

**Flourishing beyond borders: Character strengths,
resilience and self-perceived well-being of the
accompanying expatriate partner during
international relocation**

T Botha

 **orcid.org / 0000-0002-8823-4877**

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology at the
North-West University

Promoter: Prof JC Potgieter

Co-promoter: Prof KFH Botha

Examination: November 2019

Student number: 28382188

Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to accompanying expatriate partners living in Africa. Thank you for your willingness to share your personal experiences with us. I feel truly humbled and privileged having learned more about your life abroad.

May you flourish beyond borders!

“Moving from country to country is the easy bit. Anyone can pack up a kitchen, or a closet, but it takes guts and courage to walk away from one life, to say goodbye to everything you know. To leave the comfort of the familiar and loved, to begin a new life from scratch – That is when the fearless and the brave stand up.”

(Kirsty Rice)

Acknowledgements

Undertaking this PhD has been a daring adventure and life-changing experience.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to:

- My promoter, Professor Johan Potgieter. I feel extremely privileged and blessed having had you as the promoter of this study – I could not have wished for a better mentor and companion with whom to share this precious journey. Thank you for believing in the worthiness of our topic, but also for your confidence in me. Thank you for your guidance, patience, support, constructive feedback and continuous encouragement throughout this study. The past four years included tears of laughter, happiness, sadness and stress; but also cappuccinos, pizza and wine – all of which will be etched into my memory forever. Thank you for now being regarded as a close friend.
- My co-promoter, Professor Karel Botha. Thank you for your valuable input in this study. Your expertise in qualitative research is something I admire.
- Dr Carlien Kahl – Thank you for sharing your expert knowledge on qualitative research methodology with me, acting as external coding reviewer and your moral support.
- Mr Nestus Venter – Thank you for the prompt, professional and kind way in which you assisted me in the North-West University library.
- Mrs Christien Terblanche for the language editing. Thank you for the meticulous work you have done.
- Professor Suria Ellis and Mrs Marelize Pretorius at the SCS for assisting with data-analysis.
- North-West University for granting me a bursary from 2016 – 2018.
- The South African Women’s Group of Tanzania who assisted with the initial recruitment process and Anél van der Walt who played a leading role.
- The 110 South African AEPs who took part in this study. Without you, this study would not have been possible.
- The expat friends I made in Dar. I treasure our times together and miss you every day.

- My husband, Francois. Thank you for your love, patience, continuous moral support, encouragement and faith in me. Thank you for always expressing how proud you are of me. You not only made my PhD journey financially possible, but you provided me with the emotional support and companionship that I needed. You are my best friend and deepest love. I am looking forward to sharing many more adventures with you.
- Our two beautiful daughters, Kari and Nina. You are the bravest girls I know, and the biggest blessings in my life! Your love has given me the extra strength and motivation to successfully complete this PhD. Thank you for your never-ending encouragement and also understanding when I often had to miss out on special events. When I started this journey you were little girls living in a foreign country, today you are resilient young ladies and my greatest pride... I love you to the moon and back.
- My parents, Pieter and Karina – Thank you for your unconditional love, support and for always encouraging me to pursue my dreams. Your prayers have carried me through every stage of my personal, academic and professional life. You encompass all that is beautiful and kind in this world.
- My siblings, Roelof, Anzelle, Almarié, Helmut, Marguerite, Theo and Elmarié - Thank you for your continuous support and love along the way. I am lucky to have been blessed with you in my life.
- My sisters and best friends, Ammie and Margsie – You have always been my moral compass, voice of reason, and safe place. Thank you for encouraging me when I felt overwhelmed by self-doubt. You are an inspiration to anyone who has the privilege of knowing you. Thank you for always making me laugh. My love for you can hardly be expressed in words.
- My niece and friend, Nita – Your life is the working definition of grit, resilience and optimism. In 2000, you were the one to take me to RAU for M.Ed (Psych) selection, and you have been a constant source of support and encouragement throughout. Thank you for being part of my life.
- My friends – You know who you are. You are precious and I carry you deep in my heart. Thank you for always being there for me.

- My Heavenly Father – Thank you for Your ever-present love and grace and for granting me the wisdom, courage, health and strength to successfully complete this PhD journey. You are *always* enough.

For Kari and Nina:

"Always remember, you are braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, smarter than you think, and twice as beautiful as you've ever imagined."

(Dr Seuss)

Preface

- This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology at the North-West University, Potchefstroom.
- Professor Johan C Potgieter acted as promoter and Professor Karel FH Botha as co-promoter.
- The thesis is presented in article format in accordance with the guidelines set out by the North-West University. However, it is presented as a research unit (i.e. integrated manuscript), with cross-referencing where appropriate. Cross-reference citations will be adjusted for publications where applicable.
- The page numbering of the manuscript is consecutive. Each article will be numbered separately for publication.
- References and editorial style are prescribed by and formatted according to the American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines (6th edition).
- The articles were prepared for publication in the following local or international accredited academic journals:
 - Article 1 (Chapter 2): *South African Journal of Psychology* (SAJP) (Submitted)
 - Article 2 (Chapter 3): *Journal of Global Mobility: The Home of Expatriate Management Research* (JGM) (Submitted)
 - Article 3 (Chapter 4): *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology* (SAJIP)
- Professors Johan Potgieter and Suria Ellis edited and co-authored Article 1 (cf. Chapter 2), and Professors Johan Potgieter and Karel Botha guided the research process, edited and co-authored Articles 2 and 3 (cf. Chapter 3 and 4).
- The guidelines for submission to the respective journals are attached in Addendum E. Please note that technical aspects such as word count, font size, headings and spacing will be altered accordingly and that the guidelines of the respective journals will be strictly adhered to when the articles are submitted for publication.

- Author guidelines for the *Journal of Global Mobility: The Home of Expatriate Management Research* stipulate that Harvard editorial style be used throughout the article. For the purpose of examination and to ensure uniformity of this manuscript, APA guidelines are followed throughout. Please note that the necessary adjustments were made when the article was submitted for publication.
- The co-authors of the three articles have given consent for submission as well as examination towards obtaining a PhD in Psychology.
- “She” or “her” are used as personal pronouns referring to the AEP. The authors’ intent is non-sexist.
- The entire manuscript was language edited by Mrs Christien Terblanche.

Declaration by the researcher

I, Truida Botha, hereby declare that the thesis titled *Flourishing beyond borders: Character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being of the accompanying expatriate partner during international relocation*, which I herewith submit to the North-West University, Potchefstroom campus, in compliance with the requirements set for the degree **Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology**, is my work and has been language edited. All references used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged.



.....
Signature: T. Botha

Student number: 28382188

Date: 25 November 2019

Declaration by the language editor



Director: CME Terblanche - BA (Pol Sc), BA Hons (Eng), MA (Eng), TEFL
22 Strydom Street Tel 082 821 3083
Baillie Park, 2531 cumlaudelanguage@gmail.com

DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

I, Christina Maria Etrechia Terblanche, hereby declare that I edited the
research study titled:

***Flourishing beyond borders: Character strengths, resilience and
self-perceived well-being of the accompanying expatriate partner
during international relocation***

for **Truida Botha** for the purpose of submission as a postgraduate research
study. Changes were indicated in track changes and implementation was
left to the author.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'CME Terblanche'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

CME Terblanche

Cum Laude Language Practitioners (CC)

South African Translators Institute accr nr: 1001066

Full member of the Professional Editors Guild

Turnitin Digital Receipt



Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author: **CARLIEN KAHL**
 Assignment title: **TRUIDA THESIS TURN-IT-IN**
 Submission title: **12857734:Turnitin_document.docx**
 File name: **ents_220db3d5-f5b7-4592-880c-05...**
 File size: **253.59K**
 Page count: **115**
 Word count: **31,779**
 Character count: **176,484**
 Submission date: **20-Nov-2019 10:31AM (UTC+0200)**
 Submission ID: **1217790813**



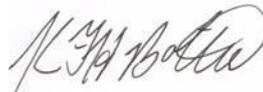
Letter of permission

Professors Johan C Potgieter (promoter) and Karel FH Botha (co-promoter) hereby grant permission that the first author, Truida Botha, may submit the following manuscript for the purposes of examination towards obtaining a PhD degree in Psychology:

Flourishing beyond borders: Character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being of the accompanying expatriate partner during international relocation.



Prof. JC Potgieter
Promoter



Prof. KFH Botha
Co-promoter

Summary

The process of expatriation presents many challenges to the working partner, the accompanying expatriate partner (AEP), as well as their families. One of the most cited reasons for failed expatriate assignments is the unhappiness or the inability of the spouse to adjust in the host country. The need for psychological support is evident, which makes it important to explore and find ways to facilitate AEPs' mental health. This should involve recognizing and making optimal use of their personal resources, such as character strengths and resilience. Even though there are multi-national companies (MNCs) and psychologists who offer training and assistance prior to expatriation, insufficient attention has been given to the mental health of the AEP. This study aimed to address this extant gap in research and practice.

In an effort to gain an understanding of the character strengths, resilience and well-being of the South African AEP, the research study consisted of three sub-studies conducted in three phases. Each phase is reported in a separate research article (cf. Chapters 2, 3 and 4). The core question for the overall study was: Do the character strengths and resilience of AEPs play a role in their self-perceived well-being during international relocation? The following research questions were formulated and addressed in the respective articles: (a) What are the character strengths, levels of resilience, and self-perceived well-being of AEPs during international relocation? (Article 1); (b) What are the significant associations between the character strengths, levels of resilience, and self-perceived well-being of AEPs during international relocation? (Article 1); (c) How do AEPs subjectively experience the relationship between their character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being? (Article 2); (d) How do their experiences inform our understanding of the mental well-being of AEPs? (Article 2); and (e) How can character strengths and resilience be enhanced to ultimately facilitate the well-being of AEPs? (Article 3).

A multimethod research design was used, where Phase 1 followed a quantitative approach and Phases 2 and 3 followed a qualitative approach. In Phase 1, three standardised questionnaires (i.e. VIA-72, RS and MHC-SF) were used to describe 110 participating South African AEPs' character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being, where after the associations between these constructs were determined and proposed in a structural equations model. In Phase 2, a smaller sample group (n=17) answered 16 semi-structured, open-ended questions in an effort to inform our understanding and review the quantitative model that was proposed in Phase 1, and to provide insight into AEPs' subjective experiences regarding the interplay between these constructs. In Phase 3, four practicing psychologists who had experience in consulting with expatriates answered 2 semi-structured, open-ended questions and reflected on the strengths included in the model, as well as on the ways in which to enhance AEPs' character strengths and resilience to ultimately facilitate their well-being.

The results of the VIA-72 indicated that the strengths of Integrity/Honesty, Love, Fairness, Appreciation of beauty, Gratitude and Kindness ranked highest. The results of the RS showed 21.8% (N = 24) of the participants to have low levels of resilience; 67.3% (N = 74) to have moderate levels of resilience, and 10.9% (N = 12) to have high levels of resilience. Further, the results of the MHC-SF indicated that 9.1% (N=10) of the participants were languishing, 46.4% (N=51) had moderate mental health, and 44.5% (N=49) were flourishing. The correlational results indicated that strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude, Hope and Zest were not only positively associated with participants' levels of resilience and well-being, but were also the most significant predictors of AEPs' resilience and well-being. Resilience was also positively associated with self-perceived well-being.

Findings from the qualitative data of Phase 2 confirmed that the strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope played pivotal roles during expatriation and that these strengths had an effect on both their levels of resilience as well as their self-perceived well-being. Finally, findings from

Phase 3 provided insight into the fact that the strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope as well as resilience could be cultivated to ultimately facilitate well-being. Participating psychologists furthermore reflected on therapeutic approaches and techniques that could be used to facilitate the further development of these character strengths, and hence also AEPs' mental health.

Both the AEPs and the psychologists affirmed a definite need for psychological support prior to and during their time abroad.

KEY WORDS: Accompanying expatriate partner (AEP), expatriation or international relocation, character strengths, flourishing, resilience, well-being

Opsomming

Die proses van ekspatriasie is besaai met struikelblokke vir die werkende lewensmaat, die meegaande lewensmaat (ML), en hulle gesinne. Een van die redes vir mislukte ekspatriasie wat gereeld genoem word, is die onvermoë van die meegaande lewensmaat om aan te pas in die gasheerland. Die behoefte aan sielkundige ondersteuning is duidelik, en dit maak die soektog vir maniere om die geestesgesondheid van ML's te fasiliteer des te meer belangrik. Dit moet die identifisering en optimale gebruik van hulle eie persoonlike hulpbronne insluit, soos byvoorbeeld positiewe karaktereenskappe en veerkragtigheid. Daar is multinasionale maatskappye (MNM'e) en sielkundiges wat opleiding en ondersteuning bied voor ekspatriasie, maar onvoldoende aandag word geskenk aan die geestesgesondheid van die ML. Die studie het ten doel om hierdie bestaande gaping in die literatuur aan te spreek.

Ten einde 'n begrip van die positiewe karaktereenskappe, veerkragtigheid en welstand van die Suid-Afrikaanse MEL te kry, is 'n studie met drie substudies oor drie fases aangepak. Elke fase word in 'n aparte artikel behandel (sien Hoofstukke 2, 3 en 4). Die sentrale vraag van die oorkoepelende studie was: Speel positiewe karaktereenskappe en veerkragtigheid van ML's 'n rol by hulle selfwaargenome welstand tydens internasionale hervestiging? Die volgende vrae word in die onderskeie artikels aangespreek: (a) Wat is die positiewe karaktereenskappe, vlakke van veerkragtigheid, en selfwaargenome welstand onder ML's gedurende internasionale hervestiging? (Artikel 1); (b) Wat is die mees beduidende verbande tussen die positiewe karaktereenskappe, vlakke van veerkragtigheid, en selfwaargenome welstand van ML's gedurende internasionale hervestiging? (c) Hoe beleef ML's die verband tussen hulle positiewe karaktereenskappe, veerkragtigheid en selfwaargenome welstand subjektief? (Artikel 2); (d) Hoe verryk hulle ervaring ons begrip van geesteswelstand? (Artikel 2); en (e) Hoe kan karaktereenskappe en veerkragtigheid uitgebou word om die welstand van ML's te fasiliteer? (Artikel 3).

'n Multimetode navorsingsontwerp is gebruik deurdat Fase 1 'n kwantitatiewe benadering gevolg het en Fases 2 en 3 'n kwalitatiewe benadering. In Fase 1 is drie gestandaardiseerde vraelyste (die VIA-72, RS en MHC-SF) gebruik om 110 deelnemende Suid-Afrikaanse ML's se positiewe karaktereienskappe, veerkragtigheid en selfwaargenome welstand te beskryf. Daarna is die verbande tussen hierdie konstrunkte ondersoek en in 'n strukturele vergelykingsmodel omskep. In Fase 2 het 'n kleiner steekproef (n=17) 16 semigestruktureerde, oopeindigende vrae beantwoord om ons begrip te verryk en om die kwantitatiewe model wat in Fase 1 voorgestel is hersien. In Fase 3 het vier praktiserende sielkundiges wat ervaring het met konsultasie met geëkspatrieerdes 2 semigestruktureerde, oopeindigende vrae beantwoord om oor die sterkpunte wat in die model ingesluit is te oorweeg, asook die maniere waarop ML's se karaktereienskappe uitgebou kan word om hulle welstand te fasiliteer.

Die resultate van die VIA-72 het aangedui dat die sterkpunte van Integriteit/Eerlikheid, Liefde, Regverdigheid, Waardering van skoonheid, Dankbaarheid en Welwillendheid die hoogste waardes behaal het. Die resultate van die RS het getoon dat 21.8% (N = 24) van die deelnemers lae vlakke van veerkragtigheid getoon het; 67.3% (N = 74) het gemiddelde vlakke van veerkragtigheid getoon, en 10.9% (N = 12) het hoë vlakke van veerkragtigheid getoon. Die resultate van die MHC-SF getoon dat 9.1% (N=10) van die deelnemers gekwyn het, 46.4% (N=51) gemiddelde geestesgesondheid gehad het, en 44.5% (N=49) floreer het. Die korrelasieresultate het getoon dat die sterkpunte van Nuuskierigheid, Dankbaarheid, Hoop en Entoesiasme nie net 'n positiewe verband met deelnemers se vlakke van veerkragtigheid en welstand gehad het nie, maar dat hulle ook die mees beduidende aanduiders van ML's se veerkragtigheid en welstand was. Veerkragtigheid het ook 'n positiewe verband getoon met selfwaargenome welstand.

Die bevindinge uit die kwalitatiewe data van Fase 2 het bevestig dat die sterkpunte van Nuuskierigheid, Dankbaarheid en Hoop 'n belangrike rol gespeel het tydens ekspatriasie en dat

hierdie sterkpunte 'n effek gehad het op beide ML's se vlakke van veerkragtigheid en hulle selfwaargenome welstand. Die bevindinge van Fase 3 het insig gebied in die feit dat die sterkpunte van Nuuskierigheid, Dankbaarheid en Hoop, asook veerkragtigheid uitgebou kan word om welstand te fasiliteer. Deelnemende sielkundiges het verder aandag geskenk aan terapeutiese benaderings en tegnieke wat gebruik kan word om die verdere ontwikkeling van hierdie eienskappe te ontwikkel, en daarmee saam hulle geestesgesondheid.

Beide die ML's en die sielkundiges het 'n behoefte aan sielkundige ondersteuning voor en gedurende die tyd in die buiteland uitgelig.

SLEUTELWOORDE: Meegaande lewensmaat (MEL), ekspatriasie of internasionale hervestiging, sterkpunte, floreer, veerkragtigheid, welstand

Table of Contents

Dedication	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Preface	v
Declaration by the researcher	vii
Declaration by the language editor	viii
Turnitin Digital Receipt	ix
Letter of permission	x
Summary	xi
Opsomming	xiv
Chapter 1:	
Introduction to the study - <i>Flourishing beyond borders</i>: Character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being of the accompanying expatriate partner during international relocation	1
Introducing the study	1
General introduction and background to the study	1
Significance	3
General literature study of core concepts	3
Expatriation and the South African AEP	3
Flourishing beyond borders: A strength perspective on AEPs' life abroad	5

Purpose of the study	7
Research questions	7
Objectives of the study	8
Brief description of research methodology	9
Research approach and design.	9
Sample recruitment.	10
Methods of data collection	14
Methods of data analysis	15
Validity and reliability of quantitative measures (Phase 1)	16
Trustworthiness	18
Ethical considerations	18
Structure of the Document	19
Thesis title	21
References	22
Chapter 2	33
Article 1	33
<i>Flourishing beyond borders: The character strengths, resilience and well-being of the South African accompanying expatriate partner in Africa</i>	33
Abstract	33
Method	36

Research design	36
Participants	36
Procedure	39
Measures	40
Ethics considerations	42
Data analysis	42
Results	43
Discussion	52
Conclusion	57
Limitations and suggestions for future research	57
References	58
Chapter 3	70
Article 2	70
<i>Flourishing beyond borders: A qualitative exploration of accompanying expatriate partners' character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being</i>	70
Abstract	70
Introduction	71
Research purpose and objective	75
Research design	75
Research context	76

Research method	77
Sampling and participants	78
Data analysis	79
Strategies to ensure data quality and reporting	80
Research findings	80
Spirit of adventure	81
Elements of adjustment	82
Initial adjustment and adaptability	82
Host-home comparisons	83
Strengths that support adjustment	84
Understanding supports adjustment	85
Sense of belonging	85
Shared AEP experiences (“being in the same boat”)	85
Building networks	86
Supportive relationships	86
Personal growth	88
Perseverance	88
Optimism	89
Meaningful outcomes	89
Gratitude	90
The cost of remaining strong	90

Discrepant gratitude	91
Energy and effort required	91
Managing expectations	92
Discussion	92
Limitations of the study	97
Conclusion	97
References	98
Chapter 4	107
Article 3	107
<i>Flourishing beyond borders: Facilitating the well-being of accompanying expatriate partners</i>	107
Abstract	107
Introduction	108
Research purpose and objectives	110
Literature review	110
Accompanying expatriate partner (AEP)	110
Taking a strengths perspective: Gratitude, Curiosity and Hope	111
Resilience	113
Well-being	114
Organizational support and benefits	115

Research design	115
Research approach and strategy	115
Research method	117
Research setting	117
Entrée and establishing research roles	117
Research participants and sampling methods	118
Data collection methods	118
Strategies employed to ensure data quality and integrity	119
Data analysis	120
Reporting style	120
Results	120
Perspectives on Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope	121
Elements of strengths	121
The time frame of strengths	123
The positive impact of strengths	124
Positive experiences of strengths	124
Personal growth	125
Therapeutic engagement and goal-setting	125
Assessment of context	125
Setting goals	126
Facilitating AEPs' well-being through strengths and resilience	127

Cultivating strengths and resilience	127
Organizational support and other supportive relationships	130
Discussion	131
Outline of results	131
Practical implications	133
Limitations and recommendations	134
Conclusion	135
Acknowledgements	136
Competing interests	136
Author contributions	136
References	136
Chapter 5	149
Conclusions and recommendations	149
Introduction	149
Research process	149
Findings	151
Integrated conclusion	153
Limitations	155
Recommendations	157
Contributions of study	158

Personal reflection	159
In closing	161
Addenda	163
Addenda A: Ethics	163
Addendum A1: NWU Ethics Approval	164
Addendum A2: Proof of Ethics Training	165
Addendum A3: License Agreement: The Resilience Scale (RS)	167
Addendum A4: Permission to use the Mental Health Short Form (MHC-SF)	168
Addendum A5: Permission to use the Virtues in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-72)	169
Addenda B: Informed Consent and Confidentiality Undertaking	170
Addendum B1: Informed Consent for Phase 1 and 2	171
Addendum B2: Initial e-mail to practitioners	177
Addendum B3: Informed Consent for Phase 3	179
Addendum B4: Confidentiality Undertaking by external code reviewer	184
Addenda C: Data collection	186
Addendum C1: E-flyer	187
Addendum C2: Qualitative questionnaire for Phase 2	188
Addendum C3: Qualitative questionnaire for Phase 3	192
Addenda D: Data Audit Trail Overview	197
Addendum D1: Network analysis view of the themes in Chapter 3/Article 2	198

Addendum D2:	Network analysis view of the themes in Chapter 4/Article 3	203
Addenda E:	Supplementary documents	207
Addendum E1:	Journal guidelines for submission to SAJP (Article 1)	208
Addendum E2:	Journal guidelines for submission to JGM (Article 2)	210
Addendum E3:	Journal guidelines for submission to SAJIP (Article 3)	215
Addendum E4:	Proof of submission to SAJP	217
Addendum E5:	Proof of submission to JGM	218

List of Tables

Chapter 2		33
Table 1:	Demographic characteristics of the initial sample group (N=110)	38
Table 2:	Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients for the MHC-SF, RS and VIA-72	44
Table 3:	Correlations between the ranks of each character strenght and the MHC-SF and RS	47
Table 4:	Goodness of fit indices for initial structural model	52
Chapter 3		70
Table 1:	Qualitative questionnaire	78
Table 2:	Themes and sub-themes	81
Chapter 4		107
Table 1:	Themes and sub-themes	121

List of Figures

Chapter 2		33
<i>Figure 1:</i>	Hypothesized model for path analysis	50
<i>Figure 2:</i>	SEM Reduced Model	51
Chapter 3		70
<i>Figure 1:</i>	SEM Reduced Model from Phase 1 (cf. Article 1)	74
Chapter 4		107
<i>Figure 1:</i>	A graphical illustration of the multimethod research approach	116
<i>Figure 2:</i>	A graphical illustration of a simplified version of the reduced model presented to the panel of practicing psychologists	118
Chapter 5		149
<i>Figure 4:</i>	Multimethod research design	150

Chapter 1:

Introduction to the study - *Flourishing beyond borders*: Character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being of the accompanying expatriate partner during international relocation

Introducing the study

General introduction and background to the study

Expatriate assignments are on the increase due to the fast pace of globalization. Employees are either sent abroad by the multi-national company (MNC) they are employed by, or they make a personal choice to pursue an international career (referred to as the self-initiated expatriate). Irrespective of how the individual arrives at the decision of embarking on an international assignment, expatriation denotes temporary relocation (Adams & van de Vijver, 2015), typically ranging between six months and five years (Naeem, Bin Naeem, & Khan, 2015). More often than not, employees are accompanied by their families. Lämsä, Heikkinen, Smith, and Tornikoski (2017) state that the expatriate's family plays a key role in not only supporting the employee (expatriate), but also in determining whether the international assignment is successful or not. In fact, they argue that the expatriate's family play such an important role that they should be recognised as stakeholders of the company. A plethora of studies have been done exploring the reasons for premature return or expatriate failure. The inability of the family to adjust abroad is cited as the one reason that outweighs all others (Bader, Berg, & Holtbrügge, 2015; Caligiuri, Hyland, Joshi, & Bross, 1998; Harvey, 1985; Harvey, Napier, & Moeller, 2009; Lazarova, McNulty, & Semeniuk, 2015; Sterle, Fontaine, De Mol, & Verhofstadt, 2018; Trompetter, Bussin, & Nienaber, 2016).

In a study done by Caligiuri et al. (1998), "family" is defined as "two life partners, with or without children" (p. 604). In most cases of expatriate assignment the life partner, i.e. the

accompanying expatriate partner (henceforth referred to as AEP), has to give up a career in her home country, and becomes a stay-at-home parent (Lazarova, Westman, & Shaffer, 2010). Research suggests that this career disruption often leads to significant stress for the AEP (Careless, 2015; Harvey, 1998). This is ascribed to the loss of financial independence, and an accompanying shift in the roles, relationships, responsibilities and dynamics within the family unit (Cole, 2011; McNulty, 2012; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001). In addition to giving up her career, the AEP is faced with challenges such as coping without her family, friends and support system back home; finding new pastime activities, and establishing a new routine in an unfamiliar environment (Okpara & Kabongo, 2011; Van den Berg-Overbreek, 2014). Research indicates that the challenges the host country poses have the potential to overwhelm the AEP and cause her to feel unhappy and fail at adjusting abroad, which often leads to international assignment failure (Ali, Van der Zee, & Sanders, 2003; Chew, 2004; Copeland & Norell, 2002; Sterle et al., 2018). The mental health of the AEP has been established as playing a pivotal role in determining the success of expatriate assignments. Numerous studies have therefore been done exploring the challenges that AEPs are confronted with in their host countries, as well as the reasons for AEPs' unhappiness or inability to adapt while living abroad, often resulting in failed expatriate assignments.

