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**THE ADJUSTABILITY OF THE EXPATRIATE MANAGER:
PROPOSAL OF AN IMPROVED MEASUREMENT SCALE**

Abbreviated title: **IMPROVED SCALE FOR ADJUSTABILITY**

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ABSTRACT. The adjustability of expatriate managers has a major influence on the success or failure of their mission. Yet, because of the difficulty of measuring this antecedent, it does not always receive the attention that it deserves. The objective of this research is to propose an improved measurement scale of the six dimensions of expatriates' adjustability. We have simplified the measures of the first five dimensions of adjustability and have operationalized active stress resistance by creating an index based on Folkman et al. (1986)'s work. Our sample consisted of 224 managers, of which 54 were French, 53 German, 60 Korean and 57 Scandinavian. The respondents were expatriated in the area of New Delhi, India. In order to test the structure of our scale, we conducted principal components factor analyses on the complete sample and on the four cultural samples. Our research allowed us to propose an improved measurement scale of adjustability, a scale that comprises fewer items and that can be used more easily in researches on cross-cultural adjustment. We showed that the structure of the six dimensions of adjustability remained stable for the different countries of our research.

Key words: *expatriate, adjustability, dimensions, scales, measures, Willingness to communicate, Substitution ability, Social Orientation, Openness ability, Technical abilities, Active stress resistance*

Introduction

Organisations send their managers abroad in order to develop global strategies, to coordinate and to control their international ventures. Expatriate managers are thus key factors in the success of these ventures. The expatriate managers' adjustment process, its measure and its antecedents have recently drawn the interest of researchers and managers. In the literature on cross-cultural adjustment (Black 1988; Waxin & Chandon, 2003; Waxin, 2000; 2004), adjustment is defined as "the degree of psychological comfort that an individual has towards several aspects of a new environment". The adjustment process is lengthy and can vary from one individual to the next. It nonetheless requires certain qualities from the individual for its outcome to be positive (Cerdin, 1999). The concept of adjustability includes the personal abilities that will allow expatriates to adjust to their new position, to interactions with host nationals and to the local living conditions. However, because of measurement difficulties, this concept of adjustability has not always received the attention that it deserves. Cerdin's (1999) and Cerdin et al.'s (1999) recent work show that expatriates' adjustability comprises six different dimensions. Cerdin's exploratory scale comprises 25 items and explains 50% of the variance of adjustability. This scale, however, was only validated on a population of French managers.

This research was part of a doctoral thesis on the antecedents of cross-cultural adjustment (Waxin, 2000). Its objective is, based on Cerdin's (1996) and Cerdin et al.'s (1999) work, to propose an improved measurement scale of the six dimensions of adjustability in order to 1) reduce the number of items, 2) explain a larger percentage of the variance and 3) better measure expatriate managers' stress resistance ability. We will validate this improved measurement scale on a sample of expatriates from four different cultural groups.

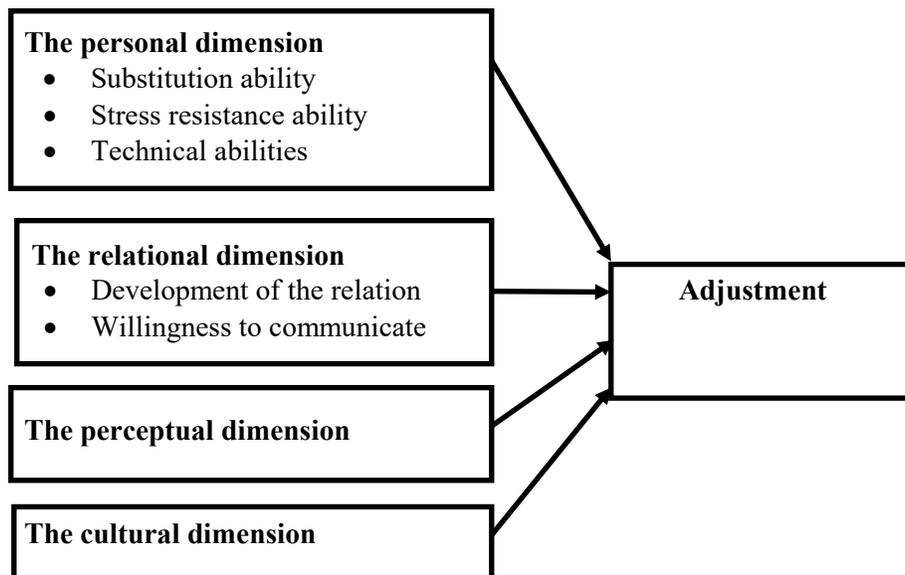
I. Adjustability and its measurement scales

