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**DUAL-CAREER COUPLES –
AN EVALUATION OF ON-ASSIGNMENT
CAREER SUPPORT FOR EXPATRIATE
SPOUSES**

Doctoral Thesis

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ANNOTATION

Driven by international career paths and difficulty finding qualified local people, companies continue to send staff abroad. However, the increase in dual-career couples leads to low employee mobility and a high risk of assignment failure which is expensive for companies. Hence, it is the purpose of this thesis to shed light on the prerequisites, influencing factors and consequences of successful on-assignment dual-career support. The empirical findings are based on survey data from expatriates, expatriate spouses and the Expatriate Manager of a large organization in the oil & gas industry. The author argues in favor of the hypothesis that dual-career support leads to increased relocation willingness. However, the findings suggest that dual-career support will not have the same outcome for every couple, as the individual backgrounds are very different and not all concerns can be overcome by dual-career support. It is most useful to spend resources on dual-career policies if partners want to be in the workforce and are non-locals. Furthermore, support is most appreciated if it is well-known and in hospitable environments. Further education is the most preferred kind of support. Dual-career support also positively influences the expatriate's subjective well-being. In addition to the expatriate, the spouse and the employer also benefit from dual-career support. There is no statistically relevant connection between the educational level of expatriate spouses and the use of dual-career support. With regard to the assignment duration, dual-career support is most commonly used between one and five years abroad. Based on the research results, HR practitioners are advised to set up or adjust their international assignment guidelines to fit the needs of dual-career couples. The main limitation is that the study's focus was solely on the preferences of technical and managerial employees of one company in the oil and gas industry. The findings must therefore be understood in the context of this environment. The thesis contributes to the research by providing evidence that it is in a company's strategic HR interest to offer dual-career support that fits the needs of the expatriate population.

Keywords: international assignments, dual-career, expatriates, work-family conflict;

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INTRODUCTION

Topicality

Delegating employees from one branch office to another has become an indispensable part of everyday business for many international corporations. Driven by globalization, an increasing number of small and medium sized enterprises are faced with global transfers as well. Although international assignments have already become more standardized from an HR perspective, the decrease of single breadwinner households turns out to influence the selection process of potential expatriates as well as the general outcome of international assignments. Dual-career couples – i.e. both partners pursue careers – represent a threat to the mobility of the work force today. Family issues are one of the main reasons for expatriate failure (Lee 2007, pp. 411–412).

Among others, Stahl et al. (2002, p. 225) consider non-work related issues such as family situation and dual-career couples to be important but under-studied aspects in the expatriate literature. Seeing that more and more people live in dual-career relationships, the author would like to take a look at the specific situation that dual-career couples face when they go abroad. Several studies (e.g. Krause-Nicolai 2005) have shown that the occupation of the expatriate's partner plays a major role when it comes to the success of an international assignment. Consequently, companies have adjusted HR policies to implement different kinds of measures to prevent the failure of assignments due to dual-career issues. However, the outcome of these policies remains unclear. Few studies have considered the expatriate adjustment process from the spouse's point of view. In light of increasing numbers of dual-career couples, this is a research gap that still needs to be covered (Andreason 2008).

International assignments are in any case expensive but poor performance or early returns are even more costly. It is difficult to quantify the actual costs that go beyond the mere transfer and salary costs. However, a study from the late 1980s estimated that direct costs of expatriate failure for American companies amounted to some two billion USD a year, which is likely to have increased since then (Jack, Stage 2005, p. 49). Practitioners report that the average cost to a company in the first year of an international assignment is more than USD 250,000. The cost of a failed expat contract is estimated at about three times the employee's annual package (Vermeulen 2011). Another study gives an estimation of assignment costs ranging between

three and six times compared to local employment costs, which is substantial (Ernst & Young 2012, p. 20). Obviously, the costs are significant for any HR budget.

Expatriate failure creates direct and indirect costs. Direct costs include the expatriate remuneration package (e.g. salary) but also other costs such as relocation allowances, replacement costs or insurance premiums. Indirect costs can be even higher than direct costs. Indirect costs could be jeopardizing market shares, and damaging relations with customers, partners, suppliers and local governments. Moreover, expatriate failure can have a negative effect on individuals, such as a loss of self-confidence or honor and impeded career development (Dowling, Schuler & Welch, 1994 cited in Qi, Lange 2005, pp. 12–13). Both assignment refusals and early repatriation are negative for companies. Still, the number of companies that evaluate the return on investment from an international assignment is quite low – at 14% in a recent study – and even lower for measuring the costs of assignment failure (8%). The reason for the low number of analyses is based on the difficulty of exact measurement (Permits Foundation 2012, p. 8).

In case of premature returns to the home country, this is likely to result in a considerable loss of return on investment for the company and also to dissatisfaction among the expatriates. In a survey conducted in 2011, 85% mentioned that less than 10% of their assignees return home earlier than planned. Yet, 15% indicated that more than 10% return prematurely, which is expensive and may harm the business (Ernst & Young 2012, p. 17). Practitioners estimate that roughly 40% of all expat contracts fail, including expats returning home and also those who have a low level of productivity (Vermeulen 2011).

In a survey conducted by the Permits Foundation 51% of the organizations claimed that assignment offers were refused because of partner employment concerns. The majority of respondents estimated that between one and ten per cent of assignments were refused, but there was a large variety among the responses (Permits Foundation 2012, p. 7). Another survey showed that 42 per cent of expatriate candidates refused relocation for dual-career reasons (The Wall Street Journal 1992 cited in Harvey et al. 2009, p. 16). The newest survey indicates that the two most common reasons for turning down an international assignment are family concerns (37%) and spouse/partner's career (19%) (Brookfield Global Relocation Services 2014, p. 48). Looking at these figures it becomes clear that it is difficult to track the exact number of assignment refusals.

To sum up, there are several reasons why dual-career couples and associated support are identified as a business critical topic for international assignments and thus HR strategies:

- Globalization leads to an increased need for international transfers.
- Pool of potential expatriates is reduced because of dual-career couples.
- Family reasons are one of the main reasons to refuse or prematurely end an international assignment.
- Expatriation failures are expensive.
- Spouses influence not only relocation willingness but also expatriate performance.
- If the needed support and target group are known, policies can be designed more accurately and financial resources can be used more efficiently.

Even though dual-career couples during international assignments allow a multi-disciplinary approach, the above mentioned points prove that it is necessary to include the company's view in this case.

The objects of research are the expatriate, expatriate spouse and expatriate employer. The subject of research is on-assignment career support.

Novelty

The thesis contributes to the research by providing evidence that dual-career support positively influences relocation willingness. This research has implications for designing more appropriate assignment policies and presents a new view for understanding individual differences among the expatriate population. The author is the first to give a comprehensive overview of parameters that influence the success of dual-career support. To begin with, the author identifies the two basic prerequisites that are necessary for a successful implementation of a dual-career policy. First, if partners do not want to be in the workforce (e.g. because they want to care for kids or are retired), it is not useful to provide dual-career support. Second, partners must be non-locals. In case of local partners the problems arising for trailing spouses (e.g. language difficulties) are irrelevant. These findings are useful when assessing if a dual-career policy should be implemented.

Another novelty lies with the finding that there are four major factors that influence the success or failure of dual-career support. First, the offered assignments should be long-term but not exceeding five years as the interest in dual-career support decreases afterwards.

Second, the host country should not be inhospitable. Even the best dual-career support will be futile if the environment is too dangerous or has a severe lack of infrastructure. Third, a dual-career policy must be well-known by the target group. The HR management must raise awareness for the policy in order to be well received. Fourth, practical and educational support should be provided as these support measures are perceived as most interesting.

The author sheds new light on the topic as she summarizes the two major consequences of successful dual-career support. By showing that successful dual-career support leads to increased relocation willingness and reduces the risk of assignment failure, the business need for dual-career support is clearly proven.

From a practical point of view, the described parameters provide a framework that can help companies to assess their current dual-career support programs or to evaluate if it is useful to introduce such a program. The framework allows better understanding of the situations in which dual-career support is most valuable. From a scientific perspective the model is helpful because it shows which settings require further dual-career support and therefore further research.

In addition, the author of this thesis is the first to provide empirical data that captures three different perspectives, namely the expatriate, the spouse and the HR manager view. This allows an unprecedented insight into the situation of dual-career couples. Another novelty lies with the fact that not only the interest in dual-career support was surveyed but also actual use was inquired, which for the first time allowed a comparison between interest and use of support.

Purpose

The objective of this thesis is to explore the prerequisites, influencing factors and consequences of on-assignment dual-career support and to show that it is in a company's strategic HR interest to offer dual-career support that fits the needs of the expatriate population.

Tasks

The tasks involved in completing this thesis include the following:

1. The author has to define the research field and the rough structure of the thesis including the formulation of the research questions.
2. As soon as this is settled, the author must study the relevant literature.
3. In order to test the propositions it is necessary to find expatriates and expatriate spouses who would be willing to fill out the survey. Therefore, an appropriate company needs to be identified and the approval from the company is to be obtained.
4. The next step is to set-up the survey. This means designing the questionnaire, implementing it in the online survey tool, testing the questionnaire and finally sending it out to the survey participants.
5. In addition to the online survey, the author must design a questionnaire for the Expatriate Manager of the company.
6. The author has to interpret the survey and questionnaire results, leading to the conclusions and suggestions for expatriates and their spouses, for HR professionals, and for political decision makers.
7. Finally, the author must add suggestions for future research in the field of dual-career couples on international assignments.

Research Questions, Main Hypothesis and Propositions to be defended

As the research field is marked by a wide range of studies from different schools of thought, to set the framework for this thesis it is essential to clearly define the research questions. In order to test the supposed relationships, the following research questions are proposed:

1. What is the preferred kind of dual-career support on the part of the trailing spouse?
2. How does dual-career support influence the expatriate's subjective well-being?
3. Who benefits from dual-career support?
4. What is the correlation between the claim of on-assignment career support and the spouse's education?
5. In what way does the duration of the assignment influence the claim of career support?

The above-mentioned questions were identified as being new in the research field. As the answer to these questions brings valuable insights for businesses and the scientific community alike, it is worthwhile to examine possible further implications. Based on the research questions, the author identifies the following main hypothesis as the foundation for the work: The use of dual-career support leads to increased relocation willingness. This hypothesis is broken down into five further propositions to be defended.

P1: Accompanying partners prefer to do further training over actual employment in the host country.

P2: Dual-career support improves the expatriate's subjective well-being.

P3a: Dual-career support is beneficial for the trailing spouse.

P3b: Dual-career support is beneficial for the expatriate.

P3c: Dual-career support is beneficial for the employer.

P4: The higher the spouse's level of education, the more likely he or she is to claim dual-career support.

P5: The longer the international assignment, the more likely the spouse is to claim dual-career support.

The propositions were developed based on previous know-how acquired through literature reviews and personal experience by the author, who spent five years working as a professional in a global mobility department of a large company. Considering both the theoretical and analytical research, and the findings from the empirical study, the conclusion should lead to a better understanding of the need for on-assignment dual-career support.

Research Methods

This thesis is based on theoretical and empirical findings. The theoretical and analytical parts are based on journal articles and books, complemented by online publications freely accessible in the internet. Apart from the literature review, there were three sections of empirical work. First, the author conducted an online survey for expatriates and second, there was an analog survey for their spouses. Third, the author developed a questionnaire for the responsible Expatriate Manager of the same company. The empirical data are analyzed through various statistical methods, namely descriptive statistics, factor analysis, cluster analysis, correlation coefficients (Spearman), discriminant analysis, one-way and multivariate analysis of variance, analysis for repeated measures, post-hoc Bonferroni tests, multiple linear regression, means and chi-square test for independence.

There are several factors that support the generalizability of the results. A large sample size is presented and the respondents have very diverse cultural and professional backgrounds. They have 40 different citizenships and are located in 19 different host countries. The professional backgrounds are spread over all possible branches. In addition, the oil and gas industry is one

with high expatriate populations, which makes it a good field for empirical research in this area. A previous study conducted by Punnett (1997) among Canadian expatriate government personnel (111 expatriates and 89 spouses) also proves the generalizability of the empirical data. Comparing the interest in spousal activities identified by Punnett (see Table 2: Ranking of activities for spouses) with the results of this study, the picture is very similar (details see chapter 3.5.). The study results can therefore be seen as independent of the nationality and industry and consistent over the last decade.

Approbation of Research Results

Various parts of this thesis have been presented at different international conferences. Please see below for a list of the relevant academic conferences:

Silberbauer, Katharina (2011): Expatriate Work-Life Balance. Global Business Management Research Conference. Fulda University of Applied Sciences. Fulda, Germany, December 2-4, 2011.

Silberbauer, Katharina (2012): Dual-Career Support for Expatriate Spouses. New Challenges of Economic and Business Development. University of Latvia. Riga, Latvia, May 10-12, 2012.

Silberbauer, Katharina (2012): The Work-Family Conflict. International Conference for Business and Economics. Kufstein University of Applied Sciences. Kufstein, Austria, August 3-6, 2012.

Silberbauer, Katharina (2013): Relocation Willingness. 71th UL Scientific Conference. University of Latvia. Riga, Latvia, January 30, 2013.

Silberbauer, Katharina (2013): An Evaluation of On-Assignment Career Support for Expatriate Spouses. International Conference for Academic Disciplines. International Journal of Arts & Sciences. Vienna, Austria, April 14-18, 2013.

Silberbauer, Katharina (2013): Benefits of Dual-Career Support. International Conference for Business and Economics. Kufstein University of Applied Sciences. Kufstein, Austria, November 29-30, 2013.

Please see below for a list of the relevant publications:

Silberbauer, Katharina (2013): An Evaluation of On-Assignment Career Support for Expatriate Spouses. In *International Journal of Business and Management Studies* Vol. 2 (Issue 2), pp. 649–662. UniversityPublications.net. Available online at

<http://universitypublications.net/ijbms/0202/index.html>, checked on 27/01/2015, ISSN: 2158-1479.

Silberbauer, Katharina (2014): Theoretical Framework for Dual-Career Couples during International Assignments. In Josef Neuert (Ed.): Contemporary Approaches of International Business Management, Economics and Social Research. DIPLOMA University. Berlin: epubli publishing Vol. 1, pp. 87–90, ISBN 978-3-7375-1329-6. *TIB GetInfo; GBV*.

Silberbauer, Katharina (2015): Benefits of Dual-Career Support for Expatriate Spouses. In *International Journal of Business & Management* Vol. III (Issue 2), pp. 66–84. University of Prague. Available online at <http://www.iises.net/international-journal-of-business-management/publication-detail-37>, checked on 27/05/2015, ISSN 2336-2197.

Silberbauer, Katharina (2016): Dual-career support and relocation willingness. In *Wirtschaft und Management - Schriftenreihe zur wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Forschung und Praxis (Business and Management Series)* Vol. 23. University of Applied Sciences bfi Vienna. Available online at <http://www.fh-vie.ac.at/en/Research/Publications/Scientific-series> (accepted for publication 16 p.).

In addition, the author attended several professional conferences and workshops/seminars:

Ernst & Young Vienna (2012): International Assignment Strategies and Policies. Vienna, Austria, January 2012. (seminar)

ARS (Academy for Law, Tax and Business) (2012): Cross-border assignments of employees. Vienna, Austria, March 2012. (seminar)

ICUnet (2012): Intercultural Training. Vienna, Austria, June 2012. (seminar)

hkp RemuNet (2013): T-PEP Annual Meeting. Reward practices in the oil & gas industry. Amsterdam, the Netherlands, June 2013. (professional conference)

hkp RemuNet (2013): T-PEP Regional Meeting. Reward practices in the German speaking oil & gas industry. Kassel, Germany, August 2013. (professional conference)

University of Applied Sciences bfi Vienna (2013): Lecturers' Conference. Vienna, Austria, September 2013. (professional conference)

HAY Group (2013): Annual Meeting. Current trends in HR. Vienna, Austria, October 2013. (professional conference)

WU (Vienna University of Economics and Business) (2014): Supervisory Board Symposium. Current trends in executive and supervisory board remuneration. Vienna, Austria, February 2014. (professional conference)

University of Applied Sciences bfi Vienna (2014): Lecturers' Conference. Vienna, Austria, September 2014. (professional conference)

Structure of Dissertation

In this thesis the author proceeds as follows. An annotation is provided at the very beginning of the thesis. After the list of contents, figures and tables, the introduction covers the problem specification and novelty of the topic. The objectives and tasks related to the research are presented, in addition to the limitations, main results, conclusions, and suggestions for further research. Subsequently, the research questions and corresponding propositions are addressed. This is followed by an overview of the research methods, conference participation and supplementary publications. The author also gives an overview of sources used. The final paragraph of the introduction contains the acknowledgments section.

The introduction is followed by the theoretical part of the thesis. Chapter 1 gives an account of the theoretical foundations – this includes the concept of dual-career couples as well as an overview of the subjects of career, expatriates and trailing spouses. Furthermore, the situation of dual-career couples during international assignments is looked at from three different perspectives, namely the influencing approaches from individual, organizational and societal perspectives.

The theoretical review is followed by an analytical part (chapter 2) that outlines the current status of the research and existing empirical findings, supplemented by the author's own experiences. The areas of dual-career couples, expatriates and trailing spouses are covered, and the three previously defined perspectives are taken on from an analytical point of view. This analysis is also reinforced with additional included statistics.

Chapter 3 presents the empirical part of the thesis. At first, the research design is explained in further detail, followed by the illustration of the research and data collection methods. The empirical results are based on questionnaires for expatriates and their spouses. The author created a questionnaire for the international mobility manager of the company in order to understand the employer's point of view. The survey results are presented by clustering them around the defined research questions.

In the last chapter, the author categorizes and interprets the empirical results and draws conclusions about the research questions in order to compare them with the theoretical section of this thesis. The author provides suggestions for different target groups (namely expatriates and expatriate spouses, HR professionals and politicians), and includes an outlook on possible future research topics.

The final part of the thesis contains the list of references and the appendix. The references are separately listed based on their source – electronic sources are presented at the end. The appendix consists of four parts and shows the English versions of the questionnaire for the expatriates, the questionnaire for the expatriate spouses, the questionnaire for the Expatriate Manager and selected comments from survey participants.

Limitations

As the empirical part of this thesis is based on self-reporting questionnaires, there are obvious limitations such as self-reporting bias. The author tried to overcome the drawbacks from this method by ensuring confidentiality. Moreover, the questionnaire was sent to a trial group before it was sent to all relevant recipients. It was also a defined goal to pose simple and precise questions, given that some of the respondents had to fill in the questionnaires in a language other than their mother tongue. In order to reduce language difficulties, the questionnaire was provided in English and German to offer some flexibility. However, it cannot be ruled out that some questions were potentially misinterpreted due to language difficulties.

The study was limited in that its focus was solely on the preferences of technical and managerial employees of one company in the oil and gas industry. This means that (at least) one member of each couple was employed by the oil and gas industry and the other could be engaged in any type of career. The findings must therefore be understood in the context of this environment. However, the respondents have very diverse cultural and professional backgrounds, which supports the generalizability of the results. In addition, the oil and gas industry is one with high expatriate populations, which makes it a good field for empirical research in this area. Nevertheless, the findings should be tested in other settings to prove the replicability.

Another limitation applies to the sample of the spouses. Even though the author uses the term ‘dual-career couple’, some spouses may not be classified as career-oriented in a narrow sense (seeing career as a progression through hierarchies) but could be, for example, dual-earners. However, the author does not identify this as a problem for the research, as the objective of the study was to evaluate the use of support measures for an entire expatriate population, not for a specified group that explicitly recognizes itself as a dual-career couple.

Main Results

The author argues in favor of the hypothesis that dual-career support leads to increased relocation willingness. However, the findings suggest that the dual-career will not have the same outcome for every couple, as the individual backgrounds are very different and not all concerns can be overcome by dual-career support. The probability that company-sponsored support will increase relocation willingness is highest if the host environment is not inhospitable and the spouse has not yet spent a lot of time abroad. Overall, three propositions could be confirmed, two had to be rejected.

The first proposition is that accompanying partners prefer to do further training over actual employment in the host country. This is clearly validated by the survey results, and previous research conducted in a different environment also echoes this conclusion (see Punnett 1997). The second proposition is that dual-career support improves the expatriate's subjective well-being. This proposition was confirmed based on spillover effects (meaning that feelings are transferred from one partner to the other). One expatriate even expressed explicit disappointment because the employer did not provide dual-career support. However, it must be said that there are situations where dual-career support is not needed for different reasons, which means the positive correlation between expatriate well-being and dual-career support is not applicable in all cases. Moreover, it seems that the correlation is not necessarily bound to internationally mobile couples, but rather a phenomenon that appears in all dual-career couples, independent of their assignment status.

The third proposition of beneficiaries is broken down to three groups, namely the trailing spouse, the expatriate and the employer. This proposition was confirmed for all groups: both the expatriate's and the spouse's subjective well-being is positively influenced by dual-career support. In addition, the interviewed Expatriate Manager confirms a positive impact for the employer. The fourth proposition is that the higher the spouse's education, the more likely he or she is to claim dual-career support. This proposition had to be rejected. There is no statistically relevant connection between the educational level and the dual-career support. The fifth proposition is that the longer the international assignment, the more likely the spouse is to claim dual-career support. This proposition was rejected. The interest in support in fact decreases over time.

Overview of Literature and Sources

The literature search was mainly focused on articles from international scientific journals accessed through electronic databases such as EBSCO Business Source Premier and ScienceDirect (available through the University of Latvia and the Kufstein University of Applied Sciences). The articles are either in English or German and the authors come from a multitude of different countries. However, the research has shown that there seems to be a majority of North American writers in the field of international assignments – for example, Michael Harvey, Rosalie Tung, Nancy Adler and Linda Duxbury. In the German-speaking community, the findings of Iris Fischlmayr seem to be most prominent.

The literature review was complemented by books available at the university library of the Vienna University of Economics and Business. Even though there are many books in the field of international assignments, it was difficult to find some works related to dual-career couples in an international context. For this specific area, it was helpful to also consider publications freely available in the internet. Relevant online publications are typically provided by international tax consultancies or relocation agencies that work closely with organizations that send people abroad. In addition, some helpful documents and official statistics were retrieved from governments or supranational organizations themselves.

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1. THEORETICAL REVIEW OF DUAL-CAREER COUPLES AND INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

This chapter reflects the theoretical foundations and research already done in the field of dual-career couples and international assignments. It includes definitions and major contributions made in the research area of dual-career couples, career expatriates and trailing spouses. Furthermore, the situation of dual-career couples during international assignments is examined from three different perspectives: individual, organizational and societal.

1.1. Introduction to the Concept of Dual-Career Couples

The term ‘dual-career couple’ has been coined by Rapoport and Rapoport (1969) who were among the first to investigate the research field of dual-career families (see Ostermann 2002, p. 44 and Rapoport and Rapoport 1990, p. 351). Dual-career couples are defined as a couple in which both partners are career-oriented (Ostermann 2002, p. 45). Career-orientation does not necessarily mean that they are currently pursuing a career, a temporary break (e.g. parental leave, unemployment) does not mean that the couple can no longer be referred to as a dual-career couple. Krause-Nicolai (2005, p. 226) identifies higher education for women, changed employment patterns, change in family structure (fewer children), lower fertility rates and changed gender roles as the main factors that have led to the development of dual-career couples. Rapoport and Rapoport (1990, p. 370) have discovered a change in the dual-career discourse with an increased understanding of the legitimacy (or even the necessity) of dual-worker families, as well as a new focus on the support that they should be offered – not only privately, but also from an institutional perspective.

Whereas most authors only use the general term ‘dual-career couples’, there are also researchers who distinguish between different forms of couples. Duxbury, Lyons and Higgins (2007) identify four different family types in modern families where both partners are in the labor force:

- the dual-career couple, in which both partners are engaged in managerial or professional work;
- the dual-earner couple, in which both partners have (low-paying) jobs rather than careers;
- the status-reversal couple, in which the female partner is engaged in managerial or professional work, whereas the male partner has a job; and

- the new-traditional couple, in which the male partner is engaged in managerial or professional work, whereas the female partner has a ‘job’.

In addition to the above occupational-level differentiations, Ostermann (2002, p. 47) has summarized the different manifestations concerning company affiliations and industry sectors (see table below).

Table 1: Differentiation of the term ‘dual-career couple’

Dual-career couple/family	
<i>Company Affiliation/Similarity of Employment:</i>	<i>Form of Employment:</i>
Same-career-same-firm couple	Private sector: Professional DCC
Different-career-same-firm couple	Science: Academic DCC
Same-career-different-firm couple	Self-employment: One-company couple
Different-career-different-firm couple	

Source: Ostermann 2002, p. 47

The table above shows that there are four different types of dual-career couples when it comes to company affiliation and similarity of employment. Ostermann (2002, p. 47) further distinguishes between the forms of employment, namely individuals in the private sector, in the scientific community and those who are self-employed. In regard to the employment status, the author would like to add that the public sector also represents a form of employment that is missing in the above differentiation.

There is existing research that focuses on the unique situation of same-career couples (Halbesleben and Rotondo 2007, p. 549). These authors argue that same-career couples have certain advantages because they have more social support resources and might improve organizational support systems. If one partner has a supportive supervisor, this could positively reflect on the other partner’s job as well. This means providing resources to one partner in a same-career couple could result in double benefits (Halbesleben, Rotondo 2007, p. 549). Further research is needed to determine if companies should develop a separate approach for couples who are both employed in the same enterprise.

Although it has been noted that there are diverse types of couples in this field, henceforth, the author uses the term ‘dual-career couple’ to refer to the overall phenomenon, including all

occurrences. This is in line with the findings of Eby et al. (1997, p. 301) that there is no difference between dual-earner and dual-career couples in regard to dual-career support. Therefore, it seems unnecessary to keep up this distinction for the evaluation of company-sponsored support.

Literature findings suggest that American two-career couples typically opt for the new-traditional model as soon as there is a stronger need for family time (Moen, Sweet 2004, p. 214). However, Moen and Sweet (2004, p. 214) argue that egalitarian models, e.g. both partners working normal working hours, improve quality of life to a greater extent. Looking at the modern family types, it is apparent that the occupation of the spouse is important, at least in financial terms if not in regard to career development. The type of couple could also change in a relationship because of an international assignment. Van der Zee et al. (2005, p. 242) observed that expatriate spouses turn into more traditional partners as caregivers and housekeepers after giving up their career. Furthermore, this change of the family structure could easily lead to lower well-being and decreased self-esteem.

Harvey (1998, pp. 311–312) identifies three different theoretical models that are frequently used to analyze family migration in regard to organizational relocations:

- neoclassical market model (maximizes family well-being; each spouse's potential gain or loss is weighted equally),
- relative resources and couples' decision making (concept of power through which decisions are made; the partner with greater earning capacity is likely to determine the outcome of a relocation decision) and,
- gender-role and provider-role ideology (the potential trailing spouse has the right to exercise power in a given area as well as his/her relative resources).

This means that regardless of the family type prior to an international assignment, couples have different strategies regarding how to decide about an international relocation. Corresponding approaches are addressed in chapter 1.2.

Although the challenges for accompanying partners on international assignments are widely discussed, it is even more difficult for male partners to follow their spouses on an assignment. Anderson (2001) points out that male partners have even greater difficulties adjusting to a foreign environment (see chapter 1.2.3 for more details). One of the issues particularly important for female expatriates is the loss of income of the partner. In such situations, paid

employment for the accompanying partner would help to compensate for this loss, and would make international assignments more financially attractive.

Whereas most literature has focused on the negative impacts, it is interesting to note that partners can also have positive influences during international assignments. This is also referred to as work-family facilitation (Lauring, Selmer 2010, p. 60) or role-enhancement perspective (Barnett, Gareis 2006). Work-family facilitation is defined as "the extent to which an individual's engagement in one life domain (i.e. work/family) provides gains (i.e. developmental, affective, capital, or efficiency) which contribute to enhanced functioning of another life domain (i.e. family/work)" (Wayne et al. 2007, p. 64). This happens when people want to optimize their development and are willing to extend their skills to other spheres of their lives. This means activity in one area can be helpful in another area (Wayne et al. 2007, p. 73). A more detailed discussion of variations of dual-career support in organizations is presented in the analytical part of this thesis (see chapter 2.1).

1.1.1. Clarification of the Notion of Career

As the term 'dual-career couple' is based on the concept of career, it is helpful to first break down the notion of career and its influencing factors. The UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) defines career as "the interaction of work roles and other life roles over a person's lifespan including both paid and unpaid work in an individual's life. People create career patterns as they make decisions about education, work, family and other life roles" (UNESCO 2002, p. 5). Although the UNESCO defines career in very general terms, it is also possible to have a more narrow understanding of career which includes a certain standard of success. For example, the Oxford English Dictionary (2012) adds this remark to the general definition: "A course of professional life or employment, which affords opportunity for progress or advancement in the world."

Another definition of career is provided by Heery and Noon (2008): "The series of jobs that a person has throughout his or her working life. Traditionally, a career was considered to be a progression from lower to higher levels in the organization, and/or from junior to senior status in one's occupation or profession. Increasingly, these ideas of career progression along a career path or up a career ladder are being replaced with new concepts such as the portfolio career and lateral career moves."

Ostermann (2002, pp. 128–132) clusters the different career perspectives into four major groups (see figure below). The individual-chronological perspective represents the sequence of an individual’s work. The focus for the organizational-chronological perspective is the position in a corporate hierarchy. In contrast, the individual-expansive perspective concentrates on the advancement of an individual and the organizational-expansive perspective relates to a promotion in a corporate hierarchy.



Figure 1: Career perspectives

Source: author’s own figure based on Ostermann (2002, pp. 128-132)

This shows that career can be either seen from an organizational point of view (different positions within an organization) or as a characteristic of an individual (a pattern in the consciousness system). In addition to this differentiation, there is a further distinction between chronological approaches (focusing on sequence of career steps) and an expansive understanding of career (the link between career and promotion/increase of responsibility).

According to this matrix, all of the above-mentioned definitions fall in the category of an individual understanding of career. The UNESCO definition could be classified as an individual-chronological perspective, whereas the Oxford definition would fall into the category of an individual-expansive perspective. Heery and Noon’s (2008) definition encompasses both perspectives. One means of explaining the type of progress is to set certain criteria which have to be met in order to be considered as someone pursuing a career. The following factors were identified as determinants for having a career (Hurley et al. 1997, p. 69): connection to corporate headquarters, a variety of positions, a variety of departments, long tenure.

It is important for organizations to think about the career development of their potential employees. In order to have enough internal candidates for top management positions, a long-term strategy is essential. Therefore, it helps to define certain skills that are needed for senior management postings. Hurley et al. (1997, p. 70) mention core skills, flexibility and breadth of experience relevant to the company as success factors. In the past, the course of life was predefined by birth and there was little room for individual choices. Only when organizations started to develop, did individuals become able to pursue different career patterns (Hurley et al. 1997, p. 70). However, this traditional approach towards career has now been challenged by the rise of new organizational forms such as inter-organizational, boundaryless careers (Becker, Haunschild 2003, pp. 713–714).

Becker and Haunschild (2003, p. 720) argue that the main challenge for companies is reducing paradoxes for decision-making and that career is helpful in that regard. However, the development of non-linear, inter-organizational careers endangers this structure, as it impedes organizations to successfully use career mechanisms. Clearly, these new, inter-organizational careers present major challenges for organizations, which need to be discussed in detail by the concerned companies. In many organizations it has become a necessity to prove an international track record. Whereas in the past the main reason for companies to send people abroad was because of the specific know-how expatriates provided, nowadays personnel development is considered the most important reason for international assignments (for further details see chapter 1.1.2.).

Companies tend to invest in pre-departure training and support during the assignment, but most do not consider the repatriation phase in their support mechanisms because they assume that the problems in the home country and home company are insignificant. However, the repatriation process (being faced with a new position, new accommodation and possibly an ongoing job search for the accompanying spouse) can be traumatic after many years spent abroad (Tung 1988, p. 241). Tung (1988, p. 242) found that the possibility of re-entry is influenced by three factors: the duration of the assignment, the overall qualification of the expatriate, and the management attitude toward international experience. Usually, repatriation becomes more difficult the longer the assignment lasts. This is because of the ‘out of sight, out of mind’ syndrome, the organizational changes that have happened during the absence, and technological changes that could negatively influence the usability of the expatriate’s

know-how (Tung 1988, p. 242). This means at least when it comes to repatriation, an employee's career is influenced by the decision to accept an international assignment.

1.1.2. Development and Current Appearances of Expatriation

The term 'expatriate' originally derives from the expression to "withdraw from one's native country" (Hoad 1993). In fact, this explanation is still valid today. Expatriates are employees who are working and temporarily residing in a foreign country (Dowling, Welch 2004, p. 5). Berry and Bell (2012, p. 10) mention that "In the international management (IM) literature, 'expatriate' is used as a verb in reference to the transnational movement of employees by multinational corporations (MNCs) and as a noun in reference to the people who are so moved across borders to work." They point out that there is a significant difference in the literature between expatriates and migrants. Although both cross borders to work, they may differ by race, gender and class (Berry, Bell 2012, p. 16). Generally, the difference between corporate expatriates' and migrants' motivation is whether they go abroad based on a company's request or their own intent. Nevertheless, there are also expatriates who use their own resources to relocate to another country for work. These people have been called 'self-initiated expatriates' in the management literature and not 'migrants' (Berry, Bell 2012, p. 21).

Even though the term 'expatriate' may not always have been used, people living outside their home countries have been around for basically as long as modern society exists. The historical development of the phenomenon of expatriates is difficult to describe, as the boundaries between migrants and expatriates are sometimes blurred. An example of the topic's historical relevance is the U.S. Expatriation Act of 1868 which claimed that "the right of expatriation is a natural and inherent right of all people, indispensable to the enjoyment of the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (Rice 2011, p. 51). However, the term 'expatriation' was used only in connection with the right to change citizenship, and was therefore used for permanent migration and not for temporary transfers. Another historical example of the existence of expatriation can be seen with missionaries. The word 'mission' derives from the Latin word 'missio' ("act of sending, a dispatching; a release, a setting at liberty; discharge from service, dismissal") and was used in the 1590s to refer to sending people (originally Jesuits) abroad. The term first appeared in a diplomatic context in the 1620s meaning "body of persons sent to a foreign land on commercial or political business" (Harper 2013).

Whenever a discussion about the internationalization of the labor force is held, the concept of globalization comes up. Globalization refers to the growing financial integration of economies around the world, but also to the international migration of labor and knowledge. From a broader perspective, cultural, political and environmental dimensions can also be covered by the term 'globalization' (IMF 2000). The term has been used since the 1980s to show the advances in order to facilitate international transactions. Basically, the same market powers had already been in place but they were newly applied to the international sphere (IMF 2000).

The increasing internationalization of businesses is accompanied by a change in the legal, political and market environment. In regard to the legal situation, the growth of the European Union has led to faster and easier internationalization. Concerning the market environment, an increase in competition in the domestic and international markets has made international activities inevitable. Many OECD countries have matured, and stagnating markets have forced companies to look for new markets abroad (Brandenburger 1995, pp. 38–40).

As described above, the internationalization of the economy requires companies to go abroad. This automatically leads to the involvement of employees in cross-border transactions. In order to systematically manage the workforce, an HR department that is in charge of the coordination of the international staff is necessary. The expatriation process is usually divided into three different phases: pre-departure, during the assignment and repatriation (Ashamalla 1998, p. 54–58). The pre-departure phase can be further broken down into different steps, namely selection and preparation (including briefing, training and family orientation). According to Ashamalla (1998, p. 54), factors that promote a possible failure of an international assignment include inappropriate HR activities during the three expatriation phases.

There are several reasons for an international assignment, but the two major ones are know-how transfer and personnel development (Brandenburger 1995, pp. 52–53). Know-how transfer can be further split into two areas: transfer of management know-how and transfer of technical know-how. In regard to personnel development, expatriates should earn international experience in order to better understand the global activities of the company, and to improve intercultural understanding. Some employers also consider the international assignment as a sort of test to see how well a person can adjust in an unknown situation (Brandenburger 1995, pp. 52–53).

1.1.3. Definition and Characteristics of Trailing Spouses

A so-called trailing partner/spouse is "a person, traditionally a woman, who sacrifices her own job or career to allow her partner to take a new job in a different location. The phenomenon of the trailing wife is perhaps less common owing to the spread of dual-earner families, in which both partners develop a career" (Heery, Noon 2008). The author of this thesis uses the term 'trailing spouse' to neutrally describe accompanying partners without any further connotation, e.g. in regard to gender or status. The author is not aware of any previous research focusing on the educational background of trailing spouses. However, Crispell and Du (1995, p. 32) have found out that education levels are not only relevant for a couple's income. The education levels also influence how the couples talk, use media and make consumer decisions. For example, they showed that college-educated couples are more likely to state that large purchases are joint decisions.

Apart from the educational levels, it might also be helpful to take a look at the career-orientation of accompanying partners, as studied by Stephens and Black (1991). They refer to earlier publications where they mention that spouses with comparatively high earnings or high-status professions have significant influence on family relocation (Stephens, Black 1991 p. 418). It is not surprising that career-oriented spouses experience unemployment or career interruptions as more severe than spouses without major career expectations. The authors define career-oriented spouses as individuals with higher incomes who are in professional or managerial jobs and put a lot of effort into finding work – this ensures that they would lose more in a case of unemployment (Stephens, Black 1991, p. 419).