In spite of the high frequency of premature return of expatriates due to AEPs' inability to adapt successfully, there are some AEPs who manage to cope or even thrive while abroad. Research done by Herleman, Britt, and Hashima (2008), Ali et al. (2003) and Wiese (2013), were the only available studies where positive psychological outcomes of AEPs during international relocation were explored. The relative lack of research focused on the predictors of positive expatriate assignment justifies a closer look at the positive psychological concepts that might play a role in AEPs' successful adjustment abroad. Moreover, not a single study could be found that focused on South African AEPs' adjustment while on expatriate assignment. The

rationale behind this study was, therefore, to explore the role that South African AEPs' character strengths and resilience play in their well-being abroad.

Significance

As mentioned, no study has been done where the character strengths, resilience and well-being of South African AEPs were explored. Recognising the fact that these individuals' unhappiness and inability to adjust in the host country is one of the most cited reasons for expatriate failure, their mental health should be noteworthy to MNCs as well as psychologists who consult with expatriates. Knowledge of the AEPs' strengths, levels of resilience and self-perceived well-being would enable psychologists to provide effective psychological guidance and support. Such interventions would offer a substantial contribution to the global market, with its rapidly increasing number of individuals embarking on expatriation. On an individual level, research aimed at increasing AEPs' personal well-being may ultimately also have an effect on her self-confidence, relationships with others, the work performance of her partner (expatriate), the success of the expatriate assignment.

General literature study of core concepts

A number of core concepts form part of this study, including the accompanying expatriate partner (AEP); expatriation or international relocation; character strengths; flourishing; resilience; and well-being. In the section below, each of these concepts are explored under two headings: (a) Expatriation and the AEP; and (b) Flourishing beyond borders: A strength perspective on AEPs' life abroad.

Expatriation and the South African AEP

Expatriation implies living and working outside your home country (Okeja, 2017) and denotes non-permanent international relocation due to foreign business assignment (Adams & van de Vijver, 2015) or "extended work assignments" (Shaffer, Kramer, Chen, & Bolino (2012,

p. 1283). Naude and Vögel (2018) state that the majority of MNCs in South Africa send their employees on international assignments for periods ranging from 25 to 35 months and that the ratio between male and female expatriates is 9:1, which is in line with a previous study done by Vögel, van Vuuren and Millard (2008). The typical profile of an expatriate is usually that of a skilled professional (Cangià, Levitan, & Zittoun, 2018; Presbitero & Quita, 2017; Ravasi, Salamin, & Davoine, 2015). Due to the “shortage of key skills in the continent [Africa]” (Naude & Vögel, 2018, p. 2), MNCs often assign these skilled professionals to positions abroad.

Expatriation is not only limited to assignments in Africa, though. As the world is becoming ever more interconnected on an economic, political and cultural level, organisations try to remain competitive in an increasingly global community (Caligiuri & Bonache, 2016; Cole, 2011; Kim, 2015; Tung, 2016). This often necessitates the relocation of individuals with the required skills. These international assignments are generally very expensive for the MNC (Vermeulen, 2015). Van Erp, Van der Zee, Giebels and Van Duijn (2014) affirm that the financial costs involved in allocating “key positions” to expatriates are very high, and employees’ successful adjustment and job satisfaction are therefore of great importance. In the limited number of studies that could be found, factors that contribute to successful adaptation include, among others, adjusting to a new work environment and routine; new living circumstances; a healthy organisation-employee relationship; successful cross-cultural adjustment; effective interaction with host country nationals and the employees’ family members’ adjustment (Gonzalez-Loureiro, Kiessling, & Dabic, 2015; Lämsä et al., 2017; Sterle et al., 2018). As mentioned earlier, the expatriate’s family, and specifically the accompanying partner, plays a critical role in the outcome of the international assignment. In fact, since the 1980s, the AEP’s inability to adjust or unhappiness abroad have been cited as one of the main reasons for expatriate failure (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Black & Stephens, 1989; Punnett, 1997; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001). Knowing that the financial implications of these assignments are

extensive, expatriate failure has a detrimental effect on the MNC. The importance of the psychological well-being of AEPs can therefore not be underestimated.

Although the topic of assignment failure has received extensive research attention during the past four decades, no study has focused on the mental health of South African AEPs. The international literature paints a rather negative picture with its focus on AEPs' inability to adjust. The flipside of the coin is, however, that some AEPs do in fact adjust successfully and live fulfilled lives while abroad (Ali et al., 2003; Herleman et al., 2008; Wiese, 2013). Even though expatriate assignment always has an element of change and challenge, these recent findings suggest that international relocation does not necessarily result in psychological distress of the AEP, or expatriate failure. This calls for an investigation of factors that contribute to flourishing abroad.

Flourishing beyond borders: A strength perspective on AEPs' life abroad

The focus of positive psychology falls on "building positive qualities" in order for individuals or communities to **flourish** (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5). The positive psychology movement, which has been gaining momentum since its emergence in 2000, is by definition not restricted to the study of disease, but rather includes the study of strengths and virtues (Seligman, 2003). Hart Weber (2013) states that individuals flourish or thrive when they lead lives filled with meaning, purpose and fulfilment. She furthermore argues that the journey towards flourishing "includes rising to challenges and being resilient through adversity and during struggles, sadness, sickness and loneliness" (p. 19). It is therefore apparent that positive psychology accentuates the development and maintenance of **personal strengths** and **well-being** (Hutchinson, Stuart, & Pretorius, 2010). There are three main focuses at the centre of positive psychology, namely positive subjective experiences; positive individual traits; and positive communities or institutions. Positive subjective experiences refer to, among others, happiness, contentment, and well-being, hope and optimism. Positive individual traits include **character**

strengths or talents such as courage, perseverance, forgiveness, creativity and spirituality.

Positive communities include virtues of good citizenship, nurturance and work ethic (Peterson, 2006; Ruch, Proyer, Harzer, Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2010; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

According to Seligman (2003) and Ryff and Singer (2008), psychological strengths can act as a safeguard against the development of mental or physical illness. These strengths can therefore be seen as protective agents against disease and assist a person in confronting challenges, often resulting in successful adjustment. Peterson and Seligman (2004) believe that individuals possess signature strengths that are self-consciously owned and naturally exercised every day in work, play and parenting. Seligman's (2003) formulation of the good life is “using your signature strengths every day in the main realms of your life to bring abundant gratification and authentic happiness” (p. 161). It therefore enables the individual to experience **well-being**, despite challenging circumstances.

From the preceding section it is clear that international relocation presents multiple challenges and losses for the AEP. It marks a period of major change and often includes many factors that are out of the AEP's control (Cole & McNulty, 2012). In spite of finding themselves in a host country, far removed from all things familiar, and facing the challenges and adversity mentioned, AEPs have also been found able to cope and to “keep the show on the road” (Gerakiteys, 2014, March 7, para. 13). This suggests that along with the natural exercise of character strengths, other protective agents or characteristics such as hardiness or **resilience** might be present.

Wagnild and Collins (2009) describe resilience as “the ability to cope effectively when faced with adversity” and add that resilience includes, but is not limited to, aspects such as “inner strength, competence, optimism and flexibility” (p.29). As mentioned earlier, character

strengths not only assist people in confronting challenges, but also contribute to greater levels of resilience and increased well-being. According to Gaffney (2011), **resilience** is at the core of living a life of meaning and people who have the instinctive drive to ascribe meaning to and find purpose amid the most difficult experiences. She furthermore states that resilience leads to increased levels of well-being, which is affirmed by Seligman (2011) “the topic of positive psychology is well-being, the gold standard for measuring well-being is flourishing, and the goal of positive psychology is to increase flourishing” (p.13). He believes that human flourishing signifies “happiness, flow, meaning, love, gratitude, accomplishment, growth and better relationships” (p.2).

Purpose of the study

Based on the above exploration of the core concepts included in this study, it seems imperative to explore and describe the character strengths, resilience and well-being of South African AEPs living in Africa. An increased understanding of AEPs’ reflections on, subjective experiences and insights into these constructs can guide psychologists to develop psychological interventions for AEPs.

Research questions

In an effort to gain an understanding of the character strengths, resilience and well-being of the South African AEP, the main research question was whether the character strengths and resilience of AEPs play a role in their self-perceived well-being during international relocation. The research study consisted of three phases, each representing a distinct sub-study (cf. Chapters 2, 3 and 4). Specific research questions were formulated and addressed accordingly:

Phase 1 / Article 1 / Chapter 2:

- What are the character strengths, levels of resilience, and self-perceived well-being of AEPs during international relocation?

- What are the significant associations between the character strengths, levels of resilience, and self-perceived well-being of AEPs during international relocation?

Phase 2 / Article 2 / Chapter 3:

- How do AEPs subjectively experience the relationship between their character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being?
- How do their experiences inform our understanding of the mental well-being of AEPs?

Phase 3 / Article 3 / Chapter 4:

- How can character strengths and resilience be enhanced to ultimately facilitate the well-being of AEPs?

Objectives of the study

The overarching aim of the study was to explore the role that character strengths and resilience play in the self-perceived well-being and adaptation of AEPs during international relocation. In order to answer each of the research questions, the specific objectives were to:

Phase 1 / Article 1 / Chapter 2:

- Describe the character strengths, levels of resilience and self-perceived well-being of AEPs.
- Determine the significant associations between the character strengths, levels of resilience, and self-perceived well-being of AEPs during international relocation and to propose a model that indicates the association between these constructs.

Phase 2 / Article 2 / Chapter 3:

- Qualitatively review the proposed model to explain and substantiate the associations between AEPs' character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being.
- Explore and interpret the subjective experiences of AEPs with regard to their character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being.

Phase 3 / Article 3 / Chapter 4:

- Explore ways in which to enhance character strengths and resilience to facilitate the well-being of AEPs.

Successful achievement of the above objectives will contribute to the field of strengths psychology, and more specifically its application within the context of expatriation. It is our hope that it would increase our knowledge and understanding with regard to the character strengths, resilience and well-being of AEPs, and of their subjective experiences of the interplay between these constructs in their daily lives abroad. Ultimately, this would facilitate the provision of effective and sufficient psychological guidance and support to AEPs, which may in turn improve the success rate of expatriate assignments.

Brief description of research methodology

This section gives a brief description of the research methodology used in this study. The following aspects of methodology are described below: (a) Research approach and design; (b) Sample recruitment; (c) Methods of data collection; and (d) Methods of data analysis.

Research approach and design. A *multimethod research approach* was used where both quantitative and qualitative approaches were incorporated to reach the stated aims of the respective research articles. The motivation behind this methodological approach was that the researcher not only wanted to measure, describe and explore the associations between the character strengths, resilience and well-being of South African AEPs, but also to wanted gain insight into the personal experiences of AEPs and explore ways in which these constructs could be cultivated to ultimately increase AEPs' well-being abroad.

The study was *non-experimental* and utilized a *cross-sectional design*. As mentioned above, the study consisted of three related but independent sub-studies, which were undertaken in three phases (cf. Chapters 2, 3 and 4). Each phase aimed to address one of the specific

objectives listed above. The study was presented in such a way that each phase built upon the previous phase(s). Study is therefore structured sequentially. Phase 1 followed a quantitative approach, whereas Phase 2 and 3 followed a qualitative approach. The quantitative approach was deliberately used in Phase 1 to elicit new research questions that the researchers could qualitatively pursue in depth during Phase 2 and 3. The results obtained during Phase 1 and 2 were presented to a panel of psychologists who consult with expatriates in an attempt to explore ways in which character strengths and resilience could be enhanced to ultimately facilitate AEPs' well-being.

A multimethod research design can be described as “the conduct of two or more research methods, each conducted rigorously and complete in itself, in one project. The results are then triangulated to form a complete whole” (Morse, 2003, p.190). Hunter and Brewer (2015) suggest that multimethod research is “open to the full variety of possible methodological combinations” (p. 187), therefore giving the researcher freedom to decide which research methods will be best suited to answer the research questions. According to Esteves and Pastor (2003), a multimethod strategy aims to improve the process and results of research. Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2009) state that a multimethod strategy adds depth and detail to findings, which enhances the validity and credibility of the study.

Given the use of a multimethod research design in the current study, each phase had a unique methodological approach, design, as well as possible limitations. These receive attention in the relevant chapters/articles.

Sample recruitment. The target population of this study included South African citizens who had accompanied their life partners on expatriate assignments and were living in any country on the African continent (excluding South Africa). There were 110 AEPs who gave informed consent to participate in Phase 1 (cf. Chapter 2), of whom only 70 completed all three

standardized questionnaires. The 17 AEPs who participated in Phase 2 (cf. Chapter 3), were also part of the sample group of Phase 1, which implied that they had already given informed consent prior to completing the semi-structured, open-ended questionnaire. Four psychologists participated in Phase 3 (cf. Chapter 4).

The *inclusion criteria* for Phases 1 and 2 were as follows:

- Prospective participants had to be South African citizens who were accompanying their life partners on an expatriate assignment.
- The participants had to have lived in the African host country for a minimum period of six months at the time of data collection.
- The working partner (employee) had to be formally deployed for a minimum period of two years.
- The AEP had to not be formally employed.
- The participants had to be adequately skilled in English (reading and writing).

The *inclusion criteria* for Phase 3 were:

- The prospective participant had to be working in the capacity of a counsellor, psychologist, business coach, human resource manager or leadership consultant with expatriates within the field of psychology, business management, or human resource management.
- The individual had to have experience in working with expatriates.
- The individual had to be able to communicate fluently in English (in writing).

For the purpose of **Phase 1** (cf. Chapter 2), two types of non-probability sampling techniques were used, namely *non-random purposive* and *snowball sampling*. Non-random purposive sampling relies on the “judgement of the researcher regarding the characteristics of a representative sample” (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole, 2013, p. 172). Babbie (2016) states that the researcher has to determine which of the participants will be most useful for the purpose of

the study. According to Jamison (2013), non-random purposive sampling is rigorous and frequently used in the field of research in psychology. As mentioned above, the researcher set specific inclusion criteria, which ensured a representative sample for the study.

The researcher appointed an independent person to act as gatekeeper of the study. The gatekeeper had, at the time, been responsible for the administration of the South African Women's Group (SAWG) of Tanzania since 2008. The SAWG had been operational for more than 15 years and possessed an extensive database of not only South African AEPs residing in Tanzania, but also of the people who might have relocated from Tanzania to another African country. The entire study was web-based. An e-flyer was created that served as an advertisement and invitation to take part in the study (see Addendum C1). The e-flyer also included a web link leading to a Google form that explained all the information set out in the informed consent document (see Addendum B1). Once consent had been given, the web link directed the participants to two self-report questionnaires, namely the Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF) (Keyes, 2002) and the Resilience Scale (RS) (Wagnild & Young, 1993). After completing the MHC-SF and RS, the participants' responses were submitted to the database of the Statistical Consultation Services (SCS) at the North-West University, where after they were directed to a separate web link, that included the Virtues in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-72) (C Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The responses on the VIA-72 were submitted to the Virtues in Action Institute on Character to be scored and interpreted, where after the de-identified raw scores were sent to the researcher in Excel format.

Snowball sampling was the other non-probability sampling technique that was used to recruit participants. This type of sampling technique is typically used in exploratory studies where the identification of the target population is either not listed or difficult to locate. Snowball sampling refers to "the process of accumulation as each subject suggests other subjects" (Babbie, 2016, p. 188). This sampling technique makes it possible to increase the

sample size and gain access to participants when the target population cannot be framed (Mouton, 2015). It was deemed appropriate for the purpose of this study as a list of South African AEPs residing in Africa does not exist. As part of the initial invitation, participants were asked to forward the e-flyer by e-mail to people whom they know to be South African AEPs currently living in an African country. In addition, Facebook was also used as a platform for recruitment. According to King, O'Rourke and DeLongis (2014), this social media platform is not only an effective way to reach participants who are "hard-to-reach" (p. 241), but is also prompt and cost-effective. This advertisement was shared on a variety of group pages on Facebook, among others SAWG Tanzania; SA living in Tanzania; Team Tanzania; SA living in Nairobi, Kenya; Expat Zambia; SA expats living abroad; SA expats in Zimbabwe; SA expats Global Community as well as SA expats. By forwarding the invitation to other possible participants and advertising the study on Facebook, the researcher used another non-probability sampling technique referred to as *snowball sampling*. This sampling technique makes it possible to increase the sample size and gain access to participants when the target population cannot be framed (Mouton, 2015).

For the purpose of **Phase 2** (cf. Chapter 3), *purposive sampling* was used.

Purposive sampling is defined as "a type of non-probability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgment about which ones will be the most useful or representative" (Babbie, 2013, p. 128). In Phase 2, the researcher wanted to qualitatively review the proposed model with a smaller sample of the population who had already been part of the sample group in Phase 1. As they had already given consent and provided their e-mail addresses, the gatekeeper sent an e-mail to them that included a web link that directed them to a Google form that once again explained the aims of this phase of the study, included the instructions, as well as the 16 semi-structured, open-ended questions. Their responses were submitted to the SCS at the North-West University.

Purposive sampling was also deemed appropriate for **Phase 3** (cf. Chapter 4). The researcher started the recruitment process of Phase 3 by contacting an industrial psychologist who had extensive experience in working with expatriates and requesting possible referrals for suitably qualified evaluators. The gatekeeper was not involved in this phase of the study, seeing that both the researcher and the appointed professionals were consulting with expatriates and continually conducted research in the field of expatriation. A total of four practicing psychologists were willing to participate and share their knowledge and expertise on therapeutic approaches and techniques that could potentially be used to enhance AEPs' character strengths and resilience to ultimately facilitate their well-being.

Methods of data collection

The following measures were used for data collection in the respective phases of the study:

Phase 1 (cf. Chapter 2):

- *Virtues in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-72)*, comprised of 72 questions measuring character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).
- *The True Resilience Scale (RS)*, comprised of 25 questions measuring individual levels of resilience (Keyes et al., 2008; Keyes, 2002).
- *The Mental Health Continuum – Short Form (MHC-SF)*, comprised of 14 questions measuring individual levels of psychological, social and emotional well-being (Wagnild & Young, 1993).

These standardized questionnaires were completed online and took approximately 30–45 minutes to complete.

Phase 2 (cf. Chapter 3):

A *qualitative questionnaire*, consisting of 16 semi-structured, open-ended questions was

designed using Google Forms (see Addendum C2). The questionnaire was sent to the participants by e-mail and took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Phase 3 (cf. Chapter 4):

A *qualitative questionnaire*, consisting of 2 semi-structured, open-ended questions was designed in Word format and sent to the participants by e-mail (see Addendum C3).

Methods of data analysis

The following methods of data analysis were applied in the respective phases of the study:

Phase 1 (cf. Chapter 2):

The VIA Institute on Character in Cincinnati, Ohio did a preliminary data analysis of the VIA-72. The authors of the VIA granted the researcher permission to receive the raw data to statistically link the results obtained from the VIA-72 with the results of the MHC-SF and RS. The responses on the MHC-SF and RS were submitted to the database of the SCS, Potchefstroom Campus. The SPSS (Version 25) and AMOS (Version 25) data analysis software systems were used to conduct descriptive and inferential statistical analysis on the measured variables. Professor Suria Ellis from the SCS, Potchefstroom Campus, assisted with the quantitative data analysis and data management. Structural equation modelling (SEM), which is a combination of path and factor analysis (Karimi & Meyer, 2014, p.123), was subsequently used to determine the predictive relations between character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being (Mcquitty & Wolf, 2013). A more comprehensive description of the method of data analysis used in Phase 1 follows in the appropriate chapter/article.

Phase 2 (cf. Chapter 3):

The qualitative data were analysed by the researcher and Dr. Carlien Kahl, who is an

expert in qualitative research methodology and acted as an independent coding reviewer. Coding was informed by and conducted in accordance with directed content analysis methodology in order to understand to which extent participants' explanations related to the core constructs of the quantitative structural equations model emanating from Phase 1 (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The researchers used primary and secondary cycle coding (Tracy, 2013) to build a more nuanced understanding of the participants' explanations through open coding. The coding cycle relied on open, axial and selective coding to capture the essence of descriptions in meaningful ways through inductive understandings that were as close as possible to the participants' explanations. As a result of both directed (deductive) and open (inductive) coding, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and explanations. These were in turn organized into themes and sub-themes. This allowed the researchers to add structure to the analysis and to provide an audit trail facilitated by ATLAS.ti (Version 8) (Friese, 2019).

Phase 3 (cf. Chapter 4):

The qualitative data obtained from practicing psychologists during Phase 3 were once again analysed by the researcher and Dr. Carlien Kahl. The data were analysed using two phases (primary and secondary cycle coding) to develop themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2016; Tracy, 2013). In order to ensure rigorous, systematic analysis, the coding techniques and principles of Saldaña (2016) were applied. Coding was facilitated using ATLAS.ti (Version 8) (Friese, 2019).

Validity and reliability of quantitative measures (Phase 1)

The quantitative measures used during Phase 1 of this study all showed acceptable internal consistency and validity. The psychometric properties of all measures in the targeted sample group were reported as first step in the analysis of data (cf. Chapter 2). A brief

description of the validity and reliability of the three standardized questionnaires is provided below:

- ***Virtues in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-72):***

Park and Peterson (2006) and Park, Peterson and Seligman (2004) report that acceptable reliability and promising validity were demonstrated during preliminary investigations on all versions of the VIA-IS. All of the sub-scales indicated satisfactory reliability indices, with a Cronbach's alpha consistently above .70. The validity of the VIA-IS in the African context has been explored by Khumalo (2006). The results of his study indicate satisfactory Cronbach's alpha reliability indices above .70. The VIA-IS furthermore has proven criterion-related validity as indicated by its correlation with other psychometric instruments also used in the study, namely the Affectometer (AFM), The Fortitude Questionnaire (FORQ), the Sense of Coherence Scale (SOC-29), Satisfaction of Life Scale (SWLS), and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28).

- ***Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF):***

The MHC-SF has been used in an African context in studies by (Willers, Potgieter, Khumalo, Malan, Mentz, and Ellis (2013), and in a study by Koen, Van Eeden, and Wissing (2011). The studies obtained Cronbach's coefficient alphas of 0.72 and 0.83 respectively, displaying good internal consistency. In the present study, the coefficient alphas for the emotional, social, and psychological well-being subscales were 0.95, 0.87 and 0.91 respectively. The full scale obtained an α of 0.88, attesting to the MHC-SF's internal consistency when used within this context.

- ***The Resilience Scale (RS):***

One study could be found where the RS was used in a South African context. Koen et al. (2011) conducted a study exploring the resilience of 312 professional nurses (between the

ages of 20 to 60+ years). A Cronbach's coefficient alpha of 0.95 was obtained, suggesting a high level of internal consistency. The present study also found the RS to be reliable with a Cronbach's coefficient alpha of 0.97.

Trustworthiness

The researchers employed a number of strategies to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings of Phase 2 and 3. As is put forward in Chapter 4, *validity* was ensured by using purposeful sampling to meet the aims of the study (Smith & Noble, 2014); continuous checking of data, coding of data; and the interpretation of findings. The researchers furthermore used continuous self-reflection by keeping a reflective journal (Hadi & Closs, 2016; Long & Johnson, 2000; J. M. Morse, 2015); making code, theoretical and operational notes (Babbie, 2016); and acknowledging possible biases in the research process (Smith & Noble, 2014). *Reliability* was ensured by keeping an audit trail (Hadi & Closs, 2016; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002; Morse, 2015) and appointing an external code reviewer to reduce research bias and to confirm the dependability of research findings. In the current study, identified conflicts and mediation strategies were reviewed regularly by an independent research psychologist who is an expert in qualitative methodologies. Appointed as external coding reviewer, she validated the classification system and study findings to ensure accurate interpretation.

Ethical considerations

This study was approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00362-16-S1) (see Addendum A1) and was conducted according to the ethics guidelines and principles of *Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures* (National Department of Health, 2015) and other international ethics guidelines applicable to this study. Due to the fact that the entire study was web-based, an informed consent document was sent to participants via e-mail (Addendum B1 and B3). Participation in this study was completely voluntary and no costs were involved for the

participants, nor were remuneration given. There was no coercion and there were no penalties for refusal to take part in the study. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage of the research process without providing an explanation. The researcher had to be able to identify the participant and her responses as participants had to be contacted for qualitative data collection after Phase 1 had been completed. Contact details were thus collected in the form of e-mail addresses. Unique participant codes were allocated to each participant, and only the researcher, her promoters and Professor Suria Ellis at the SCS at North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, had access to the data file that linked participant codes and contact details. All biographical information was removed for the purposes of data analysis. The participants were informed of the possibility that the results of the study may be published, but that there would be no disclosure of identities, ensuring anonymity. All the data collected from participants were protected, securely kept, and treated confidentially by the researcher. They were only accessed by the researcher, her promoters and the SCS of the North-West University. Electronic copies of the quantitative research data will be safely stored by the SCS of the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. Copies of the qualitative data will also be stored electronically on a password-protected computer of the researcher, her promoters and the SCS. Hard copies of the data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home. The research data will be kept for five years, where after it will be deleted and hardcopies destroyed.

Results will be shared in the form of published articles and an informal summary of the overall study will be composed and sent to participants by e-mail.