Three studies have contributed significantly to the conceptualization and measurement of the concept of adjustability by identifying theoretical dimensions: Mendenhall and Oddou's (1986) study, Black's (1990) study and Cerdin's (1999) study.

1.1 Conceptualization and measurement of the concept of adjustability

Basing themselves on a review of literature in the fields of anthropology, social psychology, cross-cultural psychology and sociology, Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) propose an integrated vision of the personal abilities that allow managers to adjust to their new environment. The authors identified four dimensions of adjustability: the personal dimension, the relational dimension, the perceptual dimension and the cultural dimension. The first three dimensions are related to individual factors of adjustment. The four dimensions are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 : The dimensions of adjustability, based on Mendenhall and Oddou (1985)



The personal dimension is made up of the abilities that allow the expatriate to maintain his mental health, his psychological well-being, his self-esteem and his personal efficiency. The personal dimension can be subdivided into three different factors. The first of these sub-factors is the substitution ability, or the ability to replace activities that provide pleasure and happiness in the culture of origin for similar, yet different, activities that can be pursued in the host country (David, 1976). The second sub-factor is the ability to deal with stress, or stress resistance ability. Studies have shown that the expatriates who demonstrate a high level of adjustment are those who manage stress effectively (Abe and Wiseman, 1983; Bardo and Bardo, 1980). Mendenhall and Oddou (1991) see the ability to deal with stress as one of the main factors of success of an expatriation. Folkman et al. (1986) identify four different types of strategies that individuals use to fight against stress in the workplace, from a problem-based strategy to a symptom-based strategy. The first strategy consists in actively changing one's environment (changing the procedures); the second strategy consists in actively seeking information or training; the third strategy consists in psychologically re-evaluating the situation and the fourth strategy consists in withdrawing psychologically and day-dreaming about how things could be different, if the situation were different. Feldman and Thomas (1991) believe that the first two strategies, external and active, are positively correlated with the success of the expatriation. Finally, the third sub-factor, technical or professional abilities, represents the confidence that the expatriate manager has in his own professional abilities, in his having the necessary expertise to successfully complete his mission. Technical abilities top the list of selection criteria (Holmes and Piker, 1980) and prove to be a significant dimension of adjustment (Hawes and Kealey, 1981).

The relational dimension comprises activities that enhance the expatriate's ability to interact with the inhabitants of the host country. It can be subdivided into two factors: the ability to develop interpersonal relationships and the willingness to communicate with host nationals. The development of a relationship implies the ability to build long-lasting relationships with the host country's inhabitants (Abe and Wiseman, 1983; Hawes and Kealey, 1981). The willingness to communicate comprises the willingness to

use the host country's language as well as the willingness to understand and to build relationships with its nationals. The degree of mastery of the host country's language should facilitate the adjustment process. However, Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) show that, apart from a basic, "survival" level of understanding, the true willingness to communicate has prominence over the level of mastery of the foreign language.

The perceptual dimension corresponds to the ability to understand the meaning of the host country's inhabitants' behaviour. This ability allows the expatriate to reduce the uncertainty in interpersonal relations, thus facilitating the adjustment process. Well-adjusted expatriates tend to interpret, without judging or evaluating, the behaviour of the host country's inhabitants (Ruben and Kealey, 1979). They tend to be less rigid in their evaluations of foreign individuals' behaviour (Detweiler, 1975) and to more actively seek additional information concerning observed behaviour than other, less well-adjusted expatriates (Ratiu, 1983).

