

# KEY FACTORS OF CORPORATE EXPATRIATES' CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT – AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates the difficulties that expatriates encounter while relocating to a foreign cultural environment. The examination of the issue is based on the results of primary research conducted among the Japanese community living and working in Hungary. Many circumstances make it difficult for an expat to feel at ease in the host country. Integration and thus the success of the posting are greatly hampered by overcoming cultural differences as well as linguistic challenges in a non-English speaking country. Language fluency issues are stated to trigger a series of practical, task-related barriers as well as broader social and emotional difficulties. Japanese multinational corporations use English for internal corporate communication. The typical posting period for Japanese expats in Hungary is 4-6 years. They are typically senior executives who arrive together with their families. Over the years, the preparedness, language skills and cross-cultural competencies of the expatriates have improved significantly, while the infrastructure of the host country is also much better prepared to receive foreigners and their families.

**Implications for Central European audience:** The first Japanese MNCs arrived in Hungary more than 30 years ago, when the transition from a planned economy to a market-based economy was just beginning (Pierce, 1991; Andor, 2019; Jaklič et al., 2020). Japanese expats arrived in a country where, compared to their home country (Hideo, 1990), human resources management was not a recognized corporate function (Pierce, 1991). A typical posting period at that time was one to two years. Expatriates usually did not experience that as an honour or professional development (Matus, 2006).

**Keywords:** Expatriates; cross-cultural adjustment; Japanese; Hungary; multilingual environment

**JEL Classification:** J61, O15

# Introduction

Along with the expansion of international trade relations from the 1970s onwards, foreign direct investments started to grow rapidly worldwide. Japan is one of the biggest capital investors, with 146.72 billion dollars in outward investment in 2021 (Statista, 2023). The foreign economic relations between Japan and Central Europe began in the 1960s (Morley et al., 2020). Since the 1980s, Japan has been making substantial direct capital investments in the region (including Hungary, Poland, Romania, former Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria) in both manufacturing and services (Bakos, 1992). The international human resource management strategy of Japanese companies typically has ethnocentric characteristics; accordingly, managers are usually delegated from the parent company to head the local subsidiaries (Harzing, 2001; Tung, 1981; Gregersen & Black, 1999). A community of Japanese corporate expatriates can be found in every city around the world where Japanese-owned companies have been established. Although expatriation imposes high costs on the company and poses a serious challenge to expatriates, it is difficult to change this practice even if the management of overseas subsidiaries would be more effective by appointing host country nationals (Brewster & Pickard, 1994; Banai, 1992; Furusawa & Brewster, 2016). Ethnocentric personnel policies can be traced back mostly to the specific human resource management practices of Japanese companies (Belderbos & Heijltjes, 2005) such as lifelong employment systems, seniority-based pay and an emphasis on control through socialization (McMillan, 1996; Tung, 1984; Beechler & Yang, 1994; Jaeger & Baliga, 1985). Empirical experience has proven that 10-40% of expat delegations end too soon and fail to achieve their goals (Zhou, 2021; Lü-Gao, 2004). The success of the expatriation may depend on many work-related and other factors (the expatriates' mental preparedness and intercultural skills, family dynamics, cross-cultural adjustment, etc.), each of which has a great influence on the expatriates' work performance.

Based on the Japan Foreign Trade Organization (JETRO) data, 160 Japanese companies doing business in Hungary (2018), with nearly 40,000 employees operate in Hungary, where the proportion of Japanese expatriates is nearly 1% (Székács & Sato, 2019; Kálmán & Tóth, 2021). The experience of Japanese expatriates in Hungary can be interesting from many points of view for expatriates with other national cultural backgrounds. The experience of the Japanese here in relation to the Hungarian language are not significantly different from similar experience of foreign expatriates working in Hungary. In general, the Hungarian language, which contains 44 sounds of Asian origin, is difficult for all foreigners (Focus, 2022). However, due to the specific cultural traditions of Japanese expatriates, their experience differs in many areas (Kesster, 2022). The article summarizes the findings of a questionnaire study completed in 2020 by 62 Japanese corporate expats in Hungary.

