



# Challenges and Adjustment of Self-Initiated Expatriates in Türkiye<sup>1</sup>

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Türkiye'ye Kendi İsteğiyle Göç Edenlerin Yaşadıkları Zorluklar ve Uyum Süreçleri	Challenges and Adjustment of Self-Initiated Expatriates in Türkiye
<p><b>Öz</b></p> <p>Göç ve göç edenlerin uyum sürecine ilişkin çalışmalar incelendiğinde, Türkiye'ye kendi isteğiyle göç edenlerin karşılaştıkları sorunlara odaklanan sınırlı sayıda çalışma olduğu gözlemlenmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'ye kendi isteğiyle göç edenlerin karşılaştıkları zorlukları ve uyum süreçlerini analiz etmektir. Örneklem seçiminde amaçlı örnekleme kullanılmıştır. İstanbul'da yaşayan ve çalışan 7 ülkeden 11 kişiyle görüşülmüş ve nitel verileri yorumlamak için tematik analiz kullanılmıştır. MAXQDA 2018 veri analiz programından yararlanılmıştır. Çalışmada yer değiştirme nedenleri, zorluklar, göç edenlerin uyumunu kolaylaştıran faktörler, uyumda başa çıkma stratejileri ve Türkiye'de kalma niyeti olmak üzere beş ana tema belirlenmiştir.</p>	<p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>In the study of expatriation and expatriate adjustment, there are limited studies that focus on issues faced by self-initiated expatriates in Türkiye. The objective of this study is to analyse the challenges and adjustment of self-initiated expatriates in Türkiye. Purposive sampling was used for participant selection. 11 expatriates from 7 countries living and working in Istanbul were interviewed and thematic analysis was used to interpret the qualitative data. MAXQDA 2018 data analytic program was utilized. The study identified five main themes: reasons of relocation, challenges, factors facilitating the expatriate adjustment, coping strategies in adjustment and intent to stay in Türkiye.</p>
<p><b>Anahtar Kelimeler:</b> Kendi İsteğiyle Göç Edenler, Zorluklar, Göç Edenlerin Uyumunu.</p>	<p><b>Keywords:</b> Self-initiated Expatriate, Challenges, Expatriate Adjustment.</p>
<p><b>JEL Kodları:</b> M10, M12, M19</p>	<p><b>JEL Codes:</b> M10, M12, M19</p>

<p><b>Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Beyanı</b></p>	<p>Bu çalışma İstanbul Okan Üniversitesi Etik Kurulu tarafından 5.06.2024 tarih ve Karar 21 ile alınan Etik Kurul Onay Belgesi ile bilimsel araştırma ve yayın etiği kurallarına uygun olarak hazırlanmıştır.</p>
<p><b>Yazarların Makaleye Olan Katkıları</b></p>	<p>Yazar 1'in makaleye katkısı %50, Yazar 2'nin makaleye katkısı %50'dir</p>
<p><b>Çıkar Beyanı</b></p>	<p>Yazarlar açısından ya da üçüncü taraflar açısından çalışmadan kaynaklı çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Bu çalışma, Eya Khemiri'nin Dr. Öğr. Üyesi F. Nazlı Sayğan Yağız danışmanlığında yazdığı aynı adlı yüksek lisans tezinden türetilmiştir.

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## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, the phenomenon of expatriation has garnered significant scholarly and practical interest. Expatriates, defined as individuals who relocate temporarily in a host country have been the subject of extensive research (Jannesari, et al., 2017; Platanitis, 2018; Shaffer, et al., 1999; Shaffer, et al., 2012; Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė, et al., 2022).

Türkiye has drawn a large number of expatriates in recent years due to wars and immigration. Some of these expatriates are self-initiated and some are assigned expatriates. Expatriates, who are assigned by the company, start to work in Türkiye with certain rights and advantages. However, in addition to those assigned by the company, there are also expatriates who voluntarily leave their country and choose to work in Türkiye. These expatriates are called self-initiated expatriates. Self-initiated expatriates are different from assigned expatriates. They decide to work abroad with no organizational support, often with less favorable work contract where as assigned expatriates who are sent abroad by their company, usually receive beneficial expatriate contracts (Biemann and Andresen, 2010).

The purpose of this study is to comprehensively examine the challenges and adjustment of self-initiated expatriates in Türkiye. The study investigates the challenges experienced by self-initiated expatriates when adjusting to living and working in Türkiye, the factors that facilitate their adjustment, their intent to stay in Türkiye, the coping strategies employed to facilitate their adjustment and the reasons of relocation. In recent years, there has been a growing body of research on expatriates both self-initiated expatriates and assigned expatriates (Dousin and Sulong, 2021; Jannesari, et al., 2017; Oh and Jang, 2021). However, the number of studies on self-initiated expatriates in Türkiye is limited (Alpaslan Danışmani 2017). Alpaslan Danışman (2017)'s study is on self-initiated expatriate academics in Türkiye. In this context, this study aims to contribute to the literature by focusing on self-initiated expatriates.

In order to provide a comprehensive knowledge of the challenges and adjustment, this study utilizes from qualitative research method. Within the scope of the study, structured interview questions were used and interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of 11 self-initiated expatriates living and working in Istanbul. This study intends to contribute to the body of knowledge on self-initiated expatriates in Türkiye. Scientific contributions to the self-initiated expatriate experience, can help organizations and policy makers to create policies and programmes that support expatriates' adjustment and maximize the potential of foreign talent.

## 2. Theoretical Frameworks and Literature Review

### 2.1. Theoretical Frameworks

This study adopted two theoretical frameworks. The first theory, referred to as the "push and pull" theory, is a set of contextual frameworks that pinpoint the reasons why people relocate abroad from their country of origin (Castles, et al., 2014: 28). The push and pull theory is frequently used in international migration studies to investigate the reasons that force individuals to migrate (Parkins, 2010). While the theory is used extensively in the international migration literature, it is also used in the expatriate literature. Push and pull theory includes push and pull factors that affect the individuals to move to the host country. Push and pull factors influence expatriates' relocation from their home country to the host country. Push factors are negative factors that encourage individuals to leave their country of

origin. These factors push the individuals to leave their home country. The individuals are dissatisfied with the current state of affairs in their home country and consider about leaving. Economic factors, political instability, and a lack of autonomy in their home country are some of the push factors driving expatriates away from their home country (Richardson and Mallon, 2005). On the other hand, pull factors are positive features of the host country that attract individuals to move there. These factors include better work opportunities, better living conditions, better healthcare facilities, religious tolerance and better security (Urbanski, 2022).

The second theory utilised in this study is socialization resources theory. According to socialization resources theory, newcomers who have recently joined the organization may encounter challenges in adjustment and socializing process. This is due to the lack of sufficient information regarding the organizational structure, culture and the behaviours expected of them, which may result in a sense of alienation. Newcomers require socialization resources such as training (prior to entry) or orientation programs (post-entry) to help them adjust and socialize. The availability of socialization resources is critical for the successful adjustment to a new environment (Saks and Gruman, 2012: 27). Fang, McAllister, and Duffy (2017) identified that vertical connections to high-status organization members and horizontal ties with peers are significant for newcomers' adjustment. It is also evident that socialization resources play a pivotal role in facilitating the adjustment of expatriates (Oh and Jang, 2021: 18). Oh and Jang (2021) found that training programs of organizations and support from colleagues and supervisors increased expatriates' adjustment. Dousin and Sulong (2021) found that the lack of pre-departure training made the expatriates' adjustment more difficult. The expatriates needed extensive pre-departure cross-cultural trainings focusing on Saudi culture, basic local language and host-country organization (Dousin and Sulong, 2021).