Mendenhall and Oddou's (1985) model of adjustability draws, among others, from personality traits and individual abilities identified by Ruben et al. (1976, 1977, 1979, 1983). The main contributions of their model reside in the identification of the different dimensions of adjustability and in the emphasis on the cultural factor, through the introduction of a "cultural dimension". Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) do not, however, take into account the temporal factor, which was accounted for in Ruben et al.'s (1976) methodology. In addition, Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) do not suggest a way to operationalize their model.

1.2 Measuring the dimensions of adjustability

Two authors contributed significantly to the measuring of adjustability : Black (1990) and Cerdin (1999). We present their work in the following paragraphs.

1.2.1 The adjustability of Japanese managers.

Black (1990) studied the influence of five dimensions of adjustability on the three facets of adjustment (work adjustment, interaction adjustment and general living conditions adjustment). In order to measure the five dimensions of adjustability, the author devised a series of items for which respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a seven-point Likert-type scale. The sample comprised 67 Japanese managers expatriated in the United States. In order to measure the theoretical dimensions of the substitution ability, the ability to develop relationships with host nationals and the willingness to communicate, Black (1990) based himself on Mendenhall and Oddou's (1986) theoretical description, and designed scales of cultural flexibility (8 items, $\alpha = 0.82$), social orientation (7 items, $\alpha = 0.89$) and willingness to communicate (8 items, $\alpha = 0.86$). Then, in order to measure the individual's stress resistance ability, the author used the seven items of Thomas' (1977) scale that measure the tendency to solve conflicts in a cooperative manner. Finally, Black (1990) measured the perceptual dimension through ethnocentrism, using the 20 items devised by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick and Levinson (1950).

The works of Black (1990) provide a first measure of five dimensions of expatriates' adjustability. However, the author did not directly measure the ability to reduce stress, and his ethnocentrism scale appears rather to measure authoritarianism (Black, 1990; Cerdin, 1996). In addition, the author did not conduct main components analyses on all items to ensure that the five dimensions were independent, and he did not verify the unidimensionality of his five scales. Also, the only data analyses conducted were exploratory and only the correlations between individual dimensions and facets of adjustment were examined. Finally, the small size and the nature of the sample constitute additional limitations in his

study.

1.2.2. The adjustability of French managers.

Cerdin (1996) examined six dimensions of the adjustability of French managers. His sample comprised 293 French managers expatriated in 44 countries. In order to measure the manager's *confidence in his own technical abilities*, the author devised four items. In order to measure the manager's *ability to reduce stress*, he created two items, based on Ratiu's (1983) work, that described the individual's ability to withdraw in "stable zones" when the cultural environment of the foreign culture becomes overwhelming.

In order to measure the theoretical dimensions of the *substitution ability*, *the ability to develop relationships with host nationals*, and *the willingness to communicate*, Certin (1996) used Black's (1990) scales for measuring cultural flexibility, social orientation, and willingness to communicate respectively. Finally, Cerdin (1996) operationalized the perceptual dimension through "pluralism". The author based himself on the works of Berry (1990) to generate seven items describing the acculturation strategy called pluralism, which aims at maintaining one's cultural identity while developing long-lasting relationships with members of the host country. Cerdin's (1996) whole questionnaire comprised 36 items, for which respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a five-point Likert-type scale. Through a main components analysis conducted on all items, followed by a varimax rotation, ten factors were extracted. The author retained the first six factors, and 25 items which explained 50% of the total variance. Cerdin's resulting exploratory scales are the following: confidence in his own technical abilities (4 items), ability to reduce stress (2), substitution ability (4), social orientation (4), willingness to communicate (5) and openness ability (6).

Cerdin's (1999) contribution is three-tiered. First, he measured the expatriate's confidence in his technical abilities, and Mendenhall and Oddou's (1985) perceptual dimension. Secondly, he showed six dimensions of the adjustability of French managers. Thirdly, he determined the effect of each dimension of adjustability on each of the three facets of adjustment. It is worth noting that Cerdin, Chandon and Waxin (1999), using Cerdin's (1996) data, confirmed Cerdin's (1996) exploratory model of adjustability using structural equation modelling. This study, however, presents certain limitations. First, the withdrawal ability does not seem to adequately measure stress resistance: it would be necessary to measure the expatriate's ability to actively resist to stress. In addition, the number of items (two) is insufficient for the scale to be considered reliable. Finally, the sample comprised only French managers.

