



23

Expatriates' Quality of Life During the Pandemic: Two Sides of the Same Coin

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Introduction

*Only when the tide goes out do you discover who's been swimming naked.—
Warren Buffett*

The COVID-19 pandemic marked its outbreak worldwide in March 2020. It changed the lives of workers significantly through lockdowns, health hazards, and economic crises. The conditions led to stressful experiences for individuals, especially expatriates, that is, those who relocate and execute their employment abroad (Andresen et al., 2014). During turbulent times, individuals require substantial resources, ranging from physical and economic to socio-psychological, to cope with stressors and sustain the quality of life (Hobfoll, 1989; Shelef et al., 2022). As expatriates tend to possess fewer resources than natives, they are more vulnerable during a crisis. For example, border restrictions during the pandemic hindered their ability to travel internationally, which prevented expatriates from securing desired employment (ILO, 2021b). They were also overrepresented in sectors and occupations where telework was not possible, increasing the risk of infection in the workplace (European Commission, 2020). Furthermore, they suffered from stress and negative affectivity (Rosa González et al., 2022), deterioration of mental health

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(Solà-Sales et al., 2021; Spiritus-Beerden et al., 2021), loss of income, and job instability (ILO, 2021b), which were more severe than in the native population (Global Migration Data Portal, 2022; Shelef et al., 2022). At the same time, a more nuanced view suggests that the availability of and access to resources is likely to vary widely among expatriates, suggesting heterogeneous experiences during the pandemic. This means, for instance, that if resources were sufficient or increased, some expatriates may have been little constrained by the pandemic or even benefited, for instance, due to improved work–life balance, affluent monetary assets, or job security (Mello & Tomei, 2021).

In order to design effective support for expatriates during the pandemic, it is crucial to obtain a comprehensive view of how various aspects of their lives changed during this period of turbulence. However, existing studies on this topic suffer from three major shortcomings. First, they primarily employed a *variable-centered* approach (cf. Gama et al., 2022; Hall et al., 2021; Solà-Sales et al., 2021), which assumes that the influences of the pandemic on expatriates' quality of life can be estimated uniformly and generalized to all expatriates (cf. Meyer & Morin, 2016). This excludes the diverse experiences of expatriates during the pandemic, which can range from negative to positive. For example, some expatriate groups reported improvements in work–life harmony (Mello & Tomei, 2021), transnational networks (Rosa González et al., 2022), and work engagement (Sahoo et al., 2022), suggesting facilitation in quality of life. Second, by assuming that the pandemic affected expatriates equally, the variable-centered approach provides insufficient knowledge for practitioners to build support and coping strategies suited to expatriates' individual experiences. Third, as the literature has focused primarily on the consequences of the pandemic, there is little understanding of the factors that contribute to these outcomes. The lack of insight into protective and risk factors also results in inapt measures to aid expatriates with different levels of vulnerability.

In this light, we adopted a *person-centered* approach to investigate how expatriates perceived the impact of the pandemic on their quality of life. This method allowed us to identify subgroups within the expatriate population, the impact of the pandemic on whose life demonstrated similar and statistically identifiable patterns (cf. Meyer & Morin, 2016). We further investigated the resources (or lack thereof) associated with the emergence of patterns, including gender, marital status, expatriate mode, community embeddedness, and personal initiative, thereby identifying the most vulnerable, as well as resilient groups. The links between perceived changes in quality of life and expatriates' work outcomes were also examined, including job embeddedness,

intention to stay, career resources, and international relocation mobility readiness.

The findings of this study are important for several reasons. First, by illustrating the diverse expatriate experiences during turbulent times, we emphasize the importance of customizing policies and procedures for this population based on individual factors. Second, the identification of harmful and helpful elements serves to further illuminate the most vulnerable and resilient groups, thereby enhancing the reliability and delivery of organizational support. Therefore, the results are instrumental in developing practical recommendations for policymakers to manage expatriates during crises such as the pandemic and prepare them for the challenges of the aftermath.

In the following section, we elaborate on our research questions using the Conservation of Resource (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018), followed by a literature review of related concepts and an illustration of the methods and data analysis. We then present the results of our study and implications for research and practice. The chapter ends with a report of limitations and suggestions for future research, along with the conclusions of the study.

Expatriates' Quality of Life Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic, Resources, and Work Consequences

According to COR theory, individuals strive to obtain, maintain, and enrich resources (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018). The threat of or actual resource losses, which are typically prevalent during turbulent times, triggers stress response (Shelef et al., 2022). Evidence generally showed that expatriates were more vulnerable than the natives to stress and damage during crises (Global Migration Data Portal, 2022; Shelef et al., 2022), because they tend to possess limited *resources* to cope with such situations (Shelef et al., 2022). Their lack of resources is manifested in various aspects, such as language deficiencies, which obstructed their access to government information, and dampened their adherence to control measures (Kumar et al., 2021). The *consequences* of resource losses were also more severe among expatriates than the national population: risk of infection, mortality rates, and several mental health problems were more pronounced among the former than the latter groups (Hayward et al., 2021; Kumar et al., 2021). Expatriates are more likely than natives to suffer from mass unemployment, and stressful and hazardous working conditions (ILO, 2021b). In terms of *quality of life*, most studies

indicated physical and material damages that expatriates perceive in the epidemic (cf. Bailey, 2021; Haist & Kurth, 2022; ILO, 2021b; Koveshnikov et al., 2022), while overlooking other facets such as relationships, fulfillment, work and career, recreation, socialization, social, community, and civic activities and self-understanding (Flanagan, 1982).