## **2.2. Expatriate Adjustment**

Expatriate adjustment is defined as the degree of fit between the expatriate and the new environment in both work and nonwork domains or the perceived degree of comfort and familiarity with the foreign culture (Aycan, 1997; Lee and Liu, 2006). According to Ward and Kennedy (1996), adjustment occurs when the expatriates are able to integrate effectively into their work and daily life in their host country.

Expatriate adjustment has been described by Black and his colleagues (Black and Gregersen, 1991; Black, et al., 1991) as having three dimensions: work, interaction and general adjustment. Work adjustment is the individual's adaptation to work and job requirements, interaction adjustment is the individual's ability to establish and develop personal relationships with host country nationals, while general adjustment is the individual's adaptation to the country in general, to the country conditions and culture (Black and Gregersen, 1991; Black, et al., 1991).

## **2.3. Facilitators of Adjustment**

The facilitators of expatriate adjustment have been the focus of much research in the literature. This study includes the facilitators of expatriate adjustment identified in previous studies. Based on the existing literature, it is classified as personal characteristics, work characteristics, social support and spouse support (Black and Stephens, 1989; Aycan, 1997; Jannesari, et al., 2017; Chen and Shaffer, 2018; Bayraktar, 2019; Oh and Jang, 2021; Derksen, et al., 2023; Teagarden and Gordon, 1995)

Personality characteristics is related to how individuals adapt to a new setting, how they view themselves in a different cultural context, and how they handle challenges in an unfamiliar setting. Expatriate adjustment has been strongly correlated with some personal characteristics such as being open and responsive to new experiences, commonly referred to as "open-mindedness" and being willing to learn and explore, sometimes referred to as "curiosity" (Teagarden and Gordon, 1995).

Work characteristics have a significant impact on the expatriate adjustment. Supportive co-workers, supervisors and organizational support play a key role in the expatriate's sense of welcome and inclusion (Jannesari, et al., 2017; Shaffer, et al., 1999). According to the findings of Shaffer et al. (1999), logistical support and coworker support were significant positive predictors of expatriate adjustment. Jannesari et al (2017) found that adjustment was associated with supportive supervisor relationships. Furthermore, language and cultural training provided by the organization facilitated adjustment (Konopaske and Werner, 2005; Shaffer, et al., 1999). Accordnig to Fu et al. (2017: 182) organizational socialization tactics facilitated social integration and learning speed, which, in turn, were positively related to self initiated expatriate adjustment. Lueke and Svyantek (2000: 380) mentions the importance of socialization tactics and the effect of these tactics on reducing expatriate turnover. Oh and Jang (2021: 16) found that supportive work environment facilitated self initiated expatriates' work adjustment and workplace learning led to role clarification were positively related to work adjustment.

Social support is defined as the quantity and quality of friendships or supportive relationships that provide either needed information, emotional support or practical help in coping with difficult circumstances. In some studies, expatriates' social support sources have been categorised in three categories: home country nationals, host country nationals and other expatriates (Bayraktar, 2019; Takeuchi and Chen, 2013). It is important for expatriates to receive support from home country relatives and friends in overcoming their negative emotions and coping with difficulties. Being in contact with home country nationals increases the individual's self-confidence and makes them feel less alone. Secondly, host country nationals also provide invaluable insights into the local culture, customs, and social norms. They provide emotional support, practical advice and help in navigating unfamiliar situations, thereby fostering a sense of belonging and connection to the host country. The last item in the classification of social support is other expatriates. Other expatriates make the expatriate feel that he or she is not alone and help the expatriate adapt by reducing feelings of victimization. They also provide information about the host environment through the eyes of 'similar others', share their experiences and help the newcomer to fit into new networks they have already established (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002).

Spouse support is another facilitator of adjustment. Spouses provide social support to their partners. They help with the challenges of relocation, provide companionship and help with integration into the new environment (Black and Stephens, 1989; Shaffer, et al., 1999: 573).

## 2.4. Challenges

The challenges faced by expatriates in host countries represent a significant area of research and concern in the field of international business and cross-cultural management. As globalization facilitates the movement of professionals across borders, understanding and addressing these challenges is paramount for individuals, organizations and policymakers (Shaffer, et al., 2012). This study includes the challenges identified in previous studies. Based on the existing literature, it is classified as new social culture, new organizational culture, language barrier, job related factors and lack of organizational support, host country nationals' attitudes and expatriates' emotional challenges (Black, et al., 1991; Bonache, et al., 2016; Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002; Kraimer and Wayne, 2004; Ward and Kennedy, 1996).

New social culture represents a critical challenge for expatriates embarking on international assignments. This challenge involves the process of adjusting to unfamiliar social norms, values, and customs prevalent in the host country. In essence, adapting to a new social culture involves aligning one's behavior and attitude patterns with the norms and expectations prevailing in the host country. This requires learning about differences in communication styles, social etiquette, and interpersonal dynamics that can significantly affect the quality of relationships and interactions with local colleagues and communities (Takeuchi, 2010)

New organizational culture plays an important role in assisting expatriates with their adjustment process (Shaffer, et al., 1999: 573). Expatriate adjustment is significantly influenced by the extent to which the new organizational culture is congruent with, or divergent from, the expatriate's home culture or previous organizational culture. A congruent culture may facilitate a smoother adjustment by providing a familiar context and reducing uncertainty. Conversely, a divergent culture may present challenges, requiring expatriates to adjust their behavior, communication styles and ways of working (Black and Stephens, 1989; Shaffer, Harrison, and Gilley, 1999). The process of an individual comparing the organisational culture of their home country and the host country, and subsequently identifying the differences between them, is referred to as organisational cultural novelty (Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė, et al., 2022).

The language barrier is a major challenge for expatriates. Communication is fundamental to workplace interactions and social integration. Language barriers can lead to miscommunication. The language barrier is potentially high where cultures are very different and languages don't share a common alphabet (Selmer, 2006: 354).

Black, et. al. (1991) identify four job-related factors that an expatriate has to deal with when entering a new culture. These are role clarity, role discretion, role conflict and role novelty. Role clarity refers to the degree to which an expatriate understands the expectations, responsibilities and limits associated with his or her job role in the host country. According to Rizzo et al. (1970), role clarity occurs when employees understand their jobs and expectations. Role discretion is defined as the degree of autonomy and freedom expatriates have in making decisions and performing their job duties. Role discretion allows the individual to reshape the work role to suit their own needs, rather than having to adapt to the situation (Black, et al., 1991). Role conflict occurs when an expatriate is faced with incompatible demands or expectations within his or her job role. Role novelty refers to the extent to which the tasks and duties of a new role differ from those performed in the past (Black, 1988). In other words, role novelty refers to the degree of newness and difference that an expatriate

experiences in his or her job role when transitioning from the home country to the host country. It includes changes in job responsibilities, work processes, cultural norms and the overall work environment (Kawai and Mohr, 2015: 166).

According to organizational support theory employees form an overall impression of how much the company values them and their contributions (Shore and Shore, 1995). When a company fails to provide its employees with adequate resources, support, and direction, employees lack organizational support (Kraimer and Wayne, 2004). The lack of organizational support can have a detrimental influence on expatriate adjustment. The lack of organizational support can increase stress and anxiety (Andreason, 2003).

Attitudes of host country nationals towards expatriates can have a profound and detrimental effect on the expatriate adjustment. These attitudes, which can take the form of prejudice, discrimination or hostility, can significantly impede both professional and personal adjustment, leading to various challenges for expatriates (Bonache, et al., 2016).

Expatriates' emotional challenges include emotional states such as anxiety and stress that expatriates feel in the host country. Some expatriates may view living and working in a new country as a challenging experience that frequently results in emotional frustration (Platanitis, 2018).

