, increases the expatriate's productivity, task implementation and spiritual condition. It is as well important to note that most of the organizations deciding on the expatriation candidates or carrying out international training forget the families of expatriates or remember them overdue. However, considering the family situation (for instance, the issues of spouses' employment, children's education, and other related questions), motivation and ability to adjust can help to avoid some of the problems in the future.

Problems of repatriation. Alongside all the relevant problems of the expatriation process, it is important to point out that no less difficulties are faced during the last stage of the process, i.e., during repatriation. It is quite often that the adjustment during repatriation is even more difficult than the adjustment to life in a foreign country. According to authors: McDonald (1993), Selmer (1999), Benson, Pattie (2008), and others, the stage of repatriation is often accompanied by the fear of losing one's status, career direction, feeling underrated, not gaining the position or promotion expected, facing financial difficulties or difficulties related to the social adjustment when back. The problems arising during the repatriation can be divided into the following two main groups (McDonald, 1993; Harvey, Moeller, 2009): (1) *organizational problems*: lack of acknowledgement, assignment of unsuitable tasks after comeback, lack of career prospects and promotions, lack of authority and professional freedom, resentment coming from the colleagues and other personnel, changes in the system and policy; (2) *personal problems*: problems of social adjustment, loss of status and life standards, financial difficulties, problems related to family, especially those that concern children's education, their reintegration into a former school, the career situation the expatriate's spouse.

When the employees (after comeback) are not successful at adjustment, the organizations lose a big amount of money and time invested in them. Moreover, the unsuccessful repatriation can be related to the change of workplace or disappointment in the process of expatriation. Problems during this stage usually arise because of the fact that organizations do not pay enough attention to the expatriates' training for repatriation, to the evaluation and application of their new experience in the organization, satisfaction of an expatriate's career and other expectations and every kind of support after the comeback. It is

quite often that the situation is aggravated by the former lack of communication during the international assignment and disregard of the family members.

Large expenses for the process. According to Mazumdar, Moulik (2012), this process is quite an expensive practice to any international organization due to the international assignment implementation (organization of training, salaries for the expatriates and other compensation programs for them and their family members) and frequent failures of expatriates and expenses of the former comeback to the home country. This is the reason why it is especially important that the selected candidates would have the necessary knowledge and skills, would be competent experts in their field with the ability to adjust to a different cultural and working environment. It is important to emphasize that in order to decrease expenses related to failures, international companies make significant changes in the expatriation process, i.e., they are more inclined to choose short-term assignments, they choose neighbouring countries instead of far countries because it means minimal adjustment and more successful activity; companies as well decrease expatriates' compensation packages (Selmer, 1999). Despite all these risk factors, expatriation is usually distinguished as a prospective area worth of notice by both the researchers and the organizations themselves in order to achieve efficiency and the best results during the international assignments. Having discussed relevant problems of an international assignment, the following are the general main factors that add to the failures in the expatriation process (Ashmalla, 1998): (1) unsuitable process of selection and training before the relocation; (2) insufficient support during the assignment; (3) unsuitable implementation of the repatriation process after carrying out tasks.

Ineffective management of the expatriation process and quite a usual lack of attention for the family members determine the aforementioned problems of the international assignment; as a result, one faces ineffective activity, various mistakes and damages. In order to avoid this, it is necessary to pay enough attention to the analysis of the problems arising during the entire assignment, search for efficient solutions and their application. It is equally important to figure out the factors that determine the success of this process. According to the analysis of scientific sources (Harvey, Novicevic, 2001; Sedlmayer, 2009; Bilan, 2012), it is possible to emphasize that **the main factors that determine the success of the international assignment are the following:** (1) *individual factors*, the most important being: strong personal traits, developed the necessary skills, international experience, positive evaluation of current job, new assignment and the company itself, family situation; (2) *organizational factors*, the noteworthy of which are: effective training, intelligent executives of international human resources, integrated, consistent, and flexible international human resource management program, mentor programs, thought-out program of repatriation and other; (3) *environmental factors*, such as, relocation to a country with similar culture and economy, linguistic similarity, reduced constraints on authority and other factors that are close to the expatriate's home environment and existing international experience.

Generalizing on the factors that can have an impact on the success of the expatriation process, it can be said that the most important are the individual and organizational factors. It is important that the companies would understand international human resource management, the expatriation process and would pay enough attention and investment to the efficiency of this process. Alongside the organizational efforts, an employee's personal traits, skills, experience, efforts, and positive attitude towards the new activity are important as well.

Having analysed the theoretical aspects of the expatriation process, it is possible to distinguish the importance of the individual level to international assignment. While carrying out international activity, the expatriates become important sellers of the main company's philosophy, culture, and strategy (Selmer, 1999). This is why international companies need

unique personalities who are highly competent, strongly motivated, and cosmopolitan. Moreover, even though international assignment success is determined by various factors, among the most important ones are the individual level factors. No matter how much attention organizations pay for the expatriation process, the international assignment success mostly depends on the selected candidates' motivation, their ability to adjust to change, wish to improve, ability to adjust to a new environment, effectively act in order to achieve goals; as well as employees' families factor. Organizations could expect a more fluent expatriation process implementation and fewer failures if they would select the best candidates for expatriation with regard to the situation of their families.

Alongside the individual level, the importance of the adjustment stage to the expatriation process has been emphasized several times as well. According to the analysis of scientific sources, it can be stated that the main problems discussed in this chapter arise during the adjustment stage and are related to the unsuccessful adjustment. Thus, expatriates' ability to adjust to new cultural, social and working environment determines his/her personal state, the quality of his/her work, and the end of the entire assignment process. No less important is an expatriate's family's ability to adjust to the new environment, which is related not only to the emotional state of an employee, but also to his/her activity and success of the expatriation process. It is important to note that in order to avoid the potential problems; companies should pay more attention to this stage of the expatriation process, its thought-out implementation, and suitable training of the selected candidates. Considering the importance of the individual level and the adjustment stage to international assignment success, the empirical research level of this topic will be analysed further.