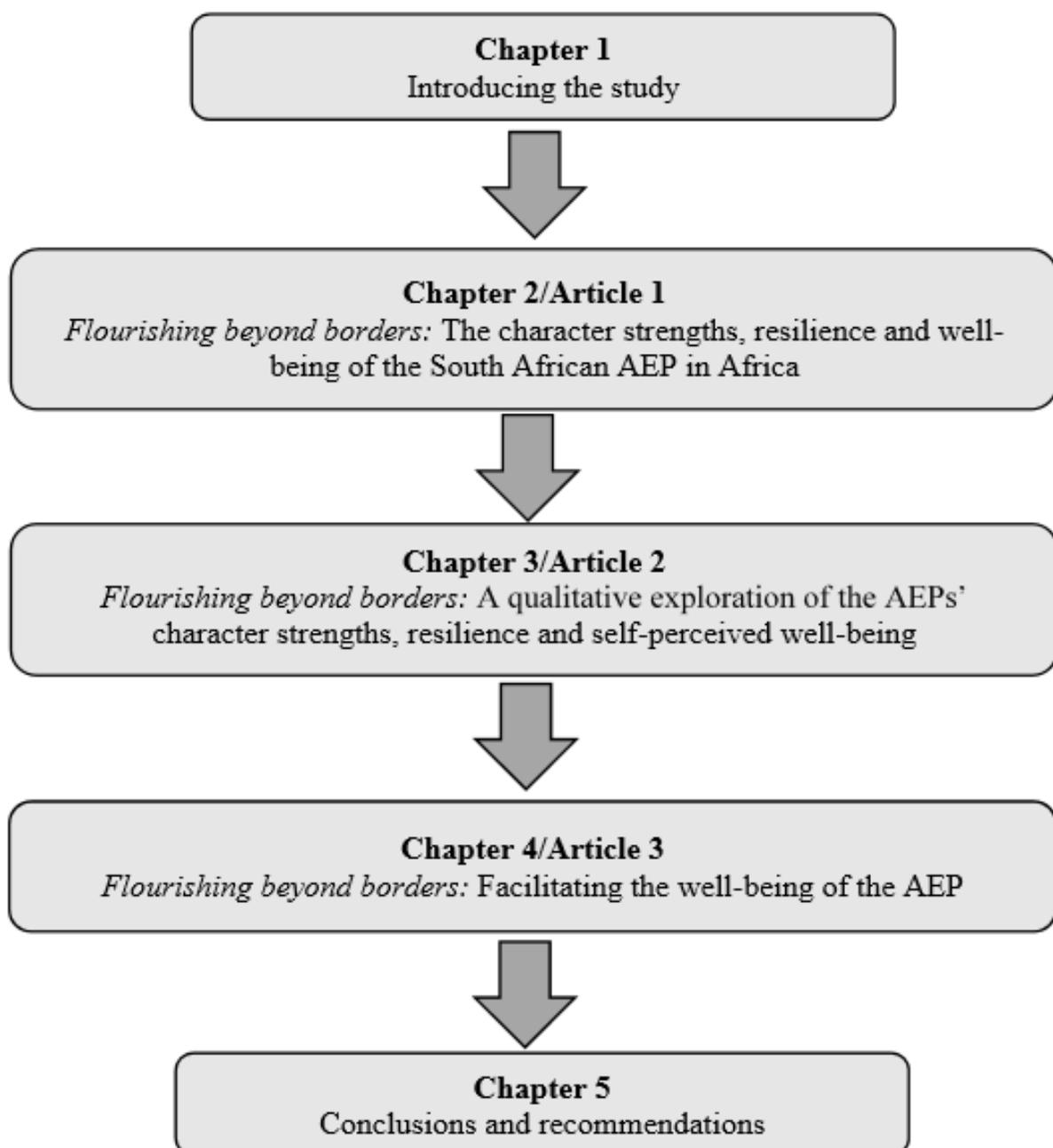
Structure of the Document

As shown in Figure 1, the thesis is structured to provide insight into the research topic by introducing and providing background to the study (Chapter 1); describing the character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being of South African AEPs in Africa, as well as exploring the relationship between these constructs (Chapter 2); exploring the subjective

experiences of AEPs (Chapter 3); exploring ways in which to facilitate the well-being of AEPs (Chapter 4); and providing concluding remarks and recommendations (Chapter 5).

Thesis title:

Flourishing beyond borders: Character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being of the accompanying expatriate partner during international relocation.



References

- Adams, B. G., & van de Vijver, F. J. R. (2015). The many faces of expatriate identity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 49, 322–331.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2015.05.009>
- Ali, A., Van der Zee, K. I., & Sanders, G. (2003). Determinants of intercultural adjustment among expatriate spouses. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27(5), 563–580. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767\(03\)00054-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(03)00054-3)
- Babbie, E. (2013). *The practice of social research* (13th ed.). China: WADSWORTH Cengage Learning.
- Babbie, E. (2016). *The practice of social research* (14th ed.). Canada: Cengage Learning.
- Bader, B., Berg, N., & Holtbrügge, D. (2015). Expatriate performance in terrorism-endangered countries: The role of family and organizational support. *International Business Review*, 24(5), 849–860. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2015.03.005>
- Black, J. S., & Gregersen, H. B. (1991). The other half of the picture: Antecedents of spouse cross-cultural adjustment. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 22(3), 461–477.
 Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/154918>
- Black, J. S., & Stephens, G. K. (1989). The influence of the spouse on American expatriate adjustment and intention to stay in Pacific Rim overseas assignments. *Journal of Management*, 15(4), 529–544. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920638901500403>
- Bless, C., Higson-Smith, C., & Sithole, S. L. (2013). *Fundamentals of Social Methods: An African Perspective* (5th ed.). Cape Town: Juta & Company Ltd.

Caligiuri, P., & Bonache, J. (2016). Evolving and enduring challenges in global mobility.

Journal of World Business, 51(1), 127–141. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2015.10.001>

Caligiuri, P. M., Hyland, M. M., Joshi, A., & Bross, A. S. (1998). Testing a theoretical model for examining the relationship between family adjustment and expatriates' work adjustment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 83(4), 598–614.

Cangià, F., Levitan, D., & Zittoun, T. (2018). Family, boundaries and transformation: The international mobility of professionals and their families. *Migration Letters*, 15(1), 17–31.

Careless, E. J. (2015). Reconstructing careers, shifting realities: Understanding the difficulties facing trailing spouses in higher education. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, (166), 1–28.

Chew, J. (2004). Managing MNC expatriates through crises: A challenge for international human resource management. *Research and Practice in Human Resource Management*, 12(2), 1–13.

Cole, N. D. (2011). Managing global talent: solving the spousal adjustment problem. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 22(7), 1504–1530.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2011.561963>

Cole, N., & McNulty, Y. (2012). Perceptions of organizational justice during expatriation: A framework for examining trailing spouse adjustment. In *The 11th World Congress of the international federation of scholarly associations of management (IFSAM)* (pp. 1–28). Lemirick, Ireland.

- Copeland, A. P., & Norell, S. K. (2002). Spousal adjustment on international assignments: The role of social support. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 26(3), 255–272. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767\(02\)00003-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(02)00003-2)
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Esteves, J., & Pastor, J. (2003). Using a multimethod approach to research enterprise systems implementations. *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 2(2), 69–82.
- Friese, S. (2019). *Qualitative data analysis with ATLAS.ti* (3rd ed.). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Gaffney, M. (2011). *Flourishing: How to achieve a deeper sense of well-being, meaning and purpose - even when facing adversity*. Ireland: Penguin Random House.
- Gerakiteys, C. (2014). Trailing spouse – the graveyard of ambition? [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://sixdegreesnorth.me>
- Gonzalez-Loureiro, M., Kiessling, T., & Dabic, M. (2015). Acculturation and overseas assignments: A review and research agenda. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 49, 239–250. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2015.05.003>
- Hadi, M., & Closs, S. (2016). Ensuring rigour and trustworthiness of qualitative research in clinical pharmacy. *International Journal of Clinical Pharmacy*, 38, 641–646. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11096-015-0237-6>
- Hart Weber, C. (2013). *Flourish: Discover vibrant living*. Franklin, Tennessee: Carpenter’s Son Publishing.

- Harvey, M. (1998). Dual-career couples during international relocation: The trailing spouse. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 9(2), 309–331.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/095851998341116>
- Harvey, M. G. (1985). The executive family: An overlooked variable in international assignments. *Columbia Journal of World Business*, Spring, 84–92.
- Harvey, M., Napier, N., & Moeller, M. (2009). Dual career couples' family life-cycles: Identifying strategic windows of global career opportunity. *Research and Practice in Human Resource Management*, 17(2), 14–35.
- Herleman, H. A., Britt, T. W., & Hashima, P. Y. (2008). Ibasho and the adjustment, satisfaction, and well-being of expatriate spouses. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 32(3), 282–299. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2008.01.004>
- Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277–1288.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>
- Hunter, A., & Brewer, J. (2015). Designing multimethod research. In S. Hesse-Biber & R. Johnson (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of multimethod and mixed methods research inquiry* (pp. 185–205). New York, US: Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199933624.013.13>
- Hutchinson, A. K., Stuart, A. D., & Pretorius, H. G. (2010). Biological contributions to well-being: The relationships amongst temperament, character strengths and resilience. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 36(2), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v36i2.844>

Jamison, J. (2013). *Understanding research methods in psychology* (2nd ed.). CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Karimi, L., & Meyer, D. (2014). Structural equation modeling in psychology: The history, development and current challenges. *International Journal of Psychological Studies*, 6(4), 123–133. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijps.v6n4p123>

Keyes, C. (2002). The mental health continuum: from languishing to flourishing in life. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 43(2), 207–222.

Keyes, C., Wissing, M., Potgieter, J., Temane, M., Kruger, A., & van Rooy, S. (2008). Evaluation of the mental health continuum- short form (MHC-SF) in Setswana-speaking South Africans. *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy*, 15(3), 181–192. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.572>

Khumalo, I. P. (2006). *Exploring the validity of the VIA Inventory of Strengths in an African context*. North-West University (Potchefstroom campus).

Kim, Y. Y. (2015). Finding a “home” beyond culture: The emergence of intercultural personhood in the globalizing world. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 46, 3–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2015.03.018>

King, D. B., O’Rourke, N., & DeLongis, A. (2014). Social media recruitment and online data collection: A beginner’s guide and best practices for accessing low-prevalence and hard-to-reach populations. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, 55(4), 240–249. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038087>

- Koen, M., Van Eeden, C., & Wissing, M. (2011). The prevalence of resilience in a group of professional nurses. *Health SA Gesondheid, 16*(1), 1–11.
<https://doi.org/10.4102/hsag.v16i1.576>
- Lämsä, A.-M., Heikkinen, S., Smith, M., & Tornikoski, C. (2017). The expatriate's family as a stakeholder of the firm: a responsibility viewpoint. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 28*(20), 2916–2935.
- Lazarova, M., McNulty, Y., & Semeniuk, M. (2015). Expatriate family narratives on international mobility: Key characteristics of the successful moveable family. In L. Mäkelä & V. Suutari (Eds.), *Work and Family Interface in the International Career Context* (pp. 29–51). eBook: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-17647-5_3
- Lazarova, M., Westman, M., & Shaffer, M. (2010). Elucidating the positive side of the work-family interface on international assignments: A model of expatriate work and family performance. *Academy of Management Review, 35*(1), 93–117. Retrieved from <http://10.0.21.89/AMR.2010.45577883%0Ahttp://proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=45577883&site=ehost-live>
- Long, T., & Johnson, M. (2000). Rigour, reliability and validity in qualitative research. *Clinical Effectiveness in Nursing, 4*, 30–37.
- Maree, K., & Van der Westhuizen, C. (2009). *Head start in designing research proposals in the social sciences*. Cape Town: Juta & Company Ltd.
- McNulty, Y. (2012). 'Being dumped in to sink or swim': an empirical study of organizational support for the trailing spouse. *Human Resource Development International, 15*(4), 417–434. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2012.721985>

Mcquitty, S., & Wolf, M. (2013). Structural Equation Modeling: A practical introduction.

Journal of African Business, 14(1), 58–69.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15228916.2013.765325>

Morse, J., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 1(2), 1–21.

Morse, J. M. (2003). Principles of mixed methods and multimethod resesarch design. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *The Handbook of Mixed Methods in social and behavioral research* (pp. 189–208). SAGE Publications.

Morse, J. M. (2015). Critical analysis of strategies for determining rigor in qualitative inquiry.

Qualitative Health Research, 25(9), 1212–1222.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315588501>

Mouton, J. (2015). *How to succeed in your master's & doctoral studies: A South African guide and resource book* (22nd ed.). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Naeem, A., Bin Naeem, A. B., & Khan, I. U. (2015). Culture shock and its effects on expatriates.

Global Advanced Research Journal of Management and Business Studies, 4(6), 248–258.

National Department of Health. (2015). Ethics in Health Research: Principles, processes and structures. <https://doi.org/10.5377/encuentro.v42i86.66>

Naude, C. J., & Vögel, J. (2018). Repatriation turnover revisited: A focus on South African multinational enterprises. *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, 21(1), 1–12.

- Okeja, U. (2017). The moral challenge of expatriate employment in developing countries. *Nordic Journal of Applied Ethics, 11*(2), 65–77.
- Okpara, J. O., & Kabongo, J. D. (2011). Cross-cultural training and expatriate adjustment: A study of western expatriates in Nigeria. *Journal of World Business, 46*(1), 22–30.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2010.05.014>
- Park, N., Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. (2004). Strengths of character and well-being. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 23*(5), 603–619.
<https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.23.5.603.50748>
- Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2006). Moral competence and character strengths among adolescents: The development and validation of the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths for Youth. *Journal of Adolescence, 29*, 891–909.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2006.04.011>
- Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. (2004). Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification (p. 818). New York and Washington DC: Oxford University Press and American Psychological Association.
- Peterson, C. (2006). Strengths of character and happiness: Introduction to special issue. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 7*(3), 289–291. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-005-3645-9>
- Presbitero, A., & Quita, C. (2017). Expatriate career intentions: Links to career adaptability and cultural intelligence. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 98*, 118–126.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2016.11.001>
- Punnett, B. J. (1997). Towards effective management of expatriate spouses. *Journal of World Business, 32*(3), 243–257.

- Ravasi, C., Salamin, X., & Davoine, E. (2015). Cross-cultural adjustment of skilled migrants in a multicultural and multilingual environment: an explorative study of foreign employees and their spouses in the Swiss context. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 26(10), 1335–1359. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2014.985328>
- Ruch, W., Proyer, R., Harzer, C., Park, N., Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. (2010). Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS): Adaptation and validation of the German version and the development of a peer-rating form. *Journal of Individual Differences*, 31(3), 138–149. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1614-0001/a000022>
- Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B. H. (2008). Know thyself and become what you are: A eudaimonic approach to psychological well-being. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 9, 13–39. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-006-9019-0>
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Seligman, M. (2003). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. London: Nicholas Brealy Publishing.
- Seligman, M. (2011). *Flourish*. London: Nicholas Brealy Publishing.
- Seligman, M., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 5–14. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066X.55.1.5>
- Shaffer, M.A., Kramer, M. L., Chen, Y., & Bolino, M. C. (2012). Choices, challenges and career consequences of global work experiences: A review and future agenda. *Journal of Management*, 38(4), 1282–1327.

- Shaffer, M. A., & Harrison, D. A. (2001). Forgotten partners of international assignments: development and test of a model of spouse adjustment. *The Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*(2), 238–254.
- Smith, J., & Noble, H. (2014). Bias in research. *Evidence-Based Nursing, 17*(4), 100–101. <https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2014-101946>
- Sterle, M., Fontaine, J., De Mol, J., & Verhofstadt, L. (2018). Expatriate family adjustment: An overview of empirical evidence on challenges and resources. *Frontiers in Psychology, 9*(1207), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01207>
- Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Trompetter, D., Bussin, M., & Nienaber, R. (2016). The relationship between family adjustment and expatriate performance. *South African Journal of Business Management, 47*(2), 13–22.
- Tung, R. L. (2016). New perspectives on human resource management in a global context. *Journal of World Business, 51*(1), 142–152. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2015.10.004>
- Van den Berg-Overbreek, A. (2014). The psychology of expatriation. *Global Living Magazine, 6*.
- Van Erp, K. J., Van der Zee, K. I., Giebels, E., & Van Duijn, M. A. (2014). Lean on me: The importance of one's own and partner's intercultural personality for expatriate's and expatriate spouse's successful adjustment abroad. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 23*(5), 706–728. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2013.816088>

- Vermeulen, A. (2015). Developing our Global Workforce: Buitelandse aanstellings kan duur wees. Retrieved July 27, 2016, from <http://www.expatsworld.co.za>
- Vögel, A. J., van Vuuren, J. J., & Millard, S. M. (2008). Preparation, support and training requirements of South African expatriates. *South African Journal of Business Management, 39*(3), 33–48.
- Wagnild, G. M., & Collins, J. A. (2009). Assessing resilience. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing & Mental Health Services, 47*(12), 28–33.
- Wagnild, G. M., & Young, H. M. (1993). Development and psychometric evaluation of the Resilience Scale, *1*(2), 165–178.
- Wiese, D. L. (2013). Psychological health of expatriate spouses: A neglected factor in international relocation. *Asian Journal of Counselling, 20*(1–2), 1–31. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2014-03299-001&site=ehost-live&scope=site>
- Willers, M., Potgieter, J., Khumalo, I., Malan, L., Mentz, P., & Ellis, S. (2013). Coping and cultural context: Implications for psychological health and well-Being. In M. P. Wissing (Ed.), *Well-Being Research in South Africa* (pp. 251–272). Dordrecht: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-6368-5>

Chapter 2

Article 1

Flourishing beyond borders: The character strengths, resilience and well-being of the South African accompanying expatriate partner in Africa

Abstract

The aim of this article is to describe the character strengths, levels of resilience and self-perceived well-being of life partners who accompany expatriates while on international assignment (i.e. the accompanying expatriate partner – AEP) and to propose a model that indicates the association between these constructs. Expatriate assignments mark a period of major change and present multiple challenges and losses for the accompanying partner. Numerous studies have pointed to partners' inability to adapt and/or unhappiness while living abroad as the reason for failed expatriate assignments. This study adopted a strengths perspective and required participants to complete the Virtues in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-72), the True Resilience Scale (RS) and the Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF). A total of 70 South African AEPs living in a number of different countries on the African continent completed the full set of questionnaires. The results indicated that the participants ranked the strengths of Integrity/Honesty, Love, Fairness, Appreciation of beauty, Gratitude and Kindness highest. The results furthermore showed the strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude, Hope and Zest to be the most significant predictors of resilience and well-being. These strengths were also positively correlated. These findings may inform programmes aimed at preparing AEPs for life abroad and may therefore also contribute to the success rate of expatriate assignment.

Keywords: Accompanying expatriate partner, character strengths, expatriation, flourishing, resilience, well-being

The recent trend of globalization predicts an increase in foreign business assignments, making international relocation and expatriation a worldwide reality and a common phenomenon (Firth, Kirkman, & Kim, 2014; Okpara & Kabongo, 2011; Tung, 2016). As the world is becoming ever more interconnected on economic, political and cultural level and organizations try to remain competitive in an increasingly global economy (Adams & van de Vijver, 2015; Naeem, Bin Naeem, & Khan, 2015), expatriate assignments are escalating (Brewster, Bonache, Cerdin, & Suutari, 2014; Caligiuri & Bonache, 2016; Kraimer, Bolino, & Mead, 2016; Ramos, Mustafa, & Haddad, 2017). Cascio and Aguinis (2011) aptly point out that the global village is indeed getting smaller every day.

Extended foreign business assignments can last anything between six months and five years before the employee either moves to his next posting or returns to his home country (Adams & van de Vijver, 2015; Naeem et al., 2015). Kraimer et al. (2016) report that, irrespective of the length of the assignment, the expatriate faces additional challenges when accompanied by his spouse and/or children while living abroad. According to Brewster et al. (2014) and Naeem et al. (2015), international relocation brings stress for the expatriate and the extended family, especially the accompanying partner.

Van den Berg-Overbreek (2014) states that the AEP faces numerous challenges when moving abroad, considering that she has to cope without family, friends and her social safety net. In addition, she has to find new pastime activities, often while being unable to speak the local language and therefore having to communicate in a language other than her own. The adjustment to a new country is a complicated and traumatic process that is compounded when the AEP has to make changes in personal standing and identity (Cole & McNulty, 2012; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001; Trompetter, Bussin, & Nienaber, 2016). Okpara and Kabongo (2011) also report that when

the AEP has to establish a new routine in an unfamiliar environment, this might lead to emotional insecurity.

Many studies have focused on exploring expatriate adjustment and coping (Firth et al., 2014; Haslberger, Brewster, & Hippler, 2013; Hippler, Brewster, & Haslberger, 2015; Lee & Kartika, 2014), work satisfaction and performance (Cole & Nesbeth, 2014; Trompetter et al., 2016), and well-being and identity (Adams & van de Vijver, 2015). A number of these studies aimed to determine the reasons for failed assignments and the premature return of expatriate employees (Cole & Nesbeth, 2014; Kraimer et al., 2016). Among the reasons found, the AEP's unhappiness and/or inability to adjust while living abroad has been identified as one of the main contributors to failed expatriate assignments and breaking contract prematurely (Ali, Van der Zee, & Sanders, 2003; Chew, 2004; Copeland & Norell, 2002; Herleman, Britt, & Hashima, 2008; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001; Trompetter et al., 2016). The psychological, social and emotional well-being of the AEP is therefore of utmost importance and deserves research attention.

Even though researchers acknowledge the importance of AEPs' mental health in determining the success or failure of expatriate contracts, most of the research attention has gone to the challenges that she appears to be confronted with while living abroad. A limited number of studies have explored factors contributing to positive outcomes and successful adjustment in the host country. No study could be found where the AEPs' resilience and well-being and the character strengths that contribute to it, were measured, described and explored.

In this study, the researchers firstly aimed at describing the character strengths, levels of resilience and self-perceived well-being of the AEP while living abroad. Secondly, the aim was to explore significant associations between these constructs.

Method

Research design

This study used a quantitative approach to data collection and analysis. The researchers followed a positivist approach with a once-off cross-sectional design as the aim was to measure constructs and to explore possible associations between them. This approach is purely scientific and does not take individual experiences into account (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Participants

The researcher recruited individuals accompanying their partners on expatriate assignment in a number of African countries. The initial sample consisted of 110 (102 women and 7 men) South Africans between the ages of 22 and 66 years. Participants had to have lived in an African country (excluding South Africa) for a minimum period of six months at the time of data collection. Their life partners had to be formally deployed on an expatriate assignment for a minimum of two consecutive years. Participants furthermore had to be proficient enough in English to complete the relevant questionnaires and had to be without formal employment while living abroad. There were no restrictions based on demographics (i.e. age, race, gender and culture of the respondents), nor on whether respondents had children or not.

Those who participated resided in 17 host countries on the African continent, with Tanzania (n=36), Kenya (n=17) and Zambia (n=13) best represented in the overall sample. Forty-eight per cent (N=53) of the sample group reported that they had been living in their host country for more than 24 months, while fifty per cent (N=56) reported to be on their first expatriate assignment. Fifty-three per cent (N=58) of the participants' children accompanied them. With regard to home language, forty-eight per cent (N=53) reported to be English speaking and fifty-two per cent (N=57) were Afrikaans speaking. Twenty-five per cent (N=55) had undergraduate

degrees and sixty-four per cent (N=71) were employed on a full-time basis prior to relocation.

Table 1 offers a summary of these and other demographic characteristics of the participant group.

Table 1:

Demographic characteristics of the initial sample group (N=110)

Demographic characteristics	N	%	Demographic characteristics	N	%
Gender			Number of prior expatriate assignments		
Male	7	6.4%	0	56	50.9%
Female	102	92.7%	1	29	26.4%
Unspecified*	1	0.9%	2	13	11.8%
			3+	11	10.0%
Age (years)			Unspecified	1	0.9%
18-25	1	0.9%			
26-35	29	26.4%	Time spent in host country (months)		
36-45	43	39.1%	0-6	19	17.3%
46-55	28	25.5%	7-12	13	11.8%
56+	9	8.1%	13-18	13	11.8%
			19-24	10	9.1%
Home language			24+	53	48.2%
Afrikaans	57	51.8%	Unspecified	2	1.8%
English	53	48.2%			
			Host country		
Education			Botswana	4	3.6%
Master's degree or PhD	13	5.9%	Comoros	1	0.9%
Post graduate (e.g. Honours)	26	11.8%	Cote d' Ivoire	1	0.9%
Under graduate (e.g. a Tertiary diploma or degree)	55	25.0%	Egypt	3	2.7%
Grade 10,11 or 12	16	7.3%	Ghana	5	4.5%
			Kenya	17	15.5%
Accompanying children			Malawi	3	2.7%
Yes	58	52.7%	Mali	2	1.8%
No	30	27.3%	Morocco	1	0.9%
N/A	21	19.1%	Mozambique	2	1.8%
Unspecified	1	0.9%	Nigeria	9	8.2%
			Rwanda	2	1.8%

Demographic characteristics	N	%	Demographic characteristics	N	%
Occupational status prior to expatriation			Tanzania	36	32.7%
Full time	71	64.5%	Togo	1	0.9%
Half day	13	11.8%	Uganda	2	1.8%
Self employed	12	10.9%	Zambia	13	11.8%
Unemployed	14	12.7%	Zimbabwe	1	0.9%
			Unspecified	7	6.4%

*Discrepancies in terms of total numbers are due to incomplete responses, and indicated as *Unspecified in the table above.

Procedure

Participation in this study was completely voluntary. The researchers recruited participants by means of e-mail and Facebook. An e-flyer was distributed to the members of the South African Women’s Group (SAWG) of Tanzania, inviting them to take part in the study. Participants were asked to forward the e-mail to people whom they knew were also at the time South African AEPs. According to Mouton (2015), this non-probability sampling technique, referred to as snowball sampling, is an ideal means to gain access to participants when the target population cannot be framed.

The flyer provided a web link that directed the participants to the informed consent document, demographic questionnaire and two of the three self-report questionnaires, being the Mental Health Continuum – Short Form (MHC-SF) (Keyes et al., 2008; Keyes, 2002) and the True Resilience Scale (RS) (Wagnild & Young, 1993). A separate link and instructions to the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-72) (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) were sent after responses to the above-mentioned questionnaires had been submitted. Due to the internet-based data collection, participants had to have valid e-mail accounts to ensure effective electronic

communication. The anonymity of participants was ensured by the use of unique participant codes.

Measures

Data were collected by means of three standardized self-report questionnaires that were completed online.