### **2.5. Coping Strategies in Expatriate Adjustment**

Coping is defined as "efforts to manage (i.e., overcome, tolerate, reduce, minimize) environmental (e.g., cultural differences) and internal demands (e.g., role conflict) and conflicts between them that exceed a person's resources" (Lazarus and Launier, 1978: 311). According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) the coping strategies are divided into two groups as problem focused coping strategies and emotion focused coping strategies. Problem-focused coping strategies involve taking active steps to directly address and resolve the issues that are causing stress. By using these strategies, expatriates seek out information to solve the problems they are experiencing (Folkman, et al., 1986). For example, an expatriate seeking advice from a neighbour about where to buy food, or an expatriate seeking advice from a cultural coach about how best to present material to a client in the host country, are both engaging in problem-focused coping strategies (Stahl and Caligiuri, 2005: 604).

In some research, emotion focused coping strategies are referred to as symptom focused coping strategies (Bennett, et al., 1995; Leana, et al., 1998; Selmer, 1999; Selmer and Leung, 2007). These two concepts are synonymous. Emotion-focused coping strategies refer to the regulation of emotions resulting from stress. Emotion-focused coping strategies aim to manage the emotional distress and psychological impact of expatriation. According to Selmer (2001) emotion-focused coping strategies attempt to minimize anxiety by withdrawing from the situation, either physically or mentally, or by avoiding the problem. For instance, an expatriate who withdraws into the expatriate enclave due to feelings of discomfort in interacting with host nationals is employing an emotion-focused coping strategy (Stahl and Caligiuri, 2005: 604).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Method**

In this study, qualitative research methods were used. Qualitative research methods are used to explore and understand complex phenomena in depth. The qualitative research method enables the investigator to delve deeper into a phenomena and acquire a deeper understanding of the research issues. This approach is particularly suitable for investigating subjective experiences, perceptions, attitudes and behaviors (Zikmund, et al., 2010). In order to understand and explain the challenges and adjustment of self-initiated expatriates, structured interview questions were conducted.

#### **3.2. Research Participants**

In qualitative research, sample size is determined depending on data saturation. Data saturation is an indication that shows the timing to complete the research. Data saturation indicates that the researcher have collected enough data and there is no need to collect more data and make more interview. Data saturation occurs when additional information no longer creates a new understanding (Liamputtong, 2009). Reaching main themes or secondary themes based on the existing theory, and the fact that new themes do not emerge in new interviews indicate that the data have reached saturation (Francis, ve diğeri, 2010: 1233). The interviews are finalised when the data reaches saturation.

According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007), for data saturation, researchers should look at similar qualitative studies on similar topics before determining the appropriate sample size. The researcher can decide on the sample size by considering the sample sizes used in the similar studies (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007). Considering the studies conducted on self-initiated expatriates, the number of samples is expected to be in the range of 9-32 (Alpaslan Danisman, 2017; Ellis, Thorn, and Yao, 2020; Oh and Jang, 2021). In this context, interviews are decided to be conducted with at least 9 individuals until data saturation is reached. In this study, data saturation was reached with 11 participants and the interviews were terminated.

To increase reliability, only self-initiated expatriates were included in the study. Interviews were conducted with purposive sample of 11 participants in Istanbul. The participants of the research are the self-initiated expatriates currently staying and working in Istanbul. They are working in Türkiye for a period of more than one year. They are mostly professionals working in different sectors such as education, fashion, tourism and furniture. No sectoral distinction was made when determining the sample. The criteria used to select the sample were that participants should have at least a bachelor's degree, be self-initiated expatriates and have been working in Türkiye for more than one year.

In determining the sample, no restrictions were made on gender, marital status, duration of employment in Türkiye and nationality. Sinangil and Ones (2003: 470) found no effect of gender on adjustment in their study of 193 expatriates from 36 different countries working in Türkiye. Similarly, in their study of self-initiated expatriates in the UAE, A. Isakovic and Forseth Whitman (2013) discovered that adjustment did not differ by gender, marital status or nationality. Also Alpaslan Danisman (2017: 25) found no relation between adjustment of self-initiated expatriates and demographic characteristics such as age, marital status and career length in Türkiye. However, despite these findings, some studies found that gender (Alpaslan Danisman, 2017; Caligiuri and Tung, 1999; Caligiuri et al. 1999). and cultural novelty (difference in culture between home country and host country) could affect adjustment

(Kraimer et al., 2001. Mamman, 1995). It is not possible to say that there is a unity in the literature on this subject. In this study, while determining the sample, it was assumed that gender, marital status, career length or nationality would not affect adjustment based on the relevant literature (Alpaslan Danisman, 2017; A. Isakovic and Forseth Whitman 2013; Sinangil and Ones, 2003) and the sample was determined.

Participation in the study was voluntary and consent was obtained for confidentiality and anonymity purposes. The names of the respondents were withheld and not shared in the research. Numbers such as “participant 1, 2” were used to protect their confidentiality. The demographic information of the participants is as in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic information of participants

Number of Participants	Gender *	Age	Marital Status**	Country	Duration of Employment in Türkiye	Profession
Participant 1	F	27	M	Egypt	3	Expert in an educational consultancy corporation
Participant 2	M	31	S	Pakistan	1	Lecturer in a high school
Participant 3	M	22	S	Yemen	2	Fashion model
Participant 4	M	25	S	Tunisia	3	English teacher in a language school
Participant 5	M	30	S	Tunisia	5	International business operation director
Participant 6	M	30	S	Tunisia	3	Ceo of an agency
Participant 7	M	32	S	Iraq	2	Sales manager in a furniture company
Participant 8	M	26	S	Morocco	2	Sales specialist in an education agency
Participant 9	F	30	M	Ukraine	10	Receptionist in a hotel
Participant 10	F	25	S	Tunisia	2	International relations manager in a medical tourism company.
Participant 11	F	34	S	Romania	6	Lecturer in a university

\*F: Female, M: Male

\*\* M: Married, S. Single

The expatriates whose demographic characteristics are shared in the Table 1 above are from seven different countries, namely Tunisia, Yemen, Ukraine, Romania, Iraq, Morocco and Pakistan. Four of the participants are female and seven are male. Two of the participants are married and the remaining participants are single. The age range of the participants is between 25 and 34.



### 3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Data were gathered involving face-to-face and online interviews with participants in which appointments were set before the meeting. The interviews were conducted on an individual basis, using structured questions. The 21 interview questions are centred around the main themes of the study including what is the reason that pushes you to work here? What motivated you to move to Türkiye? What are the challenges that you faced in Türkiye? The questions focused on the interviewee's perceptions about working in Türkiye, the challenges encountered and his/ her adjustment process. The face to face interviews were facilitated using a voice recorder and online interviews were recorded. The data from the face to face and online interviews were transcribed and further analyzed through thematic analysis.

In qualitative research, thematic analysis serves as a useful method for examining textual data in order to reveal underlying themes and sub-themes. In this research, MAXQDA 2018 data analytic software was utilized. The text has been imported into MAXQDA 2018 and thematic analysis has been conducted using this software.

All interview data were analysed using coding techniques (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), and thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was used to conceptualise the findings of the study. This method identifies and analyses patterns of meaning in a data set and illustrates which themes are important (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Table 2 illustrates how the coding process evolved from first-order codes to aggregate dimensions explaining participants' expatriate experiences. First-order codes are generated by analysing the participants' statements by commonalities. This is followed by the second-order theme, which focuses on the conceptual constructs. Finally, the second-order themes are grouped into main themes (aggregate dimensions). The codes and themes were reviewed by two experts other than the researcher. Compatibility between the two experts was checked.