In this light, the COR theory posits that during crises, individuals with more resources at the beginning are less prone to stress and dampened their quality of life (Hobfoll, 1989; Shelef et al., 2022). This means that even among the expatriate population, individuals may have different views on how the pandemic has affected their quality of life, depending on their personal resource pool. They can differ in terms of (1) the perceived overall connotation of the impact, that is, whether the pandemic had a positive, negative, or negligible influence on their quality of life; and (2) the way the pandemic changed the different facets of their quality of life, for example, some aspects of quality of life changed during the crisis but the others did not. Both dimensions constitute distinct and statistically identifiable patterns that describe expatriates' personal experiences of the *quality of life* during the pandemic.

Assuming that expatriates' perceptions of quality of life in the pandemic are manifold, the potential *consequences* of this diversity are an intriguing topic. Specifically, we are interested in their retention intentions, international relocation mobility readiness, and career resources, which the literature indicated to transform during the pandemic (Haist & Kurth, 2022; ILO, 2021b; Schmidt, 2021; Végh et al., 2022), without considering the diversity of expatriates' experiences. Another aspect is the *factors* under which these different patterns emerge. Aside from demographic features (i.e., gender, marital status), which appear to be associated with how individuals cope with the pandemic (Kowal et al., 2020; Shelef et al., 2022), social and personal resources, such as community embeddedness, expatriation mode, and personal initiative, are crucial for expatriates to sustain the quality of life in turbulent times. The factors contributing to perceived quality of life and the consequences resulting from the perceived quality of life are summarized in Fig. 23.1.

Consequences of Expatriates' Quality of Life in the Pandemic on Their Work Outcomes

Intention to Stay in the Host Country and Organization

The intention to stay in the host country and organization appears to be the most common consequence identified in relation to the pandemic among

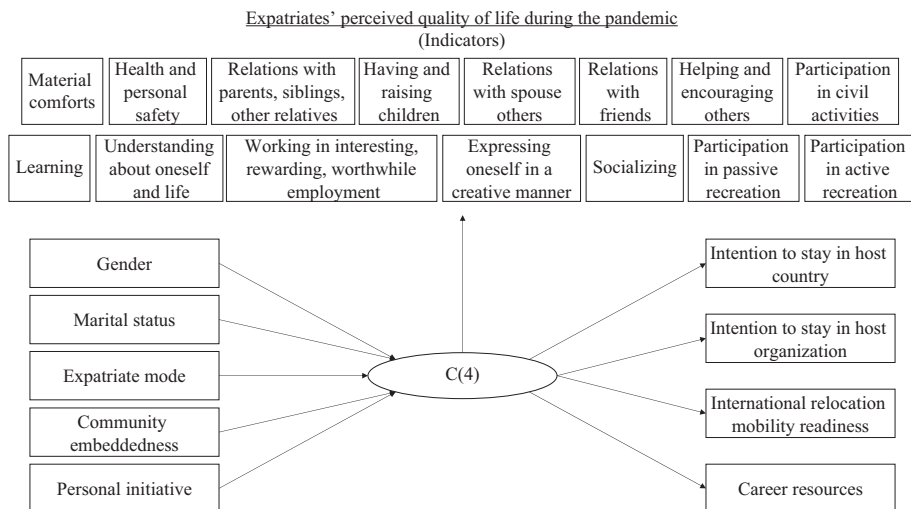


Fig. 23.1 Model illustration of 4-class LCA with covariates and distal outcomes

expatriates. Various sources indicate that the pandemic has triggered a desire among workers originating from abroad to return home (ILO, 2021b; Koveshnikov et al., 2022; Rosa González et al., 2022). The reasons varied widely, ranging from a lack of a secure job (ILO, 2021b) to concerns about family health in the host country (Chan et al., 2022) and in the home country (Rosa González et al., 2022). Nonetheless, it appears that the majority of expatriates opted to stay in their destination country during the crisis, claiming that it was safer and preferable for the continuity of their work and personal lives (Rosa González et al., 2022; Végh et al., 2022). Likewise, the intention to stay with the host organization was negatively related to expatriates' perceived non-work constraints during the pandemic (Chan et al., 2022). However, many expatriates indicated a desire to continue their employment during the pandemic, especially those living in less severely affected countries (Végh et al., 2022).

International Relocation Mobility Readiness

Another notable consequence is the readiness for international relocation mobility. An ILO survey (ILO, 2021b) shows that the number of migration plans among internationally relocated workers dropped from 60% to 23% in the first year of the pandemic. Ubiquitous and emerging forms of work, such as virtual and remote work, may lead to a decrease in the number of long- and

short-term assignments, especially in the form of assigned expatriation (Mello & Tomei, 2021; Végh et al., 2022). The crisis has also changed the motivation of expatriates to move abroad (Végh et al., 2022). Health, safety, and security, which were considered relatively trivial before the outbreak of the pandemic, became more important among the motivations for global mobility (Végh et al., 2022). In contrast, motives such as new experiences and career development decreased in importance among the factors influencing mobility (Végh et al., 2022). The readiness to relocate during and after the pandemic seemed ambivalent for many expatriates, who feared uncertainty or preferred to work online (Mello & Tomei, 2021; Végh et al., 2022). For others, however, relocation and mobility were an indispensable part of their lives, so the COVID-19 pandemic acted as an accelerating factor in their relocation plans, especially after vaccines became widely available (Végh et al., 2022).

Career Resources

Expatriate careers in the midst of the pandemic are an overlooked area. Specifically, career resources, which include human capital, career management behaviors, and environmental and motivational resources, are essential for predicting the career success of expatriates in turbulent times (Hirschi et al., 2018). The pandemic was undoubtedly a peculiar circumstance for obtaining career resources. Due to the lockdown, expatriates reportedly lacked opportunities to enrich their human capital and effectively manage their career behaviors, such as attending language classes (Haist & Kurth, 2022), developing soft skills (e.g., communication), and networking (Schmidt, 2021). The uncertainty associated with the pandemic affected expatriates' confidence in developing and achieving career goals (i.e., motivational resources) (Végh et al., 2022) and deprived them of organizational support (i.e., environmental resources) (Bailey, 2021). However, the exacerbation only applied to a certain group of expatriates; various other cases showed improvement or invariance in the acquisition of career resources. For instance, the lockdown allowed these expatriates to focus on developing their career agency, as demonstrated by their participation in online self-development courses (Haist & Kurth, 2022). The strenuous situation during the pandemic challenged them to develop new skills, such as time management, multitasking, and technical skills (Schmidt, 2021).

