

## Thriving in Transition: Unpacking the Keys to Expat Retention in Vietnam's Higher Education Landscape

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### ABSTRACT

Expatriate retention is a key concern in international human resource management, especially in emerging economies like Vietnam. In higher education, where foreign academic talent is essential, understanding factors that support expatriate success is critical. Prior studies indicate that perceived organizational support (POS) facilitates adjustment and retention. Additionally, self-regulation is the ability to manage one's own behavior and performance may influence how well expatriates adapt and remain committed. This study investigates the relationships among perceived organizational support, job adjustment, and expatriate retention in Vietnam's higher education sector. It also examines the mediating role of job adjustment and the moderating role of self-regulation. The research presents a novel framework relevant to institutional policy and expatriate management in Vietnam. A quantitative, explanatory design was employed. Using simple random sampling, data were collected from 357 expatriates working in higher education institutions in Vietnam. Data analysis involved regression, moderated multiple regression, and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the conceptual model. Perceived organizational support significantly enhances job adjustment, which in turn positively affects expatriate retention. Job adjustment mediates the relationship between organizational support and retention. Self-regulation, especially in planning and performance moderates the effect of job adjustment on retention, highlighting the importance of both organizational and individual factors. This study underscores the value of organizational support and self-regulation in enhancing expatriate adjustment and retention. It is one of the first to test this model in Vietnam's higher education context. Institutions should support proactive behavior and cultural preparedness to improve expatriate experience and retention in emerging markets.

**Keywords:** Perceived Organizational Support, Job Adjustment, Expatriate Retention, Self-regulation, International Education.

### INTRODUCTION

According to a recent survey by HSBC, Vietnam is ranked 10th for the number of expatriate employees working as professionals, while Switzerland, Singapore and Canada took the top three spots. Over the last few decades, the number of people moving or planning to move abroad has risen significantly. Vietnam is a preferred destination for expatriates based on the HSBC survey conducted among 18,059 expatriate employees in 163

different locations. The results were classified into three distinct components: living, career opportunity and family life. Vietnam was ranked 12th, 3rd, and 20th in these categories. HSBC commented in its report that the attractiveness of Vietnam has expanded immensely in the last few years. Expatriates are setting their vision on the glorious scenery, fascinating culture, and positive work-life balance. Due to the criteria mentioned, Vietnam outranks many other places as one of the most popular selection of expatriates who are already living abroad ("Asiamoney Brokers Poll 2019: HSBC proves its mettle," 2020).

In the context of this study, expatriate academics involves both expatriates and academician. In this context of study, expatriate academics carry the weight of both an expatriate and an academician. However, the synthesis of these two elements creates a new phenomenon that is extremely vague in the sense of expatriates' studies. Being an academician is not an easy job to deliver due to undeniably difficult cognitive practice common to all fields of knowledge (Selmer & Luring, 2015). However, unlike many other types of knowledge workforce, it is assumed that academics must maintain two different values of academia: teaching and academic services. Teaching and academic services require a high level of cognitive energy and affective energy and must operate within a university context (Daniel Lee & Steven, 2001).

According to statistics, nearly 25 percent of the university's academic staff in the world are expatriate academics (Kim et al., 2015). The primary objective of recruiting expatriate academics is to build the international reputation and credibility of the university (Ramalu & Subramaniam, 2019). Expatriate academics are also encouraged to publish in leading journals, apply for research grants successfully and participate in excellent education. Awareness of the workplace helps the expatriate academics to cope with their workplace pressure, and retain positive attitudes is essential. Furthermore, the recent literature on the relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and expatriate showed mixed results. For example, the organization's support practices of 230 expatriate supervisor dyads from three United State Multinational Companies analyzed by Kraimer and Wayne (2004) and the career support for POS have been established as a clear determinant of intentions without any effect on job performances or contextual results. Kawai and Strange (2014) on the other hand, found that POS has a negative effect on work change and affective commitment in their study. The current continuing trend towards globalization in higher education is one factor leading universities to employ more expatriates from developed countries. Thus, meeting the demands of students for international education experience, and a high demand for expatriate scholars.

This phenomenon has imposed a new set of demands concerning expatriate hiring and has created an enormous international labour market for talented academics (Mikula et al., 2018). Due to opportunities arising elsewhere, departure of academics causes concern at many universities in emerging countries, as they need to find suitable replacements often at short notice. Lack of commitment and loyalty to existing institutions creates a multitude of inconveniences. Therefore, it is practically inevitable that a system should evolve reducing the withdrawal rate, improving adaptability, and promoting a successful expatriate workforce (Côté et al., 2021).

The definition of retention, which applies to expatriates' intentions to stay in their foreign role, is closely linked to adaptation (Najeemdeen et al., 2018). Although several studies about the experience of expatriate academics explored adjustment, it is surprising that relatively few expanded their attention to embrace retention and especially given its significance in international human resource management. Furthermore, self-initiated expatriates seem to be very mobile and willing to work in various countries (Qian et al., 2020). Therefore, they are not likely to stay at work for too long if they feel unfavourable conditions for job/non-jobs. Although a clear correlation between adjustment and retention is observed (Côté et al., 2021), the latter definition calls for a longer-term outlook. Therefore, it is more likely they will shift jobs and non-employment conditions in the host country (Liu et al., 2019).

Past research has indicated that the intention of staff to leave and hence increase turnover was negatively linked to corporate engagement. Thus, organizational engagement indicates the importance of the relationship between individuals and their organization (Ott et al., 2019). This close relationship through organisational engagement can shorten the rate of turnover, which thereby minimising the substantial toll imposed on administration through increased recruitment and staff separation responsibilities. Such changes cause significant disruption to the lives of the academics leaving or joining the institution. An expatriate may establish an international assignment to a parent company (from which an expatriate comes and still formally belongs to) and an obligation to a foreign subsidiary or local transaction (where an expatriate undertakes a temporary international assignment). There have been numerous examples of conflicts between the dedication and retention of the parent company (Giorgi et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, the relation between the local operational commitment and retention has been important in certain cases only. The relationship was reported in other cases as irrelevant (Michel et al., 2011). With such contradictions thriving, it may be possible that working conditions temper the connections between the local procedures' commitment and retention. Nonetheless, though foreign tasks endure various difficulties in Asia, such as the financial, cultural, and political climate, western expatriates also have challenges at work, such as high job autonomy, job complexity and lack of control by parent companies (James, 2019).