Stephens and Black (1991, pp. 422-423) made four major findings in regard to the career orientation of trailing spouses:

1. Spouses with earnings above the median prior to the transfer are more likely to find work after the transfer than their lower earning counterparts (even though a majority of spouses could not find work abroad).
2. Couples in which the spouse worked before the transfer but not upon return do not report a lower standard of living than couples in which the spouse worked both before and after the transfer. In general, the expatriate remuneration compensates for the loss of the second income. Career-oriented spouses are not likely to experience significant job interruption, but should the situation arise, they face the strongest negative impact.

3. No significant differences were found between the adjustment levels of expatriate managers whose spouses only worked before the transfer, and managers whose spouses worked before and after the transfer.

4. Expatriates whose spouses only worked before the transfer did not report a higher risk of premature return than managers whose spouses worked both before and after the international assignment. However, the spousal home salary negatively correlates with the expatriate manager's retention, meaning that the higher the spouse's income in the home country, the lower the commitment of the expatriate to stay in the assignment.

Well-paid spouses are more likely to find a job upon repatriation than others, and the international experiences might even compensate for the negative effects of job interruptions faced by non-career-oriented partners (Stephens, Black 1991, p. 426). The findings described above suggest that the characteristics of trailing spouses are very diverse, and that there are many influencing factors on an individual level. This makes it difficult for research in this area to formulate generalized statements that are applicable for the entire population of expatriate spouses.

1.2. Determinants of the Situation of Dual-Career Couples

In this chapter, the author addresses the situation of dual-career couples on international assignments from three different perspectives, namely individual, organizational and societal perspectives. This clustered approach allows a holistic view of the problem. The chart below is an illustration of the three main determinants and their interactions that should help to better understand the context of dual-career couples. The approaches introduced in the chart are explained in depth in the following chapters.

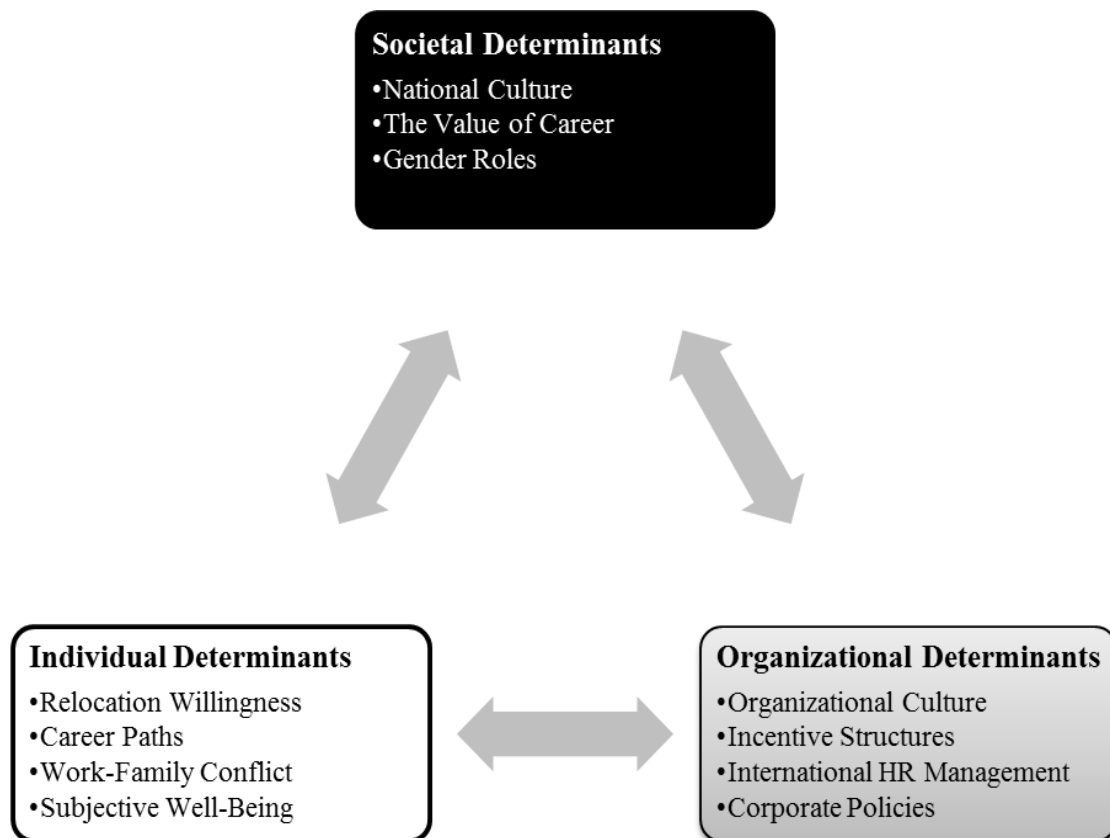


Figure 2: Framework of determinants for the situation of dual-career couples during international assignments

Source: author's own figure

Concerning individual determinants, there are four essential areas. Relocation willingness (the willingness to go abroad) heavily influences the mobility of the workforce. As staff mobility is important for multi-national corporations, this issue is significant in the research field of international assignments. The author also gives thought to career paths, as they are influential for dual-career couples as well as international assignments. The work-family conflict is relevant in this context because it is one of the fundamental challenges for dual-career couples. Finally, the subjective well-being of expatriates is closely related to the family situation and is an influencing factor for the success or failure of international assignments. This combination makes it essential to assess the situation in this research context.

There are four crucial areas when considering an organization. The organizational culture is one parameter, because whether or not the on-assignment career support is provided, accepted and used depends on the corporate culture. Moreover, the incentive structures of an organization play a role when it comes to family-friendly benefits. Finally, the role of the HR

department within an organization and the corresponding policies greatly influence the situation of dual-career couples.

The author argues that societal determinants are mainly built around three areas. First, the national culture defines the status of dual-career couples and their opportunities in a society. Second, the value of career is important for the existence and survival of dual-career couples. Third, gender roles make a difference when it comes to defining one's own role in a relationship but also in the professional world.

The above illustration demonstrates not only the key points of the different perspectives, but also shows the interactions between the determinants. This also highlights the complex surroundings that influence dual-career couples during international assignments. Naturally, some factors can be more influential in some cases than others (e.g. depending on the degree of difference between home and host culture or the couple type before relocation). However, any international assignment will be confronted with individual, organizational and societal challenges that also affect each other, and may have different outcomes for dual-career couples. The above-mentioned determinants are specified in the subsequent theoretical and/or analytical part of this thesis.

Whereas the presented approaches are a solid theoretical background for the analytical and empirical research, there are other approaches not covered in this thesis that may also play a role in the research of dual-career couples. This is because the research field of dual-career couples is a multidisciplinary area that spans multiple fields of anthropology, psychology, sociology, economics and business administration.

1.2.1. Individual Perspectives

From a theoretical point of view, the author has identified three key areas influencing dual-career couples during international assignments on an individual level: relocation willingness, work-family conflict and subjective well-being. These areas will now be explained in further detail.

Relocation Willingness

Based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs (1943), it can be seen that the so-called 'love needs' come just after the physiological and safety needs. As Maslow puts it, "the person will feel keenly, as never before, the absence of friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife, or children." Looking at international assignments where the partner has to stay in the home country or in a third country for different reasons, this need might not be fulfilled. It is difficult to imagine that employees would be high performing on the job if one of their basic needs was not being met.

When it comes to the question of why people behave in a certain way, several factors need to be addressed. Radical behaviorism, for example, combines internal and external factors, meaning that it includes previous external experiences and private, internal events of individuals (Skinner 1978, p. 24). If this approach is transferred to the setting of international assignments, it is not only the external environment (such as the working environment, employment contract etc.) that influences relocation willingness, but also private, individual considerations (such as family and friends).

Haines and Saba (1999, p. 41) identify three typical barriers for accepting an international assignment: career development, finances and family ties. International mobility policies that address the spouse and family members' concerns are considered to be most valued by parents, especially those in dual-career couples (Haines and Saba 1999, p. 43). Haines and Saba (1999, p. 49) also found out that high relocation willingness leads to fewer career, financial and family concerns. This means people who are intrinsically motivated to accept an international assignment will not ask for many additional benefits. International HR managers are further advised to study the life cycle of the employees to discover 'strategic windows' of opportunity for dual-career couples to move abroad which would help to facilitate career succession planning (Harvey et al. 2009, p. 19). Haines and Saba (1999, p. 50) mention that family-friendly benefits are considered more important for families with a greater number of accompanying children.

Konopaske et al. (2005, p. 407) name the following factors that create pressure on the spouse from inside and outside the family system:

- presence of children at home,
- caretaking and social needs of elderly relatives who live near (or with) the family,

- the degree to which the spouse has an ‘adventurous’ personality,
- job and career issues and
- whether or not the organization provides career support for the spouse.

According to Konopaske et al. (2005, p. 408) it is important to consider spouse relocation willingness because this influences manager willingness to assume a global assignment. In view of increasing numbers of dual-career couples, relocation willingness will continue to decrease (Fischlmayr 2001, p. 776). Andreason (2007, p. 24) supports this view based on the rising number of dual-career couples paired with an aging population and other family-related situations. This will lead to difficulties in regard to the available pool of candidates for foreign assignments and will consequently affect the recruitment process. Of course, individual factors and organizational aspects of relocation willingness should also be considered in addition to family factors (see figure below).

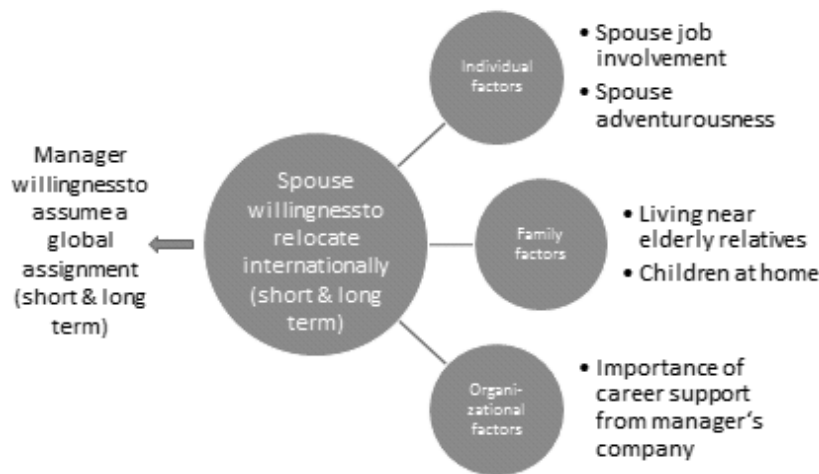


Figure 3: General model: Spouse international relocation and manager global assignment willingness

Source: Konopaske et al. 2005, p. 409

The above figure illustrates the complex environment influencing a spouse’s decision to relocate or not, and ultimately affecting a manager’s willingness to accept an international assignment. Even though the model of Konopaske et al. gives a comprehensive overview, the author of this thesis would add the societal perspective, as the expectations and norms given by the surrounding society are also influential.

Work-Family Conflict

The situation when family responsibilities interfere with the professional life is generally referred to as the work-family conflict. Allard et al. (2011, p. 144) mention that there are two dimensions of work-family conflict: work-to-family conflict (work interferes with family) and family-to-work conflict (family interferes with work). However, in this thesis the author will only use the more general term ‘work-family conflict’ as also mainly used in the literature. Apart from the two different dimensions work-family and family-work conflict, there are three different types of work-family conflict: time-, strain- and behavior-based conflict (Hargis et al. 2011, p. 388). An example of a time-based conflict is a situation when more time is spent in one role, which is then missing in the other role. A strain-based work-family conflict refers to the case when the person experiences stress or tension in one role, which negatively reflects on the other role as well. Behavior-based conflicts arise when the two roles ask for different behavior patterns.

Hein (2005, pp. 3–9) identifies different origins of the work-family conflict. She mentions the separation of home and workplace, the increasing labor force participation of women, the declining availability of family assistance, the increasing care needs of the elderly, pressure of work and long working hours, longer travel time to and from the office, and stress caused by HIV/AIDS. Whereas the background of the work-family conflict falls into the category of societal determinants for the situation of dual-career couples, the consequences are experienced by individuals. This is the reason why the author of this thesis considers the work-family conflict to be part of the individual perspective.

The most important factors influencing the work-family conflict are (Hargis et al. 2011, pp. 389–391):

- job and family stressors,
- levels of social support,
- levels of job and family involvement,
- number of working hours,
- number and ages of children,
- personality/perception of situations.

Out of these factors, negative perceptions and job stressors are most influential (Hargis et al. 2011, p. 401). Hargis et al. (2011, p. 386) summarize previous studies by explaining the most

important outcomes of work-family conflict, namely job and life satisfaction, psychological distress, chronic health problems, job performance and absenteeism, turnover intentions and voluntary turnover.

Hein (2005, p. 24) points out that only a few industries have considered family support in the past (e.g. only in remote locations such as plantations or mines). In contrast, other industries have typically separated work and family by not perceiving family matters as their responsibilities. Rather, industries believe that family is the sole responsibility of the employee, who has to make sure that there is no interference with work. Looking at multi-national corporations in our society today, most of them are likely to have bureaucratic structures. As this organization is characterized by an emphasis on technical expertise and a system of hierarchical surveillance, evaluation, and direction (Ouchi 1980, p. 134), it is not surprising that companies traditionally do not interfere with the family situation of their employees. Hein (2005, p. 25) explains that the tradition that companies do not feel responsible for families is based on the male breadwinner model where the employee could not risk losing his job because the family was dependent on one income. Today's two-income couples present a new situation that puts the family on the company's agenda. Companies should take over a more proactive role in supporting their staff to decrease work-family conflict (Powell, Greenhaus 2010, p. 528).

Study results suggest that there is a difference between men and women in regard to work-to-family positive spillover. Female employees showed higher levels of positive spillover than men, while experiencing a similar work-family conflict (Powell, Greenhaus 2010, p. 526). Independent of gender, employees show lower potential for conflicts but also for positive spillover if they separate work and family more strictly (Powell, Greenhaus 2010, p. 525). This means that if one tries to keep the spheres apart, this will have both negative and positive effects. In the past, organizations were focusing on 'face time' and '24/7' accessibility which is now being questioned because of the increasing work-family conflict. Accordingly, companies could offer training in how to transfer the values, skills, and behaviors acquired at work to the family sphere (Powell, Greenhaus 2010, p. 528).

According to Skinner (1978, p. 170), in the best case, a personality is a behavioral repertoire that was transmitted to a person through an organized order of contingencies, for example one's behavior with the family is different than this person's behavior on the job. The author claims that these two parts can co-exist in one person without conflict, as long as the

contingencies do not interfere with each other (for example friends from work visiting the person at home). This example can be taken to a more general level: Nowadays, work and private spheres have become more interconnected, and this results in conflicting behavior.

Subjective Well-Being

The World Health Organization (2011) defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community”. Recently, the term ‘work-life balance’ has been frequently used to describe the interfaces between the work and private sphere. The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines work-life balance as “the amount of time you spend doing your job compared with the amount of time you spend with your family and doing things you enjoy”. Work-life balance programs are organizational initiatives aimed at enhancing employee experience of work and non-work domains (McCarthy et al. 2010). The author takes on a broader perspective, not only considering the time factor, but also encompassing the status of mental health. This is why the term ‘subjective well-being’ is preferred in this thesis. It is also important to mention that each individual experiences his or her subjective well-being in a different way. This means that people have different needs for balance in their private and professional lives. It is also important to note that personal well-being is heavily influenced by one’s own perception of a situation. Individuals who have already experienced high levels of stress (such as burnout) are more attentive to their situation and might realize negative factors earlier than others (Westman et al. 2008, p. 464).

Research also shows that work-related well-being is strongly connected with general well-being (e.g. Nielsen, Munir 2009, p. 315). One's general outlook on life also affects the perception of working conditions, meaning that optimistic people typically have more positive feelings at work. However, the relationship between the employee and the superior also plays a role. Van Dierendonck et al. (2004, p. 173) emphasize that the leader-subordinate relationship is a reciprocal process where the feelings directly influence each other. Supervisors should receive leadership training, as positive leadership behavior will improve the subordinates’ well-being (Nielsen, Munir 2009, p. 325). Superiors should be made aware of their great influence and they should be trained in how to positively influence their subordinates. Likewise, programs to improve the employees’ well-being should also include the managers (van Dierendonck et al. 2004, p. 173). Leadership behavior will have an

influence on the individual well-being. Supportive behavior is linked to trust: recognition and feedback typically improves the well-being of the employees. The subordinates also influence their supervisors' well-being, and consequently how they are treated (van Dierendonck et al. 2004, p. 166). Generally, employees whose line managers are more supportive of their work-life balance needs tend to be more satisfied with their jobs, experience less work-personal life conflict, and report lower turnover intentions (McCarthy et al. 2010). Of course, there are not only differences in the individual perception of the subjective well-being, the cultural background is also an influencing factor.

Several researchers have tried to find solutions how to achieve a positive work-life balance. Burton (2004, p. 13) argues that in order to maintain a balance in life, routines must be flexible instead of static, for example making conscious decisions about what to do in a certain moment. One of the indicators for individual well-being is the social environment in organizations, which can be either supportive or stressful (van Dierendonck et al. 2004, p. 165). Of course, decisions are linked to the individual person, but employers also play an important part when it comes to personal well-being.

Brummelhuis and van der Lippe (2010, p. 176) state that there are two different approaches to work-family balance: the conflict approach (individuals have a given amount of time which needs to be distributed between work and family, policies as an answer to heavy family demands) and the enrichment approach (family as a means of social support; policies as a compensation for a lack of family resources). In general, employees who have troubles with their work-family balance feel less satisfied with their job and show less organizational commitment (Hein 2005, p. 25). This means it is also in the company's interest to care about the employees' well-being, as this also influences their effectiveness at work.

Allen (2001, p. 415) observed that the availability of family-friendly policies does not mean that the subjective well-being is improved if fundamental aspects of the organization are obstructive. Consequently, only a supportive organizational environment will result in successful work-life balance policies (see also chapter 1.2.2). Not surprisingly, superiors play a major role when it comes to the perception of the work environment, as they have the power to allow employees to benefit from support measures. The management also has to raise the awareness about possible problems with the individual well-being of their employees.

So far only a few researchers have considered dual-career couples in regard to subjective well-being. Van der Zee et al. (2005, p. 259) believe that the situation when two people are challenged with finding a balance at work and at home in a new country (and the interplay between those dynamics for both partners) should receive more attention. According to Dickmann et al. (2008, p. 733) the balance between work and non-work activities is closely linked to dual-career issues, leading to a need for a broader approach to work-life issues. The authors consider personal and non-work related factors as important when it comes to the decision to accept or reject international assignments.

Dickmann et al. (2008, p. 743) emphasize that an appropriate balance between private and business life influences the decisions of expatriates to take up international assignments more than companies realize. There are several factors influencing an expatriate's work-life balance in a negative way. Crompton (2006, p. 111) concludes from her literature review that long working hours make up the feature that has the most negative impact on subjective well-being. She also argues that employer-provided work-life policies are especially important in countries where there is only little state support. It is important to note that state benefits differ widely among the countries, e.g. in terms of paid vacation or nursing leave (see chapter 1.2.3). In countries with few provisions, the companies even have a more decisive role in regard to work-life questions.

Van der Zee et al. (2005, p. 244) point out that for expatriate couples the stress levels may be higher in comparison to non-international couples – the spouse has often given up a career to go abroad, which results in a stronger pressure for the expatriate. This pressure is higher, not only in financial terms (being the single earner of a family), but also in emotional terms (the whole family depending on the job/success of one parent).

1.2.2. Organizational Perspectives

In the following section the author describes three theoretical domains influencing dual-career couples during international assignments on an organizational level, namely organizational culture, incentive structures and international HR management.

Organizational Culture

Shafritz and Ott (1987, p. 373) define organizational culture as: "[...] the culture that exists in an organization, something akin to a societal culture. It is comprised of many intangible things such as values, beliefs, assumptions, perceptions, behavioral norms, artifacts, and patterns of behavior. It is the unseen and unobservable force that is always behind organizational activities that can be seen and observed."

Edgar Schein (1980) developed an influential and broadly used model of organizational culture. This model consists of three interrelated levels (Alvesson, Sveningsson, 2008):

1. Assumptions

Assumptions are the core of the organizational culture. They are taken-for-granted beliefs about the nature of reality, the nature of the organization and its relations to the environments, the nature of human nature, the nature of time and the nature of people's relations to each other. Assumptions are beliefs that guide everyday thinking and action in organizations. They are usually unconscious, but constitute the essence of culture. These assumptions are typically so well integrated in the office dynamic that they are hard to recognize from within.

2. Values

Values are norms that prescribe how the organization should work (principles, objectives, codes, rules of behavior). It is how the members represent the organization both to themselves and to others. This is often expressed in official philosophies and public statements of identity.

3. Artefacts

Artefacts are physical, behavioral and verbal manifestations, any tangible, overt or verbally identifiable elements in an organization. For example architecture, furniture, dress code or office jokes exemplify organizational artefacts. Artefacts are the visible elements in a culture and they can be recognized by people not part of the culture.

The various levels mutually influence each other. Cultural change is difficult to accomplish since it usually requires, at minimum, that the normally hidden assumptions are made explicit and targeted (Alvesson, Sveningsson, 2008). The cultural dimension is central in all aspects of organizational life, even in those organizations where cultural issues receive little explicit attention. Senior organizational members are always, in one way or another, 'managing' culture' (Alvesson 2011). One of the roles of corporate culture is to provide stability, focus, direction and guidance (Trompenaars, Prud'homme 2004). In modern organizations, it is increasingly difficult to find managers not concerned with the development, maintenance,

and/or change of corporate culture. This is because an effective organizational culture has been identified as a major factor that differentiates extraordinarily successful firms from their competition (Ashkanasy et al. 2011). The relevance of corporate culture is most visible when it comes to mergers and acquisitions and there is a clash of corporate cultures (Alvesson 2011).

There are three major views on the possibility of cultural change (Alvesson, Sveningsson 2008):

1. Organizational culture – at least under certain conditions and with the use of sufficient skills and resources – can be changed by top management.
2. It is very difficult to change organizational culture. There is a multitude of various values and meaning-influencing groups and structures are not easily accessible for influencing. People do not respond predictably to efforts to change their orientations. Still, change takes place and management is one resourceful group exercising influence. One could therefore assume that senior managers exercise a moderate influence on some values and meanings under certain circumstances (the change manager is an interpreter).
3. Culture is beyond control. How people create meaning in their work experiences is related to local culture, and contingent upon educational background, work tasks, group belonging and interpersonal interactions. This means that senior actors' efforts to exercise influence will often have limited impact and will typically be reinterpreted, so that intended and received meanings may not overlap (Ogbonna and Wilkinson 2003).

Studies of organizational cultural change seem to confirm that culture is, at the least, very difficult to change. Based on these studies, it is generally believed that openness and receptiveness to new ideas, values and meanings are central to accomplishing a cultural change. When it comes to views on how to accomplish change, it makes sense to distinguish between cultural change as a grand technocratic project (a more or less scheme-regulated stepwise activity with a design and a plan for the future) and as everyday reframing (Alvesson, Sveningsson 2008).

Trompenaars and Prud'homme (2004) mention the following dilemmas in the corporate culture change process:

- radical change versus stability,
- consensus versus decisiveness (team work or top-down),
- changing rules for behavior versus fundamental change of deeper assumptions,

- change focused on cost reduction versus change focused on investments in growth and motivation.

In regard to the area of dual-career couples, the author of this thesis takes a closer look at the work-family culture which Thompson et al. (1999, p. 394) define as follows: "shared assumptions, beliefs, and values regarding the extent to which an organization supports and values the integration of employees' work and family lives". Thompson et al. (1999, p. 408) are of the opinion that the organizational culture should also be assessed when it comes to evaluations of family support programs. Shafritz and Ott (1987, p. 391) refer to Schein's levels of culture (1980, p. 4; see above) that it could be that the basic assumptions and values attached to the work-family culture do not correspond to the actual behavior patterns. Assuming that companies create family-friendly policies to improve the work-family conflict and to enhance employee mobility, the staff might experience the dual-career support in a different way. Some employees might see the program as pure amusement for trailing spouses while not associating the policy with their own situation. Following the Hawthorne experiments, it was found that managers must be aware of and cater to the social needs of their employees in order to ensure that employees collaborate with the official organization (Mayo 1945).

Supportive work-family culture is linked to higher commitment, lower employee turnover, and less work-to-family conflict (Thompson et al. 1999, p. 409). Even if the company introduces family-friendly programs, it depends on the organizational culture whether or not the program is accepted by the work force (Hein, 2005, p. 63). Crompton et al. (2007, p. 10) also mention that organizational cultures can only become more family-friendly when there is a change in managerial practices of employee control. The reasons not to utilize programs include career concerns or discouraging line managers. According to Hein (2005), a supportive organizational culture is one of the most essential factors for the effectiveness of work-family policies.

Incentive Structures

From a corporate point of view, there are different reasons why a company would send employees abroad. Fischlmayr and Kopecek (2012, pp. 22–23) summarize the major targets from a company perspective: filling of vacancies, training of local staff, control and

coordination of local staff, organizational development and development of an international mindset - creation of management pools.

In contrast to the organizational reasons, the individual motivational factors for employees are somewhat different. These include financial incentives and opportunities for career development. The motivation could also be related to the expected autonomy and social status abroad. The assignment can also be perceived as a tool for personal development or an escape route and adventure (Fischlmayr, Kopecek 2012, pp. 23–25).

Dickmann et al. (2008, p. 732) list the following motives as typical for individuals to accept international assignments:

- the job offer,
- the opportunity to have new experiences and learning possibilities,
- personal interest in international experience,
- family and domestic issues,
- the location of the assignment, and
- the overall assignment offer including the repatriation package and the financial impact of working abroad.

Whereas the cultural background plays an important role when it comes to decision-making, it is still necessary to be aware of the role of private incentives that influence behavior in addition to these cultural phenomena (Laffont, Martimort 2002, p. 2). This is why the author considers it helpful to analyze the situation of expatriates according to the theory of agency (see Ebers, Gotsch 1999, pp. 209-215) which is also described as the theory of incentives (Laffont, Martimort 2002). The need for task delegation is clear when a firm has to send an employee abroad. This underlines the importance of the topic in line with the theory of incentives (Laffont, Martimort 2002, p. 7).

If the theory of agency is applied to the situation during an international assignment, the employer represents the principal, whereas the expatriate is the agent. The two main questions are: What are the main problems for the employer due to unequal information, insecurity and risk? How could the employer design the assignment conditions to reduce the conflicts? Both parties – the employer and the employee – definitely want to benefit from the assignment and want to get the most out of it. This will include both monetary (e.g. international assignment remuneration for the expatriate or increased profits for the employer) and non-monetary goals

(e.g. career development). Besides, material incentives have been discussed as being ineffective compared to other incentives (Laffont and Martimort 2002, p. 12 referring to Barnard 1938, p. 144). The expatriate is more likely to be risk-averse, which is natural considering how much effort is needed for an international relocation. The employer has more information about the actual purpose and targets of the international assignment than the employee.

The organizational setup is based on contracts between individuals (Ebers, Gotsch 1999, p. 210). However, even if there are international assignment contracts and assignment guidelines, not every situation will be covered by these frameworks. The agency costs occur because of unequal distribution of information. The employer will have costs for governance mechanisms (e.g. expatriate bonus system), guarantee costs (e.g. payback clauses) and residual costs (welfare losses for the employer).

According to the theory of agency there are two main problems: hidden information and hidden action (Ebers, Gotsch 1999, p. 213). Both problems are critical in regard to international assignments. The employer does not know how the employee will perform abroad and if the person will meet the needs of the foreign subsidiary. The problem of hidden action is especially significant if the employee is sent to a remote host country that is far away from the headquarters. The employer has little control over the activities of the employee. In order to reduce these problems, the employer will introduce certain governance mechanisms (Ebers, Gotsch 1999, p. 214). Amongst others, these mechanisms can include bonus systems, codes of conduct and improved information and reporting structures. The theory of agency, as described by Ebers and Gotsch (1999), supports the view that the relationship between the employer and the expatriate needs to be well covered by contracts and guidelines, especially in risky situations like international assignments. The expatriate and his/her employer are likely to experience some sort of conflict at one point of the assignment or another.

Apart from the theory of agency, there are also other organizational theories that describe situations in connection with international assignments. The decision making process, for example, does not only relate to individual decisions made by the expatriate and his/her partner (see chapter 1.2.1) but also to decisions that are made within an organization. According to behavioral decision theory, the decision making process is not based on logic but human behavior (Berger, Bernhard-Mehlich 1999, p. 133). The environment is seen as complex and changing and the organizations need to adapt to these circumstances. For

example, the situation of dual-career couples is something new that organizations still need to cope with. However, it is impossible for organizations to capture the full picture of the relationships of its employees.

Decision theorists like Barnard (1938) consider organizations as something impersonal (Berger, Bernhard-Mehlich 1999, p. 135). Taking into account that employees are mainly driven by the organization's perspective, it is likely that private life will interfere with professional life sooner or later, especially for individuals in dual-career relationships. Interestingly, the participants of an organization are broadly defined as everybody who contributes something to the organization. This means, for example, employee spouses can be considered organizational participants if they influence actions of employees.

Behavioral decision theory argues that employees need monetary and non-monetary inducements in order to contribute something to the organization (Berger, Bernhard-Mehlich 1999, p. 137). If one applies this rule to dual-career couples, it could mean that if the organization provides adequate assignment remuneration and appropriate dual-career support, the employee will be more likely to accept an international assignment.

Another organizational theory that is relevant in this context is system theory. The 'Theory of Social Systems' was introduced by Niklas Luhmann who published his major work "Soziale Systeme. Grundriß einer allgemeinen Theorie" in 1984 whose aim is to explain society (Kneer, Nassehi 2000, p. 34). According to Luhmann (1984), social systems do not comprise humans but communication. Communication is not a result of human behavior but a product of social systems (Kneer, Nassehi 2000, p. 66). It is also important to note that in system theory the human being is not a system but consists of a multitude of separately operating systems. Consequently, the human being itself does not communicate (Kneer, Nassehi 2000, pp. 66-67). Social and psychic systems are structurally interconnected which means that there is no communication without consciousness and no consciousness without communication (Kneer, Nassehi 2000, p. 71). Even though the psychic system of the human is outside of the social system, it can irritate and stimulate communication (Kneer, Nassehi 2000, p. 80).

In the context of international assignments, this could be observed in a meeting with the purpose of negotiating the assignment contract. Whereas the international mobility manager might talk about hard facts such as assignment remuneration and allowances, the employee could think about how his/her partner will be able to adjust in the new country without paying

attention to the contents of the contract. Kneer and Nassehi (2000, p. 73) argue that two psychic systems will always remain non-transparent, meaning that one can never participate in the thoughts of the counterpart. Taking on the perspective of system theory, it is very difficult – if not impossible – for organizations to understand the ‘expatriate system’ and this makes it very challenging to introduce appropriate dual-career support measures.

International Human Resource Management

In order to understand the field of international HR it is helpful to take on a broader perspective. For this purpose, Brewster et al. (2005, p. 961-966) describe organizational drivers, HR enablers and HR processes that finally lead to organizational outcomes (see figure below).

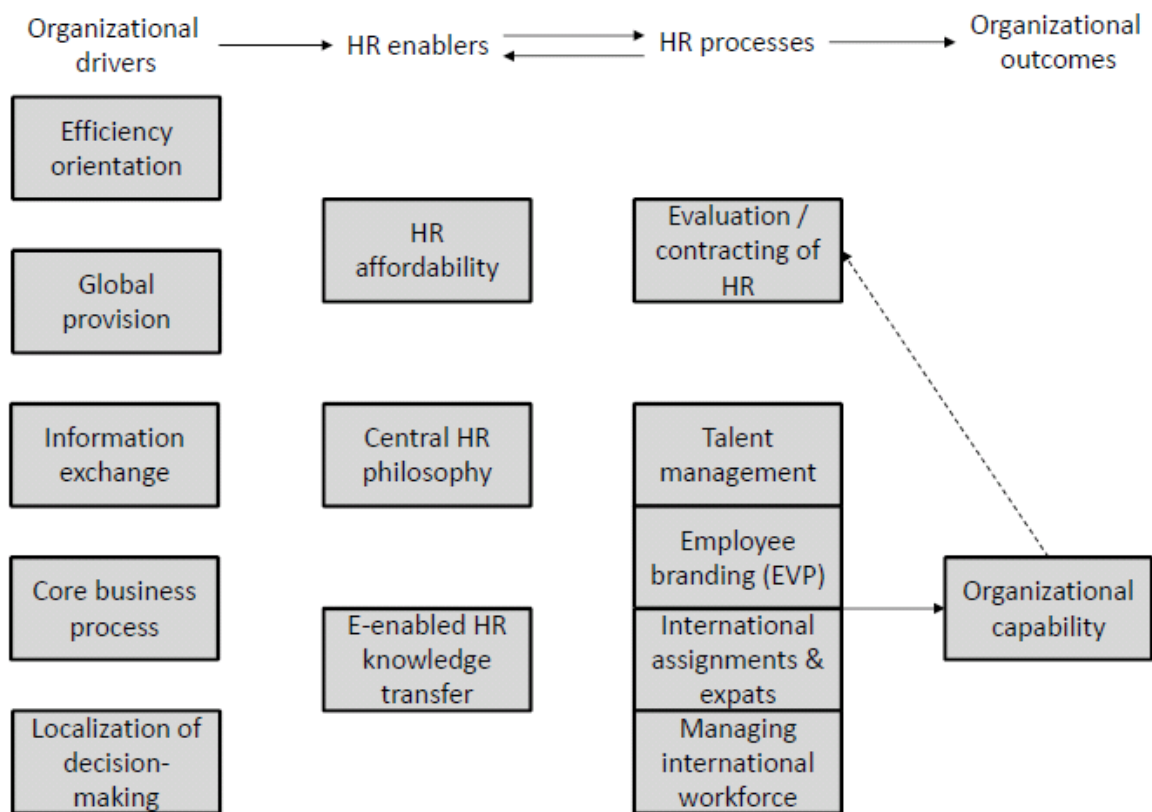


Figure 4: Model of global HR

Source: Brewster et al. 2005, p. 961

The authors identify five distinct, but linked, organizational drivers of international HR: efficiency orientation, global service provision, information exchange, core business processes and localization of decision-making. Besides these drivers, there are three enablers of high-performance international HR management that are being developed by multinational

enterprises (HR affordability, central HR philosophy and HR excellence and knowledge transfer). The enablers are delivered through important HR processes, namely talent management and employer branding, global leadership through international assignments, managing an international workforce and evaluation of HR contribution.

In regard to the role of HR, it can be concluded that HR has the ability to manage the delicate balance between overall coordinated systems and sensitivity to local needs, including cultural differences, aligning both business needs and the corporate philosophy (Brewster et al. 2005, p. 966). Besides this value that HR has in an international environment, the distinction between international HR management and global HR management is also noteworthy. Traditionally, international HR management has been about managing international staff. However, global HR management goes beyond this as it covers all HR management activities, independent of their location, through a global standardization of rules (Brewster et al. 2005, p. 966).

Pucik and Saba (1998, p. 49) mention five HR areas that influence the development of global managers: selection, career development and training, performance management and compensation, organizational design and global communication. In particular, staffing has extended to an approach where origin does not matter and international assignments can cater to developmental needs. Additionally, global mind-sets and leadership styles become criteria for performance evaluation. Even if there is no actual relocation, global managers are often part of a transnational team. There is a new focus on the quality of management processes, open communication and the establishment of a cross-border competitive culture. This requires effective HR practices, as there is a direct link between effective management and HR processes. Overall, international assignments represent the most important development method for global managers, but they seem to happen at an earlier career stage (global learning is the main goal) (Pucik, Saba 1998, p. 49).

The HR role includes topics such as international taxation, relations with the host government, and language translation. The host culture could also make it necessary to adapt corporate policies (e.g. for hiring procedures). Compared with domestic HR, international HR managers must take on global perspective as they are working with different nationalities. Moreover, failures are typically more expensive in international terms. Schuler et al. (2004, pp. 170–171) define the key roles for HR leaders as follows: partnership with multiple stakeholders, change facilitator, strategy implementer, strategic mind-set, innovator,

collaborator, HRM practice builder. HR professionals working in an international environment need the following competences (Schuler et al. 2004, p. 172):

- business competences (such as industry knowledge, financial understanding, strategic visioning),
- leadership competences (such as managing cultural diversity, planning skills, learning facilitator),
- change and knowledge management competences (such as consulting and communicating, partnering, negotiating, networking).

1.2.3. Societal Perspectives

There are three key areas influencing dual-career couples during international assignments on a societal level, namely national culture, the value of career and gender roles. These areas are described in the following sections.

National Culture

When discussing international assignments, there is a need to consider both the national culture as well as the corporate culture of the concerned company (see chapter 1.2.2). Hofstede (1980, p. 202) describes culture “as the collective mental programming of the people in an environment. Culture is not a characteristic of individuals; it encompasses a number of people who were conditioned by the same education and life experience.” Shafritz and Ott (1987, p. 385) provide a different, more detailed definition of culture: “[...] a pattern of basic assumptions - invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration - that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.”