In summary, the evidence on how the pandemic has influenced expatriates' core work outcomes is generally inconsistent, with some suggesting facilitation and others suggesting stability or deterioration. Thus, it is unlikely that

the pandemic was consistently dampening expatriates' work outcomes, but rather that individual perceptions of quality of life during the pandemic, which vary across the population, are the influencing factors of such consequences. Therefore, it is necessary to obtain a classification of expatriates' individual experiences of their quality of life during the pandemic and, from there, determine the extent to which these personal perceptions differentiated work outcomes.

Factors Associated with Expatriates' Quality of Life During the Pandemic

Gender

Female expatriates were among the most vulnerable groups during the pandemic (Shelef et al., 2022; UN Women, 2020). The literature illustrates that they are inherently disadvantaged in terms of possessing resources to cope with different types of crises, which is even more notable when they belong to minority groups such as expatriates (Shelef et al., 2022). During the crisis, they were at five times greater risk of job loss than male expatriates (ILO, 2021a). Their physical and mental health was also more at risk than men's during the crisis (Gama et al., 2022; Spiritus-Beerden et al., 2021). Intimate partner violence and sexual abuse against women increased during the epidemic (UN Women, 2020). Isolation and lockdown led to a surge in domestic violence, while physical and verbal attacks threatened female expatriates working in women-dominated occupations (e.g., health care and domestic care) (UN Women, 2020). Given these impediments to women, we expect *gender* to be a factor contributing to perceived quality of life in the pandemic.

Marital Status

Akin to that, marriage generally acts as a resource for coping with stressors (Williams et al., 2009). However, it is unclear whether and how it affected expatriates' quality of life during the pandemic. Recent literature suggests that family ties may have become stronger and facilitated their work life (Mello & Tomei, 2021). Staying with family also reduced feelings of loneliness during the lockdown and anxiety about ambivalence (Rosa González et al., 2022). However, for expatriates who stayed with family, the pandemic situation could have placed greater demands and depleted resources, for instance, in

terms of work and household responsibilities (Végh et al., 2022). Isolation and lockdown similarly proved stressful for those who were separated or divorced, due to the distance from their children and concerns about their children's safety (Finell et al., 2021; Végh et al., 2022).

Expatriation Mode

Another factor that seemed to determine expatriates' experiences with the pandemic is their expatriation mode, that is, whether they were assigned expatriates (AEs) or self-initiated expatriates (SIEs). AEs tended to possess more resources, including job stability and organizational support, than SIEs during the crisis, which relieved them of financial and social threats. Research indicates that virtual assignments in lieu of travel may be attractive to many AEs who often endure work–life conflicts due to frequent business travel (Mello & Tomei, 2021; Végh et al., 2022). Flexible work has paved the way for AEs to strengthen ties with their family members (Mello & Tomei, 2021) and to manage their work more efficiently (Mello & Tomei, 2021; Schmidt, 2021). In contrast, SIEs are more likely than AEs to work in low-status occupations and were, therefore, faced with a higher likelihood of layoffs and precarious working conditions during the pandemic (Haist & Kurth, 2022). Border closures and lockdowns were overwhelming for them, as they prevented them from visiting their families (Haist & Kurth, 2022; Végh et al., 2022). The contrast in the resource pool thus implies a role of the expatriate mode in shaping the quality of life of expatriates during the pandemic.

Community Embeddedness

Further, the pandemic highlighted the crucial role of expatriates' community embeddedness in turbulent times, their enmeshment in the local community encompasses links (i.e., connections with people, figures, associations, etc.), fit (i.e., perceived compatibility with the local community), and sacrifice (i.e., anticipated losses from leaving their place of residence) (Mitchell et al., 2001). In the wake of the pandemic, connectedness to the local community, for example, in terms of access to government information and supportive authorities, was vital to avoid higher rates of contagion, actual infection, and excessive stress (Finell et al., 2021; Haist & Kurth, 2022; Kumar et al., 2021). Relationships with community members were fundamental to overcoming infectious diseases (e.g., checking in and buying food during quarantine)

(Finell et al., 2021). Trust in local authorities also eased their worries about health and safety, not only for themselves but also for their families back home (Rosa González et al., 2022). In contrast, expatriates with loose enmeshment in the host community tended to suffer more from loneliness and anxiety (Haist & Kurth, 2022), as well as greater risks of illness, violence, and exploitation due to their inability to obtain necessary social support (Kumar et al., 2021; UN Women, 2020). Hence, the extent to which expatriates are connected to the host community can shape their quality of life in critical times.

Personal Initiative

While community embeddedness provides essential social resources, personal initiative represents expatriates' agency to overcome a crisis. Personal initiative refers to the behavioral tendency to take the initiative, be proactive, and overcome difficulties to achieve goals (Frese et al., 1997). Expatriates who possess this trait were likely to tackle problems despite the constraints of their circumstances, such as taking online self-development courses and finding new activities during the lockdown (Haist & Kurth, 2022). In other cases, proactivity was useful for forming collective action, such as helping others navigate bureaucracy and sharing preventative information (Finell et al., 2021). This helped to diminish unpleasant emotions such as hopelessness, reduce loneliness in isolation (Haist & Kurth, 2022), and strengthen ties to the local community (Finell et al., 2021). In the work context, the personal initiative was beneficial in overcoming technical challenges (e.g., the time lag in remote work) and creating ways to communicate more effectively in the virtual environment (Schmidt, 2021).

