

INTERCULTURAL TRAINING BETWEEN STANDARDIZATION AND DIFFERENTIATION OF PROGRAMS: TO WHAT EXTENT CAN IT ACTS ON THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF THE ADJUSTMENT OF EXPATRIATE EXECUTIVES?

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to study the nature of the relationship between adjustment in its three dimensions and intercultural training. We will then try to answer the following question: To what extent can intercultural training acts on the three dimensions of the adjustment of expatriate executives? This paper is based on a developed positivism. We will opt for a positivist approach based on a hypothetico-deductive method. The sample comprises 232 expatriate executives. We will focus on a thematic analysis to explain more deeply the quantitative research found a significant and positive relationship only between intercultural training and adjustment to work. The thematic study highlights the undervaluation of intercultural training, which seems to be insufficient and formal or even useless and, in most cases, non-existent. Managerial implications likely to improve the relationship between intercultural training and expatriate adjustment will be highlighted.

Keywords: Intercultural Adjustment, Adjustment to Work, Adjustment to Interaction, General Adjustment, Expatriate Executives, Intercultural Training, Cultural Diversity.

INTRODUCTION

Despite its high cost, its risks and the development of its forms (traditional expatriation, commuting, alternating mobility, virtual mobility, "self-initiated expatriates") (Cerdin, 2012), international mobility is attracting growing interest from companies that are increasingly seeking to select future talent with the ability to manage the complexity due to the internationalization of the economy (Dickmann & Harris, 2005; Point et al., 2012). For the case of our research, organizational expatriate executives will be the subject of our theoretical and empirical study. They are defined by (Yanaprasart, 2006) as executive employees or unit managers and employees sent to a foreign subsidiary for a mission of limited duration and performing technical or managerial expertise functions.

The literature on expatriation shows that international success is based on adapting to the new culture, which favors performance at work and the accomplishment of the mission in its totality (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Black, 1988; Black et al., 1991; Cerdin and Peretti, 2000; Varner and Palmer, 2005; Nunes et al., 2017). At the start of the 1960s, the authors of the first

works on adjustment (Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1960; Davis, 1971) considered it as a unitary construct linked to the shock suffered by expatriates when confronted with new general living conditions. Indeed, most research on expatriation (Church, 1982; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985) dealt with the most visible aspects of new cultures such as food, transportation, health systems, etc. Studies that highlighted the multidimensional path of adjustment began in the early 1990s with the publication of the works of (Black, 1988), (Black & Mendenhall, 1991) and (Black et al. 1991). Consequently, intercultural adjustment has the following three facets: adjustment to work (supervision, responsibilities, performance), adjustment to interaction (to contact with members of local community) and general adjustment (to living conditions such as housing, food, care).

The determinants of intercultural adjustment have been studied and analyzed in several research works (Black, 1988; Black et al., 1991; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Cerdin & Peretti, 2000; Waxin & Chandon, 2003; Waxin & Panaccio, 2005). Since the initial model of (Black et al., 1991), the literature emphasizes individual, organizational and contextual determinants. Although it remains superficial, incomplete or even non-existent in the majority of multinationals (Hutchings, 2003; Lawson & Shepherd, 2019; Montgomery & Bourassa-Dansereau, 2019; Waxin & Chandon, 2003; Waxin & Panaccio, 2005), intercultural training has aroused the interest of studies in intercultural psychology and management sciences which have shown its beneficial effect on intercultural adjustment. According to (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991) and (Lawson & Shepherd, 2019), intercultural training helps expatriate managers to overcome the period of culture shock by teaching them to maintain effective relationships with members of the host community and by predisposing them to adapt more quickly to their new positions.

In most searches, the relationship between cross-cultural training and adjustment is significant (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Black et al., 1991; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991; Okpara et al., 2021; Presbitero & Toledano, 2017; Waxin & Chandon, 2003). However, other studies (Cerdin, 1999; Waxin & Panaccio, 2005) revealed a non-significant relationship between this variable and the three facets of adjustment. As Montgomery and (Bourassa-Dansereau, 2019) explain, the design of pre-departure training does not sufficiently consider the particular demands of expatriate managers who resist traditional forms of training.