### 4. Findings

Based on the analysis, the following codes, second-order themes and aggregate dimensions were reached:

Table 2: Qualitative data structure

First-order codes	Second- Order Theme	Aggregate Dimensions
"I was attracted to the opportunity" (P1)	Work opportunity	Reasons of relocation
"education quality, culture, development" (P8)	Personal reasons	
"Türkiye is a growing economy" (P4)	Economic reasons	
"there is huge language barrier in Türkiye." (P2)	Language barrier	Challenges
"I didn't get used to it, but I tried to adapt" (P7)	Cultural challenges	
"Racism among the Turkish people has spread so much" (P7)	Host country nationals' negative attitudes	
"The challenge of high prices that occurred in the last year" (P7)	Economic challenges	
"Missing my friends and family" (P4)	Expatriates' emotional challenges	
"I benefited from an orientation program about culture and language" (P11)	Organizational support	
"My husband is Turkish and he is helping me to adjust" (P1)	Spouse support	

"I am lucky to have strong family support ..." (P11)	Family support	<b>Factors facilitating the expatriate adjustment</b>
"It's easy to adapt. Especially being surrounded with foreigners" (P6)	Expatriate friends' support	
"...trying as much as possible to get support from local friends when I have to interact with authorities, or to go to crowded places". (P11)	Host country nationals' support	
"Being receptive to cultural differences and avoiding prejudice made it relatively easy for me to adjust". (P2)	Personal characteristics	
"It wasn't my first time abroad" (P8)	Previous international work experience	
"..Joined language exchange programs" (P1)	Attending courses	<b>Coping strategies in adjustment</b>
"I've actively participated in local events ..." (P1)	Participating to local activities	
"I'm planning to go home for a while" (P4)	Returning to home country	<b>Intent to stay in Türkiye</b>
"..Open and confident for moving to other countries." (P11)	Being open to work in other countries	
"I will continue to live in Türkiye". (P9)	Desire to stay in Türkiye	

As a result of data analysis (as shown in Table 2), three main themes were found that push the participants to relocate such as personal reasons, work opportunities and economic reasons.

#### 4.1. Reasons of Relocation

As a result of data analysis, three main themes were found that pushed the participants to relocation such as personal reasons, work opportunities and economic reasons.

##### 4.1.1. Personal Reasons

Almost all of the expatriates interviewed mentioned that the reasons for relocation were personal reasons in their lives.

P2 said, "My cause to come here to Türkiye was to get an MBA degree and to get diversified experience. Which I got greatly, I'm happy with my decision". In addition, he added he relocated to Türkiye "to explore and get experiences of Turkish workplaces".

P6 stated, " .... assume responsibilities, explore a new country and culture, and foster relationships with individuals from diverse backgrounds are aspects of my experience " .

P7 mentioned that religion is one of the causes of his relocation to Türkiye. He said "... it is a Muslim country with a European character, and I can work and study there". Also, he added he loved "the beautiful nature and diversity that exists in Türkiye, especially in Istanbul".

P1 mentioned "I was attracted ..... to immerse myself in the rich culture of Türkiye."

P4 said "I enjoy being in this country plus I got to learn a lot about it".

P11 said "Personal and family reasons" prompted her to move to Türkiye.

As for P8, the reasons were different and many, the main ones was "... education quality, culture, development, these were the main reasons why I moved here to study my master degree, and about what actually influenced me to relocate here is to study master degree".

But for P10, the distance between her country and Türkiye was a reason and also the visa requirement "Two main reasons were that it doesn't require visa, and second it's nearby my home country so I could go back anytime I want".

Participants who relocated to Türkiye for personal reasons were from Egypt, Pakistan, Tunisia, Iraq, Morocco and Romania. These participants, from various cultural backgrounds, stated that they came to Türkiye for personal reasons rather than job opportunities or economic reasons. Personal reasons included loving Türkiye's history and culture, registering to MBA programs in Türkiye, proximity to my home country, and the desire to discover a new country and culture.

#### **4.1.2 Work Opportunity**

Two of the participants mentioned work opportunities as a reason for relocation.

P1 said, “ I was attracted to the opportunity to contribute to the vibrant academic community at my organization and to immerse myself in the rich culture of Türkiye ” .

P3, who is a fashion model, said, “The modern knowledge of fashion, meeting the most experienced people on fashion and collaboration with the big companies”.

A small number of participants mentioned they relocated to Türkiye for work opportunities. Türkiye's current economic conditions and job opportunities may not appeal to expatriates.

#### **4.1.3 Economic Reasons**

Two of the participants mentioned economic reasons. P4 mentioned that his reason was “The fact that Türkiye is a growing economy with a good quality educational system, also the diversification of the country and especially Istanbul”.

P9 stated, “The salary level was much higher than in my country; most likely earnings were the most important reason for working in Türkiye ”.

Few participants of this study indicated economic considerations were a factor in their decision to relocate to Türkiye. The prevailing economic conditions may render Türkiye a less appealing country for those seeking to relocate abroad. Indeed, the majority of participants in the study did not mention economic reasons as a motivating factor for residing in Türkiye. In studies from previous years, the majority of expatriates stated economic reasons as the reason for migrating to Türkiye (Mutlu, 1998; Özkan, 2010). Mutlu (1998) found that economic reasons were effective in expatriates moving to Türkiye. Expatriates accepted to work in Türkiye in order to have better living standards. Similarly, Özkan (2010:33) also revealed that Asian expatriates mostly relocated to Istanbul in order to have better living standards compared to their home countries.

#### **4.2 Challenges**

As a result of data analysis, there were found five second-order themes under this main theme: the language barrier, cultural challenges, host country nationals' negative attitudes, economic challenges and expatriates' emotional challenges.

##### **4.2.1 Language Barrier**

Four of the participants mentioned the language barrier as a challenge.

P2 stated “There is a huge language barrier in Türkiye. Turkish people are really in fewer numbers, if we talk about the English language”.

P1 also voiced out her views by mentioning, “Language barriers initially posed a challenge, but with language courses and practice, I have overcome this obstacle. Additionally, adapting to certain cultural nuances required time and patience” .

P11 stated her opinion by saying that "... It was difficult, especially due to the language barrier..".

As for P4, Turkish language was hard to learn because it is different and it mixes words from many languages, he confirmed: " it is not an easy language I think " .

This study demonstrated that expatriates encounter challenges in communicating with locals due to language barriers. The relatively low prevalence of bilingual or multilingual individuals in society presents a significant challenge for expatriates in communication. Similarly, Alpaslan Danisman (2017) discovered that language barriers are the most common challenge for self-initiated expatriates in Türkiye. According to Özkan (2010), language barriers are a major challenge for expatriates in Türkiye. Özkan (2010: 29) discovered that Asian expatriates encountered significant challenges when attempting to perform daily routines such as shopping, ordering food at a restaurant, or giving directions in a taxi. This was largely attributed to the fact that the locals do not speak English. Contrary to these findings, Mutlu (1998) found that the majority of European and American expatriate managers did not experience a language barrier in Türkiye. Approximately eighty percent of these managers stated that they could not create a social circle in Türkiye. It is possible that these individuals did not perceive a language barrier because they primarily interacted with people in their immediate surroundings and were not inclined to engage in communication with local residents.

#### **4.2.2 Cultural Challenges**

Most of the participants mentioned the cultural challenges.

P3 stated on this problem that the two cultures "are pretty similar to each other but in my country, people always welcome foreigners as one of them which is not available in Türkiye they never let you feel that you are one of them" .

P5 said that there were differences in "the food, the language and the traditions" .

P7 stated "I didn't get used to it, but I tried to adapt".

P8 said "... my country is more conservative, my country is more open to foreigners ..." .

P10 shared the same opinion also by saying "... we are more open-minded I believe ...".

P9 affirmed "I won't say that I'm used to the culture of Türkiye, but I respect it but I'm still closer to the culture of my native country" .