Overall, evidence suggests that gender, marital status, expatriate mode, community embeddedness, and personal initiative tended to be associated with expatriates' quality of life during the pandemic. It is unclear whether these factors diversified expatriates' perception of their quality of life during the crisis from a person-centered perspective.

Methods

An Overview of Latent Class Analysis

We employed the latent class analysis (LCA) using the maximum likelihood (ML) three-step procedure (Asparouhov & Muthén, 2014; Vermunt, 2010). This method relaxes the linear assumption in relationships between the pandemic's impacts on quality of life with predictors and outcomes, which typically requires a mediation model and regression analysis in a variable-centered approach (Meyer & Morin, 2016). This person-centered method, by contrast, focuses on identifying personalized experiences of expatriates (i.e., latent classes), which allows further exploration of factors explaining the emergence of classes (i.e., covariates or predictors), as well as the difference between classes in terms of consequences (i.e., distal outcomes) (Nylund-Gibson et al., 2019; Vermunt, 2010). In our research model (Fig. 23.1), the latent classes emerged from expatriates' perceived quality of life in the pandemic, which was associated with gender, marital status, expatriate mode, community embeddedness, and personal initiative. At the same time, expatriates in different classes demonstrated different levels of intention to stay, international mobility relocation readiness, and career resources.

The analysis procedure entailed the following steps. First, we identified a latent class model using class indicators (i.e., perceived changes in quality-of-life facets during the pandemic). Then, in Step 2, we computed a pseudo-class with a latent class posterior distribution to fix misclassification errors. In Step 3, by applying multinomial regression and Chi-square tests, we investigated the association between error-controlled classes, as well as covariates (i.e., predictors of classes). We also examined the mean differences between classes as to the work outcome variables using the Wald test (Nylund-Gibson et al., 2019).

Data Collection and Sample

Our quantitative cross-sectional data consists of employed expatriates living and working in the United Kingdom, France, and Germany during the first wave of the pandemic (July to November 2020). We disseminated a recruitment call in a Consumer Panel, Prolific, and Facebook groups for expatriates. A total of 2860 individuals from these sources accessed our invitation link, of whom 921 were eligible and completed the online survey. We examined the quality of the responses by employing indicators such as consistency between

answers, response time, and outliers, to remove 214 careless answers (Meade & Craig, 2012), resulting in a response rate of 24.7%.

Our sample (41.3% men, 58.7% women) encompassed 707 employed expatriates originating from 98 countries who resided in France (11.9%), Germany (25.6%), and the United Kingdom (62.5%). The majority were highly qualified, with 38% having a bachelor's degree, 36.4% a master's degree, and 6.8% a doctorate. The remainder completed secondary education or lower (8.2%) or post-secondary non-tertiary or short-cycle tertiary degrees (10.6%). As to marital status, 43.4% of the respondents were married, 33.1% were living in a partnership, 21.4% were single, and 2.1% were separated or divorced. Our sample consisted of 9.1% AEs (i.e., those who were relocated abroad by their employer) and 91.1% SIEs (i.e., those who relocated abroad on their own initiative).

Measures

Quality of Life Scale

We adapted the *Quality of Life Scale* (Flanagan, 1982) to measure expatriates' perceived impact of the pandemic on their life quality. At the time of data collection, a scale ranging from 1 ("highly negative") to 7 ("highly positive"), with a midpoint of 4 denoting no perceived influence ("neither negative nor positive"), was used to ask the participants to rate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on several aspects of their quality of life. The scale encompassed 15 items, each describing an aspect of quality of life (Flanagan, 1982). Sample items were "A. Material comfort—things like a desirable home, good food, possessions, convenience, an increasing income, and security for the future" and "E. Close relationship with a husband/wife/a life partner". The instrument obtained desirable reliability ($\omega = 0.91$) (Hayes & Coutts, 2020).

Scales to Measure Expatriates' Work Outcomes

Intention to stay: We measured intention to stay *in the employer organization* using the 5-item scale developed by Price and Mueller (1986) ($\omega = 0.89$). Sample items included "I plan to stay in this company as long as possible" and "I plan to leave this company as soon as possible" (reverse code). To measure the intention to stay *in the host country*, we applied the mobility scale from the Employment Opportunity Index developed and validated by Griffeth et al.

(2005). The instrument encompasses three items, for instance, “I am unable to move to another country now even if a job came along”. All the items were rated from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). The reliability test of the scale yielded a satisfactory result ($\omega = 0.73$).

International relocation mobility readiness: We employed a translated version of the German scale for measuring international relocation mobility readiness (Dalbert, 1999; Otto, 2004). The questionnaire contained 13 items, which were ranked from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). A sample item reads, “There are many places in the world where I could imagine living and working”. Testing of internal consistency yielded a desirable result ($\omega = 0.85$).

Career resources: To measure career resources, we used the Career Resources Questionnaire developed by Hirschi et al. (2018). Specifically, we included occupational expertise, soft skills, job challenges, and career confidence subscales. The instrument consists of 13 items rated on a scale from 1 (“not true at all”) to 5 (“completely true”) and obtained good internal consistency ($\omega = 0.91$).

Scales to Measure Factors Associated with Expatriates’ Quality of Life

Gender: Codes for the gender of participants were 1 (“male”) and 2 (“female”).

Marital status: Participants had the following options to describe their marital status: 1 (“married”), 2 (“in partnership”), 3 (“single”), 4 (“separated”), 5 (“divorced”), and 6 (“widowed”). In the survey, no participant chose option 6 (“widowed”), so it was removed from further analysis.