In regard to international assignments, Hofstede (1980, p. 222) mentions that it is crucial to provide cross-cultural training for managers because home country management theories are very limited for use (or may even be harmful) abroad. Looking at the differences between home and host culture, it might be helpful to consider a local adaption of the family-support programs. Hofstede (1980, p. 221) argues that HR policies are evaluated differently in different cultures due to employee values but also due to different government policies, legislation, labor market situations and labor union power positions. This diverse background

could make it necessary to adapt policies because a universal approach might not be sufficient. However, to identify the priority issues of the management, it is necessary to have an understanding of the underlying organizational culture of the company (Shafritz, Ott 1987, p. 381). When talking about national culture, the different welfare regimes and labor market regulations certainly affect the possibilities of a positive work-life balance of families (Crompton et al. 2007, p. 10). For example, the USA offer very limited family support compared to European countries, e.g. concerning children's allowances, parental leaves, unemployment benefits, work-hours, vacation entitlements (Moen, Sweet 2004, p. 220-221).

In regard to cross-cultural adjustment, the U-curve theory of adjustment (UCT) as introduced by Lysgaard (1955) has been mainly used by researchers (see for example Black and Mendenhall 1990 or Lee 2006). The figure below shows the stages of adjustment and the development over time. The degree of adjustment ranges from very low adjustment (1) to very high adjustment (7) and is assessed through variables such as comfort or satisfaction with the new environment, attitudes, contact with host nationals, or difficulties with aspects of the new environment (Black and Mendenhall 1990).

Degree of Adjustment

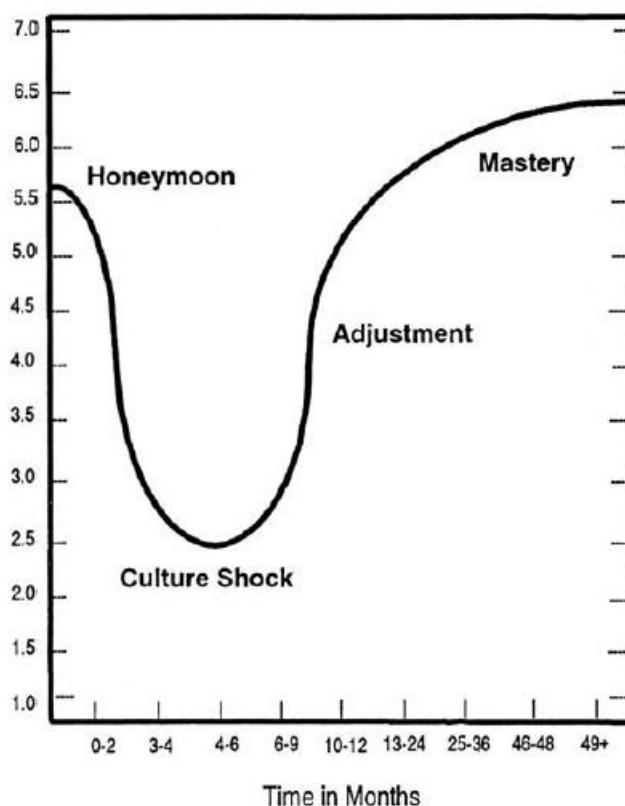


Figure 5: The U-curve of cross cultural adjustment

Source: Black and Mendenhall 1990, p. 227

As illustrated in the figure above, the U-curve theory describes four distinct stages of adjustment (Black and Mendenhall 1990, p. 226):

1. Honeymoon: fascination by the new culture, excitement about new and interesting sights and sounds;
2. Culture shock: disillusionment and frustration, live in new culture on day-to-day basis;
3. Adjustment: gradual adaptation, learning to behave according to local cultural norms;
4. Mastery: small incremental increases in ability to function effectively in new culture.

Cultural differences play an important role in various stages of an international assignment. Of course, the largest impact is experienced by the expatriate during the assignment. Lack of sensitivity, ignorance and ethnocentricity can lead to frustration, misunderstanding or inability to adjust to the local culture. Failure in the business context and/or an early return to the home country are logical consequences (Fischlmayr, Kopecek 2012, p. 142).

The first phase abroad is also referred to as the 'honeymoon phase' because expatriates and their families experience this period almost as vacation and the new surroundings are considered as exciting (Fischlmayr, Kopecek 2012, pp. 185-186). However, after a while routine takes over and the new circumstances begin to get troublesome. Tasks like doctor's appointments or authority visits can become frustrating experiences. It can be exhausting to speak a foreign language all day long. These experiences can lead to frustration, insecurity and tiredness that create a feeling of homesickness. For some, it is not only homesickness but loneliness, anxiety states or depression which can lead to progressing isolation. To overcome this period the expatriate and the family must learn to adjust to the new culture, to understand the behavioral patterns and live their own lives. In order to get to this point it is necessary to be open and flexible (Fischlmayr, Kopecek 2012, pp. 185-186).

Companies should be aware of the phenomenon of cultural shock, and should offer cultural support in the host country. Ideally, companies should offer pre-assignment intercultural training and continuous support during the assignment when problems occur, also for accompanying family members (Fischlmayr, Kopecek 2012, p. 187). The culture shock will be reduced if the expatriate already has previous foreign experience or if the host culture is similar to the home culture (Fischlmayr, Kopecek 2012, p. 187).

The Value of Career

Literature in the field of career theory usually emphasizes person variables (such as interests and abilities) and neglects environmental variables (such as social status, ethnicity and gender) (Hartung 2002, p. 12). Hartung (2002) argues that it is wrong to disregard the environment because the cultural context plays a major role for career paths.

Current career paths and fixed working hours are a danger for employees with family responsibilities that might lead to overload or even burnout (Moen, Sweet 2004, p. 219). There are some signs of improvements such as re-considerations of assumptions and policies in regard to work hours and benefit systems, but it is still a very difficult and long process which must have a clear goal to enable a further transition to more flexible careers (Moen, Sweet 2004, p. 219, 222).

As a consequence of the diversification of the workforce, it is necessary to reconsider the current approach to career development. In order to include employees of diverse social statuses and cultural backgrounds, there is a need to think about development through work and other life roles. "Thus, work represents a culture-general human life role, whereas career represents a more culture-specific form of occupational life" (Hartung 2002, p. 16). Evidence suggests that accompanying partners are aware that the business success is influenced by their behavior and commonly try to shape corporate regulations, for example in regard to working hours (Lauring, Selmer 2010, p. 68).

It seems that the career support of partners also plays an important role. Individuals who had the feeling that their partners offered social support for their careers experienced higher marital satisfaction than others (Burley 1994, p. 493). It is important to see that deviation from the usual definition of careers. Modern careers have more than just an occupational aspect: they touch multiple areas of life, e.g. the family form and structure, career decisions (Moen, Sweet 2004, 212).

Moen and Sweet (2004, p. 213-218) identify three trends that challenge working families in regard to career planning:

- Changing gender relations: Women are an important part of the labor force instead of the housewives that were considered typical in the previously dominant male-breadwinner/female-homemaker model.

- Changing age structures and life course sequences: There is a need for new policies to match an ageing society. People are better educated, have fewer children, become parents later and are less likely to get married than in former times. However, the current policies are still built around the structure of full-time employment followed by full-time retirement, which clearly results in mismatches in private, occupational and public areas.
- Changing contracts between employers and employees: It still counts more how many hours one spends in a job than the actual quality of the work. Employees typically work more hours than they want to.

Considering the above-mentioned changes in societal patterns, it is necessary to re-think the existing employment relationships and the corresponding outcome for employers and employees. Companies are asked to review their policies and strategies in order to meet requirements of this newly establishing workforce.

Gender Roles

Bauer and Taylor (2001, p. 136) emphasize that in view of the increasing numbers of dual-career couples being sent abroad, the differences in the adjustment process between male and female spouses need to be understood. Particularly in regard to growing numbers of female expatriates, the specifics of male trailing spouses should be considered by international assignment policies (Anderson 2001, p. 115). Anderson (2001, p. 110) points out that gendered perceptions of men and women influence their behavior during assignments, e.g. women feel that the socially accepted roles are that of a full-time wife and mother. In contrast, men are typically defined by their careers. Consequently, male accompanying partners are faced with a lack of identity, social isolation and ostracism (Anderson 2001, p. 111).

Insch et al. (2008, p. 20) argue that international assignments are male-dominated and somehow considered inappropriate for female candidates. This leads to a so-called expatriate glass ceiling. In general, partners provide additional support for job performance. The spouse typically not only takes care of household chores but also provides counselling and assistance in professional matters. However, female managers generally receive less spousal support than their male counterparts (Insch et al. 2008, p. 21). Hanis (2005) has shown that the claim of family-friendly benefits is still unequally distributed among women and men and that it is a big challenge to overcome this gender segregation. Some managers might exclude female

employees from expatriate assignments because of the prejudice that they do not want to relocate for family reasons. Even though it is common that male expatriates have accompanying spouses who only concentrate on the household during the international assignment, it is wrong to assume that male spouses or partners will put the assignment at risk. This means the international recruiting process should not be different compared to local positions (Insch et al. 2008, p. 24). Recruiters and HR managers should receive training in regard to candidate selection to overcome biases that might prevent them from offering international jobs to female candidates. Sex role stereotypes lead to the situation that women are not even asked if they are interested in an international move (Stringer-Moore 1981, pp. 395-396).

Burley (1994, p. 493) draws several conclusions from her study in regard to male and female perceptions. People who thought that their partners did not spend enough time on household tasks had inferior levels of marital satisfaction. There was no evidence that this relation is different for men or women. However, women felt more imbalances between the distributions of household chores than men. It is also interesting to note that women and men have a different understanding of fairness. Fairness in the household seems to have less importance for men than for women. Male respondents had lower work-family conflict than women. Overall, the findings suggest that women were more sensitive to an uneven distribution of household work but they seemed to accept this imbalance as a social fact without negative consequences for their marital satisfaction (Burley 1994, p. 493).

Especially in the USA, there is a history of denial of differences between men and women, meaning that American companies try to behave in a politically correct way without considering differences between sex, cultures, religions and races (Adler 2002, p. 754). However, Adler (2002) reports that this attitude has led to problems, because there are obvious differences that need to be taken into account. Therefore, the emergence of the trend is to think about measures that consider special needs, e.g. for women. Companies have adapted cultural-fit strategies, for example female expatriates for female products (Adler 2002, p. 755).

Even though gender roles have started to change, there is also the tendency to further develop gender inequalities. This happens when decisions are produced and reproduced both in the workplace and at home, for example: when to have children, the number of working hours or completely dropping out of the workforce (Moen, Sweet 2004, p. 214).

An ethnographic study by Lauring and Selmer (2010) shows that the gender roles of expatriate families living in expat compounds are not much different to the attitudes of couples in the 1960s. Still, the situation is different in the respect that the spouses had left a job in the home country to accompany their husbands to the host country. Interestingly, even though the spouses were limited to home making they experienced the expat life as a welcome change to the stressful jobs in the home country. However, they had the temporary nature of the assignment in mind, which made it easier to accept the professionally dissatisfying situation (Lauring, Selmer 2010, p. 63).

During international assignments, spouses are likely to be faced with a change of gender roles (Lauring, Selmer 2010, pp. 65–66). The inability to take up a job in the host country leads to a new setup of roles. Even though there are positive aspects of having a more laid back style of living, there are obvious drawbacks like feelings of unproductiveness, limited freedom and a restricted feeling of agency. This is often in sharp contrast to the pre-assignment lifestyle, which typically shows a more equal distribution of labor market participation. As a consequence, spouses in the sample tried to find new challenges and tasks usually by getting involved in the expatriate careers and defining their roles in close connection to their partners' jobs (Lauring, Selmer 2010, pp. 65–66).

1.3. Summary of Theoretical Findings

Dual-career couples are couples in which both partners are career-oriented. Besides the general term 'dual-career couple', there are also more specific terms such as 'dual-earner couples' or 'same-career couples'. Even though there are many different definitions of the term 'career', career is typically defined as the progression in one's professional life. Expatriates are employees who are temporarily working and living abroad. Expatriate spouses, who accompany their partners abroad, are typically referred to as 'trailing spouses'.

The theoretical foundation for the thesis is built around three perspectives that are represented by individual, organizational and societal determinants. On an individual level, the areas of relocation willingness, work-family conflict and subjective well-being are discussed. Relocation willingness, i.e. the willingness to move abroad, is influenced by different factors that derive from the working and the private environment. Besides other factors, the expatriate spouse plays an important role when it comes to the decision whether or not to accept an international assignment. The work-family conflict, i.e. when the professional life interferes

with the family life, is one of the major problems for dual-career couples. With non-traditional careers, work and private spheres are increasingly interconnected, which can result in even more conflicts. When considering work-family conflict, it comes natural to discuss employee well-being as well. Work-related well-being is closely linked to general well-being. Employees faced with work-family conflict are likely to be dissatisfied with their job, resulting in lower organizational commitment. Expatriations may further increase stress levels, for example when a previous dual-earner couple turns into a single-earner household.

The organizational perspectives are addressed through the areas of organizational culture, incentive structures and international HR management. Organizational culture in general (and work-family culture in particular) strongly influences the availability and usability of family-friendly benefits. This means that support programs must match the perceived organizational culture. Otherwise, they are likely to fail. As described through the application of the theory of agency, there are different incentives for the employer and the employee to offer/accept an international assignment. Because of the risks connected with an assignment, conflicts are likely to emerge. Following system theory, the communication between the expatriate and the employer is a challenge in itself. Apart from that, decision making processes play an important role both on the employee and the organizational part. From an international HR perspective, mobility issues are typically handled by a specialized mobility or expatriate services department. This function should ideally focus on the smooth running of expatriation processes, by giving guidance on how to efficiently manage international assignments.

On a societal level, the areas of national culture, the value of career and gender roles are discussed. When it comes to international assignments, the difference between the home and host culture clearly influences the risk of conflicts. In general, it is recommended to adjust corporate policies to local needs. In any case, cross-cultural training can be helpful to overcome possible challenges such as culture shock. With regard to career planning, changes in societal patterns such as gender relations, age structures, life courses and employment contracts also lead to a change for careers. Additionally, spouses play an important role when it comes to the development of career paths. When looking at gender relations, the gender role influences behavior during international assignments. One term used in this context is ‘expatriate glass ceiling’, which derives from the fact that some companies consider assignments to be inappropriate or uninteresting for women. International assignments may also lead to a change of gender roles within relationships, for example taking over more traditional roles when abroad.

2. ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH ON DUAL-CAREER COUPLES AND INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

The following chapter represents the analytical part of the thesis: it outlines the current status of the research, and existing empirical findings, and is supplemented by the author's own experiences. The areas of dual-career support, the geographic and numeric distribution of expatriates and the educational levels and influence of spouses on career development are discussed and the three previously defined perspectives are examined analytically.

2.1. Characterization of Dual-Career Support

In order to overcome the negative consequences of dual-career relationships, companies have developed different kinds of support measures to be offered to their employees. The ways in which companies offer organizational support differ widely. Saxena and Bhatnagar (2009, p. 84) note that corporate policies are still mainly built around the outdated belief that the (male) employees have a support system at home and they can exclusively focus on their professional lives. Nevertheless, companies have identified several family-friendly policies such as part-time work, flexible schedules, job-sharing, alternative work locations, workplace nursery, resource and referral programs and support groups (e.g. Hanis 2005, pp. 24-29). However, many organizations still restrict family-friendly programs to women-friendly childcare support (Hein 2005, p. 62). Companies only now realize that work-family programs need to have a broader perspective. Even though companies have started to introduce such measures, they have not assessed and compared costs that would result from adopting family-friendly arrangements (Hein, 2005, p. 25). Research data implies that smaller companies are less likely to offer family-friendly benefits than large firms (Ruhm, 2004, p. 4). Hein (2005, p. 28) adds that family-friendly programs are most popular in high-skilled industries and sectors where the costs of losing and replacing an employee are high and the benefits of family-friendly practices are easier to quantify.

Dual-career support covers company-sponsored support that is aimed at enhancing the mobility of dual-career couples, especially through supporting the expatriate spouse's professional career. Dowling and Welch (2004) point out that there are several methods of supporting the spouse's career:

- inter-company networking (the employer supports the spouse to find a job in the same location but at a different company),
- job hunting assistance (e.g. employment agency fees, career counseling, work permit assistance),
- intra-company employment (the spouse is offered a job in the same branch office),
- on-assignment career support (e.g. lump sum payments for education expenses, professional association fees, seminar attendance, language training, employment agency fees, career development activities).

This shows that dual-career support is not necessarily bound to paid employment in the host country. For various reasons (such as work permit restrictions, language barriers or non-acceptance of formal education) actual work might not be possible. Therefore, measures that support the spouses' career not immediately but only in the long run are included in dual-career support policies.

Konopaske et al. (2005, p. 420) mention the same career support methods, but added the introduction to decision makers in other multinational companies in the host country as a possible form of overseas career support for spouses. They also highlight the importance of intercultural training and introducing spouses to repatriated spouses of former expatriates. Expatriates often wish to receive a reimbursement for spouse education costs and help with arranging work permits for the partner (Suutari, Tornikoski 2001, p. 400). Bauer and Taylor (2001, p. 137) advise companies to offer language courses and intercultural training for spouses and to support them with building social networks, e.g. by arranging social events, providing cultural counsellors and pre-relocation training which will leader to more successful assignments.

Suutari and Tornikoski (2001, p. 398) report spouse-related disadvantages such as the loss of salary and pension contributions of the spouse during the international assignments. The expatriates also asked for a compensation for the second income because the household income was lower during the assignment. Paid employment for accompanying spouses would usually improve the dual-career dilemma, however, few companies provide spouse employment opportunities (Thornton and Thornton 1995, p. 60). It is also important to say that the financial position of a dual-career couple makes a difference when it comes to work-family interference. Wealthier couples could afford to hire some help, which reduces household responsibilities (Stringer-Moore 1981, p. 395).

Solomon (1996, p. 38) names the following challenges accompanying partners are faced with when they try to find work:

- immigration regulations that bar foreigners from working,
- language,
- lack of transferable skills to meaningful available work,
- scarcity of volunteer opportunities,
- cultural barriers that don't allow women to perform certain jobs – paid or voluntary,
- lack of knowledge about educational opportunities.

There are different answers to the above-mentioned problems. Harvey (1998, p. 325) summarizes spouse support from different assignment policies: job-related assistance (counselling and preparation for overseas career opportunities, job support within a multi-national corporation or with international counterparts, professional international placement assistance, support for advanced education opportunities, creating tasks for spouses) and operational support (realistic 'preview' of international relocation/Look & See trip, flexible housing solutions/commuting options, short-term assignments) and other occasional support. Even if family-friendly policies exist, availability is still subject to supervisory discretion, which means they might not be equally accessible (Crompton et al. 2007, p. 9).

There are certainly many different ways to support dual-career couples during international assignments. According to the Brookfield Survey Report (2010), companies most frequently assist the expatriate spouse with language training (85%), educational assistance (38%) and company-sponsored work permits (34%). Punnett (1997, p. 249) provides an overview of the most important spouse assistance programs (see below).

Table 2: Ranking of activities for spouses (5=very important)

Ranking	Activities
4.33	Company help in obtaining necessary papers (work permits etc.) for spouse
4.28	Adequate notice of relocation
4.24	Pre-departure training for spouse and children
4.23	Counselling for spouse regarding work/activity opportunities in foreign location
4.05	Employment networks coordinated with other international networks
3.97	Help with spouse's re-entry into home country
3.93	Financial support for education
3.76	Compensation for spouse's lost wages and/or benefits
3.71	Creation of a job for spouse
3.58	Development of support groups for spouses
3.24	Administrative support (office space, secretarial services etc.) for spouses
3.11	Financial support for research
3.01	Financial support for volunteer activities
2.9	Financial support for creative activities

Source: Punnett 1997, p. 249

The table above shows that all activities are ranked quite high among the survey participants but obviously support with immigration documents is appreciated the most. In contrast, financial support for creative activities has the lowest ranking. The above activities match the experiences the author of this thesis has made during her own professional career. The compliance with all immigration regulations is essential especially for nationalities that require visas and work permits. Naturally, this is the prerequisite for any further activities in the host country and therefore has priority.

Punnett (1997, pp. 250–251) highlights that the spouse should be considered in the entire assignment life cycle, meaning pre-assignment, early assignment, late assignment and post assignment. Pre-assignment measures typically include Look & See trips, language training and intercultural training. The early assignment phase is usually more informal with support groups consisting of local managers and spouses. If the expatriates survive the culture shock, they enter the late assignment stage where the most important thing is to keep in touch with the home company/country. The post-assignment stage usually also contains a culture shock and difficulties with adjustment.

Harvey (1998, p. 321) argues that the level and quality of support for the dual-career couple will be influenced by the family background (quality of the marriage), the social network in the new environment, the similarity between the home and host support systems and the individual characteristics of the couple (willingness to seek and provide support). A survey among 31,571 Canadian employees showed that 75% of the respondents are currently married or living in a relationship and 69% are part of a dual-income family (Duxbury, Higgins 2003, p. xi). Apart from the fact that there is a rising number of dual-career couples, there are also other occurrences gaining importance. There is not only a change from single- to dual-earners households, there are additionally plenty of new structures such as single-parent families, stepfamilies, blended families and gay and lesbian families that question the conventional thinking about work and family (Barnett 1999, p. 148).

Some companies have introduced dual-career policies as highlighted above. Still, these should be reviewed in regard to the individual needs of the couples. Harvey (1998, p. 321) mentions the following aspects that need to be considered in terms of support infrastructure:

- emotional needs of the dual-career couple;
- instrumental needs, i.e. time, resources and skills provided by the company to provide assistance in adjustment to dual-career couples;
- infrastructural support on the provision of facts, opinions, and advice while on the expatriation assignment and
- appraisal support which supplies the dual-career couple with feedback on performance as well as adjustment overseas (House, 1981; Granrose *et al*, 1992).

Apart from the above-mentioned needs, considering the following three different groups of spouses is also recommended because each needs different treatment (Punnett 1997, pp. 247-248):

- female spouses who do not expect to work abroad ('traditional expatriate spouses'): major concern is cultural adjustment;
- female spouses who do expect to work abroad: major concern is job/educational opportunities;
- male spouses who predominantly expect to work abroad: major concern is job opportunities and emotional support;

Several studies have shown that the professional situation of expatriate spouses is heavily affected by international assignments. The Brookfield Survey Report (2010), for example, shows that out of the interviewed spouses 50% were employed prior to the foreign assignment. Not surprisingly, only a small number – namely 9% – were employed both before and during the assignment. Even if this figure might not be the same for every position and location – for other figures see, for example, the Permits Foundation Survey 2008 – it still shows that the employment rates considerably decrease for trailing spouses. This is closely related to the career-orientation of the spouses. In case the partners are highly career-oriented before the international assignment, they are also more likely to find a job during and after the assignment. One can assume that career-orientation is linked to the level of education, which supports the proposed proposition that spouses with higher levels of education are more likely to claim dual-career support.

As an example of inappropriate benefit schemes Adler (2002, p. 754) mentions companies that offer complimentary club memberships for elite social and sports organizations but forget about providing commuting options, which would be especially important for women in dual-career partnerships. This shows that companies do not differentiate who is sent abroad but offer standardized schemes that might not fit for everybody.

Some companies could argue that including the spouse in the assignment process is discriminating against other employees. Brummelhuis and van der Lippe (2010, p. 187) note that single expatriates might have a feeling of envy or exclusion when they are confronted with a family-supportive culture. However, if the policies are transparent and clear for everybody and the spouses are willing to participate, this problem can be solved (Punnett 1997, p. 254). Companies who think about offering the accompanying partner a job in the company should also think about possible risks. Considering that the spouse does not have to go through a demanding recruiting process, other candidates could feel discriminated against and might even sue the company (Stringer-Moore 1981, p. 394). Nevertheless, companies could mention in their job ads that they encourage couples for applications, which could attract candidates who might not have applied otherwise (Stringer-Moore 1981, p. 395). Overall there are plenty of possibilities to support dual-career couples. Companies should review which ones best fit their employees and corporate strategies.

The benefits of dual-career support are evident for the expatriate spouses. They are directly affected by most of the policies and can benefit from them. Of course, a prerequisite is that

they are made aware of the company-provided support systems. The measures can either help them on an emotional level, like improved adjustment to the new culture, on a professional level, e.g. cost coverage for educational expenses, on an operational level, e.g. paid child care facilities, or in financial terms, for example a compensation for lost income.

At the same time, the policies usually do not directly involve the expatriate. Nevertheless, there are spillover effects in relationships. Van der Zee et al. (2005, p. 239) identify spillover effects in terms of subjective well-being meaning that emotional stress is transferred from one partner to the other. This means if the partner feels bad, the expatriate will also suffer (see chapter 1.2.1.). The main reasons companies should consider on-assignment support are spillover effects from the spouse to the expatriate (leading to decreased productivity) and low employee mobility if the company does not care about the spouses. The Brookfield Survey Report (2010) showed that the main reason for the refusal of an assignment were family concerns and spouse/partner's career. At the same time, the most important factor in terms of assignment failure was spouse dissatisfaction. It appears that spillover of partner issues to the expatriate is a significant factor in assignment failure (Cole, Nesbeth 2014).

Even though literature supports the idea of dual-career programs, reality seems to lag behind (Anderson 2001, p. 114). Krause-Nicolai (2005) found in her study that preparation, on-assignment support and reintegration of dual-career couples are insufficient in German companies. Her empirical results show that the solutions for the expatriate couples were typically not employer-initiated but based on private commitment. She argues that companies could achieve considerably higher satisfaction among dual-career couples by providing some custom-tailored support. Higher satisfaction also goes along with less stress and increased productivity. Even though the possibility of work for the spouse in the host country is an important factor, Krause-Nicolai (2005, p. 225) mentions that this does not determine the decision for or against an international assignment. Still, many dual-career couples appreciate career counselling.

However, one common approach will not be sufficient, as the employees' needs differ according to their gender, age and family development (Lingard, Francis 2005, p. 1045). Lingard and Francis (2005, p. 1053) therefore suggest offering a cafeteria system of benefits which enables employees to choose from a range of salary and benefit packages. This would be especially helpful because requirements change due to progressions of a life cycle. From a practical point of view, this could cause challenges for the administration of the benefits.

When using a cafeteria system, it is essential to keep track of all claimed benefits. This can lead to an increase in the workload of the mobility department and might also give rise to negotiations on the part of the expatriates.

Offering dual-career support definitely creates an additional financial burden for companies. However, the literature suggests that the actual costs are insignificant compared to the achieved savings (e.g. Bello, Tinder 2009, p. 39):

- Without dual-career support resistance from the family will make a move more unlikely.
- Dissatisfaction at home leads to reduced productivity at the workplace.
- Higher retention rates reduce the costs of an assignment.
- Family-friendly policies bring a competitive advantage (meaning that a company might be able to attract candidates who would otherwise have not been available).

When looking at the benefits provided through international assignment policies, it is important to note that expenses for dual-career support are marginal compared to the total costs of an assignment (typically less than 1%), while at the same time they could make a considerable difference for the overall outcome of an assignment (Bello, Tinder 2009, p. 39). Nevertheless, it might be difficult for companies to measure the benefits and costs related to the provided support.

If no support is provided by the expatriate employer, the expatriates themselves have to put effort into the situation of their spouses which will have negative effects on their organizational loyalty, job commitment and mobility (Kupka, Cathro 2007, p. 964). It is clear that if the employees have to spend time on the career situation of their spouses, less time is spent on their own work which is not in the interest of the employer.

2.1.1. Expatriate Distribution

As the phenomenon of expatriation is indeed a global one, it affects a lot of different countries and industries, which makes it very difficult to obtain reliable information on expatriate populations. For many countries it is a challenge to track their immigrant inhabitants (Dumont, Lemaitre 2005, p. 3). Realistically, it is only possible to estimate the numbers. There are three main methods of obtaining immigrant numbers: statistics of people registered

in embassies and consulates overseas, emigration surveys in origin countries and compilation of statistics from receiving countries (Dumont, Lemaitre 2005, p. 13).

However, even if these methods are applied, it is still hard to distinguish migrants from corporate expatriates (for a definition see chapter 1.1.2). The OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) has published figures for intra-company transfers (see figure below). Still, long-term expatriates may not be counted in this statistic as they sometimes have indefinitely renewable permits and are not ranked among temporary migrants (OECD 2014, p. 25). The below illustration shows that intra-company transfers peaked in 2011 with 130,000 registered transfers. Even though the economic crisis led to a drop in 2009, the numbers are generally increasing with a slight decline in 2012.

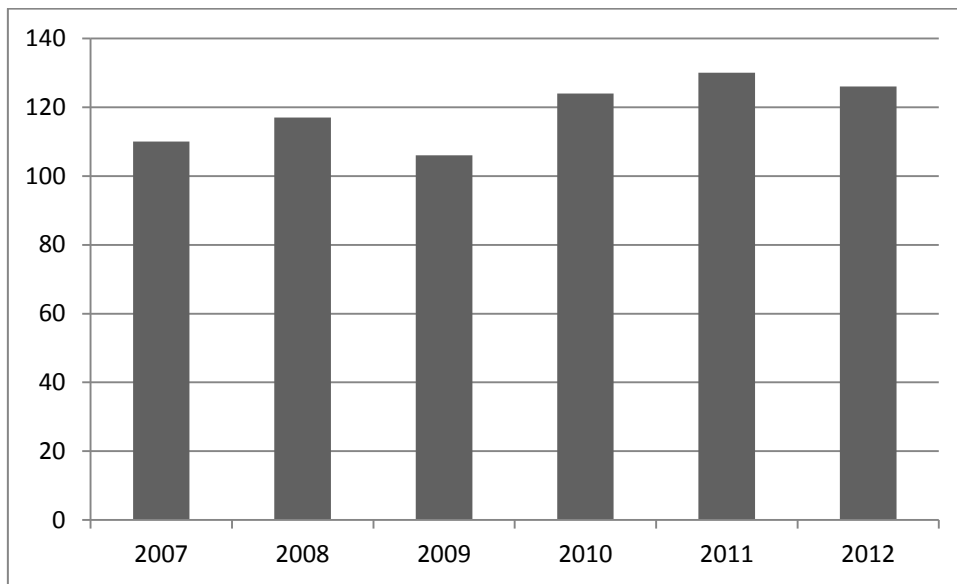


Figure 6: Intra-company transfers in OECD countries 2007-2012 (in 1,000 people)

Source: OECD 2014, p. 25

Whereas the above figure illustrates intra-company transfers, Finaccord (2014) publishes figures for expatriates, not only covering corporate transferees but also individual workers, students, retirees and others (with a minimum stay of twelve months and a maximum of five years). Given this definition, the number of expatriates worldwide amounted to a total of around 50.53 million in 2013 with a forecasted growth to 56.84 million in 2017. Within the expatriate population, individual workers made up the largest group and corporate transferees the smallest (Finaccord 2014).

The global expatriate population is increasing both as a proportion of the worldwide immigrant population and as a proportion of the total worldwide population (Finaccord 2014). Finaccord (2014) estimates that the expatriate population will increase from 0.72 % to 0.77% of the worldwide population (from 2013 until 2017). The expatriate population as a percentage of the worldwide immigrant population is expected to increase from 21.8% to 23.4%.

Different regions are known for different things among expatriates. The Expat Explorer Survey 2012 (HSBC Expat 2012, p. 4-5) gives further insights into these geographic differences: Asia is popular for its financial opportunities and quality of life. Singapore specifically is also known for career progression possibilities. The Middle East is catching up with financial gains and a good environment for job seekers, and living conditions are also improving. However, Middle Eastern destinations are still most popular for short-term assignments among expatriates enjoying higher income levels. In contrast, Europe-based expatriates typically opt for long-term stays. For example even though Spain has been negatively affected by economic downturns, few expatriates are leaving the country. Spain and France are typical destinations for expat retirees (representing over one third of the expatriate population) who enjoy the weather and quality of life. On the contrary, Germany mainly attracts young expatriates with high career orientation supported by a high satisfaction with the local economy. Expatriates in the UK typically enjoy cultural events, which make the country popular for people looking for entertainment and culture. Expatriates with children choose Canada as the best country for raising their families. Australia is ranked highest for active families who like to spend time outdoors, whereas Hong Kong scores highest in terms of child safety.

However, the different countries are not only known for different things. Another study showed that the importance of employer provided services also differs by country of assignment (CGHB, NFTC 2013, p. 8). For example, medical support is most important for expatriates in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, whereas consultation regarding financial and tax consequences ranks much higher in North and South America. For expatriates in Central America and Sub-Saharan Africa assistance with schools is more critical and for Asia and the Middle East cross-cultural training is important. In general, expatriates are dissatisfied with the efforts of employers in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and South America, whereas they are satisfied in Australia and Europe (CGHB, NFTC 2013, p. 8).

The following list shows the ten most popular countries in terms of expat lifestyle, (considering how easy it is to settle down in the new country, possibility of integration in the local community, and the quality of life in the host country) (HSBC Expat 2012, p. 20): Cayman Islands, Thailand, Spain, Singapore, Malaysia, Mexico, Switzerland, Germany, South Africa, Australia. Another survey reported that Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa are said to be the most difficult countries from an employer perspective (CGHB, NFTC 2013, p. 8).

Clearly, some countries are more popular than others. The lifestyle factors are important for self-initiated expatriates, but not necessarily for intra-company transfers. For these cases, it depends on the expatriate's situation if they have the opportunity to choose between different locations, or if the employer dictates the work place. When expatriates are free to choose the host location, the following factors are influential for the selection of the country: spouse relocation willingness, career advancement, own personality advancement, own personality traits and work-life balance (Xenidis, Gallou 2014, p. 560). Brandenburger (1995, p. 55) has identified the following targets companies want to meet with international assignments (see table below).

Table 3: Reasons for international assignments

Reasons for international assignments	Percentage
Personnel or management development	40%
Know-how transfer	32%
Training of local employees	8%
Filling of vacant positions abroad	8%
Transfer of corporate culture	8%
Representation of the company on site	4%

Source: Brandenburger (1995, p. 55)

The above table shows that the main reason for international assignments is personnel development, closely followed by know-how transfer. Depending on the size of the company and the available subsidiaries, expatriates that are sent abroad for these reasons might be able to influence the host location.

2.1.2. Educational Levels and Influence of Spouses on Career Development

Crispell and Du (1995, p. 32-33) have shown in their study in the U.S. that education makes a difference in regard to the employment status of couples. The population of single earners has dropped steadily from 39% in 1980 to 28% in 1994. For 18% of the couples, both partners were without a job. Couples without two salaries can be found in all educational cohorts, however there are some peaks. Examples of single earning couples are parents with small children or couples with one partner momentarily without a job. Some are single earners or permanently without a job, e.g. retirees and older couples.

The educational background differs within relationships. In 24% of cases the husbands are better educated and in 21% the wives are better educated. Education is positively related to earnings, at the same time well-educated couples are also more likely to work in general. Among couples without high school diplomas, just 24% are dual-earner households and 42% are without a salary (the main reason for this being their age or because they are retired). 55% of couples with two high school degrees have two salaries. 70% of couples with university degrees are dual-earners (Crispell, Du 1995, p. 32-33). Although these data are from the U.S. it is likely that the situation is similar in other industrialized countries. The positive correlation of high educational levels with higher income can most likely be found in many countries. Also, the finding that there is a high proportion of dual-earner households among university graduates seems to be generally applicable.

Another question is that of who is making decisions in a relationship. Evidence suggests that this is also related to the educational background of a couple. With higher education, a couple's decisions are more likely to be made together. Only 46% of wives who did not finish high school say they are equal partners in the couples' financial decision-making, compared with two-thirds or more of other wives (Crispell, Du 1995, p. 34).

Pursuing the thought that the number of dual-career couples is increasing, it is also worthwhile to reconsider the influence the partner has on one's career. A study of Israeli managers (Grossbard-Shechtman et al. 1994, p. 165) showed that about two-thirds of men appreciated that their spouses helped them with the progression of their career. It is therefore not surprising to see that married men on average earned more than unmarried ones. A majority of women also claimed that they were supported by their husbands. It seems that husbands are more likely to support when it is most needed and productive (e.g. with small

children). The survey results also show that young women get more support. This could be for one of three reasons: First, the couple is confronted with younger children; second, the woman still has a long career ahead of her; or third, the couple has less traditional values. In general, the spouse's willingness to support the partner's career also depends on the probability of divorce, and the profitability of the investment and expected return.

Overall, the results show that both men and women acknowledge the spousal support for the promotion of their careers. This could mean that high income individuals are not more likely to get married, but rather that married employees are benefitting from spousal resources resulting in higher income levels (Grossbard-Shechtman et al. 1994, p. 165). Partners may also have an influential role during international assignments. The trailing spouses are typically eager to spend their free time and resources on social networking and strategic alliances in order to improve their husband's standing within the organization and enhance career opportunities (Lauring, Selmer 2010, p. 66). This means the expatriate employers could make use of these assets by offering training to the spouses, and at the same time easing spousal dissatisfaction (Lauring, Selmer 2010, p. 67).