The **VIA-72** (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) is a condensed version of the VIA-IS and was used to measure participants' character strengths. This 72-item self-report questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert scale that ranges from *very much unlike me* (1) to *very much like me* (5) to measure the degree to which statements reflect each of the 24 character strengths relevant to the participant. Each character strength, therefore, represents one of the 24 sub-scales of the VIA-72.

Khumalo (2006) explored the validity of the VIA-IS in the African context by including 256 African students in his study. He reported satisfactory Cronbach's alpha reliability indices above $\alpha = 0.70$ for all 24 character strengths. The MHC-SF was also successfully used in studies conducted in a variety of cultural contexts, including the study by Biswas-Diener (2006) evaluating character strengths across three cultures (N=713), including the Kenyan Maasai, the Inughuit from Northern Greenland, and students from the University of Illinois. Table 2 reports the reliabilities for the VIA-72 in the present study. The alpha coefficient on the 24 sub-scales ranged from 0.50 (Integrity/Honesty) to 0.90 (Spirituality).

The **RS-25** (Wagnild & Young, 1993) was used to explore participants' self-reported levels of resilience. This questionnaire consists of 25 items, measuring five essential characteristics of resilience. According to Wagnild (2009), these are purpose, perseverance, equanimity, self-reliance and existential aloneness. Participants indicate their level of agreement with a range of positively phrased statements using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*disagree*) to 7 (*agree*). Total scale scores range between 25 and 175, with higher scores

indicative of higher levels of resilience (Wagnild & Collins, 2009; Wagnild & Young, 1993b). Wagnild and Collins (2009) have found the RS to be culturally fair, easy to use, and displaying good content validity. They also found the scale reliable, reporting that “internal consistency reliability of the RS is not only acceptable across sample populations, but also rather robust” (p. 111). In a study conducted by Koen, Van Eeden, and Wissing (2011), the RS was used in a South African context, exploring the resilience of 312 professional nurses (between the ages of 20 to 60+ years). A Cronbach’s coefficient alpha of 0.95 was obtained, suggesting a high level of internal consistency. This was, however, the only available study that used the RS in a South African context. The present study also found the RS to be reliable with a Cronbach’s coefficient alpha of 0.97.

The **MHC-SF** (Keyes et al., 2008; Keyes, 2002) was used to measure the self-perceived well-being of the South African AEPs while on assignment. This questionnaire consists of 14 items measuring three different aspects of well-being, including emotional well-being (3 items), social well-being (5 items) and psychological well-being (6 items). It uses a 6-point Likert scale where participants must rate the frequency with which they experienced each of a number of indicators of well-being in the past month. Response options include *never (0)*, *once or twice a month*, *about once a week*, *two to three times a week*, *almost every day*, and *every day (6)*. The total scale score places a person in one of three categories on a continuum of mental health, ranging from languishing (low level of mental health), through moderate mental health to the experience of flourishing (optimal mental health) (Keyes, 2002, 2005; Keyes, Dhingra, & Simoes, 2010; Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002).

The MHC-SF has been used in an African context in studies by Willers, Potgieter, Khumalo, Malan, Mentz, and Ellis (2013), and in a study by Koen et al. (2011). The studies obtained Cronbach’s coefficient alphas of 0.72 and 0.83 respectively, displaying good internal consistency. In the present study, the coefficient alphas for the emotional, social, and

psychological well-being subscales were 0.95, 0.87 and 0.91 respectively. The full scale obtained an α of 0.88, attesting to the MHC-SF's internal consistency when used within this context.

Ethics considerations

This study was approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00362-16-S1) and was conducted according to the ethics guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (National Department of Health, 2015) and other international ethics guidelines applicable to this study.

Data analysis

The VIA Institute on Character in Cincinnati, Ohio did a preliminary data analysis of the VIA-72. The authors of the VIA granted the researcher permission to receive the raw data in order to statistically link the results obtained from the VIA-72 with the results of the MHC-SF and RS.

The SPSS (Version 25) and AMOS (Version 25) data analysis software systems were used to conduct descriptive and inferential statistical analysis on the measured variables. It included participants' self-reported character strengths, resilience and well-being. Indicators of internal consistency and reliability of the scales used to measure these constructs were computed by way of Cronbach's coefficient alpha (α). The construct validity of the different scales was determined by means of explorative factor analysis. In addition to descriptive statistics regarding the different constructs, which included means (\bar{x}) and standard deviations (s), the associations between these variables were computed by means of Spearman's correlation coefficient.

Structural equation modelling (SEM), which is a combination of path and factor analysis (Karimi & Meyer, 2014, p.123), was subsequently used to determine the predictive relations between these variables. According to Lei and Wu (2007), SEM is used to test the hypothesized

associations between variables. The adequacy of the resultant model and its fit to the data were determined by a number of fit indices including, among others, the Chi-square test statistic, Comparative fit index (CFI), and Root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA).

Results

None of the demographic characteristics showed any significant association with either the rank of character strengths or the levels of resilience or well-being of the participants. Mean ranks and standard deviations were computed for the 24 VIA-72 sub-scales. It is important to note that the ranks and not the scores of character strengths for the total sample group were used because the ranks of strengths are not influenced by individual answering patterns and could give more information than the scores. Mean scores and standard deviations were computed for the RS, the 3 sub-scales, and full scale of the MHC-SF. Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics of the sample group.

Table 2:
Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients for the MHC-SF, RS and VIA-72

	Range					
	N	Mean	Min	Max	Std.Dev.	CA
MHC-SF-EWB	110	10.49	2.00	15.00	3.36	0.95
MHC-SF-SWB	110	13.30	2.00	24.00	5.36	0.87
MHC-SF-PWB	110	20.22	4.00	30.00	6.60	0.91
MHC-SF-Total	110	44.01	9.00	68.00	14.18	0.88
RS	110	130.20	41.67	175.00	31.16	0.97
Wisdom and Knowledge						
Curiosity	70	12.52	1.00	24.00	6.52	0.73
Love of learning	70	13.61	1.00	24.00	7.33	0.75
Judgment/Open-mindedness	70	11.44	2.00	24.00	6.28	0.57
Creativity	70	14.86	1.00	24.00	6.96	0.83
Social intelligence	70	14.79	3.00	24.00	5.21	0.62
Perspective	70	16.25	2.00	24.00	5.39	0.59
Courage						
Bravery	70	11.65	1.00	24.00	7.32	0.64
Perseverance	70	12.04	1.00	24.00	6.81	0.87
Integrity/Honesty	70	6.42	1.00	23.00	4.88	0.50
Humanity and Love						
Kindness	70	9.31	1.00	22.00	5.25	0.75
Love	70	7.06	1.00	22.00	5.50	0.76
Justice						
Teamwork	70	12.58	1.00	24.00	5.83	0.79
Fairness	70	7.92	1.00	20.00	4.88	0.65
Leadership	70	12.95	3.00	22.00	4.85	0.73
Temperance						
Self-regulation	70	20.19	3.00	24.00	4.50	0.55
Prudence/Caution	70	12.86	1.00	24.00	6.80	0.74
Modesty/Humility	70	16.18	3.00	24.00	5.57	0.64

	Range					CA
	N	Mean	Min	Max	Std.Dev.	
Transcendence						
Appreciation of beauty	70	7.97	1.00	24.00	6.74	0.78
Gratitude	70	9.06	1.00	23.00	5.62	0.76
Hope	70	11.97	1.00	22.00	5.82	0.65
Spirituality	70	13.87	1.00	24.00	7.82	0.90
Forgiveness	70	14.47	1.00	24.00	6.80	0.79
Humour and playfulness	70	12.12	1.00	24.00	7.07	0.80
Zest/Enthusiasm	70	17.90	2.00	24.00	5.13	0.79

Note: MHC-SF-EWB = Mental Health Continuum - Short Form, Emotional Well-being; MHC-SF-SWB - Mental Health Continuum - Short Form, Social Well-being; MHC-SF-PWB = Mental Health Continuum - Short Form, Psychological Well-being; MHC-SF-Total = Mental Health Continuum - Short Form Total score; RS = True Resilience Scale; CA = Cronbach’s alpha

Bold indicates the six virtue clusters, namely Wisdom and Knowledge; Courage; Humanity and Love; Justice; Temperance; and Transcendence

As is evident from Table 2, there were discrepancies in the number of participants that completed the different questionnaires (N=110 for MHC-SF and RS; N=70 for VIA-72). After requesting participants to submit outstanding questionnaires electronically, only 70 participants completed all three measurements for use for correlations and SEM. However, the descriptive statistics of the total sample of 110 was included in the analysis to gain insight into the demographics, MHC-SF and RS of a larger group of AEPs.

The mean rankings of participants’ character strengths as measured with the VIA-72, ranged between 6.42 (Integrity/Honesty) and 20.19 (Self-regulation). It is important to note that by using the ranks and not the subscale average for each particular strength, a lower average score denotes a higher ranking for that particular strength within this participant group.

Cronbach’s coefficient alpha (α) was used to assess the internal consistency of the VIA-72, RS

and MHC-SF. The α reliability indices for the 24 character strengths that form part of the VIA-72 ranged between 0.50 (Integrity/Honesty) and 0.90 (Spirituality), as indicated in Table 2.

On the RS, which has a potential maximum score of 175, the mean score was 130.20 with a standard deviation of 31.16. The α coefficient for the RS was 0.97. Wagnild's (2009) guidelines were used to interpret the results of the current sample group on the RS. These guidelines classify scores of 120 and below as indicating low resilience; 125–145 indicating moderately low to moderate levels of resilience; and a score greater than 145 indicating moderately high to high levels of resilience. The results of the RS showed 21.8% (N = 24) of the participants to have low levels of resilience; 67.3% (N = 74) to have moderate levels of resilience and 10.9% (N = 12) to have high levels of resilience.

On the MHC-SF, the mean score of the emotional well-being sub-scale was 10.49 (SD = 3.36); 13.30 (SD = 5.36) on the social well-being sub-scale and 20.22 (SD = 6.60) on the psychological well-being sub-scale. There was a mean value of 44.01 and standard deviation of 14.18 for the total scale score. The α coefficient ranged between 0.87 and 0.95 for the subscales of the MHC-SF, indicating a high degree of internal consistency and reliability. According to Keyes (2002), participants' levels of mental health or well-being can be categorized into three subgroups: languishing, moderate mental health, and optimal mental health, also referred to as flourishing. The results of the MHC-SF indicate that 9.1% (N=10) of the participants were languishing, 46.4% (N=51) had moderate mental health, and 44.5% (N=49) were flourishing.

Table 3 reports the correlations between the ranks of character strengths and participants' self-reported levels of resilience and mental health.

Table 3:
Correlations between the ranks of each character strength and the MHC-SF and RS

	MHC-SF- EWB	MHC-SF- SWB	MHC-SF- PWB	MHC-SF- Total	RS
MHC-SF-EWB	1.000	.724**	.785**	.876**	.557**
MHC-SF-SWB	.724**	1.000	.737**	.907**	.485**
MHC-SF-PWB	.785**	.737**	1.000	.931**	.636**
MHC-SF-Total	.876**	.907**	.931**	1.000	.608**
RS	.557**	.485**	.636**	.608**	1.000
Wisdom and Knowledge					
Curiosity	-0.235	-0.229	-.285*	-.266*	-.271*
Love of learning	0.086	0.063	-0.013	0.044	0.020
Judgment/Open-mindedness	0.083	0.164	0.055	0.106	0.065
Creativity	-0.071	0.049	-0.133	-0.061	-0.085
Social intelligence	0.085	0.182	0.211	0.197	.249*
Perspective	-0.046	0.056	-0.045	0.002	0.018
Courage					
Bravery	0.126	0.146	0.004	0.084	-0.028
Perseverance	-0.064	-0.055	-0.174	-0.110	-0.221
Integrity/Honesty	0.094	0.103	0.056	0.103	0.026
Humanity and Love					
Kindness	0.143	-0.032	.266*	0.135	0.115
Love	0.018	0.033	0.120	0.068	0.153
Justice					
Teamwork	0.160	0.001	0.176	0.118	0.157
Fairness	-0.011	-0.148	-0.009	-0.082	-0.113
Leadership	0.101	0.088	0.086	0.087	0.165
Temperance					
Self-regulation	-0.068	0.031	-0.112	-0.044	-0.090
Prudence/Caution	0.067	0.051	0.023	0.051	-0.023
Modesty/Humility	.379**	0.135	.367**	.316**	.296*

	MHC-SF- EWB	MHC-SF- SWB	MHC-SF- PWB	MHC-SF- Total	RS
Transcendence					
Appreciation of beauty	-0.104	0.234	0.164	0.201	0.163
Gratitude	-.343**	-.269*	-0.215	-.287*	-0.132
Hope	-0.167	-.280*	-0.228	-.257*	-.236*
Spirituality	-0.040	-0.100	-0.048	-0.090	0.014
Forgiveness	0.033	-0.060	0.087	0.016	0.127
Humour and playfulness	-0.134	-0.056	-0.037	-0.070	-0.084
Zest/Enthusiasm	-.285*	-0.199	-0.201	-.249*	-0.110

Note. **Bold** indicates the six virtue clusters, namely Wisdom and Knowledge; Courage; Humanity and Love; Justice; Temperance; and Transcendence.

* p <0.05; **p <0.01

There were correlations reaching the .01 level of significance between the MHC-SF total scale score and all of its subscales. There were significant correlations between the sub-scales of the MHC-SF and participants’ self-reported levels of resilience. This included emotional well-being ($r = 0.557, p < 0.01$), psychological well-being ($r = 0.636, p < 0.01$), social well-being ($r = 0.485, p < 0.01$) and the total scale on the MHC-SF ($r = 0.608, p < 0.01$). A number of the character strength rankings had significant correlations with both mental health and resilience. It is important to note that a negative correlation between the rank of a particular strength and resilience or well-being denotes a positive association between those variables and vice versa. The character strengths that showed significant negative correlations and were therefore positively associated with participants’ resilience and well-being included Curiosity, Gratitude, Hope and Zest.

In the case of the Curiosity subscale, the negative correlations denote a significant association between that character strength and participants’ level of resilience ($r = -0.271, p < 0.05$), personal well-being ($r = -0.285, p < 0.05$) and general well-being ($r = -0.266, p < 0.05$).

Gratitude showed significant association with emotional well-being ($r = -0.343$, $p < 0.01$) and social well-being ($r = -0.269$, $p < 0.05$), as well as the total scale score on the MHC-SF ($r = -0.287$, $p < 0.05$). Hope showed significant association with resilience ($r = -0.236$, $p < 0.05$), social well-being ($r = -0.280$, $p < 0.05$), as well as the total scale of the MHC-SF ($r = -0.257$, $p < 0.05$). Zest also showed a positive association with emotional well-being ($r = -0.285$, $p < 0.05$) as well as the total scale of the MHC-SF ($r = -0.249$, $p < 0.05$).

Although counter intuitive, a number of character strengths showed positive correlations of varying significance and were therefore negatively associated with participants' resilience and mental health. These included Social intelligence, Kindness and Modesty/Humility. These positive correlations indicate that the higher these strengths were ranked, the lower the participants' self-reported levels of resilience and mental health appeared to be. More specifically, the strength of Social intelligence showed a significant negative association with resilience ($r = 0.249$, $p < 0.05$), and Kindness was negatively associated with psychological well-being ($r = 0.266$, $p < 0.05$). Most prominently, though, the strength of Modesty/Humility showed positive correlations with participants' self-reported resilience ($r = 0.269$, $p < 0.05$), emotional well-being ($r = 0.379$, $p < 0.01$), psychological well-being ($r = 0.367$, $p < 0.01$), as well as the total scale score of the MHC-SF ($r = 0.316$, $p < 0.01$).

The next step in establishing the association between participants' character strengths and their levels of resilience and well-being was structural equation modelling (SEM). Based on the results above, only the significant associations for the total group were included in the path model (Figure 1). The model hypothesizes that resilience acts as mediator between strengths and well-being.

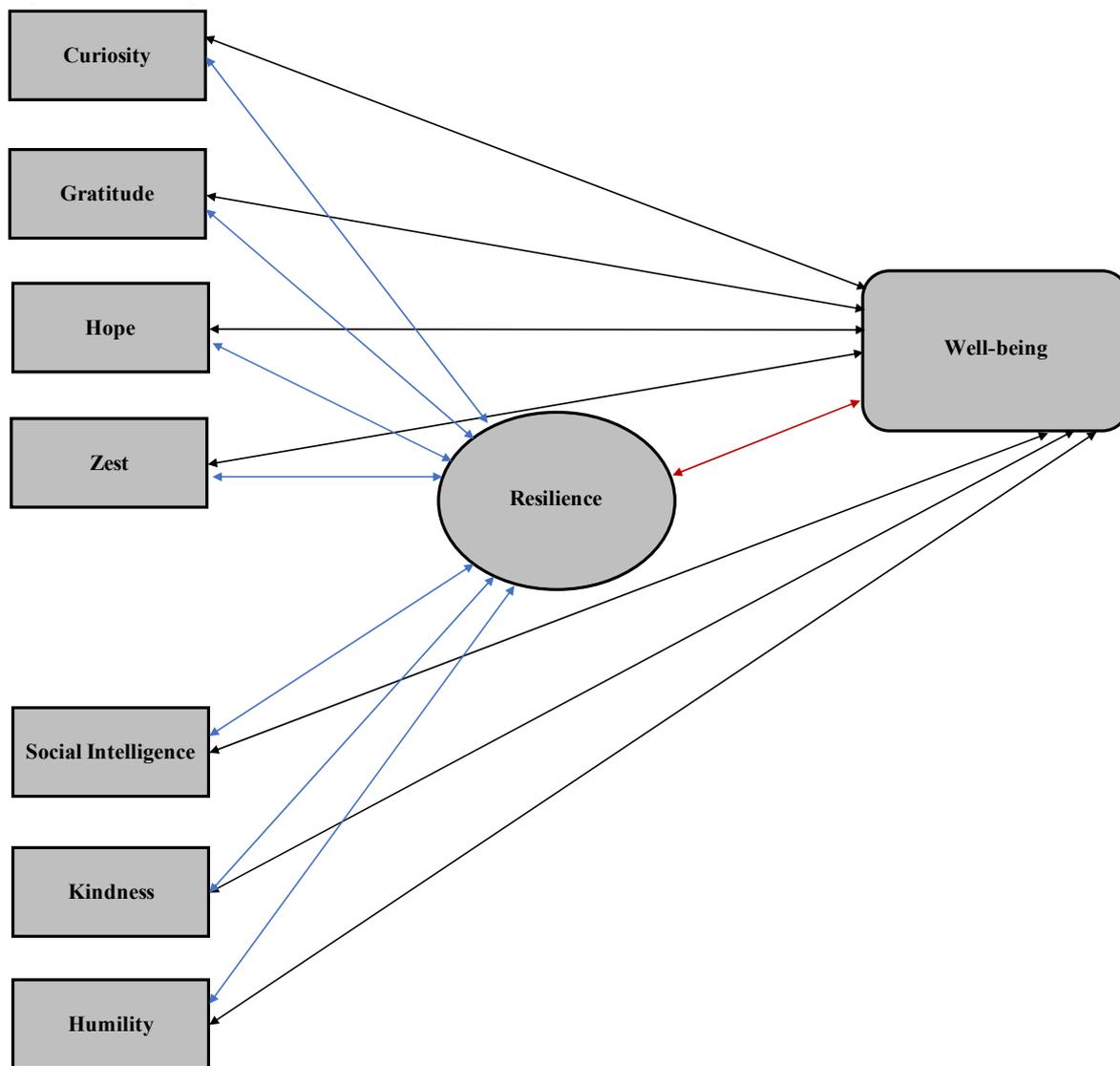
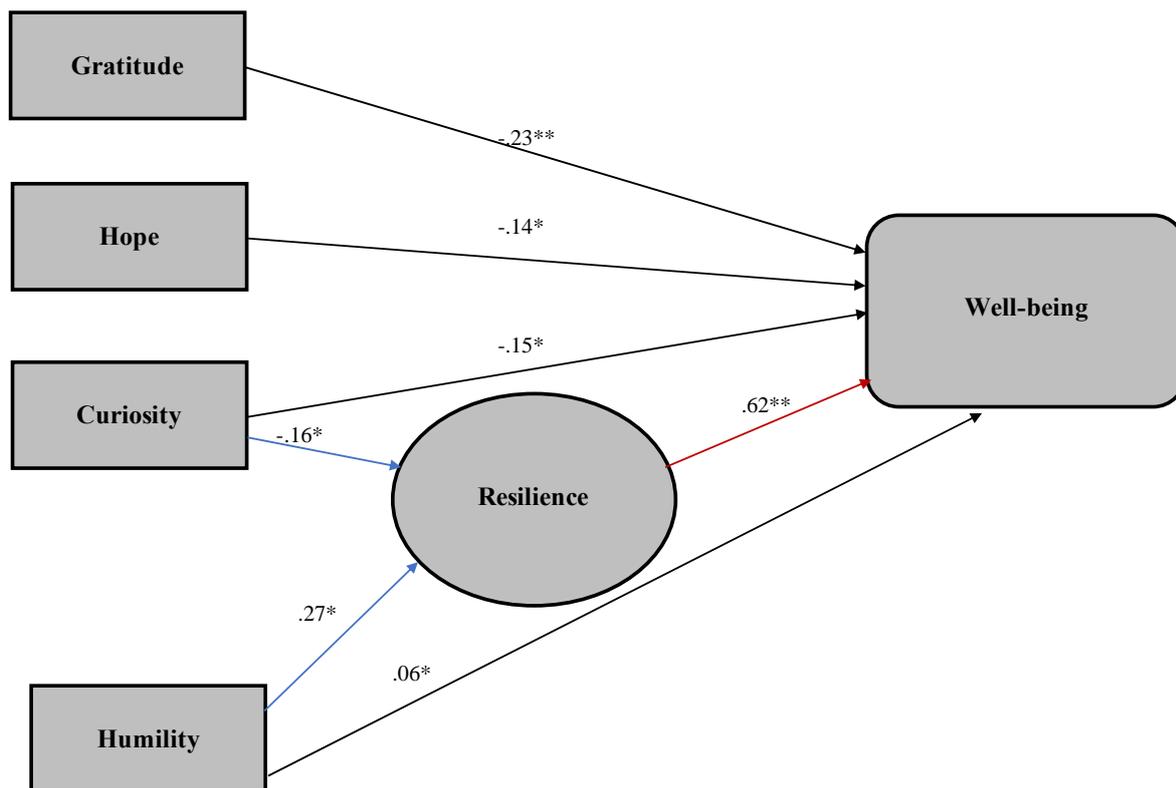


Figure 1: Hypothesized model for path analysis

Even though the sample size was small for SEM ($n = 70$), Wolf, Harrington, Clark, and Miller (2013) found that in sample sizes of 30 with a simple CFA, four indicators and loadings around .80 are sufficient. This is affirmed by Sideridis, Simos, Papanicolaou and Fletcher (2014), who found that a sample size of 50–70 would be enough for a model involving four latent variables. The model in the current study explored which of these character strengths predicted well-being and also if resilience acts as a mediator between some of these strengths and well-being. In subsequent rounds, the model was reduced to increase the degree of fit with the data and to show only the significant paths, as illustrated in Figure 2.



Note. **p<0.01 and p<0.05. The numbers on the paths represent regression weights.

Figure 2: SEM Reduced Model

The numbers on the paths in Figure 2 represent the standardized regression weights. The standardized regression weights indicated that Gratitude, Hope and Curiosity proved to be positive predictors of well-being, with β -values of -0.23, -0.14 and -0.15 respectively. Resilience partially mediated the effect of Curiosity and Humility on well-being. However, while Humility is negatively associated with resilience, Curiosity makes a positive contribution to this construct. Results also indicate a strong association between resilience and mental health and show that resilience appears to be a significant predictor of mental health ($\beta = 0.62$). The discussion section offers possible explanations or interpretation of these results.

The reduced model proved to have the best fit to the data as judged by the fit indices, including the chi-square test statistic, Comparative Fit Indices (CFI) and RMSEA (Table 4).

Table 4:
Goodness of fit indices for initial structural model

CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF	CFI	RMSEA [90% conf.]
5.7	8	.68	0.71	1.00	0.00 [0.00; 0.09]

Note. CMIN minimum sample discrepancy, DF degrees of freedom, CFI comparative fit index, RMSEA root mean square error of approximation

The Comparative Fit Index of 1.00 was higher than the guideline value of 0.95, indicating a good fit. The RMSEA was 0.00 with a 90% confidence interval of [0.00; 0.09], which is lower than the guideline value of 0.06 and therefore indicative of acceptable model fit (Hooper, Coughlan, & Mullen, 2008). The CMIN/DF ratio yielded a value of 0.71. This indicates a good fit, as it is lower than the value of 2 as recommended by Mcquitty and Wolf (2013).

Discussion

The findings of this study as illustrated in Figure 2 expand our knowledge of the character strengths, levels of resilience and the mental health of South African AEPs while living abroad. Firstly, it is interesting to note that none of the demographic characteristics showed any significant association with either the ranking of character strengths, the self-reported levels of resilience, or the well-being of the participants. This stands in contrast to results of other studies such as that of Okpara (2010) and Shaffer and Harrison (2001), which found that gender, age, prior experience, marital status and children contributed significantly to expatriates’ general, interactional, work and psychological adjustment while living and working abroad. Okpara (2010), who did his research in Nigeria, West Africa, furthermore found that previous international experience played an especially important part in the expatriate and his family’s adjustment, “because the exposure to previous cross-cultural experiences enables the expatriate to acquire skills to cope with uncertainties” (p. 127). The fact that there were no correlations between the demographic variables and any of the constructs explored can possibly be ascribed

to the fact that the relatively small sample size led to the character strengths, resilience and well-being.

The participants' self-reported levels of resilience revealed a larger part of the sample group (67.3%) to fall within the moderate range with a mean score of 130.2. This compares well to a study done by Mendonca, Shrivastava, and Pietsching (2018), which found moderate levels of resilience among married expatriate women in Dubai. Although facing similar challenges as the current participant group, the majority of these participant groups remained relatively resilient while facing these stressors. This suggests the presence of factors that protect and preserve AEPs' well-being during expatriation.