2. Empirical Research Level of the Factors of International Assignment Success

Having revealed the conceptual essence of the expatriation process in Chapter 1 on the theoretical level as well as discussed the fact that the expatriation process is related not only to positive, but also to various problematic issues; having revealed the significance of the individual level and the adjustment stage on international assignment, this chapter will discuss the research carried out by the different authors and other analytical data. First of all, it is necessary to point out that it is difficult to find valuable research on the topic of expatriation in the Lithuanian context. However, it can be noted that an increasing number of Lithuanian capital companies are expanding their activities into the international field, and more and more foreign companies are establishing their subsidiaries in Lithuania. According to *Statistics Lithuania* (2014), in the beginning of 2014, there were 164 foreign legal person subsidiaries in the Republic of Lithuania's territory (in the beginning of 2013 there were 134, in the beginning of 2012 – 143, in the beginning of 2011 – 133, in the beginning of 2010 – 119, and in the beginning of 2009 there were 102 foreign legal person subsidiaries). In 2011, there were 466 companies abroad controlled by Lithuania (there are no published data on the last two years, while in 2010 there were 420, in 2009 – 438, in 2008 – 511 companies abroad controlled by Lithuania).

Even though a detailed evaluation of these indicators requires a wider context and a more elaborate analysis of the national and global economics and business tendencies during that particular period, the indicators introduced in this article reveal the development of Lithuanian companies on an international level as well as the development of foreign companies in Lithuania. With regard to this information, an assumption can be raised that as Lithuanian companies are developing their activities on an international scale, and foreign companies are establishing subsidiaries in Lithuania, a demand for international employees is

growing, and the application of the expatriation practice is becoming more and more relevant. This proves that this topic and related research are especially important in the Lithuanian context.

It is important to note that interesting experience relating to the expatriates' activity and adjustment can be created in the European Commission. The Belgians are the best at doing the employment tests to this organization as they are local citizens and they do not need to leave their families and ordinary environment, which keeps motivation to climb the international career ladder high. For example, the employment level of the Polish people is low, yet the country is large. The reason for this is the fact that there are no training programs carried out in Poland before applying for a position in the European Commission, whereas employees in Scandinavian countries and Great Britain are not inclined to be employed in this organization as the standard of life in their countries is higher, which keeps them in their home countries. Conversely, employees in those countries where the standard of life is lower (Italians, Romanians, Bulgarians) are more inclined to participate in the selection process. It is important to note that the socialization period for expatriates in the European Commission lasts from 6 to 9 months. However, transitioning from one subsidiary to another, after having worked in it for a while, drops the duration of socialization to 3 months. New employees are assigned to a secretary who helps as much as the employee needs. Moreover, employees can work virtually (this is how approx. 8% of employees carry out the work), keep to a flexible schedule, yet have to be in their workplace from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. An interesting fact is that an employee's career is not planned out because an employee himself/herself should be concerned with this aspect, i.e., he/she himself knows best what his/her family situation is, what experience and knowledge he/she has, etc. However, employees are encouraged to transfer to another subsidiary every 2-5 years because this influences their professional growth.

Speaking about the analysis of the already carried out empirical research, it is important to note that, even though the theoretical analysis revealed that international assignment and its success is mostly influenced by various individual, organizational and environmental factors, the article will further discuss only individual factors that are among the most important ones in the expatriation process. What concerns scientific works on the topic of expatriation by different authors, it is obvious that practical research includes various stages and problematic aspects of international assignment; however, the largest amount of attention is devoted to the adjustment stage of the expatriation process. This stage, as it has been mentioned, is often described as one of the most complex stages related to the main problems of the expatriation process, and one of the stages that significantly condition the international assignment success. However, it can be noted that, even though adjustment of expatriates is a relevant topic that attracts a lot of attention, there is a lack of basis for certain aspects and a more detailed analysis of individual or organizational levels.

Chapter 1 gave a theoretical basis for the fact that one of the most problematic stages of the expatriation process is the adjustment. Unsuccessful adjustment is often related to various financial and organizational damages. Authors Brewster, Suutari (1998) aimed at explaining the problems and causes of adjustment in Europe. In order to do that, they carried out a research during which 33 expatriates in Finland were interviewed; they had had previous experience in the following European countries: France (12), Great Britain (8), Germany (7), Sweden (6). The obtained results were analysed for the aforementioned three levels of adjustment (adjustment to the general environment, adjustment to work situation and adjustment to the interaction with local citizens). The results of this research are introduced in *Table 1*.

The analysis of the obtained results and distinction of the main problems of expatriates' adjustment in Europe as well as their causes reveals that the experienced expatriates' problems practically support the results of the theoretical analysis introduced in Chapter 1. Moreover, the authors note that, even though this research is not especially extensive, it shows that the problem of adjustment is relevant.

Table 1. Problems and their causes of expatriates' adjustment in Europe: a case study of expatriates in Finland

	Problems:	Causes:
Adjustment to interaction with the locals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficult development of relationships with local citizens; • difficult integration into the local community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poor knowledge of a particular foreign language.
Adjustment to general non-working environment:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficult solution of practical issues (related to home, bank account, phone); • difficult adjustment of family members; • partner's employment issues; • problems related to children's education and health care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gaps in the local system and bureaucracy; • poor family members' knowledge of a particular foreign language; • different educational and healthcare systems.
Adjustment to work situation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adjustment difficulties due to different management styles; • adjustment difficulties due to different organizational systems; • difficulties of adjustment to work communication peculiarities; • difficulties of adjustment to working environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • different management style; • differences between organizational systems (level of formality, hierarchy and bureaucracy, human resource management); • different styles of communication, communicational scopes; • lack of clarity of position and professional experience in certain new areas, negative colleagues' outlook of arriving employees.

Source: created by the authors on the basis of Brewster, Ch.; Suutari, V. (1998), pp.93-97.