The purpose of the present research is, based on the work of Cerdin (1999) and Cerdin et al. (1999), to improve the measurement scale for the six dimensions of adjustability in order to 1) reduce the number of items, 2) explain a larger percentage of the variance of adjustability and 3) better measure the ability to resist to stress. We will validate this improved scale on a sample of expatriate managers from four different cultural groups.

II. Methodology

2.1 The simplification of the scales for the first five dimensions of adjustability

In order to construct the measurement scales for the first five dimensions of adjustability (confidence in one's own technical abilities, substitution ability, social orientation, willingness to communicate and openness ability), we use Cerdin's (1996) scales, which were also used and confirmed / modified by

Cerdin, Chandon and Waxin (1999), and simplify them. The purpose of this simplification is to obtain truly distinct dimensions, each one measured by only three or four items. Elimination of superfluous items is done by analyzing Cerdin et al.'s (1999) results, and by conducting a pre-test in order to verify the understanding of each item by respondents of all cultural groups. As was the case with the final questionnaire, the pre-test was self-administered. The author distributed the pre-test among a convenience sample of 20 expatriate managers in New Delhi (5 French, 5 German, 5 Korean and 5 Scandinavian managers) met at a cultural event. In the first part of the questionnaire, the five dimensions of adjustability are defined. Respondents are then asked to link each item to one of the five dimensions of adjustability. The author, on appointment with each respondent, picked up questionnaires personally in order to get their commentaries. Detailed results of the pre-test (re-classification of the items by the 20 respondents) are presented in Appendix 1. For each item retained in the final questionnaire, we asked respondents to indicate his/her level of agreement on a seven-point Likert scale (1= Strongly disagrees, 7 = Strongly agrees).

2.2 Measuring active stress resistance

In Cerdin et al.'s (1999) confirmatory analysis, it was not possible to include Cerdin's two items concerning the withdrawal ability, as this type of analysis requires at least three items per dimension. In addition, we believe that it is preferable to measure the expatriates' ability to actively fight stress rather than their withdrawal ability. In our research, we create an index of active stress resistance (Appendix 2). Our scale comprises four items, which reflect Folkman et al.'s (1986) four types of anti-stress strategies. First, we asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with each item (which we will refer to as SR1, SR2, SR3 and SR4) on a seven-point Likert scale. Secondly, we ask respondents to distribute 100 points between the same four items (which we will refer to as SR1', SR2', SR3' and SR4'). Of these four items, we retained the first two, which specifically measure active stress resistance. In order to get the active stress resistance index, which can take values between 1 and 7, we combine the two measures taken on these two items, using the following formula:

Stress Index = $(SR1 + SR2 + p) / 3$, when $p=7 * (SR1' + SR2') / 100$.

2.3 Sample and data collection

Our sample consisted of 224 managers, of which 54 were French, 53 German, 60 Korean and 57 Scandinavian. The respondents were expatriated in the area of New Delhi, in India, where they had been working for at least eight months. The mean age of the 33 women and 191 men who participated in the study was 38 years old ($s=7.5$). Respondents reported on average 2.16 years ($s=2.35$) of prior international experience. They had been working in India for an average of 20.49 months ($s=8.89$) at the time the data was collected. The answer rate was 76%. Embassies of France, Korea, Denmark and Sweden provided lists of their national companies based in New Delhi. The director of human resources of each subsidy was contacted and asked to participate in the study, and to provide the names of their expatriate employees. Those employees subsequently received the questionnaire with a letter explaining the objectives of the research and guaranteeing the anonymity of their responses.

2.4 Analysis of the results

To test the structure of our scale, we will conduct a principal components factor analysis on the 19 items of adjustability, requesting six factors. We will conduct this analysis on the complete sample and on the four cultural samples.

III. Results

3.1 The simplification of the scales for the first five dimensions

The chart in Appendix 1 summarizes the modifications made to the scales for each dimension of adjustability.

The manager's confidence in his technical abilities. In order to measure the manager's confidence in his own technical abilities, we use Cerdin et al.'s (1999) scale. Eliminating the fourth item of Cerdin's (1996) initial scale improves the Cronbach's alpha from 0.78 to 0.85.