The aim of this paper is to study the nature of the relationship between intercultural training and adjustment in its three facets. We will then try to answer the following question: To what extent can intercultural training acts on the three dimensions of the adjustment of expatriate executives? The epistemological approach of our research is based on a developed positivism. Initially, we will opt for a positivist approach based on a hypothetico-deductive approach. In a second step, we will focus on a thematic analysis to explain more deeply our quantitative results. First, we will begin by studying the theoretical foundations of the three-dimensional construct of intercultural adjustment and training. Thereafter, we will present the research methodology and we will expose and discuss the results obtained. The resulting implications will be proposed to improve the relationship between intercultural training and expatriate adjustment.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Presentation of intercultural adjustment

The following part is devoted to the presentation of the main definitions of intercultural adjustment as well as to the highlighting of its three-dimensional aspect.

Many studies agree to define adjustment as the degree of psychological comfort and familiarity of a person with different aspects of the culture of the host country (Black, 1990; Okpara et al., 2021). Intercultural adjustment then constitutes an internal, psychological and emotional state and can only be felt by the person affected abroad (Black, 1990). According to (Aryee & Stone, 1996) and (Nunes et al., 2017), adjustment is a factor of satisfaction and psychological well-being. It results in cognitive, attitudinal, behavioral and psychological changes (Haslberger, 2005; Sit et al., 2017).

For their part, (Hou et al., 2018) emphasize the fact that it has two dimensions associated with the psychological comfort felt in the host country as well as the absence of distress such as depression. To this end, intercultural adjustment is a response to the culture shock resulting from the confrontation with a new culture and involves both the degree of psychological comfort and the change of behavior to reduce the conflicts arising inside and outside the framework (Okpara et al., 2021).

Knowing that it has not been sufficiently theorized, (Black, 1988), (Black & Mendenhall, 1991) and (Black et al., 1991) propose a three-dimensional construct of adjustment comprising the following three facets: adjustment to work (supervision, responsibilities, performance), adjustment to interaction (to contact with members of the host community) and general adjustment (to living conditions such as housing, food, care) (Cerdin & Peretti, 2000).

Adjustment to work

The first dimension of intercultural adjustment includes job-specific responsibilities, performance level and expectations and management responsibilities (Black, 1990; Black et al., 1991; Cerdin & Peretti, 2000; MÉRIGNAC & Roger, 2004; Nunes et al., 2017). According to (Black & Stephens, 1989), it refers to commitment to the company, the desire to stay there and the satisfaction experienced with the new job and is considered to be the easiest dimension to adapt to the cultural workplace. Indeed, adjustment to work is maintained by the similarities in the procedures between the tasks carried out in the country of origin and those carried out in the host country (Black et al., 1999). It also promotes the career development of expatriates (Song et al., 2019).

Adjustment to Interaction

Some authors have split this dimension into adjustment to interaction with locals inside and outside the workplace (Nunes et al., 2017; Okpara et al., 2021). Indeed, socialization with members of the host community, contact with locals in general, contact with host nationals outside of work and talking with them are the main dimensions of relational adjustment (Black et al., 1991; Cerdin & Peretti, 2000; Mérignac & Roger, 2004). As pointed out by Black *et al.* (1999), the expatriate finds it more difficult to maintain relations with members of the host community than to adapt to work and general living conditions. This idea is also supported by (Selmer, 2002) who showed that adjustment to interaction is the most important and most difficult dimension because it is essentially based on implicit communication as well as on building interpersonal relationships with members of different cultural backgrounds.