The results on the self-perceived well-being of the participants seem to confirm this, with 44.5% of the total sample group reporting to be flourishing while on expatriate assignment, while 9.1% reported that they were languishing. No other study could be found where AEPs' levels of well-being were assessed by means of the MHC-SF. In a study that included South African AEPs residing in Germany, Van Renen (2015) found that AEPs' subjective well-being was positively associated with cross-cultural adjustment. Our results show that 44.5% of the current sample group experienced a high degree of well-being and could therefore be assumed to have adjusted relatively well to the foreign environment. Again, this suggests the presence of certain protective factors, one of which might be the moderate levels of resilience reported earlier.

Correlational analysis confirmed positive associations between participants' self-reported resilience and all the aspects of their well-being as measured by the MHC-SF. The correlations between these constructs reached the 1% level of significance. Although the association between resilience and well-being has to our knowledge not been researched in the context of expatriation, many studies have confirmed the positive interplay between these constructs in other contexts (Hutchinson, Stuart, & Pretorius, 2010; Lyubomirsky & Della Porta, 2010;

Panchal, Mukherjee, & Kumar, 2016; Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004; Schultze-Lutter, Schimmelman, & Schmidt, 2016; Seery, Holman, & Silver, 2010). In light of the above, resilience seems to be strongly associated with well-being, also within the context of expatriation.

Correlational results furthermore showed strong associations between seven of the character strengths as measured by the VIA-72 (i.e. Curiosity, Gratitude, Hope, Zest, Social Intelligence, Kindness and Humility) and both resilience and mental health. Even though not within the field of expatriation, a plethora of studies have explored the relationship between character strengths and resilience (Hutchinson et al., 2010; Martínez-Martí & Ruch, 2017; Meyers & van Woerkom, 2017; Niemiec, 2019; Petkari & Ortiz-Tallo, 2018), and character strengths and well-being (Allan, 2015; Bobowik, Basabe, & Paez, 2015; Demirci & Eksi, 2018; A. Hutchinson et al., 2010; M. Meyers, van Woerkom, & Bakker, 2013; Park et al., 2004; Peterson & Park, 2012; Proctor, Maltby, & Linley, 2011; Toner, Haslam, Robinson, & Williams, 2012). Results from our study suggest that the strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude, Hope and Zest are positively associated with higher levels of well-being, while Social Intelligence, Kindness and Humility showed a negative association with this construct. The hypothesized model for path analysis included these seven strengths. SEM was conducted to investigate the predictive relationships that exist between these variables. The reduced model indicated that not only resilience, but also the strengths of Gratitude, Hope and Curiosity, were positive predictors of the AEPs' well-being. Literature affirms that these so-called "strengths of the heart" have a well-established association with life satisfaction (Govindji & Linley, 2007; Park & Peterson, 2006; Park et al., 2004; Peterson, Ruch, Beermann, Park, & Seligman, 2007; Proctor et al., 2011).

Gratitude is described as the ability of being aware of and thankful for good things that happen (Park et al., 2004; Seligman, 2003), and can be directed toward either others, towards nonhuman sources (e.g. God, nature or animals), or towards the self. Many studies have shown

that Gratitude connects with all of the elements of well-being (Allan, 2015; Littman-Ovadia, Lavy, & Boiman-Meshita, 2017; Littman-Ovadia & Niemiec, 2016; Lyubomirsky, Dickerhoof, Boehm, & Sheldon, 2011; Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013; Noor, Rahman, & Zahari, 2018; Petkari & Ortiz-Tallo, 2018; Sansone & Sansone, 2010; Toepfer, Cichy, & Peters, 2012). As mentioned earlier, Gratitude was ranked fifth by the total sample group, suggesting that this strength features prominently in AEPs' life abroad. Living as expatriates in developing countries on the African continent poses unique challenges, such as the lack of access to electricity (Ford, 2019), violent crime, poor quality of health care, poverty (Poelzl, 2010), to name a few. Within this context, being aware and appreciative of good things that happen seems likely to increase the AEPs' well-being.

According to Park and Peterson (2009), Hope is one of the strengths that act as a "buffer against the negative effects of stress and trauma, preventing or limiting problems in their wake" (p. 2). They also suggest that in the face of adversity, the strengths of Gratitude and Hope especially, will come to the fore (Park & Peterson, 2009; Peterson, Park, Pole, D'Andrea, & Seligman, 2008). The results of the current study indicate that being hopeful about the future and one's ability to achieve goals seem to predict good mental health. Hope was ranked ninth for the total sample group, which suggests that it is a strength that this group of expat partners identify with and deem important during expatriation.

According to Seligman (2003), Curiosity refers to the inner ability to be open to exploring, discovering and being flexible with regard to one's preconceptions. The relevance of this character strength within the context of expatriate assignment is affirmed by Van Erp, Van der Zee, Giebels and Van Duijn (2014), who state that the most important resources in the AEPs' psychological and sociocultural adjustment are among others open-mindedness, emotional stability and social initiative. In the current study, resilience partially mediated the relationship

between Curiosity and well-being. Curiosity, therefore, not only contributes positively to AEPs' well-being, but also makes them more resilient while living abroad.

Resilience also partially mediated the association between humility and well-being, and humility was the only strength that displayed negative associations with both constructs. This is in line with the findings of international studies done by Park et al. (2004) and Shimai, Otake, Park, Peterson and Seligman (2006), which indicated that Humility was "consistently associated with less life satisfaction" (p. 611). Both of these studies ascribe the connection between the strength of Humility and less life satisfaction to individualism. Humility can be explained as the innate tendency to avoid the spotlight and not regard oneself as more important than one is (Park et al., 2004; Seligman, 2003). However, it is interesting to note that within the current sample group, Humility was ranked twenty-first out of a possible 24. This suggests that within this relatively individualistic participant group, the strength of Humility is not highly esteemed among individuals pursuing expatriation. Should Humility therefore be one of an individuals' signature strengths, our results suggest an associated decrease in resilience and well-being. In line with the literature cited above, this might indicate that the participants in our study represent a relatively individualistic group, where success is associated with the pursuit of individual gain and not necessarily that of the group. Within the current group it might therefore be that the ability or willingness to put oneself forward is not necessarily counter-productive.

The positive contributions that the strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope made to AEPs' mental health and even the negative contribution of Humility on resilience and well-being expand our knowledge on the interplay between these constructs during international relocation.

Conclusion

To our knowledge, this has been the first study to explore the associations between the character strengths, resilience and well-being of the AEP during international relocation. Expatriate assignments have become a reality worldwide. In most cases, the employee's life partner and children (if applicable) accompany him. It is important to acknowledge the influence that the AEPs' mental health has on the overall outcome of the assignment. Creating awareness of the AEPs' unique character strengths and enhancing resilience, could help AEPs to not only exist or cope, but to flourish during the expatriate assignment. The importance of research and support in the life of the AEP cannot be underestimated. This study not only aimed at creating a better understanding of the challenges that AEPs are faced with, but also at laying the foundation for developing an intervention framework that psychologists, counsellors or business coaches can use to assist AEPs during pre-departure training or to offer support while they are on assignment and during repatriation. This study furthermore sets the stage for researchers to further investigate and explore positive mental health concepts at play in AEPs' adjustment and life abroad.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study met with a number of limitations, the first of which was the cross-sectional nature of data collection. Our results can therefore merely be taken as indicative of associations and the existence of causal relationships would be speculative at best. Secondly, the researchers based their study on South African AEPs, which may limit the generalisability of the findings. Thirdly, the sample size was relatively small. This can be explained by the fact that AEPs are not easily located and the researchers had to rely on snowball sampling to increase the sample size. Another limitation to the study is the fact that the researchers relied on self-report questionnaires, which run the risk of response bias. The most significant limitation of the study was the

discrepancy in the number of participants (n = 110 for RS and MHC-SF; n = 70 for VIA-72). Due to the fact that there were two web links to direct participants to a) the RS and MHC-SF, and b) the VIA-72 and the responses were submitted to two independent databases, not all participants completed all three measurements.

References

- Adams, B. G., & van de Vijver, F. J. R. (2015). The many faces of expatriate identity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 49, 322–331. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2015.05.009>
- Ali, A., Van der Zee, K. I., & Sanders, G. (2003). Determinants of intercultural adjustment among expatriate spouses. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27(5), 563–580. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767\(03\)00054-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(03)00054-3)
- Allan, B. A. (2015). Balance among character strengths and meaning in life. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 16, 1247–1261. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-014-9557-9>
- Biswas-Diener, R. (2006). From the equator to the north pole: A study of character strengths. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 7(3), 293–310. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-005-3646-8>
- Bobowik, M., Basabe, N., & Paez, D. (2015). The bright side of migration: Hedonic, psychological, and social well-being in immigrants in Spain. *Social Science Research*, 51, 189–204. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2014.09.011>
- Brewster, C., Bonache, J., Cerdin, J.-L., & Suutari, V. (2014). Exploring expatriate outcomes. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 25(14), 1921–1937.

Caligiuri, P., & Bonache, J. (2016). Evolving and enduring challenges in global mobility.

Journal of World Business, 51(1), 127–141. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2015.10.001>

Cascio, W. F., & Aguinis, H. (2011). *Applied psychology in human resource management* (7th ed.). New Jersey, NY: Upper Saddle River, NJ : Prentice Hall.

Chew, J. (2004). Managing MNC expatriates through crises: A challenge for international human resource management. *Research and Practice in Human Resource Management*, 12(2), 1–13.

Cole, N., & McNulty, Y. (2012). Perceptions of organizational justice during expatriation: A framework for examining trailing spouse adjustment. In *The 11th World Congress of the international federation of scholarly associations of management (IFSAM)* (pp. 1–28). Lemirick, Ireland.

Cole, N., & Nesbeth, K. (2014). Why do international assignments fail? The expatriate families speak. *International Studies of Management and Organization*, 44(3), 1–17.
<https://doi.org/10.2753/IMO0020-8825440304>

Copeland, A. P., & Norell, S. K. (2002). Spousal adjustment on international assignments: The role of social support. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 26(3), 255–272.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767\(02\)00003-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(02)00003-2)

Demirci, I., & Eksi, H. (2018). Keep calm and be happy: A mixed method study from character strengths to well-being. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 18(2), 279–330.
<https://doi.org/10.12738/estp.2018.2.0799>

- Firth, B. M., Kirkman, B. L., & Kim, K. (2014). Newcomers abroad: Expatriate adaptation during early phases of international assignments. *Academy of Management Journal*, 57(1), 280–300.
- Ford, N. (2019). Powering Africa forward. *New African*, (January 2019), 49–52.
- Govindji, R., & Linley, P. A. (2007). Strengths use, self-concordance and well-being: Implications for strengths coaching and coaching psychologists. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 2(2), 143–153.
- Haslberger, A., Brewster, C., & Hippler, T. (2013). The dimensions of expatriate adjustment. *Human Resource Management*, 52(3), 333–351. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm>
- Herleman, H. A., Britt, T. W., & Hashima, P. Y. (2008). Ibasho and the adjustment, satisfaction, and well-being of expatriate spouses. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 32(3), 282–299. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2008.01.004>
- Hippler, T., Brewster, C., & Haslberger, A. (2015). The elephant in the room: the role of time in expatriate adjustment. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 26(15), 1920–1935.
- Hooper, D., Coughlan, J., & Mullen, M. (2008). Structural equation modelling : Guidelines for determining model fit. *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 6(1), 53–60.
- Hutchinson, A., Stuart, A., & Pretorius, H. (2010). Biological contributions to well-being: The relationships amongst temperament, character strengths and resilience. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 36(2), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v36i2.844>

- Karimi, L., & Meyer, D. (2014). Structural equation modeling in psychology: The history, development and current challenges. *International Journal of Psychological Studies*, 6(4), 123–133. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijps.v6n4p123>
- Keyes, C. L. M., Wissing, M., Potgieter, J. C., Temane, M., Kruger, A., & van Rooy, S. (2008). Evaluation of the mental health continuum- short form (MHC-SF) in Setswana-speaking South Africans. *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy*, 15(3), 181–192. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.572>
- Keyes, C. L. M. (2002). The mental health continuum: from languishing to flourishing in life. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 43(2), 207–222.
- Keyes, C. L. M. (2005). Mental illness and/or mental health? Investigating axioms of the complete state model of health. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 73(3), 539–548. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.73.3.539>
- Keyes, C. L. M., Dhingra, S. S., & Simoes, E. J. (2010). Change in level of positive mental health as a predictor of future risk of mental illness. *Mental Health Promotion and Protection*, 100(12), 2366–2372. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2010.192245>
- Keyes, C. L. M., Shmotkin, D., & Ryff, C. D. (2002). Optimizing well-being: The empirical encounter of two traditions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(6), 1007–1022. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.82.6.1007>
- Khumalo, I. P. (2006). *Exploring the validity of the VIA Inventory of Strengths in an African context*. North-West University (Potchefstroom campus).

- Koen, M. P., Van Eeden, C., & Wissing, M. P. (2011). The prevalence of resilience in a group of professional nurses. *Health SA Gesondheid, 16*(1), 1–11.
<https://doi.org/10.4102/hsag.v16i1.576>
- Kraimer, M., Bolino, M., & Mead, B. (2016). Themes in expatriate and repatriate research over four decades: What do we know and what do we still need to learn? *The Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 3*(1), 1–27.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-041015-062437>
- Lee, L.-Y., & Kartika, N. (2014). The influence of individual, family, and social capital factors on expatriate adjustment and performance: The moderating effect of psychology contract and organizational support. *Expert Systems with Applications, 41*(11), 5483–5494. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eswa.2014.02.030>
- Lei, P.-W., & Wu, Q. (2007). Introduction to structural equation modeling: Issues and practical considerations. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice, Fall*, 33–43.
- Littman-Ovadia, H., Lavy, S., & Boiman-Meshita, M. (2017). When theory and research collide: Examining correlates of signature strengths use at work. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 18*, 527–548. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-016-9739-8>
- Littman-Ovadia, H., & Niemiec, R. M. (2016). Character strengths and mindfulness as core pathways to meaning in life. In P. et al. Russo-Netzer (Ed.), *Clinical Perspectives on Meaning* (pp. 383–405). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-41397-6>
- Lyubomirsky, S., & Della Porta, M. (2010). *Boosting happiness, buttressing resilience: results from cognitive and behavioral Interventions. Handbook of Adult Resilience.*

- Lyubomirsky, S., Dickerhoof, R., Boehm, J. K., & Sheldon, K. M. (2011). Becoming happier takes both a will and a proper way: an experimental longitudinal intervention to boost well-being. *Emotion, 11*(2), 391–402. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21500907>
- Lyubomirsky, S., & Layous, K. (2013). How Do Simple Positive Activities Increase Well-Being? *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 22*(1), 57–62. Retrieved from <http://cdp.sagepub.com/lookup/doi/10.1177/0963721412469809%5Cnhttp://cdp.sagepub.com/lookup/doi/10.1177/0963721412469809%5Cnhttp://cdp.sagepub.com/content/22/1/57.abstract>
- Martínez-Martí, M. L., & Ruch, W. (2017). Character strengths predict resilience over and above positive affect, self-efficacy, optimism, social support, self-esteem, and life satisfaction. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 12*(2), 110–119. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1163403>
- Mcquitty, S., & Wolf, M. (2013). Structural equation modeling: A practical introduction. *Journal of African Business, 14*(1), 58–69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15228916.2013.765325>
- Mendonca, C., Shrivastava, A., & Pietsching, J. (2018). The effect of adaptive capacity, culture and employment status on happiness among married expatriate women residing in Dubai. *Current Psychology, 1*–9. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-018-9832-8>
- Meyers, M. C., & van Woerkom, M. (2017). Effects of a strengths intervention on general and work-related well-being: The mediating role of positive affect. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 18*, 671–689. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-016-9745-x>

- Meyers, M., van Woerkom, M., & Bakker, A. (2013). The added value of the positive: A literature review of positive psychology interventions in organizations. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 22*(5), 618–632.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2012.694689>
- Mouton, J. (2015). *How to succeed in your master's & doctoral studies: A South African guide and resource book* (22nd Editi). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Naeem, A., Bin Naeem, A. B., & Khan, I. U. (2015). Culture shock and its effects on expatriates. *Global Advanced Research Journal of Management and Business Studies, 4*(6), 248–258.
- National Department of Health. (2015). Ethics in Health Research: Principles, processes and structures. <https://doi.org/10.5377/encuentro.v4i2i86.66>
- Niemiec, R. M. (2019). Six functions of character strengths for thriving at times of adversity and opportunity: A theoretical perspective. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-018-9692-2>
- Noor, N., Rahman, N., & Zahari, M. (2018). Gratitude, gratitude intervention and well-being in Malaysia. *The Journal of Behavioral Science, 13*(2), 1–18.
- Okpara, J. O. (2010). Personal characteristics as predictors of expatriate managers cross-cultural adjustment in Nigeria. *American Journal of Business and Economic Research, 5*(1), 113–134.
- Okpara, J. O., & Kabongo, J. D. (2011). Cross-cultural training and expatriate adjustment: A study of western expatriates in Nigeria. *Journal of World Business, 46*(1), 22–30.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2010.05.014>

- Panchal, S., Mukherjee, S., & Kumar, U. (2016). Optimism in relation to well-being, resilience, and perceived stress. *International Journal of Education and Psychological Research*, 5(2), 1–6.
- Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2006). Moral competence and character strengths among adolescents: The development and validation of the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths for Youth. *Journal of Adolescence*, 29, 891–909.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2006.04.011>
- Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2009). Character strengths: Research and practice. *Journal of College and Character*, 10(4), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1940-1639.1042>
- Park, N., Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). Strengths of character and well-being. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23(5), 603–619.
<https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.23.5.603.50748>
- Peterson, C., & Park, N. (2012). Character strengths and the life of meaning. In P. T. P. Wong (Ed.), *The human quest for meaning: Theories, research and applications* (2nd ed., pp. 277–295). Routledge.
- Peterson, C., Park, N., Pole, N., D’Andrea, W. D., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2008). Strengths of character and posttraumatic growth. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 21(2), 214–217.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/jts>.
- Peterson, C., Ruch, W., Beermann, U., Park, N., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2007). Strength of character, orientations to happiness, and life satisfaction. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 2(3), 149–156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760701228938>

- Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification (p. 818). New York and Washington DC: Oxford University Press and American Psychological Association.
- Petkari, E., & Ortiz-Tallo, M. (2018). Towards youth happiness and mental health in the United Arab Emirates: The path of character strengths in a multicultural population. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 19*, 333–350.
- Poelzl, V. (2010). Transitions Abroad: How to live and work in Africa as an expatriate. Retrieved May 19, 2017, from <http://www.transitionsabroad.com>
- Proctor, C., Maltby, J., & Linley, P. A. (2011). Strengths use as a predictor of well-being and health-related quality of life. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 12*, 153–169.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-009-9181-2>
- Ramos, H. M. L., Mustafa, M., & Haddad, A. R. (2017). Social support and expatriate spouses' wellbeing: The mediating role of cross-cultural adjustment. *International Journal of Employment Studies, 25*(2), 6–25.
- Sansone, R. A., & Sansone, L. A. (2010). Gratitude and well-being: The benefits of appreciation. *Psychiatry, 7*(11), 18–21.
- Schultze-Lutter, F., Schimmelmann, B. G., & Schmidt, S. J. (2016). Resilience, risk, mental health and well-being: associations and conceptual differences. *European Child Adolescent Psychiatry, 25*, 459–466. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-016-0851-4>
- Seery, M. D., Holman, E. A., & Silver, R. C. (2010). Whatever does not kill us: Cumulative lifetime adversity, vulnerability, and resilience. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 99*(6), 1025–1041. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021344>

- Seligman, M. E. P. (2003). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. London: Nicholas Brealy Publishing.
- Shaffer, M. A., & Harrison, D. A. (2001a). Forgotten partners in international assignments: Development and Test of a Model of Spouse Adjustment. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*(2), 238–254.
- Shimai, S., Otake, K., Park, N., Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2006). Convergence of character strengths in American and Japanese young adults. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 7*, 311–323. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-005-3647-7>
- Sideridis, G., Simos, P., Papanicolaou, A., & Fletcher, J. (2014). Using structural equation modeling to assess functional connectivity in the brain: Power and sample size considerations. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 74*(5), 733–758. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164414525397>
- Toepfer, S. M., Cichy, K., & Peters, P. (2012). Letters of gratitude: Further evidence for author benefits. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 13*, 187–201. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-011-9257-7>
- Toner, E., Haslam, N., Robinson, J., & Williams, P. (2012). Character strengths and wellbeing in adolescence: Structure and correlates of the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths for children. *Personality and Individual Differences, 52*(5), 637–642. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2011.12.014>
- Trompetter, D., Bussin, M., & Nienaber, R. (2016). The relationship between family adjustment and expatriate performance. *South African Journal of Business Management, 47*(2), 13–22.

Tung, R. L. (2016). New perspectives on human resource management in a global context.

Journal of World Business, 51(1), 142–152. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2015.10.004>

Van den Berg-Overbreek, A. (2014). The psychology of expatriation. *Global Living Magazine*, 6.

Van Erp, K. J., Van der Zee, K. I., Giebels, E., & Van Duijn, M. A. (2014). Lean on me: The importance of one's own and partner's intercultural personality for expatriate's and expatriate spouse's successful adjustment abroad. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 23(5), 706–728.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2013.816088>

Van Renen, A. E. (2015). *The effects of international relocation on expatriate partners' subjective well-being*. University of South Africa.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>

Wagnild, G. M. (2009). A review of the Resilience Scale. *Journal of Nursing Measurement*, 17(2), 105–113. <https://doi.org/10.1891/1061-3749.17.2.105>

Wagnild, G. M., & Collins, J. A. (2009). Assessing resilience. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing & Mental Health Services*, 47(12), 28–33.

Wagnild, G. M., & Young, H. M. (1993). Development and psychometric evaluation of the Resilience Scale. *Journal of Nursing Measurement*, 1(2), 165–178.

Willers, M., Potgieter, J. C., Khumalo, I. P., Malan, L., Mentz, P. J. K., & Ellis, S. (2013). Coping and cultural context : Implications for psychological health and well-being. In M. P. Wissing (Ed.), *Well-Being Research in South Africa* (pp. 251–272). Dordrecht: Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-6368-5>

Wolf, E. J., Harrington, K. M., Clark, S. L., & Miller, M. W. (2013). Sample size requirements for structural equation models: An evaluation of power, bias, and solution propriety.

Educational and Psychological Measurement, 73(6), 913–934.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164413495237>

Chapter 3

Article 2

Flourishing beyond borders: A qualitative exploration of accompanying expatriate partners' character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being

Abstract

Purpose – The authors' aim was to gain a greater understanding of how South African accompanying expatriate partners (AEPs) subjectively experience the strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope, and how these strengths are related to AEPs' resilience and well-being while abroad. An expansion of our knowledge of the mental health of AEPs during expatriation will equip mental health professionals to optimally support this vulnerable group.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected from 17 South African AEPs who, at the time of data collection, were living in another country on the African continent.

Findings – The data gathered from AEPs generated five distinct themes, which included: Spirit of adventure, Elements of adjustment, Sense of belonging, Personal growth and the Cost of remaining strong. These themes served to inform our understanding of the quantitative model of the factors involved with well-being of AEPs created during a previous phase of the research.

Practical implications – The results suggest that there is a positive interplay between AEPs' strengths, resilience and overall well-being during international relocation. However, AEPs do experience that their strengths also come with downsides in that they demand energy, effort and personal compromise. It is important that AEPs be included in the initial selection process and pre-departure training so that they are well equipped before the international assignment.

Originality/value – The research provides insight into South African AEPs’ subjective experiences of their character strengths, resilience and well-being during international relocation.

Keywords: accompanying expatriate partner, character strengths, expatriation, flourishing, qualitative research, resilience, well-being

Introduction

Expatriation, or international relocation, is a worldwide reality brought about by an increase in global business and foreign assignments (Horak & Yang, 2016; Okpara & Kabongo, 2011; Ramos, Mustafa, & Haddad, 2017; Ren, Yunlu, Shaffer, & Fodchuk, 2015; Tung, 2016). These extended business assignments can last anything between six months and five years before the employee either moves to his next posting or returns to his home country (Adams & van de Vijver, 2015; Naeem, Bin Naeem & Khan, 2015). Naeem et al. (2015) state that international assignment can be regarded as a traumatic life event, considering that the employee has to move house, adjust to a new country, fulfil a new role in the company and create a new balance in a foreign culture that may differ from their home culture in significant ways and require great shifts in their usual way of functioning. The process of international relocation brings stress not only for the expatriate, but also for the accompanying partner and extended family (Naeem et al., 2015).

The person accompanying the expatriate while on assignment is frequently referred to in literature as the “trailing spouse” (Chia, 2008; Harvey, 1998; McNulty, 2012; Vögel, van Vuuren, & Millard, 2008). According to the Lexico Online Dictionary, “trailing” is defined as “to draw or be drawn along behind someone or something” (Trailing, n.d.), which supposes that the individual who is “trailing” does not necessarily do so out of free will. It is understandable that the use of the term “trailing spouse” has met with disapproval, as it presupposes indignity, worthlessness or feeling “second-class” (Swanson, 2013, p. 156). This is clearly expressed by

Chris Gerakiteys (2014), a blogger from Australia who currently resides in Ghana with her family:

“We have become the dreaded trailing spouse. When the honeymoon period is over (and before the Gin and Tonics kick in), in this age of female empowerment (in the developed world at least), the harsh reality of a spouse visa signifies all we have left behind. Spouse of Mr. R...no occupation or business for reward permitted (Gerakiteys, 2014, March 7, para. 5)”.

For the purposes of this study, the expatriate’s life partner who is accompanying him while on international assignment, is referred to as the accompanying expatriate partner (AEP). This term includes all life partners of individuals on international assignment, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation or marital status.