Expatriation mode: We asked participants whether they were sent to work abroad by their employer, in order to determine their expatriate mode as AE (1 - “yes”) or SIE (2 - “no”).

Community embeddedness: To measure community embeddedness, we employed the original scale and revised two items about links to fit the internationally relocating population (Mitchell et al., 2001; Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). An example of a revised item is “Do you have any relatives living in the country where you now live?” and “How many children are currently living with you?” Most items measuring links have dichotomous options (“yes” or “no”) or require manual entry of numbers (i.e., number of friends and children). Sample items for the “fit” and “sacrifice” dimensions read “I really love the place where I live” and “Leaving this community would be very hard”. These items are rated on a Likert scale from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5

(“strongly agree”). The instruments demonstrated an acceptable internal consistency ($\omega = 0.75$).

Personal initiative: We employed the scale developed by Frese et al. (1997) ($\omega = 0.84$) to measure the personal initiative of expatriates. The scale consists of seven items, which are rated on a scale from 1 (“hardly ever or never”) to 5 (“very often or always”). An example of an item included is “I actively attack problems”.

Results

Latent Class Analysis

Table 23.1 illustrates the results of the LCA. We scrutinized the following fit indices to determine the best-fit model: Akaike’s information criterion (AIC) (Akaike, 1987), Bayesian information criterion (BIC) (Schwarz, 1978), sample size adjusted BIC (ABIC) (Sclove, 1987), entropy values (Celeux & Soromenho, 1996), and the Lo-Mendell-Rubin likelihood ratio test (LMR LRT) (Lo et al., 2001). LMR LRT yielded a significant result for the 2-class model, proving that the impact of the pandemic on expatriates’ quality of life was likely to be diverse. The four-class model was, thus, confirmed by a comparison of the fit criteria. Therefore, we can statistically classify the impact of the pandemic on expatriates’ quality of life into four distinguishable patterns.

Figure 23.2 demonstrates differences between the classes explained by the means of the pandemic’s impact on expatriates’ quality of life facets. The first class (12.4%) indicated significant “negative” impacts, especially on health and personal safety; relationships with parents, siblings, and other relatives; relationships with close friends; helping and encouraging others; participating in civil activities; learning; and participation in active recreation. Moreover, this class showed a strong deterioration in socializing and a slightly negative impact on other facets, such as material comfort, having and raising children,

Table 23.1 Latent class analysis results

Fit indices	1-class model	2-class model	3-class model	4-class model
AIC	38248.892	35610.769	34829.125	34496.26
BIC	38385.723	35820.576	35111.909	34852.027
Adjusted BIC	38290.466	35674.516	34915.045	34604.359
Entropy		0.920	0.877	0.884
LMR LRT		$p < 0.001$	$p < 0.05$	$p = 0.07$

Note: The most preferable model for each of the fit indices was marked as bold

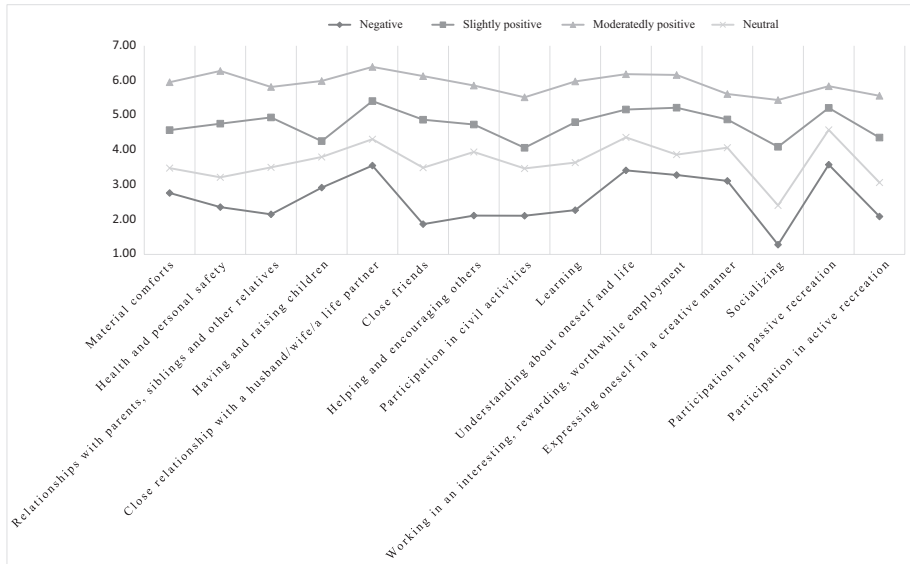


Fig. 23.2 Illustration of latent classes based on the experienced quality of life. *Note:* Scale ranging from 1 (“highly negative”) to 7 (“highly positive”) and a midpoint of 4 indicating no perceived impact (“neither negative nor positive”)

close relationship with life partner, an understanding of self and life, working in interesting, rewarding, and worthwhile employment, creativity, and participation in passive recreation. In contrast, the second class (26.3%) showed a “slightly positive” effect of the pandemic on all variables affecting the quality of life, excluding socializing. A notable improvement in the quality of life emerged in class three (9.1%), in which expatriates experienced “moderately positive” impacts on all quality-of-life facets, especially health and personal safety, close relationships with a life partner, close friends, understanding about oneself and life, and working in interesting, rewarding, and worthwhile employment. The last class accounted for the majority of the population (52.2%) and represented relatively “neutral” influences of the pandemic on expatriates’ quality of life. Individuals in this class perceived slightly negative impacts on health and personal safety, as well as on socializing. Other facets of their quality of life, however, held steady during the pandemic.

In summary, the pandemic generally did not significantly affect the quality of life of the majority of expatriates. A quarter of our sample even perceived the pandemic as slightly positive for their life quality and, most interestingly, a minority reported notably ameliorated living during the pandemic. Nevertheless, one-fifth of the expatriate population experienced a deterioration in the quality of their lives.