To date, there is no clear research finding on the relationship between perceived organisational support, self-regulation, job adjustment, and expatriate retention in various Vietnamese university departments. Therefore, this study aimed to examine this knowledge gap by assigning models to investigate the growing trends and changes associated with expatriates in emerging countries, with a focus on expatriates working in the higher education institutions in Vietnam. It is essential to ensure that expatriates have seamless cultural adaptations to the local setting. Thus, it is vital to identify the challenges faced by these expatriates. Furthermore, there is a clear need to explore in greater depth the issues surrounding cultural adaptation and investigate the host country's effects on perceived organisational support, adjustment, and expatriate retention in Vietnam. The main reason driving expatriates to leave is the difficulty to adjust to the new surroundings. Thus, findings from this study can guide the academic institutions to develop appropriate organisational support policies that will improve retention and reduce the turnover rate of expatriates in Vietnam.

Expatriates play a vital role in the internationalization of higher education, particularly in developing countries where global knowledge exchange and academic standards are crucial for institutional advancement. In Vietnam, the higher education sector has increasingly relied on expatriate academics to enhance educational quality, foster research collaboration, and support curriculum development. Despite their contributions, expatriate retention remains a persistent challenge, often due to inadequate organizational support and difficulties in job adjustment.

Although a growing body of literature has examined expatriate management in business and multinational settings, limited research has been dedicated to understanding these dynamics within the higher education context. This oversight is particularly significant given the unique organizational culture, professional expectations, and academic mobility patterns in universities. Addressing this gap is essential for developing retention strategies tailored to educational institutions rather than relying solely on business-derived models. This study contributes to the educational literature by exploring how perceived organizational support and job adjustment influence expatriate retention specifically within Vietnam's higher education sector. By contextualizing these variables in academic settings, the research aims to offer actionable insights for university administrators and policymakers seeking to sustain and support expatriate faculty.

The research problem addressed in this study is the limited understanding of how perceived organizational support and job adjustment influence the retention of expatriate academics in Vietnam's higher education sector, despite their critical role in institutional development and internationalization. To guide the inquiry, this study poses the following research questions:

1. How does perceived organizational support affect expatriate retention in Vietnam's higher education sector?
2. What is the relationship between job adjustment and expatriate retention among academic staff?
3. Does job adjustment mediate the relationship between perceived organizational support and expatriate retention?

The following is how the rest of the paper is organized: The variables (POS, job adjustment, self-regulation, and expatriate retention) and hypotheses formulation are detailed in Section 2. The research approach is defined in Section 3, which includes the population, sampling, and data collection procedures. Section 4 discusses the data processing method and explanation of the research findings, while Section 5 discusses the relationship between POS, job adjustment, self-regulation, and expatriate retention. Section 6 concludes with a discussion of the theoretical and practical ramifications of our results, as well as certain research flaws and assumptions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies performed by different researchers and applicable to the variables of this study were discussed in this section of the article.

### Perceived Organizational Support

According to Carmeli et al. (2007), developing employees' beliefs concerning their welfare, such as valuing input from employees, fulfilling their socio-emotional needs, and showing concern for their well-being, can achieve organizational success. Thus, POS is defined as the employee's belief that the organization values their contribution and cares about their well-being. When employees identify with and adopt the organizational culture, both business and individual employee success are favored. Expatriates often receive more benefits and are rewarded more by their organization than the local employees. Higher rewards are based on equity theory because expatriates may offer more than their local counterparts (Ng & Feldman, 2013). For expatriates, factors like organizational support relating to fair organizational procedures, supervisory support and higher compensatory rewards with better job conditions lead to positive outcomes for both individual employees and their organizations. These beneficial results

of enhanced work performance, reduced incidence of withdrawal and higher affective commitment were revealed in a systematic review of more than 60 studies (Shantz et al., 2016).

Ng and Feldman (2013) mentioned that employees regard POS as a way of ensuring that help is accessible when they must do their job and cope with stressful circumstances successfully. Based on Job Demand-Resources Model, we argue that POS is a type of operational tool that improves the interactions involving employees and their establishment and localities. POS is also a motivating tool for self-initiated expatriates that organizations should include in their administration and culture. Perceived organizational support is the level to which employees consider that their supervisors or managers value their commitment and consider their welfare.

These organizational tools are based on a Job Demands-Resources Model perspective, an occupational stress model in which a mismatch between workload and labour resources place undue stress on the worker. Yongxing et al. (2017) investigated the function of POS in predicting employees' motivation based on self-determination theory. All studies have found POS strong and substantially related to self-reliance and regulated motivation challenged the original hypothesis that only autonomous encouragement should be correlated with POS. To offer a plausible answer, we further examine this discrepancy of these unexpected findings through deconstruction of POS into three dimensions (economic, technical and adjustment) and its effect on autonomous self-initiated expatriates (i.e., voluntary) and controlled incentive (i.e., forced) to work. Financial POS describes the degree to which the company, by different means of compensation and job benefits, is concerned with the financial needs and rewards employee contributions (Bal & De Lange, 2015). Financial POS may provide a lucrative package for expatriates, such as allocation incentives, cost of living changes, and other benefits.

On the other hand, self-initiated expatriates are typically paid according to their professional qualifications and put according to local employees on the pay grid. Financial compensation is a psychological transactional arrangement or trade of interest leading to a commitment to work (Bal & De Lange, 2015). These reciprocal views can inhibit employees' autonomous motivation and increase their managed motivation as they feel that they must do something in return for financial incentives. Our argument is consistent with the observation by self-determination theory researchers that the autonomous motivation of individuals decreases, and regulated motivation increases when they earn contingent monetary payments (Gagné & Deci, 2005). A meta-analytical study also found that external incentives (e.g., money and allowances) undermined self-reliant motivation and substantially increased regulated motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Then, career POS is described as the degree to which the company is interested in its employees' career needs. For example, a mentor may provide career POS for self-initiated expatriates when self-initiated expatriates arrive in a new country with a new job or longer-term career planning (James et al., 2011). Like financial POS, we expect career POS to link with the self-employed motivation of self-initiated expatriates. Within self-determination theory, support for autonomy has been recognized as the most researched factor for autonomous motivation prediction. Organizational activities are considered to promote freedom when organizations make employees aware of their duties, prioritize choice, and monitor and understand employees' views and needs (Simons & Buitendach, 2013). In POS-career, companies involved in employee employment, taking employee goals and feelings into account in making career choices enter a psychological partnership contract with employees. They provide signals to employees that they are free to choose their career paths and goals and will support their careers individually. It increases the autonomous incentive of employees to work. A recent study by Côté et al. (2021) has shown that training programs that improve employee job adjustment (example POS) have positively predicted self-employed motivation.