Cultural differences between countries can present challenges for expatriates. The process of adjusting to the host country's culture can be difficult for some expatriates, particularly when cultural norms and values are starkly different from the home country (Kraimer et al., 2001). Özkan (2010) found that most of the Asian expatriates experienced cultural challenges in Istanbul due to the lack of certain food items and tea houses or entertainment venues specific to their country and culture. In this study, the participants who stated that they experienced cultural challenges are from Yemen, Tunisia, Iraq, Morocco and Ukraine. Based on these findings, it is possible to say that the participants who experienced cultural challenges were from many different cultures. Participants from both the Middle East and North Africa region and Europe expressed that they had difficulties. Ukrainian P9, who had the longest stay in Türkiye, stated that she had not fully adapted to Türkiye despite living here for ten years. Another participant who experienced cultural challenges was P5, a Tunisian who had been in Türkiye for five years. It is interesting that P10 and P5 continue to

experience cultural challenges despite their long stay in Türkiye. The length of stay of the other participants who reported experiencing cultural challenges in Türkiye was 2 years, relatively less than that of P5 and P10.

According to some studies, in countries where female labor force participation is low, women have less of a place in social life, and being a single woman is difficult, expatriate women may face more cultural challenges than men due to their gender (Caligiuri and Tung, 1999; Caligiuri et al. 1999). According to 2022 data shared by İŞKUR (Employment and Worker Agency), the number of men working in Istanbul is twice the number of women. Although women's participation in labor is lower than men's, Türkiye is a country where women and men take part in social life together. None of the women in the sample stated that they experienced a gender-related challenge. In the sample of 11, only two out of four women expressed cultural difficulties.

#### **4.2.3 Host Country Nationals' Negative Attitudes**

Most of the participants reported a generally positive experience with the local population; however, four individuals expressed negative experiences with the host country nationals.

P3 said “.. only educated people in Türkiye are those who are welcoming people, sometimes I got disturbed by ignorant people in the street sometimes ..” .

Moreover, P6 stated, “... I had some issues concerning welcoming or any kind of contact between a foreigner and a Turkish citizen ...”.

P7 articulated his experiences with racism, emphasizing the pervasiveness of this phenomenon in Turkish society. He stated, “Racism among the Turkish people has spread so much that I no longer feel comfortable because of the harassment” .

P11 stated her opinion by saying “We all experienced probably various approaches in the crowded touristic places .. very insisting or even rude behavior. However, in traffic especially, locals seem to be very aggressive. I am sometimes afraid as well of these kinds of no-tempered reactions”.

The findings of this study regarding the negative attitudes of host country nationals are interesting. In previous studies investigating expatriates in Türkiye, Turkish people are described as friendly and negative statements are not encountered regarding Turkish people (Alpaslan Danisman, 2017; Özkan 2010). In this study, the disturbing behaviors of host country nationals, which can even reach racist levels, were mentioned by some of the participants. The participants who were exposed to these behaviors were from Yemen, Tunisia, Iraq and Romania. The fact that participants from different races were exposed to rude behaviors may indicate a negative attitude towards foreigners rather than a specific race. Based on the existing studies (Alpaslan Danisman, 2017; Özkan 2010), the emergence of such an attitude that was previously absent in Turkish society may be indicative of a sociological transformation. The increase in immigration in Türkiye in recent years may be a contributing factor in the development of negative attitudes towards foreigners among the local population.

#### **4.2.4 Economic Challenges**

Few of the participants mentioned economic challenges. The main reason that participants mentioned was ‘..inflation...’ , as P2 said, the economic problems were a challenge for them.

Also P6 agreed on this point, he said “The fact that you need to pay the charges of rent, bills and accommodation also the adaptation of the increase of prices of goods monthly”.

P7 shared the same opinion with them because “.. high prices that occurred in the last year and the rejection of some Turkish people to foreigners, which made this a difficult challenge”.

In this study, few of the participants mentioned inflation and the high increase in rent, bills and product prices due to inflation. Despite the fact that Özkan's study was conducted in 2010, when inflation rates were relatively lower, Özkan (2010) similarly identified that residing in Istanbul presented certain economic challenges for expatriates. The participants indicated that the cost of living in Istanbul was considerable, citing the high expenses associated with utilities such as gas, water, and electricity, as well as the high taxes levied on imported products. Furthermore, Özkan (2010) identified that expatriates with children expressed concern regarding the high cost of private school fees.

#### **4.2.5 Expatriates’ Emotional Challenges**

The majority of participants stated that they had experienced a range of emotional challenges in Türkiye.

P4 stated “..missing my friends and family”.

P11 said, “...I miss my parents and the rest of the family....”.

P2 mentioned “..I feel loneliness often, but I don’t want them to be here...”.

P3 indicated that his family was not residing with him in Türkiye and that he felt “....uncomfortable” without them.

P7 mentioned his feeling as “homesickness” and he added “.. I don’t have anyone from my family with me, and this is what made things very difficult...I was completely alone”.

P10 also shared the same idea that “Living alone in Türkiye as a foreigner is not easy”.

It is noteworthy that the majority of expatriates encountered emotional challenges. Being away from family may have caused emotional challenges, as participants often stated that being away from family caused them a sense of longing. Similar findings were obtained in Mutlu's (1998) study of 55 expatriate managers, mostly European and American, working in multinational companies operating in Türkiye. Mutlu (1998) found that approximately eighty percent of the expatriate managers were unable to establish a social circle in Türkiye and often experienced feelings of loneliness.

### **4.3. Factors Facilitating the Expatriate Adjustment**

Under this main theme, seven second-order themes were obtained: Organizational support, spouse support, family support, expatriate friends’ support, host country nationals’ support, personal characteristics and previous international work experience.

#### **4.3.1 Organizational Support**

According to the findings of this study, few of the participants stated that they received organizational support.

According to P1 “the university provided valuable support, including cultural training and language courses, which significantly aided my adjustment process. The supportive environment has made it easy for me to integrate into the organization.” She also stated “the welcoming atmosphere at work, and support from colleagues, ... have been crucial factors in my smooth adjustment.”

P9 also got support from her company. She said “The company I worked for organized a free course on learning Turkish”. She also expressed the support of her colleagues. “I feel integrated thanks to my colleagues who are helpful and openminded”

P11 shared her first experience “...I benefited from an orientation program about culture and language (basic, but very helpful as a starting point), as well as support in finding accommodation...” She also added her colleagues’ support by saying “My colleagues were always a strong support for me.”

P7 indicated “I feel integrated because I have a good manager and I do my duties perfectly.”

In this study, it was found that most of the participants did not receive sufficient organizational support. Numerous studies in the literature demonstrate that organizational support has a positive effect on expatriates' adjustment (Kraimer et al. 2001; Yavaş and Bodur, 1999). In Yavaş and Bodur (1999)'s study which was on expatriates in Türkiye, work adjustment levels of expatriates differed between the expatriates who received organizational support and those who did not. Those who received organizational support showed a higher level of work adjustment. Yavaş and Bodur emphasized the necessity of pre-departure training and suggested that organizations should provide cultural diversity training programs regarding the values, beliefs, habits, religion and language of Türkiye. Similarly, Dousin and Sulong (2021), who conducted a study on expatriates in Saudi Arabia, found that the lack of pre-departure training made the expatriates' adjustment more difficult. These findings highlight the importance of receiving cross-cultural training before moving to the host country. These studies recommend that organizations provide pre-departure support for assigned expatriates. Since the sample of this study consists of self-initiated expatriates, it is not possible to expect pre-departure organizational support. However, in this context, self-initiated expatriates may be advised to research the host country thoroughly to avoid experiencing cultural shock. The substantial disparity between the home and host cultures may make the expatriates' adjustment difficult (Kraimer et al. 2001).

#### **4.3.2 Spouse Support**

According to data analysis, few of the participants mentioned the role of the spouse in their adjustment.

P1 said, “My husband is Turkish and he is helping me to adjust”.