The literature highlights the close relationship between this dimension of adjustment and socialization. Indeed, this concept is defined by (Fischer, 1997) as a process of social interaction which makes it possible to learn and integrate the cultural values of a society into the structure of our personality and this, during our experiences and under the effect of social agents whose “educational” role is to build our sociability to promote adjustment to the social context and to others with whom we live. (Kour. & Jyotim, 2022) explained that culturally intelligent managers are able to communicate with members of different cultural roots, which promotes the establishment of friendly relations with them.

General Adjustment

This dimension, which has often been the favorite subject of researchers, includes living conditions in general, housing, food, shopping, cost of living, facilities and opportunities for relaxation and care (Black et al., 1991; Cerdin & Peretti, 2000; Nunes et al., 2017). The literature considers that expatriates adapt more easily to the general environment of the host country than to the social relations maintained with the locals. However, it seems that expatriate managers have more difficulties to adapt to the general environment than to the work (Black et al., 1991).

Intercultural Training

Intercultural training is defined as a process that can enhance intercultural learning through the development of cognitive, affective and behavioral skills needed to adapt to the new culture (Okpara et al., 2021). It also contributes to the improvement of cultural intelligence involving the ability to function effectively in a situation of cultural diversity (Presbitero & Toledano, 2017), which promotes the management of cultural differences and the adaptation of behavior to cultural specificities and local societies. Based on intercultural psychology, (Brislin, 1979) identifies three methods of intercultural training associated with cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects.

These methods are analyzed by (Waxin & Panaccio, 2005). For these authors, the cognitive method corresponds to the dissemination of information through the organization of conferences and meetings analyzing the specificities of the new cultural context. As for the affective method, (Waxin & Panaccio, 2005) emphasize that it engenders individual reactions capable of mastering stressful situations. For the behavioral method, it helps expatriate managers to adopt behaviors appropriate to local cultural and societal specificities and to communicate better with members of the host community (Waxin & Panaccio, 2005).

For his part, (Tung, 1981) identifies five training programs that are part of a continuum, namely, documentary programs promoting didactic training, assimilation programs to improve understanding of the new culture, language programs, awareness programs and field experiences (Waxin & Panaccio, 2004, 2005). These authors note that the different models of intercultural training and their content depend on the type of mission. They vary according to two essential factors: the degree of resemblance between the culture of origin and the host culture and the degree of interpersonal interaction between the expatriate manager and the nationals of the host country (Cerdin & Peretti, 2000; Waxin & Panaccio, 2005).

Gertsen (1990) develops a typology of training methods in four categories. As this researcher points out, the first type concerns conventional or traditional training marked by the dissemination of information during unidirectional communication, as is the case in schools and universities. According to (Waxin & Panaccio, 2005), experimental training corresponds to the integration of participants in real life situations. In this sense, Gertsen distinguishes two possible directions for training: either the training aims to enrich the notion of culture in general to raise awareness and attract participants to this concept, or it aims to discover a specific culture (Waxin & Panaccio, 2005). Experimental training helps to improve the skills of participants by encouraging them to adopt behaviors appropriate to local particularities (Presbitero & Toledano, 2017).

The table 1 below describes the different intercultural training strategies analyzed by (Littrell & Salas, 2005), (Sit et al., 2017) and (Lawson & Shepherd, 2019). As these authors show, these strategies are likely to help expatriate executives to become aware of their own cultural referents, to understand and recognize cultural differences and to master the harmful effects of cultural shock.

Table 1 CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING STRATEGIES	
Strategies	Objectives
Attribution training	- Develop the attitudes and skills needed to explain and understand the behaviors of locals. - Teach expatriates how to make isomorphic attributions similar to those of members of the host community.
Cultural Awareness Training	- Understand and analyze their own values, attitudes and beliefs to know how the home culture affects their behaviors.
Training in Behavioral and Cognitive Modification	- Helping expatriate managers to identify inappropriate behavior with specific local characteristics. – -It is also a question of teaching them to adopt the behaviors accepted by the locals.
Interaction training	- Helping expatriate executives to integrate into the new culture and to maintain relationships with locals inside and outside the workplace.
Language training	- Teach expatriate executives the language of the host country to better communicate with its members and to adapt to its general living conditions.
Didactic training	- Provide expatriate executives with as much information as possible related to living and working conditions in the host country (economy, culture, politics, geography, work characteristics, shopping, etc.).
Experimental training	- Offer expatriate executives the opportunity to learn by experiencing situations that can be experienced in the host country.