Bodur, Yavas (1999) as well note that one of the most important stages of the expatriation process – adjustment – is usually related to various failures and damages. This is precisely why it is important to determine the factors that ease or impede the adjustment to a new environment; it is necessary to figure out the personal traits that can add to the success or failures in the adjustment stage. This information is relevant due to the fact that it can provide a basis for organizations to prepare effective expatriation management strategies. In order to determine the factors that influence the adjustment process, a research on expatriates in Turkey was carried out; the results revealed that positive significance for the adjustment process is mostly conditioned by the following aspects: (1) personal strengths and skills (a high level of adjustment is especially determined by cultural readiness before the assignment, cultural sensibility, willingness to communicate with the local citizens, having actual expectations, willingness to accept the challenges of intercultural experience, enjoyment of social interaction, empathy for others, ability to solve disputes, good foreign language skills); (2) expatriates' previous international experience; (3) support from the family; (4) effective training and support programs; (5) organizations' attention to employees (sustenance of open communication channels, encouragement of mutual solutions); (6) teamwork as a value in an organization. The authors sum up that in order to ease the adjustment process for expatriates, it is important to pay more attention to efficient management programs, selection, training, manifold help and active mutual communication during the assignment. The results of this

research both ground the theoretical premises and reveal that the adjustment process in highly influenced by various individual and organizational factors.

Going deeper into the factors that determine the international assignment success allows adding that, on the individual level, among the most important factors are the character traits; their impact on expatriates' intercultural adjustment has been studied by Che Rose *et al.* (2010). These authors interviewed 332 expatriates working in Malaysia and figured out that character traits is an important factor that determines arriving employees' adjustment to a new environment. According to the results of this research, the following generalizations can be made: (1) expatriates that display a higher personal satisfaction (sociability, being oneself, activeness, honesty, etc.) find it easier to adjust to the general environment and to the interaction with the local citizens; (2) expatriates who display higher extroversion find it easier to adjust to the general environment; (3) expatriates who display higher honesty and openness to new experience find it easier to adjust to the working environment.

Thus, more successful general adjustment is related to the higher extroversion and personal satisfaction, which determines more successful adjustment to the interaction with the locals. On the other hand, a successful adjustment to working environment is determined by honesty and openness to the new experience. The importance of character traits for the adjustment process during the international assignment was confirmed by the scientists Lee, Sukoco (2008) who carried out a study involving expatriates in Taiwan and determined that there was a strong relation (0.917) between the ratios of an expatriate's character traits and his/her adjustment to a new environment. Meanwhile, dependency on an expatriate's activity was very insignificant (0.012). As it has been mentioned in Chapter 1, one of the factors determining the success of both the expatriation process and the adjustment stage is expatriates' personal strengths. This aforementioned research supports this statement and emphasizes the significance of an expatriate's character traits to the adjustment during international assignment.

The analysis of the theoretical aspects of the expatriation process has repeatedly emphasized that international assignment success, easier adjustment to a new environment, and efficient activity are determined not only by character traits, skills, existing experience, but also by the situation of an expatriate's family. This statement is supported by a research carried out by scientists Rothmann, Van der Bank (2006); they interviewed 95 expatriates from 8 international companies located in South Africa. They interviewed the employees who had spent over three months abroad for an international assignment purposes, 78.9% of whom were married, 15.8% - single, 5.3% - divorced, and 64% - accompanied by the family members, it became clear that the support from family members determines a lower level of stress and easier adjustment to the international assignment. The authors emphasize the significance of the support coming from the family members to the expatriates' adjustment and the success of the entire international assignment. Moreover, fast and fluent adjustment to a new environment and efficient implementation of the expatriation process involves both an employee's character traits and the support coming from a particular organization.

Family's support as a factor determining the cultural adjustment was as well studied by Lee (2007); the main aim of the author's research was to evaluate the relationship between the family and international assignment. In order to achieve this goal, Lee interviewed expatriates (Taiwan) in different industrial branches; the expatriates had been internationally assigned to China. From 1200 sent questionnaires, 353 came back and 331 from them were usable. Having analysed the collected information, it became clear that the support coming from the expatriates' families is statistically significant for adjustment to a new environment and a new culture. According to Lee (2007), family's support is one of the most important

elements of successful adjustment to the international assignment; thus, organizations, in order to achieve successful implementation of the expatriation process, should be concerned not only with the employees-expatriates, but also with their family members. The author maintains that attention to family members may as well be expressed by introducing them with consulting programs or paying a double salary when an expatriate's partner or spouse quits his/her career. The studies carried out by Rothmann, Van der Bank, (2006) and Lee (2007) give the basis for the theoretical insights and, thus, emphasize the importance of an expatriate's family situation, family's support in both adjustment to a new environment and during the entire international assignment process.

Summing up the results of these studies, it can be maintained that all the studies analysed in this chapter support the aforementioned theoretical statements. Studies carried out by different authors reveal that the relevant problems relating to adjustment are: difficult adjustment to a different work situation, problematic interaction with the citizens of the recipient country, difficult solutions of practical issues, difficult adjustment of the family members and related problems. The results of the studies emphasize the importance of the individual level factors (character traits and skills, existing experience, family situation and support) on the expatriates' adjustment to a foreign country and the success of the entire international assignment. Alongside the individual level, organizational factors (training and support programs, an organization's focus on their employees, teamwork support and others) are of great importance for both international adjustment and the entire expatriation process.

It is important to note that the studies and research carried out by different authors reveal only those practices that exist in the foreign countries. There is a lack of studies in the Lithuanian context, which is the reason why the upcoming research will be a significant input that will help to reveal the expatriates' experience in Lithuania and determine the factors of international assignment success. In order to achieve this, several research statements have been formulated that can be either confirmed or contradicted with the help of an empirical research.