It seems that the influence of international assignments on career perspectives is also influenced by the duration of an assignment. Thornton and Thornton (1995, p. 61) observed that when it comes to assignments that do not exceed a six month duration, expatriate spouses are not confronted with career issues. For this period the assignment is considered to be a long vacation, and the spouses will return to their home jobs. This means that if companies think about offering short-term assignments, the difficulties for those dual-career couples could be reduced.

2.2. Determinants of the Situation of Dual-Career Couples

As outlined in chapter 1.2 the author clusters the situation of dual-career couples on international assignments into three different perspectives: individual, organizational and societal perspectives. Whereas chapter 1.2 provides a theoretical foundation, the following chapter analyses the determinants based on empirical evidence from existing research. The author's practical experience is also included as a transition to the author's own empirical research as presented in chapter 3.

2.2.1. Individual Perspectives

On an individual level, the author has identified four key areas influencing dual-career couples during international assignments, namely relocation willingness, career paths, work-family conflict and subjective well-being. Whereas relocation willingness, work-family conflict and subjective well-being have already been addressed from a theoretical view, this section incorporates career paths, as they provide further insight into the topic of dual-career couples. The aforementioned areas will now be explained in further detail.

Relocation Willingness

Cummins (2010) mentions that dual-career concerns are a major threat to employee mobility, causing companies to introduce spousal assistance policies. However, family issues are not the only influencing factor for accepting or denying offers for international positions. The relocation willingness of an employee is influenced by spouse relocation willingness, perceptions of spouse mobility, family environment and income levels (Dupuis et al. 2008, p. 291). Konopaske et al. (2005, p. 407) also found that spouse attitudes towards international relocation are an important factor on manager willingness to assume a global assignment. They identify the assistance of employees' spouses as indispensable for recruiting top candidates for international assignments. Consequently, career support will be a competitive advantage in the global market. In this regard, dual-career support could be used as a tool for corporate employer branding strategies.

Also the type of couple makes a difference when it comes to relocation willingness. Duxbury, Lyons and Higgins (2007, p. 484) note that men in new-traditional families are most likely to relocate, and dual-career men and women are least willing to change their workplace. They also recommend that considering the family situation should help to set up appropriate HR development programs and could improve the company's reputation as a family-friendly employer which could lead to increased employee commitment and engagement. Krause-Nicolai (2005, p. 226) argues that a dual-career policy can sanitize the public image of a company because the dual-career topic affects a major part of the society, and is often discussed in general.

The Permits Foundation survey (2008) presents that improved spouse employment opportunities enhance employee mobility. According to the Permits Foundation survey

(2008), the career situation is particularly important for male partners, young age groups, unmarried couples and university graduates. It does not come as a surprise that almost 60% of the respondents said that in future, they would be unwilling to relocate if it would be difficult for their spouse to obtain a work permit. Considering the opinions of younger expatriates and male partners, the importance of spousal employment will further increase in the future. The survey indicates the following positive impacts of working spouses:

- better adjustment to the location,
- improved family relationships,
- better health or well-being (lower risk of depression) and
- increased willingness to go on a new assignment, to extend or to complete the current assignment.

Empirical research has shown that dual-career couples understand the corporate wish to send employees abroad. However, there is no appropriate answer that fits the needs of all dual-career couples (Ostermann 2002, p. 398). The couples interviewed by Ostermann (2002, p. 398) mentioned that they would decline the offer of an international assignment if there was not appropriate support. This demonstrates the sovereignty and high relationship loyalty of dual-career couples in terms of occupation.

In general, the existence of children in a dual-earner household negatively affects relocation willingness (Dupuis et al. 2008, pp. 290–291). Childcare and education typically require sufficient time, energy and geographic stability, which usually preclude international assignments. It also seems that the children's age plays a role: children between the ages of 12 and 17 represent the greatest barrier to accepting an international assignment because of expected problems with education and social relations (Dupuis et al. 2008, pp. 290–291). Although the author of this thesis has seen expatriates with children in this age group, it seems to be more common to go either with young children or once the children are already independent. One obvious reason for higher relocation willingness at a young age is the unavoidable career break (which many women encounter at this point in life anyway). Whether this career interruption is spent in the home country or abroad is often insignificant. An obvious advantage with grown-up children is that educational facilities in the host country are not a problem. Nonetheless, career issues for the partner might be more severe.

The positive correlation between compensation and relocation willingness matches the assumption that the higher the income, the higher the negotiation power in the family. In

addition, the influence of the family’s situation (e.g. the income level of the spouse) on relocation willingness is reduced if the employee has a high salary (Dupuis et al. 2008, p. 290). This means that the income both before an assignment and during an assignment plays a role when it comes to relocation decisions.

Career Paths

There are several problems that can occur when it comes to repatriation, especially if the career does not progress as expected, or the repatriate realizes that the foreign experience cannot be used in their home country. This is particularly common in the U.S. where international experience is not necessary for reaching senior management positions. In contrast, a foreign experience is considered important for a promotion in European, Japanese or Australian companies (Tung 1988, p. 242). It could also be argued that it depends on the industry whether or not international experience is seen as indispensable or even appreciated. An environment that is heavily influenced by international trends or competitors might require top managers to have foreign experience, in contrast to companies operating in local surroundings.

In the past, many European companies employed expatriates who spent almost their entire career on international assignments. However, with the high costs of assignments, there is a need to reduce the expatriate population, which in turn requires employees to either repatriate before their regular retirement age or accept local contracts. It is often difficult to find a job in the home company due to inappropriate skill sets, which leads to early retirement options offered by a number of European companies (Tung 1988, p. 243).

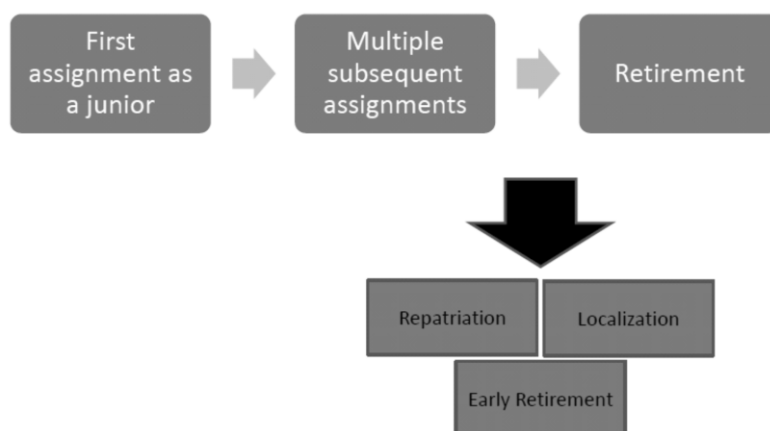


Figure 7: Expatriate careers - past and current challenges

Source: author’s own figure based on Tung 1988, p. 243

The figure above illustrates a past career path, which is now typically replaced by earlier terminations of the international assignment contracts. It demonstrates that there are three possible terminations: repatriation, localization or early retirement. From a corporate perspective, localization is probably the most favored option if the employee is still needed. In that case, the company can benefit from expatriate know-how and experience at reduced costs of local labor. However, employees might not be willing to work in a foreign environment without an expatriate compensation and benefit package. Repatriation, on the other hand, offers different problems such as non-availability of adequate work in the home country. As a consequence to repatriation problems, European companies tend to initiate assignments with a focus on career development, meaning that only individuals with high potential for senior management positions are sent abroad (Tung 1988, p. 243).

There are a variety of ways to avoid assignment-related career problems (Tung 1988, p. 243):

- mentor-mentee programs with a home country manager;
- specific departments with focus on expatriate careers to offer pre-assignment career planning, guidance/counselling, annual career planning sessions and a session six to eight months before repatriation;
- constant contact between the home company and the expatriate (e.g. special courier services for delivering goods from the home company to provide mental and financial support or teleconferencing to avoid isolation).

Even though the above-mentioned methods may reduce career drawbacks, companies also need to think about the target group of this assistance. As these programs need sufficient staffing and funding, the measures should be carefully thought through and aimed at management positions or management potentials.

Hamori and Koyuncu (2011) have studied the career of 1001 chief executives in the U.S. and Europe. Even though previous studies and the press suggest that international experience is positively related to career and success, this could not be fully confirmed. The more assignments the CEOs had, and the longer they had spent outside their home companies, the longer it took them to reach the executive position. Assignments that had started at a later career stage and assignments with an organization different to the current employer are especially harmful to the speed of success (Hamori, Koyuncu 2011, p. 857). One factor that is considered to be detrimental is that employees are away from the headquarters' social

networks during international assignments. This isolation (and the difficulty finding an appropriate job upon return) worsens the situation of expatriates (Hamori, Koyuncu 2011, pp. 857–858). However, Hamori and Koyuncu (2011) do not say that international experience is unimportant for CEOs. Considering that 32% of the CEOs in the survey have international experience, this seems to be explicitly important for newly appointed executives (Hamori, Koyuncu 2011, p. 858). In short, multiple extended international assignments, assignments with other employers and late-in-career assignments are harmful for top management career advancement (Hamori, Koyuncu 2011, p. 843). In contrast, Fischlmayr and Kopecek (2012, p. 26) have found that even though two thirds of repatriates are not guaranteed a job upon their return, job offers from other companies who appreciate the foreign experience, compensate for this. Overall, modern careers are getting more independent of single organizations. However, expatriates still believe that international experience will be advantageous for their careers (Fischlmayr, Kopecek 2012, p. 26).

A survey by Benson and Pattie (2008) showed no significant differences between expatriates, repatriates and local U.S. employees in terms of salary. However the only drawback that could be confirmed by the study was that repatriates experienced fewer promotions over the past four years (Benson, Pattie 2008, p. 1647). Another disadvantage could be that expatriates receive significantly fewer offers from external recruiters than repatriates and domestic U.S. employees, which supports the view that international assignments reduce contacts to potential employers. This could be a result of their contact details being more difficult to find and the separation from home country networks (Benson, Pattie 2008, pp. 1647–1648). Even though expatriation can lead to fewer promotions and fewer external offers, expatriates are still optimistic in regard to their career opportunities because they believe they will benefit from the skills and knowledge obtained during the international assignment (Benson, Pattie 2008, p. 1648).

The organizational background, corporate policies and practices influence expatriate career perceptions and behaviors. The appropriate balance between formal systems and employee proactivity is hard to achieve (Dickmann, Doherty 2008, p. 155). International assignments can (but do not always) increase perceived abilities and know-how of employees (Dickmann, Doherty 2008, p. 155). Expatriates' perception of the value and risks of assignments also depends on the extent of formal organizational activities. Expatriation failure rates are reduced when corporate career planning activities guide expatriate expectations and offer long-term career orientation and security. Career progression is supported by organized

development of skills such as intercultural communication. Expatriates are more satisfied with the assignment when organizational development activities aim at skills that can be used in the subsequent position. Without formal organizational home networking mechanisms, expatriates focus on keeping contacts with their home company. Widespread formal home networking structures encourage expatriates to build host and international networks (Dickmann, Doherty 2008, pp. 157–158).

For trailing spouses, the international assignment naturally creates a challenge for their career paths. Dual-career couples are, by definition interested in their careers, so the expatriation may lead to career-separation stress. This stress is related to a possible discontinuation of the career and the pressure to subordinate one's own career to the career of the partner. This situation is worsened if the trailing spouse cannot find a job in the host country (Harvey, Buckley 1998, p. 101). Returning to the home country presents another challenge: the career will need to be re-started, which can lead to additional stress and negative consequences for the family (Harvey, Buckley 1998, p. 102).

Work-Family Conflict

The dominant approach to research in the area of work and family is the work-family conflict. This proposes that individuals have a limited energy level, which is affected by taking on multiple roles (Barnett, Gareis 2006). Considering higher employment rates of mothers and an increase in single-parent households, it makes balancing conflicts between family and work responsibilities even more demanding (Ruhm 2004, p. 2).

Data from an empirical study in Canada shows a reduction of job satisfaction and organizational commitment between the years 1991 and 2001 (Duxbury, Higgins 2003, p. 40). This went along with an increase in work-life conflict, which leads to the conclusion that business practices such as downsizing, re-engineering/re-structuring, long working hours or pay freezes have negative consequences on employee perceptions of the job and the employer (Duxbury, Higgins 2003, p. 40).

Organizations and individuals can show different reactions to these circumstances. Barnett (1999, p. 146-147) describes the situation when family matters are not considered at work with the separate-spheres model. According to this model, the spheres have strict boundaries: each sphere has its own demands, which leads to a consistent struggle. Women are in charge

of handling both spheres, and if they cannot separate family matters from work it means there are inadequate boundaries and inappropriate priorities. The author argues that this behavioral pattern still heavily influences corporate policies today. Following the societal developments, Barnett created the new overlapping-spheres model (1999, p. 149). According to this new model, there is interdependence between work and life as well as a shift from the single focus on problems to an acknowledgement of the positive outcome of operating in two spheres at the same time. In addition, boundaries are less clear with less emphasis on interface issues. Finally, Barnett (1999, p. 151) proposes the work-life integration model as the ultimate goal: where family demands are in harmony with both workplaces, with the underlying assumption that a good job benefits the employee and the spouse (see figure below). The author further claims that both employers benefit from effective work-life policies that support dual-career couples.

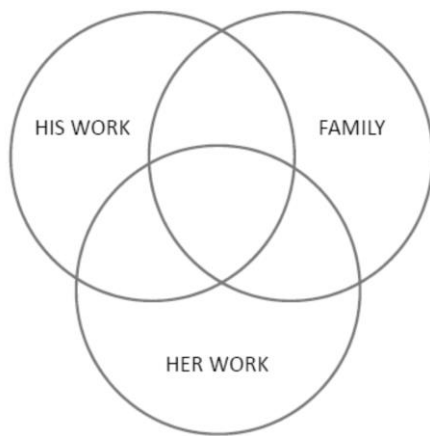


Figure 8: The work-life integration model

Source: Barnett 1999, p. 151

High levels of role overload are typical for employees of large companies. 58% of the questioned employees stated that they had high levels of role overload, while an additional 30% showing moderate levels of role overload. This is opposed to 12% with low levels of overload (Duxbury, Higgins 2003, p. xii). It also seems that working long hours has become significantly more common over time.

Table 4: Working time in Canada (1991 vs. 2001)

Working time	1991	2001
50 or more hours	10%	25%
between 35 and 39 hours	48%	27%

Source: author's own table based on Duxbury, Higgins 2003, p. xii

The above table illustrates the increase for employees working 50 weekly hours or more and the decrease for staff working less than full-time which has been reported for all job groups and sectors (Duxbury, Higgins 2003, p. xii). In the corresponding 2012 study, the typical employee spent 50.2 hours in work related activities per week while 60% worked more than 45 hours per week (Duxbury, Higgins 2012, p. 4). This shows that the working time has further increased over time. Evidence suggests that work-family conflict is a major problem for Canadian employees in large companies where 25% mention that work responsibilities interfere with responsibilities at home, and almost 40% report moderate interferences (Duxbury, Higgins 2003, p. xii). When it comes to family-work conflict, evidence from Canada suggests that this is uncommon: only 10% claim high levels of family-work conflict (Duxbury, Higgins 2003, p. xii).

When it comes to an international assignment, the work-family conflict can be even worse. The roles and responsibilities of the family members may change, for example due to work permit restrictions, which could turn a dual-career couple into a single-breadwinner household (Harvey, Buckley 1998, p. 101).

Subjective Well-Being

Not only people's own success influences the well-being but also the well-being of others surrounding them (Christakis, Fowler 2009). This means that beyond the fulfillment of own needs the need fulfillment of others can influence a person's well-being (Tay, Diener 2011). When it comes to making the decision to go on an assignment and the transition during an assignment the extent of support for the spouse and family are crucial for expatriates (Collings et al. 2011). Over the last decades support for the spousal career has become more relevant and the extent of spousal career support can have a substantial influence on the success of an assignment (van der Velde et al. 2005). The provision of support at work, development opportunities at work, family social support and family adjustment can be perceived as resources but can be a stressor in case of absence (Schütter and Boerner, 2013).

Poor subjective well-being has several negative consequences, such as low job satisfaction, low commitment and loyalty, reduced effectiveness and employee mobility. Still, employers usually underestimate the relevance of the employee's well-being. In dual-career relationships, two people need to find a balance between their private and professional lives, which is more difficult to achieve than for singles or single-earner households. There is also

the danger of spillover effects, meaning that if one person in a relationship feels bad, those feelings are transferred to the other person as well.

However, not only dual-career couples experience challenges in regard to their well-being. It seems that, in general, high levels of job stress and absenteeism because of sickness have become more severe (suggested by evidence from Canada, see table below) (Duxbury, Higgins 2003, p. 39).

Table 5: Stress levels and absenteeism because of ill health in Canada

Stress levels and absenteeism	1991	2001
high job stress	13%	35%
did not miss work due to ill health in last six months	56%	46%
missed three or more days due to ill health in last six months	24%	28%

Source: author's own table based on Duxbury, Higgins 2003, p. 39

In the 2012 study, the most common reasons for missing work included health problems (63%) and emotional, mental or physical fatigue (45%) (Duxbury, Higgins 2012, p. 9). The study also shows that absenteeism has increased over time. The number of people who missed work due to ill health increased by 17 percentage points over time (Duxbury, Higgins 2012, p. 14).

When it comes to well-being in a relationship, it is interesting to see that the quality of a relationship prior to an international assignment is also an influencing factor. Fischlmayr and Kollinger (2010, p. 470) refer to earlier research in that field that shows that moving abroad can lead to higher stress levels in a marriage and even to separation or divorce, specifically in previously weak relationships. However, not only expatriate well-being is influenced by the interference between work and home roles, the well-being of the spouses is also affected (van der Zee et al. 2005, p. 257). The partner is an essential element of the situation at home, which sometimes leads to a vicious circle. If one partner feels uncomfortable, the other one is likely to experience the same feelings.

Fischlmayr and Kollinger (2010, p. 469) point out that an accompanying partner can have a positive and negative influence on the expatriate's subjective well-being: On the one hand, the spouse can provide support and stability for the expatriate. On the other hand, the new environment could lead to conflicts, which might exacerbate earlier tensions. Expatriate

spouses are faced with an interruption – or at least change – in their career, possible loss of income, low self-esteem and loss of power due to financial dependence on the partner. Boredom and frustration can further worsen the situation (Kupka, Cathro 2007, pp. 955–956). Van der Zee et al. (2005, p. 256) observed that high demands at home and insufficient household support came along with a perception that household responsibilities interfered with productivity at work, which correlated with lower subjective well-being. The employers should be aware of this situation and should offer assistance to ease tensions.

Among resident expatriates, interviewees mentioned the threat of an assignment for a partnership as independent of the family member's residence status, whereas the danger is even more serious with children (Fischlmayr, Kollinger 2010, pp. 474-475). This means it does not matter if the family stays in the home country or accompanies the expatriate to the host country – both situations are a challenge for the relationship. Whereas expatriates with children are faced with even more challenges (e.g. schooling), children can also be a kind of social support. Particularly smaller children are heavily dependent on the parents, which could give some stability and identity to the spouse and prevent isolation (Kupka, Cathro 2007, p. 953). It has been observed that this is the case especially with children who are six years or younger. With children that age, the spouses and expatriates are more likely to interact with locals, which helps to adjust to the new environment. However, generally speaking, employees with children typically have higher levels of work interference with family (Keeney et al. 2013). In regard to gender, a survey among business travelers implies that female employees are more likely to experience high levels of stress due to additional household chores imposed on them (Westman et al. 2008, p. 477). However, adjustment in a new (work) environment is also influenced by factors outside of the family sphere. Cross-cultural motivation and psychological empowerment were found to positively influence initial adjustment in the host country (Firth et al. 2014).

Fischlmayr and Kollinger (2010, p. 465) summarize other studies and report that company support improves the situation during international assignments and definitely facilitates a better work-life balance on the part of the expatriate and his/her family members. The interviewees considered the following measures as helpful: cultural preparation, organizational help in settling in the foreign country, contact to the home company during the stay, the offer of additional flights back home, planned re-entry and strategic career-planning (Fischlmayr, Kollinger 2010, p. 475). The authors conclude that considering the spouse and

children on international assignments significantly improves the perceived balance of work and private life in a foreign country.

Thereafter, it is not enough to simply provide a salary package. Corporations have to think about the interaction of private lives and the work sphere. Spouses increasingly feel that the employers are also (partly) responsible for the quality of living of the family (Bello, Tinder 2009, p. 38). Van der Zee et al. (2005, p. 258) suggest providing expatriates with support at work to overcome this situation and avoid spillover effects, e.g. by individualized post-arrival cross-cultural training, support groups or counselling. Dickmann et al. (2008, p. 741) observed that work-life balance issues are considered important by both individuals and company representatives. However, it is important to note that companies typically underestimate the relevance of work-life balance considerations and the interruption in the spouse's career (Dickmann et al. 2008, p. 741). The majority of accompanying spouses do not receive any support from the expatriate's employer and in cases where they find work in the host location this is rarely due to support by the company (Kupka, Cathro 2007, p. 964).

Obviously, companies primarily think about their employees and not about how to include the spouses in the concept. The general approach to better individual well-being is to enhance flexibility. Flexible working arrangements are generally considered as employee-friendly practices but could also mean employer-friendly policies with negative effects on the subjective well-being of the employees (Fleetwood 2007, p. 396). Considering the steady increase of dual-career couples, the approach should include both partners in a relationship and how to improve the common well-being. Work-life benefits could also be a tool for diversity management programs meaning that benefits could be designed to attract employees from under-represented demographic groups which might influence the attraction, retention and motivation of more diverse employees (Lingard, Francis 2005, p. 1054). As long as the superiors are not aware of this problem, they will not be willing to provide their personnel with support programs. There is a high risk that the expected outcomes of work-life benefits will not happen if employees do not feel at liberty to make use of them (Lingard, Francis 2005, p. 1054). At the same time line managers must be aware of the programs and know how to use them in order to enable a successful application (McCarthy et al. 2010).

In a survey conducted by Dickmann et al. (2008, p. 741) around 25% of the interviewees reported that the general work-life balance could present a barrier to go on an international assignment, work-life balance being in the middle of the ranking of influencing factors. It

seems that international assignments are perceived as a threat to the individual well-being. This could also be linked to the fear that a poor work-life balance might become even worse during an international assignment.

Bloom and van Reenen (2006, p. 458) argue that tougher competition raises management quality but does not reduce work-life balance. This is why they doubt that work-life balance policies are linked to higher productivity. Nevertheless, employees appreciate a positive work-life balance with positive consequences for the working environment, which might also pay off (Bloom, van Reenen 2006, p. 470).

2.2.2. Organizational Perspectives

There are three key analytical areas influencing dual-career couples during international assignments on an organizational level: organizational culture, international human resource management and corporate policies. These areas are illustrated in further detail below.

Organizational Culture

Allard et al. (2011, p. 154) state that a family-supportive organizational culture is associated with experiences of less work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict, even if there is little reported work-family support from top managers and superiors. This means that because of different perceptions, it is not enough that benefits are available. Allen (2001, p. 429) found out that staff who felt that the organization was less family-supportive experienced more work-family conflict, less job satisfaction, less organizational commitment and greater turnover intentions compared to employees who perceived the organization as more family-supportive. The employee perceptions about the family-supportiveness of a workplace environment have a strong influence on job attitudes and experiences (Allen 2001, p. 429). If employees have the feeling that they will be faced with negative career consequences when using benefits, they are less likely to make use of provided support (Lingard, Francis 2005, p. 1055).

Not surprisingly, superiors play a major role when it comes to the perception of the work environment as they have the power to allow employees to benefit from support measures. It is all the more important for supervisors to receive training in regard to work-family balance issues (Allen 2001, p. 430). It is essential that superiors support their subordinates' subjective

well-being and that they are aware of and understand the offered organizational benefits (Lingard, Francis 2005, p. 1055).

Allard et al. (2011, p. 153) highlight the importance of the subcultures close to the employees, mainly co-workers, in regard to the perception of work-family culture. They also found out that fathers who perceive their work environment as family-supportive, especially at the top management and work group levels, have a better chance to combine work and family (p. 155). This is supported by Major et al. (2008, p. 892) who concluded that a supportive workplace leads to decreased work interference with family. Nevertheless, work-life policies need local adaption due to differences in regard to culture, gender distribution, family-care issues and diversity of the workforce (de Cieri, Bardoel 2009, p. 191). In order to implement these work-life balance programs, HR managers and supervisors need appropriate training (de Cieri, Bardoel 2009, p. 191).

The identification with the organizational culture has a significant connection with two dimensions of adjustment: adjustment to the work environment and adjustment to daily life. This implies that companies should support the identification of expatriates with the organizational culture to reach a positive effect on the adjustment. This could be obtained by corporate identity training, other cultural training or culture specific incentives (Rygl, Puck 2008, p. 44).

When companies want to change the organizational culture to become more family-friendly, the basic assumptions will heavily influence this plan. Callan (2007, p. 687) has developed recommendations on how to become a family-friendly employer for different corporate cultures based on her case studies:

1. Organizations marked by a strong ideal worker type and command for change should rather use frequent high-level, public announcements to support the long-term priority the company wants to set.
2. Organizations characterized by gradual change should not rely on loud marketing campaigns promoting rapid changes, as these will not be appreciated by the employees who prefer evolutionary changes. For these companies, strategies such as 'walking the talk' with role models have better chances to become successful. The risk is that the change will proceed slowly.
3. Organizations that are very conservative should better go for a clear public campaign where 'walking the talk' goes along with 'talking the walk' (Callan 2007, p. 687).

This cultural change is difficult because of a typical resistance to new things and a potential threat of self-esteem or identity. This resistance can be typically overcome if the situation asks for a change or the organization will no longer exist. However, there usually is no threat to existence. In the case of a family-friendly culture, managers are typically in favor as they also benefit from the new flexibility. Nevertheless, the management was nervous to reduce competitiveness by introducing family-friendly policies (Callan 2007, p. 688).

Evidence presented by Callan (2007) suggests that radical and systemic change towards a family-friendly culture is unlikely to happen. Rather, small, growing changes are considered possible accompanied by long-term strategic views. It is also important to match the policies with the basic assumptions in an organization to avoid contradictions. Corporate culture can also be actively used to promote family-friendly policies to enable an evolutionary process (Callan 2007, p. 689).

International Human Resource Management

There are culture-specific differences between the perceptions of HR management. The U.S. American understanding of HR management is based on two core assumptions: external barriers from trade unions or state regulations are low and organizations manage their employees to improve organizational performance. The situation of HR management in Europe is different as it operates in a different environment (Brewster 2008, pp. 53–56). The U.S. focus on individualism becomes clear in regard to individual performance-based rewards and the ‘hire-and-fire’ mentality. In contrast, Europeans want to control the business and treat employees fairly. Also, the role of the state is different – most European states have more legislative control over the employment relationship and also offer more financial and institutional support. Europe is also characterized by the widespread power of trade unions and a different pattern of ownership with less influence of the stock market (Brewster 2008, pp. 57–60).

It is important for multi-national companies to be able to transfer firm-specific advantages also to subsidiaries requiring flexible HR practices (Wöcke et al. 2008, p. 114). International HR management must be considered from at least two dimensions: the level of abstraction and scope. This is especially important when it comes to the question of whether the HR organization should be centralized or decentralized (Wöcke et al. 2008, p. 125). The HR

strategy needs to consider activities that have to be centralized and standardized and the flexibility that is required. The level of abstraction is the level at which the HR strategy is concentrated. For example, abstraction could lead from recommendations to operational procedures with strict rules. On the other hand, the scope defines how much the HR strategy is dealt with. This could reach from only a few HR areas that are covered to a comprehensive list of HR practices. The degree of abstraction and scope are influenced by the business model, the national culture, the degree of convergence, and organizational culture (Wöcke et al. 2008, pp. 114–115). The different types of strategies are illustrated in the figure below.

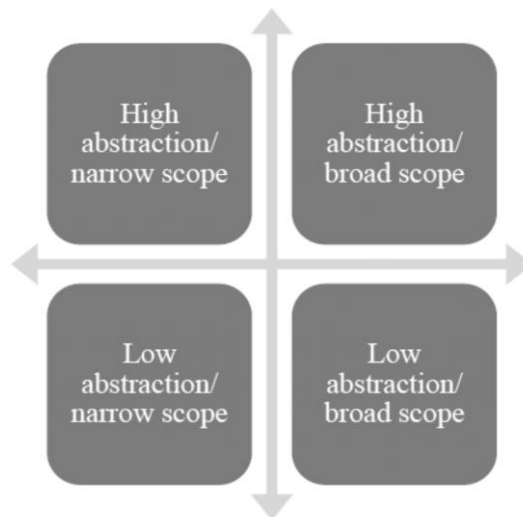


Figure 9: Types of corporate HR strategies

Source: author’s own figure based on Wöcke et al. 2008, p. 115

Large corporations typically have a global mobility or expatriate services department in their HR organization that handles all issues related to international assignments. The role of the mobility manager should be a consultant for the management. Mobility managers should advise which form of assignment is appropriate, which criteria are to be considered and how to put a focus on development, planning and reintegration. The transfer of routine tasks from the mobility team to service centers or external providers would make the mobility team available for more strategic tasks (Fischlmayr, Kopecek 2012, p. 39).

From her own experience, the author knows that companies tend to have mobility teams within the HR organization as soon as the expatriate population reaches a significant number. With only a few expatriates, typically the HR managers have national and international HR responsibilities and outsource more specific tasks related to expatriation to external consultants.

With the increasing importance of global mobility topics, there is a tendency to introduce a global HR services platform that combines the HR and global mobility roles (Deloitte 2010, p. 2). In the past, global mobility departments had the role to manage and administer everything related to international assignments. However, as expatriation becomes a more and more standard practice, the stand-alone approach may be outdated. Thanks to integrated HR service policies and tools, the administrative tasks can be shifted to the HR operations departments, enabling the global mobility department to act more strategically (Deloitte 2010, p. 2). Overall, a global mobility department should be an advisor and a supporter for the business providing the following services:

- Give advice to the business in regard to mobility decisions,
- provide the full range of HR services to expatriates,
- integrate tools and methods in order to facilitate appropriate repatriations or re-assignments,
- use internal resources and external providers to be efficient and to guarantee high quality (Deloitte 2010, p. 10).

In order to be efficient it is essential to define which tasks ask for specialized capabilities of the global mobility department and which responsibilities can be handled by the standard HR departments (Deloitte 2010, p. 12). This decision will certainly be influenced by the size of the company, the size of the expatriate population and the degree of maturity of the HR organization as a whole.

Corporate Policies

When it comes to international assignments, various departments in an organization and external service providers are involved. In order to achieve coordination among the different stakeholders and to offer employees a stable guideline it is advisable to set up an international assignment policy. This also makes sense if the organization only has few expatriates to handle (Fischlmayr, Kopecek 2012, p. 35).

When implementing international assignment guidelines, it is necessary to check the applicability in different countries with regard to legal and other (e.g. organizational) principles. For example, local labor law regulations must not be breached by the guideline

(e.g. minimum wage or minimum annual leave). The guideline should provide standardization but should also allow some flexibility for local adaptations (Fischlmayr, Kopecek 2012, p. 41).

There are different reasons to introduce an international assignment guideline. A guideline is more efficient and provides security relating to operating procedures. Costs and time can be saved when certain standards are clear from the beginning. One of the major reasons why to introduce a policy is the equal treatment of expatriates. A guideline provides fairness to the employees and individual negotiations can be minimized. In addition, it is easier to control and plan the costs of an assignment. The policy could become an integrated, binding part of the international assignment contract or could be an optional guideline. It is advisable to integrate the policy into the contract to reduce later discussions (Fischlmayr, Kopecek 2012, p. 36).

Whereas in the past companies had one universal assignment policy, nowadays companies tend to use a portfolio of guidelines. Generally, undifferentiated support is more expensive than customized support. Also, a single guideline could result in undesirable results, for example an expansive package could lead to frustration if it does not match the employee (Fischlmayr, Kopecek 2012, p. 37). There are different target groups of assignment policies: strategic possibility – for future managers, learning experience – for trainees, experts and commodity jobs (out of personal interest) (Fischlmayr, Kopecek 2012, p. 38).

One example of an international assignment guideline is that of Schering AG. The general strategy for international assignments at Schering is to fill management positions in foreign subsidiaries with parent-country nationals on limited assignment contracts. The respective guideline was introduced in 1993 and is valid for in following situations:

- an employee is sent abroad for limited period of time, contract duration: four years;
- the home contract is still active;
- an employment contract with the host company is only set up if this is necessary for legal reasons, the host company has authority over the employee during the assignment;
- the assignment is terminated after the contract ends, in case of repatriation or resignation; after the assignment contract ends, the home contract is the only binding contract (Hoyer 2005, pp. 193–194).

As the assignment guidelines were mainly designed for employees of the German headquarters who were being delegated to foreign subsidiaries, the company introduced a new guideline in 2002 that included also third country nationals and considered the new family type of dual-career couples (Hoyer 2005, p. 198). The guideline also mentions “to facilitate the decision to accept an international assignment by supporting the employee and his/her family during all stages of the assignment” as a defined target (Hoyer 2005, p. 199). Dual-career support is provided in the form of language and intercultural training, look & see trips, one home flight per year and a defined partner budget to reimburse 80% of educational costs.

The Schering Group International Transfer Guidelines differentiate between three different types: Secondment (six months-max. one year), short-term assignment (one to two years) and standard assignments (four years). The secondment is meant for training and is built around the home-company salary. The short-term and standard assignments are for temporary/concrete positions and have a market oriented salary (Hoyer 2005, p. 265).

The following topics should be covered by an international assignment guideline: staffing approach, selection of preferred candidates, preparation and transfer processes, retention and reintegration measures, compensation principles, taxation, labor law topics (working time, vacation, flextime, ...), rights and duties (if different to home contract) (Fischlmayr, Kopecek 2012, p. 41).

Harvey and Buckley (1998) have recommended a process for how to set up a dual-career policy. This process is separated into three phases. The first phase is dealing with decisions in regard to the corporate policy and is made up of five elements: Global corporate policy → Organization structure/ownership → Level of corporate cultural fit → Staffing requirements and decision criteria → Succession planning (Harvey, Buckley 1998, p. 106-109).

In regard to a global corporate policy, the company first needs to define the commitment and degree of internationalization (i.e. what is the role of the international operations for the company and how many financial and human resources are currently dedicated for international ventures). Another topic is the background of the employed staff – how is the distribution among home country, host country and third country nationals. If there are high numbers of non-local employees, this is an indication for high costs, which usually goes along with high organizational commitment towards this group of employees (Harvey, Buckley 1998, p. 107).

The organizational structure can have a lot of different shapes. The level of autonomy for the managers is higher if the organizational freedom is higher. This will also influence the selection of managers, for example if home or host country nationals are preferred. Also the ownership structure of a company influences staffing decisions. For example, in a joint venture it is necessary to take joint decisions, which can restrict possible options. This means the type of ownership will somehow influence the decision whether or not to introduce a dual-career policy (Harvey, Buckley 1998, p. 107-108).

Additionally, the level of corporate cultural fit between the home and host location needs to be considered. For example, if the culture is similar also a less experienced manager can be sent abroad and get international experience. If there is a high degree of dissimilarity, this will be more of a challenge, especially for dual-career couples (Harvey, Buckley 1998, p. 108).

The company also needs to identify the staffing requirements and decision criteria. The final step of the policy decisions is the succession planning. The goal for a company should be to set up a succession plan that suits the future needs and pool of candidates. If the succession planning is reduced to ad hoc decisions, this can be risky for the success of assignments and the organization (Harvey, Buckley 1998, p. 108).

The succession planning is further broken down into four steps. First, it is necessary to analyze succession antecedent issues (reason for the requirement, e.g. retirement). Moreover, the characteristics of the ideal candidate must be identified based on the organization's strategy. Second, the contingencies, meaning the internal (corporate culture and available candidates) and external context, must be analyzed (Harvey, Buckley 1998, p. 108-109). The first phase as described above is followed by the decision about the strategy level, which includes the following items: strategic value of the market, external environment analysis, requirements of the position, home/host/third country national, government restrictions on HR decisions and acceptable pool of candidates (Harvey, Buckley 1998, p. 109-113).

After the strategic decision, the tactical decisions need to be made concerning the following characteristics of the expatriate population: dual-career couples, male/female expatriates, trailing spouses continue/discontinue employment, stage of career life-cycle, stage of family-life cycle and requirements of support programs for dual-career (Harvey, Buckley 1998, p.

113-118). After the evaluation of above-mentioned points, it is possible to develop a custom-fit dual-career policy that both fits the organization and its culture.

2.2.3. Societal Perspectives

From an analytical point of view, there are two key areas influencing dual-career couples during international assignments on a societal level: national culture and gender roles. These areas are now presented in greater detail.

National Culture

As a result of the increasing globalization of business transactions there is also a growing number of expatriates. Looking at the internationalization of the workforce it is important to consider both national cultures and organizational cultures of corporations. For international assignments the cultural differences play a major role, for example the differences in state benefits and labor market regulations, but also intercultural difficulties that increase in case of greater discrepancies between the home and the host culture. For example, the topic of work-life balance is rather new in countries like China where typically life is built around work and people are encouraged to focus on their professional lives (de Cieri, Bardoel 2009, p. 188). Due to cultural differences, there is a need to adjust global policies to local needs. Whereas the national welfare regimes can be either generous or scarce in regard to family support the same holds true for corporate support systems. Organizational cultures can be either family supportive or obstructive.