The substitution ability. Cerdin et al.'s (1999) study confirms Cerdin's (1996) scale. The pre-test's results lead us to eliminate items SU4 and SU5. SU4 was the item that was the least strongly linked with the latent concept (Cerdin et al., 1999). Then, following the respondents' advice, we modify SU2 to emphasize the replacement of one activity by another. Finally, basing ourselves on the results of the qualitative part of the study, we add a new item, SU3, in order to obtain a three-item scale.

The social orientation. Cerdin et al.'s (1999) work confirm Cerdin's (1996) scale. The pretest's results allow us to eliminate item SO4, which does not contain, according to our respondents, the idea of developing interpersonal relationships, but rather refers to substitution and openness abilities.

The willingness to communicate. In their confirmatory factor analysis, Cerdin et al. (1999) use seven items and obtain a Cronbach's alpha of 0.80, which is inferior to the alpha obtained by Cerdin (1996) in his exploratory analysis (0.83) with his five-item scale. We thus base ourselves on Cerdin's (1996) exploratory results. However, we eliminate item WC5, which we consider redundant with item WC1, in order to obtain a four-item scale.

The openness ability. We use Cerdin's (1996) scale for openness ability, which was confirmed by Cerdin et al. (1999). Results of the pre-test lead us to eliminate items OA4, OA5 and OA6. It is worth noting that, in Cerdin et al.'s (1999) confirmatory analysis, items OA4 and OA6 were those that were the least strongly linked to the latent concept.

In conclusion, the analysis of Cerdin et al.'s (1999) results and of the pretest lead us to eliminate seven items, modify one, and add one. We end up with 16 items related to the first five dimensions of adjustability, plus 3 items related to the active stress resistance index (SR1, SR2, Active stress resistance index score)

3.2 The dimensionality and the internal consistency of the final scales

In order to test the structure of the scale, we conduct a principal components factor analysis on the 19 items, requesting six factors.

Table 1 : Principal components analysis of the adjustability of expatriate managers (N=224)

Adjustability	1. WC	2. SA	3. SO	4. OA	5. TA	6. SR
<i>Willingness to communicate</i>						
Ask to repeat	0,81					
Use what I know	0,85					
Try to communicate	0,86					
Re-explain	0,93					
<i>Substitution ability</i>						
Replace things		0,98				
Replace activities		0,93				
Replace products		0,98				
<i>Social Orientation</i>						
Make new friends			0,92			
Being comfortable / strangers			0,91			
Being comfortable / society			0,92			
<i>Openness ability</i>						
Willingness to understand the culture				0,90		
Contacts with the host country				0,89		
Interesting initiation				0,92		
<i>Technical abilities</i>						
Confidence / abilities					0,94	
Having the abilities					0,84	
Being qualified					0,98	
<i>Active stress resistance</i>						
Take action						0,92
Seek information						0,89
Active stress resistance index score / 7						0,81
α	0,93	0,95	0,96	0,93	0,94	0,86

WC : willingness to communicate, SA : substitution ability, SO : social orientation, OA : openness ability, TA : confidence in one's technical abilities, SR : active stress resistance ability

On the global sample, the principal components analysis with a varimax rotation on the 19 items of adjustability shows that they can be regrouped into six factors, which correspond to the six expected dimensions of adjustability. Each scale has a strong internal consistency, a percentage of explained variance explained by the first axis superior to 78% and a Cronbach's alpha superior to 0.86. *On the national samples*, the principal components factor analysis reveals the existence of the six dimensions of adjustability, composed of the expected items. The structure of adjustability in six dimensions is thus stable in all the countries of origin of our respondents. Each one of the scales shows a percentage of explained variance by the first axis superior to 73% and adequate internal consistency, with Cronbach's alphas superior to 0.82.

The simplified scales have a better internal consistence than Black's (1990) and Cerdin's (1996) original scales, for which the alpha coefficients varied from 0.63 to 0.83. The percentage of variance of adjustability explained by the six dimensions is clearly improved: Cerdin (1996) explains 50% of the variance with six axes and 25 items, while we explain 87% of the variance with as many axes and 19 items, instead of 35. We have verified that the structure of adjustability remained stable in the different countries of our research.