The analysis of scientific sources reveals that the expatriation process success is mostly determined by various individual factors. Furthermore, one of the most complex and often most problem-raising stages of the expatriation process is the adjustment to a new environment. Thus, the first group of statements (S1) consists of statements that show the relation between expatriates' personal characteristics and adjustment. The outcomes of the entire expatriation process depend on how well an employee is able to adjust. According to different authors and their theoretical and empirical research, expatriates' character traits and skills along with existing experience have significant impact on the adjustment to a new environment. Meanwhile, the family situation is often referred to as one of the factors that raise problems for an expatriate, yet the support coming from the family adds to the success of an expatriate's activity. The statements in the first group are as follows: S1a – the success of adjusting to a new environment depends on the level of an expatriate's character traits and personal skills; S1b – expatriates who have international experience find it easier to adjust during assignment abroad; S1c – expatriates' family situation has significant impact on the expatriates' adjustment to a new environment. The second (S2) and the third (S3) statements point out the relationship between the expatriates' adjustment and the individual expectations or the problems of this level. It has been theoretically proved that successful adjustment determines the success and satisfaction of the expectations that expatriates have, whereas failures in adjustment determine various individual problems. The statements are as follows: S2 – successful expatriates' adjustment has significant impact on the satisfaction of individual

expectations; S3 – unsuccessful expatriates' adjustment has significant impact on individual problems.

The formulation of these research statements allows advancing to the description of the empirical research as well as discussion and evaluation of its results.

3. Analysis of the Main Factors of Expatriates' International Assignment Success

3.1 Research Methodology

With regard to the fact that the application of expatriation practices on Lithuanian business subjects is a relatively a new experience, and there is a lack of research on this topic in Lithuania, a research with the aim of revealing expatriates' experience in terms of international assignment was carried out by determining how the expatriation process is implemented, what problems the international expatriates face, and what can distinguish the causes of the aforementioned problems as well as factors that determine international assignment success within the Lithuanian context.

The aim of the research: to analyse the application experience of expatriation practices in the individual level.

Objectives:

1. to find out expatriates' attitude towards international assignment;
2. to determine how expatriates see the adjustment stage during the international assignment;
3. to assess the problems that arose during expatriates' international assignment;
4. to assess the satisfaction of expatriates' expectations;
5. to find out how expatriates evaluate the role of a particular organization during the international assignment.

Research methods. Considering the fact that expatriation practices on Lithuanian business subjects is a relatively a new experience, a qualitative research has been employed to collect the necessary information; this type of research is suitable for the analysis of new phenomena and processes, creation of a detailed presentation of a subject, discussion on relevant issues (Tidikis, 2003). With regard to a potentially limited or low scope, the interview method has been employed to collect data; this method is considered to be one of the most efficient methods of qualitative research. Considering that the employees-expatriates selected for the research are from several international companies of different sizes and fields, a structured interview method has been used as a more convenient tool to collect relevant information, analyse the obtained data and discuss and evaluate the outcomes. Data collection has been carried out according to a previously formulated questionnaire that contains 6 question categories: general characteristics, international assignment, adjustment, problems, expectations, and the role of the organization. Each category contains open questions with no restrictions either on content or form. Considering the extent of the questionnaire, the obtained data were analyzed and discussed with regard to the aforementioned categories rather than separate questions.

Scope of the research. The 7 respondents who took part in the research were employees in 4 Lithuanian international companies that practice expatriation. The fields of these companies are as follows: confectionery, furniture, computers and software, computer repair and IT services. The presentability of the scope lies in the fact that employees are from different organizations that differ in size, area, and work geography. All the organizations that

have taken part in the research are interrelated in that they have experience in expatriation process management, and the respondents are current or former expatriates.

Organization of the research. The research itself with the aforementioned structured interview as a method was carried out in March-April of 2013. An interview took approximately 1 to 2 hours depending on the communication skills of the respondents and the expatriation experience they had. Meeting with each of the respondents had a fixed date and time depending on a suitable time and location for the interview. As the research included employees of several different nationalities, interviews were executed in the Lithuanian and English languages. It is important to note that several employees at the given time were on an assignment abroad; thus, communication with them was carried out by means of the phone and Internet telephony software *Skype*.

3.2 The Results of the Research

Moving on to the analysis of the obtained data and discussion on the results, two main characteristics of the expatriates who participated in the research can be distinguished. The characteristics have been revealed with the help of the first category questions (*General characteristics*). As it has been mentioned, expatriates from 7 international companies were interviewed. All the respondents were male. The age average of the respondents was 34.3 (the youngest respondent was 27 years, whereas the oldest was 42). Marital status: 3 respondents were married (43%), 4 respondents were single (57%). The research revealed that all 3 married respondents brought their families to the international assignment (100%). The research showed that the interviewees had been on the long-term international assignments 1-2 times (in Poland, Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, South Africa, Lithuania). The average record of service of the respondents was 7 years (shortest record of service was 4 years, longest – 12 years).

The second category questions (*International assignment*) aimed at figuring out the expatriates' attitude towards international assignment. As it has been pointed out in the theoretical chapter on the basis of authors Mazumdar, Moulik (2012), the international assignment is mostly assessed as an important international experience, an opportunity for personal improvement, potentially higher salary, and future career possibilities. All these factors usually motivate employees to agree with the expatriation offer.

The data collected during the research has revealed that all 7 respondents have a positive evaluation of the experience acquired during the expatriation. According to the expatriates, participation in the international assignment is a new universal experience and an opportunity to prove oneself (*...it is a significant experience of managerial job culture, communication with people of various cultures/behavioral types; ...it is an opportunity to prove oneself, acquire new experience for future career...*), an opportunity to improve existing skills and develop new ones (*...it is also an improvement of foreign language skills, personal qualification and international career...*), an opportunity to expand one's horizon, spend time in a different environment (*...it is an opportunity to expand one's horizon and understand the importance of Lithuania in the European context...*). It has been noted that this new positive expatriation experience relates not only to the advantages, but also to quite a few challenges (*...work and life in a different environment is a very interesting experience full of challenges, yet it involves a lot of advantages...*). The most important positive and negative aspects of the expatriation process distinguished by the respondents are introduced in *Table 2*.