Hypotheses and Research Model

Researchers who have based on the study of the relationship between cross-cultural training and adjustment have not come to unanimous results. Indeed, the review of several studies on intercultural adjustment has allowed us to observe that intercultural training has most often been linked to the three facets of adjustment. As (Black & Mendenhall, 1990), (Black et al., 1991), (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991) and (Waxin & Chandon, 2003) show, this variable has a significant effect on intercultural adjustment. As such, (Waxin & Barmeyer, 2008) consider that intercultural training improves the work performance of expatriate executives, helps to establish relationships with members of the host community and promotes psychological well-being and familiarity with different aspects of the new environment. (Presbitero & Toledano, 2017) find that it promotes cultural intelligence and therefore intercultural adjustment. For their part, (Okpara et al. 2021) find a positive relationship between intercultural training and the three dimensions of intercultural adjustment.

However, other studies have highlighted the absence of a significant relationship between cross-cultural training and the three facets of adjustment. Indeed, empirical research conducted by (Cerdin, 1999) and (Waxin & Panaccio, 2005) demonstrated the ineffectiveness of different training methods. As such, these authors concluded that cross-cultural training plays no role in maintaining the adaptation process. Studies by these authors revealed a non-significant relationship between cross-cultural training and the three facets of adjustment. For their part, (Waxin & Chandon, 2002) note that the rate of trained expatriates in their sample (54%) is very high compared to other studies such as that conducted by (Cerdin, 1999). Indeed, this researcher finds that only 20% of expatriates have received real intercultural training. As part of our

research and based on the results of previous studies highlighting the significant effect of intercultural training on adjustment, we put forward the following hypotheses figure 1:

- H1:** Expatriates who have had cross-cultural training will adapt to the job better than those who have not.
H2: Expatriates who have had cross-cultural training will adapt to interacting with locals better than those who have not.
H3: Expatriates who have had intercultural training will adapt to general living conditions better than those who have not.

The conceptual model below illustrates these relationships.

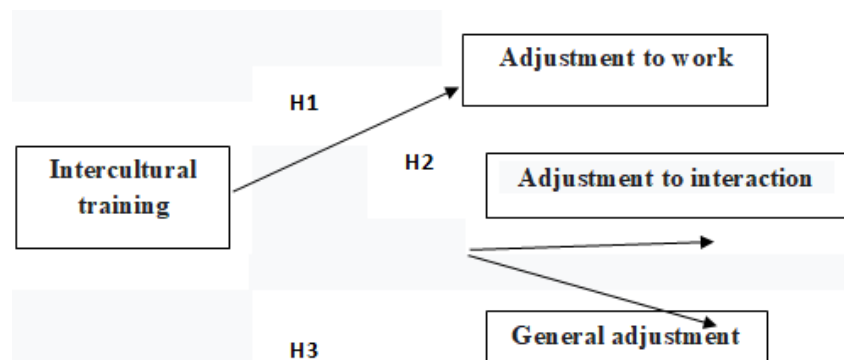


Figure 1
RESEARCH MODEL

METHODOLOGY

To answer our research question: To what extent can intercultural training acts on the three dimensions of the adjustment of expatriate executives? we mobilized a developed positivist epistemological approach. This part is devoted to the presentation of the methodology of the quantitative and thematic study.