## 1 Theoretical Framework

The examination and analysis of the factors related to the failure or success of corporate expatriates has been one of the hot topics of management research in the last twenty-five years (see, for example, Edström & Galbraith, 1977; Tung, 1981; 1987; 1988; Black, 1990; Black et al., 1991; Mendenhall & Kuhlmann, 2002; Banai, 1992; Downes & Thomas, 2000; Lauring & Selmer, 2009; Kubota, 2013; Fukuda, 2015). Much of the research into the impact of cross-cultural experience has examined its impact on psychological well-being. The earliest research and most of the authors since then have put intercultural adaptation at the

centre of their research. The examined variables include previous experience, the extent of cultural differences (Black, 1990; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Black & Stephens, 1989), language difficulties (Fukuda, 2015; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001; Tanaka, 2006), family members' integration (Fujio, 2018; Simeon & Fujio, 2000; Ozeki & Knowles, 2009; Takeuchi & Tesluk, 2002; Luring & Selmer, 2009; Teague, 2015), the expatriates' individual characteristics (Sparrow & Hiltrop, 1994; Ali et al., 2003; Gupta et al., 2012), or the effect of cross-cultural training (Forster, 2000; Deshpande & Chockalingam, 1992; Tahir, 2022). To some extent, all of these factors influence expatriate work performance and play a crucial part in whether the expatriate will be able to accomplish the assignment objectives successfully.

Language skills obviously affect the integration of expatriates in different ways depending on whether the language of the host country is English or a language other than English (Fukuda, 2015; Kubota, 2013). The English language is commonly used by managers and other employees operating in international environments. There is no consensus in the literature as to whether the degree of difference between national cultures affects the adjustment of expatriates. Many authors believe that the difference between the local culture and the culture of the expatriate's country of origin does not affect the integration of the individual and the success of the expatriation (Xingying & Qin, 2009). Baksa and Gaál (2022), studying the relationship-building patterns of the expatriates, also highlighted the integration difficulties resulting from the lack of knowledge of the local language, which manifests itself mainly in the field of leisure and private life activities. For this reason, expatriates prefer the company of other culturally related expatriates. It is also easier to establish relationships with other expatriates because they have the free time and energy to form new relationships – as opposed to citizens of the host country, who also manage their existing network of relationships (Shim & Paprock, 2002). Based on research conducted among expatriates from UK-based companies, Forster (2000) concluded that expatriates who operated in English-speaking areas faced the same difficulties as those who were sent on assignment to a country where they had to reckon with much greater cultural differences. Peterson et al. (1996) previously came to a similar conclusion: in the light of research conducted with Japanese expatriates, they found that the success of adjustment is mostly influenced by individual characteristics. However, many authors point out that the greater the difference between the culture of the host country and that of the country of origin, the more difficult and challenging the expatriate's adjustment is and the more doubtful the success of the expatriation. Shaffer et al. (1999) surveyed 452 company delegates arriving in 45 different host countries and concluded that there is a positive relationship between the degree of cultural differences and integration difficulties of expatriates. A relatively large number of studies have been conducted specifically among Japanese expatriates in recent years (Xingying & Qin, 2009; Yamazaki & Kayes, 2007; Fukuda, 2015; Furusawa & Brewster, 2016; Sonoda, 2013; Kubota, 2013; Mandari & Boer, 2021; Fujio, 2018; Dang & Rammal, 2020; Wong, 1999; Zhou et al., 2017; Yungang et al., 2011) due to the growing number of Japanese expatriates worldwide.

Studies of Japanese expatriates have described this population as a “closed community”, which allows them to maintain a lifestyle similar to that lived in Japan (Glebe, 2003; Björklund, 2007). Some studies draw attention to the fact that a common characteristic of Japanese

expatriates is the lack of knowledge of the local language (Fukuda, 2015). The strong bond that these Japanese expatriates maintain with their compatriots abroad often prevents them from learning the local language. Between 2011 and 2014, Fukuda assessed the responses of 36 Japanese expatriates managing local subsidiaries in Spain (Barcelona and Madrid). According to his findings, the knowledge of local language in a non-English-speaking country is one of the most important factors, but does not determine life satisfaction in general. The use of English is quite low compared to the local language, although a significant percentage of respondents consider English language skills necessary in their daily lives (Fukuda, 2015).

Based on their research findings, Furusawa and Brewster (2016) concluded that technical and professional competencies were the key factors and the family situation was the least considered factor in expatriates' adjustment. The authors further concluded that language and cross-cultural competencies correlate positively with the expatriates' adjustment.