Given the frequency of expatriate assignment (Caligiuri & Bonache, 2016; Shortland, 2016; Tahir, 2018), it is surprising that the South African accompanying expatriate partner has not been included in studies on expatriation to date. South African citizens take on expatriate assignments for a variety of reasons. According to the InterNations Expat Insider report, the profile of the South African expatriate fits that of a highly-skilled workforce (InterNations, 2016). Many South Africans take on assignments abroad due to professional advancement in an effort to broaden their understanding of operating in a foreign environment (Hawley, 2016). According to a study done by Marks (2004), other reasons that motivate South Africans to move abroad include “an oppressive political system, limited economic resources and opportunities and social problems such as crime and HIV/AIDS, declining health care and education standards” (p.7).

Considering these challenges that characterize the African context corresponds with Cole and McNulty’s (2012) depiction of relocation as a “crisis situation, rife with uncertainties about roles and various forms of strain” (p.3). Ramos et al. (2017) concur as they describe expatriate assignments as a “significant life-changing and stressful event” for AEPs (p. 6). In most cases

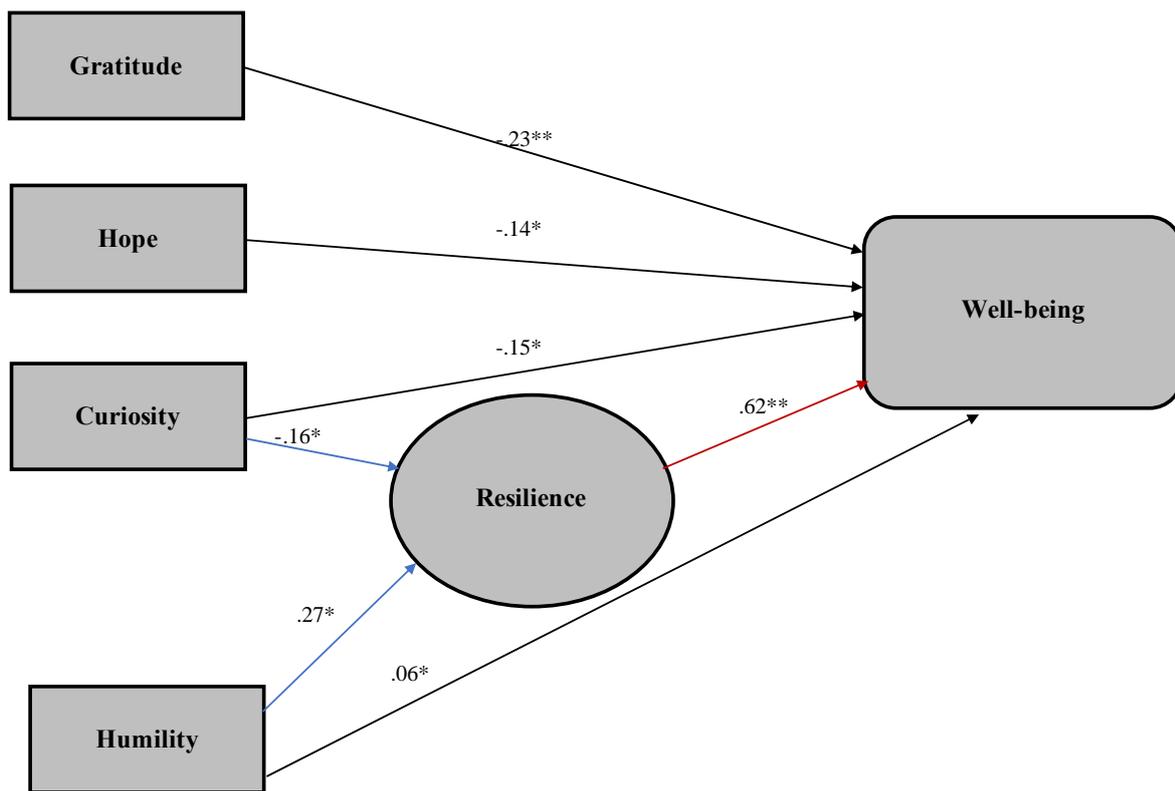
the AEP has to give up a career in her home country, and due to work permit restrictions is often not allowed to work abroad. According to McNulty (2012), this loss of career often coincides with a loss of “power, identity and self-worth (p. 421).”

Research indicates that the expatriate partners’ unhappiness with life abroad or inability to adjust to the challenges of the host country is one of the leading causes for failing at expatriate assignments and breaking contract (Ali, Van der Zee, & Sanders, 2003; Chew, 2004; Copeland & Norell, 2002; Herleman, Britt, & Hashima, 2008; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001; Trompetter, Bussin, & Nienaber, 2016). While explicit research attention has been given to the various challenges that the expatriate partners have to face while living abroad, only a few studies could be found exploring the psychological health, well-being and successful adjustment of expatriate spouses (Ramos et al., 2017; Wiese, 2004, 2013). In spite of finding themselves far removed from all things familiar, and despite the challenges and sometimes adversity, many of these expatriate partners are able to cope and “keep the show on the road” (Gerakiteys, 2014, para. 13).

To address the paucity of research on psychological health and well-being, the aim of this study was to explore possible factors contributing to AEPs’ successful adjustment and strong mental health while abroad. Constructs such as character strengths, resilience and well-being were explored. The current study forms part of three related but independent phases of research (i.e., Chapters 2, 3 and 4). Accordingly, the current study builds on a previous study, which quantitatively measured and described the relationship between character strengths, resilience and well-being of the AEP in Africa, documented in Chapter 2.

Figure 1 illustrates the core findings (cf. Chapter 2) of the quantitative phase that established that the strengths of Gratitude and Hope showed meaningful relationships with self-perceived well-

being of AEPs, whereas Curiosity showed positive associations with both resilience and well-being. Humility displayed negative associations with both resilience and well-being reported by the expatriate partner. The effect of Curiosity and Humility on well-being was partially mediated by resilience. While Humility was negatively associated with resilience, Curiosity made a positive contribution to this construct. Results also indicated a strong association between resilience and mental health, and more specifically that resilience appeared to be a significant predictor of mental health ($\beta = 0.62$). The current study aimed to expand on these quantitative understandings through the qualitative exploration of AEPs’ perceptions of their strengths, their experiences of well-being and resilience while abroad.



Note. **p<0.01 and p<0.05. The numbers on the paths represent regression weights.

Figure 1: SEM Reduced Model from Phase 1 (cf. Article 1)

Research purpose and objective

The aim of the current study was to answer the following questions:

RQ1. How do participants subjectively experience the relationship between the character strengths included in this model and their resilience and well-being?

RQ2. How do their experiences inform our understanding of the mental well-being of AEPs?

Research design

Selmer and McNulty (2017) state that investigating the realities of expatriates' lives on a daily basis is a much-needed area of research on expatriation. This justifies a qualitative research approach, as Bless, Higson-Smith, and Sithole (2013) state that "in many cases, language provides a far more sensitive and meaningful way of recording human experience" (p. 58). As such, the second and current phase (i.e. Chapter 3) of the study aimed at gaining insight into the subjective experiences of the AEP in Africa through qualitatively reviewing the relationship that the strengths of Gratitude, Curiosity and Hope have with resilience and self-perceived well-being as proposed in the quantitative model. By developing an understanding of the AEPs' subjective experience, professionals can increase their ability to contribute positively to their mental health while living abroad, as well as the success rate of expatriate assignment. The study follows an interpretive descriptive research design. According to Neergaard, Olesen, Andersen, and Sondergaard (2009) interpretive description "goes beyond mere description and aims to provide an in-depth conceptual description and understanding of a phenomenon" (n.p.). The researchers realize that since interpretive research is dialectical (Davies & Fisher, 2018), they cannot be detached from the data (i.e. the subjective realities of their participants). The researchers furthermore acknowledge that qualitative research is a value-laden process containing bias (Hadi & Closs, 2016; Noble & Smith, 2015; Smith & Noble, 2014), and therefore bias is discussed

where it comes into play. According to Davies and Fisher (2018), interpretive research is “a deeply self-reflective process for the researcher” (p. 23).

Research context

Although a substantial percentage of expatriate assignments involve translocation to other African countries, a limited number of studies could be found of expatriates living on this continent (Sterle, Fontaine, De Mol, & Verhofstadt, 2018). Literature suggests, however, that translocating to an African country could be very challenging. In the World Population Review of 2019, it is reported that 26 out of the 54 countries in Africa are rated as “least developed countries” (LDCs) and the rest as “developing countries” (Anon, 2019b). According to the United Nations, these countries are confronted with a range of challenges regarding nutrition, education and literacy, but are also economically vulnerable due to extreme poverty (Anon, 2019b). Among the numerous challenges expatriates face while living in any African country, are poor quality and high cost of healthcare; political instability and personal safety; poor infrastructure, greed and corruption; language barriers; various diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria, cholera, rabies and tuberculosis; poor transportation infrastructure; unreliable and/or underdeveloped water and electricity supply outside major urban areas; and poverty and malnutrition (Anon, 2019a; Benedict & Ukpere, 2012; Faeth & Kittler, 2017; Ford, 2019; Pelizzo, Kinyondo, & Nwokora, 2018; Sulemana, 2015). According to The World Happiness Report of 2019, which measures the levels of life satisfaction or happiness of countries on six aspects of well-being, namely freedom, generosity, income, trust, healthy life expectancy and social support (Helliwell, Layard, & Sachs, 2019; King, 2019), 34 countries on the African continent were placed between 105th and 156th position, with the latter being the lowest ranking. This suggests that 34 out of the 54 countries in Africa, are “unhappy” as rated by their own citizens (Helliwell et al., 2019). Experiencing well-being in the context of living in countries

with low reports of life satisfaction and happiness may place AEPs at a disadvantage that adds to the relocation demands they face.

Research method

A qualitative questionnaire was designed using Google Forms, consisting of 16 semi-structured, open-ended questions (Table 1) inviting participants to share their experience of various aspects of the quantitative model depicted in Figure 1. The researchers included a cover letter with the qualitative questionnaire emphasizing the importance of participants answering the questions honestly, and that the confidentiality of responses would be upheld. The letter included key definitions of the three strengths (Gratitude, Curiosity, Hope) that were positively associated with resilience and well-being during Phase 1, and definitions of resilience and well-being. This ensured that participants who may have been unfamiliar with the terminology would understand what each concept entails. Explanations would thus focus on participants' interpretation of character strengths, resilience and well-being rather than individual considerations of the terms used. An e-mail consisting of a cover letter, instructions and a link to the questionnaire was sent to participants, who were allowed up to six weeks to complete the questionnaire before access to the platform was closed. The responses were submitted to the Statistical Consultation Services (SCS) at the North-West University.

Table 1:

Qualitative questionnaire

Meaning in life, character strengths, resilience and well-being

1. What gives you the most meaning in your life?
2. As you look over your life, what would you say are your biggest strengths?
3. Tell me about your well-being as an accompanying expatriate partner (AEP).

Gratitude

- 4.1. How do you experience Gratitude in your life as an AEP?
- 4.2. How do you express Gratitude?
- 4.3. How does Gratitude relate to your well-being?
- 4.4. How does Gratitude relate to your resilience?

Hope

- 5.1. How do you experience Hope in your life as an AEP?
- 5.2. How do you express Hope?
- 5.3. How does Hope relate to your well-being?
- 5.4. How does Hope relate to your resilience?

Curiosity

- 6.1. How do you experience Curiosity in your life as an AEP?
- 6.2. How do you express Curiosity?
- 6.3. How does Curiosity relate to your well-being?
- 6.4. How does Curiosity relate to your resilience?

Relationship between resilience and well-being

10. How would you describe the relationship between your levels of resilience and your well-being as an AEP?

Through these questions, the researchers wanted to explore participants’ perceptions and interpretations of core theoretical constructs, i.e. Curiosity, Gratitude, Hope, resilience and well-being.

Sampling and participants

All of the South African AEPs who were part of the initial study (cf. Chapter 2) were

invited to take part in the second phase, of which 17 (24.6%) accepted the invitation. In the current sample of 17, all of the participants were women between the ages of 35 – 59 years old who were accompanying their life partners and living as expatriates in various countries on the continent of Africa (excluding South Africa). They were not employed in the host country. Participants were proficient in English, which was the language in which the questionnaire was developed. Participation was entirely voluntary and no incentive or remuneration was provided. An e-mail containing instructions and a web link to access the qualitative questionnaire was sent to prospective participants. The initial sample group (cf. Chapter 2) resided in 17 host countries on the African continent, with Tanzania (n=36), Kenya (n=17) and Zambia (n=13) the most prevalent in the overall sample. The current sample of 17 represented the following countries: Tanzania (n=10), Zambia (n=2), Malawi (n=2), Nigeria (n=1), Botswana (n=1) and Kenya (n=1).

Data analysis

Data included 17 responses to 16 semi-structured, open-ended questions. The data analysis strategies were twofold. First, coding was informed by and conducted in accordance with a directed content analysis methodology in order to understand to which extent participants' explanations related to the core constructs under investigation. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) state that directed content analysis aims at validating or extending existing theory or theoretical frameworks in an effort to describe a particular phenomenon sufficiently. Directed content analysis is a process consisting of a number of phases or steps. In the current study, directed content analysis was guided by the strategy set out by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), although coding does not start with predetermined codes. This allowed the researchers to add structure to the analysis and to provide an audit trail facilitated by ATLAS.ti 8 (Mac Version)(Friese, 2019) (Addenda D)

Second, the researchers recognized that responses participants provided offered additional information that could not be readily associated with the core definitions and predetermined coding strategies of directed content analysis. The researchers used primary and secondary cycle coding (Tracy, 2013) to build a more nuanced understanding of the participants' explanations through open coding. The coding cycle relied on open, axial and selective coding to capture the essence of descriptions in meaningful ways through inductive understandings that are as close as possible to the participants' explanations. Later the open codes were grouped together to relate the code-code relationships and build conceptual level codes and categories. As a result of both directed (deductive) and open (inductive) coding, the researchers gained a deeper understanding of participants' experiences and explanations. These understandings were organized into themes and sub-themes discussed below.

Strategies to ensure data quality and reporting

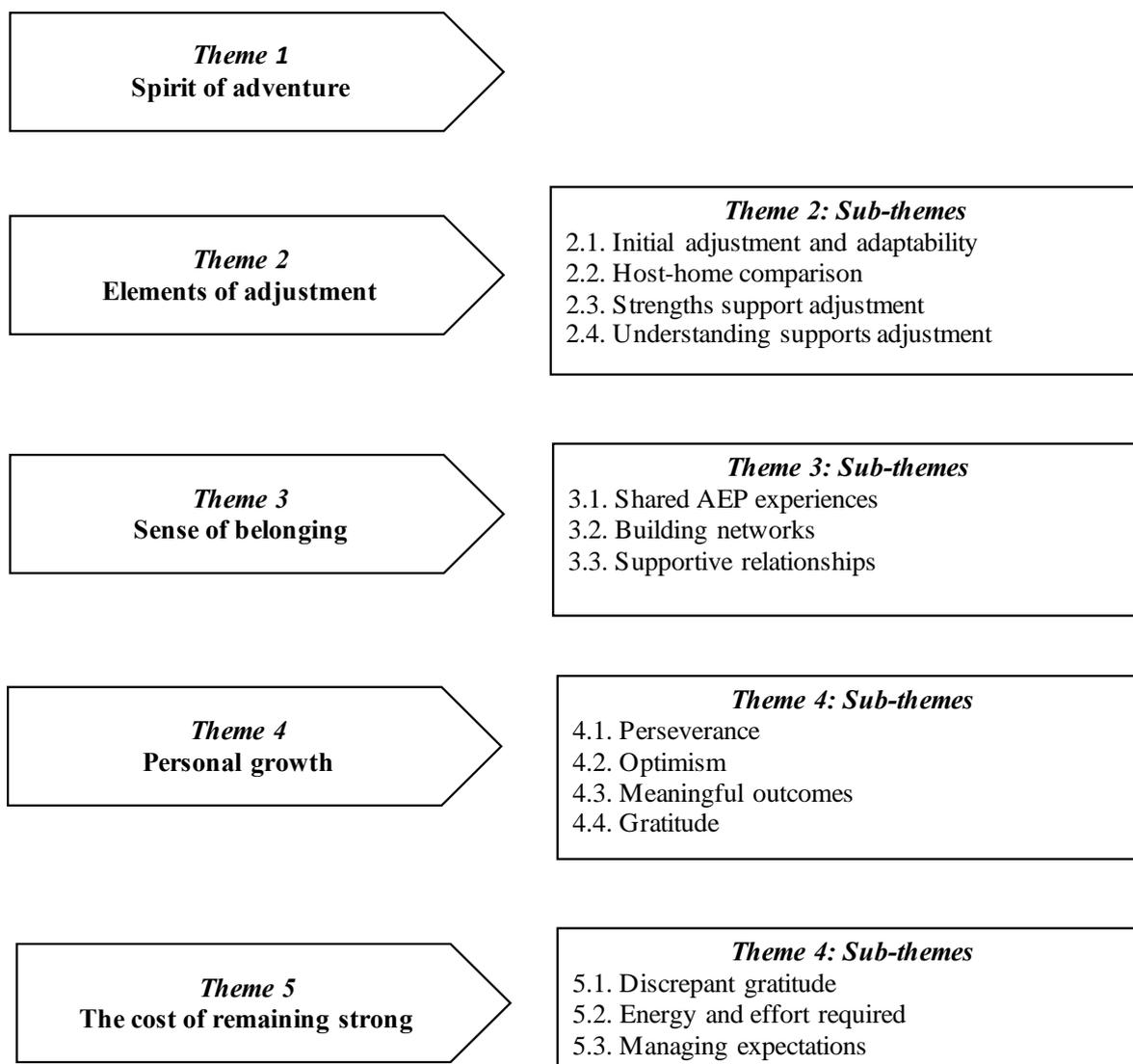
To ensure trustworthiness, identified conflicts and mediation strategies were reviewed regularly by an independent research psychologist who is an expert in qualitative methodologies. Appointed as external coding reviewer, she validated the classification system and study findings to ensure accurate interpretation.

Research findings

Five distinct themes reflected the subjective experiences of AEPs with respect to the interplay between strengths of Gratitude, Hope and Curiosity, with resilience and self-perceived well-being. The themes were labeled: *Spirit of adventure; Elements of adjustment; Sense of belonging; Personal growth and lastly, the Cost of remaining strong*. These themes and the subsequent sub-themes are graphically illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2:

Themes and sub-themes



The themes and sub-themes are described below with supportive evidence cited from the data transcripts (quotation references in parenthesis, e.g. Document number; Quote number).

Spirit of adventure

Spirit of adventure refers to an AEP’s levels of curiosity, sense of adventure, interest in engaging in novel experiences and acquiring new skills. Most of the participants indicated that a spirit of adventure not only contributed to successful adjustment in the host country, but also played an important part in their well-being while abroad.

“It [Curiosity] drives me to learn more and learning gives me a great sense of excitement and well-being” (Document 14, Quote 13)

Participants admitted that “the unknown of a new country sparks your [their] curiosity” (Document 12, Quote 35), and that being “open to new adventures becomes the norm” (Document 12, Quote 17). One of the AEPs shared that “the unexpected keeps things interesting and taught her [me] new ways to view where she lived and the people she encountered” (Document 14, Quote 6). Expatriation marks a period of change and “taking a leap of faith and doing something with no guarantees attached” (Document 9, Quote 16). Despite the fact that there is no real guarantee of the AEP’s happiness and well-being abroad, many participants admitted that they “embrace the joy of learning about new cultures and having new experiences” (Document 3, Quote 80). One participant shared the following:

“I lived a very cocooned life, being conservative in my lifestyle choices and not stepping outside the box, I’m now doing that and am enlightened with what the world has to offer” (Document 7, Quote 46).

Elements of adjustment

The context of expatriation presupposes that the AEP leaves her home country and settle into a new routine in the host country – a process that can be challenging, especially when the environment, culture, language and schooling of the “foreign” or “unfamiliar” country are in stark contrast with the familiarity of her home country. Elements of adjustment include a number of factors that seemed to have played a part in the overall adjustment process:

Initial adjustment and adaptability

Participants admitted that the first few weeks or months of a new assignment were the hardest:

“The beginning was very difficult and my well-being was not in a great place. It took me about 8 months to adapt and find ways to lead a meaningful and well-balanced life again” (Document 3, Quote 53);

“I think the first post was the toughest post” (Document 3, Quote 60); and

“It was incredibly difficult initially, as it was the first expat experience so I had no reference point” (Document 3, Quote 110)

Even though participants strived to successfully adjust to the culture and routine of the host country, one participant stated that “as an AEP you are living a life of constant upheaval and constant change” (Document 15, Quote 26). Referring back to Theme 1, one of the participants admitted that in order to cope with the constant change “curiosity was part of helping one [her] through the initial adjustment” (Document 12, Quote 13), which was affirmed by another AEP who stated that “being open to new adventures becomes the norm” (Document 12, Quote 17) and that expatriate assignments offered “an endless stream of new experiences to be had” (Document 12, Quote 44). Participants believed that “adaptability was [is] necessary for resilience” (Document 15, Quote 15). One respondent explained: “if I wasn’t resilient or able to adjust easily to new environments I would have battled [battle] as an AEP” (Document 16, Quote 41).

Host-home comparisons

According to the AEPs, their adjustment process was influenced by comparisons between the daily realities of living in the host country and what the AEPs admitted to be missing about their home country. In addition, they also made it clear that either their careers, hobbies, lifestyle, social networks or a combination of these, were not only aspects that they missed about their home country, but that it also defined their respective personal identities. One participant shared the following: “...I gave up most of my identity” (Document 3; Quote 120) during the move abroad. Participants acknowledged that “life can be difficult, communication is difficult and sense of humour and sarcasm and understanding is different in different cultures” (Document 16, Quote 28). Many of the challenges involved in living in an African country seemed to highlight the contrast to life in the AEP’s home country. A participant shared that “it’s difficult to be away from your family/support system and the country which you know,

especially if there are more resources in your home country than your expat country” (Document 3, Quote 89). According to another participant, “we need to retain a positive mind-set to cope with the day to day challenges of living in a foreign country, where often services and products are not readily available” (Document 6, Quote 32).

Most participants admitted to missing the comforts of their home country and that they had to “learn to cope without certain things” (Document 16, Quote 28) while living as AEPs in a poor African country. Despite the challenges in the host country, some participants admitted that “the struggle to use what you have and what [you] can get is very appealing” (Document 3, Quote 111) and that this awareness promoted a sense of gratitude.

“I think to live in an African country that is poorer than my home country firstly makes you extremely grateful for having a house, food, health services, transport and to visit amazing beautiful places” (Document 4, Quote 47); and

“Meeting people who are less fortunate than yourself helps you to be grateful for all that you have. There is so much poverty and seeing that really helps you to be grateful for all that you have” (Document 4, Quote 57)

Strengths that support adjustment

Some of the participants shared that their curiosity, adaptability and their self-perceived resilience in particular supported them during the adjustment process. One participant stated that “you settle easily by being curious because you [can] then ‘experience’ [what the host country has to offer]” (Document 14, Quote 21). Knowing that expatriation entails leaving what is “familiar” and settling into the “unfamiliar”, AEPs indicated that their adaptability made the transition easier. A participant shared: “Adapt, adjust and focus on the ways of life where you find yourself” (Document 15, Quote 22). Not only did adaptability support adjustment, AEPs also felt that adaptability was essential for resilience: “I feel that if I wasn’t resilient or able to adjust easily to new environments I would battle as an AEP” (Document 16, Quote 41).

Understanding supports adjustment

The AEPs' adjustment process was furthermore supported by learning more about the country to which they were relocating and thus gaining a greater understanding of what they could expect from life abroad. A participant shared that "understanding often brings peace of mind and certainty" (Document 14, Quote 10), which was affirmed by another AEP stating that she "became comfortable just by 'knowing' [what could be expected]" (Document 14, Quote 20).

"The more I understand about the country, people etc. - the better I am able to accept and adapt and be resilient" (Document 15, Quote 6)

Sense of belonging

Sense of belonging refers to the AEP's desire to be accepted and be part of something bigger and sharing personal experiences and stories with others. They found a sense of belonging in a variety of contexts, e.g. at church, with friends, family or being part of interest groups on social media. AEPs seemed to find meaning in belonging to a larger community and knowing that they did not have to feel alone during whatever challenges confronted them. Great emphasis was placed on the fact that, as AEPs, they had one thing in common and that was that they were in the "same boat". Participants pointed out that there were certain factors that assisted in establishing a sense of belonging as they shared AEP experiences, built networks and relied on supportive relationships.

Shared AEP experiences ("being in the same boat")

Participants found meaning in their interactions with other expatriates or AEPs, in other words, people who were in the "same boat" as them. They pointed out that, "meeting people from all walks of life, finding out about them and drawing from their experiences" (Document 8, Quote 33) provided a sense of belonging in the host country. One participant shared that other expats or AEPs were "more curious because they are truly interested as opposed to people from a

community from the home country” (Document 12, Quote 41), which suggested that people at home did not necessarily grasp what living conditions in Africa were like. The fact that they were able to “share this experience with others” (Document 6, Quote 12) brought a sense of belonging. Some of the experiences that AEPs share were among others more time available to pursue interests or to spend with friends and family, financial freedom, and the opportunity to engage with people of different cultures and from all walks of life.

“I like being with a group of people who are all in the same boat so they support each other and are also available to do things” (Document 3, Quote 40)

Building networks

Most of the participants relied on building networks with other expats in the host country, which helped them to develop a sense of belonging. Some participants admitted that it was not easy and that they had to make a conscious decision to “put themselves [myself] out there” (Document 15, Quote 4) and “we [I] had to reach out to people and become involved in activities in order to [and] socially keep our [my] spirits up” (Document 3, Quote 29). It seems evident that building networks contributed to AEPs’ happiness and led to feelings of gratitude: “I feel so grateful to be with people of all nationalities and cultures” (Document 3, Quote 36). Interacting with others in a variety of activities made them feel connected, and thus, created a sense of belonging in their new environment.

“Finding friends who are willing to explore places, meet new people, taste different foods, have discussions to share ideas and perspectives all becomes part of engaging with the “new reality” (Document 13, Quote 21)

Supportive relationships

Supportive relationships also assisted in establishing a sense of belonging in the host country. According to participants, these supportive relationships seemed to be reciprocal, i.e. the support that AEPs received from their friends, families and other expatriates and the support

they personally offered to those around them. Participants regarded their life partners, children, friends, families and fellow-expats among the people who supported them. One participant said that “close and often life-long friendships arise from a posting” (Document 3, Quote 78).