Methodology of quantitative study

In this part inherent to the methodology of the quantitative study, we focus on the sample and the collection of data, the measurement of variables and the tools for data analysis

The sample and data collection

After submitted a pre-test to colleagues, researchers and a population of twenty-five expatriate executives from different nationalities, the finalized questionnaire was distributed to 600 expatriate executives, 200 of whom were contacted personally and the rest by electronic. After checking the time spent by the respondents in Tunisia (at least 6 months), 232 usable questionnaires were collected (of which 70% obtained face to face and 30% electronically), the

return rate is, in fact, of 38.66%. From this perspective, studies on expatriation often show low response rates (Cerdin & Peretti, 2000).

Male expatriate executives make up most of the respondents (89.22% against 10.78% for women). The sample comprises 232 expatriate executives including 95 French, 78 Italian, 22 Belgian, 12 German, 10 Spanish, 3 Turkish, 3 Algerian, 2 English, 2 Moroccan, 2 Albanian, 2 from the Netherlands and 1 Romanian belonging to various sectors industrial (textiles and clothing, electrical, electronic and household appliance industries, chemical, mechanical and metallurgical industries, etc.) and tertiary (mass distribution, outsourcing, etc.) and whose geographical location is located in different regions of Tunisia. The characteristics of our sample are presented in the following table 2.

Variable		Frequency	Percentage
Age	Between 18 and 29 years	35	15,08
	Between 30 and 39 years	69	29,74
	Between 40 and 49 years	72	31,03
	Between 50 and 59 years	56	24,13
Gender	Man	207	89,22
	Women	25	10,78
Hierarchical level	Leader	20	8,62
	Senior	184	79,31
	Middle manager	24	10,34
	Employee	4	1,72
Activity area	Agri-food	9	3,87
	Glass ceramic	8	3,44
	Mechanical and metallurgical	45	19,39
	Electrical, electronics and appliances	51	21,98
	Chemical	8	3,44
	Textile and clothing	50	21,55
	Wood, cork and furniture	2	0,86
	Leather and footwear	8	3,44
	Various industries	10	4,31
	Various services	41	17,67
Marital status	Single	114	49,13
	Couple without children, the spouse remained in the country	10	4,31
	Couple without children, the spouse accompanies you	11	4,74
	Couple with children, the family stayed in the country	21	9,05
	Couple with children, the family accompanies you	71	30,60
	Couple with children, only the spouse accompanies you	5	2,15

Measurement of variables

In our research, the study of the multidimensional aspect of intercultural adjustment led us to use the scale of black and stephens (1989) measuring the degree of adjustment to work (3 statements: level of requirement and expectation of performance, specific responsibilities in the work and supervisory responsibilities) ($\alpha=0.91$), interaction with locals (4 statements: the degree

of interaction of the expatriate manager with locals inside and outside of work) ($\alpha = 0.79$) and general living conditions (7 statements: living conditions in general, housing conditions, food, shopping, cost of living, possibilities for leisure and relaxation and conditions of care) ($\alpha = 0.82$). To measure intercultural training, we asked a question determining whether the expatriate received training programs before or during his arrival in Tunisia.

Data analysis tools

Before testing our theoretical hypothesis, it is important to verify the reliability and validity of the measuring instruments. As part of our work, the reliability of the intercultural adjustment scale is measured using Cronbach's alpha (α). Indeed, this reliability detector makes it possible to see whether the respondents give consistent answers to all the statements aimed at measuring the same variable (Igalens and Roussel, 1998, p.140). For the validity of content, it is checked since our questionnaire was subjected to a critical analysis of the content and the form on the part of the research colleagues. A confirmatory factor analysis makes it possible to ensure the validity of the construct (Roussel et al., 2002). To test our hypothesis, we chose to refer to the comparison of means test given that intercultural training is considered in this work as a non-metric and nominal variable with two modalities.

Methodology of thematic study

To explain more deeply our quantitative results, our choice fell on the semi-directive interview which seems to us the most appropriate means and the most adapted to the objectives of our research. Preparing for interviews involves developing an interview guide consisting of open-ended questions. This guide includes the topics of interest that need to be explained and explored in depth and should be supplemented, during the course of the interview, with other questions, as recommended by Thiétart (2003). The first theme is based on the collection of information about the expatriate and his local subsidiary: nationality, age, gender, hierarchical level, period lived in Tunisia, marital status, expatriation decision (requested, proposed, imposed) and sector activity of the local subsidiary.