Cultural preparation certainly helps in order to anticipate future conflicts in the host country. Increased cultural awareness leads to higher self-confidence which results in an improved emotional balance and better integration (Fischlmayr, Kollinger 2010, p. 471). The authors report further positive consequences such as better performance, better concentration and less homesickness. The survey of Kupka and Cathro (2007, p. 965) shows that insufficient intercultural training and the lack of company mentors in combination with significant cultural differences create an environment that is stressful for the spouses and his/her surroundings.

The differences between the home and the host culture are also an influencing factor when it comes to social support. Large discrepancies lead to social isolation, which is a stress factor

particularly for the spouses. This situation can be improved with contact to host country nationals, e.g. in clubs or organizations (Kupka, Cathro 2007, pp. 953–955). Specifically in countries with great cultural differences, the expatriate spouses heavily rely on friends for social support, whereas the importance of mentors is negligible (Kupka, Cathro 2007, p. 959). Another survey showed that there is no difference in terms of work-family conflict in individualistic compared to collectivistic countries (Mortazavi et al. 2009, p. 266). The differences only occurred in gender role expectations defined by cultural norms.

There are three major dimensions that influence expatriate adjustment: adjustment to the general environment, adjustment to the work situation and adjustment to interacting with host nationals. It could happen that expatriates might be well adjusted in one field, but lack adjustment in another area (Puck et al. 2008, p. 11). Puck et al. (2008) identify individual (personality and experience related), work-related (before and during the assignment) and non-work related (environmental) factors for each of the above-mentioned areas.

One study of German expatriates showed that the family situation of expatriates significantly correlates with the interaction with locals. It is evident that expatriates who had met their partners in the host country are best adjusted to the interaction with locals because the partners already have many contacts. Expatriates with partners in the home country show a slightly lower level of adjustment. Expatriates with accompanying partners have the lowest degree of adjustment. This could be explained by the fact that their social contacts are mainly within the family and contacts to locals are limited (Kittler et al. 2008, p. 77). The adjustment of the family definitely influences the expatriate adjustment. In case the host country adjustment of the partner and children is successful, this has positive effects on the expatriate. This makes it logical to include the family in the assignment process (Kittler et al. 2008, p. 80).

Generally, the greater the difference between the home and the host culture, the higher the level of uncertainty is in regard to international assignments (Dupuis et al. 2008, p. 292). Home-related factors stronger influence relocation willingness when culturally distant host locations are observed, but only in case of children the willingness was lower to go to high cultural distance countries but not to low cultural distance locations. Gender and cultural distance interfere in several ways. Gender roles propose that family ties differ considerably across low and high cultural distance locations, particularly for men. The family climate, actual spouse willingness to accompany the partner and perceived spouse mobility more

strongly correlated with relocation willingness to low rather than high cultural distance locations. Therefore it can be assumed that men have other thoughts on mobility decisions in low-high cultural distance countries. In contrast, women are mostly worried about children in high cultural distance host countries. Cultural distance thus implies diverse associations between family ties and relocation willingness. The degree of cultural distance and gender roles require different reflections (Dupuis et al. 2008, p. 292).

Considering the above mentioned factors it seems advisable that companies think about the cultural difference between the home and host location of the expatriate population. Especially for combinations with high discrepancies, pre-departure intercultural training should be offered to the expatriate and the accompanying family members to avoid adjustment problems.

Gender Roles

From a historical point of view, family structures have significantly changed over the past centuries. In regard to international assignments, up to the 1980s it was normal that men accepted an international transfer without asking for consent from their wives (Bello, Tinder 2009, pp. 37–38). The female role was merely to provide a comforting environment at home. The change came with the first and second wave of the women's movement. This was when the women gained more influence on an international transfer, either as an active decision maker in a relationship or as an expatriate themselves. In the 1990s companies started to implement dual-career policies as a response to these developments (Bello, Tinder 2009, pp. 37–38).

In regard to gender relations, it is interesting to see that an increasing number of women accept international assignments. This results in a new phenomenon of male trailing spouses who typically face even more difficult conditions than their female counterparts (e.g. Bello, Tinder 2009; Adler 2002). Punnett et al. (1992, p. 586) give several reasons why it is more difficult for men to be the trailing spouse. Male homemakers are not accepted by society, the non-working spouse group is largely female and traditional volunteer activities might not be available.

International assignments have become an important part of career paths for managers, both male and female. The greatest danger for employees with family responsibilities is the trend

for long working hours (Hein 2005), which could be even worsened when abroad. Literature also suggests that families have a growing influence on the decision making in job-related matters. Whereas in the past the family and work spheres were clearly separated, this now starts to interfere. Another change is the work pattern. In previous times a period of full-time employment was followed by a period of full-time retirement (Moen, Sweet 2004). This strict separation is no longer possible in a globalized, ageing society.

Perceived spouse mobility, actual spouse willingness and children correlated with higher relocation willingness for females than for males. The positive correlation between relative income and relocation willingness was higher for men than for women, implying that for men higher income supports the belief to be in charge of looking after the family financially (Dupuis et al. 2008, p. 291). The influence of beliefs is stronger for females than for males. Women have higher relocation willingness when they think that spouses should be willing to relocate to support their partner's career (Dupuis et al. 2008, p. 291).

Family ties are more important for women when it comes to the decision to accept or refuse an international assignment. Considering gender roles, the family role is more influential for women and the work role is more prominent for men (Dupuis et al. 2008, p. 291). This is not surprising when looking at the historical single-breadwinner model with men being the only earners in a household. This model still influences societal beliefs when it comes to role allocation.

It seems that the type of required support also differs among male and female partners. One survey showed that male spouses are typically less interested in counselling support compared with women (Eby et al. 1997, p. 301). However, looking at the situation of reversed gender roles for male accompanying partners, counselling could be of advantage for men. In regard to job-related support, there were no differences between male and female spouses. Nevertheless, female expatriates are more unlikely to ask for support for their partners because they think they appear as overly worried about their family situation. Males, on the other hand, are shy about asking for support because they expect negative responses because of existing gender roles. This means even though male and female spouses are equally interested in job-related assistance, it can happen that male partners get access to support measures less frequently (Eby et al. 1997, pp. 301–303).

2.3. Summary of Analytical Findings

In order to assist dual-career couples during international assignments, companies have developed different dual-career support measures. These measures typically include networking opportunities, job hunting assistance, employment offers or other financial career support. The overall number of expatriates is almost impossible to count but statistics suggest that the number is increasing. Management development is the number one reason to go abroad. When looking at the educational levels of couples, it can be seen that there is a positive correlation between high educational levels and higher income. Empirical data also shows that a majority of couples with university degrees live in a dual-earner household.

The three perspectives introduced in the theoretical part of the thesis are further broken down to an analytical level. In regard to individual perspectives, relocation willingness, work-family conflict and subjective well-being are discussed. Moreover, career paths are added as an individual determinant. Dual-career couples are typically hesitant when it comes to moving abroad. However, improved spouse employment opportunities are expected to enhance employee mobility. With regard to career paths, especially repatriation creates problems for the employer, the repatriate and the spouse. When taking a look at the work-family conflict, evidence suggests that the situation has worsened in the last decades and role overload is becoming more common. Concerning individual well-being, also stress levels seem to have increased over time. In addition, international assignments present a threat for a relationship. This danger is enhanced for previously weak relationships and for couples with children.

On an organizational level, organizational culture and international HR management are discussed. In addition, corporate HR policies are addressed. A family supportive organizational culture seems to have a strong influence on job satisfaction. Especially, the role of superiors and subcultures close to the employee are essential. A change to a supportive organizational culture is difficult to achieve but should, in any case, be linked to the basic assumptions within an organization. With regard to international HR management, it is necessary for organizations to define an HR strategy that provides the framework for processes. The HR strategy has a narrow or broad scope and uses a high or low level of abstraction. Depending on this structure, the HR processes are either centralized or decentralized. When it comes to expatriation, it makes sense for companies to introduce international assignment guidelines that are generally applicable but allow for local adaptations, where necessary.

On a societal level, national culture and gender roles are discussed in further detail. The national culture of the host culture obviously influences expatriates and accompanying family members, for example through the local national welfare regime. Adjustment in the host country is necessary on three different levels: adjustment to the general environment, to the work situation and to interacting with host nationals. Successful local adjustment is very individual and depends on many factors. When it comes to gender roles, the emancipation of women has significantly influenced international transfers. Women are now strongly involved in the decision making process. In addition, female expatriates gain importance and male trailing spouses present a new challenge for companies.

3. EMPIRICAL STUDY AMONG EXPATRIATES AND EXPATRIATE SPOUSES

While chapter 1 provides the theoretical framework and chapter 2 links the topics to existing empirical research and experiences, the following chapter contains the author's own empirical research results. At first, the research design is explained in further detail, followed by the illustration of the research method and the data collection. It is based both on questionnaires for expatriates and their spouses and on a questionnaire for the international mobility manager of the company (to understand the employer's point of view). The empirical results are presented by clustering them around the previously mentioned research questions.

3.1. Research Design

The present empirical research is built around one major hypothesis and five propositions that are closely interlinked. The propositions were developed based on previous know-how acquired through literature reviews and personal experience by the author, who spent five years working as a professional in the global mobility department of the surveyed company. These propositions will now be explained in further detail.

The main idea behind this research was to find out whether or not dual-career support influences relocation willingness. To the author's knowledge, there is no previous research focusing on the actual use of dual-career support rather than on the need for or interest in dual-career support. Considering that family issues are one of the main reasons not to accept an international assignment, the author assumes that the use of dual-career support leads to increased relocation willingness. This research question is important, as it gives advice to expatriate employers about whether or not it is worth spending resources on dual-career support. Limited relocation willingness is a serious concern for international companies which might restrict them in further expansion or maintaining foreign subsidiaries.

When it comes to the actual measures that expatriate spouses would like to use as dual-career support, the proposition is that accompanying partners prefer to do further training compared to actual employment in the host country. This is because further training is usually easily accessible in almost all locations, as opposed to work opportunities that are typically restricted by work permit limitations and/or labor market requirements. In addition, expatriate

spouses might take the chance to invest in training that they could not afford otherwise. Moreover, existing literature stresses the importance of language and intercultural training to facilitate local adjustment in the host environment. Companies will benefit from the know-how which dual-career support measures are most preferred as they can design their assignment policies accordingly. If the needed support is known, financial resources can be used more efficiently.

The next question is about how dual-career support influences the expatriate's subjective well-being. This query is of relevance as it is interesting for a company to know if the provision of dual-career support is only helpful for the spouse or if the expatriate is also positively affected. Because of spillover effects previously described in the literature, the author assumes that dual-career support improves the expatriate's subjective well-being. Poor well-being can adversely affect expatriate performance. Supplementing the question about the influence on the expatriate well-being, the next question is about the beneficiaries of dual-career support. The author proposes that dual-career support is beneficial for the trailing spouse, the expatriate and the employer, with different reasons for each group. The trailing spouse is the most obvious beneficiary, as the support is directly targeted at her/him. The expatriate will presumably benefit on an emotional level because of positive spillover effects (see also the second proposition). Ultimately, the employer should benefit from an increased mobility of the workforce. It is helpful for companies to know why they should introduce dual-career support programs and knowing the beneficiaries can assist in getting such policies approved.

The next question goes into further detail concerning the target group of dual-career support. The author wants to know the correlation between the claim of on-assignment career support and the spouse's education. The assumption is that the higher the spouse's education, the more likely he or she is to claim dual-career support. The author presumes that high educational levels go along with high career orientation, higher salary levels resulting in more severe loss of income and high interest in further education. These indicators support the proposition that higher education leads to higher dual-career support claim rates. However, it is difficult to connect the results to existing research, as the author is unaware of previous findings predicting the proposed correlation. Getting to know the target group will help companies to spend their resources more efficiently.

The final question connects to the previous one and also investigates the target group of dual-career support. It is about the way the duration of the assignment influences the claim of career support. The author assumes that the longer the international assignment, the more likely the spouse is to claim dual-career support. The proposition is based on the idea that for short-term assignments it might not be necessary to think about the spouse career as the assignment might be considered as a long vacation, as previously described in the literature. The longer the assignment, the more spouses might think about their own career development and necessary steps to increase their chances in the labor market of the host country. Not only can companies spend their resources more efficiently when they know their target group better, but they can also shape assignment policies accordingly, e.g. in regard to assignment duration.

The empirical data that tests the suggested propositions were collected from an Austrian company in the oil & gas industry. The oil & gas industry is an industry marked by a large expatriate population with 49.6% of companies claiming that they even expect their expat numbers to further increase (Hays 2012, p. 17). The below table shows that a large proportion of employees in the oil & gas industry works outside of their home country. This is most extreme in the Middle East where 88.40% are non-locals. In total, only 57.3% of people in the oil & gas industry work in their home country (Hays 2012, p. 18). This large relevance of international assignments makes the oil & gas industry a valuable research field for expatriate issues.

Table 6: Proportion of imported labor in the global oil and gas industry in 2011, by region

Region	Middle East	Austral -asia	CIS	Europe	North America	Africa	South America	Asia
%	88.40%	53.80%	51.60%	33.50%	29.20%	28.80%	27.20%	23.20%

Source: Hays 2012, p. 19

Research data implies that smaller companies are less likely to offer family-friendly benefits than large firms (Ruhm, 2004, p. 4). At the same time family-friendly programs are most popular in high-skilled industries and sectors where the costs of losing and replacing an employee are high and the benefits of family-friendly practices are easier to quantify (Hein 2005, p. 28). Considering these factors the surveyed company should offer sufficient grounds for the proposed research questions. The company is large with a workforce of around 29,000

employees and operates in a high-skilled industry with a lack of qualified candidates. One survey among oil and gas companies showed that demand for qualified staff is expected to reach an all-time high intensifying an already serious skills shortage (Oil and Gas People 2013).

Existing evidence suggests that the topic of dual-career couples and international assignments is one heavily discussed in the scientific community but also in the corporate world. The relevance of the topic is backed up by a large number of comments that were added at the end of the online survey. 54 participating expatriates and 21 participating spouses left comments concerning the survey. Out of them, there were 13 remarks that praised the survey topic and/or questionnaire design, as opposed to three remarks that expressed dissatisfaction with the survey. The Expatriate Manager who was interviewed also mentioned that it is a very interesting topic that was worth thinking about in more detail. She said she would also appreciate being informed about the results of this thesis.

The high number of comments and the positive response rate (see chapter 3.2) further emphasize the great attention that expatriates and their partners pay to the issue. Even though the topic of dual-career couples on international assignments has received some attention in the scientific community, it seems that it has not been (sufficiently) discussed with those who are actually concerned, namely expatriates and their partners. The survey offers further insight into the views of expatriates and expat spouses that reconfirms the necessity of further research in the field.

3.2. Method

The author uses primary data collection through a written survey in order to gather information in regard to the situation of expatriates and their spouses. An online questionnaire was sent to expatriates and their spouses through the international mobility department in the surveyed company. Questionnaires were submitted through the online survey tool by 241 expatriates and 108 spouses. The study utilizes two separate self-completion questionnaires for both expatriates and their spouses. The employer's perspective is also observed through a questionnaire for the Expatriate Manager of the company.

The expatriate and spouse data was collected via an online survey using professional survey software. The web-based delivery of the survey was considered appropriate for the people in the sample, as they most probably use the internet to stay in touch with their friends and

families in the home country and are therefore computer literate. The invitation email that was sent to the expatriates contained two links: one for the expat survey and one for the partner survey. Both surveys were available in English and German in order to reduce errors linked to language difficulties.

The sample size consisted of 422 expatriates who are in a relationship. The respondents had to live in a relationship but did not have to be married. Even though the international assignment guideline of the surveyed company also covers homosexual partnerships, at this point in time all reported spouses were of the opposite sex. For cost reasons and the global spread of host locations, the questionnaires were only sent out via email. First, an email with two questionnaires (expatriate and spouse versions) was sent out. Second, a follow-up email was sent one week later in order to increase the response rate.

Out of the possible 422 expatriates, 241 returned useable surveys, resulting in a response rate of 57% for expatriates. The 57% represent a rather high response rate compared to other studies, putting this study on strong empirical ground. Based on various comments made by the survey participants at the end of the questionnaire (examples see Appendix N.4 – Selected Comments from Survey Participants), the author concludes that the reason for this high response rate is the expatriates' numerous concerns in regard to their international assignments. Out of the possible 422 spouses, 108 returned useable surveys, resulting in a response rate of 26% for spouses. The smaller response rate for the spouses is not surprising, given that the availability of the questionnaire depended on the expatriates' willingness to forward the link to their spouses. Considering this barrier, the 26% still represent a decent response rate.

The questionnaires were sent to expatriates who are on an international assignment for an Austrian oil and gas company. They also received the instruction to forward the questionnaire to their spouses. The expatriates are typically between 30 and 40 years and the majority (25.88%) are of Austrian descent (details see chapter 3.3). However, the expatriates are mostly quite cosmopolitan due to the international industry they are working in. This is supported by the fact that the survey participants comprise 40 different citizenships. This allows a comparison with other multi-national corporations in further countries. The 19 host countries are located in Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia.

The expatriate questionnaire was composed of 30 questions (including items with question logic). The spouse questionnaire was composed of 33 questions (including items with question logic). The possible answers were either provided by a drop down menu or through a five-point Likert format. A pre-test conducted with ten people was used to identify problems associated with the questionnaire. As a result of the pre-test, several questions were adjusted and three were added. The length of the questionnaire varied, as there were several items with question logic. The questionnaire included demographic questions that were the same for expatriates and spouses (home country, citizenship, host country, gender, age, number of children, highest education). The list of selectable countries consisted of the member states of the United Nations. Also, general questions concerning the jobs and the international assignment were the same (line of work, career level, duration of assignment, partner's current residence –why home or third country, years of foreign experience, if the partner currently has a job). The list of professions was derived from the encyclopedia of professions as provided by the Austrian employment agency (AMS Österreich 2011) and the German employment agency (Statistik der Bundesagentur für Arbeit 2012). In regard to dual-career support, the expatriates and spouses were asked what kind of support they had made use of or why they had not used any support, if they were generally interested in support measures in the host country and what kind of support would be interesting. Another question concerned a potential offer for a new international assignment and whether the expatriate would accept and the partner would accompany the expat. If their answer was no, they had to give the reasons for this decision. The survey participants could leave optional remarks at the end of the survey.

There were three questions that were only addressed to expatriates and related to the subjective well-being related to the assignment/family status of the expatriates (Would you feel better if the partner could accompany you to the host country?) and other influencing factors on personal well-being. In contrast, expatriate spouses received additional questions relating to the following areas: work experience, job in the home country, job in the host country and how support would be beneficial. The English version of the questionnaires for the expatriates and expatriate spouses is included in the appendix.

The author uses a variety of statistical methods in order to present the empirical results. Factor analyses and descriptive statistics were most commonly used. Additional methods were used where appropriate (cluster analysis, correlation coefficients, analysis for repeated measures,

Post-hoc Bonferroni tests, multiple linear regression, calculation of means, one-way and multivariate analysis of variance, chi-square test for independence).

Dillman et al. (2009, pp. 17-18) mention certain errors that could occur in regard to surveys. The author has tried to limit these errors to the minimum. The coverage error can be overcome by the fact that the target group is recorded in an electronic system. For confidentiality reasons, the names were not provided to the author. However, the global mobility department distributed the questionnaire in the name of the author to all relevant expatriates. Concerning possible coverage errors due to a possible unavailability of internet connection, this risk is limited because all expatriates have internet access at work and get financial reimbursement for the basic private internet fees in the host country. This makes it very likely that expatriates and their spouses have internet access, which is necessary for the survey. The only risk in regard to the coverage error is a possible outdated distribution list, for example if an expat resigns or repatriates at the time the survey is sent out or if the marital status changes or is not up to date. Undeclared marital status changes can be observed if the expatriate is afraid of possible social or financial disadvantages or if he/she is unaware of the obligation to notify the employer. The sampling error is minimized by the fact that the survey is sent to all expatriates who declared their partners in the contracts. Similar to the coverage error, the only risk is that expatriates are excluded because they declared themselves as single, even though this is not reality. This could be the case for social or religious concerns, for example homosexual partnerships or partners out of wedlock. The nonresponse error cannot be avoided, especially if the expatriates do not forward the survey to their partners. In order to reduce the measurement error the author tries to pose simple and precise questions and provides an English and a German version.

Concerning the employer's view, the author developed a questionnaire for the Expatriate Manager of the company. The interviewee can be considered an expert in the field of expatriate management with more than ten years relevant work experience acquired in three different companies and own foreign experience. The Expatriate Manager currently leads the global mobility team located in two countries, responsible for all activities related to international assignments in the group. The company started the first expatriations in the 1980s and currently has an expatriate population of approximately 600 people.

The questionnaire for the Expatriate Manager was designed to complement the questionnaire for the expatriates and spouses to identify possible differences between the employer's and

the employees' perception. The questionnaire was created following the expat and spouse questionnaire, but allowed more space for open-ended questions and answers (since the questionnaire was addressed to only one person and the aim was to capture as many dimensions as possible). The Expatriate Manager questionnaire was only provided in English as the author knew that the Expatriate Manager was fully capable of using the English version. The full questionnaire is included in the appendix of this thesis.

3.3. Sample

The sample was obtained as follows. The author provided an invitation email with the links to the survey to a contact person in the mobility department of the surveyed company. The contact person then used the organization's internal email address to distribute the email to all 422 active expatriates who had declared to be married or in a relationship in November 2012 (out of those 48 were women). Single expatriates and expatriate rotational personnel (working in shifts on oil fields or platforms) were excluded, as this kind of work does not allow bringing family to the location for safety reasons. This means 266 expatriates were not the target group of the survey. In 2012, the company employed a total of 28,658 employees (including expatriate staff). The employer perspective was captured through a questionnaire for the Expatriate Manager of the company.

Before the email was sent out, the author briefed the five members of the Austrian mobility department to explain the research. In total, 241 expatriates and 108 expatriate spouses participated in the study. The table below gives an overview of the characteristics of the survey participants.

Table 7: Overview of survey respondents

	Expatriates	Expatriate spouses
Number of survey participants	241	108
Completed surveys	228	88
Number of home countries	38	23
Citizenships	40	24
Host countries	19	14
Female respondents	14.04%	86.36%
Male respondents	85.96%	13.64%

Source: author's own table

70.35% of the expatriates were transferred to or within Europe, 16.81% to Asia, 7.96% to Africa and 4.87% were sent to Australia/New Zealand (see figure below).

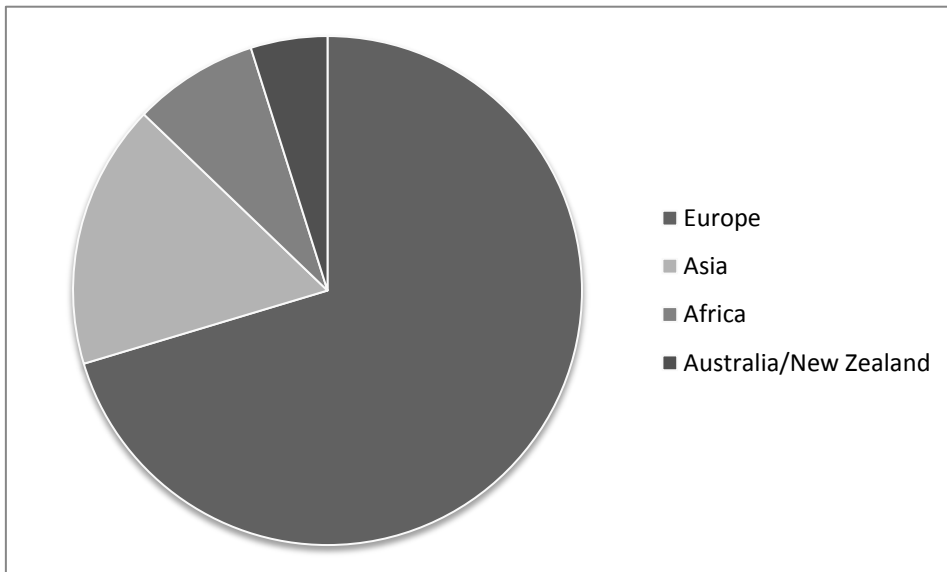


Figure 10: Host country locations of expatriates

Source: author's own figure

The high number of male expatriates (85.96%) is not surprising as the oil & gas industry is a business with a predominantly male workforce. In 2011, 92.2% of staff in the oil & gas sector were male (Hays 2012, p. 18). Among the addressed expatriates 11.38% were female. When looking at the female response rate of 14.04%, this shows that women who received the survey were more likely than the men to respond. This difference indicates that female expatriates have a high interest in dual-career support for their spouses.

The majority of the expatriates (42.29%) were in the age category of 30-40 years. The following chart presents the age distribution among the expatriates in more detail.

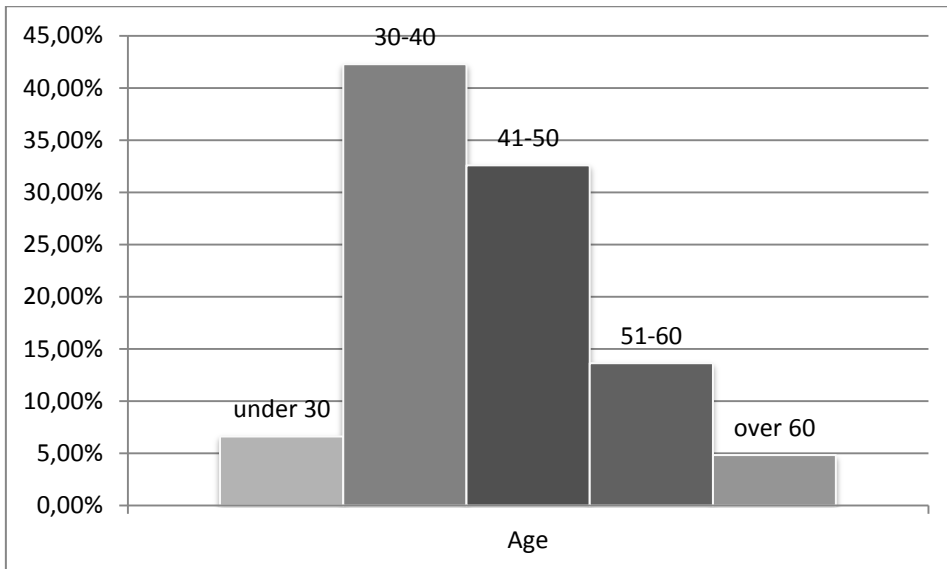


Figure 11: Expatriate age (in years)

Source: author's own figure

The age distribution among the partners shows a similar picture with a majority in the range between 30 and 40 years (52.27%), however the partners tend to be younger than the expatriates (see below). This is not surprising given that men are typically older than women in a marriage (Eurostat 2008, p. 19).

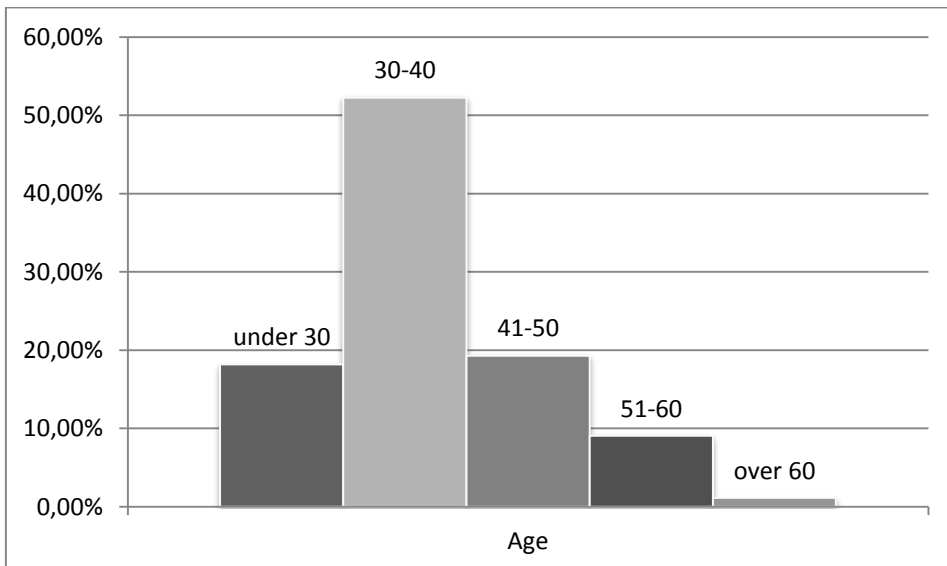


Figure 12: Partner age (in years)

Source: author's own figure

The age factor is an interesting way to see the life-cycle stage the expatriates and their partners are currently in. There are two stages that are said to face most work-family conflict:

parents who have young children at home and are in the ‘full-nest’ stage of the life-cycle and those between child care and care for the elderly, also called the sandwich generation (Duxbury, Higgins 2002, p. 37). The survey data suggests that the majority of the expatriates are in the age group that has a high risk for work-life conflict.

The following chart presents the number of children of the expatriates. The majority of expatriates had two children. As a matter of course, the number for the partners shows the same picture with a majority having two children.

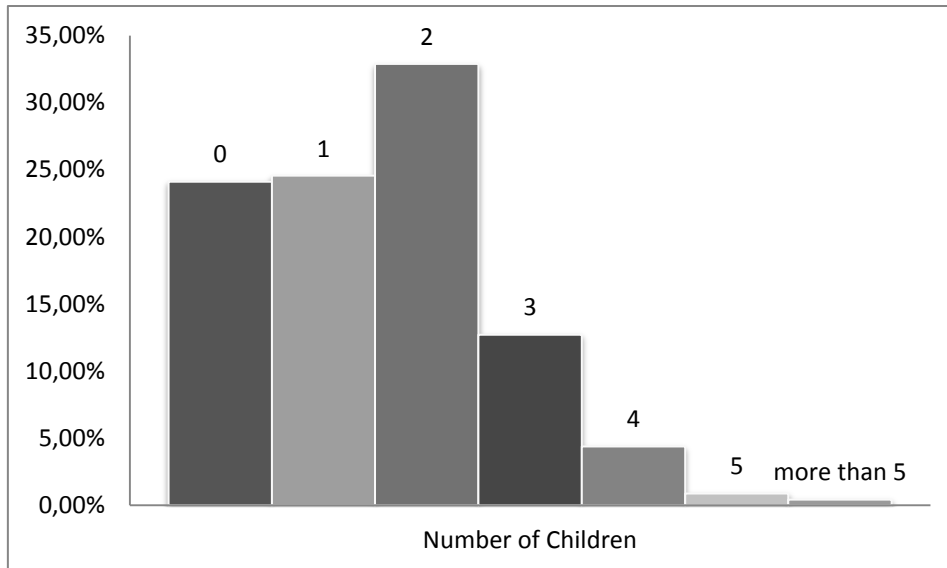


Figure 13: Expatriate number of children

Source: author’s own figure

It does not come as a surprise that most of the expatriates (50.22%) work as engineers or in similar production positions as the survey was sent to employees in the oil & gas industry. When looking at the professions of the spouses, it becomes clear that same-career couples are rare as only 7.95% of the spouses have an occupation in the production field. The professions among spouses do not show a clear peak. However, it seems that the majority (29.55%) work in a business function. In addition, it is interesting to see that a relatively high percentage of the partners, namely 15.91%, identify themselves as having no profession or as a homemaker which makes this the second largest category for spouses (see table below).

Table 8: Professions of survey respondents

	Expatriates	Expatriate spouses
Agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, horticulture and environment	0%	1.14%
Raw materials production, production, manufacturing, chemistry, synthetics, mining, glass, ceramics, stone, machinery, automotive, metal	50.22%	7.95%
Construction, subconstruction work, architecture, surveying, building and timber	3.06%	1.14%
(Natural) science, geography, computer science, electronics, research and development	13.10%	4.55%
Traffic, transport, logistics, delivery services, safety and security	3.06%	3.41%
Business services, retail, sales, advertising, food, hotel, hospitality, tourism, travel, leisure and sport, body and beauty care, cleaning and house keeping	5.68%	14.77%
Business organization, accounting, finance, business administration, legal and administration	21.40%	29.55%
Health/medicine, social work, teaching and education	1.31%	13.64%
Linguistics, literature, humanities, social sciences, economics, media, art, culture, design, graphics, photos, paper, textiles, fashion and leather	1.31%	7.95%
No profession or homemaker	n.a.	15.91%

Source: author's own table

Most of the expats worked in expert positions (37.72%) or on a (middle or senior) management level (32.46% and 19.74%). Most of the partners were employed as specialists (31.33%) but also a high number of respondents were unemployed or in training (20.48%). A large majority of expats had a university degree (96.05%). Remarkably, also most of the expatriate partners are university graduates (73.86%). The partners typically had a work experience of 6-10 years (30.68%) or even 11-20 years of experience (28.41%).

There is a great variety on how long the expats had been living abroad. However, the largest group had stayed abroad for more than six years already (29.39%). The partners had not spent as much time abroad with 25% claiming less than one year and 27.94% stating between one and two years foreign experience. The planned duration of an international assignment is typically 3-4 years (48.68%). This shows that employees tend to go on more than one international assignment. Interestingly, the majority of partners accompany their spouses and live in a common household in the host country (73.25%). One quarter of the partners stayed in the home country and a marginal group stays in a third country (1.75%).

There are several reasons why the partners stay in the home country, but job-related issues (41.77%) and family relations (32.91%) are by far the most common reasons not to accompany the partner. The expatriate answers match with the answers from the partners who also ranked job-related issues number one and family-related issues number two in importance. The stay in a third country is generally job-related.

A majority of the partners mentioned that they had had a job before they moved abroad (69.12%). Among those with a job, most had a paid full-time job (68.09%). Even though most of them were working before the assignment, only 27.59% had a job at the moment. That job was typically a paid full time position either in the home country (53.85%) or in the host country (42.31%). This means out of the interviewed spouses only 12.5% had a job in the host country. 88.37% of the spouses claimed that they were generally interested in dual-career support measures.

When examining the characteristics of dual-career couples as identified by Harvey and Buckley (1998, pp. 102–104), the following indications can be derived from the above sample: In regard to gender, as the majority of expatriates are male the specific problems that male trailing spouses are faced with are rather marginal in the sample. When it comes to the employment status of the trailing spouse the data shows that only 12.5% of trailing spouses were employed in the host location. This low number gives room to potential dangers for the success of the international assignments. Concerning the stage of career life-cycle, the author takes a look at the age of the expatriates and the career level and concludes that the majority are in the phase of growth/establishment or maintenance/plateau. In contrast, some of the trailing spouses seem to be still in the trial/exploration phase. Considering the stage of family life-cycle, only 24.12% of the surveyed expatriates had no children. This means children are an important factor in the polled expatriate population. This analysis shows that there are

numerous challenges when looking at the characteristics of the expatriates in question. Specifically, the high number of unemployed spouses and the predominance of relationships with children show conflict potential.

3.4. Presentation of the Empirical Results

3.4.1. Kinds of Dual Career-Support

The first research question relates to the preferred type of dual-career support. In order to explore the preferences, the survey participants were asked what kind of dual-career support measure they/their partners had already used and what kind of support they would be interested in. In addition they were asked if there were generally interested in dual-career support. It is first assessed whether the first proposition can be statistically proven. The evaluation is carried out by means of analysis for repeated measures. The within-subjects factor consists of the assessments of the three used support dimensions. The following independent variables are considered: the sample (expatriate/partners), the age, the length of the stay abroad, the expected duration of the current assignments, the presence of the partner in the host country, employment of the partner, general interest in support measures, and possible assumption of a new assignment.

Interesting Support

In order to evaluate the question which support is considered as interesting, a factor analysis for the expats is conducted. Three very well interpretable factors are extracted. The first factor comprises all statements of 'Practical and Educational Support' (PES). This factor can explain 22% of variance of the underlying correlation matrix. The internal consistency is Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$. This value is an indicator of an acceptable reliability of this index. The second factor includes all statements for 'Financial Support' (FS). The factor explains 19% of variance. The statement 'financial compensation for loss of income', which loads highest in the third factor, is assigned to the second factor. The reliability coefficient is Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$. This value can be interpreted as acceptable. The correlation value is 0.43. This means it fits well with the items of this factor and it also has no negative impact on the reliability. The third factor includes those questions which relate to 'Occupational Support' (OS). This factor explains 16% of variance, the Cronbach's α has a value of 0.75 and is also assessed as acceptable.

Table 9: Rotated component matrix for different kinds of support, expat sample

Practical and Educational Support	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
intercultural training	0.75	0.08	0.09
Look & See trip	0.73	0.09	0.19
language training	0.72	0.18	0.15
networking activities in or outside the company	0.64	0.30	-0.09
help with re-entry into the home country	0.57	0.14	0.39
seminars/educational programs	0.52	0.46	0.19
Financial Support			
financial support for volunteer activities	0.16	0.81	0.19
financial support for research	0.06	0.76	0.32
professional association/membership fees	0.15	0.74	0.06
counseling/psychological support	0.30	0.51	0.09
Occupational Support			
my employer provides my partner with a job in the same company	-0.05	0.00	0.85
my employer provides my partner with a job in a different company	0.20	0.33	0.77
(financial compensation for loss of income)	0.36	0.29	0.53
assistance with finding a job in the host country e.g. employment agency fees, career counseling, work permit assistance	0.36	0.34	0.53

Source: author's own table

A factor analysis for the entire sample (expats and partners) also shows a three dimensional result with basically the same factor structure. However, some items appear in other factors ("seminars / educational programs" is shown in factor 2 but also has a relatively high load in factor 1).