Culture is the collective mental programming of the human mind that distinguishes one group of people from another. This programming influences the patterns of thinking that are reflected in the way people relate to different aspects of life. Patterns of thinking crystallize in the institutions of society. This is not to say that everyone in a given society follows the same pattern; there are significant differences between individuals, but under the law of large numbers, the behaviour of the majority is significantly influenced by the culture in which they were born (Hidasi, 2008). According to Adler and Gundersen (2008), when creating and operating unique corporate culture models, organizations cannot ignore the defining national cultural environment in which they operate. Unlike Hungarian culture, this culture belongs to high-context cultures (Hall, 1989; Székács & Noriko, 2019). Taking national characteristics into account, many culture models are widespread in the literature. Following Jarjabka (2013), we can highlight, among others, the models of Ronen and Shenkar (2013), GLOBE (Chhokar et al., 2008), Hofstede (1980), Hofstede & Minkov (2010) and Mintzberg (1979). In our article, it was cited by many (Minkov & Kaasa, 2022) and used (Barthélemy, 2019; Taras et al., 2023), as well as often criticized by others (e.g., the size of its sample, the origin of IBM, the statics and homogeneity of the model, etc.) (McSweeney, 2002).

We worked with the Hofstede model. According to Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions, Hungary is considered an individualistic society. Japanese society shows more characteristics of a collectivist society: for example, it places the harmony of the group above the expression of individual opinions. The other cultural characteristic that differs is time orientation. Japan is one of the most long-term-oriented societies. The Japanese see their life as a very short moment in the long history of mankind. In contrast, Hungarian society is much more pragmatic and immediate. Our study and other research conducted among Japanese expatriates (Mandari & Boer, 2021) also point to the fact that the attitude of Japanese expatriates is strongly influenced by their national cultural characteristics, such as the collectivistic attitude, by which the individual is able to put the group's goals before his own individual goals (McNulty & Brewster, 2017). Approaching a Western lifestyle does not have a direct impact on an individual's cultural attitudes, as these are deeply rooted in the personality (Triandis-Suh, 2002). Our empirical research shows that the big cultural differences between Western and Japanese society require specific solutions in companies and other organizations. The topic merits investigation since multinational companies (MNCs) are actively expanding their operations into developing economies. The increasing global investment of MNCs increases their contribution to the markets of host countries. The specific

roles of expatriates revolve around the management, coordination and integration of business life into the local environment by transferring information and knowledge, as well as shaping the corporate culture (Arokiasamy & Kim, 2020).

## 2 Materials and Methods

For data collection, we chose the questionnaire method. The Japanese expatriate community is a specific, hard-to-reach group. We prepared a bilingual, Japanese-Hungarian questionnaire, which was sent electronically to the recipients. The 12 recipients contacted in the first round of inquiries were asked to forward the questionnaire to other Japanese expatriates in Hungary. The Japanese-Hungarian questionnaire prepared for the research contained 13 closed questions for the survey of demographic data, which were included in the analysis process as variables with nominal and ordinal measurement levels as a group-breaking factor. The questionnaire contained 22 statements for which the respondent had to rate on a scale of 1 to 6 how well they felt about the statements made in terms of preparation, integration and future career (Kvale, 1996). The questionnaire was available on an internet platform for two months and was completed by 62 Japanese expatriates. The collected data were analysed using SPSS statistical software. The normal distribution of scale-type variables was examined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests — both methods provide an answer to whether the data examined are from a population with a normal or abnormal distribution. If the  $p$ -value is less than the specified significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ), the data do not follow a normal distribution; however, if the  $p$ -value exceeds this, the normality of the data can be assumed. Based on the measurements, our data are not normally distributed; accordingly, the data were evaluated with a non-parametric Mann-Whitney statistical test.

## 3 Results and Discussion

Some 98.4% of the sample is made up of men. In Japan, which has masculine characteristics, according to the accepted view, management positions in companies are primarily held by men. Most of the respondents belong to the age group of 40–50 years old. Overall, 64.5% of the surveyed respondents are over 40 years of age and 35.5% are under 40. Regarding the length of the posting period, the most typical period is 4–6 years (53.2%). In terms of position, it can be said that they typically come to Hungary to fulfil managerial or advisory roles. The most frequently marked position is “senior management”, which accounts for 66.1% of the sample surveyed. Some 54.8% of the expatriates came to Hungary alone and 45.1% of the sample brought their wives and their whole family.