The second theme focuses on the perceptions of expatriate managers on their adjustment to work, interaction with locals and general living conditions. For the third theme, it focuses on the perceptions that expatriate managers have on intercultural training, the degree of its importance and the extent of its effect on their intercultural adjustment. The last theme revolves around the identification and explanation of the main causes of the limited effect of intercultural training, which is positive only on adjustment to work. It should be noted that a summary presenting the results of the quantitative study had been given to the interviewees.

In the case of our research, we opted for a thematic content analysis. It is a question of relying on a methodological combination integrating a vertical and transversal thematic analysis by following the approach of Wacheux (1996). The interviews proceed according to the following stages: the presentation (explanation of the quantitative results, interaction), the development (conventional speeches), the deepening (more personal speeches) and the conclusion (collection of the last remarks) (Giannelloni and Vernet, 2002).

We used 11 semi-directive interviews lasting around 50 to 70 minutes. Indeed, the size of the sample was fixed taking into consideration the principle of semantic and theoretical

saturation recommended by roussel and wacheux (2005). The sample is made up of 11 expatriate executives characterized by a certain diversity in terms of their nationalities (5 french, 4 italian and 2 belgian), professional and family situations, sectors of activity and ages (the age of the interviewees being between 32 and 53 years old). The 11 expatriate executives declare having spent in tunisia a period between 20 and 60 months.

Presentation and discussion of the results

Presentation and discussion of the results from the quantitative study

After verifying the reliability and validity of the quantitative study, we will test our hypotheses predicting that expatriate executives who have followed intercultural training adapt better to work, interaction and general living conditions than those who did not follow. The comparison of means test reveals no difference between the means of adjustment to interaction ($f = 2.001$, $p = 0.943 > 0.05$) and general adjustment ($f = 0.028$, $p = 0.766 > 0.05$) for expatriates whether or not they have taken intercultural training. However, there is a difference between the means of adjustment to work for expatriate managers who have and have not benefited from intercultural training programs ($f = 6.896$, $p = 0.021 < 0.05$). These are usually technical in nature or primarily associated with the fulfillment of job-specific and supervisory responsibilities. Consequently, expatriate managers who were or were not trained before their departure reported significantly different means of adjustment to work (0.283 versus -0.080).

These results lead us to state that only the first hypothesis is validated. They go partially in the same direction as those obtained by black and mendenhall (1990), black et al. (1991), mendenhall and oddou (1991) and waxin and chandon (2003). Indeed, the significant relationship between intercultural training and adjustment to work can be essentially explained by the technical aspect of the content of the training programs offered to expatriate managers. The latter generally benefit from professional training geared towards the development of their technical skills which helps them to fulfill their specific responsibilities at work and those of supervision as well as to improve the level of their performance at the international. The lack of difference between the means of adjustment to interaction and general living conditions for expatriates whether or not they have followed intercultural training can be explained either by the fact that the organizations of origin are not aware of the importance of training expatriate managers before their departure, or else because they offer inadequate, insufficient or superficial training programs.

After a first quantitative phase aimed at testing the effect of intercultural training on the three dimensions of adjustment, we will mobilize a complementary thematic approach to deepen the explanation of the quantitative results. The qualitative data of our survey, collected from 11 interviews, were the subject of a thematic content analysis in order to better understand well-defined relationships that had not been sufficiently explained during our quantitative research.