Table 2. Positive and negative aspects of the international assignment

Positive aspects	Supporting statements
New experiences and contacts, wider outlook and perspective	...one becomes if not global, then at least European citizen... ...I liked new experiences: people, culture, work particularity... ...I liked the new culture, new contacts made, new work experience, a wider outlook and perspective...
Ability to travel and know the country	...I liked being able to travel and acquire new, different, and significant experience... ...I liked trips around an unfamiliar city...
Possibility to effectively carry out the work	...I liked "live" communication which is absent when managing project implementation in a foreign country via electronic channels... ...I liked the opportunity to be closer to the client...
Negative aspects	Supporting statements
Distance from a known environment	...I didn't like the fact that I was far away from my usual environment...
Too high intensity	...I didn't like the high intensity (new environment, many new faces)...
Yearning for family members staying in the home country	...I had a big feeling of yearning for my family (parents, brothers) staying in the home country...
Poor environment conditions	...I didn't like managing various affairs with governmental institutions because the English language was at a low level; knowledge of Russian helped out... ...I didn't like the bad food and even worse weather...
Postponing of personal future plans	...I didn't like the fact that I had to postpone a lot of life stages understandable for a typical Lithuanian, i.e., marriage, having kids, purchasing my own home...

Source: created by the authors.

As it has been mentioned before, 3 of the respondents were married and brought their family members on the international assignment. When asked to assess their family members' attitude to international assignment, the respondents distinguished the following aspects of both positive and negative attitudes:

- positive attitude is related to the increase in the living quality level (*...they liked the increase of the living quality level (more various events, higher cultured people)...*) and an opportunity to improve linguistic skills, live in a different environment (*...an opportunity to live abroad was an especially memorable experience for the kids...*);
- negative attitude is related to the unwillingness of the family members to travel together, to the lack of communication, the lack of family staying in Lithuania and the lack of activities (*...my wife didn't have a job, which is why she felt there was a lack of activity...*).

The research as well showed that international assignment success is determined by both individual and organizational factors. A successful activity in a foreign country is determined by both personal qualities of an employee, his/her skills (*...flexibility and adjustment, wide attitude...; ...ability to communicate and collaborate with different people...*) and a positive outlook, personal motivation, existing experience and family situation (*...family's support is very important...; ...wellbeing of the family members in a new environment...*). Moreover, it has been noted that international assignment success is determined by the attribution of a supervisor, effective activity management, help when facing problems, a motivating compensation system, and care for the family members. Summing up the factors that determine international assignment success distinguished by the respondents, it is possible to claim that expatriates' personal qualities, existing skills, and experience are especially important for international activity success. The respondents were as well asked what personal qualities/skills/experience had been helpful to them during the international

assignment and what personal qualities/skills/experience they lacked. The results are provided in *Table 3*.

Table 3. Personal traits/ skills/ experience important during the international assignment

Factors that were helpful during the international assignment	Supporting statements
Professional skills	...existing professional skills, ability to solve problems and make independent decisions...
Linguistic, social, skills relating adjustment to a new environment	...my communicative abilities helped the most... ...foreign language knowledge, independency, ability to adjust easily... ...my ability to meet new people, communicate with various people, easy adjustment ...
International experience, motivation, devotion to work	...devotion to work, finishing work through, keeping to deadlines... ...motivation, existing experience...
Factors that the respondents lacked during the international assignment	Supporting statements
More active discussions	...more active discussions because foreigners like to discuss...
Local language skills	...I felt the lack of fluency in the Russian language... ...as it turned out, I had no ability to efficiently study a foreign language, and I find Lithuanian especially difficult...

Source: created by the authors.

In order to figure out the attitude of expatriates towards the international assignment, the respondents were asked how they assessed a possibility for future international assignment. The obtained results revealed that as many as 6 of the respondents would want, agree to or consider an opportunity to work in a foreign country again; only one of the respondents answered that he would not, for a given time, go on an international assignment due to his family situation.

The questions in the third category (*Adjustment*) aimed at figuring out how the expatriates and their family members managed to adjust to a new environment, what helped and what they lacked so that adjustment to a foreign country would have been fluent. First of all, the aim was to reveal the expatriates' attitude towards the adjustment stage. The results are summed up in *Table 4*.

Table 4. Expatriates' attitude towards the adjustment stage

Results obtained	Supporting statements
5 respondents saw their personal adjustment to a foreign country fluent	...it was easy to adjust to new environment, work conditions, new people... ...I managed to adjust fluently without experiencing any problems... ...even though they viewed me with suspicion, the adjustment process itself was the same as in any new company; I found it easy...
2 respondents claimed to have experienced certain difficulties	...adjustment to a new work environment was rather easy; it was difficult to adjust to a different culture, customs, people, different climate, etc... ...it usually takes 1 to 1,5 years to adjust to a new environment, and this period gets "kicked out" of life...
The most difficult was the adjustment of the family members	... adjustment was especially difficult; it is the most burning issue... ...family members were hesitant to travel abroad, they found it difficult to adjust and wanted to go back home shortly...

Source: created by the authors.

The respondents were asked what factors determined successful adjustment. The following individual and organizational factors were distinguished:

- individual factors: employee's personal strengths and skills (...*patience, accepting compromise, knowing what you want from a certain period in life...*), existing experience, positive attitude of both the employee and his/her family members (...*when abroad, family becomes extremely important; thus, it is important to find compromise and determination to go hand in hand...*), active communication with new colleagues, involvement into the local social life;

- organizational factors: support from the executive, attention from the main subsidiary, help from the new colleagues.

Alongside the factors that determine successful adjustment in a foreign country, the following factors that were lacking so that adjustment would have been easier have been distinguished:

- on the individual level, there was a lack of: local language skills, more experience, social activity, support of the family members;

- on the organizational level, there was a lack of: other expatriates who could have shared their experience, more practical information (...*I felt a lack of practical information (training) about the country, settling in it so that everything would go more fluently...*).