Relationships Between Classes of Expatriates' Quality of Life and Distant Work Outcomes

Given the evidence of the variety of impacts of the pandemic on expatriates' quality of life, we proceeded further to examine whether their experiences affected work outcomes. Figure 23.3 illustrates a summary of these findings.

Pairwise Wald test revealed that intention to stay in the organization was significantly different within each pair of all classes ($p < .001$). Specifically, intention to stay in the organization was lowest among those who experienced "negative" impacts of the pandemic ($M = 2.27$, $SD = 3.94$), followed by those in "slightly positive" ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 3.00$) and "neutral" ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 2.15$) classes, and comparably highest in the "moderately positive" classes ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 3.62$).

The test on intention to stay in the host country showed striking differences between expatriates who experienced "moderately positive" impacts ($M =$

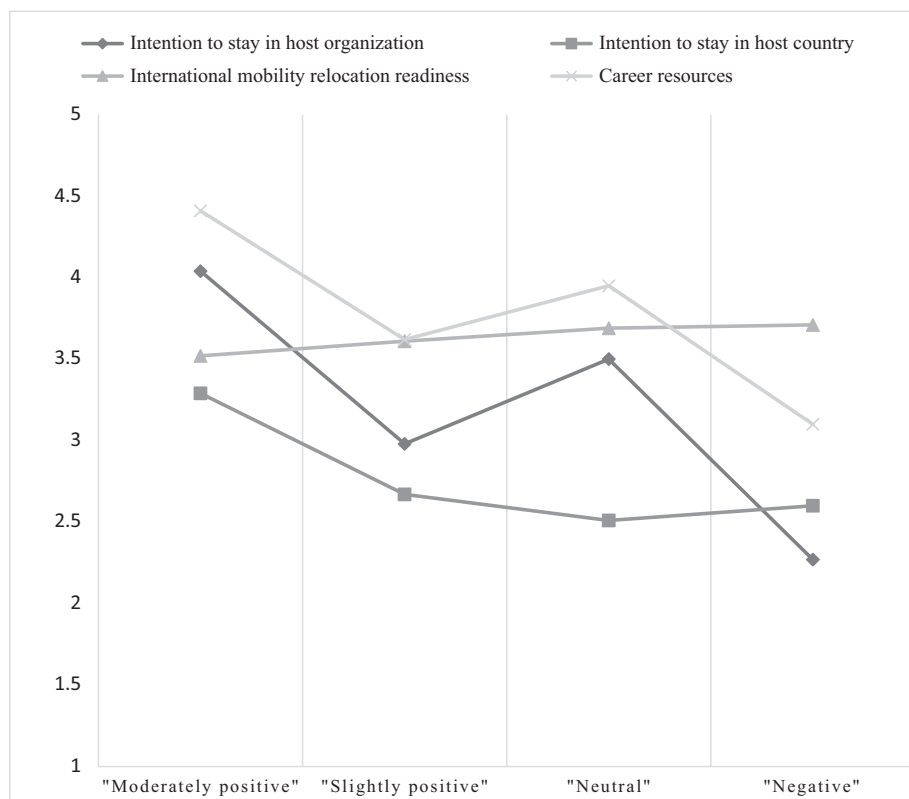


Fig. 23.3 Illustration of differences in work outcomes between classes

3.29, $SD = 4.12$) and all other classes, including those perceived “*slightly positive*” ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 2.52$) ($p < 0.01$), “*neutral*” ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 1.89$) ($p < 0.001$), and “*negative*” influences of the crisis ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 3.56$) ($p < 0.01$). However, the intention to remain in the host country did not differ significantly between the latter three classes.

In terms of international relocation mobility readiness, results revealed that expatriates with “*moderately positive*” experiences during the pandemic showed the least preparedness to relocate ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.94$). This result distinguished them from those who perceived “*negative*” ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.89$) ($p < 0.10$) and “*neutral*” ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.22$) ($p < 0.10$) impacts, but not those with “*slightly positive*” perception ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.49$). These latter three classes—encompassing expatriates whose impact of the pandemic was “*negative*”, “*neutral*”, and “*slightly positive*”—demonstrated no significant differences in international relocation mobility readiness.

Finally, the mean values of career resources were strikingly different within each pair of classes ($p < 0.001$). Expatriates who perceived the “*moderately positive*” effects of the pandemic scored highest on career resources ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 1.86$), far above those who perceived “*neutral*” ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.12$), “*slightly positive*” ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.57$), and “*negative*” influences ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 3.40$) of the crisis.

Relationships Between Factors and Classes of Expatriates’ Quality of Life

In the last step, we explored the role of protective and harmful factors on expatriates’ quality of life in the midst of the pandemic (see Table 23.2).

Table 23.2 Summary of the relationship between classes and covariates (predictors)

Class	Covariates					Expatriate mode	Community embeddedness	Personal initiative
	Gender	Marital status						
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)		
“Moderately positive”	<i>n.s.</i>	+	-	-	-	-	+++	+++
“Slightly positive”	<i>n.s.</i>	-	-	+	+	-	+	+
“Neutral”	-	-	+	+	+	+	++	++
“Negative”	+	-	-	-	-	+	-	-

Notes: Gender: 1 (“male”) and 2 (“female”); Marital status: 1 (“married”), 2 (“in partnership”), 3 (“single”), 4 (“separated”), 5 (“divorced”); Expatriation mode: AE (1 - “yes”) or SIE (2 - “no”)

The Chi-square test revealed that females were more likely than males to experience “*negative*” influences of the pandemic on quality of life, $\chi^2(3, N = 707) = 6.93, p = 0.07, p < 0.10$. Only 9% of the men perceived negative effects of the pandemic, compared to 14.7% of women. In contrast, males' quality of life after the pandemic was more likely to remain “*neutral*” (57.2%) compared with that before the outbreak, a perception that was less prevalent among females (48.7%).