Researchers have concluded that POS plays a significant role in assessing employee satisfaction. The perception of an organisation's support is a measure of employer loyalty and confidence in the degree to which the business takes care of the well-being of employees, while job satisfaction focuses solely on various aspects or points of view in the workplace. A variety of studies involving different categories of staff, including managers, vendors, and part-time employees, have shown a positive and important association between perceived organizational support and job satisfaction. Research indicates that POS contributes significantly to employee satisfaction (Najeemdeen et al., 2018). Furthermore, Qian et al. (2020) found a positive relationship between organizational support and work satisfaction. In addition, POS has been expected to influence the overall affective reactions of employees to their work, including job satisfaction and an optimistic attitude. There is a strong association between POS and job satisfaction, according to Liu et al. (2019). Researchers argued that POS is strongly correlated to job satisfaction based on the data cited above.

## **Expatriate Retention**

Expatriate teachers are more likely, on their initiative, to be self-initiated expatriates pursuing teaching abroad, who may be impaired by various motivating elements that in turn influence their organizational engagement (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). A large-scale survey of 2,608 self-initiated expatriates in New Zealand found that the dominant motivation factors are culture and job (Shore et al., 2012). In the South Korean family, labor market conditions overseas and foreign experience are at play in the expatriation and adaptation of higher education

scholars, according to (DeConinck, 2010), for whom interaction adjustment turns out to be a challenge. A comparative study of 448 self-initiated and organizational expatriates from Finland was conducted by Suutari and Brewster (2000). The study indicated that interest in international experience and professional growth is the most important motivating factor for both types of expatriates. Yet, interest in internationalism and bad jobs at home are more critical factors for self-initiated expatriates than for organizational expatriates.

In addition to cultural adjustment, the school background and climate also present challenges, especially for expatriate teachers. A qualitative analysis of expatriate teachers working in an international school in Southeast Asia shows that their adaptation may be more threatened by the working atmosphere than the host country's culture (Hamamatsu, 2017). A survey of 30 teachers in Indonesia, Tanzania, Egypt and Argentina describes the key reasons for entering and staying in an international school as: professional development, a productive working atmosphere, a sense of security, and supportive colleagues and administration (Jokinen et al., 2008). Brewster and Suutari (2005) highlight some important factors in their study of teachers in international schools, such as pay, the ability to encounter foreign cultures, and personal circumstances, in addition to administrative leadership. In the meantime, Knight et al. (2017) reached a similar conclusion that teacher turnover in international schools in the Near East and South Asia region is correlated with wage satisfaction and perceived school leadership effectiveness. Hirschi (2012) also addresses the professional difficulties faced by expatriate teachers, which can arise from a lack of acquaintance with the curriculum, students, cultural norms of staff, and local leadership styles.

### **Job Adjustment**

Employees must create favorable conditions for new employees to ensure that the new employees become familiar with their work tasks, conditions, and social environment before taking up a job position (Jonasson et al., 2017). Therefore, considerable effort and time may be invested in the process of recruiting an employee, including selection and final hiring. However, suppose the process of orientation and adjustment is managed efficiently. In that case, becoming familiar with the work, conditions and social environment can take less time, be more effective, and influence the nature of employee relations at all levels, including their attitude to work, organization, supervisors, and other members of their workgroup. A stable psychological trait of readiness and willingness to adjust to career changes is referred to in this context by the word "adaptivity" (Kristensen et al., 2008).

Although the adjustment process to a new place of work is deemed an underutilized field for managing human capital, the efficiency of the progress of adjustment will indicate the outcome of the job of the newly recruited staff. There are three stages for an integrated procedure of professional adjustment for new employees (Lou et al., 2011). The first stage of adjustment is supported by the exposure of freshly recruited employees to the current state of the organization, especially regarding its corporate mission and vision. The second stage of adjustment is to the organization's programs in a valid and economic environment and its external ecosystem. Finally, the third stage of adjustment is to the work standards and other rules within the institution.

Although much has been studied in the cross-cultural adjustment of organizational expatriates (OEs), none of the intercultural adjustments of self-initiated expatriates is currently understood. Wang and Tran (2012) showed that self-initiated expatriates appear to be better modified than OEs. Concerning work adjustment, Awais Bhatti et al. (2013) found self-initiated expatriates to display lower job satisfaction than organizational expatriates. Moreover, they did not empirically measure the self-initiated expatriates' adjustment background. Still, they hypothesized that previous social networking and increased motivation of self-initiated expatriates could affect interaction and adjustment positively. In terms of job satisfaction, they hypothesized that self-initiated expatriates get less work support. Besides, Ramalu and Subramaniam (2019) research implicitly indicated that families and partners positively impact cross-cultural adjustment. In summary, intercultural adjustment varies significantly between self-initiated expatriates and organizational expatriates. Moreover, the precedents of intercultural adjustment by the self-initiated expatriates can also be different from those of the organizational expatriates. Therefore, this research aims to examine the history, relationships, and adjustment factors of self-initiated expatriates in general.

### **Self-Regulation**

Hofmann et al. (2012) expressed that most self-regulated learning interpretations have four general beliefs in common. The first is the active constructive assumption that comes from cognitive aspects. From this standpoint, learners should create their meaning, goals and techniques in their "external" environment and "internal" environment through existing knowledge. A second supposition is a potential for control assumption. In this respect, individuals can track, control, and regulate unique aspects of their cognition, motivation, behaviour, and specific circumstances. This belief, however, does not suggest that humans can control and regulate their cognitive motivation and behaviours (Raver et al., 2011). Instead, individuals expect to improve their learning and then control their awareness, motivation and conduct to achieve their goals. The last general principle is that self-regulatory practices mediate personal and contextual characteristics and real success and achievement. In addition

to cultural, social, individual differences, individual's self-regulation, motivation, and actions are significant factors in achieving their objectives (Fischer et al., 2008).