P9 shared the same opinion also but said “I got married here and have a child.....I have the chance to join events and celebrations ... thanks to ... my husband”.

Two of the participants in this study had Turkish spouses. Participants with Turkish spouses mentioned that their spouses and their Turkish families increased their adjustment. The fact that the spouses of the expatriates in the sample were Turkish may have facilitated adjustment. Similar findings were obtained in Yavaş and Bodur (1999)'s study. Yavaş and Bodur (1999) found that expatriates with Turkish spouses and children experienced higher levels of interaction adjustment. If the spouse is not from the host country, he/she will also

experience adjustment problems. Kraimer et al. (2001:92) assert that spousal adjustment, rather than spousal support, plays a crucial role in influencing the expatriate's adjustment. In their study of 213 expatriate supervisors, Kraimer et al. (2001) found that spousal support was not related to expatriate adjustment.

#### **4.3.3 Family Support**

Few of the participants mentioned the role of family support in adjustment.

The presence of the family support was an important factor in adjustment for P4 who said "They visit from time to time so it's alright".

P9 shared the same opinion when she said, "...of course my family comes to visit me".

P11 stated, "...I am lucky to have strong family support even from a distance".

The financial family support was useful for P6. He said, " my family provided financial support to assist me in settling down".

Family support refers to the closeness of family members to each other (Caligiuri et al. 1998: 600). When expatriates do not receive support from family outsiders such as friends in the host country due to relocation, they rely heavily on family members. Supportive relations between family members during the early stages of the expatriation cycle are very important (van der Laken, 2019: 12). According to Lee and Kartika (2014), family support has a positive influence on expatriate adjustment. In this study, few participants reported receiving family support. Spouse support was considered separately from the support of other family members.

#### **4.3.4 Expatriate Friends' Support**

Five of the participants affirmed that their expatriate friends were the reason for their easy adjustment. P8 stated, "... I do know a lot of people from all over the world".

Moreover, P4 said, "I made friends along the way who helped me when I had a problem" and added "...it's mixed Turkish friends, Arab and even others."

When explaining her circle of friends in Türkiye, P5 stated, "It is an equal number of Turkish people and expatriates."

P6 stated, "I think it's easy to adapt to a new culture and lifestyle especially being surrounded by foreigners. ... Most of my friends are expatriate students".

In line with P6, P9 said, "... I had many colleagues who were Russian speakers... I have social networks, I think 20% of them are Turkish friends..."

The presence of other expatriates in the host country facilitates the expatriates' adjustment (Bayraktar, 2019; Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002). In order to cope with feelings of loneliness or homesickness, the expatriates communicate with other expatriates who share similar experiences. Furthermore, the expatriates gain insight into the host country by listening to the experiences of other expatriates (Bayraktar, 2019: 12; Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002). Mutlu (1998) found that twenty percent of assigned expatriate managers in her sample had only other expatriate managers in their social circle. This study discovered that participants who received support from expatriate friends did not only make friends with expatriates. Participants did not avoid communicating with host country nationals. Expatriates were found to have both Turkish and foreign friends.



#### 4.3.5 Host Country Nationals' Support

Most of the participants indicated host country nationals' support. P1 stated "I have found Turkish nationals to be welcoming and warm. The hospitality has made me feel comfortable and included in the local community."

Similarly to P1, P2 said, "Turkish people are welcoming and are great hosts. I feel totally comfortable here."

On the other hand, P3 said, "Through my Turkish friends I got to know Turkish culture".

While explaining his social circle, P4 said "...it's mixed Turkish friends, Arab and even others."

P8 said, "I have been used to the new culture by .... communicating with locals."

P9 said, "Yes, I have social networks, I think 20% of them are Turkish friends".

P10 said, " in Türkiye mainly in Istanbul, if you're surrounded by intellectual people who traveled outside of their country and open-minded it makes the process much easier". P10 also added "... most of my network is Turkish".

P11 shared her experience by saying, "people here are very communicative, supportive, having the habit of hospitality and interaction with foreigners....trying as much as possible to get support from local friends when I have to interact with authorities, or to go to crowded places..."

In this study, most of the participants indicated the host country nationals' support. These participants were from many different countries as Egypt, Pakistan, Yemen, Tunisia, Morocco, Ukraine and Romania. This finding suggests that there is, in general, a positive attitude towards foreign nationals among the Turkish population. Alpaslan Danisman (2017) found similar results in her study of expatriates in Türkiye. She found that thirteen out of eighteen expatriates from different countries such as Tanzania, USA, Palestine, Syria, Iran, England, Bosnia and Egypt felt at home. The participants stated that Turkish people are friendly and they can develop close relationships with Turkish people (Alpaslan Danisman (2017).

According to Fisher (1985), host country nationals classify expatriates as in-group and out-group members. In-group members are expatriates who have similar values to host country nationals and can be invited into their social circles. Out-group members are expatriates who have different values and whom host country nationals would not want to include in their social circles. If host country nationals believe that they can include the expatriates in their social circle, they show social support to these expatriates. Based on this assumption, Varma et al. (2016) investigated how Turkish host country nationals decide to show social support to expatriates. According to the findings of Varma et al. (2016), Turkish host country nationals are more likely to regard an expatriate who shares their beliefs and is in a supervisory role as a 'in-group' member. In this study, no findings were found to support Varma (2016).

#### 4.3.6. Personal Characteristics

Most of the participants mentioned the influence of their personal characteristics on their ability to adapt to a new cultural and professional environment.

P1 stated, "... openness to change and appreciation for cultural differences have been assets in my adaptation process. It has allowed me to connect with colleagues and locals more effectively..."

P2 said, "My natural inclination towards effective communication and openness facilitated a smooth adaptation process in Türkiye. Being receptive to cultural differences and avoiding prejudice made it relatively easy for me to adjust and connect with people".

P5 confirmed the other participant by saying "Being open helped me integrate into the city more easily and easined my transition process" .. "Being diverse and social person".

P8 said, "I had no problem with adapting, because I come from a diverse culture, and my family educated me to respect every culture and person's beliefs, so the adaptation process was good".

P9 said, "My openness to change helps me a lot to adjust , it tends to adapt more easily to the new life , the new country and work environment."

P10 stated, "I believe that I became more mature, more closed easygoing in a way to accept everything and everyone the way they are".

P11 said, "My personality and beliefs probably helped me in this transition. In the beginning, it was also the curiosity and enthusiasm, together with the joy of exploring Türkiye, its culture and beautiful places".

In this study, participants expressed certain personal characteristics that facilitated their adjustment. Many studies have found that personal characteristics are effective in expatriate adjustment (Black and Gregsen, 1991; Lee and Kartika, 2014; Yavaş and Bodur, 1999). Black and Gregersen (1991) emphasized the importance of personal attributes in expatriate adjustment. Lee and Kartika (2014) demonstrated that emotional and cultural intelligence positively influence expatriate adjustment. Yavaş and Bodur (1999: 271) also found that individuals with certain characteristics showed higher levels of adaptation than others. Yavaş and Bodur (1999: 271) listed these characteristics as to be culturally prepared for the task; being a culturally sensitive person; being able to recognize the complexities of host cultures; liking to integrate with locals; being realistic in one's expectations; being willing to accept the challenges of intercultural experiences; enjoying social interactions; having empathy; effectiveness at resolving conflicts and being a people person.

#### **4.3.7. Previous International Work Experience**

Few of the participants mentioned that their prior international job experience helped them to adjust to new overseas position. P11 said she worked in "... Bratislava".

P8 said, "It wasn't my first time abroad, so it was smooth... since I am an influencer I had the chance to travel and work in many countries Indonesia, Thailand, UAE, Tunisia, Malaysia, Kuwait, Azerbaijan".

P2 also was abroad before " No it is not the first time, I worked in the United Arab Emirates".