*Hypothesis 1: Japanese expatriates try to assimilate instead of closing in, being more open to local culture.*

The main task of foreign delegates as carriers of knowledge of parent companies (Delios & Bjorkman, 2000) is to expand functional knowledge (Minbaeva & Michailova, 2004) and to transfer company-specific knowledge to subsidiaries (Easterby et al., 2008). The more complex the information or process passed, the greater the potential for losses and misinterpretations. The degree of dilution increases in direct proportion to the amount of tacit knowledge inherent in the information provided. This is especially true for the transfer of lean

management, where the risk of misinterpretations increases exponentially due to the exceptionally high number of tacit elements inherent in the bundle of practices (Iuga & Kifor, 2014). Fang et al. (2009) highlighted that knowledge is the most critical strategic resource that contributes to a company's sustainable competitive advantage. In the context of cross-border knowledge transfer, tacit and complex knowledge can be further differentiated in terms of site specificity, as overly site-specific knowledge has little value outside its place of origin. Harzing (2001) pointed out that the operation of subsidiaries depends to a large extent on the relationship that delegates can build with locals. The ability to assimilate has been linked by several studies to the cultural intelligence (CQ) formulated by Earley & Ang (2003), which determines an individual's ability to adapt to culturally diverse situations. CQ is composed of cognitive, meta-cognitive, motivational and behavioural components.

*Hypothesis 2: Expatriate assignees find the experience gained during the current secondment useful for both their personal development and career development.*

Through culture and knowledge transfer, delegates bring a number of benefits to their affiliates, such as return on investment, increased profits and achieving set goals, in exchange for international experience and leadership development, which contributes to the delegate's future career building (Abdullah & Jin, 2015). Evans et al. (2017) pointed out that these challenges require not only special skills but also a global mindset that allows managers to accept unique characteristics in each geographic location. Huff et al. (2014) supported the association between cultural intelligence and the ability to adapt abroad. Of the four components of cultural intelligence, motivational CQ proved to be a predictor of successful deployment. The higher a person's motivational CQ, the more effort and energy they will put into adapting, which will affect the success of the posting. When selecting delegates and training before or during the posting, the focus should be on developing a motivational CQ. If the motivational CQ remains low, the parent company should reconsider posting that individual.

*Hypothesis 3: The experience of expatriates in the international arena has a positive effect on career development in the parent company.*

According to Edstrom & Galbraith (1977), the main task of delegates is to fill a specific position and to develop local managers and the organization. Overseas secondment plays an important role in later career development through gaining international experience. Comparing the management style and labour relations of the Asian subsidiaries operating in Hungary identifies a mixture of the cultural elements of the host and the homeland. Although the influence of the host country dominates in many areas, many elements from the homeland have been transposed and operated at the Hungarian subsidiaries. McNulty and Tharenou (2004) point out that successful completion of a posting results in a return on investment for the parent company, as well as a positive impact on the outsourcer's later career. In the case of the Japanese subsidiaries in Hungary, the employment of delegates is relatively high, but their progress is still based on seniority (Sass et al., 2019). Examining the career planning trends of Japanese companies, Firkola (2005) found that companies do not encourage employees to build this individual career. The group has a strong influence on individuals; employees are required to suppress their individual aspirations and shift the focus to teamwork and group performance. Employees know little about skill requirements and potential career paths. Despite the existence of an annual self-assessment and career

planning system ("jikoshinkoku") in Japanese companies, most employees say it is ineffective because the immediate manager has a greater influence on the individual's progress.

*Hypothesis 4: Proficiency in English contributes greatly to increasing comfort during a posting abroad.*