Another AEP stated the following: “I feel grateful for all my friends and all the people that have let us into their ‘circle’ and made us feel like family” (Document 4, Quote 59). Participants furthermore pointed out that supportive relationships not only created a sense of belonging, but also gave meaning to their lives:

“Truly connecting with people and knowing that there is trust, collaboration and respect between the parties. This is the foundation to all other interaction, activity, and forms a basis for fulfillment” (Document 1, Quote 17)

Many participants found meaning in supporting others, which provided them with a sense of belonging: “I try to help the people that I can in any way while living as an AEP (Document 9, Quote 38) and “I thrive on supporting others and it affects me positively to be there for others and helping them in any situation” (Document 2, Quote 70). Among these people were household staff, drivers and the local community.

“It takes more than just me to make my life work so I am grateful for what I have [been] given” (Document 6, Quote 14)

In addition to the relational aspects of their sense of belonging, it was evident that participants relied on spiritual experiences. One of the personal needs they expressed was to connect to a Higher Power (God), give thanks and pray: “I try to recognise God's unending Grace in each day” (Document 5, Quote 23). They believed that hope was determined by their faith by saying that “hope has to come from lifting your eyes above now and here” (Document 8, Quote 10). Most participants also wished to share their personal spiritual experiences with others, to connect and feel like they belong. One participant shared that it was important to “talk

to people around them [us] about the amazing people that God sent to help them [us] and the amazing things that came on their [our] paths” (Document 7, Quote 30).

Personal growth

Personal growth includes participants’ subjective experience of self-development as a direct result of being an AEP. Upon subjective reflection, most AEPs were able to recognize the personal growth and resilience that expatriation brought.

“I realise how far I have come” (Document 8, Quote 4);

“I had to overcome a lot of things whilst in Africa for 10 years” (Document 16, Quote 39); and

“Good experiences can change your life, bad ones teach you lessons and most help you to see a new perspective” (Document 15, Quote 20)

Despite the challenges posed by expatriation, especially when the expatriate assignment is in a poor African country, some AEPs seemed to adjust successfully and gained a great deal of insight into the emotional strength that they possess. The following aspects seemed to contribute to AEPs’ experiences of personal growth: Perseverance; optimism; meaningful outcomes; hopeful attitudes and gratitude. These aspects receive attention in the sections to follow.

Perseverance

Some participants pointed out that for them to adjust and be happy in the host country, they simply had to have determination and be tenacious: “...whatever challenges I have now, are temporary and that I need to deal with it” (Document 11, Quote 28). Participants believed that their mindset and attitude towards the challenges in the host country contributed to their overall well-being as AEPs: “Remembering how fortunate and empowered I am makes me push on when I feel like folding” (Document 7, Quote 10). According to participants, the ability to persevere in the face of adversity, suggested the experience of personal growth.

*“I continue to learn which drives me to be better than who I was yesterday”
(Document 14, Quote 3)*

“Resilience is the will to survive – In an effort to find out what more there is to life” (Document 15, Quote 3)

Optimism

As with perseverance, AEPs believed that with a positive mindset they were able to achieve whatever they set out to do. They admitted that such a mindset assisted them in “finding a way through, over and around the obstacles or adjust [their] sails to find a new vision or goal to achieve” (Document 9, Quote 19). Participants also believed that an optimistic mindset led to a hopeful attitude, and that hope in itself “is fuel for reaching their [our] goals and achieving their [our] desires” (Document 10, Quote 19). One AEP shared the following:

“Whenever I feel stressed or worried about a situation I will have a look of things in my past that was difficult to realize that things will always work out and therefore I can have hope for everyday and the future” (Document 8, Quote 48)

Having a positive attitude and a hopeful attitude not only manifested as part of their personal growth, but also led to feelings of gratitude:

“Being grateful for what you have in your life and being aware of it means that on the off days you can look at what you have and know the good outlays [outweighs] the bad” (Document 7, Quote 18).

Meaningful outcomes

Personal growth is reflected in meaningful outcomes as a direct result of being an AEP. These outcomes were personal and not necessarily the same for all AEPs, yet an essential aspect all participants noted. Most of the participants were employed on a full-time basis prior to international relocation, and thus had to give up their careers and become the “trailing” partner. A number of participants mentioned that “trailing” with their life partner felt like losing their sense of identity and purpose in life. They admitted that during the process of adjustment, it was

important for them to regain a sense of self, and that “once [they] found purpose and connection [they] felt more encouraged” (Document 3, Quote 31). Upon reflection, these AEPs believed that “experiences make us rich as human beings” (Document 12, Quote 31). Participants shared the following:

“[I] found ways to lead a meaningful and well-balanced life” (Document 3, Quote 54)

“I think that along the way [I] found peace” (Document 3, Quote 72)

Gratitude

According to AEPs, a conscious awareness of what they were grateful for and expressing gratitude were not only imperative while living in an African country, but upon subjective reflection, they were able to acknowledge the role that gratitude played in their personal growth. Many participants pointed out that they “learnt to appreciate and be grateful for things which they [you] would have taken for granted back home” (Document 4, Quote 56). One participant furthermore believed that “when [AEPs] experience and express gratitude, [they] feel better and stronger” (Document 6, Quote 26). Having experienced gratitude thus not only resulted in them feeling more resilient, but also accentuated their personal growth, which one participant expressed as follows:

“Whenever I am experiencing a setback, I don't always have perspective over what I have achieved, but when I look back, I do it with tremendous gratitude” (7:3)

The cost of remaining strong

A number of factors mentioned in the previous themes seemed to play a positive role in the AEPs’ adjustment process and their life abroad. However, participants pointed out that sometimes remaining strong came at a psychological or physical cost, suggesting that they also experienced the downsides of their strengths. It seemed to be brought about by assumptions or

predetermined expectations of how expatriate life would be, but in reality, was not. The following aspects seemed to encompass AEPs' experience of strengths at a cost: discrepant gratitude; energy and effort required and managing expectations.

Discrepant gratitude

Prior to embarking on an expatriate assignment, AEPs have certain expectations about life abroad. Their experiences, however, were sometimes far from what they had imagined, which resulted in feelings of disillusionment. As one participant explained: "I can on an intellectual level know that I'm lucky and fortunate and therefore should be grateful, but it simply doesn't work that way" (Document 6, Quote 16). This discrepant gratitude resulted in tension between what participants felt they should be feeling and their actual personal experiences while abroad: "I know I am supposed to be grateful but it makes me feel worse" (Document 7, Quote 38).

Energy and effort required

Adjusting to the routine and culture of a foreign country is a process that not only takes time, but also energy. It was evident from the participants' responses that adjustment in any African country was difficult and often came at an emotional price. One participant shared the following: "Living in Africa is not easy. Most of the time it is hard and it pushes you to your limit" (Document 16, Quote 34). A participant pointed out that leaving one's home country and starting a new life in a foreign African country entailed a great deal of sacrifice and feelings of loss:

"I have experienced great trauma and heartache in my life. I left my family, my mom passed away just after we arrived in Kenya, [I left my] employment and life behind to follow and support my husband in his career" (7:47)

Another participant said: "When [I am] feeling low and incapable of coping with challenges, my desire to carry on is not strong" (Document 16, Quote 33). Furthermore, it was

evident that AEPs tended to regard their roles in their respective families as very important but that it demanded great effort: “I am pushing on behalf of my family, friends and team” (Document 7, Quote 9).

Managing expectations

Participants pointed out that in order for them to successfully adjust and be happy abroad, they had to manage their expectations in order to “be well when it gets tough” (Document 16, Quote 10). Some of the participants indicated that they “avoid having high hopes and expectations” (Document 8, Quote 14). This was affirmed by an AEP who stated the following: “I live more in the acceptance role than in the hope role” (Document 8, Quote 47). This was in line with another AEP who cited that “unrealistic hopes and expectations can crush well-being which is why I avoid them” (Document 10, Quote 33). Even though AEPs felt that they had to manage their expectations while abroad, they also acknowledged their self-perceived resilience:

“I can't really afford not to be resilient – whether I feel well or not” (Document 16, Quote 22).

“You need to be resilient as hell as an expat” (Document 3, Quote 94)

Discussion

The main purpose of the current study was to gain an understanding on how AEPs subjectively experience the relationship between strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope and their resilience and well-being as suggested by the quantitative model from Phase 1 of the study. The purpose was furthermore to determine how their experiences inform our knowledge of the well-being of AEPs while abroad. Although the participants’ descriptions did not always make explicit mention of the elements of the quantitative model or follow the model’s structure, the themes discussed did inform our understanding of the associations between the five constructs central to the quantitative model (cf. Figure 1) and its practical relevance to AEPs. Within this

sample group, it was evident that their unique strengths and self-perceived levels of resilience had a significant effect on their well-being and vice versa.

AEPs pointed out that an expatriate assignment not only marked a period of change, but that it also made them question their personal identity (Collins & Bertone, 2017) and purpose in life. McNulty (2012) states that the loss of an AEP's career can lead to a loss of "power, identity and self-worth" (p. 421). As mentioned earlier, expatriation entails a great deal of personal compromise for the AEP, and this is also one of the reasons why participants emphasize the importance to "find ways to lead meaningful and well-balanced lives again" (Document 3; Quote 54). It is thus safe to say that AEPs' process of adjustment requires finding meaning, purpose and a newfound balance in the foreign environment.

Further, participants pointed out that self-care is of utmost importance, because "if I don't look after myself, my levels of resilience will decrease" (16:5). The findings of this study indicate that a spirit of adventure and the interest in acquiring new skills and novel experiences are key components of expatriation and can assist in successful adjustment. This reminds strongly to the strength of *Curiosity*, and corresponds with previous findings which indicated that a sense of adventure was vital in securing a successful movable family (Lazarova, McNulty, & Semeniuk, 2015). It is furthermore in line with Van Erp, Van der Zee, Giebels and Van Duijn (2014) and Wiles and Simpson (2017) who state that open-minded individuals are curious by nature and are self-determined. AEPs' experience of Curiosity included, amongst others, the love for travelling and visiting unfamiliar places; learning new skills, language or cooking methods; meeting people from other cultures; and an overall sense of adventure. Qualitative results, therefore, seemed to support the emergence of Curiosity as a strength that is likely to assist AEPs in creating an easier transition. Similar to findings of previous studies (e.g. Demirci & Eksi, 2018; Petkari & Ortiz-Tallo, 2018), Curiosity seems likely to enhance both resilience and well-being within this context. AEPs described Curiosity as the driving force that keeps their lives

interesting; it brings them joy to embark on new adventures and leave their comfort zones; and it assists them in carrying on despite the challenges that confront them.

The study findings furthermore suggest that *Gratitude* is a strength with which most AEPs identify and they draw strength from it while abroad. The fact that these participants were living in various developing or Third World countries, resulted in them missing things and developing a newfound appreciation for things that they would usually have taken for granted in their home country. It is particularly notable that a sense of gratitude made it easier for AEPs to confront challenges in the host country. This in turn made it possible for them to develop an appreciation for their own personal growth, thereby achieving a key expatriate outcome (Shortland, 2016). Gratitude, according to Janssen (2013), supports the expatriate partner by making her “feel better about their immediate situation and discover hope” (p. 294).

Findings confirm that for these AEPs, Gratitude and their self-perceived well-being are positively associated, as is evident from their experience of inner peace, contentment and a sense of belonging. AEPs attach value to the fact that other AEPs are in the “same boat” and are therefore capable of identifying with each other’s personal experiences (Cangià, 2017). Supportive relationships often grew from this. Contrary to the findings of this study, Scurry, Rodriguez, and Bailouni (2013) state that it is not always possible for expatriates to experience a sense of belonging in their host country. This is mostly because expatriation denotes a temporary period in the AEP’s life. In this study, however, participants’ development of a sense of belonging was facilitated by sharing experiences with other expatriates or AEPs, building networks in the host country and establishing supportive relationships in their new environment.

Some of the AEPs’ reflections suggest that they attach great value to expressing *hope* and having hopeful attitudes amidst the challenges in the host country. This concurs with Swanson (2013), who points out that a positive and hopeful attitude can assist the AEP in making the most of their time abroad. Findings furthermore indicate a strong connection between hope and

spirituality, and that AEPs' belief in God helped them overcome emotionally challenging times. Participants also disclosed the need to share their spiritual experiences with others, which furthermore created a sense of belonging in the host country.

This concurs with Janssen (2013), who states that spirituality is the “fundamental basis for how we [expats]... share our [their] truths, express hope, ... and deal with tumult and adversity” (p. 260). However, contrary to the model indicating the positive role that hope plays in the well-being of AEPs, findings indicate that some AEPs consciously avoid having any expectations or hope for the future, and that it is difficult to feel hopeful when their well-being is poor. Similar to this mindset, Wiles and Simpson (2017) warn expatriates by stating that “overly optimistic assumptions can turn to disappointment when reality does not match those expectations” (p. 47). Further, participants pointed out that it on subjective reflection, it is evident that AEPs recognized their self-perceived *resilience*. International relocation denotes stress for the expatriate, the AEP and the extended family (Naeem, Bin Naeem, & Khan, 2015), but despite the challenges that expatriation hold (Harry, Dodd, & Chinyamurindi, 2019; Rosenbusch, Cerny, & Earnest, 2015; Shortland, 2018; Sterle et al, 2018), some participants felt that they were strong and capable of confronting difficult situations in the host country. This in turn had a positive effect on their overall *well-being*, which affirms the results with respect to the quantitative model. Similar to previous studies (Hutchinson, Stuart, & Pretorius, 2010; Lyubomirsky & Della Porta, 2010; Panchal, Mukherjee, & Kumar, 2016; Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004; Schultze-Lutter, Schimmelman, & Schmidt, 2016; Seery, Holman, & Silver, 2010), although not in the context of expatriation, the findings of this study confirm the positive association between resilience and well-being (cf. Chapter 1).

Although the main objective of this study was to gain an understanding of how AEPs subjectively experience the relationship between the five constructs as suggested by the quantitative model from Phase 1 of the study, the study offered additional information that is

worth considering. Findings indicate that it is not always easy for AEPs to utilize their strengths, feel resilient or have good mental health. Participants pointed out that not only does it take effort and energy to cope in the foreign country, but they also have to manage their expectations in order to not feel disillusioned, especially in light of the harsh reality of living in poor Third World countries. Remaining strong came at a physical or psychological cost. It is also notable that some AEPs often experienced feelings of guilt, mainly due to the discrepancy between what is “expected” from them emotionally, versus their emotions in real life (Cangià, 2017), i.e. “I can on an intellectual level know that I am lucky and fortunate and therefore should be grateful, but it simply doesn’t work that way” (Document 6, Quote 16). This suggests that it cannot be assumed that character strengths will feature prominently on a daily basis, or that the same character strengths will apply in all cases, especially in the face of adversity.

This is an important conclusion regarding our own research results and a critical aspect for companies and counsellors to take into consideration when preparing AEPs for assignments. Although the character strengths of curiosity, gratitude and hope emerged as the most prominent in assisting expatriate adjustment, participants’ personal experiences highlighted the unique interplay between their strengths, resilience and well-being. The results do not provide practitioners with a one-size-fits-all recipe to be applied indiscriminately when preparing AEPs for expatriate assignment. Although certain strengths have been highlighted as being particularly important for the maintained well-being of AEPs while acclimatizing to the host country, our results also show that practitioners have to recognize and appreciate the unique nature of each AEP’s experience when consulting with them. Ultimately, each client brings to therapy a unique set of values, strengths and perspectives that we as psychologists have to celebrate and utilize to its full potential.

Limitations of the study

The current study included a relatively small number of participants. Findings may therefore not fully inform the quantitative model, may not be generalizable or may not be applicable to other countries as the sample was comprised of South African AEPs living in various African countries (excluding South Africa).

Conclusion

In this study, AEPs' subjective experiences were used to inform our understanding of a quantitative model indicating the interplay between strengths of Gratitude, Curiosity, Hope, resilience and self-perceived well-being. Findings suggest that the model is practically relevant. The findings furthermore informed our knowledge of the well-being of AEPs abroad. In order for AEPs to adjust successfully and ultimately flourish abroad, having a sense of adventure might be helpful. Aspects such as perseverance, optimism, gratitude and experiencing a sense of belonging, seem to also contribute to their personal growth while abroad. Although remaining strong often comes at a physical or psychological cost, our results show that many AEPs manage to face challenges and be well, and that their utilization of character strengths makes a significant contribution in this regard.

Note

- Throughout the research paper, the terms AEP and expatriate partner are used interchangeably.
- “She” or “her” are used as personal pronouns referring to the AEP. For the purposes of the current study, the authors did not ask what gender the participants were and we therefore refer to the AEP as female. The authors' intent is non-sexist.

References

- Adams, B. G., & van de Vijver, F. J. R. (2015). The many faces of expatriate identity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *49*, 322–331. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2015.05.009>
- Ali, A., Van der Zee, K. I., & Sanders, G. (2003). Determinants of intercultural adjustment among expatriate spouses. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *27*(5), 563–580. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767\(03\)00054-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(03)00054-3)
- Anon. (2019a). Combating cholera in Mozambique. Retrieved April 11, 2019, from <http://www.who.int>
- Anon. (2019b). Third World Countries 2019. Retrieved April 11, 2019, from <http://worldpopulationreview.com>
- Benedict, O. H., & Ukpere, W. I. (2012). Brain drain and African development: Any possible gain from the drain? *African Journal of Business Management*, *6*(7), 2421–2428. <https://doi.org/10.5897/AJBM11.2385>
- Bless, C., Higson-Smith, C., & Sithole, S. L. (2013). *Fundamentals of social methods: An African perspective* (5th ed.). Cape Town: Juta & Company Ltd.
- Caligiuri, P., & Bonache, J. (2016). Evolving and enduring challenges in global mobility. *Journal of World Business*, *51*(1), 127–141. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2015.10.001>
- Cangià, F. (2017). (Im)Mobility and the emotional lives of expat spouses. *Emotion, Space and Society*, *25*(October), 22–28. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2017.10.001>

- Chew, J. (2004). Managing MNC expatriates through crises: A challenge for international human resource management. *Research and Practice in Human Resource Management*, 12(2), 1–13.
- Chia, T. (2008, July). Confessions of a trailing spouse. *Elle Magazine*, 70–73.
- Cole, N., & McNulty, Y. (2012). Perceptions of organizational justice during expatriation: A framework for examining trailing spouse adjustment. In *The 11th World Congress of the international federation of scholarly associations of management (IFSAM)* (pp. 1–28). Lemirick, Ireland.
- Collins, H. E., & Bertone, S. (2017). Threatened identities: adjustment narratives of expatriate spouses. *Journal of Global Mobility: The Home of Expatriate Management Research*, 5(1), 78–92. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JGM-01-2017-0003>
- Copeland, A. P., & Norell, S. K. (2002). Spousal adjustment on international assignments: The role of social support. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 26(3), 255–272. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767\(02\)00003-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(02)00003-2)
- Davies, C., & Fisher, M. (2018). Understanding research paradigms. *Journal of the Australasian Rehabilitation Nurses Association (JARNA)*, 21(3), 21–26.
- Demirci, I., & Eksi, H. (2018). Keep calm and be happy: A mixed method study from character strengths to well-being. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 18(2), 279–330. <https://doi.org/10.12738/estp.2018.2.0799>
- Faeth, P. C., & Kittler, M. G. (2017). How do you fear? Examining expatriates' perceptions of danger and its consequences. *Journal of Global Mobility*, 5(4), 391–417.
- Ford, N. (2019). Powering Africa forward. *New African*, (January 2019), 49–52.

- Friese, S. (2019). *Qualitative Data Analysis with ATLAS.ti* (3rd ed.). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Gerakiteys, C. (2014). Trailing spouse – the graveyard of ambition? [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://sixdegreesnorth.me>
- Hadi, M., & Closs, S. (2016). Ensuring rigour and trustworthiness of qualitative research in clinical pharmacy. *International Journal of Clinical Pharmacy*, 38, 641–646. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11096-015-0237-6>
- Harry, T. T., Dodd, N., & Chinyamurindi, W. (2019). Telling tales: Using narratives and storytelling to understand the challenges faced by a sample of self-initiated expatriates in South Africa. *Journal of Global Mobility*, 7(1), 64–87. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JGM-05-2018-0024>
- Harvey, M. (1998). Dual-career couples during international relocation: The trailing spouse. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 9(2), 309–331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/095851998341116>
- Hawley, K. (2016). Developing our Global Workforce: Developing and retaining global talent. Retrieved July 27, 2016, from <http://www.expatsworld.co.za>
- Helliwell, J. F., Layard, R., & Sachs, J. D. (2019). *World Happiness Report 2019*. Retrieved from <http://www.worldhappiness.report>
- Herleman, H. A., Britt, T. W., & Hashima, P. Y. (2008). Ibasho and the adjustment, satisfaction, and well-being of expatriate spouses. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 32(3), 282–299. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2008.01.004>

Horak, S., & Yang, I. (2016). Affective networks, informal ties, and the limits of expatriate effectiveness. *International Business Review*, 25(5), 1030–1042.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2016.01.006>

Hsieh, H. F., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis.

Qualitative Health Research, 15(9), 1277–1288.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>

Hutchinson, A., Stuart, A., & Pretorius, H. (2010). Biological contributions to well-being: The relationships amongst temperament, character strengths and resilience. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 36(2), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v36i2.844>

SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 36(2), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v36i2.844>

InterNations. (2016). *The world through expat eyes*. Retrieved from www.internations.org/expat-insider

Janssen, L. A. (2013). *The emotionally resilient expat: Engage, adapt and thrive across cultures*.

UK: Summertime Publishing.

King, N. (2019, March 21). South Africa is one of the world's unhappiest countries – these are the happiest. *The South African*. Retrieved from <http://www.thesouthafrican.com>

Lazarova, M., McNulty, Y., & Semeniuk, M. (2015). Expatriate family narratives on

international mobility: Key characteristics of the successful moveable family. In L.

Mäkelä & V. Suutari (Eds.), *Work and Family Interface in the International Career*

Context (pp. 29–51). eBook: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-17647-5_3

Lyubomirsky, S., & Della Porta, M. (2010). *Boosting happiness, buttressing resilience: results from cognitive and behavioral Interventions*. *Handbook of Adult Resilience*.

- Marks, J. (2004). *Expatriate professionals as an entry point into global knowledge-intensive value chains: South Africa*.
- McNulty, Y. (2012). 'Being dumped in to sink or swim': an empirical study of organizational support for the trailing spouse. *Human Resource Development International*, 15(4), 417–434. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2012.721985>
- Naeem, A., Bin Naeem, A. B., & Khan, I. U. (2015). Culture shock and its effects on expatriates. *Global Advanced Research Journal of Management and Business Studies*, 4(6), 248–258.
- Neergaard, M. A., Olesen, F., Andersen, R. S., & Sondergaard, J. (2009). Qualitative description - the poor cousin of health research? *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 9(April 2016), 52. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2288-9-52>
- Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2015). Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 18(2), 34–35. <https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2015-102054>
- Okpara, J. O., & Kabongo, J. D. (2011). Cross-cultural training and expatriate adjustment: A study of western expatriates in Nigeria. *Journal of World Business*, 46(1), 22–30. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2010.05.014>
- Panchal, S., Mukherjee, S., & Kumar, U. (2016). Optimism in relation to well-being, resilience, and perceived stress. *International Journal of Education and Psychological Research*, 5(2), 1–6.
- Park, N., Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. (2004). Strengths of character and well-being. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23(5), 603–619. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.23.5.603.50748>

- Pelizzo, R., Kinyondo, A., & Nwokora, Z. (2018). Development in Africa. *World Affairs*, (Fall), 256–285.
- Petkari, E., & Ortiz-Tallo, M. (2018). Towards youth happiness and mental health in the United Arab Emirates: The path of character strengths in a multicultural population. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 19, 333–350.
- Ramos, H. M. L., Mustafa, M., & Haddad, A. R. (2017). Social support and expatriate spouses' wellbeing: The mediating role of cross-cultural adjustment. *International Journal of Employment Studies*, 25(2), 6–25.
- Ren, H., Yunlu, D. G., Shaffer, M., & Fodchuk, K. M. (2015). Expatriate success and thriving: The influence of job deprivation and emotional stability. *Journal of World Business*, 50(1), 69–78. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2014.01.007>
- Rosenbusch, K., Cerny, L. J., & Earnest, D. R. (2015). The impact of stressors during international assignments. *Cross Cultural Management*, 22(3), 405–430. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CCM-09-2013-0134>
- Schultze-Lutter, F., Schimmelmann, B. G., & Schmidt, S. J. (2016). Resilience, risk, mental health and well-being: associations and conceptual differences. *European Child Adolescent Psychiatry*, 25, 459–466. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-016-0851-4>
- Scurry, T., Rodriguez, J. K., & Bailouni, S. (2013). Narratives of identity of self-initiated expatriates in Qatar. *Career Development International*, 18(1), 12–33. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13620431311305926>

- Seery, M. D., Holman, E. A., & Silver, R. C. (2010). Whatever does not kill us: Cumulative lifetime adversity, vulnerability, and resilience. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *99*(6), 1025–1041. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021344>
- Selmer, J., & McNulty, Y. (2017). Publishing research on expatriates: Advice for PhD candidates and early career researchers. In Y. McNulty & J. Selmer (Eds.), *Research Handbook of Expatriates*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Shaffer, M. A., & Harrison, D. A. (2001). Forgotten partners in international assignments: Development and Test of a Model of Spouse Adjustment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *86*(2), 238–254.
- Shortland, S. (2016). The purpose of expatriation: Why women undertake international assignments. *Human Resource Management*, *55*(4), 655–678.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm>
- Shortland, S. (2018). Female expatriates' motivations and challenges: the case of oil and gas. *Gender Management: An International Journal*, *33*(1), 50–65.
- Smith, J., & Noble, H. (2014). Bias in research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, *17*(4), 100–101.
<https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2014-101946>
- Sterle, M., Fontaine, J., De Mol, J., & Verhofstadt, L. (2018). Expatriate family adjustment: An overview of empirical evidence on challenges and resources. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *9*(1207), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01207>
- Sulemana, I. (2015). The effect of fear of crime and crime victimization on subjective well-being in Africa. *Social Indicators Research*, *121*, 849–872. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-014-0660-4>

- Swanson, K. (2013). The trailing spouse: A portable career. In C. Smallwood & L. Burkey Wade (Eds.), *Job stress and the librarian: Coping strategies from the professionals* (pp. 155–160). Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company.
- Tahir, R. (2018). Expanding horizons and expatriate adjustment. *Cross Cultural and Strategic Management*, 25(3), 401–424. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CCSM-02-2017-0024>
- Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. eBook: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Trompetter, D., Bussin, M., & Nienaber, R. (2016). The relationship between family adjustment and expatriate performance. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 47(2), 13–22.
- Tung, R. L. (2016). New perspectives on human resource management in a global context. *Journal of World Business*, 51(1), 142–152. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2015.10.004>
- Van Erp, K. J., Van der Zee, K. I., Giebels, E., & Van Duijn, M. A. (2014). Lean on me: The importance of one's own and partner's intercultural personality for expatriate's and expatriate spouse's successful adjustment abroad. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 23(5), 706–728.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2013.816088>
- Vögel, A. J., van Vuuren, J. J., & Millard, S. M. (2008). Preparation, support and training requirements of South African expatriates. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 39(3), 33–48.