Thus, according to the data obtained during the research, it can be said that even though the majority of the respondents found adjustment to a new environment fluent, it can be noted that this is not one of the easiest stages. Difficulties related to adjustment are especially important to the family members. Successful adjustment during the expatriation requires personal strengths, existing skills, experience, positive attitude of the employee and his/her family members, involvement in the local social life as well as support from the executive, attention and help from former and current colleagues. The discussion of the respondents' attitude towards international assignment revealing the peculiarities relating to them and their family members' adjustment to a new environment helped to figure out what problems the expatriates and their family members faces during the international assignment, and what were the causes, outcomes, and solutions for these problems. This was done on the basis of the fourth category questions (*Problems*). The introduced theoretical part, on the basis of authors Selmer (1999), Anderson (2005), Sedlmayer (2009) and others, that the most important problems arising during the expatriation process are the problems relating to the lack of appropriate training and adjustment, issues related to large expenses, unsuccessful end of the process, various other individual, family related, and organizational difficulties. The respondents of this research noticed that the international assignment process relates not only to advantages and positive aspects, but also to certain challenges and problematic questions. The relevant problems of the expatriation process that ground the results of the theoretical analysis as well can be divided into three groups (*Table 5*).

According to the data obtained during the research, the main causes and outcomes of the aforementioned problems can be distinguished (*Table 6*).

Table 5. International assignment problems distinguished by the expatriates

Problem groups	Relevant problems
1. Individual problems	Lack of communication (... <i>lack of communication even if you can speak the local language...</i>);
	lack of after-work activities, constraints on entertainment;
	difficulties in communication with the locals (... <i>poor knowledge of the local language made communication with employees and local people who did not speak English difficult...</i>);
	large expenses of living in a foreign country;
	difficulties of adjusting to a new environment.
2. Family-related problems	difficult adjustment;
	occupation problems (... <i>problems of my spouse's occupation...</i> ; ... <i>lack of activities, especially when you don't speak the local language...</i>);
	lack of communication.
3. Environment-related problems	Intolerance/rejection if you do not speak the local language.

Source: created by the authors.

Table 6. Causes and outcomes of the problems distinguished by the expatriates

Causes of the problems	Outcomes of the problems
Poor employee's/family members' foreign language skills;	Experiencing stress, loneliness;
lack of international experience;	yearning for home;
lack of ability to adjust to a new environment;	disappointment of family members;
lack of support and motivation from the family members;	various other psychological problems;
lack of training for the assignment;	large expenses during the expatriation process;
lack of communication with the main subsidiary when abroad;	lack of efficiency of activity;
differences between the local and home environments;	premature end of the process.
negative attitude of local citizens;	
gaps in the local system.	

Source: created by the authors.

Alongside the problems, their causes and outcomes, the research has revealed the following solutions used in practice:

- individual: adjustment to a country's peculiarities, the decision to end an international assignment earlier (...*it was decided to go back earlier than planned due to the difficulties related to adjustment and not feeling well in a new environment...*), participation in local cultural life (...*participation in events that require beginner's knowledge of the local language...*), communication with the main subsidiary (...*intensive use of electronic means to sustain communication...*);

- organizational: search for translators/interpreters (in case of a lack of knowledge of the local language), attribution of a supervisor.

It can be said that personal experience of the respondents helped them to reveal not only positive, but also the problematic side of the international assignments. Going deeper into the relevant problems, their causes and outcomes showed that the adjustment stage and family situation have significant impact on the expatriation process. Expatriates' ability to adjust to a new environment, going through the adjustment stage fluently, successful adjustment of the family members, positive outlook and support are those factors that

determine both success of a particular employee's activity abroad and the success of the entire international assignment.

The fifth category of questions (*Expectations*) helped to figure out what expectations the respondents had when going on an international assignment, what expectations were satisfied, and what determined the fact that not all the expectations were satisfied. According to the data obtained during the research, the expatriates have various expectations upon going on an international assignment that can be divided into three groups (*Table 7*).

Table 7. Expatriates' expectations related to the international assignment

Groups of expectations	Expectations the expatriates had
1. Individual expectations	Aim to acquire new experience (... <i>to acquire new experience for the future career...</i>);
	aim to improve professional and foreign language skills;
	aim to earn money;
	aim to realize the cognitive goal, get to live in a foreign language, know a different culture (... <i>expanding one's horizon and work experience or, as Lithuanians like to say, "an attempt"...</i> ; ... <i>I only had the idea of "it's going to be interesting"...</i>).
2. Expectations related to the family	Aim to provide the family with better living conditions, more opportunities (... <i>wish to provide my family with better living conditions, an opportunity to live in a different environment, know a different culture, improve foreign language skills...</i>);
	aim to satisfy my family's wish to have a new and interesting experience.
3. Expectations related to the company	Aim for a more efficient activity (... <i>I wanted to help the business develop by working together with the colleagues from the local subsidiary...</i>).

Source: created by the authors.

In order to figure out what expectations the expatriates had on the international assignments, it was asked whether all the expectations had been satisfied. Considering their personal experience, 3 respondents said their expectations were fully satisfied, another three claimed their expectations were partially satisfied, whereas the remaining one maintained that his expectations were not met. However, the former employee emphasized that his main focus was his family-related expectations rather than personal ones (...*my family members' expectations were not satisfied...*). The main causes that determined this failure to satisfy some of the expectations was the presence of the weak sides (...*existence of weak sides, which raised problematic aspects...*), difficult family situation (difficult adjustment to a new environment, negative assessment of the situation, lack of motivation, lack of communication and occupation). Having revealed the respondents' expectations and their level of satisfaction during the international assignments, the next step is to evaluate the role of a particular organization in the expatriation process. In order to achieve this, the last category of individual level questions (*Role of organization*) was included.