P5 said, "... I've been to Algeria, Qatar, KSA, UAE, Jordan, Morocco, Egypt, and Tanzania...".

In this study, few of the participants had previous international work experience. Lee and Kartika (2014) found that expatriates with experience abroad can adjust more easily in the new work environment. According to Zhu et al. (2016: 564), expatriates with previous work experience in the same or similar culture tend to experience relatively high initial work adjustments. Despite the fact that the majority of the expatriates in this study lacked prior work experience, they felt integrated and wanted to remain in Türkiye. In this regard, A.

Isakovic and Forseth Whitman (2013)'s study on self-initiated expatriates in the United Arab Emirates yields interesting results. A. Isakovic and Forseth Whitman (2013) found no relationship between previous overseas work experience and sociocultural adjustment.

#### **4.4. Coping Strategies in Adjustment**

As a result of data analysis, two second-order themes were obtained under this main theme: attending courses and participating in local activities.

##### **4.4.1 Attending Courses**

Two of the participants stated that they attended the courses.

P1 said that she "joined language exchange programs" .

P3 affirmed that his adjustment process was supported "by joining the Halkalı dance club".

##### **4.4.2 Participating to Local Activities**

Most of the participants mentioned that they participated to local activities to increase their adjustment.

P1 said, "To enhance my adjustment, I've actively participated in local events..."

P3 indicated that he engaged in activities with his local friends, stating, " ..joining my friends by letting them introduce me to their cuisine..." .

P5 was "Attending business conferences and events".

P8 said, "I joined my university's football team, I was an event organizer in different clubs within the university, I joined lots of trips around Türkiye" .

P9 stated, "I have the chance to join events and celebrations also I tried all foods thanks to the Turkish family of my husband".

P2 mentioned, "to adapt to Türkiye, my main coping strategy involved embracing the culinary scene. I cultivated my love for cooking, learning and savoring a variety of dishes".

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) divide coping strategies into two categories: problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies. Problem-focused coping strategies involve the expatriate actively working to solve the problems causing emotional stress, whereas emotion-focused coping strategies involve avoiding problems. Individuals who use the emotion-focused strategies try to reduce their stress, but they do not attempt to solve the underlying problem. In this study, although the majority of the participants face cultural challenges, they engage in local activities or courses to cope with these challenges and learn about Turkish culture. Most of the participants from different nations such as Egypt, Pakistan, Tunisia, Morocco and Ukraine were eager to learn about Turkish culture and open to communicating with locals. This demonstrates that the participants employed problem-focused strategies.

#### **4.5 Intent to Stay in Türkiye**

Under this main theme, three second-order themes were obtained: Returning to home country, being open to work in other countries and desire to stay in Türkiye.

##### **4.5.1 Returning to Home Country**

In this study, few participants stated that they wanted to return to their home countries.

P4 shared, "I'm planning to go home for a while"

P7 said, "There is a timetable for returning to my home country and I am about to leave".

Two participants, Tunisian and Iraqi, expressed a desire to return to their home countries. However, Tunisian P4 stated that he would be leaving for a while. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the vast majority of participants are unwilling to move their home country.

#### **4.5.2 Being Open to Work in Other Countries**

According to the data analysis, few participants were found to be open to working in other countries.

P2 said, "I have plans to relocate, .... considering countries like England or Finland".

Similarly P11 stated, "... I am also open and confident about moving to other countries if it will be the case (both personally and professionally)".

Two participants, Pakistani and Romanian, stated that they were open to working in other countries.

#### **4.5.3 Desire to Stay in Türkiye**

Most of the participants mentioned that they planned to stay in Türkiye in the long term.

P1 said, "Now, I plan to continue living and contributing to the vibrant community here".

P8 stated, "For now my vision is to stay in Türkiye and grow in my career."

P9 mentioned, "I will continue to live in Türkiye".

P10 said, "My plan is not clear yet, but I love Türkiye. I can continue to stay.."

P3 said, "I'm planning to stay in Türkiye".

P5 confirmed, "I do plan on staying here".

P6 said, "Now I'm currently living between Tunisia and Türkiye as the whole work of my agency is based on Türkiye".

Six participants from Egypt, Yemen, Tunisia, Morocco and Ukraine expressed their intention to stay in Türkiye. Even though Tunisian P10 has yet to make a decision, he has stated that he loves Türkiye and may stay. Although the participants experienced certain challenges, it is noteworthy that the majority wanted to continue staying.

### **5. Conclusion and Discussion**

This study contributes to a better understanding of the state of the self-initiated expatriates' life in Türkiye. It adds to our understanding of experiences of self-initiated expatriates adjusting to the host country. Self-initiated expatriates relocate for a variety of reasons. Within the scope of this study, three themes related to the reasons for relocation were obtained: work opportunity, personal reasons and economic reasons. The expatriates mostly stated that they started working in Türkiye because of work opportunities, better economic conditions compared to their home countries, and personal reasons such as liking the culture, religion and people of Türkiye.

The study provides evidence that self-initiated expatriates face challenges such as language barrier, cultural challenges, host country nationals' negative attitudes, economic challenges and expatriates' emotional challenges. Özkan (2010)'s thesis, entitled "Challenges and Advantages During Expatriation: A Study on Asian Expatriates in Istanbul", provides support for some of these findings. Similarly with our findings, she found that high cost of living (named as economic challenges in this study), language related challenges and cultural challenges were challenges faced by the expatriates (Özkan, 2010). A substantial body of

research has demonstrated that cultural challenge were a significant challenge in diminishing the expatriate adjustment (Kraimer, Wayne, and Jaworski, 2001; Selmer, 1999). As indicated by Kraimer et al. (2001) cultural novelty (the distance between host and home cultures) was found to be negatively correlated with expatriate adjustment. In addition, Selmer (1999) revealed the absence of cultural closeness led to expatriation failure.

Apart from the findings of this study, in Özkan (2010)'s thesis it was revealed that expatriates faced some more challenges in Türkiye as official procedures, physical disturbances because of urban planning and infrastructure issues and social disturbances, including instances of theft or encounters with rude taxi drivers. The respondents in this study didn't mention any specific issues regarding to these challenges. In contrast, the findings of this study revealed that nationals' negative attitudes towards expatriates had a detrimental impact on their experiences. Some expatriates indicated that, over time, there has been an increase in racism and rudeness between Turkish people. Furthermore, the emotional states of expatriates presented a significant challenge in their adjustment to Türkiye. It is notable that the majority of expatriates mentioned experiencing feelings of loneliness and homesickness.

In this research, organizational support, spouse support, family support, expatriate friends' support, host country nationals' support, personal characteristics and previous international work experience were found as facilitating factors in expatriate adjustment. The participants mentioned that organizational support such as orientation programs, welcoming atmosphere of the organization, peer support and managerial support facilitated their adjustment. Previous studies have predominantly identified organizational support as an important factor in expatriate adjustment (Shaffer, et al., 1999). Dousin and Sulong (2021), who conducted a study on expatriates in Saudi Arabia, found that the lack of pre-departure training made the expatriates' adjustment more difficult. The expatriates needed extensive pre-departure cross-cultural trainings focusing on Saudi culture, basic local language and host-country organization (Dousin and Sulong, 2021).

In addition to organizational support, spousal and family support were other factors that facilitated adjustment. Previous studies have predominantly identified spouse and family support as significant factors in expatriate adjustment (Lauring and Selmer, 2010; Lee and Kartika, 2014). Lee and Kartika (2014) found that family support and family adaptability have positive influence on expatriate adjustment. Recent studies emphasize the role of family adjustment on expatriate adjustment or success rather than the effect of family support on expatriate adjustment (Erogul and Rahman, 2017; Shah, de Oliveira, et al., 2022). These recent researches suggest that theoretical and empirical research on expatriates needs to be scaled up from the individual (expatriate) level to the family unit level in order to gain additional insights into cross-cultural adjustment.