Conclusion

Additional empirical studies would be useful in order to complement our attempt to more precisely define the concept of adjustability. First, measurement of "stress resistance ability" could be improved. Researches could focus on the different strategies chosen by individuals when they face stressful situations. Simultaneous utilization of different strategies might, for instance, constitute one measure of this dimension. In addition, results of the confirmatory analyses would be welcome to confirm the exploratory results. To be able to generalize results, we would need to validate the stability of the number of dimensions of adjustability and the stability of their internal structure on samples of expatriates of different nationalities.

Our research, however, allowed us to propose an improved measurement scale of adjustability, a scale that comprises fewer items and that can be used more easily in researches on cross-cultural adjustment. We have indeed simplified the measures of the first five dimensions of adjustability and have operationalized active stress resistance by creating an index based on Folkman et al. (1986)'s work. Finally, we showed that the structure of adjustability remained stable for the different countries of our research.

The managerial implications of this research rest in the field of recruitment of expatriate managers or of any other person affected by cross-cultural adjustment. Corporations, nowadays, attach too much importance to technical abilities and past performances (Black and Gregersen, 1999). Waxin (2003, 2004) shows that the different dimensions of adjustability play a part, of varying importance, in facilitating work adjustment, interaction adjustment and general living conditions adjustment. All these dimensions should therefore be taken into consideration.

Appendix 1

Results of the pre-test of the adjustability questionnaire

Code	Items	TA	SA	SO	WC	OA*
TA1	I have confidence in my professional abilities to carry out this international assignment.	20				
TA2	I have already made use of similar competences to those that I need on my job abroad.	20				
TA3	I am professionally qualified for this job abroad.	20				
SA1	Even though a foreign country might not have things I enjoy at home, it would be easy for me to find new ones		20			
SA2	If certain activities that I enjoy in my country of origin are not available in the host country, I easily replace them with other activities which are available, and which I learn to appreciate.		14			6
SA4	Most foreign countries have interesting and fun activities which are not common at home (eliminated)		9			11
SA5	Because I make new friends easily, being away from home would not make me miss it much (eliminated)		4	12		4
SO1	It is easy for me to make new friends		2	16		2
SO2	I feel comfortable when I encounter foreigners			17		3
SO3	In general, I am comfortable in social settings even when there are lots of people I do not know			19		1
SO4	I adjust easily to new ways of doing things (eliminated)		10			10
WC1	If I were speaking with a foreigner in their native language and they said something important but I did not understand, I would ask them to explain it again				20	
WC2	Even if I couldn't speak a foreign language well, I would try to use what I knew			2	18	
WC3	Even though I make mistakes, I enjoy trying to communicate with foreigners			2	18	
WC4	If a foreigner didn't understand what I said, I'd be willing to explain it a couple of different times if I needed to.				20	
OA1	Abroad, I look to understand the host national culture					20
OA2	Having many contacts with the nationals of the host country is important when abroad			2		18
OA3	Learning about other cultures is interesting and fun					20
OA4	I enjoy trying new foods and dishes (eliminated)		10	1		9
OA5	Meeting and getting to know people from other countries is interesting and enjoyable. (eliminated)			10		10
OA6	I wish I had more foreign friends (eliminated)			10		10

SA3 : added : If a **product** which I use in my home country is not available in the host country, I easily replace it with another product that I can find locally

Appendix 2

Active stress resistance measurement

You have discovered a new culture and a new job at the same time. How do you deal with this stressful situation? Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements (1 = Strongly disagrees, 7 = Strongly agrees)

SR1. I take action.

SR2. I actively seek help or additional information.

SR3. I try to see things in a positive light.

SR4. I try to forget about the problem and I deal with the consequences of stress.

Generally speaking, when you face a stressful situation, how do you react? Distribute 100 points among the four statements

SR1'. I take action. points

SR2'. I actively seek help or additional information. points

SR3'. I try to see things in a positive light. points

SR4'. I try to forget about the problem and I deal with the consequences of stress. points

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