The collected data revealed that all 7 respondents had a positive evaluation of the expatriation process management in their organizations (...*in my opinion, it is effective, fast and oriented towards the employee...; ...the employees have good opportunities and favourable conditions to work on probation abroad...; ...our company has good organization of this area, it all works in a simple and effective way...*). However, one of them pointed out that there are aspects to improve, and another expatriate maintained that there was no exceptional international assignment management in their company (...*there is no "management" as such; I was offered to go on an assignment, I agreed and once I was*

abroad, the executive and my new colleagues in the local subsidiary helped out...). The employee emphasized that maybe this was the reason why the execution and management of the entire organization's activity is non-standard. The organization has subsidiaries in many global locations and is active in their enterprise; communication and even management of more remote subsidiaries is carried out via electronic means of communication. The executives of the subsidiaries are responsible for their employees, and the employees themselves can be described as having more expanded horizons, modern, able to successfully adjust to various changes. Such exceptional situation of the organization determines a different attitude towards the expatriation process and helps to assess it as a natural phenomenon, an interesting opportunity and a part of the international career. Even though the organization does not have a developed international assignment strategy, expatriates still get bonuses, the accommodation expenses are paid for, they are attributed a local employee who would help to find accommodation and solve other issues related to work and living.

Having assessed the expatriation process management in the organizations, the respondents were asked what help they had received and what help they lacked of from the main subsidiary during the international assignment. The results are presented in *Table 8*.

Table 8. The help for the expatriates from the main unit during the international assignment

The help received	The help needed (not received)
Help in the organization of all related affairs (...everything covered in internal procedures (relocation, organizational questions and so on...)...);	Lack of communication (...there was a lack of communication and certain information...);
financial support (...a favorable payment system...);	there was no one assigned who would help to integrate into the new environment;
help in problematic situations;	lack of help in the future career planning.
attribution of a local employee-mentor (...the executive of the local subsidiary and assigned employees helped with accommodation, solve various questions related to banks, migration, etc., know the local culture, city, and so on...);	
support after returning.	

Source: created by the author.

Communication that took part with the main subsidiary during the international assignments was assessed in both positive (...my evaluation is neutral as we communicated as much as was necessary...; ...we communicated a lot, the colleagues from the main subsidiary asked how I was doing and helped to solve many of the problems...) and negative (...there was a lack of information about what I was coming back to...; ...the relationship with the former subunit basically breaks because you become a part of a different unit...; ...there was no communication, so to speak; there was only a symbolical type of attention limited to how-are-you's...) ways.

It is important to note that this research has revealed the significance of mutual communication between the expatriate and the main subsidiary to international assignment success. This was emphasized while discussing both the factors of successful adjustment to a new environment (...the attention and help coming from the main subsidiary...) and the lack of help from the organization (...there was a lack of communication and certain information...).

The analysis of the data obtained during the research revealed that an expatriate's family situation, their ability to adjust, positive attitude and motivation, support for the

employee are the factors that significantly condition the success of expatriates' activity and the entire international assignment. It has been mentioned that in order to successfully implement the expatriation process, organizations should pay attention not only to their expatriates, but also to their family members. Speaking about their organization's attention for their family members, 3 respondents expressed a positive evaluation (*...there are internal procedures (e.g. schools, language courses, etc.) depending on whether the family members take part in them...; ...the organization tries to make the relocation and adjustment easier for the family members...; the attention was more on the financial side...*), whereas 1 respondent expressed a negative evaluation claiming that his family members lacked attention.

Summing up, it can be said that the results of this empirical research reveal that employees and expatriates positively evaluate the international assignment experience, yet they note that there are certain disadvantages as well. The research showed that the most individual level problems arise due to the adjustment to a new environment, interaction with local citizens, lack of communication and after-work activities, and various family-related problems. Moreover, the following most important causes for the aforementioned problems have been distinguished: an employee lacks certain skills, international experience, personal strengths, his/her family situation is complex, he/she lacks communication with the main subsidiary and experiences a lack of training for the international assignment. The research revealed that the most frequent outcomes of these problems are ineffective activity, loss of motivation, various psychological problems, premature end of the process, large expenses.

Therefore, according to the results of the research, it can be said that the main factors of international assignment success are the expatriates' personal strengths, required skills, existing international experience, personal motivation and a favourable family situation. Alongside these individual factors, the company's attention for the management of the expatriation process and for the implementation of the adjustment stage are no less important; as well significant are the suitable training of the candidates, motivation, sustaining of mutual communication during the international assignment and attention for the employee's family members.

3.3 Evaluation of the Research Outcomes

Considering the results of the research, the research statements introduced in Chapter 2 can be assessed (confirmed or contradicted) as follows:

S1: the first group of statements consists of statements that point out the relation between the expatriates' personal characteristics and adjustment. *According to the results of the research, there is a strong relation between personal characteristics and adjustment.* The results have revealed that successful adjustment is determined by a particular employee's personal strengths, existing professional, social and adjustment skills as well as the existing international experience, family situation and other factors. Authors Che Rose *et al.* (2010), who study the impact of character traits on the expatriates' cultural adjustment, claim that character traits is an important factor that determines the employees' adjustment to a new environment. *Considering this claim, the first statement in this group (S1a, stating that expatriates' character trait and skill level determines the success of adjustment to a new environment) is confirmed.* The more skills and personal strengths an employee has, the faster and more successful is the adjustment process. Along the character traits and skills, the results of the research emphasize the importance of an expatriate's experience of the adjustment process. The analysis of the results has revealed that the existing international experience determines the success of the adjustment process. The more international experience a

particular employee has, the easier it is for him/her to adjust to a new environment. A research carried out by Bodur, Yavas (1999) along with other factors that have a positive impact on the adjustment process as well points out that those expatriates who have more international experience find it easier to adjust to a new environment. *Thus, it can be said that statement S1b which claims that expatriates who have international experience find it easier to adjust to a new environment is confirmed.*