Table 10: Rotated component matrix for different kinds of support, partner sample

	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
intercultural training	0.75	0.16	0.08
Look & See trip	0.75	0.02	0.24
help with re-entry into the home country	0.64	0.04	0.42
language training	0.63	0.34	0.03
networking activities in or outside the company	0.62	0.30	-0.03
financial support for volunteer activities	0.20	0.82	0.15
professional association/membership fees	0.09	0.75	0.16
financial support for research	0.12	0.69	0.40
seminars/educational programs	0.48	0.56	0.09
counseling/psychological support	0.33	0.41	0.28
my employer provides my partner with a job in the same company	-0.04	0.10	0.82
my employer provides my partner with a job in a different company	0.12	0.33	0.76
financial compensation for loss of income	0.40	0.17	0.59
assistance with finding a job in the host country e.g. employment agency fees, career counseling, work permit assistance	0.33	0.40	0.54

Source: author's own table

Seeing that the factor structure differs only slightly from that of the expat sample, the index construction is carried out for the partner statements analogously. This approach seems justified as the reliabilities for this are good (Practical and Educational Support: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.78$, Financial Support: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.77$ and Occupational Support: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.79$).

Using one-way analysis of variance it can be seen that in all three dimensions – Practical and Educational Support ($F(1;253) = 3.295$; $p = 0.071$); Financial Support ($F(1;253) = 2.494$; $p = 0.116$) and Occupational Support ($F(1;253) = 1.643$; $p = 0.201$) – there are no differences between the interesting support measures among expats and spouses. The descriptive statistics are given in the table below.

Table 11: Descriptive statistics: evaluation of the interesting support dimensions, by samples (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)

	Expats		Partners		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Practical and Educational Support	4.17	0.64	4.33	0.63	4.22	0.64
Financial Support	3.64	0.78	3.82	0.93	3.69	0.83
Occupational Support	3.91	0.88	4.07	1.01	3.95	0.92

Source: author's own table

The three dimensions have different values ($F(2;506) = 42.63$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.14$). The highest average appears for Practical and Educational Support (PES) ($M = 4.22$; $SD = 0.64$), the second highest dimension is the Occupational Support (OS) ($M = 3.95$; $SD = 1.01$). In comparison, the least important is the index of Financial Support (FS) ($M = 3.69$; $SD = 0.82$). Post-hoc Bonferroni tests demonstrate that all three indices differ significantly from each other ($p < 0.001$). Thus, it can be assumed that Practical and Educational Support (PES) services is most wanted, Financial Support (FS) is least preferred.

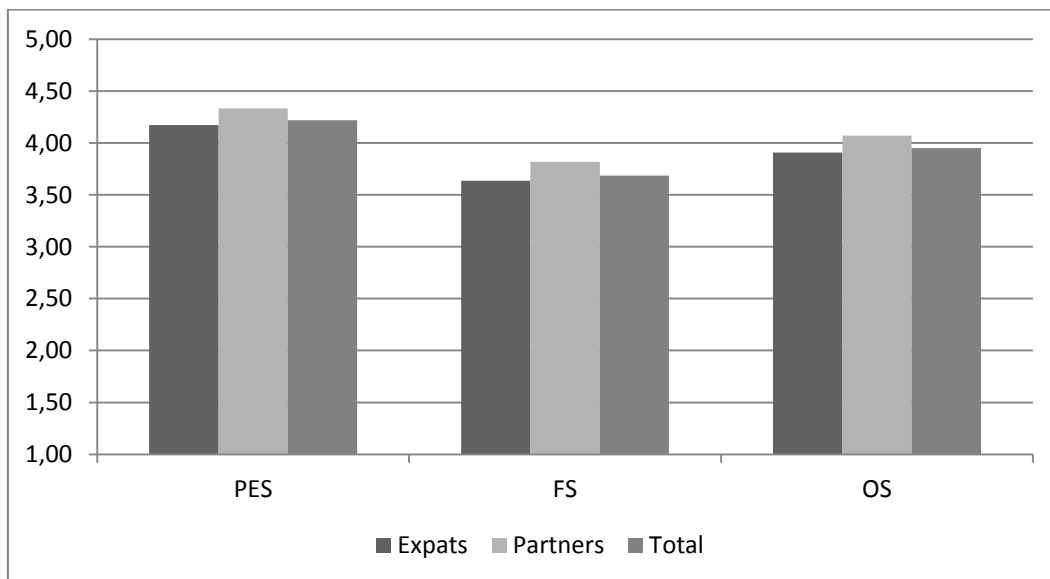


Figure 14: Means of interesting support dimensions, by sample and entire sample

Source: author's own figure

This ratio of the indices to each other is independent of the sample ($F(2;506) = 0.018$; $p = 0.982$). Therefore, this means that Practical and Educational Support (PES) is most important and Financial Support (FS) is least important for both expats and partners. There is a

statistical tendency ($F(1;253) = 3.491$; $p = 0.063$) that partners assess the three dimensions slightly higher than expats.

Depending on the selected language, there is a significant interaction of support dimensions and language ($F(2;502) = 5.422$; $p = 0.005$), which is again independent of the sample ($F(2; 502) = 0.163$; $p = 0.850$). This significant interaction is clearly rooted in the evaluation of the Financial Support (FS) index. The mean of the respondents in the English version ($M = 3.81$) is significantly higher than in the German version ($M = 3.41$).

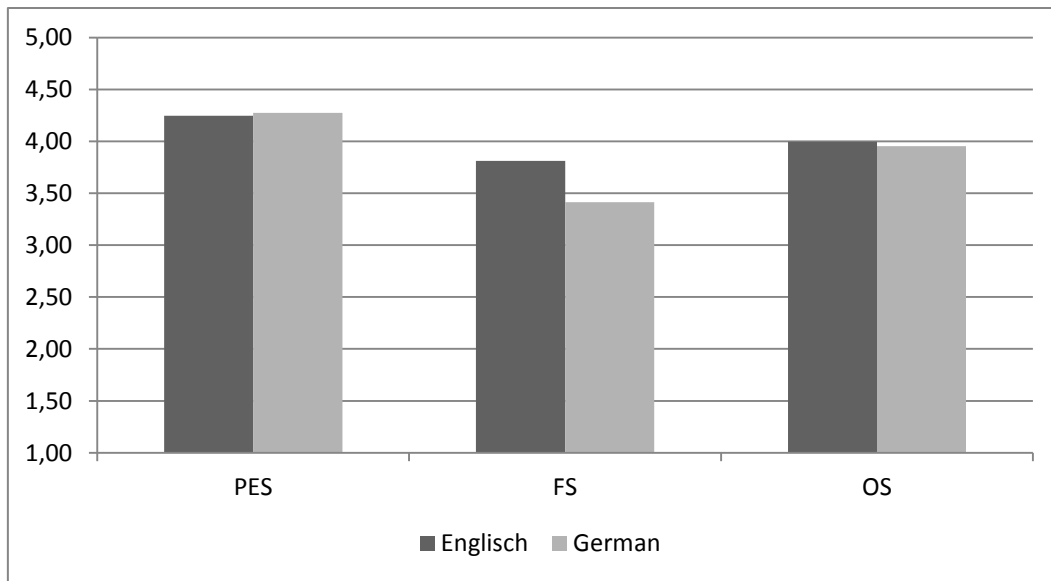


Figure 15: Means of interesting support dimensions, by language of the survey

Source: author's own figure

The age of the respondents shows no significant effect on the assessment of the three dimensions ($F(6;494) = 0.74$; $p = 0.618$). Also the interaction of the support dimensions, age groups and samples is not significant ($F(6;494) = 0.109$; $p = 0.995$). The assessment of the dimensions is independent of the location of the partner ($F(2;502) = 0.961$; $p = 0.383$), the sample is also not significant ($F(2;502) = 0.941$; $p = 0.391$). The reason for the non-common residence does not affect the assessment (job-related: $F(2;259) = 2.359$; $p = 0.100$; family-related: $F(2;259) = 2.081$; $p = 0.131$).

There is a clearly significant difference in rating depending on whether the partner is employed ($F(2;502) = 6.682$; $p = 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.03$). If the partner is not working, the dimensions of Practical and Educational Support (PES) and Financial Support (FS) are considered more important. However, if the partner is working, the Occupational Support

(OS) dimension is rated highest. This difference in assessment is evaluated as equal in both samples ($F(2;502) = 2.685; p = 0.069$).

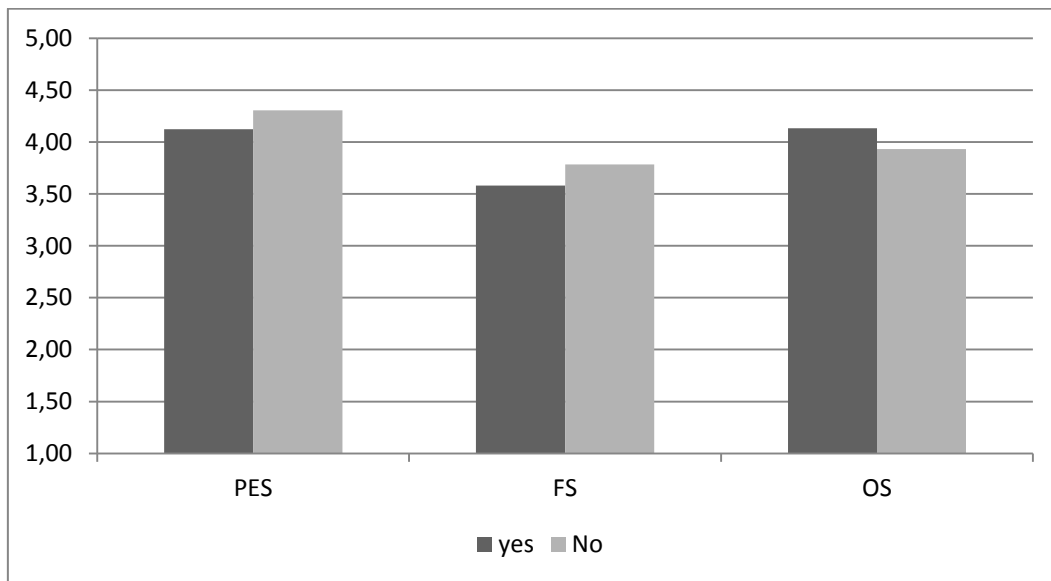


Figure 16: Means of interesting support dimensions, by (non-) employed partners

Used Support

The table below illustrates the previously used support measures with a total of 14 items, the wording for expats and partners is only marginally different. The table shows that there are four major support measures that are most frequently used. These are language training, Look & See trips, networking activities and intercultural training. More moderately used support measures are the payment of seminars/educational programs, assistance with finding a job in the host country, the expat employer provided a job in the same company and the payment of professional association or membership fees. Rarely used support measures were the financial compensation for loss of income, financial support for research or creative activities or counselling and psychological support.

Table 12: Utilization rates of dual-career support measures

Type of support	Expatriate sample	Partner sample
Language training	30.53%	33.09%
Look & See trip (visiting the host country before final relocation)	25.55%	25.18%
Networking activities in or outside the company (e.g. invitation to events)	10.59%	12.95%
Intercultural training	8.41%	10.07%
Seminars/educational programs	4.05%	2.16%
Assistance with finding a job in the host country e.g. employment agency fees, career counseling, work permit assistance	2.18%	2.88%
Expatriate employer provided a job in the same company	1.56%	0%
Professional association/membership fees	1.25%	0.72%
Financial compensation for loss of income	0.62%	0%
Financial support for research or creative activities	0%	0.72%
Help with re-entry into the home country	0.62%	1.44%
Other support	0.62%	0.72%
Counseling/psychological support	0.31%	0%
NO support measures have been used.	13.71%	9.35%

Source: author's own table

First, a cluster analysis is conducted. There are three well distinguishable groups. Discriminant analysis is used for a rebuilding. The following support measures are identified as significant distractors between the groups: assistance with finding a job in the host country, seminars/educational programs, language training, intercultural training, Look & See trip and networking activities in or outside the company. The majority of the items can be assigned to Practical and Educational Support. Two support measures are part of the factor Occupational Support. Cluster 2 (n = 46; 27.9%) includes those expats that hardly make use of support measures. Cluster 1 (n = 68; 41.2%) includes those people who almost all went on Look and See Trips but also have a high rate of language course claims. Cluster 3 (n = 51; 30.9%) is characterized by a high usage of language and intercultural training, but also increased networking activities. The hit rate of the discriminant analysis is 92%.

Table 13: Description of the clusters by the used support measures, expat sample

	C 1	C 2	C 3	Total
assistance with finding a job in the host country e.g. employment agency fees, career counseling, work permit assistance	7.4%	0.0%	3.9%	4.2%
seminars/educational programs	0.0%	0.0%	25.5%	7.9%
language training	70.6%	0.0%	84.3%	55.2%
intercultural training	14.7%	0.0%	33.3%	16.4%
Look & See trip (visiting the host country before final relocation)	97.1%	0.0%	19.6%	46.1%
networking activities in or outside the company (e.g. invitation to events)	22.1%	0.0%	37.3%	20.6%

Source: author's own table

In addition to the cluster analysis, normalized sum indices are formed which encompass the support measures considering the factor structure found previously. Because of the normalization, the used support measures can be directly compared.

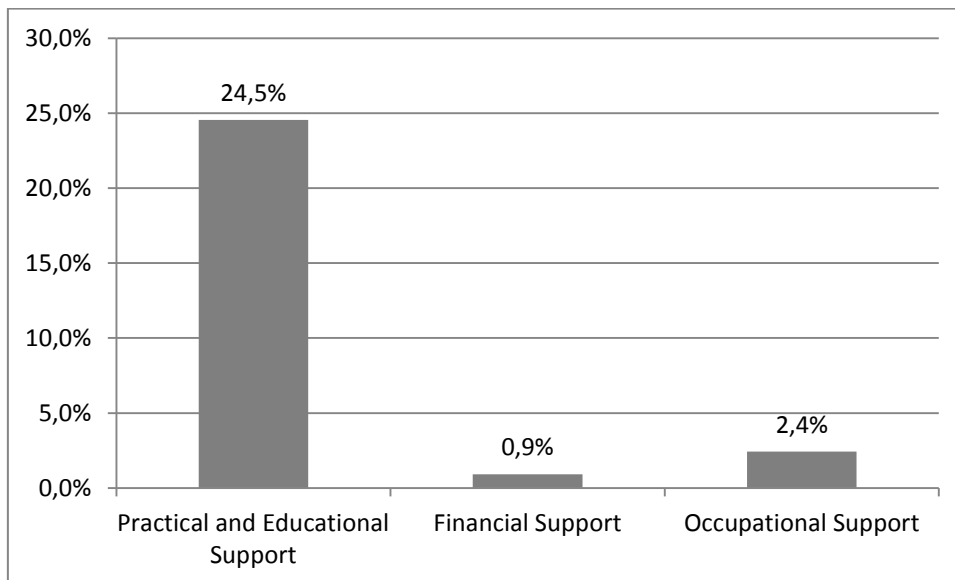


Figure 17: Used support measures (normalized cumulative value), expat sample

Source: author's own figure

Conducting a cluster analysis for used support measures for the sample of partners analogously to the one for the expats, it is a very similar three-cluster result as found for the expats. In order to discriminate the three groups, three variables are sufficient in this case: assistance with finding a job in the host country, intercultural training, and Look & See trip. However, the hit rate of 75% is significantly lower.

Table 14: Description of the clusters by the used support measures, partner sample

	C1 (n=25; 37%)	C2 (n=13; 19%)	C3 (n=30; 44%)	Total (n=68)
assistance with finding a job in the host country e.g. employment agency fees, career counseling, work permit assistance	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	5.9%
intercultural training	11.1%	0.0%	52.9%	19.1%
Look & See trip (visiting the host country before final relocation)	63.9%	0.0%	58.8%	48.5%

Source: author's own table

Looking at the indices, there is the following result for the partner sample:

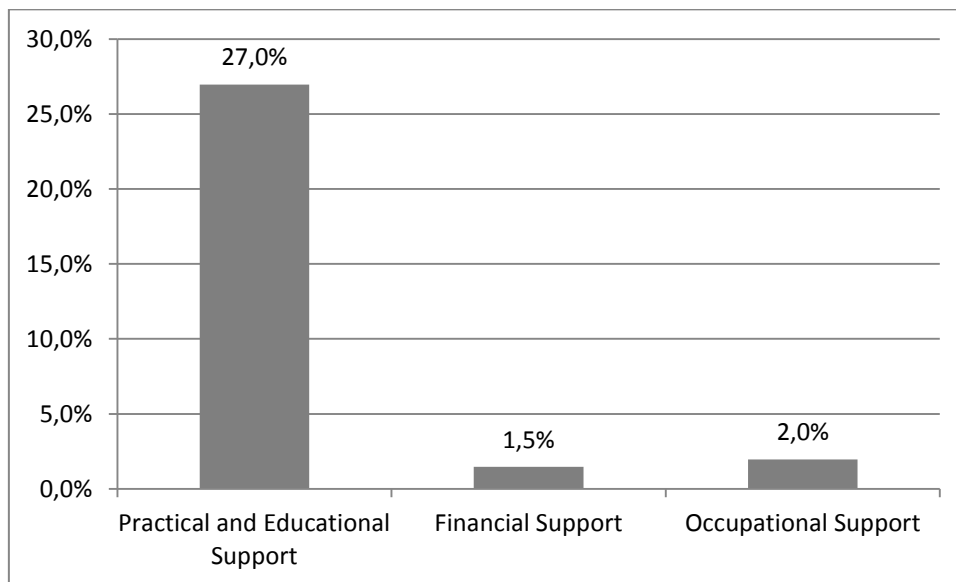


Figure 18: Used support measures (normalized cumulative value), partner sample

Source: author's own figure

The evaluation of whether there are significant differences between the two samples is carried out by means of one-way analysis of variance. Also for the used support measures, no

differences can be found between the expat and partner sample (Practical and Educational Support ($F(1;231) = 0.705$; $p = 0.402$); Financial Support ($F(1;231) = 0.588$; $p = 0.444$); Occupational Support ($F(1;231) = 0.144$; $p = 0.704$).

Table 15: Descriptive statistics: evaluation of the used support dimensions, by samples

	Expats		Partners		Total	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Practical and Educational Support	24.5	19.8	27.0	20.4	25.3	19.9
Financial Support	0.9	4.7	1.5	5.9	1.1	5.1
Occupational Support	2.4	8.7	2.0	7.9	2.3	8.4

Source: author's own table

For the used indices, a highly significant difference between Practical and Educational Support, Financial Support and Occupational Support is proven ($F(2;462) = 242.146$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.51$). The mean value for Practical and Educational Support is at 24.5 (SD = 19.8). There are significantly lower means for Financial Support (M = 0.91; SD = 1.47) and Occupational Support (M = 2.42; SD = 1.96). Post-hoc Bonferroni tests demonstrate that the differences between Practical and Educational Support and Financial Support ($p < 0.001$) and Practical and Educational Support and Occupational Support ($p < 0.001$) are significant. The difference between Financial Support and Occupational Support ($p = 0.465$) is not significant. Thus, it can be assumed that Practical and Educational Support is most frequently used.

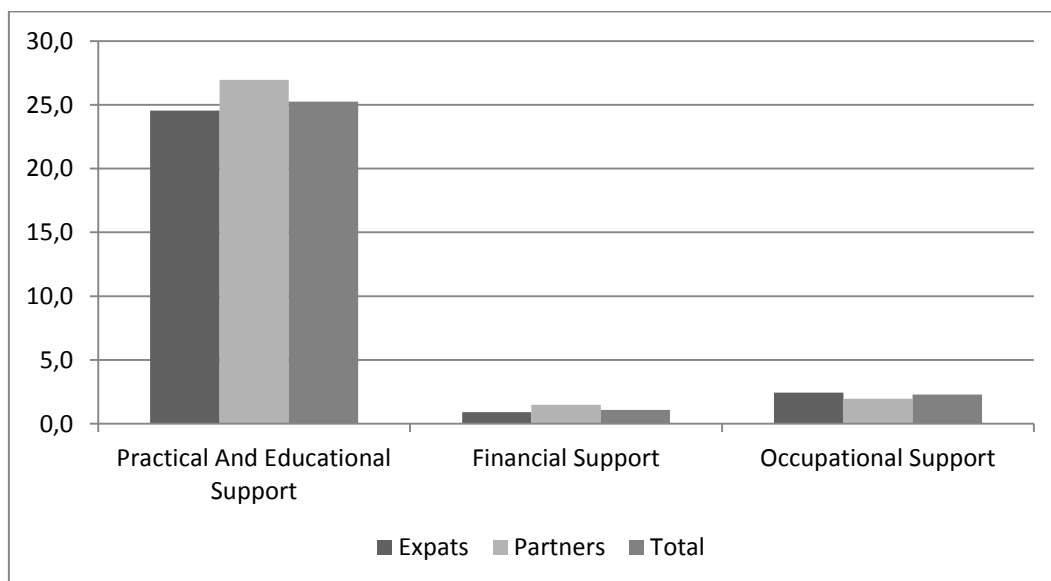


Figure 19: Means of the used support indices, by sample and total sample

Source: author's own figure

There is no interaction between the use of support measure and the sample ($F(2;462) = 0.667$; $p = 0.514$). The usage is thus independent of the sample, the differences in use of the three dimensions are assessed as equal for partners and expats.

In the following, it is investigated whether other variables have an influence on the ratio of the use of support measures. Regarding the language in which the questionnaire was completed, no significant interaction is shown ($F(2;458) = 2.572$; $p = 0.077$). The interaction of language and sample also has no statistically demonstrable effect ($F(2;0.053)$; $p = 0.949$). The age of the respondents also has no influence on the support use ($F(6;450) = 1.491$; $p = 0.180$), the interaction of support usage, age and sample is not significant ($F(6;450) = 0.695$; $p = 0.654$). The employment of the partner shows a significant influence on the use of the support dimensions ($F(2;458) = 5.459$; $p = 0.005$, $\eta^2 = 0.023$). If the partner is working, the dimension of Practical and Educational Support (PES) are less frequently claimed, but Occupational Support (OS) is more common. This difference in usage is independent of the sample ($F(2;458) = 0.095$; $p = 0.910$).

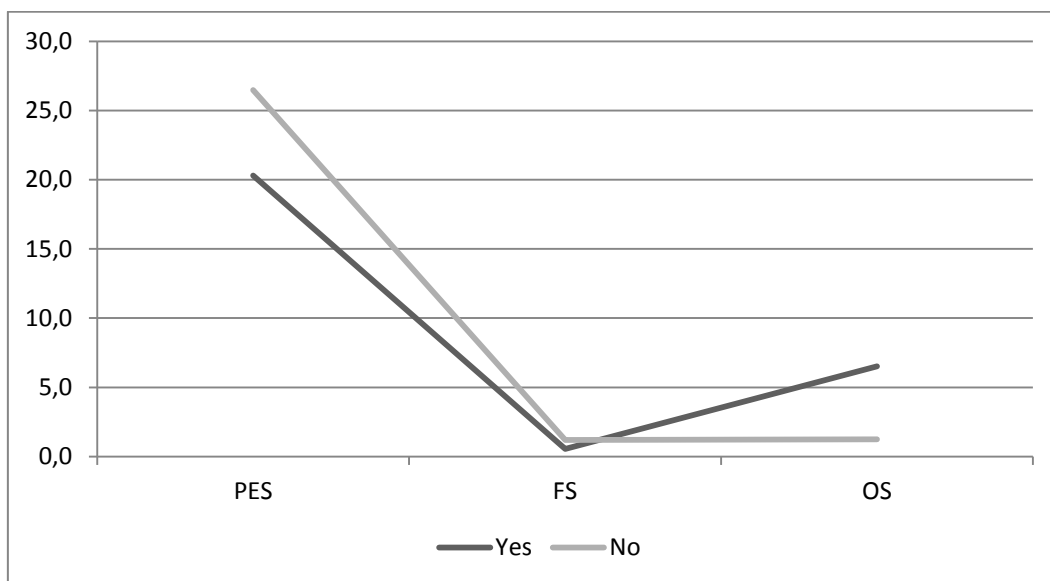


Figure 20: Significant interaction between used support and (non-) employed partners

Source: author's own figure

The previous length of stay abroad does not affect the use of the support dimensions ($F(8;320) = 0.934$, $p = 0.489$; expat sample).

In contrast to the survey results derived from the expatriate and partner answers, the available support measures stated by the Expatriate Manager can be seen in the figure below. Support that was only mentioned by the expatriates and spouses but not by the Expatriate Manager is pictured in the small circles. The size of the smaller circles illustrates the frequency of that answer.

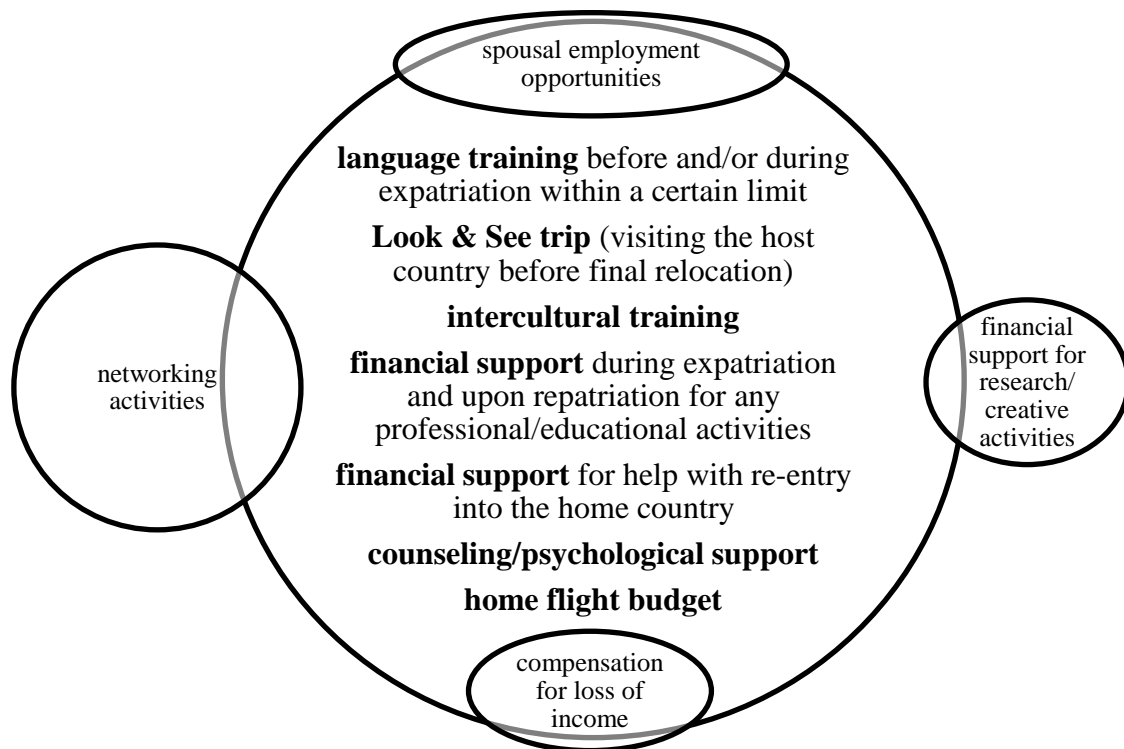


Figure 21: Officially available support and additionally used support

Source: author's own figure

Comparing the officially available support with the answers given by the expatriates and spouses, the following issues are noted: Networking activities are ranked quite highly, even though the Expatriate Manager does not specifically mention this support measure. The author assumes that this difference derives from the fact that networking events are typically organized locally and not through the headquarters. This means the availability of networking events depends on the willingness of the local management to support such events and is less likely to be covered through a corporate policy.

Some expatriates mentioned that the employer also provided a job to the spouse. The Expatriate Manager, however, did not declare this support measure. The author assumes that there is no corporate policy in regard to spousal job opportunities, which means the situation will be handled on a case by case basis. As the availability of a job for the spouse heavily

depends on the spouse's profession and qualifications as well as on the host country labor requirements, it seems difficult to set up a general policy to cover this matter.

A small number of survey respondents stated financial compensation for loss of income and financial support for research or creative activities as used support measures, whereas the Expatriate Manager does not mention this support. Considering the low number of mentions, it is likely that these support measures were based on an individual negotiation with the local management.

The Expatriate Manager assumed that intercultural training was the most frequently used support measure because the awareness of the importance of understanding the other culture has been increasing over the past few years. The understanding of the business rules on the one hand (important especially for the expat himself or herself) as well as the soft aspects of the daily life on the other hand may be crucial for the successful integration of the spouse/expat family in the host country. When asked about future plans, the Expatriate Manager states that there are no plans to change the available dual-career budget in the near future.

The answers from the expatriates and spouses confirm that intercultural training ranks among the most preferred kinds of dual-career support. However, it only comes fourth after language training Look & See trips and networking events. Apart from the above-mentioned options, expats and spouses stated the following support measures:

- tax and company registering support or assistance with self-employment, e.g. market research, networking, marketing;
- support to get registered in the social insurance system in the host country;
- visa support for expat parents to help with childcare;
- help with communication with authorities (financial authority, legislation, etc.) for whole time of contract not only at the beginning by relocation company.

Respondents who had not made use of any support measures gave the reasons shown in the table below.

Table 16: Reasons for not using dual-career support

Reason	Expatriate sample	Partner sample
There is no need.	25.93%	26.67%
Did not know about the possibility.	24.07%	20.00%
Appropriate support was not provided or not possible.	20.37%	6.67%
Spouse wants to stay at home and care for the kids.	14.81%	33.33%
No time so far.	5.56%	
Spouse wants to stay at home and take a time out.	3.70%	13.33%
Tried but did not succeed.	3.70%	
Other reason	1.85%	

Source: author's own table

For expatriates, the main reason for not using dual-career support was that there is simply no need. An obvious reason for this answer is if the spouse is a host country national or if the spouse has already reached retirement age. Some of the respondents also did not know that this possibility was offered (24.07% of expatriates and 20% of partners). Interestingly, the partners ranked the answer 'stay at home to care for the kids' as the most important reason. Looking at the other reasons, it is worthwhile to note that expatriates tend to mention that it was not possible to get appropriate support whereas spouses state it as a conscious decision because they wanted to stay at home.

The Expatriate Manager assumed the lack of information was the most important reason why dual-career support was not claimed. This is because it is the expat's responsibility to make the company aware of any claims based on the international assignment guidelines. He/she might also oversee the importance of involving the spouse into the details of the international assignment guidelines and to discuss the scope of the international assignment guidelines (and thus also the spousal support) with his/her partner at home. Regarding the intercultural training there is sometimes the opinion of the expat (and spouse) that the differences are not that big between the home and host country, as the expat and the spouse know the host country from business and or private trips. This might be a trap because there are many aspects of business and private life, which cannot be perceived during a short trip but might come up when staying in the host country for a longer period of time. Therefore, the company

recommends an intercultural training in any case. The major reasons for not using support as stated by the Expatriate Manager can be summarized as follows:

- lack of information,
- not identifying the need,
- non-involvement of the partner.

The Expatriate Manager's assumption that expatriates and/or their spouses do not know about the support is confirmed by the answers received from expatriates and spouses. Also the belief of a possible underestimation of intercultural differences might be reflected in the answer that support is not needed.

Correlation between Use and Interest and General Interest

The indices of Practical and Educational Support and Occupational Support correlate with respect to interest and use. The correlation coefficients are $r = 0.284$ ($p < 0.001$) for Practical and Educational Support and $r = 0.268$ ($p < 0.001$) for Occupational Support. The higher the demand for these support measures, the more they took advantage of it or the higher the use, the greater the interest in these support measures. Looking at the relationships for each sample, the correlations are of similar magnitude in both samples.

Table 17: Correlation coefficient (Spearman) of the indices of used support with interesting support, total sample (expats und partners)

	PES-N		FS-N		OS-N	
	r	p	r	p	r	p
Practical and Educational Support (PES) - Interest	0.284	0.000	-0.040	0.576	0.043	0.548
Financial Support (FS) - Interest	0.074	0.301	0.137	0.058	0.005	0.941
Occupational Support (OS) - Interest	0.055	0.441	0.048	0.504	0.268	0.000

Source: author's own table

When asked if they were generally interested in dual-career support, 90.38% of the expats agreed that they were. Concerning the different kinds of dual-career support, a large majority considered most of the options as interesting or even very interesting. The general interest in support measures has an impact on the support used. The mean value of the dimension

Practical and Educational Support (PES) is significantly lower with no interest than in the case of interest, however the Occupational Support (OS) is slightly higher. This interaction is independent of the sample ($F(2;430) = 0.186; p = 0.830$).

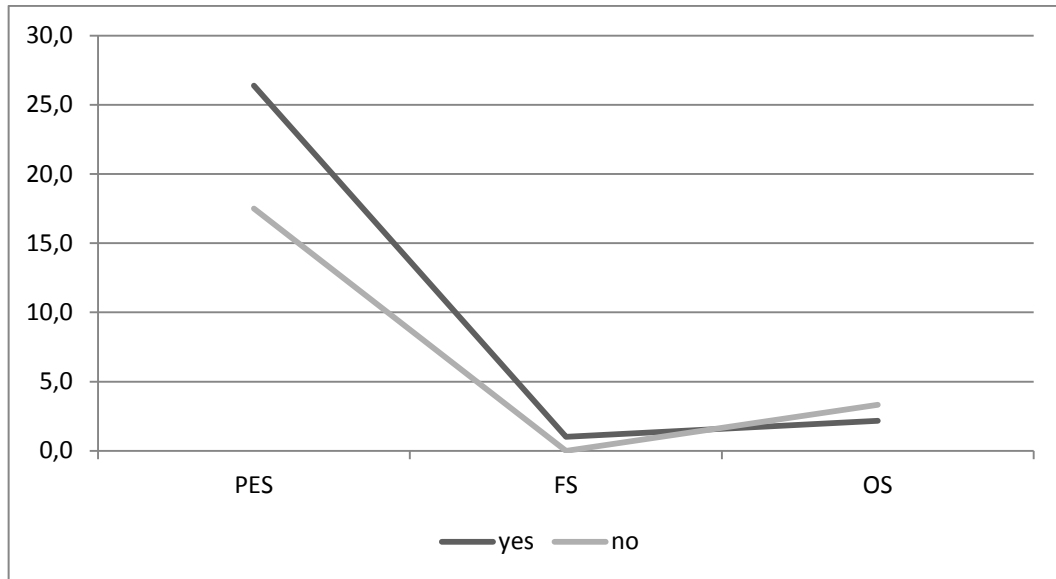


Figure 22: Significant interaction between used support and general interest

Source: author's own figure

At the end of the survey, two expatriates added that the company had not offered any support for the partner. One expat commented that HR could help expat spouses to find a job but it is not a must. Another spouse added that support is interesting if you are abroad without kids. One expatriate suggested social/environmental care programs for spouses, whereas one of the spouses would find a website with information helpful. The various comments show that expatriates and partners clearly think about the topic of trailing spouses and also have several ideas about how to improve the situation. Some of the suggestions could easily be adopted without spending a lot of resources on the part of the company.

3.4.2. Expatriate Subjective Well-Being

The next research question dealt with the influence of dual-career support on the well-being of expatriates. In order to assess the subjective well-being it was necessary to pose a wider range of questions. These were addressed solely to the expatriates and not to the spouses. The evaluation of this research question is carried out with multiple linear regressions. Independent variables are the dimensions of used and interesting support. The dependent

variables are as follows. For the question “How is your personal well-being influenced by your relationship?”, the first two statements (“feel bad if partner is frustrated” and “fulfilling partner’s job is positive for mood”) form the scale ‘negative influence of job/job situation’. The reliability for this index consisting of two items is Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.71$ and can be interpreted as being acceptable. The statement “household responsibilities are negative for work” and the two statements “can focus on work because partner takes care of household responsibilities” and “financially under pressure because of single earner” are considered below as independent variables.

The author conducted a factor analysis for the question concerning the influence of the assignment on expat well-being. Three factors can be extracted with the factor analysis about the impact of stay abroad on the well-being, which together explain 67% of variance. The first factor includes statements concerning ‘Negative Feelings with Regard to Spousal Unemployment’. This factor explains 26% of variance, the internal consistency is Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.83$. This value can be described as good. The second factor includes statements that describe the ‘Negative Impact on Relationship’. This factor explained 23% of variance and has an acceptable reliability with a Cronbach’s α of 0.76. The third factor captures ‘Positive Spillover Effects’ and explains 18% of variance. The internal consistency being at Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.39$ is, however, very low.