Academics often enjoy a fair degree of latitude as to how they perform their tasks, even in the case of critical tasks such as prioritizing their daily work duties, choosing tactics to use with a particular client/ student, when and from whom to seek feedback about performance (Shore et al., 2012). Thanks to this degree of latitude, academics burden with a sizable proportion of obligation for governing their own affective, cognitive, and general conduct at work to achieve valuable aims, which has promoted raised concerning the subject of self-regulation among theorists of organizational theory (Selmer & Lauring, 2015).

## RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Figure 1 shows the study framework that will be used in this research.

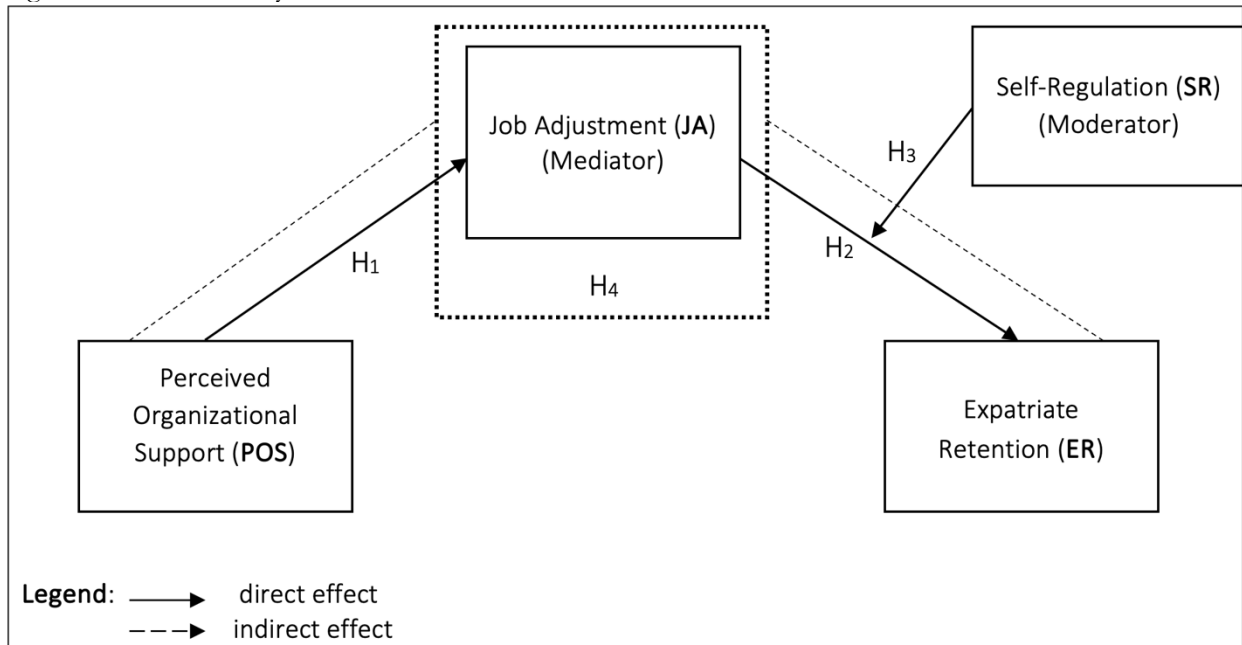


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

### Hypotheses Development

This section hypothesis will be developed for the direct relationship between POS as an independent variable, expatriate retention as a dependent variable mediated by job adjustment and self-regulation as moderator.

#### *POS and Job Adjustment*

The organizational support theory notes that POS considers that employers acknowledge that their jobs and responsibilities value their commitment and care for their welfare (Takeuchi et al., 2009). POS, in turn, can engender a desire in the employee to identify with the welfare of the organization and help achieve its goals. Integrating organizational participation and role position into the employees' social individuality and fortifying their belief that the organization will reward improved results, POS also fulfils the social-emotional needs of its employees. The stronger the bond between expatriates and mentors and the more often they interact with one another, the smoother it would be for expatriates to assimilate appropriate technical skills and establish strong working relationships, thus strengthening their ability to adapt to new jobs. If employers provide their employees with a high degree of support based on reciprocity principles, employees are emotionally dedicated to their organizations, with a low risk of turnover and good job performance, which results in employees who are dedicated and loyal in their work (Allen & Shanock, 2013). As a result, the following hypothesis is proposed in this study.

Hypothesis 1: Perceived organisational support is positively associated with job adjustment in Vietnam's higher education sector.

#### *Job Adjustment and Expatriate Retention*

Companies need to create favorable working conditions for new employees. Favorable conditions can assist them in becoming familiar with their job tasks, work conditions, and social environment as they take up a new job position (Ren et al., 2014). Very often, companies spend a considerable amount of effort and time in the process

of recruiting, selecting, and hiring an employee. Therefore, it should be followed with a similar level of effort. If the adjustment process during the orientation period is managed efficiently, it will take less time for the employees to become familiar with the working conditions and social environment. As a result, their work attitude is better, and they can become more effective at work. Furthermore, they will foster a closer relationship with supervisors and other members of the organization (Richardson & Wong, 2018).

Previous studies indicate a significant relationship between discontent at work and turnover intentions (Toh & DeNisi, 2007). Kraimer et al. (2009) also reported organizational engagement to have the greatest and most direct effect on turnover intentions. This effect was reinforced by reduced absenteeism and turnover in organizations with higher rates of commitment, which found that high influencing commitment predicted lower turnover rates. Although the literature offers an overview of the history of retention research, few studies have explored the subject in relation to law enforcement personnel (Maertz et al., 2016). Studies by Harvey and Moeller (2009) stated that employee satisfaction was the best indicator of organizational engagement in six law enforcement agencies, among other factors. Their research also found a clear correlation between organizational participation and police plans to leave. DeConinck (2010) reported a negative correlation between work satisfaction and the amount of leave taken, plus the lack of incentives for promotion in the organization, for law enforcement personnel. Nonetheless, few studies have explored the causal relationship between work satisfaction, affective involvement, and policy turnover intentions. Based on the previous literature, the researcher hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 2: Job adjustment is positively associated with expatriate retention in the higher education sector in Vietnam.