Expatriate friends' support was another factor facilitating the expatriate adjustment. According to Caligiuri and Lazarova (2002), other expatriates facilitate the expatriate adjustment process. They provide information about the host environment, share their experiences, and help the expatriate enter into new networks that they have already built up (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002). Langinier and Froehlicher (2018) emphasize that in areas such as Diversaudit Luxembourg, where expatriates have few opportunities to interact with locals, international counterparts are important for expatriate adjustment. In such places,

expatriates focus their attention on other expatriates, encoding their behaviors in their memory and replicating them (Langinier and Froehlicher, 2018).

As well as expatriate friends' support, host country nationals' support was found as another facilitating factor in the expatriate adjustment. This finding coincides with the findings of previous studies. Previous studies found that interaction with host country nationals facilitates the adjustment of expatriates (Black, et al., 1991; Liu and Shaffer, 2005). Additionally, Toh and DeNisi (2007) have proposed that host country nationals serve as socializing agents for expatriates, providing information and offering social support.

Finally, previous international work experience and personal characteristics such as openness, being diverse and social were factors that facilitated adjustment. Lee and Kartika (2014) found that expatriates with experience abroad can adjust more easily in the new work environment and expatriates with higher emotional intelligence and cultural intelligence can adjust more easily in the new work environment. Black and Gregersen (1991) emphasized the importance of personal attributes and proposed several key employee attributes that are essential for the success of expatriate assignments. These included a drive to communicate, an enthusiastic and extroverted disposition; a broad-based sociability to the local communities; cultural flexibility; a cosmopolitan mindset orientation and a collaborative negotiation style.

In this study, it was found that expatriates mostly utilize coping strategies. The participants mostly used problem-focused coping strategies by attending courses and participating in local activities. In addition, it was also found that even though the participants mentioned many challenges, the majority of them had the intention to stay in Türkiye.

In this study, no demographic criteria such as nationality, marital status or gender were set when determining the sample. When the findings were examined, no findings were reached that would require different evaluations in terms of these demographic variables. For example, female participants did not state that they experienced a challenge based on gender or that individuals of a different nationality experienced a challenge because of their nationality. Although there were participants from the MENA region and Europe in the sample, their experiences were not very different from each other. However, according to Mamman (1995), those who were born and raised in a culture similar to the host country have a higher chance of adapting and being accepted by the local people. Therefore, it is recommended that similar studies be conducted based on these findings.

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## Extended Summary

### Challenges and Adjustment of Self-Initiated Expatriates in Türkiye

Türkiye has received a large number of expatriates, especially in recent years, due to the impact of wars and immigration. Some of these expatriates are self-initiated and some are assigned expatriates. Assigned expatriates are sent abroad by their company and start to work in host country with certain work rights and advantages whereas self-initiated expatriates voluntarily leave their country and decide to work in a host country on their own. In this context, self-initiated expatriates' experiences are different from assigned expatriates. They decide to work abroad with no organizational support, often with less favorable work contract whereas assigned expatriates usually receive beneficial expatriate contracts (Biemann and Andresen, 2010). In the study of expatriation and expatriate adjustment, there are limited studies that focus on issues faced by self-initiated expatriates working in Türkiye (Alpaslan Danışman, 2017). Alpaslan Danışman (2017)'s study is on self-initiated expatriate academics. In this context, the objective of this study is to analyse the challenges and adjustment of self-initiated expatriates in Türkiye. This study contributes to a better understanding of the self-initiated expatriates' life and experience in Türkiye.

This study adopted two theoretical frameworks. The first theory, referred to as the "push and pull" theory, is a set of contextual frameworks that pinpoint the reasons why people relocate abroad from their country of origin (Castles, et al., 2014: 28). Push and pull theory includes push and pull factors that affect the individuals to move to the host country. Push factors are negative factors that encourage individuals to leave their country of origin. Economic factors, political instability, and a lack of autonomy in their home country are some of the push factors driving expatriates away from their home country (Richardson and Mallon, 2005). On the other hand, pull factors are positive features of the host country that attract individuals to move there. These factors include better work opportunities, better living conditions, better healthcare facilities, religious tolerance and better security (Urbanski, 2022). The second theory utilised in this study is socialization resources theory. It is used to develop a new pathway for newcomer socialization, with a focus on the provision of resources to newcomers during the first year of organizational entry. Socialization resources theory focuses on the resources that newcomers believe are essential for a better adjustment and socializing process (Saks and Gruman, 2012). The availability of the resources such as orientation programs and pre-departure training is critical in effectively adjusting to a new environment (Oh and Jang, 2021: 18).

Purposive sampling was used for participant selection. No sectoral distinction was made when determining the sample. The criteria used to select the sample were that participants should have at least a bachelor's degree, be self-initiated expatriates and have been working in Türkiye for more than one year. 11 expatriates from 7 countries living and working in Istanbul were interviewed and thematic analysis was used to interpret the qualitative data. MAXQDA 2018 data analytic program was utilized. The text has been imported into MAXQDA 2018 and thematic analysis has been conducted using this software.

The study identified five main themes: reasons of relocation, challenges, factors facilitating the expatriate adjustment, coping strategies in adjustment and intent to stay in Türkiye. Work opportunity, personal and economic reasons were found as the reasons of relocation. The expatriates mostly stated that they started working in Türkiye because of work opportunities, better economic conditions compared to their home countries, and personal reasons such as liking the culture, religion of Türkiye and Turkish people.

The challenges faced by expatriates in Türkiye were categorised as follows: language barrier, cultural challenges, host country nationals' negative attitudes, economic challenges and expatriates' emotional challenges. These findings are in line with the findings of previous studies on expatriate adjustment (Black, et al., 1991; Bonache, et al., 2016; Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002; Kraimer and Wayne, 2004; Ward and Kennedy, 1996). The emotional states of expatriates presented a significant challenge in their adjustment to Türkiye. It is notable that the majority of expatriates mentioned experiencing feelings of loneliness and homesickness. Also, some expatriates indicated that, over time, there has been an increase in racism and rudeness between Turkish people.

The factors facilitating adjustment were found as organizational support, spouse support, family support, expatriate friends' support, host country nationals' support, personal characteristics and previous international work experience. The participants mentioned that organizational support such as orientation programs, welcoming atmosphere of the organization, peer support and managerial support facilitated their adjustment. Previous studies have predominantly identified organizational support (Shaffer, et al., 1999), spouse support, family support (Lauring and Selmer, 2010; Lee and Kartika, 2014) and expatriate friends' support (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002) as significant factors in expatriate adjustment. According to Caligiuri and Lazarova (2002), other expatriates provide information about the host environment, share their experiences, and help the expatriate enter into new networks that they have already built up (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002). In addition, the research revealed that previous international work experience and personal characteristics such as openness, being diverse and social facilitated the adjustment of expatriates. In accordance with this finding, Lee and Kartika (2014) found that expatriates with international work experience can adjust more easily in the new work environment and Black and Gregersen (1991) proposed that employee attributes such as a drive to communicate, an enthusiastic and extroverted disposition etc. are essential for the success of expatriate assignments.

The research revealed that the majority of sample used problem-focused coping strategies by attending courses and participating in local activities. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) the coping strategies are divided into two groups as problem focused coping strategies and emotion focused coping strategies. Problem-focused coping strategies involve taking active steps to directly address and resolve the issues that are causing stress whereas emotion focused coping strategies attempt to minimize anxiety by withdrawing from the situation, either physically or mentally, or by avoiding the problem (Selmer, 2001). In this study, it was found that most of the participants took active steps to resolve their adjustment problems instead of escaping from them. Also it was found that the majority of the sample demonstrated a willingness to remain in Türkiye.