Table 18: Rotated component matrix for influence of assignment on well-being, expat sample

	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
Negative Feelings with Regard to Spousal Unemployment			
I feel uncomfortable because my partner had to give up her/his career for mine.	0.89	0.20	0.10
I worry about my partner because he/she cannot work in the host country.	0.88	0.10	0.13
Negative Impact on Relationship			
My work-life balance has worsened because of my international assignment.	0.04	0.78	0.15
The decision to accept an international assignment is a danger for my marriage/relationship.	0.40	0.75	-0.01
I feel guilty because my partner/family had to move abroad for my career.	0.55	0.64	-0.01
Positive Spillover Effects			
If my partner is satisfied, I am more likely to extend my existing contract or accept a new international assignment.	0.08	0.08	0.75
I feel relieved when I see that my partner is involved in some activities, even if they are unpaid.	-0.02	0.36	0.68
It is good to have my partner with me abroad because this gives me social support.	0.19	-0.37	0.60

Source: author's own table

The regression model with the dependent variable 'Negative Feelings with Regard to Spousal Unemployment' is significant ($F(6;130) = 2.843$; $p = 0.012$; $R^2 = 0.08$). Looking at the regression coefficients, the one of Occupational Support-Used is significant ($B = -0.10$; $\beta = -0.24$; $p = 0.007$). The more often this support is claimed, the lower are the negative feelings about the unemployment of the partner. Interest in Financial Support tends to be significant ($B = 1.09$, $\beta = 0.19$; $p = 0.063$). The stronger this interest is pronounced, the stronger are the negative feelings about the unemployment of the partner. Through this regression model a total of 8% of variance can be explained.

Table 19: Regression coefficients of the independent variables (used and interesting support), dependent variable: negative feelings with regard to spousal unemployment

	B	SE B	Beta	t	p
(Constant)	-14.02	2.39		-5.88	0.000
Practical and Educational Support - Used	0.01	0.02	0.08	0.90	0.372
Financial Support - Used	0.05	0.07	0.05	0.63	0.531
Occupational Support - Used	-0.10	0.04	-0.24	-2.76	0.007
Practical and Educational Support - Interest	-0.42	0.58	-0.07	-0.72	0.470
Financial Support - Interest	1.09	0.58	0.19	1.88	0.063
Occupational Support - Interest	0.64	0.40	0.16	1.59	0.115

Source: author's own table

A significant regression model is also applied for the factor 'Negative Impact on Relationship' ($F(6;129) = 2.471$; $p = 0.027$; $R^2 = 0.06$). The interest in Practical and Educational Support proves to be a significant predictor ($B = -0.32$; -0.21 Beta = -0.21 ; $p = 0.030$). The higher the interest in such support services, the lower is the assessment of the negative impact on the relationship. In addition, the dimension of interest in Financial Support is significant ($B = 0.30$, beta = -0.21 ; $p = 0.044$). The stronger the interest, the greater the negative impact on the relationship. Used Occupational Support also tends to be significant ($B = -0.02$; beta = -0.15 ; $p = 0.097$). The more support of this dimension is claimed, the higher is the negative impact on the relationship. This regression model explains 6% of variance.

Table 20: Regression coefficients of the independent variables (used and interesting support), dependent variable: negative impact on relationship

	B	SE B	Beta	t	p
(Constant)	1.81	0.61		2.95	0.004
Practical and Educational Support - Used	0.01	0.00	0.14	1.54	0.126
Financial Support - Used	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.999
Occupational Support - Used	-0.02	0.01	-0.15	-1.67	0.097
Practical and Educational Support -Interest	-0.32	0.15	-0.21	-2.19	0.030
Financial Support - Interest	0.30	0.15	0.21	2.04	0.044
Occupational Support - Interest	0.16	0.10	0.16	1.56	0.122

Source: author's own table

A significant regression model is also applied for the factor 'Positive Spillover Effect' ($F(6;130) = 2.304$; $p = 0.038$; $R^2 = 0.05$). Among the regression coefficients, however, none is really significant. Occupational Support - Used ($B = 0.01$, $\beta = 0.15$; $p = 0.083$), Financial Support - Interest ($B = 0.14$, $\beta = 0.20$; $p = 0.058$) and Occupational Support - Interest ($B = -0.10$; $\beta = -0.20$; $p = 0.055$) tend to be significant. Used Occupational Support increases the positive spillover effect. The interest in more Financial Support also increases the positive spillover effect. However, the interest in more Occupational Support leads to reduced spillover.

Table 21: Regression coefficients of the independent variables (used and interesting support), dependent variable: positive spillover effects

	B	SE B	Beta	t	p
(Constant)	3.81	0.31		12.32	0.000
Practical and Educational Support - Used	0.00	0.00	-0.07	-0.79	0.433
Financial Support - Used	0.01	0.01	0.06	0.75	0.455
Occupational Support - Used	0.01	0.00	0.15	1.75	0.083
Practical and Educational Support -Interest	0.12	0.07	0.15	1.58	0.117
Financial Support - Interest	0.14	0.07	0.20	1.92	0.058
Occupational Support - Interest	-0.10	0.05	-0.20	-1.94	0.055

Source: author's own table

In addition, please see below a descriptive analysis of the separate answer options. 81.02% agree or strongly agree that when they see their partner is frustrated about her/his job that they also feel bad. An equally high number of respondents (81.94%) declared that that if the partner has a fulfilling job, this will have a positive influence on their mood as well. The question whether household responsibilities have a negative effect on the productivity at work did not result in a clear picture. Also, the question whether the situation as a single-earner is perceived as a financial pressure is not homogenous and does not have an even distribution among the answer options.

The assumption that the work-life balance generally worsens during an international assignment was not confirmed, seeing that only 23.92% (strongly) agree but 47.37% (strongly) disagree. One expatriate mentioned that the work-life balance depends on the host location (e.g. meaning that it is more difficult to have a good work-life balance in hardship countries). Even though the majority of the respondents do not perceive the decision to accept an international assignment as a danger for the relationship, 16.27% still mention it as a danger.

Expatriates do not clearly state that they feel guilty because the partner and/or family had to move abroad for their career. About half of the respondents do not have feelings of guilt. However, a definite majority of expatriates (84.21%) agree that it is good to have an accompanying partner because this gives social support.

41.15% strongly agree or agree that they worry about their partner because he/she cannot work in the host country and 36.36% feel uncomfortable because the partner had to give up the career for theirs. The majority of expatriates (60.29%) feel relieved when they see that the partner is involved in some activities, even if they are unpaid. It is unambiguous that expatriates are more likely to extend the existing contract or accept a new international assignment if the partner is satisfied (91.39% agree or strongly agree). One of the expatriates expressed gratitude for the given support, whereas another expat criticized missing support. There were three comments that showed general dissatisfaction with HR activities and/or policies versus one comment that expressed satisfaction. One expatriate commented that he would like to see more flexibility in regard to working times but accepts the current situation. The mentioned comments show that the corporate policies or given support is something that is perceived very differently.

The Expatriate Manager argues that there is no influence of the partner's employment status on the well-being of the expatriate for the following reasons:

- Important for the expatriate's well-being is that the spouse and kids (if any) are well integrated in the host country,
- spouse might find other fulfilling activities during the limited time of the partner's expatriation,
- job opportunities might be helpful but not necessarily the key for integration,
- well-being is very individual.

3.4.3. Beneficiaries of Dual-Career Support

Apart from the obvious benefits, the author also wanted to explore beneficial effects of dual-career support not only for the spouses but also for the expatriates and the employer.

Benefits for the Spouse

The questions “In which way would the support be beneficial for you?” in the partner survey are assessed for this research question. The factor analysis results in four well-interpretable factors. The first factor can be interpreted as ‘Emotional benefits due to work’, the reliability is Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.86$. The second factor is interpreted as ‘Occupational benefits’ and also has a good reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.82$). The third factor is interpreted as ‘Emotional benefits due to unpaid activities’ with a reliability of Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.74$. The fourth factor can be described as ‘Cultural benefits’ with a reliability of 0.75.

Table 22: Factor analysis of the benefits

	Comp 1	Comp 2	Comp 3	Comp 4
Emotional benefits due to work				
I feel more satisfied if I have my own job. - Strongly agree	0.87			
I feel more relaxed around my family if I have my own job. - Strongly agree	0.85			
I have more self-respect if I have my own job. - Strongly agree	0.71			
I feel less isolated if I have my own job. - Strongly agree	0.66			
It is financially comforting that I can contribute my own part to the family income. - Strongly agree	0.54			
Occupational benefits				
The further education during the assignment will be an asset for my future career. - Strongly agree		0.82	0.20	
It feels good to have time to participate in further education. - Strongly agree		0.76	0.12	
I feel satisfied when I can develop my career while abroad. - Strongly agree		0.72	0.21	
The work experience in the host country will be an asset for my future career. - Strongly agree		0.58	0.09	
Emotional benefits due to unpaid activities				
I feel more satisfied if I am engaged in volunteer work than only staying at home. - Strongly agree			0.85	
I have more self-respect if I am engaged in volunteer work. - Strongly agree			0.83	
I feel more relaxed around my family if I have my own activities. - Strongly agree			0.74	
My partner's employer finances training courses / seminars etc. which I could or would not have afforded otherwise. - Strongly agree			0.51	
Cultural benefits				
I feel more comfortable when I am aware of intercultural differences. - Strongly agree				0.89
I feel more comfortable when I know the local language. - Strongly agree				0.81

Source: author's own table

Looking at the average values, it is highest for 'Cultural benefits' (M = 4.51, SD = 0.63). 'Occupational benefits' have an average value of M = 4.52 (SD = 0.60). The average value for the index 'Emotional benefits due to work' is M = 4.20 (SD = 0.81). The lowest perceived benefit is 'Emotional benefits due to unpaid activities' (M = 3.76; SD = 0.74). The four

averages are significantly different (analysis of variance for repeated measures: $F(3;213) = 29.411, p < 0.001$). Post-hoc Bonferroni tests demonstrate that ‘Occupational benefits’ and ‘Cultural benefits’ differ from all the others ($p < 0.019$). These two indices thus have the highest agreement, ‘Emotional benefits due to unpaid activities’ get the lowest agreement.

Table 23: Descriptive statistics for benefits

	M	SD
Emotional benefits due to work	4.20	0.81
Occupational benefits	4.42	0.60
Emotional benefits due to unpaid activities	3.76	0.74
Cultural benefits	4.51	0.63

Source: author’s own table

Subsequently, the author analyzes whether the meaning of the benefits is dependent on partner-specific variables. Therefore, a multivariate analysis of variance is used with the four indices as dependent variables. The independent variables are age, education, existence of children, partner’s length of stay abroad, current residence, former stay abroad, jobs before stay abroad and current employment status.

There is no significant difference in the four indices regarding couples with or without children ($F(4, 53) = 1.408; p = 0.244$). The age has no statistically demonstrable impact on the evaluation of the benefits. There are also no differences among the age groups ($F(8;134) = 1.888; p = 0.067$). Also the education of the partner makes no significant difference ($F(8;134) = 1.135; p = 0.344$). The duration of the current assignment plays no role ($F(8;134) = 0.364; p = 0.938$). The same is the case for the current residence ($F(4;67) = 1.306; p = 0.277$) and their own stay abroad ($F(12;156) = 0.987; p = 0.464$). There is no statistically significant impact on the evaluation of the four indices. A significant difference exists, however, depending on whether the partner had a job before the relocation ($F(4;52) = 5.824; p = 0.001$).

Table 24: Descriptive statistics for the benefit indices, by employment status of the partner before stay abroad

	Employed		Unemployed	
	M	SD	M	SD
Emotional benefits due to work	4.41	0.69	3.57	0.86
Occupational benefits	4.58	0.49	4.08	0.69
Emotional benefits due to unpaid activities	3.73	0.78	3.76	0.60
Cultural benefits	4.65	0.50	4.34	0.75

Source: author's own table

Considering the univariate analysis of variance, there are significant differences for the indices 'Emotional benefits due to work' ($F(1;55) = 14.778$; $p < 0.001$) and 'Occupational benefits' ($F(1;55) = 9.609$; $p = 0.003$). Both benefits are much more important for partners who were employed before. There is no significant difference regarding the current employment of the partner ($F(4, 67) = 1.588$; $p = 0.188$).

Benefits for the Expatriate

In regard to a subsequent relocation, 91.26% of expatriates mentioned that they would accept an offer for a new international assignment. Among the expatriate spouses 90.36% said they would accompany their partner. 82.26% of the expatriates whose partner did not stay with them agreed that they would feel better if the partner could accompany them to the host country. Those who said they would not accept a new offer, the respondents gave the following answers (see table below).

Table 25: Reasons not to accept a new international assignment

Reasons for denying the offer	Expatriate sample	Partner sample
Family issues (e.g. care for children, parents)	26.67%	31.25%
Quality of living (e.g. friends, private entertainment)	22.22%	12.5%
Relationship issues (e.g. the partner wants to go home)	22.22%	0.00%
Financial issues (e.g. assignment remuneration is not attractive enough; loss of income)	11.11%	18.75%
Career issues (e.g. gained sufficient experience abroad; better career possibilities in the home country)	8.89%	25.00%
Other reason	8.89%	12.5%

Source: author's own table

Both expatriates and spouses ranked family issues as the number one reason for denying the offer for a new international assignment. While the second most important reason for spouses was career issues, expatriates mentioned the quality of living and relationship issues as number two.

Other reasons and general remarks to that question included that this decision depends on several factors such as location, security, schooling, assignment duration, social security coverage, financial package, job opportunities for the partner and if the family/partner wants to move to another country. At the end of the survey, there were five expatriates who mentioned that they were hoping for improvements in regard to the situation of expatriate spouses.

There were many other comments relating to different areas of international assignments. One expatriate mentioned that company-organized networking activities make sense but should be close to the actual work place and not far away. One expatriate advises companies to think about new international assignment categories such as rotational/shift work contracts for difficult countries and short-term assignments. There were several remarks with regard to foreign experiences that exemplify the challenges faced by expatriates and their partners but also benefits of the stay abroad are mentioned. Two expatriates mentioned career problems when returning to the home country. Three partners left comments that it was hard for them to be a non-working trailing spouse. Three working partners commented that it is important for them to work but pension rights are a problem.

Benefits for the Employer

The Expatriate Manager said that the company benefits from dual-career support measures for several reasons, but there are also drawbacks. The different considerations are listed in the table below.

Table 26: Benefits and barriers for the employer

Benefits	Barriers
Important sign towards the expatriate and spouse that company is aware of private difficulties (feeling of being understood)	Very diverse individual situations
Showing willingness to compensate for difficulties	Not every disadvantage can be compensated
Facilitating the decision to accept an assignment	Personal and cultural values concerning relocation willingness cannot be influenced

Source: author's own table

The survey results received from expatriates and their partners confirm the Expatriate Manager's feeling that the perceived support and relocation willingness is an individual issue that is influenced by many private factors.

3.4.4. Level of Education

In order to evaluate a connection between the educational background and the claim of dual-career support the level of education was interrogated. The table below shows the educational background of expatriates and their spouses. It is obvious that a high proportion of the expatriates have a university degree as they are usually sent abroad as experts or managers, typically requiring university education. However, it is interesting to see that also the average spouse holds a university degree.

Table 27: Level of education of expatriates and spouses

Highest education	Expatriates	Spouses
Compulsory schooling	0.88%	2.27%
Apprenticeship / professional school	0.88%	6.82%
University-entrance diploma / school leaving examination / foreman	2.19%	17.05%
College / university	96.05%	73.86%

Source: author's own table

Comparing the level of education with the educational background of the total Austrian population (see table below), it can be seen that both expatriates and spouses by far have a higher-than-average level of education. Even if the figures for other countries look different, it can still be assumed that the education levels are above the ordinary.

Table 28: Highest completed education among the Austrian population at the age of 15 and above (in 2011)

Highest education	Percentage of Austrian population
Compulsory schooling	26.93%
Apprenticeship / professional school	44.18%
University-entrance diploma / school leaving examination / foreman	13.52%
College / university	15.37%

Source: author's own table based on Statistik Austria (2013)

See below for an illustration displaying the rates of spouses who reported to never have used dual-career support, split by educational level. Even if there is a difference for spouses who had finished an apprenticeship, it is difficult to deduce a general tendency from these figures as there is a high number of university graduates and the absolute number for other educational levels in the survey is low.

Table 29: Non-support users, by educational level

Highest education	Percentage of spouses without any support
Compulsory schooling	0%
Apprenticeship / professional school	33%
University-entrance diploma / school leaving examination / foreman	14%
College / university	14%

Source: author's own table

In addition to the descriptive analyses, the author conducts a multivariate analysis of variance for further evaluation. There is no significant difference concerning the different kinds of used support with regard to education ($F(6;128) = 1.295$; $p = 0.264$). Also for the interesting support, there is no statistically relevant difference ($F(6;142) = 0.801$; $p = 0.571$). Interest in support services (chi-square test for independence) is not related to the level of education of the partners ($\chi^2(2) = 0.666$; $p = 0.717$). 90% of persons with a university degree show interest in support, 85% of people with a university entrance diploma and 83% of those with other education are interested in support measures.

The Expatriate Manager cannot say if there is a difference in the educational background of the spouses who ask for dual-career support as opposed to those who do not. This is because there is no data available in the company about this kind of spousal background information.

3.4.5. Duration of International Assignments

In order to test a possible connection between the duration of an international assignment and the claim of dual-career support, the period of time spent abroad was requested. There is a great variety on how long the expats had been living abroad. However, the largest group had stayed abroad for more than six years already (29.39%). The partners had not spent as much time abroad with 25% claiming less than one year and 27.94% stating between one and two years foreign experience. The planned duration of an international assignment is typically three to four years (48.68%).

The following chart illustrates the difference between the duration of the international assignment for all expatriates and spouses compared with the duration of the expatriates and spouses who mentioned that they had not claimed any dual-career support.

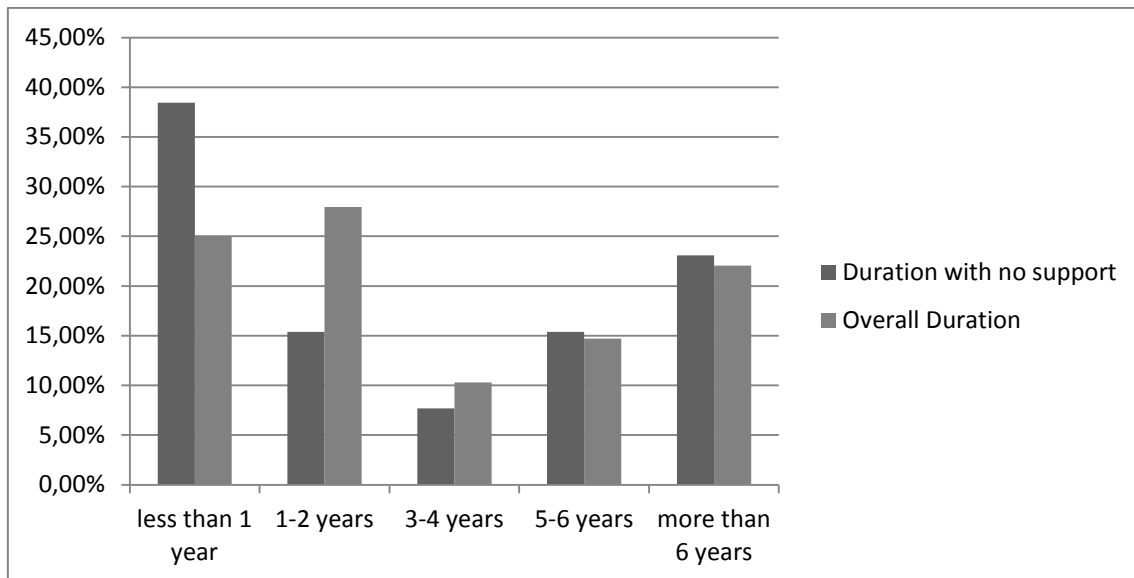


Figure 23: Duration of international assignment for spouses, by total population and without support

Source: author's own figure

As shown in the figure above there is no noteworthy difference for five and more years. Not surprisingly, the percentage of partners who had not claimed any support is higher in the first year of the assignment. However, it must be added that the percentages shown above (for spouses with no previous support) are statistically not significant as the question was only addressed to partners residing in the host country and who had not used dual-career support, resulting in a very low absolute number of survey responses.

As a matter of fact, the answers given by expatriates should show a similar picture as the ones given by the spouses. This is the case with a higher proportion of non-support users in the first year and after six years. The percentage of expatriates who had not claimed support for their partners is even higher for the period of more than six years. However, the trend is the same in the period between one and five years when more support is claimed.

The following analysis is conducted by using multivariate analysis of variance and is based on the partner survey. The claimed benefits do not differ with regard to the partner's duration of the stay abroad ($F(6;128) = 1.703; p = 0.125$). However, considering each factor on its own,

there is a tendency towards a significant difference for Practical and Educational Support ($F(2;65) = 2.885; p = 0.062$). If the partner is a very long time abroad, this group shows a trend to higher utilization, the average is 33.3 (SD = 19.5; 3-4 years) and 30.3 (SD = 22.13; > 4 years). For a shorter stay the average is 20.6. There is no significant difference concerning the interest in support ($F(6;142) = 0.473; p = 0.827$). Also a chi-square test for independence with regard to interest in support services shows no provable connection ($\chi^2(2) = 4.978; p = 0.083$). A statistical tendency, however, is apparent. This is in contrast to proposition testing. Partners with the shortest assignment period show the highest interest (94%). For a stay of three to four years, the percentage is 90. Only 71% of partners with longer stays show an interest in dual-career support.

The expected duration of the stay in the host country has a significant impact on the kind of used support ($F(4;455) = 3.779; p = 0.005; \eta^2 = 0.03$). In the group with a stay of three to four years the use of Practical and Educational Support (PES) is significantly higher, this group has the lowest use of Occupational Support (OS) (see figure below). This interaction is independent of the sample ($F(4;454) = 1.538; p = 0.190$).

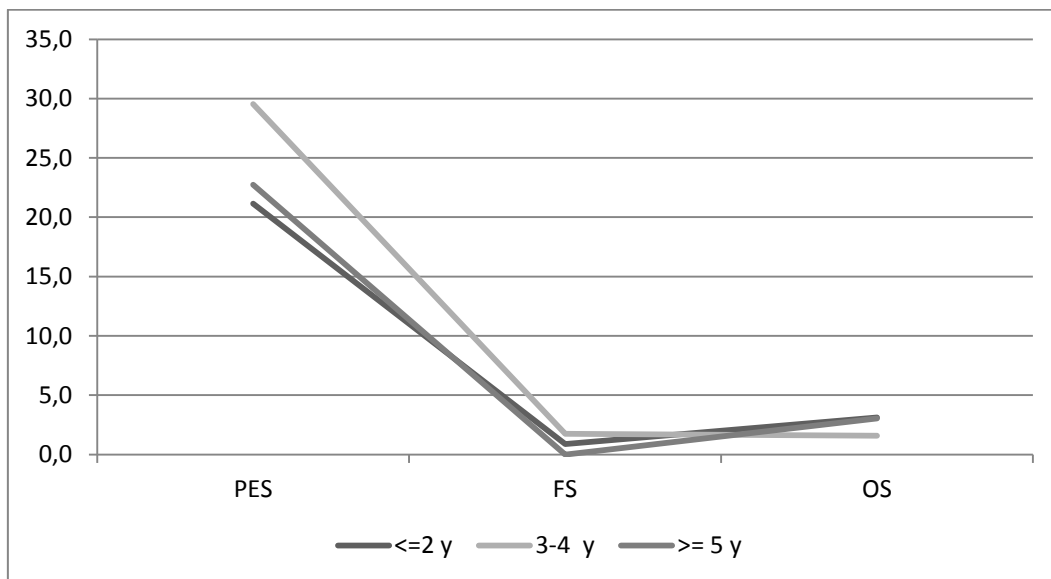


Figure 24: Significant interaction of used support dimensions with estimated length of stay in the host country

Source: author's own figure

Depending on the planned length of stay in the host country, there is also a significant difference in the assessment of the dimensions ($F(4;498) = 2.661; p = 0.032$). The significant effect is primarily due to the different evaluation of the Financial Support (FS) dimension. If

the stay is five years or more, the financial aspect is rated relatively low. The sample has no effect on this result ($F(4;498) = 0.597; p = 0.665$).

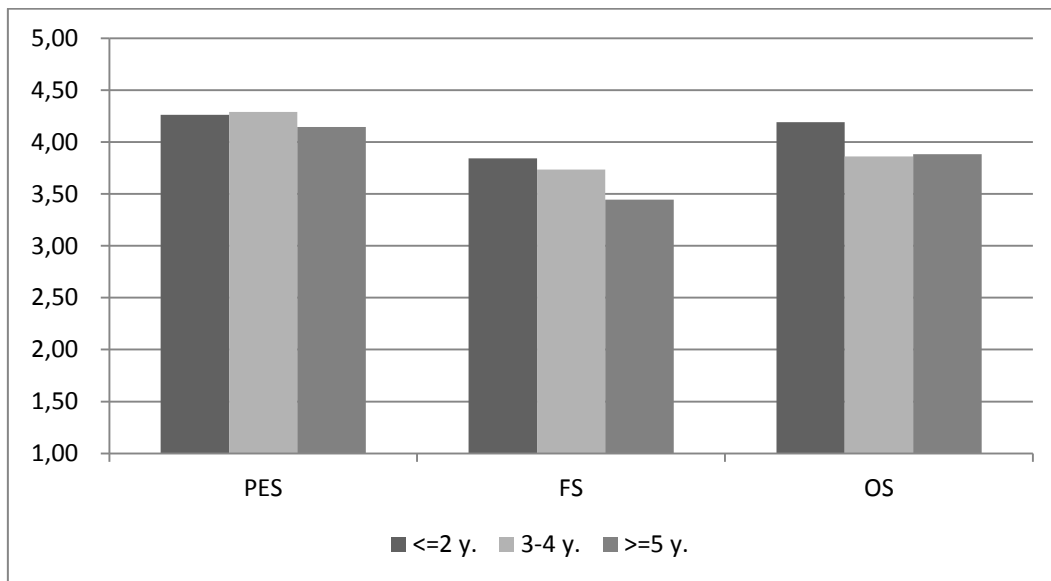


Figure 25: Means of interesting support dimensions, by expected length of stay abroad

Source: author's own figure

One expat left a comment that longer assignments can be helpful for families. One spouse argued similarly stating that short-term assignments are too short for families to relocate but also adding positive side-effects.

The Expatriate Manager cannot clearly say if there is a significant difference in regard to the duration of international assignments and the actual use of dual-career support measures because there is no statistical research or background information available in the company. However, she assumes that there are basically two types of behavior (see table below). The Expatriate Manager would assume there is a 50/50 ratio between those two groups of expat spouses. Within the above explanations and assumed ratio the portion of expatriate spouses, who does not use the spousal support at all, is not considered.

Table 30: Types of support use, Expatriate Manager view

Type 1: duration makes no difference	Type 2: the longer, the more support
much into the details of the guidelines	concentrate on settling down first
start to use support right away	start to explore opportunities only after a while

Source: author's own table

The assumed ratio of 50% support users in the first year and 50% users after the first year cannot be confirmed by the survey results, as the survey does not show at which point in time the spouses use the support. However, the figures suggest that there are expatriate spouses who make use of dual-career support already in the first year of the assignment. This provides backup for the statement that there are spouses who start to consume all benefits right away as opposed to partners who first want to settle down and only later start to look into the subject of dual-career support.

3.5. Discussion of Empirical Results

The main hypothesis was that the use of dual-career support leads to increased relocation willingness. When looking at the reasons why expatriates would not accept a new international assignment, family issues such as care for children or parents are ranked as number one both among expatriates and expatriate spouses. The second most important reason for spouses is career issues such as limited possibilities in the host country. In contrast, expatriates mention the quality of living and relationship issues as the number two reasons. When thinking about possible dual-career support the reasons for refusing an offer could be combated through the following measures. Professional childcare and international schooling needs to be made available and sufficiently funded so this problem can be reduced. If expatriates do not want to leave elderly parents behind, there could be a certain budget that is placed at the disposal of the expatriates either to finance professional elderly care in the home country or to permit a greater number of home flights. Career issues for spouses can be reduced by providing a dual-career budget or job-search assistance in the host country. Whereas the company cannot influence the quality of life in a host country, possible relationship issues that arise because the spouse wants to return to the home country might be reduced through the offer of dual-career support.

As a consequence, the author argues that the hypothesis that dual-career support leads to increased relocation willingness can be confirmed. However, the findings suggest that the situation as a dual-career couple will not have the same outcome for everyone as the individual background is very different and not all concerns can be overcome by dual-career support. The probability that company sponsored support will increase relocation willingness is highest if the host environment is not inhospitable and the spouse has not yet spent a lot of years abroad. There is a level of uncertainty in regard to the situation of potential candidates for an international assignment. Future research could use the results in order to test the

propositions with a target group of potential future expatriates. In the following the author will further address the different propositions in greater detail.

Kinds of Dual-Career Support

There are three groups of dual-career support that can be distinguished: Practical and Educational Support, Financial Support and Occupational Support. The findings show that expatriates spouses have already used some dual-career support measures but they are mainly focused on the area of Practical and Educational Support (intercultural training, Look & See trips, language training, networking activities help with re-entry into the home country and seminars/educational programs). The usage is independent of the sample, age, language of the survey and previous length of stay abroad. If the partner is working, the dimension of Practical and Educational Support is less frequently claimed, but Occupational Support is more common. Looking at the usage patterns, there are three different clusters: Cluster 1 (41.2%) shows an emphasis on Look and See trips and language courses and could be called ‘pragmatists’. Cluster 3 (30.9%) has a focus on language and intercultural training, but also increased networking activities. The author sees them as the ‘ambitious ones’. Cluster 2 (27.9%) has hardly any use of support measures; they are ‘deniers’.

When comparing the survey results with the spousal activities identified by Punnett (see Table 2: Ranking of activities for spouses), the drawn picture is very similar. Language and intercultural training as well as assistance with finding a job and networking events are ranked comparably high. Financial support for educational programs was considered slightly more interesting in the present study (4.63 versus 3.93 in Punnett’s survey). The same holds true for financial support for volunteer activities (3.63 versus 3.01) and creative activities (3.84 versus 2.9). However, these two activities are ranked relatively low in both surveys so the differences are negligible. Even though Punnett’s survey has already shown the interest in different kinds of support with a very similar outcome, the present study adds further value as it allows comparing the measures rated as interesting with the actually used measures. In addition, the sample in Punnett’s study was smaller and limited to Canadian government personnel. Consequently, the author’s study confirms that the support measures considered as interesting are independent of the nationality and industry and have not changed over the last decade.

When looking at the interest in dual-career support, Practical and Educational Support services are most desired, Financial Support services are ranked lowest. The interest is

independent of the language of the survey, sample, age and location. Financial support was more important in the English language version of the survey. Also the employment status makes a difference. If the partner is not working, the dimensions of Practical and Educational Support and Financial Support are considered more important. However, if the partner is working, the Occupational Support dimension is rated highest.

Looking at the results of the statistical analyses, the findings support the proposition that expatriate spouses prefer to do further training (Practical and Educational Support) compared to actual work in the host country (Occupational Support). Finally, it is essential to add that 90.38% of expats are generally interested in support measures for their spouses. Consequently, the author argues that this should definitely make companies think about further promoting dual-career support. Overall, the proposition that accompanying partners prefer to do further training compared to actual employment in the host country can be confirmed.

The questions in the questionnaire proved to be appropriate for the research because there was a clear outcome and there were no remarks or criticism in this area at the end of the questionnaire. The only shortcoming that might be added is that a home flight allowance was mentioned as a support measure by the Expatriate Manager and also by some survey participants, which was not a pre-defined answer option. Even though the author knows that companies offer home flights for expatriates and accompanying partners the author did not include this option because she does not consider it to be a support measure that supports the career of trailing spouses. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that home flights are perceived as dual-career support, at least to some extent. Every third spouse who had not used any dual-career support said that this is because she/he wanted to stay at home and care for the kids. Future research could use this result in order to further explore the role of children during international assignments.

Expatriate Subjective Well-Being

Three factors can be extracted with the factor analysis about the impact of stay abroad on the well-being, which together explain 67% of variance. The first factor is summarized as 'Negative Feelings with Regard to Spousal Unemployment' and explains 26% of variance. The second factor covers the 'Negative Impact on Relationship' and explains 23% of variance. The third factor captures 'Positive Spillover Effects' and explains 18% of variance

but has a low reliability. The weighting of the factors shows that negative spillover effects are more dominant than positive spillover effects.

A regression analysis gives further insight into the different dimensions. The more often Occupational Support is claimed, the lower are the negative feelings about the unemployment of the partner. In addition, the stronger the interest in Financial Support is pronounced, the stronger are the negative feelings about the unemployment of the partner. The higher the interest in Practical and Educational Support, the lower is the assessment of the negative impact on the relationship. The stronger the interest in Financial Support, the greater is the negative impact on the relationship. Among the regression coefficients for Positive Spillover Effects, however, none is really significant.

The findings suggest that if the partner has a fulfilling job, this has a positive influence on the mood of the expatriates. The answers from the surveyed expatriates confirm the existence of positive as well as negative spillover effects from the spouses as indicated in the literature (see, for example, Powell and Greenhaus 2010 or van der Zee et al. 2005). At the same time the expatriates declared that an international assignment does not automatically weaken the work-life balance of an employee. This finding is contrary to existing research results by Dickmann et al. (2008). However, Dickmann et al. (2008) also reported the international assignment having only a moderate influence on the subjective well-being. There is a level of uncertainty in regard to the question whether household responsibilities have a negative effect on the productivity at work. The same applies for the question whether or not the situation as a single-earner is perceived as a financial pressure. This means that these findings of van der Zee et al. (2005) cannot be confirmed. Interestingly, only a minor proportion of expatriates perceive an international assignment as a danger for the relationship. This is in contrast to previous research in that area (see for example Fischlmayr and Kollinger 2010). The author assumes that there is a difference in regard to the perception of marital risks because this is significantly influenced by many individual factors such as length of the relationship, cultural background or age. It is therefore not recommended to draw a general conclusion from this finding.

Still, an accompanying partner is definitely perceived as something positive due to the social support that is provided. Also, the majority of expatriates prefer if the partner is engaged in some activities, even if unpaid. One expatriate even expressed explicit disappointment because the employer did not provide dual-career support. As a consequence, the author

argues that the proposition that dual-career support improves the expatriate's subjective well-being can be confirmed because of spillover effects. However, it needs to be added that there are cases where dual-career support is not needed for different reasons, which means the positive correlation between expatriate well-being and dual-career support is not applicable in all cases. In line with previous research (Keeney et al. 2013), the author argues that solutions for improved expatriate well-being may vary across segments of employees. Accordingly, the research results of this thesis support the idea of organizations tailoring work-life programs to support the needs of all expatriates.

A major value of the data is that they have clearly confirmed that expatriates are more likely to extend the existing contract or accept a new international assignment if the partner is satisfied. This complements previous research that implied an influence of the spouse on employee relocation willingness (see for example Konopaske et al. 2005). The method proved to be appropriate because the existence of spillover effects clearly emerged from the answers to the statements. Future research could use the survey results in order to explore the well-being of spouses during international assignments as opposed to the well-being of expatriates.

Beneficiaries of Dual-Career Support

The proposition to be defended was that all three stakeholders benefit from dual-career support, namely the spouse, the expatriate and the expatriate employer. In regard to the expatriate, evidence was already presented where the findings suggest that expatriates benefit from dual-career support because of positive spillover effects from the spouse. Moreover, there is an explicit outcome that expatriates, whose partners did not stay with them, would feel better if the partner could accompany them to the host country. It is interesting to note that the primary reasons for expatriates to deny the offer for an international assignment are family issues, closely followed by a lower quality of living and relationship issues. The findings suggest that the number one reason to refuse an international assignment could be diminished by offering family-friendly policies. The emotional aspects for the spouse were inquired about separately. The received answers give a clear indication that dual-career support leads to improved well-being and specifically cultural and occupational support is perceived as beneficial.

When it comes to the employer's perspective, three different benefits are mentioned: important sign towards the expatriate and spouse that company is aware of private difficulties

(feeling of being understood), showing willingness to compensate for difficulties, facilitating the decision to accept an assignment. Interestingly, benefits in terms of increased attractiveness for job candidates as suggested by Bello and Tinder (2009) have neither been mentioned by the expatriates nor by the Expatriate Manager. The author assumes that this topic was not raised because it was not explicitly covered by any of the posed questions.

The main shortcomings of the data are that only employees who are already on an assignment were asked. This is why it is not surprising to have a large percentage of expatriates who would accept the offer of a new international assignment. Future research could include potential expatriates for this question, although it must be said that it is difficult to define and reach this target group. In general, it is difficult to compare the findings with previous research as the author is unaware of studies explicitly focusing on beneficiaries of dual-career support.

Even though dual-career support provides benefits for trailing spouses, it must not be forgotten that there are problems that cannot be solved by the company. This is, for example, the case if the host country labor market is restrictive and does not allow or need certain professions. Another issue is the difference in income levels between countries and a possible non-compatibility of pension systems. These issues should be placed on political agendas rather than on corporate schedules.

Consequently, the propositions that dual-career support is beneficial for the trailing spouse, the expatriate and the employer can be confirmed. The method proved to be appropriate because benefits for the expatriate, trailing spouse and expatriate employer could be clearly identified. Future research could use these results in order to explore benefits for supplying industries such as relocation agencies, training providers or counsellors.