### ***Self-Regulation***

Self-regulation is frequently exploited imprecisely with social competency. The abstract gateway that relates activation theory, variance arousal theory, conversation of resources theory and discriminatory proficiency is self-regulation. Comparing one's current form with the aim or criterion is a part of regulation, and if there is a disagreement, one may adapt one's behavior to fulfil the criterion (Maertz et al., 2016). The capability to adapt behavior when there is a difference in the theory of self-regulation, an option between alternative actions in response to evolving contingencies and successful evaluation by individuals of situation characteristics are all included in the definition of self-regulation. Positive emotions such as happiness or satisfaction will be generated if a promotion system focuses on self-regulation concentrates on growth and accomplishment with favorable outcomes. However, if the outcome is unfavorable, it may cause negative emotional reactions such as sadness or disappointment (Kawai & Mohr, 2015).

Another approach is to investigate the essence of emotions that expatriates will feel in their intercultural meetings. Although stress has been considered in existing research on expatriate adjustment, the impact of discrete emotions on expatriate adjustment is scarce. Emotions are affective states of high intensity that last for a short time but can nevertheless be extremely important in forming the interpersonal exchanges between individuals (Selmer & Luring, 2015). For example, the protagonist can achieve his goals, yet negative emotions occur when they are torn by accomplishing their aims. Likewise, the expatriate is likely to be torn by achieving his or her goals, setting the stage for negative emotions such as anger or anxiety to emerge. Therefore, it is crucial to know how an expatriate manages the emotions he/she encounters and their effects on his/her work and interaction adjustments. This reaction to success is a subject that expatriate researchers have seldom explored, while organization science is now much more than willing to engage in emotional research (Harvey & Moeller, 2009). In our view, this represents a crucial weakness in literature as the emotional effects shape judgments and impact on the other party's reactions. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 3: Self-regulation moderates the relationship between job adjustment and expatriate retention. Self-regulation will enhance the positive relationship between job adjustment and expatriate retention in the higher education sector in Vietnam.

### ***Job Adjustment***

Doherty (2013), in their study on job satisfaction and organisational support, drew upon Herzberg's Motivational Theory of Hygiene Factors and Motivational Factors. They found that employees' perception of organisational support can positively affect job satisfaction and that stressful work functions may contribute to dissatisfaction. Toh and DeNisi (2007) indicated the influence management support had on job adjustment and organisational commitment and found a statistically significant impact, although it may not significantly impact organisational commitment. Takeuchi et al. (2009) analysed the influence of employee perception on organisational support, and findings indicated strong effects of role ambiguity and role conflict on employee performance and employee turnover. The study further notes that the company actively promotes employee's views of corporate

policies and activities. Koo Moon et al. (2012), in their study, stated that job adjustment has a mediating effect on perception towards organization support and effectiveness of training. Their study further asserts that a positive perception towards organizational support will improve job adjustment. According to Krause et al. (2010) posited that in the event of the existence of a direct and positive relationship between three variables that one of these variables might mediate the relationship between the other two variables. Based on that, this study assumes:

Hypothesis 4: Job adjustment mediates the relationship between POS and expatriate retention in the higher education sector in Vietnam.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a quantitative, explanatory research design to examine the relationships between perceived organizational support, job adjustment, and expatriate retention in Vietnam's higher education sector. Data were collected using a structured web-based questionnaire distributed via Google Docs to expatriate academic staff listed on expat.com Vietnam. The target population consisted of expatriate academics working in higher education institutions in Ho Chi Minh City. A simple random sampling technique was used to ensure a representative sample. Out of 600 questionnaires distributed, 364 responses were received, of which 357 were deemed valid for analysis.

The questionnaire included validated measurement items adapted from prior studies to assess four main constructs: perceived organizational support, job adjustment, self-regulation, and expatriate retention. Each item was measured using a 5-point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to test the conceptual framework and hypotheses. Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to assess reliability and validity. Additionally, moderation and mediation analyses were performed to explore the roles of self-regulation and job adjustment in the hypothesized relationships.

## **RESULTS**

### **Data Collection and Sample**

Data were collected using a structured online questionnaire distributed via Google Docs to expatriate academic staff recruited through expat.com Vietnam, a digital platform commonly used by expatriates residing in the country. While this approach enabled efficient access to the target population, it also presents a limitation in terms of sample representativeness, as it may exclude expatriates not registered on or actively using the platform, thereby introducing potential selection bias.

The study employed a simple random sampling technique from the pool of available contacts. A total of 600 invitations were sent out, with 364 responses received. After screening for completeness and relevance, 357 responses were retained for analysis. To ensure relevance and diversity among respondents, participation was limited to self-initiated expatriates currently employed in higher education institutions in Ho Chi Minh City. Participants were required to confirm their status as full-time academic staff and to have a minimum of one year of teaching experience in Vietnam to ensure contextual familiarity and response validity. Basic demographic data such as nationality, education level, and years of experience were also collected to capture a diverse respondent profile.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the INTI International University Research Ethics Committee (PA24-2024-ITU3290). Participants were informed of their confidentiality, the voluntary nature of the study, and the intended use of their data for research purposes only.

The descriptive analysis for the impact of POS on job adjustment, the impact of job adjustment on expatriate retention as the moderating and mediating effect of self-regulation and job adjustment accordingly was explained by the number of the respondents (N), mean, standard deviation and the number of items. This section was to identify the respondent's demographic profiles from expatriate academic staff working in the higher education sector in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

### **Demographic Profile of the Respondents**

The demographic data revealed a balanced gender distribution among respondents, with 50.1% identifying as female and 49.9% as male. A notable pattern emerged in terms of regional representation: Middle Eastern expatriates comprised the largest group (35.6%), followed by Canadians (23.5%), while other nationalities such as British (2.8%) and Chinese (1.7%) were underrepresented. This overrepresentation of Middle Eastern respondents

may introduce cultural or regional bias, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to the broader expatriate academic population in Vietnam.

In terms of academic qualifications, the majority held graduate (38.1%) or postgraduate (37.0%) degrees, with most respondents (38.1%) having between 4–6 years of work experience. Additionally, a substantial proportion (37.5%) had been working in Vietnam for two years, suggesting that the sample included relatively settled expatriates with moderate local experience. These demographic patterns should be considered when interpreting the results, especially regarding cultural adaptation and retention factors that may vary across national backgrounds.