Presentation and discussion of the results from the thematic study

The results of our quantitative research found a significant relationship only between training and adjustment to work. Within the framework of our thematic study, it is a question of

Underlining that, apart from three expatriate executives, all the others interviewed highlighted the importance of intercultural training in facilitating their adjustment to work only,

even if they consider this factor to be insufficient on its own. The scope of the training is limited to the organizational framework only. This result is illustrated in the following verbatim: “training can only help the expatriate to do his job properly and to improve the level of his performance. In the absence of rigorous and objective training programs, it is rather vocational training that would be relevant before departure” and “personally, i consider that training, if it does not reflect the reality experienced abroad, cannot be intercultural. It is therefore not necessary. In this case, i rather prefer to speak of a training likely to develop only the professional skills of the expatriate”.

To better understand the quantitative results, we asked the interlocutors to give their opinions and explanations. The main reasons given by all of the interviewees are linked to the low degree of importance given by the culture of the organization of origin to intercultural exchanges and more particularly, to the novelty of the culture of the host country. These results are also associated to the neglect of the integration of intercultural training in the strategy of the parent company, whose objectives are essentially oriented towards international success and more particularly, towards improving the level of performance of its expatriate executives. The undervaluation of intercultural training, which seems to be insufficient and formal or even useless and, in most cases, non-existent, can also explain the results of our quantitative study.

Other explanations emanate from the lack of versatile and specialized trainers in the field of intercultural and from the weak coordination of headquarters with former expatriates and the host community in the development of intercultural training programs. In this regard, the use of external service providers specializing in intercultural training does not prevent former expatriates from being called upon to prepare future executives to work and live in the host country (cerdin, 2012; song et al., 2019). All these explanations are illustrated in the following verbatim: “we are very expensive for our companies. The latter believe that money should be spent to provide expatriates with good living and working conditions in the host country rather than wasting it on useless training”, “trainers are most often lacking professionalism, flexibility and responsiveness” and “in most cases, the head office does not take into account the opinions and suggestions of future and former expatriates or those of local organizations in the development of intercultural training programs”.

The non-significant effect of intercultural training on adjustment to interaction and general adjustment also stems from a poor choice of training programs which are in most cases repetitive, standard or based on academic courses and which do not take into account the cultural distance between the country of origin and the host country. This result is linked to the absence of experimental training, awareness programs and field experiences. In this regard, cerdin (2012) emphasizes the growing importance of experimental and specific training (role-playing games and simulations) in preparing future expatriates to function effectively in a different cultural setting. For their part, waxin and panaccio (2004, 2005) insist on taking cultural distance into account in the development of intercultural training programs. “for me, formal, repetitive and standard training, the content and duration of which respond neither to the cultural specificities of the country of origin nor to those of the host country, would be useless. In fact, french, italian and belgian friends claim to have been trained in the same way. Before my arrival in tunisia, i received almost the same training program that i followed five years ago when i was an expatriate in mauritania” and “frankly, the academic and documentary training and the assimilation sessions organized by headquarters did not arouse my interest. Today, it is

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITS AND EXTENSIONS

The question of intercultural adjustment continues to arouse the interest of researchers and practitioners in the field of intercultural management, given the advantages that it can bring to the international company, to expatriate executives as well as to the country of origin. Our empirical study highlights the limited effect of intercultural training, which is only positive on adjustment to work. In view of the results obtained, the home organizations must opt for innovative practices in terms of intercultural training in order to encourage the expatriate executives not only to adjust to work but also to interact with the locals and to adjust to the general conditions of life.

Today, the emergence of new forms of international mobility such as international commuting executives raises several questions inherent in living and working conditions that seem to be less favorable than those related to long-term expatriation as well as the consequences of physiological and psychological costs (desmarais et al., 2012). Therefore, it would be relevant to conduct empirical studies whose objective is to question the design of new intercultural training programs adapted to the evolution of international mobility.

Our research work contributes in different ways to the development of knowledge on the subject of the relationship between intercultural training and intercultural adjustment. On the theoretical level, our synthesis focused on the presentation of the theoretical foundations of intercultural adjustment in its three dimensions and of intercultural training. We also relied on theoretical arguments from the literature to formulate new hypotheses suggesting that the effect of intercultural training is positive on the three facets of intercultural adjustment.