Language competence is identified as a key factor in adapting to a cultural environment (Zhang & Harzing, 2016). Knowledge of the local language has a positive effect on adaptation to the host culture, thus increasing the performance of the posted person (Huff, 2013). Fukuda's (2015) research in a Spanish-speaking environment revealed that Japanese expatriates form strong attachments with their compatriots as they form a closed community, allowing them to live a life similar to that at home, but hindering building relationships with locals. The results of the study suggest that the use of the local language in a non-English-speaking country is very important and may be one of the determinants of the degree of communication satisfaction. Nevertheless, knowledge of neither the local language nor English was decisive in terms of overall life satisfaction. Ward et al. (2009), who did research among international student groups, found that those with English language skills had fewer adaptation problems. Chen et al. (2011) concluded an interesting result for Philippine delegates on a mission to Taiwan. While knowledge of the English language used in the workplace had a positive effect on the posted person's job performance, knowledge of the local Chinese language had a negative effect on job performance. Based on the results of previous studies, there is a strong correlation between the success and satisfaction of the posted person and at least the knowledge of the language used in the workplace. For delegates, English is a universally used language (lingua franca) with which they can communicate effectively in any country (Selmer & Luring, 2015, 2017; Kubota, 2013; Zhang & Harzing, 2016). The common language spoken in the workplace is generally English even in non-English-speaking countries. Therefore, in addition to knowledge of the local language, we also asked the respondents about their knowledge of English. Our hypotheses set up during our primary research were tested using statistical methods according to group-breaking factors, where the level of significance  $\alpha = 0.05$  was considered the guideline during the analyses. Before testing the hypotheses, we performed an examination of the normal distribution of the data in each case, which is a prerequisite for performing parametric studies. Normal data distribution was not confirmed by the normality test, so the Mann-Whitney test was used to test the hypotheses.

### 3.1 Japanese expatriates try to assimilate instead of closing in, being more open to accommodating local culture (H1)

Table 1 | Mann-Whitney test of H1

Length of posting		N	Ranking average (MR)	Ranking amount	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Significance (p)
I like the proportion of working time to private life in Hungary	1–3 years	27	23.00	621.00	243	-3.136	0.002
	4–6 years	33	36.64	1209.00			
	Total	60					
I made a lot of friends during the posting	1–3 years	27	24.35	657.50	279.5	-2.528	0.011
	4–6 years	33	35.53	1172.50			
	Total	60					
In my free time I travel a lot and go hiking	1–3 years	27	23.54	635.50	257.5	-2.856	0.004
	4–6 years	33	36.20	1194.50			
	Total	60					
I would love to come back or stay in Hungary	1–3 years	27	21.91	591.50	213.5	-3.555	0.000
	4–6 years	33	37.53	1238.50			
	Total	60					

Source: Own elaboration

Table 1 shows the means and sums of the rank of the sample examined and the results of the Mann-Whitney test. The ranking of the work-life balance is 621.00 for the “1–3 years” group, while the ranking for the “4–6 years” group is 1209.00. The sum of the rankings in the “4–6 years” group is almost twice as high as in the “1–3 years” group for each question. The difference is significant in all the cases ( $p < 0.05$ ), which suggests that a longer posting time increases the openness of the posted persons. Based on the results, we can state with a 95% accuracy that the integration of the expatriates into the Hungarian cultural environment is not a problem and the length of the posting period further strengthens the expatriates’ need for a deeper knowledge of the host culture. Based on the presented results, we fail to reject Hypothesis 1.

3.2 Expatriates find the experience gained during the secondment useful for both their personal and career development (H2)

Table 2 | Mann-Whitney test of H2

Length of posting		N	Ranking average (MR)	Ranking amount	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Significance (p)
Posting abroad is useful for my personality development	1–3 years	27	25.81	697.00	319.0	-1.975	0.048
	4–6 years	33	34.33	1133.00			
	Total	60					
Posting is good for my career	1–3 years	27	26.44	714.00	336.0	-1.692	0.091
	4–6 years	33	33.82	1116.00			
	Total	60					
After my return, I can expect a promotion	1–3 years	27	24.80	669.50	291.5	-2.337	0.019
	4–6 years	33	35.17	1160.50			
	Total	60					