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including gender, race, category, age, working experience, and period of work collected from the 357 expatriate retention staff. Half of the respondents (50.1%) were females. Most of the respondents were Middle Easterners (35.6%), followed by Canadians (23.5%). Meanwhile, Americans and French accounted for 13.2 percent of the respondents, respectively. Only 1.7 percent of them were from China. Among the respondents, 38.1 percent were graduate holders, followed by 37 percent of postgraduate holders and 24.9 percent of diploma holders. About one-quarter (24.9%) were within the age group of 26-30 years, and another 18.8 percent were younger than 25 years old. Among the respondents, 38.1 percent had 4-6 years of working experience, followed by 35.9 percent with only 1-3 years of experience. The rest were more senior with 7-9 years of working experience (26.1%). As for the period of work, most of the respondents have been working for two years (37.5%) while only 5.3 percent has worked for more than five years in the current position.

**Table 1.** Demographic profile of respondents

Demographic		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	178	49.1
	Female	179	50.1
Race	American	47	13.2
	British	10	2.8
	Chinese	6	1.7
	French	47	13.2
	Canadian	84	23.5
	Middle Eastern	127	35.6
	Others	36	10.1
Category	Postgraduate	132	37.0
	Graduate	136	38.1
	Diploma	89	24.9
Age	<25	67	18.8
	26-30	133	24.9
	31-35	89	19.0
	36-40	68	37.3
Experience of working	1-3 years	128	35.9
	4-6 years	136	38.1
	7-9 years	93	26.1
Period of work	1 year	74	20.7
	2 years	134	37.5
	3 years	72	20.2
	4 years	58	16.2
	>5 years	19	5.3

### *Normality Testing*

A normality test is a test that has been used to measure the normal distribution of the data set. The primary criterion for trials for the assessment of the normality is Kolmogorov Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test. With the large sample size ( $>40$ ), Kolmogorov-Smirnov was used for the evaluation of normality and the Shapiro-Wilk test used in sample size ( $<40$ ). As this present study sample size was 357 ( $>40$ ), the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine the normality of data (Thadewald & Büning, 2007). In the examination of normalcy, a non-significant result ( $p > .05$ ) indicates normal distribution. To support the decision to proceed with parametric analysis, skewness and kurtosis values were examined and found to fall within the acceptable range of  $\pm 1$ , indicating that the distributions were approximately normal.

In this regard, the parametric test will be used for statistical analysis. However, if the significant values ( $p < .05$ ) it is still considered as a normal distribution if the two mean values differences compared (mean and 5% mean trimmed) was not too different and the value of skewness and kurtosis in the range of  $\pm 1$ . Table 2 shows all variables has a significant value ( $p < 0.05$ ). The significant value of all variables was normally distributed. The differences of the two mean values compared (mean and 5% mean trimmed) were not to differ, and the amount of skewness and kurtosis in the range of  $\pm 1$ .

**Table 2.** Normality tests of variables

Kolmogorov-Smirnov							
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Mean	5% Trimmed mean	Skewness	Kurtosis
Perceived Organisational Support	.096	357	.000*	.020	3.74	.129	.257
Job Adjustment	.081	357	.000*	.014	3.73	.129	.257
Expatriate Retention	.077	357	.000*	.021	3.71	.129	.257
Self-Regulation	.079	357	.000*	.022	3.71	.129	.257

### a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

#### *Measurement Model Evaluation*

The measurement model was assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to evaluate the reliability and validity of the constructs. All model fit indices met recommended thresholds, indicating a good model fit (e.g., RMSEA  $< 0.08$ ; GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI, and TLI  $> 0.90$ ). In addition, composite reliability (CR) values for all constructs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, demonstrating strong internal consistency. Specifically, CR values ranged from 0.882 to 0.916 across the four constructs. Likewise, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each construct surpassed the 0.50 benchmark, confirming acceptable levels of convergent validity. These results support the reliability and construct validity of the measurement model used in this study.

In illustrating Table 3 of CFA for the construct of POS, JA, SR and ER, which have nine items, ten items, nine items and six items respectively where all the items' factor loadings were more than 0.5 and their AVE was more than the recommended value of 0.5 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Therefore, none of the items were deleted. Thus, it can be concluded that all the items achieved adequate convergent validity (Hair et al., 2017).

#### *Common Method Bias and Non-Response Bias*

To address potential common method bias (CMB), both procedural and statistical remedies were implemented in accordance with Podsakoff et al. (2003). Procedurally, the survey design incorporated several controls to reduce bias, including randomizing the order of questions, using neutral and non-leading language, and separating items by constructing psychologically distance related questions. Respondents were also assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and informed that there were no right or wrong answers, to minimize evaluation apprehension and socially desirable responses. Statistically, Harman's single-factor test was conducted to assess the presence of CMB. The results showed that no single factor accounted for the majority of variance (i.e., less than 50%), indicating that common method variance was not a serious concern in this study.

When data is obtained from a single source, common method bias may increase or decrease the correlation between constructs, according to Podsakoff et al. (2003). To reduce the evaluation anxiety of the participants, we emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers and assured confidentiality and anonymity of participants in the cover letter. We followed Podsakoff et al. (2003) recommendation by conducting Harman's single-factor test to report common method variance (CMV). If a first factor accounts for more than 50 percent of the variance among variables, common method bias may be a serious problem (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Much to our relief, we reported no CMV problem in the study.

