

Chapter 5: Expatriates' Living Environments and Adjustment to Japanese Life and Work

Introduction

Since overseas employment in a different cultural environment concerns the everyday lives not only of the expatriates but of their accompanying spouses and children, it is a major life experience. On the one hand, the expatriates' adjustment to working life overseas affects the results of their work, so we can say that it is an important indicator showing the success of overseas work. In this chapter, we will analyze the educational status of accompanying children and the degree of satisfaction with that education, as well as the expatriates cultural adjustment to working and living in Japan.

As in Chapter 4, we will use the location of the dispatching organization's headquarters as the focus of our analysis, as well as statistical identification of differences among countries that yielded 10 or more responses. Note, however, that tables analyzing the entire sample may be found at the end of this chapter.

1. The Education of Accompanying Children

The percentage of expatriates with accompanying children between the ages of 6 and 15 varied: France (50.0%), the United States (51.5%), and the United Kingdom (47.1%) had the highest percentages, and Germany (25.0%), Switzerland (33.3%), and Canada (36.4%) had the lowest.

In addition, the average number of children ranged from 2.3 (France), 2.0 (Canada), 1.9 (the United Kingdom), and 1.8 (the United States), to 1.3 (Germany), and the average was 1.80.

Furthermore, only three countries yielded 10 or more responses when we asked about the type of school that the children were attending in Japan, but it is noteworthy that 90% of the respondents from French companies reported that their children were attending schools organized under the French system (Table 5-1). On the other hand, most American (64.7%) and British (56.3%) respondents were sending their children to international schools. Chi-square analysis yielded some statistical differences in these tendencies. A certain number, however small, of expatriates sent their children to Japanese schools, including 12.5% of expatriates from British companies and 2.9% of expatriates from American companies.

The 3 countries above showed a high level of satisfaction with the educational environment in Japan: on a 4-point scale, the scores were 3.55 for the United States, 3.81 for the United Kingdom, and 3.70 for France.

Table 5-1: Types of schools that expatriate children are attending

Location of headquarters of dispatching organization	1. School organized along home country's system		2. International school		3. Japanese school		4. Other	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
United States	12 (35.3)	22 (64.7)	22 (64.7)	12 (35.3)	1 (2.9)	33 (97.1)	1 (2.9)	33 (97.1)
United Kingdom	6 (37.5)	10 (62.5)	9 (56.3)	7 (43.8)	2 (12.5)	14 (87.5)	0	
France	9 (90.0)	1 (10.0)	1 (10.0)	9 (90.0)	0	10 (100)	0	
Overall total	44 (43.1)	58 (56.9)	55 (53.9)	47 (46.1)	5 (4.9)	97 (95.1)	1 (1.0)	101 (99.0)
Chi-square value	42.01**		39.34*		29.34*		2.02	

Figures in parentheses are percentages, **P < .01 : *P < .05

2. Satisfaction with Life in Japan

The respondents were asked to rate 8 items related to their satisfaction with life in Japan (housing, food, commuting, medical care, relationships with local residents, safety, convenience, and life in general) on a scale of 1 (dissatisfied) to 5 (satisfied).

Table 5-2 shows the results of variance analysis of the average points. There were statistically significant differences among countries with respect to the average values for the 5 items of housing, food, commuting, convenience, and overall living environment. Among all the items, the degrees of satisfaction about food (4.29) and public safety and morals (4.49) were relatively high and showed that expatriates are somewhat uneasy about medical care (3.08).

3. Adjustment to a Different Culture

We measured adjustment to a different culture on the basis of a scale measuring work and daily life and composed of 14 items. We asked the respondents to rate each item on a 5-point scale from 1 (not at all adjusted) to 5 (very well adjusted).

The results of factor analysis made it clear that there are 3 major dimensions related to adaptation to a different culture: "I. Overall adaptation" (6 items), "II. Interpersonal adaptation" (4 items), and "III. Adaptation to the workplace" (3 items) as shown in Table 5-3.

Next, we analyzed the samples from the countries that accounted for 10 or more expatriates to see if there were any differences among countries with respect to these 3 dimensions of adaptation to a different culture, and the results are shown in Table 5-4. We conducted variance analysis in order to look at significant differences among the average values for countries with respect to the raw point totals of the items comprising the various factors. We noticed significant differences at a level of 5% for overall adaptation and at a level of 1% for adaptation to the workplace.