Pertaining to other parameters, the data demonstrated a strong correlation between marital status and the standard of living among the expatriates during the pandemic, $\chi^2(12, N = 707) = 32.74, p < 0.01$. Specifically, 14.5% of married expatriates reported “*moderately positive*” impacts of the pandemic, whereas this number was only 7.3% among those living in a partnership, 1.3% of single, and 0% of separated and divorced expatriates. Being married was also associated with a lower probability of perceiving the impacts of this crisis as “*neutral*”. Only 46.3% of them perceived no change as a result of the pandemic, whereas the numbers were much higher among those who were single (55%), living with their partner (57.7%), separated (66.7%), and divorced (55.6%). Divorced participants had the highest risk of exacerbation, with 22.2% of them claiming “*negative*” impacts of the pandemic on their quality of life, compared with 14.3%, 10.7%, 11.3%, and 0% for those who were married, partnered, single, and separated, respectively. The “*slightly positive*” impact of the pandemic on life quality was strongest among single (32.5%) and separated (33.3%) expatriates. Only 24.8% of married participants, 24.4% of those living in a partnership, and 22.2% of divorced people reported the same experiences.

The results further provide evidence on the role of expatriation mode on expatriates' quality of life during the pandemic, $\chi^2(3, N = 707) = 10.07, p < 0.05$. AEs were more likely than SIEs to view their quality of life as either “*moderately positive*” (15.2% versus 8.4%) or “*slightly positive*” (36.4% versus 25.3%). In contrast, the pandemic changed the lives of SIEs less than AEs, with 54% of SIEs reporting a “*neutral*” impact on quality of life, while only 34.8% of AEs had the same perception.

Community embeddedness appeared to be a significant resource for expatriates' quality of life during the epidemic. One increase in the unit in community embeddedness resulted in 6.08 more odds of experiencing “*moderately positive*” than “*negative*” influences of the pandemic (Odds Ratio [OR] = 6.08, 95% Confidence Interval [CI] (2.79, 13.26), $p < 0.001$), 3.58 more odds to perceive “*moderately positive*” than “*slightly positive*” experiences (OR = 3.58, 95% CI (1.90, 6.76), $p < 0.001$), and 6.89 times more chances to perceive “*moderately positive*” than “*neutral*” impacts (OR = 6.89, 95% CI

(3.77, 12.5), $p < 0.001$) of the pandemic. Akin to that, as community immersion was raised by one unit, the probability of experiencing “*neutral*” impact increased by 1.91 times compared to perceiving a “*slightly positive*” experience (OR = 1.91, 95% CI (1.32, 2.79), $p < 0.01$).

Lastly, personal initiative appeared to be a strong resource for expatriates to cope with the pandemic. As personal initiative increased by one unit, the odds of being in a “*moderately positive*” class increased by 41.14 times compared to enduring “*negative*” influences (OR = 41.14, 95% CI (14.23, 118.92), $p < 0.001$), by 12.05 times compared to obtain “*neutral*” perception (OR = 12.05, 95% CI (5.23, 27.78), $p < 0.001$), and by 18.96 times compared to perceiving “*slightly positive*” impacts (OR = 18.96, 95% CI (8.38, 42.89), $p < 0.001$). Higher levels of proactivity and persistence similarly resulted in a higher probability of being “*neutral*” in the pandemic compared to experiencing “*negative*” influences (OR = 3.41, 95% CI (1.68, 6.94), $p < 0.01$) and a “*slightly positive*” perception (OR = 1.57, 95% CI (1.01, 2.45), $p < 0.05$). Likewise, those with higher levels of initiative possessed a greater chance of perceiving “*slightly positive*” than “*negative*” changes in quality of life (OR = 2.17, 95% CI (1.12, 4.20), $p < 0.05$).

The results shed light on how the pandemic shaped expatriates’ quality of life, as well as their relationships with work outcomes and explanatory factors. In the following section, we elaborate on the implications of the study results and provide recommendations for practices to support expatriates during and after the pandemic.

Discussion

Contrary to previous studies that used a variable-centered approach, we clearly illustrated that the pandemic did not affect expatriates uniformly. This finding is reflected in our opening quote, “Only when the tide goes out do you discover who’s been swimming naked”, in that some were equipped with significantly more resources than others (“with a bathing suit or without”, so to speak). The results of the data analysis revealed that the pandemic influenced expatriates’ quality of life in four ways: “*negative*”, “*slightly positive*”, “*moderately positive*”, and “*neutral*”. Each class differed from the others in terms of their work outcomes, and most interestingly, the group that perceived a positive impact on their quality of life did not consistently show positive work consequences.

The expatriates who perceived “*moderately positive*” experiences notably reported additional positive outcomes, such as a greater willingness to stay

and enrichment of their career resources. At the same time, this amelioration reduced their readiness to be internationally mobile. The analysis shows that being married, being an AE, having fewer previous mobility experiences, being tightly connected with the host community, and having high levels of initiative and persistence increased the chances of perceiving “*moderately positive*” benefits during the pandemic. Expatriates’ embeddedness with the host-country environment serves as a personal resource that can facilitate coping with country-related challenges and motivate them to stay on the assignment (Andresen, 2015). Thus, these conditions were reliable resources for expatriates to tackle challenges in such turbulent times.