**Table 3.** Factor loadings, Ave, and construct reliability of the variables

Constructs	Items	Factor Loadings	Mean	SD	Construct Reliability	AVE
Perceived Organizational Support	POSQ1	0.856	3.584	1.178	0.911	0.7113
	POSQ2	0.767	3.565	1.165		
	POSQ3	0.833	3.561	1.121		
	POSQ4	0.820	3.621	1.108		
	POSQ5	0.791	3.588	1.112		
	POSQ6	0.923	3.584	1.145		
	POSQ7	0.771	3.586	1.117		
	POSQ8	0.813	3.572	1.106		
	POSQ9	0.802	3.136	1.113		
Job Adjustment	JAQ1	0.794	3.202	1.091	0.898	0.672
	JAQ2	0.806	3.228	1.087		
	JAQ3	0.811	3.122	1.112		
	JAQ4	0.797	3.163	1.098		
	JAQ5	0.815	3.242	1.097		
	JAQ6	0.824	3.356	1.095		
	JAQ7	0.799	3.312	1.087		
	JAQ8	0.782	3.335	1.110		
	JAQ9	0.880	3.378	1.117		
Expatriate Retention	ERQ1	0.897	3.784	1.123	0.882	0.677
	ERQ2	0.857	3.684	1.169		
	ERQ3	0.866	3.774	1.146		
	ERQ4	0.812	3.783	1.192		
	ERQ5	0.826	3.681	1.167		
	ERQ6	0.796	3.664	1.127		
Self-Regulation	SRQ1	0.781	3.773	1.123	0.916	0.688
	SRQ2	0.794	3.761	1.121		
	SRQ3	0.816	3.758	1.187		
	SRQ4	0.825	3.689	1.112		
	SRQ5	0.841	3.664	1.198		
	SRQ6	0.817	3.719	1.187		
	SRQ7	0.807	3.723	1.195		
	SRQ8	0.797	3.682	1.187		
	SRQ9	0.779	3.669	1.110		
	SRQ10	0.803	3.687	1.123		

### Findings of Hypotheses

Table 4 shows a significant positive relationship between POS and job adjustment with a  $p$ -value of 0.010. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Hypothesis 2 was tested using the same technique. The result shows a significant positive relationship between job adjustment and expatriate retention with a  $p$ -value of 0.005. Therefore, H2 was supported.

**Table 4.** Path co-efficient results

		$\beta$	S.E.	Beta	C.R.	P	Decision
H1	POS $\rightarrow$ JA	0.928	0.775	0.351	2.521	0.010	Supported
H2	JA $\rightarrow$ ER	0.810	0.621	0.264	3.120	0.005	Supported

Note: POS = perceived organizational support, JA = job adjustment, ER = expatriate retention

### Analyzing the Moderating Effect

This study used PLS-SEM to assess how self-regulation moderates the relationship between job adjustment and expatriate retention and found that self-regulation enhanced the positive relationship between job adjustment and expatriate retention. Guilford's rule of thumb was applied (Akter et al., 2017). Based on the standard, if the relationship is  $<0.20$ , it is considered a negligible relationship. The range between 0.41-0.70 indicates a moderate correlation, whereas  $>0.90$  is considered a stable relationship. Table 5 shows a significant value in which the sample

mean, and SD were  $0.621 \pm 0.253$  ( $p$ -value = 0.003). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported by sufficient statistical evidence. Thus, self-regulation moderates the relationship between job adjustment and expatriate retention.

**Table 5.** Path co-efficient result

		$\beta$	S.E.	Beta	C.R.	P	Decision
H3	SRS*JA $\rightarrow$ ERQ	0.810	0.621	0.253	3.120	0.003	Supported

Note: SRS = self-regulation, JA = job adjustment, ERQ = expatriate retention

### Analyzing the Mediating Effect

PLS-SEM was used to identify how job adjustment mediates the relationship between POS and expatriate retention. The results showed that the level of job adjustment mediated the relationship between POS and expatriate retention. As illustrated in Table 6 below, the result indicated that the bias-corrected 95% percentile confidence interval (Beta = 0.085, P = 0.017) and does not include zero in between LB and UB. This finding revealed that the indirect effect of POS on expatriate retention through mediator job adjustment is statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance. In explaining the mediation effect, the result of the direct model and the mediation model were compared. Since the direct effect was statistically significant, it could be concluded that job adjustment partially mediated the relationship between POS and expatriate retention. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was supported by sufficient statistical evidence. Thus, job adjustment partially mediates in the relationship between POS and expatriate retention.

**Table 6.** Mediation effect result

Hypothesized Path	Beta	P-Value	95% Bootstrap		Decision
			LL	UL	
Direct Model					
POS $\rightarrow$ ER	0.820	0.000			
Mediation Model					
JA $\rightarrow$ POS $\rightarrow$ ER	0.664	0.002			
Std. Indirect Effect	0.085	0.017	0.016	0.189	Partial Mediation

Note: POS = perceived organizational support, ER = expatriate retention, JA = job adjustment

## DISCUSSIONS

Regarding Hypothesis 1, POS was found to be positively associated with job adjustment. Previous research by Carmeli et al. (2007) on the performance of expatriate teachers in Thailand stated that POS has a direct correlational effect on job adjustment. The result is also consistent with past research that showed good organisational support for employees would encourage them to adapt to their work, environment, and organisation regulations. In addition, Shanock and Eisenberger (2006) mentioned that high-level employee POS (financial assistance, family support, co-worker support & career path) facilitates the employees' adjustment with their co-employees. A more effortless adjustment helps them to abide by organisational rules and work procedures. Although expatriates are employees, there might be some differences as expatriates must cope with many changes in their lives. Expatriates might have higher socio-emotional needs than employees as their decision to move abroad can greatly impact their lives. To satisfy these socio-emotional needs, expatriates may need a higher level of POS or different POS practices than employees.

Consequently, POS might have a different effect on job satisfaction for expatriates than for employees. Therefore, the results may be different in this study. Nevertheless, all these findings echoed the sentiment of this study that expatriates can adapt better to a new cultural setting when their individual needs in the work environment are addressed which, in turn, improves their performance and job satisfaction.

As for Hypothesis 2, job adjustment was positively associated with expatriate retention, as shown in Table 4. In other words, job adjustment directly influences expatriate retention. It is believed that the organization will reap sound output efficiency if their expatriate staff have a high degree of job adjustment. Similarly, Jonasson et al. (2017) research on the impacts of social assistance and transition leadership on expatriate adjustment and efficiency also showed a strong positive association between expatriate retention and job adjustment. The results were also consistent with Sutari and Brewster (2000). A supportive relationship was observed between expatriate retention and job adjustment and between employee attitude change and background efficiency of the organisation. In many instances, job adjustment can be a turning point for the employees to stay on their targets. One way to improve job adjustment is via attractive work benefits such as financial and lifestyle perks (Awais Bhatti et al., 2013). It might thus be possible that only financial incentives are influencing the expatriate's retention. Another possible

explanation might be that instead of POS strengthening the expatriate's level of job adjustment, they reinforce each other. So, it becomes apparent that POS might work as a moderator on the relationship between the expatriate's job adjustment and the intention to complete the assignment. For example, expatriates with a high level of job adjustment may perceive their organizational support as higher than people with a low level of job adjustment. This would thus change the relation into a moderating one instead of a mediating relation.