As it has been mentioned the results of this research have revealed that the expatriates' family situation is an important factor that influences both the adjustment of a particular employee to a new environment and the efficiency of his/her activity, international assignment success and the emergence of potential problems. These results are supported by other authors (Rothmann, Van der Bank, 2006; Lee, 2007) who emphasize the importance of the expatriates' family situation and support during the adjustment process and the entire expatriation process. *As a result, it can be said that an expatriate's family situation has a significant influence on the expatriate's adjustment to a new environment. Thus, statement S1c is confirmed.*

Statements S2 and S3 point out the relationship between the expatriates' adjustment and the expectations from the expatriation process or the problems on this level. The analysis of empirical data has revealed that successful adjustment determines the success and satisfaction of the expectations that expatriates have. Meanwhile, unsuccessful adjustment determines the emergence of various individual problems (if an employee cannot adjust to a new environment, he/she feels disappointed, loses motivation, which has an impact on the implementation of tasks). The analysis of the collected data has as well showed that successful adjustment is related to efficient activity, the success of the expatriation process and satisfaction of individual expectations. Meanwhile, unsuccessful adjustment to a new environment is referred to as one of the main causes for individual problems arising during the expatriation process. *Thus, successful adjustment has a significant amount of impact on the satisfaction of individual expectations, whereas unsuccessful adjustment has a significant amount of impact on individual problems. On the basis of this, statements S2 and S3 are confirmed.*

Conclusions

The analysis of the expatriation process shows that this process is typical not only of positive, but also of various problematic properties, and one of the most difficult stages of international assignment is adjustment to different working, living, and environment conditions. The success of expatriates' adjustment to a new environment has a great amount of impact on the entire international assignment process. It has been revealed that the success of the expatriation process is mostly determined by the individual factors, with emphasis put on the following ones: personal strengths, required skills, existing international experience, positive attitude towards a situation and family situation.

Having evaluated the research level of the success factors in the expatriation process, it has been revealed that even though the subject of the expatriation attracts attention of the foreign scientists, there is a lack of this type of research in Lithuania. The research shows that the international adjustment stage is the aspect that attracts the most attention and is distinguished as a very important factor in international assignment success. Furthermore, the adjustment stage is determined by various factors on an individual level, especially expatriates' personal strengths and his/her family's situation. It is important to note that the

results of the analysed empirical research support the theoretical premises in terms of problems arising during the expatriation process, their causes and success factors.

The research on expatriates' experience in the case of Lithuania allows claiming that all the respondents have a positive evaluation of international assignment experience; however, they note that alongside the advantages there are certain relevant problems. The research confirms that the adjustment to a new environment is one of the most difficult stages of the expatriation process. Successful international adjustment of expatriates and their family members has a significant amount of impact on the success of the expatriation process and satisfaction of individual expectations, whereas unsuccessful adjustment to a new environment adds to the emergence of various problems. The research as well confirms that character traits, existing skills and experience and family situation have an impact on the expatriates' international adjustment success and the success of the entire process of expatriation. It is important to note that the theoretical, analytical chapters, and the chapter relating to the results emphasize the importance of a particular organization to the expatriation process and employees' international adjustment (the importance of suitable training, versatile help for an employee and his/her family members, mutual communication during the assignment), which can be considered as a perspective for future research.

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EKSPATRIANTO PATIRTIS: TARPTAUTINIO PASKYRIMO SĖKMĖS VEIKSNIAI

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SANTRAUKA

Straipsnyje siekiama ištirti ekspatrianto tarptautinio paskyrimo sėkmės veiksniai. Tyrimui buvo iškelti uždaviniai: 1) ištirti ekspatriacijos procesą išskiriant tarptautinio paskyrimo sėkmės veiksniai; 2) išnagrinėti tarptautinio paskyrimo sėkmės veiksnių empirinį ištyrimo lygį; 3) ištyrus ekspatriantų patirtį Lietuvos atveju, nustatyti tarptautinio paskyrimo sėkmės veiksniai.

Vykdydami tarptautinę veiklą, ekspatriantai tampa svarbiais namų organizacijos filosofijos, kultūros, strategijos perdavėjais. Teorinė ir empirinė analizė rodo, kad daugiausiai tarptautinio paskyrimo sėkmė priklauso nuo atrinktų kandidatų, jų motyvacijos, gebėjimo greitai prisitaikyti prie pokyčių, noro tobulėti, gebėjimo sklandžiai prisitaikyti naujoje aplinkoje, efektyviai veikti siekiant užsibrėžtų tikslų, taip pat nuo darbuotojų šeimos situacijos. Atlikto tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė, kad vienas sudėtingiausių ekspatriacijos proceso etapų yra ekspatriantų prisitaikymas tarptautinio paskyrimo metu. Nustatyta, kad sėkmingas ekspatriantų prisitaikymas siejasi su efektyvia veikla, tarptautinio paskyrimo sėkme bei ekspatriantų turimų lūkesčių pateisinimu. O nesėkmingas prisitaikymas nulemia įvairias nesėkmes ir individualių problemų atsiradimą (jei darbuotojui nesiseka prisitaikyti naujoje aplinkoje, jis susiduria su įvairiomis problemomis, kurios lemia neefektyvią veiklą, ankstesnį proceso užbaigimą ar įvairius kitus nuostolius). Įrodyta, kad ekspatriantų prisitaikymo ir viso ekspatriacijos proceso sėkmei reikšmingiausia yra darbuotojo stipriosios asmeninės savybės, turimi profesiniai, socialiniai, adaptacijos įgūdžiai, turima tarptautinė patirtis, palanki šeimos situacija. Tyrimo metu išryškėjo ir organizacijos reikšmė ekspatriacijos procesui bei darbuotojų tarptautiniam prisitaikymui; tai gali būti laikoma ateities tyrimų perspektyva.

REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: ekspatriantas, tarptautinis paskyrimas, ekspatriacijos procesas, tarptautinis prisitaikymas.