Level of Education

A chi-square test for independence shows that interest in support services is not related to the level of education of the partners. Therefore, the proposition that the higher the spouse's education, the more likely he or she is to claim dual-career support has to be rejected. The author argues that this research question could be re-tested with another group of expatriate spouses. It remains to be seen if a different expatriate population shows the same results. The main shortcomings of the data are that there are only few answers from spouses who do not

have a university degree, as 73.86% out of the surveyed spouses are university graduates. This makes it difficult to assess differences compared to the other educational groups, especially when coupled with generally high levels of usage of dual-career support.

The major value of the data is that the findings still show that expatriate spouses typically have higher than average educational levels. It is difficult to compare the results with previous research, as the author is not aware of any earlier studies focusing on the educational background of trailing spouses. However, following the findings of Crispell and Du (1995) that college-educated couples are more likely to make joint decisions, it seems probable that college-educated spouses also highly influence the decision of an international relocation. Consequently, the findings that the majority of spouses have university degrees re-emphasize their power in the decision making process.

Duration of International Assignments

With regard to the duration, there is a tendency that is in contrast to proposition testing. Partners with the shortest assignment period show the highest interest (94%). Therefore, the proposition that the longer the international assignment, the more likely the spouse is to claim dual-career support has to be rejected.

The major value of the data is that the probability of using dual-career support in fact decreases over time. The author assumes that spouses who had been living abroad for a very long period of time already gave up on finding an appropriate job in the host country and have accepted their status as a homemaker. Another possible explanation is that those spouses already have an existing job and/or social network and therefore do not need any more support. This assumption is backed up by a potential full adjustment to the host country culture as described by the stages of cross cultural adjustment developed by Black and Mendenhall (1990) where mastery is reached after approximately four years (see Figure 5: The U-curve of cross cultural adjustment). Moreover, a small group of spouses could not be interested because they already reached the legal retirement age during the assignment (10.23% of the surveyed spouses were over 50 years).

The author is not aware of previous research focusing on the correlation between dual-career support and the duration of international assignments. This is why it is difficult to compare the survey results with other findings. However, the finding that dual-career support is less

common in the first year of the assignment matches the results by Thornton and Thornton (1995) who say that short-term assignments of up to six months typically do not cause career issues.

When looking at the typical duration of an international assignment in the surveyed company, it becomes clear that the average planned duration of an assignment is 3-4 years, whereas the typical time spent abroad is usually longer with 29.39% stating that they have spent more than six years abroad. As a consequence, the author argues that the company still struggles with the challenge of multiple subsequent assignments as opposed to alternative settings including repatriation, localization or early retirement scenarios as described by Tung (1988, see Figure 7: Expatriate careers - past and current challenges). This means the company will probably be faced with new challenges sooner or later when the next life stage is reached.

3.6. Summary of Empirical Results

It was the objective of this thesis to evaluate the prerequisites, influencing factors and consequences of on-assignment dual-career support. This target was reached through a comprehensive literature review and an extensive survey among expatriates, expatriate spouses and a global mobility manager.

The main hypothesis was that the use of dual-career support leads to increased relocation willingness. When looking at the reasons why expatriates would not accept a new international assignment, family issues such as care for children or parents are ranked as number one. The second most important reason for spouses is career issues such as limited possibilities in the host country. When thinking about possible dual-career support the reasons for refusing an offer could be combated through company-sponsored support. Therefore, the author argues that the hypothesis that dual-career support leads to increased relocation willingness can be confirmed.

Concerning the kinds of dual-career support there are three groups of support that can be distinguished: Practical and Educational Support, Financial Support and Occupational Support. The findings show that expatriates spouses so far have focused on the area of Practical and Educational Support. Looking at the usage patterns, there are three different clusters: Cluster 1 (41.2%) shows an emphasis on Look and See trips and language courses (the 'pragmatists'). Cluster 3 (30.9%) has a focus on language and intercultural training, but also increased networking activities (the 'ambitious ones'). Cluster 2 (27.9%) has hardly any

use of support measures (the ‘deniers’). When comparing the survey results with the spousal activities identified by Punnett (see Table 2: Ranking of spousal activities for spouses), the drawn picture is very similar. Consequently, the author’s study confirms that the support measures considered as interesting are independent of the nationality and industry and have not changed over the last decade. When looking at the interest in dual-career support, Practical and Educational Support services are most desired, Financial Support services are ranked lowest. Overall, the proposition that accompanying partners prefer to do further training compared to actual employment in the host country can be confirmed.

Three factors can be extracted about the impact of the stay abroad on the expat well-being. The first factor is summarized as ‘Negative Feelings with Regard to Spousal Unemployment’. The second factor covers the ‘Negative Impact on Relationship’. The third factor captures ‘Positive Spillover Effects’. Negative spillover effects are more dominant than positive spillover effects. The findings suggest that if the partner has a fulfilling job, this has a positive influence on the mood of the expatriates. As a consequence, the author argues that the proposition that dual-career support improves the expatriate's subjective well-being can be confirmed because of spillover effects.

Concerning the benefits of dual-career support for spouses, the factor analysis results in four well-interpretable factors. The first factor can be interpreted as ‘Emotional benefits due to work’. The second factor is summarized as ‘Occupational benefits’. The third factor is read as ‘Emotional benefits due to unpaid activities’. The fourth factor can be described as ‘Cultural benefits’. The average values are highest for Cultural benefits. Emotional benefits due to unpaid activities get the lowest agreement. The results are independent of the number of children, age, educational level, duration of current assignment, current residence, previous stay abroad and current employment. However, ‘Emotional benefits due to work’ and ‘Occupational benefits’ are much more important for partners who were employed before. In regard to the expatriate, there is an explicit outcome that expatriates, whose partners did not stay with them, would feel better if the partner could accompany them to the host country. Also the spillover effects identified earlier highlight the advantages for the expatriate. When it comes to the employer’s perspective, three different benefits are mentioned: giving the feeling of being understood, showing willingness to compensate for difficulties, facilitating the decision to accept an assignment. Consequently, the propositions that dual-career support is beneficial for the trailing spouse, the expatriate and the employer can be confirmed.

Regarding the educational levels, the data illustrate that expatriates and spouses have high educational levels. A chi-square test for independence shows that interest in support services is not related to the level of education of the partners. Therefore, the proposition that the higher the spouse's education, the more likely he or she is to claim dual-career support has to be rejected.

The claimed benefits do not differ with regard to the partner's duration of the stay abroad. With regard to interest in support and duration, there is a tendency that is in contrast to the suggested proposition. Partners with the shortest assignment period show the highest interest. Therefore, the proposition that the longer the international assignment, the more likely dual-career support is claimed has to be rejected.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This chapter provides a categorization and interpretation of the empirical results. The author draws conclusions to the research questions and allows a comparison with the theoretical part. In addition, the author provides suggestions for expatriates and expatriate spouses, HR professionals and political decision makers. Finally, there is an outlook on possible future research topics that have not been addresses in the present study.

Conclusions

The main hypothesis that dual-career support enhances relocation willingness could be confirmed. Out of the further propositions, three propositions could be confirmed (P1, P2, P3) whereas two propositions had to be rejected (P4, P5). The author draws the following conclusions from the attained results:

1. Dual-career support has the potential to increase employee mobility.
 2. On an individual level, the areas of relocation willingness, work-family conflict, subjective well-being, and career paths are influential for the situation of dual-career couples.
 3. The organizational determinants are organizational culture, incentive structures, international HR management, and corporate HR policies.
 4. The national culture, the value of career, and gender roles have an impact from a societal perspective.
 5. The existence of spillover effects from spouses to expatriates is confirmed.
 6. Practical and educational support is preferred over financial and occupational support.
 7. Local language skills and intercultural awareness are perceived as most beneficial.
 8. Dual-career support is most commonly used by spouses who are abroad for one to five years.
 9. Family issues are the major reason to refuse the offer of an international assignment.
- Company-sponsored support can reduce or eliminate factors that cause employees to refuse an assignment.

Management Implications

As already described in the theoretical part of this thesis, there are three different levels of determinants influencing the situation of dual-career couples on international assignments: individual, organizational and societal determinants (see chapter 1.2). The following recommendations are correspondingly built around these three areas.

From an individual perspective, expatriates and expatriate spouses are advised to:

1. Thoroughly acquaint yourself with all company-sponsored support before relocation.

Many expatriates and expatriate spouses are unaware of offered support activities. Therefore, a step that is easy to realize is to gather information about the support portfolio from the employer. Even if the employer currently does not offer any support, requests in that regard might trigger a change of thinking.

2. Consider that partners influence each other's feelings.

Couples should be aware of their mutual interference when it comes to well-being. Sometimes it helps to re-consider personal behaviors when one knows that not only the individual well-being is affected.

3. Actively search for job opportunities in the host country.

International assignments definitely ask for self-initiative and in some companies the mobility department lacks sufficient resources to provide comprehensive support. It is therefore recommendable to start own efforts instead of being depressed by disappointing company support.

4. Attempt to develop the spouse's career also in case of long-term assignments or long-term unemployment.

Dual-career support is less frequently used after six years of foreign assignment. The author presumes that at that point, the trailing spouse has given up hope of finding an appropriate occupation. This situation could be improved through making use of dual-career support.

The following recommendations are intended for the organizational level. HR professionals are advised to:

1. Become acquainted with the family situation of the staff, and act accordingly.

A first step towards effective dual-career support is a review of the expatriate population to see if family-friendly policies are necessary. For example, if the expatriates are mostly single or if the typical assignment duration is below one year, it might not be necessary to implement a comprehensive dual-career support program.

2. Allow direct contact with the spouses, if the expatriates agree.

Many companies focus only on the employee and some might not even allow direct communication with spouses. In order to make the spouses feel included in the process, a simple and inexpensive method is to send an introductory email to the spouses with the information about the offered dual-career support, provided that the expatriate agrees to share the contact details. The only risk could be that some spouses might not have email addresses

or that the expatriate does not want the direct contact, for example because of religious beliefs.

3. Further promote intercultural training.

Even though companies identify cross-cultural adjustment as a major factor for international assignments, intercultural training was not attended by a majority of expatriates and spouses. It is therefore recommended to further stress the importance of intercultural training and actively invite expatriates and accompanying family members to participate.

4. Appreciate and support unofficial support measures such as local networking events and job offers for spouses.

This recommendation refers to the situation that some expatriates reported support measures that the Expatriate Manager was unaware of. Especially with large expatriate populations and globally spread host locations, this is not surprising. Even though there might be local support, such as networking events and job offers for spouses, that is not covered through corporate policies, this is not something necessarily disruptive. On the contrary, local initiatives might even be better adjusted to local needs and could reach a higher participation rate. The risk that occurs with local initiatives is that the support depends on the willingness of the local management, which might result in an uneven distribution among branch offices making some locations more attractive than others.

5. Support further education and job searching in the host country by cooperating with specialized providers.

A potential cooperation with external providers is recommended in particular for companies that only have limited internal resources in the HR or global mobility department. Instead of providing direct assistance, the company could collect a list of reliable providers that have specialized in the field. The spouses could directly get in touch with the external provider which could be more cost and time efficient. Recently, a separate industry has developed where typically relocation agencies that have focused on moving and house search in the past broaden their scope of services by offering partner career services.

6. Make expatriates and expatriate spouses aware of available dual-career support.

As the second most important reason not to use dual-career support is because the target group does not know about it, it is reasonable to use this as a starting point. This goes along with the recommendation mentioned previously that expatriate spouses should be directly contacted. By sending them an introductory email, the probability that some are not informed is reduced.

7. Show consideration for positive and negative spillover effects from the spouses to the expatriates.

As soon as the company realizes that their workforce is directly influenced by the well-being of their partners, it should come naturally that they are also cared about.

8. Consider offering short-term assignments that pose a smaller barrier for employees with family members.

As recommended in the literature and confirmed in the empirical research, shorter assignments create fewer challenges for expatriates with family. The company should think about reducing the number of long-term assignments to allow for short-term assignments that attract a potential group of candidates that might have refused in the past. Of course, there are some risks and insecurities associated with this approach. First, not all jobs are suitable for short-term assignments. Second, a short-term assignment creates new challenges such as insufficient cultural adjustment or the need to re-fill the position sooner than before.

9. Take advantage of the trailing spouses' qualifications and resources to promote corporate initiatives such as local corporate social responsibility projects.

Trailing spouses typically have a high educational background. Companies could think about making use of the high qualifications and international work experience. Even if it is not possible to offer a job in the host location, it might be possible to involve spouses in volunteering projects such as initiatives in the field of corporate social responsibility.

10. Focus the efforts on spouses who have not been abroad before or who have been recently sent on an international assignment.

The survey results show that dual-career support is best accepted by spouses who are abroad for one to five years. Therefore, the efforts should also be concentrated on this target group, even though the other groups should not be discriminated against.

11. Do not limit the assumption of costs for childcare to a certain age or number of children.

Following the findings that childcare is essential for expatriates with kids the company should try to offer comprehensive support in this respect. This means, if the financial situation of the company allows it, that the support should not be limited to a certain group of children. A limitation can have severe consequences such as an early return to the home country, especially if the child is borne abroad.

12. Re-consider the situation of expatriates who have to provide care for aging relatives.

Even though it is understandable that companies typically do not support the accompaniment of parents or other relatives, there might be other ways to diminish the problem. For example, if the expatriate does not bring a partner or children to the host country, other relatives requiring care could be brought instead.

From a societal perspective, political institutions are in the position to influence the situation:

1. EU/ministries for social affairs: Further promote the harmonization of pension systems and bilateral social security agreements to facilitate the consideration of years of contribution spent abroad.

This piece of advice derives from several comments in the survey that even if the spouse finds a job in the host country, these years will be lost for the pension rights because they will not be considered. This is indeed a problem that can only be solved on an intergovernmental basis. There are already provisions within the European Union that the years in another EU member state are considered. The transferability from other countries depends on the existence of bilateral agreements. Considering the increased internationalization of the workforce, governments should make a progress in the harmonization of the pension systems.

2. EU/ministries of internal affairs: Simplify family reunification visas and applications for work permits of spouses whose partners already have a valid work permit.

As work permits are the prerequisite for spouses to work in the host country, there is a strong need for a simplification. Even though this is not applicable for EU citizen moving to another EU country, there are still a lot of country combinations that require a strict immigration process. It is therefore advisable to facilitate the process for highly skilled expatriates, which usually is an asset for the local labor market.

3. Ministries of education/municipal administration: Permit and financially support the opening of international schools.

The last recommendation refers to international schools. As childcare and appropriate schooling is a major factor for expatriates, it is necessary for countries to build up an adequate infrastructure to be able to attract an international, competitive workforce.

Suggestions for Further Research

Given that the empirical study only highlights one point in the assignment life cycle, further studies could investigate the influence of dual-career support in the long run, e.g. long-term consequences on the career of trailing spouses. The thesis presents the on-assignment career support as one influencing factor for the subjective well-being of expatriates. Similarly, further research could take a closer look at other factors that play a role in terms of the individual well-being of expatriates. Future research could also focus on exploring the well-being of spouses during international assignments as opposed to the emotional health of expatriates.

The present study analyzes the role of the spouse's educational background. One could investigate if members of a certain profession are more open for dual-career support than spouses with a different job profile. Another aspect which was not considered in this thesis is the age of the expatriate and the spouses. Age could make a difference in regard to the necessity or effectiveness of dual-career support.

Further research could also focus on family size. Many expatriates are accompanied by children. However, the number of children and the consequences of their presence have not been analyzed. There could be further studies exploring the connection between the existence of children and the specific need for support. Also some of the survey participants have stressed the need to consider schooling opportunities and the kindergarten or childcare situation in regard to international assignments.

In the survey, some expatriates also mentioned other suggestions for further research. For example the income levels of the expatriate and the spouse have not been analyzed so far. One proposition could be that the higher the pre-assignment income level of the spouse, the more likely he or she will use dual-career support. Another survey respondent added that it makes a difference how often the family can see each other. Therefore, shift work or commuter assignments could be tested in regard to their influence on the situation of dual-career couples.

A further comment related to experienced language barriers. The present study did not investigate the differences between spouses who understood the local language versus those who did not. It seems plausible that the extent of language difficulties is an influencing factor for the successful adjustment of the spouse in the host country.

Another field that has not been explored in the survey is the specific situation of male partners. As already indicated in the literature, the situation of male spouses is even more challenging. An empirical study could shed more light on the needs of male partners and support measures particularly helpful for them. As a matter of fact, it could be a challenge to find sufficient survey participants, as still a large majority of trailing spouses is female.

One area that has not been touched is a cost projection of dual-career support measures. It is obvious that the benefit of dual-career support is very difficult to measure and assess. However, the costs related to the company-sponsored activities can be tracked. Further

research could take a look at the costs deriving from the family-friendly policies and to set up recommendations on how to design the dual-career support programs in a cost efficient manner.

Even though the present thesis has identified benefits for the expatriate, the expatriate spouse and the employer, there could be further research on benefits for supplying industries such as relocation agencies, training providers or counsellors. Considering that more and more companies are introducing dual-career support, there is also a growing market for external providers. It remains to be seen if the trend will have a significant influence on the consulting industry.

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APPENDIX

Appendix N.1 – Questionnaire for Expatriates

Expatriate Survey

This is the survey for expatriates. Please use the other link in the email if you are an expat's partner.
If you have any questions about the survey, please contact us at kp11148@lu.lv.

Das ist die Umfrage für Expats. Bitte verwenden Sie den anderen Link im E-Mail, wenn Sie der Partner/die Partnerin eines Expats sind.
Wenn Sie Fragen zu der Umfrage haben, senden Sie bitte ein E-Mail an kp11148@lu.lv.

***1. I am an expatriate and am married or in a relationship.**
Ich bin derzeit entsendet und bin verheiratet oder in einer Beziehung.

yes / ja
 no / nein

We are sorry. This survey is only for expatriates who are currently in a relationship.
Es tut uns leid. Diese Umfrage ist nur für Expats, die derzeit in einer Beziehung sind.

***2. Please select your preferred language for the survey.**
Bitte wählen Sie die Sprache, in der Sie die Umfrage durchführen wollen.

English
 Deutsch

***3. What is your home country?**

***4. Citizenship**

other citizenship (if applicable)

***5. What is your host country?**

***6. Gender**

female
 male

7. Age

under 30
 30-40
 41-50
 51-60
 over 60

Expatriate Survey

***8. Number of Children**

***9. Highest Education**

- compulsory schooling
- apprenticeship / professional school
- university-entrance diploma / school leaving examination / foreman
- college / university
- other education (please specify)

***10. What is your line of work?**

(Please choose your profession and not the industry sector.)

other profession (if applicable)

11. What is your career level?

***12. How long have you been living abroad?**

- less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5-6 years
- more than 6 years

***13. What is the expected overall duration of your current assignment?**

- less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5-6 years
- more than 6 years

***14. Where is your partner's current residence?**

- his/her home country
- common household in the host country
- somewhere else/third country

Expatriate Survey

***15. Why does he/she stay in the home country?
(multiple answers possible)**

- job-related (does not want to give up current job or education)
- family-related (care for children or elderly relatives)
- The company does not allow family members in the host country (e.g. security reasons).
- The company does not support partners in the host country (e.g. short-term assignment).
- low quality of living in the host country
- other reason (please specify)

***16. Would you feel better if she/he could accompany you to the host country?**

- yes
- no
- don't know

***17. Why does he/she stay in a third country?
(multiple answers possible)**

- job-related (does not want to give up current job or education)
- family-related (care for children or elderly relatives)
- The company does not allow partners in the host country (e.g. security reasons).
- The company does not support partners in the host country (e.g. short-term assignment).
- low quality of living in the host country
- other reason (please specify)

***18. Would you feel better if she/he could accompany you to the host country?**

- yes
- no
- don't know

Expatriate Survey

*19. Has your partner ever used any of the following company-sponsored support measures during the current assignment or previous assignments?

(multiple answers possible)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> assistance with finding a job in the host country
e.g. employment agency fees, career counseling, work permit assistance | <input type="checkbox"/> networking activities in or outside the company
(e.g. invitation to events) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> my employer provided a job in the same company | <input type="checkbox"/> financial compensation for loss of income |
| <input type="checkbox"/> my employer provided a job in a different company | <input type="checkbox"/> counseling/psychological support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> professional association/membership fees | <input type="checkbox"/> help with re-entry into the home country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> seminars/educational programs | <input type="checkbox"/> financial support for research |
| <input type="checkbox"/> language training | <input type="checkbox"/> financial support for volunteer activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> intercultural training | <input type="checkbox"/> financial support for creative activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Look & See trip (visiting the host country before final relocation) | <input type="checkbox"/> NO support measures have been used. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other support (please specify)
_____ | |

*20. Why not?

(multiple answers possible)

- My partner wants to stay at home and care for the kids.
- I did not know about the possibility.
- Appropriate support was not provided or not possible.
- He/she wants to stay at home and take a time out.
- There is no need.
- other reason (please specify)

*21. Is your partner currently working?

- yes
- no

Expatriate Survey

*22. How is your personal well-being influenced by your relationship?

	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	N/A or don't know
When I see my partner is frustrated about her/his job situation I also feel bad.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If my partner has a fulfilling job, this will have a positive influence on my mood as well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My household responsibilities have a negative effect on my productivity at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

*23. How is your personal well-being influenced by your relationship?

	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	N/A or don't know
When I see my partner is frustrated about her/his job situation I also feel bad.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If my partner has a fulfilling job, this will have a positive influence on my mood as well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can focus on my work because my partner takes care of the household responsibilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel financially under pressure because I am the single earner in the relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Expat Survey

*24. In which way does your international assignment influence your well-being?

	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	N/A or don't know
My work-life balance has worsened because of my international assignment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The decision to accept an international assignment is a danger for my marriage/relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel guilty because my partner/family had to move abroad for my career.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is good to have my partner with me abroad because this gives me social support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I worry about my partner because he/she cannot work in the host country.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel uncomfortable because my partner had to give up her/his career for mine.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel relieved when I see that my partner is involved in some activities, even if they are unpaid (e.g volunteering, networking).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If my partner is satisfied, I am more likely to extend my existing contract or accept a new international assignment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Expatriate Survey

***25. Are you generally interested in company-sponsored support measures for the partner in the host country (e.g. for job seeking or further education)?**

yes

no

***26. What kind of support would be or would have been interesting for your partner in regard to job seeking?**

	very interesting	interesting	neutral	uninteresting	very uninteresting / irrelevant	don't know
assistance with finding a job in the host country e.g. employment agency fees, career counseling, work permit assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
my employer provides my partner with a job in the same company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
my employer provides my partner with a job in a different company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
professional association/membership fees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Look & See trip (visiting the host country before final relocation)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
networking activities in or outside the company (e.g. invitation to events)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
help with re-entry into the home country	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

other support (please specify)

Expatriate Survey

***27. What kind of support would be or would have been interesting for your partner in regard to professional development?**

	very interesting	interesting	neutral	uninteresting	very uninteresting / irrelevant	don't know
seminars/educational programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
language training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
intercultural training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
financial compensation for loss of income	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
counseling/psychological support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
financial support for research	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
financial support for volunteer activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
financial support for creative activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
other support (please specify)	<input type="text"/>					

***28. If you had the offer to go on another international assignment, would you accept the offer?**

- yes
 no

***29. Why not?**

(multiple answers possible)

- career issues (e.g. gained sufficient experience abroad)
 financial issues (e.g. assignment remuneration is not attractive enough)
 relationship issues (e.g. the partner wants to go home)
 family issues (e.g. care for children, parents)
 quality of living (e.g. friends, private entertainment)
 other reason (please specify)

Expatriate Survey

30. Please feel free to add your remarks to the survey (optional).

Thank you for completing this survey. We appreciate your help.

Appendix N.2 – Questionnaire for Spouses

Partner Survey

This is the survey for partners. Please use the other link in the email if you are an expat. If you have any questions about the survey, please contact us at kp11148@lu.lv.

Das ist die Umfrage für Partner/innen. Bitte verwenden Sie den anderen Link im E-Mail, wenn Sie Expat sind.

Wenn Sie Fragen zu der Umfrage haben, senden Sie bitte ein E-Mail an kp11148@lu.lv.

***1. Please select your preferred language for the survey.**

Bitte wählen Sie die Sprache, in der Sie die Umfrage durchführen wollen.

English

Deutsch

***2. What is your home country?**

***3. Citizenship**

other citizenship (if applicable)

***4. Where is your partner assigned to?**

(host country)

***5. Gender**

female

male

6. Age

under 30

30-40

41-50

51-60

over 60

***7. Number of Children**

Partner Survey

*8. Highest Education

- compulsory education
- apprenticeship / professional school
- university-entrance diploma / school leaving examination / foreman
- college / university
- other education (please specify)

*9. What is your line of work?

(Please choose your profession and not the industry sector.)

other profession (if applicable)

10. What is your career level?

*11. How many years of work experience do you have?

*12. What is the expected overall duration of your partner's current assignment?

- less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5-6 years
- more than 6 years

*13. Where is your current residence?

- my home country
- common household in my partner's host country
- somewhere else/third country

Partner Survey

***14. Why do you stay in the home country?
(multiple answers possible)**

- job-related (do not want to give up current job or education)
- family-related (care for children or elderly relatives)
- My partner's employer does not allow family members in the host country (e.g. security reasons).
- My partner's employer does not support partners in the host country (e.g. short-term assignment).
- low quality of living in the host country
- other reason (please specify)

***15. Why do you stay in a third country?
(multiple answers possible)**

- job-related (do not want to give up current job or education)
- family-related (care for children or elderly relatives)
- My partner's employer does not allow family members in the host country (e.g. security reasons).
- My partner's employer does not support partners in the host country (e.g. short-term assignment).
- low quality of living in the host country
- other reason (please specify)

***16. How long have you been living abroad?**

- less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- 5-6 years
- more than 6 years

Partner Survey

***17. Have you ever made use of any of the following company-sponsored support measures during the current assignment or previous assignments?**

(multiple answers possible)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> assistance with finding a job in the host country
e.g. employment agency fees, career counseling, work permit assistance | <input type="checkbox"/> networking activities in or outside the company
(e.g. invitation to events) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> my partner's employer provided a job in the same company | <input type="checkbox"/> financial compensation for loss of income |
| <input type="checkbox"/> my partner's employer provided a job in a different company | <input type="checkbox"/> counseling/psychological support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> professional association/membership fees | <input type="checkbox"/> help with re-entry into the home country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> seminars/educational programs | <input type="checkbox"/> financial support for research |
| <input type="checkbox"/> language training | <input type="checkbox"/> financial support for volunteer activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> intercultural training | <input type="checkbox"/> financial support for creative activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Look & See trip (visiting the host country before final relocation) | <input type="checkbox"/> NO support measures have been used. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other support (please specify)
_____ | |

***18. Why not?**

(multiple answers possible)

- I want to stay at home and care for the kids.
- I did not know about the possibility.
- Appropriate support was not provided or not possible.
- I want to stay at home and take a time out.
- There is no need.
- other reason (please specify)

***19. Did you have a job before you moved to your current host country?**

- Yes
- No

***20. How many hours did you work?**

- 1-10 hours per week (marginal employment)
- 11-34 hours per week (part-time work)
- 35-40 hours per week (full-time work)
- more than 40 hours per week (more than full-time work)

Partner Survey

***21. Was that job paid or unpaid?**

- paid
 unpaid or insignificantly paid

***22. Do you currently have a job?**

- Yes
 No

***23. Where is this job?**

(multiple answers possible)

- home country
 host country
 third country
 telework
 commuting between different countries

***24. How many hours do you work per week?**

- 1-10 hours per week (marginal employment)
 11-34 hours per week (part-time work)
 35-40 hours per week (full-time work)
 more than 40 hours per week (more than full-time work)

***25. Is your job paid or unpaid?**

- paid
 unpaid or insignificantly paid

***26. Are you generally interested in company-sponsored support measures in the host country (e.g. for job seeking or further education)?**

- yes
 no

Partner Survey

*27. What kind of support would have been interesting or would be interesting in the future in regard to job-seeking?

	very interesting	interesting	neutral	uninteresting	very uninteresting / irrelevant	don't know
assistance with finding a job in the host country e.g. employment agency fees, career counseling, work permit assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
my partner's employer provides a job in the same company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
my partner's employer provides a job in a different company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
professional association/membership fees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Look & See trip (visiting the host country before final relocation)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
networking activities in or outside the partner's company (e.g. invitation to events)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
help with re-entry into the home country	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

other support (please specify)

Partner Survey

***28. What kind of support would have been interesting or would be interesting in the future in regard to professional development?**

	very interesting	interesting	neutral	uninteresting	very uninteresting / irrelevant	don't know
seminars/educational programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
language training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
intercultural training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
financial compensation for loss of income	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
counseling/psychological support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
financial support for research	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
financial support for volunteer activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
financial support for creative activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

other support (please specify)

Partner Survey

***29. In which way would the support be beneficial for you in general and occupational terms?**

	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	N/A or don't know
I feel more comfortable when I know the local language.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel more comfortable when I am aware of intercultural differences.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel more satisfied if I have my own job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel more relaxed around my family if I have my own job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is financially comforting that I can contribute my own part to the family income.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel satisfied when I can develop my career while abroad.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have more self-respect if I have my own job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel less isolated if I have my own job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The work experience in the host country will be an asset for my future career.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Partner Survey

***30. In which way would the support be beneficial for you in regard to volunteering and training?**

	strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	N/A or don't know
I feel more satisfied if I am engaged in volunteer work than only staying at home.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel more relaxed around my family if I have my own activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have more self-respect if I am engaged in volunteer work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It feels good to have time to participate in further education.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The further education during the assignment will be an asset for my future career.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My partner's employer finances training courses/seminars etc. which I could or would not have afforded otherwise.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

***31. If your partner got the offer to go on another international assignment, would you accompany him/her?**

- Yes
 No

Partner Survey

*32. Why not?

(multiple answers possible)

- career issues (e.g. better career possibilities in the home country)
- financial issues (e.g. loss of income)
- relationship issues (e.g. the partner wants to go home)
- family issues (e.g. care for children, parents)
- quality of living (e.g. friends, private entertainment)
- other reason (please specify)

33. Please feel free to add your remarks to the survey (optional).

Thank you for completing this survey. We appreciate your help.

Appendix N.3 – Questionnaire for the Expatriate Manager

Interviewer: Katharina Silberbauer

Interviewee:

Position:

Date:

Location:

➤ Introduction

Objectives:

The outcome of the questionnaire will be used for a doctoral thesis in the field of dual-career support during international assignments. The target is to understand the employer's point of view when it comes to dual-career support.

Definition of dual-career support:

The term “dual-career support” is broadly defined as anything that the expat employer does in order to support the expatriate spouse, for example look & see trip, intercultural training, networking activities, financial support and so on.

The below questions only relate to expatriates who are in a relationship.

Please confirm that the interviewer may use your answers for her thesis:

Yes, I confirm.

Your answers will be treated anonymously.

➤ Questions

1. What kind of dual-career support does the company offer for expatriate spouses?

Please tick off the offered support and provide more details (e.g. duration/frequency, limitations, internal/external provider and if there are special prerequisites to get the support).

<input type="checkbox"/>	Language training:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Look & See trip (visiting the host country before final relocation):
<input type="checkbox"/>	Networking activities in the company (e.g. invitation to events):
<input type="checkbox"/>	Intercultural training:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Financial compensation for seminars/educational programs:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Assistance with finding a job in the host country e.g. employment agency fees, career counseling, work permit assistance:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Employer offers a job for the spouse in the same branch office:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Employer arranges a job for the spouse in a different company:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Financial compensation for professional association or membership fees:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Financial compensation for loss of income:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Financial support for research, volunteering or creative activities:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help with re-entry into the home country (e.g. employment agency fees):
<input type="checkbox"/>	Counseling/psychological support:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other support:

2. What do you think is the most frequently used dual-career support?
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.....
Why?
3. What do you think is the reason why some do not use any dual-career support?
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.....
.....
4. Do you see any influence on the expatriate's general well-being if the spouse has a job in the host country or not?
.....
.....
Why?
5. How does the company benefit from dual-career support?
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.....
.....
6. Do you think the employee's decision to accept an international assignment depends on the partner's willingness to accompany him or her?
.....
.....
.....
7. What are the differences between expatriate spouses who ask for dual-career support and those who don't (e.g. educational background, culture)?
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.....
.....
8. How does the duration of the assignment influence the claim of dual-career support?
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.....

9. Does the company plan any operational changes to the currently offered dual-career support? If yes, in what way?

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.....

10. How will the company deal with dual-career couples in the future?

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.....
.....

Do you have any comments or remarks concerning the topic/questionnaire?

.....
.....
.....

Thank you for your support!

Appendix N.4 – Selected Comments from Survey Participants

Research Topic

“I have thought about this topic a lot. Thank you for your interest in partners of expat workers.”

“Thank you for sending us the survey. I appreciate your interest on this topic. As a personal opinion, I think it would be great if you could also send us the results or a conclusion of this survey. Success!”

“The content of this survey is very unexpected and surprising but highly appreciated. Thank you for the interest and concern in the subject of our (expat's spouses’) career.”

“We move around the world for the last 17 years and nobody offers real help or would even listen. This is the first time I've got asked questions. Thank you.”

Kind of Support

“In this specific case of expatriate’s spouse, I believe that the financial compensation for losing income is not the most important thing, but helping the spouse finding at least a medium term job/assignment in the host country. I think this is the best thing, which could happen for both expatriate and spouse. However, being honest, my opinion is that the Company is not responsible in any way finding a job for the expatriate’s spouse. However, HR could help a lot checking the spouse’s CV maybe there are some qualities required by the company covering a part-time job in the company (if any) or a potential replacement for a limited period of time (e.g. maternity leave) when needed.”

“If you often relocate with children, it is important for me to offer the children stability and security. This is the reason why - for me as a mother - I do not work in the host country. If we were abroad without kids, I would appreciate support for job seeking or educational support measures.”

"Diversified social involvement projects, or other type of social/environmental care programs developed by the employer company in the host country could be very well developed by involving the expatriates partners - as the knowledge and skills pool put together by these expatriates of so many different countries could not be matched so easily by company's own knowledge/personnel resources.” One of the spouses came up with a different suggestion: “I would love if someone from the company would really listen to us spouses. A website where we could ask questions would be great too.”

Subjective Well-Being

“Overall, the process is well organized. We (me and my family) are getting necessary support and appreciate it. Thank you for your work!”

“I would like actual support. My expat contract ‘says’ all these wonderful things that they would help my partner find a job - but when I asked, HR said they don’t have any expertise and could not assist any further than that. Very disappointing.”

“I work already 14 years abroad with a lot of pleasure. It's no problem for my wife that I am away for some weeks. Once a month I visit my family, but only for a weekend. It would be nice that there is more flexibility from the Company to travel on Friday and back on Monday morning, but is not possible. I respect this.”

Foreign Experiences

“It is not easy as we thought that would be, that’s for sure. The cultural differences are more and more visible once you have constraints to meet them. When you [are] struggling to reach/achieve something and facing difficulties due the cultural differences, language gap, etc. Although it is a good lesson in life to live this experience together. You will reach to face a lot of things, good ones and bad ones, but worth it.”

“Working on international assignments is [a] challenge for expats and found very interesting by us.”

“In certain host countries there are no job opportunities for partners, without jobs and where no kids policy, it can be very problematic for partners, as expats usually work late hours.”

“Also today partners are not necessarily prepared to give up their career, this can have enormous financial disadvantages and loss of pension rights in an unclear future. This might not be necessarily compensated by a higher salary for 2 years.”

“An international assignment enriches spirit and soul. You can broaden your horizon by trying to understand and learn the host country’s culture. You get to know a lot of different nationalities and especially when you have kids.”

“[This is] my second consecutive international assignment, would be interested to continue international assignment, because I have very limited career options going back to home country.”

“For the job an international assignment is very beneficial. For private life it is a big challenge, in particular if you have to go resident to country with restricted possibilities to return home.”

“As much as I feel my career will suffer due to moving on assignments with my husband, there is no compromising our family being together which is a very strong value for me. I am still trying to figure out a career I could take on to complement his.”

“The fact that I am not able to work in the host country is frustrating, so the contractual type should offer this possibility.”

“A lot of these questions were about my work. As we are entitled to the universal family benefit in our host country, we are not 'out of pocket' because I am not working. However, it is very hard going from working to non-working. People always ask what do I do with my time, now that I am not working. I have three young children and a husband who travels a lot!”

“Without the job in the host country, the assignment would be a lot less exciting and interesting.”

“I work for a Romanian salary (250 EUR) for over 30 hours and I don't even have to think of a consideration for the pension!”

“The years of work experience must be considered in the home country, also if the salary is low. It does not fit with our pension system. Otherwise you are a loser as an accompanying partner.”

Duration

“Going international has advantages & disadvantages as well, not only related to spouse/partner but also related to the children. In fact children can be affected by not having a continuity regarding their group of friends and comfort zone. Therefore longer assignments (3-4 years) would help.”

“Because of the short assignment (max. 1-2 years) it didn't make sense for us to relocate with the kids. But also the trips abroad with the family and the meetings with friends and colleagues there have improved our language skills and gave us wonderful and unforgettable moments.”