Source: Own elaboration

Table 2 summarizes the results of testing Hypothesis 2. The impact of posting abroad on personality development was highly valued by respondents in both groups. The average ranking of the “1–3 years” group is  $MR = 25.18$ , the ranking amount is 697.00, while the average ranking of the “4–6 years” group is higher,  $MR = 34.33$  and the ranking amount is almost twice as high, value is 1133.00. The difference is significant ( $p = 0.048$ ), so we can state that in the case of the examined sample, the respondents of the “4–6 years” group feel the posting twice as useful for their personal development as the respondents of the “1–3 years” group. The usefulness of the posting was highly valued by both groups in terms of both career development and professional development. The average of the ranking “1–3 years” is  $MR = 26.44$ , the ranking value is 714.00, the average ranking of the group “4–6 years” is higher,  $MR = 33.82$ , while the ranking amount is 1116.00. The difference between the groups is not significant ( $p = 0.091$ ), based on which it can be stated that there is no significant difference between the two groups in the case of the examined sample. There is also a significant difference in the possibility of career building after return, where at  $p = 0.019$  we concluded that the “4–6 years” group ( $MR = 35.17$ , ranking = 1160.50) is twice as confident in post-return promotion as the “1–3 years” group ( $MR = 24.80$ , ranking amount = 669.50). Based on the results, we cannot clearly show that the experience gained during the posting and considered useful will help the secondees to be promoted later; therefore, we partially reject Hypothesis 2.

### 3.3 The experience of expatriates in the international arena has a positive effect on career development at the parent company (H3)

Table 3 | Mann-Whitney test of H3

Length of posting		N	Ranking average (MR)	Ranking amount	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Significance (p)
I can use the new experience at the parent company	1-3 years	27	27.39	739.50	361.5	-1.289	0.198
	4-6 years	33	33.05	1090.50			
	Total	60					
After my return, I have a clear career goal ahead of me at the parent company	1-3 years	27	26.70	721.00	343.0	-1.557	0.119
	4-6 years	33	33.61	1109.00			
	Total	60					

Source: Own elaboration

Table 4 shows the results of testing Hypothesis 3, which shows that the values of the ranking averages and the ranking sums are higher in both cases in the “4–6 years” group than in the “1–3 years” group. In the case of the examined question, it exceeds the value of  $\alpha = 0.05$  ( $p_1 = 0.198$ ,  $p_2 = 0.119$ ). Based on the results, there is no significant difference between the responses of the two groups examined, so we cannot state that the experience of the posted persons abroad has a positive effect on career development after returning in the foreseeable future. Based on the results, Hypothesis 3 is rejected.

### 3.4 Proficiency in English contributes greatly to increasing the comfort during the posting (H4)

Table 4 shows the summary results of the Mann-Whitney test of Hypothesis 4. Regarding the uncertainty due to different feedback, the average score of the “intermediate” group is  $MR = 25.09$ , the sum of the rankings is 727.50, which is lower than the ranking of the “basic” group ( $MR = 33.91$ , ranking sum = 983.50). The difference is significant,  $p = 0.041$ . The result suggests that delegates with basic language skills are more likely to feel insecure about different reactions and feedback. The results also suggest that unpleasant situations and stress at work due to misunderstood situations are more common among delegates with basic language skills than those who speak English at an intermediate level. For the two questions examined, the  $p$ -value is less than 0.05, so the difference is considered significant. In terms of propensity to integrate, the average score for the “basic” group is  $MR = 25.22$  and the sum of the rankings is 731.50, while the values for the “intermediate” group are higher  $MR = 33.78$ , ranking sum = 979.50. The significance level of the difference is  $p = 0.04$ , so in the case of the examined sample, we can say that the group with higher English language skills has a higher willingness to integrate. Based on the results, we fail to reject Hypothesis 4.

Table 4 | Mann-Whitney test of H4

What is your level of English?		N	Ranking average (MR)	Ranking amount	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Significance (p)
<b>Because of the different reactions and feedback, I feel insecure</b>	Basic	29	33.91	983.50	292.5	-2.046	0.041
	Intermediate	29	25.09	727.50			
	Total	58					
<b>Because of misunderstood situations, I often get involved in an awkward situation</b>	Basic	29	33.84	981.50	294.5	-2.016	0.044
	Intermediate	29	25.16	729.50			
	Total	58					
<b>Because of the different thinking, I face a lot of tension at work</b>	Basic	29	37.34	1083.00	193.0	-3.645	0.000
	Intermediate	29	21.66	628.00			
	Total	58					
<b>I try to integrate and accept the local culture</b>	Basic	29	25.22	731.50	296.5	-2.015	0.044
	Intermediate	29	33.78	979.50			
	Total	58					