The moderating effect of self-regulation on the relationship between job adjustment and expatriate retention was tested using PLS-SEM. The results showed a significant interaction effect ( $\beta = 0.253$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ), supporting Hypothesis 3 (see Table 6). Theoretically, this finding underscores the role of self-regulation as a personal resource that enhances an expatriate's capacity to adapt to new work environments. Individuals with higher self-regulation are better equipped to manage emotional responses, maintain goal focus, and persist through cultural and organizational challenges. As such, even when job adjustment is difficult, expatriates with strong self-regulatory skills are more likely to stay committed to their roles, thereby strengthening the link between adjustment and retention.

The mediating effect of job adjustment in the relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and expatriate retention was also confirmed (indirect effect  $\beta = 0.085$ ,  $p = 0.017$ ), validating Hypothesis 4. This suggests that POS contributes to retention not only directly but also indirectly by improving expatriates' ability to adjust to their work environment. From a theoretical standpoint, this aligns with social exchange theory, where employees interpret organizational support as a signal of value and care, prompting a sense of obligation to reciprocate through greater engagement and retention. Job adjustment acts as the mechanism through which this reciprocation is realized, enabling expatriates to better navigate job roles, expectations, and interpersonal dynamics in a foreign context.

These findings highlight the dual importance of organizational and individual-level factors in expatriate retention and suggest that effective retention strategies should focus not only on institutional support but also on building expatriates' self-regulatory capacities.

In line with the social exchange perspective, expatriates seem to become involved deeply in the organization's activities to reciprocate for its caring about and its responsibility for future career development. Employees' perceptions of the organization's dedication to their well-being considering career planning contribute to enhancing expatriates' job performance via job adjustment and retention. In this study, we thus contributed to opening the black box of the mechanism that can realize superior expatriate performance. In short, the study found a constructive relationship between job adjustment and the task performance of the employees, as well as a positive relationship between expatriate retention and their performance (Kristensen et al., 2008).

Unlike previous research, this study focused on retaining expatriate academics in a developing country like Vietnam. Thus, it has provided a unique outlook. In this age of globalisation of educational institutions, academic executives must commit considerable resources to optimise the global experience of expatriates to attract and retain these essential scholars. Support of these strategic expatriate roles will enhance the survival and growth of these institutions. A developing nation like Vietnam may not be an attractive option for many expatriates with global experience and skills. However, given the beneficial impact of hiring expatriate academics, as shown in this study, the relevant stakeholders should tap into the research findings to support the university's continued progress.

## CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of POS on job adjustment and retention rates among expatriate employees and the influence of the moderating role of self-regulation. The results showed a positive impact of POS on job adjustment among expatriate employees. Furthermore, the significant results from this research can be a benchmark to be discussed by practitioners and scholars. Future researchers can further explore different types of expatriates in other countries or expatriates in different occupations to obtain a broader perspective.

## IMPLICATIONS

In terms of theoretical implications, the study first contributes to the existing literature on the effects of POS on job adjustment and the retention rate among expatriates. Although personality characteristics have been shown to predict various forms of behaviour, their relationship with self-regulation is largely unknown, especially with job adjustment playing the mediating role. Our study findings were able to offer more evidence in this area. To begin, the findings of this study suggest that HR managers should provide direct and indirect support to expatriates and their families in terms of language and cultural training, continuous communication with expatriates during international assignments, career development, logistical assistance, family mentoring, psychological counselling,

job search, self-development, and other areas. This direct and indirect assistance would assist expatriates, and their families carry out their work tasks in a safe atmosphere, interact with host country residents, and adjust to their new surroundings. Direct and indirect assistance will not only assist expatriates in adjusting to life in the host country in terms of employment, engagement, and general transition. Still, it will also assist expatriates in achieving their job goals, improving their interactions with host country nationals, and overall success. Furthermore, overt, and indirect sponsorship will foster an atmosphere that encourages expatriates and citizens of host countries to work hard to accomplish organizational goals.

Before coming to work in Vietnam, expatriates are attracted by the fact that they will experience a different cultural, political, and social environment. However, they will need to adjust and adapt to it (Simons & Buitendach, 2013). This study has shown that POS and job adjustment play a critical role in enhancing expatriate retention and improving their performance through the moderating role of the self-regulation mechanism. Therefore, the university management needs to provide expatriates with sufficient training and opportunities to acquire proactive behaviour that can be applied in their daily assignments. Furthermore, universities need to implement support practices to fulfil the needs of expatriates at the time of hiring. Such practices should be complemented with the necessary resources for them to adapt to stress and challenges. Apart from that, university managers must establish the necessary mechanisms that can recognise and respect the expertise of global expatriates and leverage it to their current work assignments. If an expatriate perceives job POS positively, he or she is more likely to see the company's offer of an expatriate assignment as a valuable career opportunity and be more attentive to achieving the assignment. Also, by being more dedicated, the expatriate can repay the employer for this possible career-enhancing opportunity. Furthermore, financial POS was associated with a favourable relationship between dedication to the international facility and mission success. In short, POS, job adjustment, self-regulation and expatriate retention will be beneficial to both university management and individual expatriates.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study had several limitations. First, its focus was on the effects of POS and job adjustment on expatriate retention. It must be recognized that the researchers attempted to conduct the study to produce accurate results. Limitations that should be noted are as follows. First, the population of expatriate academics as the target group working in the higher education sector in Vietnam may be a unique population. Second, the relation between POS on job adjustment was examined, but no comparison of the performance levels and different adjustment levels in various organizations was made. Last, in this study, expatriate academics were not separated by nationality. Other higher educational institutions and users should be aware of these points when applying the results of this study.

Future studies can investigate a qualitative design study to establish more projections of expatriates' turnover and the relevant reasons. Future research can also assess the characteristics of expatriates that determine if they have imaginative or conventional job attitudes. This study covered a wide range of nationalities. Thus, future studies can recruit a larger sample size to investigate whether nationality plays a role in predicting expatriates' attitudes in their professions. Furthermore, workforce development programmes can be paired with expatriate specific frameworks to facilitate job management in the future. Thus, it would be possible to predict the impact of various career phases of expatriates, giving major significance to future inquiry. Finally, like-minded researchers can consider recruiting participants using different sources and methods to obtain more comprehensive and less biased results.

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