Table 5-2: Satisfaction with Life in Japan

Location of headquarters of dispatching organization	Housing	Food	Commuting	Medical care	Relations with residents	Safety and morals	Convenience	Overall
United States	3.90	4.23	4.10	2.73	3.22	4.49	3.68	3.78
United Kingdom	4.05	4.33	4.00	3.20	3.40	4.35	4.03	3.93
Germany	3.63	4.32	3.16	2.84	3.08	4.47	3.22	3.37
Denmark	4.00	4.93	3.93	3.64	3.50	4.71	4.07	4.00
France	4.50	4.54	4.42	3.54	3.88	4.71	4.38	4.33
Canada	3.69	4.15	3.54	3.08	3.83	4.38	3.77	3.85
Switzerland	4.25	4.54	4.00	3.17	3.54	4.54	4.09	3.74
Sweden	4.70	4.60	3.70	3.50	3.30	4.60	4.20	4.30
Total (entire sample)	3.93**	4.29**	3.89**	3.08	3.39	4.49	3.86**	3.83**

**P<.01 : *P<.05

Table 5-3: Factor analysis of adjustment to a different culture

Item	Adjustment to a different culture		
	I. General adjustment	II. Interpersonal adjustment	III. Professional adjustment
A. Specific job responsibilities	.117	.176	<u>.830</u>
B. Expected performance standards	.152	5.543E-02	<u>.876</u>
C. Supervision and guidance of subordinates	.111	.169	<u>.760</u>
D. Japanese society and customs	.151	<u>.798</u>	.272
E. Interactions with Japanese colleagues	.108	<u>.764</u>	.328
F. Interactions with Japanese outside of work	.194	<u>.844</u>	3.168E-02
G. Conversations with Japanese people on a daily basis	.105	<u>.856</u>	-1.234E-02
H. Living conditions in general	<u>.803</u>	.160	6.782E-02
I. Housing conditions	<u>.745</u>	.106	.138
J. Food	<u>.656</u>	.110	.132
K. Shopping	<u>.753</u>	8.963E-02	.118
L. Standard and quality of life	<u>.840</u>	.124	9.983E-02
M. Entertainment/recreation facilities and opportunities	<u>.745</u>	.198	4.091E-02
N. Health care facilities	.566	.182	4.254E-02
Eigen values	5.07	2.33	1.67

Factor extraction method: principal component analysis

Rotation method: varimax method

Underlined parts: items making up the factors

Note, however, that we may mention a general tendency for expatriates from Sweden to have an especially high level of overall adaptation, for those from Denmark to have an especially high level of interpersonal adaptation, and for those from France to have an especially high level of adaptation to the workplace.

Table 5-4: Comparisons among countries of the three dimensions of adjustment to a different culture

Location of headquarters of dispatching organization	I. General adaptation (6 items)	II. Interpersonal adjustment (4 items)	III. Professional adjustment (3 items)
United States	23.62 (4.28)	14.37 (2.71)	12.74(1.72)
United Kingdom	23.80 (4.13)	13.35 (3.43)	12.18(2.10)
Germany	22.37 (4.81)	14.37 (3.54)	12.58(1.72)
Denmark	25.50 (3.61)	15.50 (3.18)	12.50(1.65)
France	24.83 (4.53)	14.91 (2.56)	13.09(1.38)
Canada	23.85 (4.62)	15.38 (3.82)	12.85(1.99)
Switzerland	24.38 (4.15)	13.25 (3.63)	11.00(1.62)
Sweden	26.10 (2.81)	14.40 (2.84)	13.50(1.72)
Total (entire sample)	23.73* (4.31)	14.33 (3.18)	12.55**(1.77)

Figures in parentheses are percentages, **P<.01 : *P<.05

4. Summary

A high percentage of expatriates from the United States (51.5%) and the United Kingdom (47.1%) indicated that they had school-age children accompanying them. When asked about the schools that their children were attending, 90.0% of the expatriates from France replied that their children were attending a school organized according to their own country's system.

There were no significant differences among countries with respect to satisfaction with daily life, but food and public safety and morals tended to be higher than other items.

It became clear that adaptation to a different culture could be classified into overall adaptation, interpersonal adaptation, and adaptation to the workplace, but we may note a general tendency for expatriates from Sweden to have an especially high level of overall adaptation, for those from Denmark to have an especially high level of interpersonal adaptation, and for those from France to have an especially high level of adaptation to the workplace.