Source: Own elaboration

The data were subjected to normality tests, where both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests confirmed a non-normal distribution, which excluded the use of parametric T-test and ANOVA procedures. If the data are not normally distributed, the non-parametric equivalents of the statistical procedures should be used, which are the Mann-Whitney test for two samples and the Kruskal-Wallis test for more than two samples. The data provided by the online questionnaire did not require manual processing, so outliers caused by processing errors could be excluded. Data collection for the questionnaire research was carried out with the help of a Likert scale, which, due to its structure, excludes the occurrence of outliers; accordingly, data cleaning was not necessary. The data were analysed by forming small homogeneous groups from the total sample and examining the correlations between them. The research sought to determine whether there were measurable and statistically demonstrable attitudinal differences between the groups that could be used to confirm the hypotheses. As a main criterion for the design of the groups, we considered an approximately equal sample size to be relevant; low-element groups were excluded from the analysis.

## Conclusion

Japanese companies have been present in Hungary for 30 years, yet empirical research into Japanese-Hungarian cultural differences is scarce. Research by Matus (2006) among Japanese expatriates highlighted the difficulties of integration for expatriates arriving in Hungary without prior preparation. The study highlights the sense of exclusion due to a lack of family and language competence, which significantly complicates the years of posting.

The Japanese expatriates participating in the survey typically (53.2%) spend 4–6 years on assignment in Hungary. They belong mainly to the 40–50 age group (35.5%) and are typically senior executives. Expatriation is viewed by the survey respondents as a positive professional and personal experience. In the process of being posted in a foreign culture, expats face various situations that have a positive impact on their personality and help their professional development; this was clearly confirmed by the respondents of this research.

Expatriates become a channel of communication between the parent company and the subsidiary and must cope with pressure from both sides. Despite gaining extensive experience, the delegates do not, paradoxically, expect to be promoted after their return. Lifelong employment at a company is still typical in many multinational enterprises in Japan. Due to loyalty and employee engagement, the employee base stays stable; however, career building is a relatively slow process. With persistent work and diligence in Japanese companies, anyone can move forward, but it can take decades to build a career in a seniority-based system. Posting abroad is therefore not a straightforward way to gain a higher position but may still be a critical precondition for a later promotion. We also examined how English language skills affect integration and the feeling of satisfaction during the posting. It can be concluded that those with at least an intermediate level of English felt less uncomfortable in Hungary; however, those with weaker English proficiency did not experience any special difficulties fitting in. The majority of the respondents had not received any pre-departure training. They had acquired the necessary knowledge from other expatriates.

Our research does not support the findings of previous studies, which emphasize the integration of family members as a key to the assignment success (Simeon & Fujio, 2000; Takeuchi & Tesluk, 2002; Ozeki & Knowles, 2009; Luring & Selmer, 2010; Takeuchi & Chen, 2013; Teague, 2015; Sterle et al., 2018). According to our study, loyalty to the employer takes precedence over family life. Japanese expatriates have a view on assignment fundamentally different from those of other nations. The impact of their emotions on work performance could not be detected.

We actively monitored the research investigating the HR effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Dajnoki et al., 2023). General HR trends such as "go and stay" (Koveshnikov et al., 2022; Végh et al., 2023) and work-life balance (Mello & Tomei, 2021) have also appeared among expatriates working at international companies. It can be said that the indicated trends appeared with lesser and greater intensity among the expatriates examined in the article, but later passed and ceased or were eliminated. In the questionnaire design, in addition to closed questions, we provided the respondents with the opportunity to express their opinions in short text comments on topics that the questionnaire did not ask about. The majority of respondents used this option, so we assume that the respondents completed the questionnaire with due care.

Although the research does not provide representative or statistically valid results, it helps understand processes and trends and highlights the characteristics of the behaviour observed. With this article, we contribute to getting to know as much as possible about the adaptation of Japanese expatriates working for Japanese companies in the Central and Eastern European environment. Factors influencing the effectiveness of the assignment and the degree to which expatriates integrate into the host nation are dynamic, as are the conditions that dictate the aforementioned factors. We believe that our experience and conclusions will contribute to a deeper understanding of expat research, particularly with regard to the more effective employment of expatriates working in subsidiaries of large international Japanese companies (Wengraf, 2001; Mason, 2002).

Thus, it would be worthwhile to conduct this research again every five to six years. It would be beneficial to repeat the study in other Central and Eastern European countries. We hope that this study will stimulate more research in this region. Time series analysis designs for a constantly shifting population play a complex and ever-evolving role as expatriates continue to be a challenge.

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