Our methodological contribution lies in the interweaving of a double quantitative and complementary thematic study. To our knowledge, none of the previous studies on the relationship between intercultural training and the adjustment of expatriate executives is based on this approach. Having opted for a developed positivist epistemology, we started with a positivist approach based on a hypothetico-deductive approach to analyze the impact of intercultural training on the three dimensions of intercultural adjustment. The results obtained have provided a number of lessons to guide the thematic analysis through the identification of the most relevant themes of our research. The content analysis allowed us, in a second phase, to deepen the explanation of the quantitative results obtained. Therefore, the combination of these two approaches has provided us with a more comprehensive insight into the nature of the relationship between intercultural training and adjustment in its three dimensions. It also helped us to highlight certain managerial implications likely to promote this relationship.

As managerial recommendations, we suggest that the organizations of origin opt for innovative practices in terms of intercultural training in order to promote the intercultural adjustment of expatriate executives in its three dimensions. Although the training programs are essentially of a technical and professional nature, we were able to identify, at the level of the thematic study, a great need expressed by the majority of the interviewees to invest in

Experimental intercultural training as well as in field experiences. This training method is considered the most effective in promoting intercultural adjustment (sit et al., 2017). The importance must also be given to the promotion of intercultural coaching involving the support and direct monitoring of expatriate executives throughout the different phases of their adjustment process, whether by a mentor, a specialized or local coach. As explained by song et al. (2019),

the rich experiences lived by mentors can help them to reduce psychological stress and to promote their intercultural adjustment in its three facets.

Therefore, we propose that intercultural training programs be sufficiently complete, real and widely disseminated. We also highlight the importance for professionals to think about offering diversified, rigorous and relevant training programs. Determining the timing, duration and focus of these programs must take into consideration the newness of the country in terms of the degree of difference between the culture of origin and that of the host country (lawson and shepherd, 2019), the cultural and societal specificities of tunisia, the nature of the mission and the degree of interaction between expatriate executives and locals.

It is also important to note that the content of these training programs must meet the needs expressed by each nationality of the expatriate managers and satisfy their expectations. Within multinationals, the establishment of an innovative organizational culture in terms of intercultural training is all the more important as it helps them to overcome the negative effects of culture shock and introduces them to an easier adjustment to work, interaction with locals and general living conditions. Beyond the technical and professional training programs, more emphasis should be placed on the promotion of experimental training, awareness-raising and experience in the field, before the departure of expatriate executives. The latter also need intercultural training consistent with the specificities of each phase of the process of their adjustment.

Beyond the explicit aspect of culture, special attention must be paid to deciphering its hidden side. To this end, another recommendation, on which we rely, consists of the importance that must be given to the development of cultural intelligence (kour and jyoti, 2022) and to the promotion of intercultural coaching, the real trigger of which is the desire to succeed in an international experience and to know the other and oneself (zheng and yang, 2006). In tunisia, the establishment of consulting and training firms specializing in intercultural management like those existing in morocco (frimousse, 2007) is essential, given that they offer multinationals and expatriates reading grids of local societal, social and organizational environment. However, it is important to draw attention to the need to involve spouses and children in these training programs in order to facilitate their intercultural adjustment (selvarajah and petzall, 2003; chwoming yu et al., 2005).

As with any research conducted in management science, this work is not free from limitations. Indeed, the literature review carried out, which despite its richness, can certainly not be exhaustive. In addition, this work has taken a precise orientation acting on our choices as to the works and scientific articles retained as the basic foundations of this work. Another methodological limitation is reflected in the fact that our study was conducted with a specific population: expatriate executives in tunisia. Although our sample of 232 expatriate executives shows good internal validity, the question of the generalization of the results obtained nevertheless remains. Indeed, the obstacles associated with access to the field of investigation prevent claiming representativeness of the population of expatriate executives in tunisia. It should also be noted that the data collected is declarative and based essentially on the self-perceptions of the respondents. In our study, we have decided not to integrate certain variables

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