In contrast, expatriates who experienced “*negative*” influences of the pandemic significantly reduced their intention to stay and reported a decline in career resources. The pandemic represented a high-demand situation for them that occasioned physiological or psychological costs and, thus, resource loss (cf. Hobfoll et al., 2018). Consequently, this aggravation increased their international relocation mobility readiness; leaving the current employer and country of residence would allow expatriates to withdraw entirely from the stressful situation in the host country to halt the resource loss spiral and regain resources elsewhere (cf. Hobfoll et al., 2018). This experience was more prevalent among females, divorced expatriates, those with low community embeddedness, and those with low personal initiative. Thus, it is likely that these expatriates had insufficient resources to cope with the crisis, which called for further support from organizations and societies.

We found that the majority of expatriates perceived the impact of the pandemic on their quality of life as “*neutral*”, except for their health and personal safety. Their work outcomes, including their intention to stay and their career resources, were generally less favorable than those who perceived “*moderately positive*” changes, but better than those who had a “*negative*” experience and even those with a “*slightly positive*” perception. The crisis encouraged their tendency to pursue international relocation mobility, in contrast to expatriates who enjoyed “*moderately positive*” benefits. Further analysis pointed out that men, unmarried individuals, SIEs, and those with average connections to the host society and average personal initiative were representative of this group.

Lastly, it is interesting to note that expatriates who had “*slightly positive*” experiences during the pandemic did not benefit at work as much as those who perceived “*moderately positive*” impacts, and their work outcomes were far inferior to those whose lifestyles remained “*neutral*”. We presume that the explanatory factors in this class are responsible for this result. We found that such an experience is associated with being single, living independently,

having relatively low levels of community embeddedness, and having low levels of personal initiative. It has long been known that families play a crucial role in expatriate success (Schütter & Boerner, 2013) by transferring resources to the expatriate. If individuals lack these additional family resources, the expatriate might be less willing to stay abroad (Zimmerman & Darnold, 2009). Thus, although expatriates in this group believed that their quality of life improved during the pandemic, their propensity and ability to use these resources for work outcomes were limited.

Given this, it is positive in terms of work consequences if expatriates can achieve an improvement or at least stabilization of their quality of life during a crisis. Mello and Tomei (2021) showed that the use of flexible work arrangements has a significant effect on the quality of life by making expatriates' work and private lives much easier. It is worth noting that some factors of quality of life actually improved under pandemic conditions, such as health and personal safety or understanding of oneself and life, which may have previously received little attention from many expatriates and organizations (Rosa González et al., 2022; Végh et al., 2022). This could be a call for organizations to exert further efforts to promote these quality-of-life factors, also under non-pandemic conditions, for example, through the provision of medical services, psychological counseling, sports activities, or meditation practices.

There is a need to provide aid to vulnerable expatriates such as women, divorcees, people with less community embeddedness (e.g., newcomers), and those with less initiative and persistence. Key impairments in their lives include insecurity and health impairments, a lack of close friendships, and limited opportunities to learn, socialize, participate in civil activities, and actively recreate (e.g., travel). During the pandemic, meeting these needs presented challenges for both individuals and organizations. Therefore, in similar crises, organizations can alternatively offer their expatriates interactive events and online communication to reduce uncertainty and mitigate loneliness (Schmidt, 2021). They can also equip expatriates with skills to manage virtual and remote work more efficiently, such as technical expertise, time management, and online communication (Schmidt, 2021). Virtual environments can also be used for learning activities, which proved beneficial for several expatriates during the pandemic (Rosa González et al., 2022). For those whose host country language is deficient, it may be beneficial to disseminate preventive information and provide them with an interpreter when needed (e.g., when communicating with health authorities) (cf. Kumar et al., 2021). Lastly, employers should maintain close contact with female expatriates

during a crisis, such as the pandemic, and provide them with information and access to sources of protection (e.g., women's associations, family offices, police, etc.).

On the one hand, the pandemic posed a challenge for many organizations and expatriates. On the other hand, it stimulated some reflections on future Human Resource Management practices for expatriates. For instance, for AEs and married expatriates, transitioning back to the pre-pandemic state may be challenging since they had a positive experience with the altered working arrangements implemented during the pandemic. Many would prefer to introduce more virtual assignments instead of physical ones (Mello & Tomei, 2021; Schmidt, 2021; Végh et al., 2022). In line with that, they may exhibit less motivation to take on long-term assignments (Mello & Tomei, 2021) and require further guarantees of health care and the safety of their families (Végh et al., 2022). Organizations, thus, may need to reposition their global mobility activities by shifting to more virtual work and assignments and advancing their digitalization even after the pandemic. Likewise, the pandemic has shed light on expatriates' needs for personal growth, self-awareness, and self-actualization, which may require the attention of organizations during the post-crisis phase.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Our study has some limitations that may impede the interpretation of the research results. First, the small proportion of AEs in our sample may alter the percentage of latent classes. To confirm our findings, further quantitative research with a larger proportion of AEs is necessary. Second, we conducted this study by employing a sample located across three European countries. The results of the study, therefore, can differ depending on the region. For instance, empirical evidence suggests that expatriates consider their quality of life to be more stable in countries with less stringent regulations (Végh et al., 2022). Similarly, how the host country's government managed the crisis (pandemic), as well as the host country nationals' sentiments, can significantly affect expatriates' perceptions of their lives (Finell et al., 2021; Végh et al., 2022). Lastly, we employed cross-sectional data for the analysis, hence limiting the causality interference of the results. Future research should, therefore, replicate our model with longitudinal data. Furthermore, it is insightful to explore the long-term effects of the pandemic, such as whether the experience of the pandemic influences expatriates' career changes.

Conclusion

In terms of the impact of the pandemic on quality of life, expatriates could be categorized into four main groups: “negative”, “slightly positive”, “moderately positive”, and “neutral” experience. The categorization was also associated with various conditions such as gender, marital status, relocation experiences, community embeddedness, and personal initiative. The respective quality of life experience is a crucial factor that determines expatriates’ intention to stay in the host country and with the employing organization, their international relocation mobility readiness, and their career resources.

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