Wiese, D. L. (2004). *Psychological well-being and social engagement of expatriate spouses during international relocation*. University of Wisconsin - Madison.

<https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543067001043>

Wiese, D. L. (2013). Psychological health of expatriate spouses: A neglected factor in international relocation. *Asian Journal of Counselling*, 20(1–2), 1–31. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2014-03299-001&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Wiles, L., & Simpson, E. (2017). *Thriving abroad: The definitive guide to professional and personal relocation success*. UK: Practical Inspiration Publishing.

Chapter 4

Article 3

Flourishing beyond borders: Facilitating the well-being of accompanying expatriate partners

Abstract

Orientation: One of the leading causes for failing at expatriate assignments is the accompanying expatriate partners' (AEPs) unhappiness with life abroad or inability to adjust to the challenges of the host country. It is therefore imperative to explore ways in which character strengths and resilience could enhance AEPs' well-being while abroad.

Research purpose: The aim of this study was to qualitatively review an intervention framework with a panel of practicing psychologists who have experience in consulting with expatriates to provide practical guidelines to fellow psychologists consulting with AEPs.

Motivation for the study: In order to facilitate well-being of AEPs abroad and ultimately ensure successful expatriate assignments, the current study drew from the expert knowledge and experience of psychologists who regularly consult with expatriates. They were provided with the results of two independent sub-studies that preceded the current study. The first sub-study identified the strengths of Gratitude, Curiosity and Hope to be positively associated with AEPs' resilience and well-being. These results were used to construct a quantitative model that illustrates the interplay between these constructs. In the second sub-study, the proposed model was qualitatively reviewed by a smaller group of AEPs to inform and enrich our understanding of AEPs' personal experiences of these constructs.

Research approach/design and method: A cross-sectional, interpretive descriptive research design, applying purposive sampling, was used to identify and recruit four practicing

psychologists who completed a questionnaire consisting of two semi-structured, open-ended questions in an effort to review the proposed intervention framework. The data were analysed using two phases (primary and secondary cycle coding) to develop themes that capture psychologists' views on the reasons why strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope featured prominently in the adaptation process of AEPs and to indicate how AEPs' strengths, resilience and well-being may be enhanced.

Main findings: Psychologists indicated that strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope featured prominently because these strengths include elements that form part of the process of expatriation. Practicing psychologists were able to suggest practical strength-based therapeutic techniques which would assist in enhancement of strengths, resilience and ultimately well-being.

Practical/managerial implications: These findings can guide organizations, psychologists or counsellors in preparing AEPs for the challenges of expatriate assignment prior to departure and to enhance their well-being during international relocation.

Contribution/value-add: This study highlights the important role that both organizations and psychologists should play in ensuring successful adaptation of AEPs. It is proposed that the intervention framework suggested in this study could contribute to increased work performance by employees, as well as the success rate of expatriate assignments.

Introduction

While the expatriate employee deserves research attention, especially from a human resource perspective, it should be said that these employees are more often than not accompanied by their life partners and families. Harvey (1985) states that the employee's family "has a profound impact on the success of the international assignment" (p. 84). Almost four decades later it is still the case, with an increasing focus on the role that so-called "accompanying expatriate partners" (AEPs) play in determining the success or failure of expatriate assignments

(Föbker & Imani, 2017; Lämsä, Heikkinen, Smith, & Tornikoski, 2017; Luring & Selmer, 2010; McNulty, 2012). Numerous possible challenges that AEPs experience have been cited in recent research looking into the reasons for failed assignments. In most cases, the AEP has to give up a career in her home country “to follow the interests of her husband’s career” (Teague, 2015, p.139). In addition, the AEP has to give up her home, social network and family in her home country, as well as establish a routine and find new pastime activities in the foreign country (Lazarova, McNulty, & Semeniuk, 2015; Teague, 2015; Van den Berg-Overbreek, 2014). While the challenges faced by AEPs have received explicit research attention (Arar, 2019; Caligiuri & Bonache, 2016; Harry, Dodd, & Chinyamurindi, 2019; Shortland, 2018), and the impact that AEPs have on the outcome of international assignments is a known fact, there has been a call for greater emphasis on protecting the mental health of AEPs (Wiese, 2013), especially through interventions before international relocation.

It would therefore be in the interest of multinational companies (MNCs) and their human resource managers, as well as psychology practitioners, counsellors or business coaches working with AEPs, to understand what the positive predictors of the AEP’s well-being might be and how to facilitate the development of these predictors in AEPs’ lives. This could help equip AEPs with the necessary skills to confront the challenges that they might need to overcome in the host country in order to successfully adjust to life abroad (Naude & Vögel, 2018).

Although extensive research has been done on the pivotal role that AEPs play in the outcome of expatriate assignments, no study has been done where the enhancement of their character strengths, resilience and ultimately their well-being have been explored. This study aims to target this gap in the extant body of research.

Research purpose and objectives

The results of the first sub-study indicate that Gratitude, Curiosity and Hope were positively associated with resilience and well-being during international relocation (cf. Chapter 2). In the second sub-study, the interplay between the above-mentioned constructs was qualitatively explored in a smaller sample group of AEPs. The purpose of the current study is twofold: Firstly, it aims to explore practicing psychologists' views of why these specific strengths featured prominently in the AEPs' adaptation process. Secondly, the objective is to gain insight from fellow psychologists with expertise in this particular field into ways in which to enhance these character strengths, resilience and ultimately well-being of AEPs before departure and during international relocation. The authors' hope was that the reviews of psychologists could assist MNCs and other psychologists, counsellors or human resource managers with not only preparing prospective AEPs for an expatriate assignment, but also in supporting them while abroad. The following section outlines the main constructs that were reviewed.

Literature review

Accompanying expatriate partner (AEP)

The employees' significant other, or life partner who accompanies him on the expatriate assignment is referred to as the AEP. In literature, these partners are also referred to as "trailing" spouses or partners (Amcoff & Niedomysl, 2015; Cangià, 2017; Cangià, Levitan, & Zittoun, 2018; Harvey, 1998; McNulty, 2012; Van Bochove & Engbersen, 2015). As previously mentioned, the "trailing" partner has to give up most things familiar when accompanying her partner abroad (Teague, 2015). However, the profile of the "trailing" partner has changed over the years. Indicative of this, NetExpat and Ernst and Young (2018) conducted a survey on the profile of 1006 relocating partners in 121 host countries in the world (excluding countries in

Africa). The results indicate that 77% of these partners were part of dual-income households prior to relocation and that their careers seem to play a vital role in deciding whether to accept an international assignment or not. Previous studies have pointed out that international relocation can potentially disrupt or end the career of the AEP (Harvey, 1998; Harvey, 1985; Harvey, Napier, & Moeller, 2009). This is one of the main reasons why the AEP would be unwilling to move, or struggle to adapt in her new environment and feel unhappy while abroad. An AEP in China states the following: “While his [husband] career took another step ahead with each move, my own career and identity seemed to have gotten lost...” (Chia, 2008, p.71). Her opinion affirms that the loss of a career often leads to experiencing a loss of identity (McNulty, 2012; Mohr & Klein, 2004; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001). It is a known fact that AEPs are confronted with numerous challenges in the host country, of which dealing with the loss of a career is only one. Confronting these challenges in an unfamiliar environment can lead to enhanced levels of stress and lower levels of well-being (Rosenbusch, Cerny, & Earnest, 2015).

Taking a strengths perspective: Gratitude, Curiosity and Hope

Park, Peterson, and Seligman (2004) describe character strengths as “positive traits reflected in thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. They exist in degrees and can be measured as individual differences” (p. 603). Furthermore, Seligman (2003) states that the formulation of the good life is “using your signature strengths every day in the main realms of your life to bring abundant gratification and authentic happiness” (p. 161).

The VIA Classification of character strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) consists of 24 character strengths that fall into six broad virtue categories, namely *wisdom*; *courage*; *humanity*; *justice*; *temperance* and *transcendence* (Seligman, 2016). These virtues are morally and universally accepted, whereas character strengths refer to the behaviour through which virtues are demonstrated (Seligman, 2003, 2004 & 2016). Seligman (2003, 2016) states that every person possesses all 24 of the classified Virtues in Action (VIA) character strengths, although in

varying degrees. Individual profiles will therefore be unique. As mentioned earlier, results of the first phase of this study (cf. Chapter 2) indicated the strengths of **gratitude**, **curiosity** and **hope** to be positively associated with resilience and well-being within the context of expatriation. These strengths represent virtues of *wisdom* and *transcendence* (Seligman, 2003).

According to Sansone and Sansone (2010), the definition of **gratitude** depends on personal context, but entails the “appreciation of what is valuable and meaningful to oneself; it is a general state of thankfulness and/or appreciation” (p. 18). Noor, Rahman, and Zahari (2018) state that a universal definition of gratitude does not exist, but that it is evident from previous studies that practising gratitude contributes to greater happiness and a general sense of well-being (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Hart Weber, 2013; Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). Emmons (2012) suggests that there are five ways in which gratitude positively affects well-being, namely that it increases spiritual awareness; promotes physical health; maximises pleasure; protects against the negative; and strengthens relationships. Further, a study by Armenta, Fritz, and Lyubomirsky (2017) report that gratitude may motivate positive behaviour and lead to establishing meaningful relationships and self-improvement. Hart Weber (2013) states that gratitude can be learned and enhanced. Consistent with this, there are a variety of therapeutic techniques that psychologists can incorporate in practice when working with clients toward the enhancement of gratitude (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013; Rash, Matsuba, & Prkachin, 2011; Sansone & Sansone, 2010).

Curiosity can be defined as “a strong desire to know or learn something” (Curiosity, n.d.). Individuals who are naturally curious are open to discover or explore new ideas, activities and experiences in an effort to increase both their knowledge and experience base (Anon, 2019; Seligman, 2003). Campbell (2015) concurs and furthermore states that curiosity boosts happiness; helps people to remain attentive; assists in increased work performance; creates opportunities to connect with people from all walks of life and establish close relationships with

others. This suggests that there are psychological, emotional, social, and health benefits when practicing curiosity. Once again, curiosity is a strength that can be cultivated (Proyer, Ruch, & Buschor, 2013; Thexton, 2019).

Hope can be described as optimism about the future (Seligman, 2003) and includes setting realistic goals and working towards achieving them (Dholakia, 2017; Vignansky, Addad, & Himi, 2018). According to Vignansky et al. (2018), hope “gives people the ability to confront circumstances, even when they are difficult, and try to deal with them” (p. 336). Eggerman and Panter-Brick (2010) conducted a study on a sample group in Afghanistan, a country affected by war. It was found that “resilience rests upon a sense of hope: the belief that adversity can ultimately be overcome” (p. 81). It is therefore of great importance to learn to hope (Turaga, 2018), as hope appears to be strongly associated with leading a meaningful life (Littman-Ovadia & Niemiec, 2016).

Resilience

Although there is no universal definition of resilience, most scholars agree that resilience encompasses certain factors, such as successful adaptation, overcoming challenges, effective coping during difficult times, and growing in the face of adversity (Aburn, Gott, & Hoare, 2016; Britt, Shen, Sinclair, Grossman, & Klieger, 2016; Hornor, 2016; Roemer & Harris, 2018). According to Schultze-Lutter et al. (2016), there are two viewpoints on resilience, one being process-oriented and the other trait-oriented. Resilience scholars who have a process-oriented perspective of resilience regard resilience as a dynamic, interactive process between individuals and their environment, where resilience is measured by the individual’s context, risk and protective factors (Masten, 2014, 2016; Schultze-Lutter et al., 2016; Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick, & Yehuda, 2014; Ungar, 2012; Ungar & Hadfield, 2019). For the purposes of this study, participants’ levels of resilience were measured by the Resilience Scale (RS) (Wagnild & Young, 1993) (cf. Chapter 2). The RS determines the “extent to which an

individual perceives him- or herself as being resilient and able to cope with difficulties or challenges in life” (Hutchinson, Stuart, & Pretorius, 2010, p. 3). Wagnild and Young (1993) believe that resilience is a personality characteristic (trait) that assists individuals in their adjustment during challenging times. In line with this perspective, resilience implies “inner strength, competence, optimism, flexibility, and the ability to cope effectively when faced with adversity” (Wagnild, 2009; Wagnild & Collins, 2009, pp. 105 and 29). As noted previously, it is a known fact that AEPs are confronted with numerous challenges while abroad. Davies, Stoermer and Froese (2019) recently stated that there is a gap in research regarding the role that resilience plays during international relocation.

Well-being

The science and practice of well-being is at the core of positive psychology (Lomas, Hefferon, & Ivtzan, 2014). Seligman (2011) states that “the topic of positive psychology is well-being, the gold standard for measuring well-being is flourishing, and that the goal of positive psychology is to increase flourishing” (p.13). He believes that human flourishing signifies “happiness, flow, meaning, love, gratitude, accomplishment, growth and better relationships” (p.2). Well-being is a well-known concept in psychology and a construct that has received ample attention to date (Roemer & Harris, 2018). However, the reality is that these research efforts have led to a plethora of ways to measure, describe, define or conceptualize well-being (Disabato, Goodman, Kashdan, Short, & Jarden, 2016; Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012; Goodman, Disabato, Kashdan, & Kauffman, 2018; Huta & Waterman, 2014; Jayawickreme, Forgeard, & Seligman, 2012). In the present study, well-being is considered a multi-faceted construct, including emotional, subjective and psychological well-being (Keyes, 2002; Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002). Keyes (2002) states that this construct ranges from low levels of well-being, i.e. languishing, to high levels of well-being, i.e. flourishing. In addition, he states that

“flourishing in life...could be a source of resilience, acting as a stress buffer against stressful life events and life transition” (Keyes, 2002, p. 218).

Organizational support and benefits

It has been well documented that the AEPs’ adaptation and psychological well-being while abroad play a pivotal role in the employee’s adjustment and performance, as well as in assignment failure (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Cole, 2011; Lazarova et al., 2015; Lazarova, Westman, & Shaffer, 2010; Takeuchi, 2010; Takeuchi, Yun, & Tesluk, 2002). While the demand for international assignments are escalating and the financial costs of these assignments are very high, it is of great importance for MNCs to ensure successful adaptation of their employees. This topic has received ample research attention up to date (Davies et al., 2019; Lee & Kartika, 2014; Li & Jackson, 2015; Tung, 1979; Varma & Russell, 2016). In contrast, a limited number of studies have explored the role that MNCs play in the successful adjustment of AEPs during international relocation (Cole & McNulty, 2012; Cole & Nesbeth, 2014; Lazarova et al., 2015), resulting in a gap in research and practice. Little is known about protective factors that contribute to positive outcomes for AEPs during international relocation (Wiese, 2013). Knowing that the well-being of the AEP determines whether assignments are successful or not, it should thus be important for MNCs to help prospective AEPs become aware of and increase their psychosocial strengths and resources prior to departure and during the period of expatriation.

Research design

Research approach and strategy

The current study forms part of a multimethod study (Morse, 2003) consisting of three related but independent phases of research that form part of a larger research project. These phases are graphically illustrated in Figure 1.

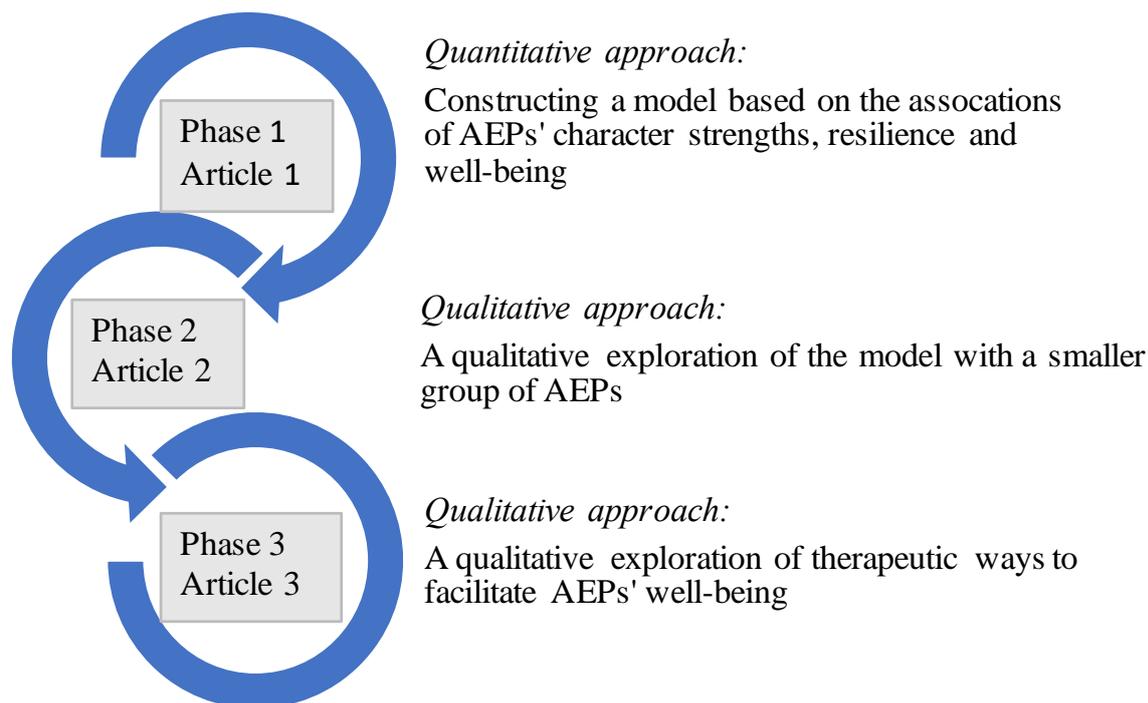


Figure 1: A graphical illustration of the multimethod research approach

During the *first phase* of the study (cf. Chapter 2) the character strengths, levels of resilience and self-perceived well-being of South African AEPs (n = 110) from 17 host countries were measured using the Virtues in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-72) (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), the Resilience Scale (RS) (Wagnild & Young, 1993) and the Mental Health Continuum – Short Form (MHC-SF) (Keyes et al., 2008; Keyes, 2002). Structural equation modelling was used to construct a model indicating the associations between these constructs. During the *second phase* of the study (cf. Chapter 3), a smaller sample group (n = 17) representing seven of the original host countries was asked to qualitatively review the quantitative model that emerged during Phase 1, in an effort to gain greater understanding of their subjective experiences as AEPs and thereby enrich our understanding of the model.

The current study represents the *third and final phase* of the overall study where independent psychologists who consult with expatriates and AEPs were invited to provide us

with thoughts and comments on the proposed model as set out and described in Chapter 2 and 3 (see Figure 2). The objective was firstly to ascertain why these psychologists thought the strengths of Gratitude, Curiosity and Hope featured so prominently in the model. Secondly, the study aimed to determine how these psychologists would, from their experience in working with AEPs, enhance these strengths and AEPs' resilience in therapy, and ultimately facilitate greater well-being and successful adjustment abroad. These results could potentially form the basis of an intervention framework for practitioners working with prospective or current AEPs. Since MNCs clearly have a vested interest in supporting not only the working partner (expatriate), but also the AEP and other family members, the insights and views expressed by experts in the field can effectively be used to increase the success rate of expatriate assignment.

Research method

Research setting

The entire research study was web-based and thus completed online. In the current phase, a qualitative questionnaire containing two semi-structured, open-ended questions was developed and sent by e-mail to a panel of four practicing psychologists with experience in working with AEPs. The researchers wanted to obtain insights from these psychologists on why these strengths appeared to be positively associated with resilience and well-being (see Figure 2), and for these practitioners to share practical techniques through which these constructs could be enhanced. The research was conducted by a PhD candidate and two supervisors from the Department of Psychology at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus. All three researchers are registered psychologists with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA).

Entrée and establishing research roles

As mentioned above, four psychologists were invited to participate in this phase of the study. The PhD candidate approached the participants by e-mail and explained the aims of the

study, as well as what would be expected of them. Participation was completely voluntary. The relevant background information regarding the previous phases of the study (cf. Chapters 2 and 3), as well as a simplified version of the reduced model (Figure 2), were shared with all the participants (Addendum C3).

Research participants and sampling methods

Purposive sampling was used (Babbie, 2016). The psychologists were included because of their knowledge and practical experience consulting with expatriates, AEPs and their families. The four psychologists who participated were all registered with the HPCSA and representative of three categories within psychology, namely industrial (n = 1; female), clinical (n = 1; female), and counselling (n = 2; 1 male and 1 female). Three of the psychologists were practicing in South Africa, and one psychologist was practicing abroad.

Data collection methods

As mentioned earlier, a qualitative questionnaire containing two semi-structured, open-ended questions was used for data collection.

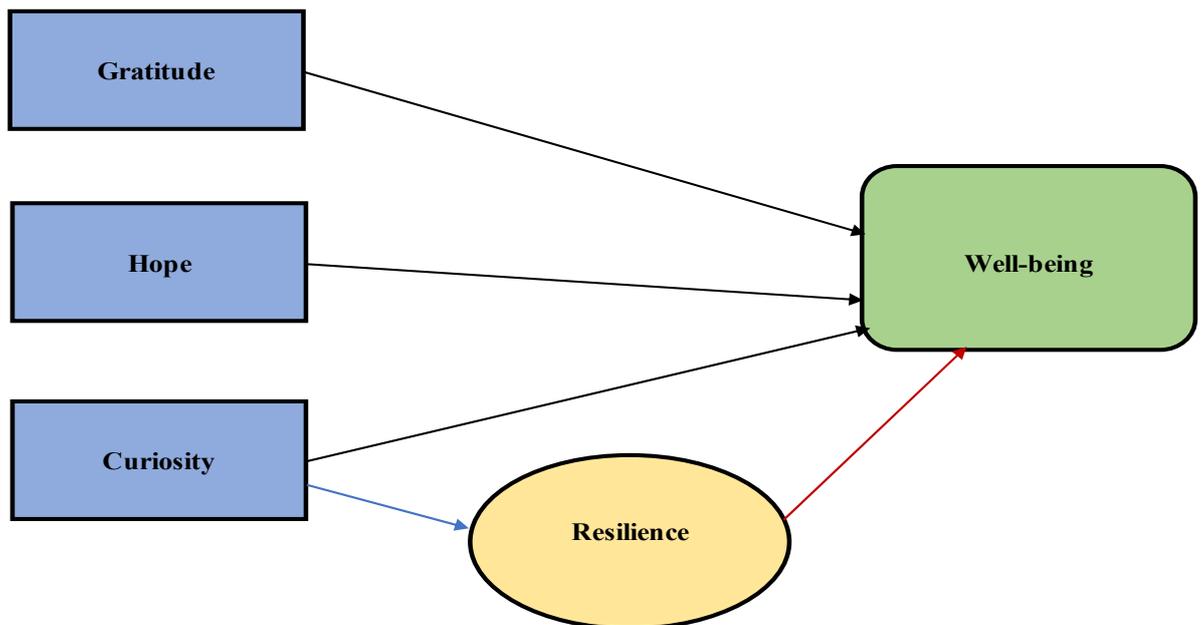


Figure 2: A graphical illustration of a simplified version of the reduced model presented to the panel of practicing psychologists

With reference to the simplified version of the proposed quantitative model constructed based on the first two phases of the study (Figure 2), psychologists were asked the following questions:

- In your opinion and with your expertise, what might be possible explanations (or motivation) for Gratitude, Curiosity and Hope to be the three strengths that correlated positively with AEPs' resilience and well-being, specifically bearing in mind the challenges faced by AEPs?
- If approached by an AEP/family about to embark on an expatriate assignment, how would you therapeutically address the enhancement of these character strengths and ultimately the resilience and well-being of AEPs? Please do not hesitate to be very practical in your reflections.

Strategies employed to ensure data quality and integrity

According to Hadi and Closs (2016), it is imperative for qualitative research findings to have *integrity*. The only way to ensure quality and integrity in qualitative data is by demonstrating *rigour*. Noble and Smith (2015) concur, and furthermore state that research integrity is essential if findings “are to be utilized in practice” (p. 34). The researchers employed a number of strategies to ensure data quality and integrity in this study. *Validity* was ensured by using purposeful sampling to meet the aims of the study (Smith & Noble, 2014) and continuous checking of data, coding of data, and interpretation of findings. The researchers furthermore used continuous self-reflection by keeping a reflective journal (Hadi & Closs, 2016; Long & Johnson, 2000; Morse, 2015); making code, theoretical and operational notes (Babbie, 2016); and acknowledging possible biases in the research process (Smith & Noble, 2014). *Reliability* was ensured by keeping an audit trail (Hadi & Closs, 2016; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002; Morse, 2015) and appointing an external code reviewer to reduce research bias and to confirm the dependability of research findings. According to Noble and Smith (2015), an “independent researcher should be able to arrive at similar or comparable findings” (p.34) for

reliability of findings to be confirmed. In the current study, the data were co-coded by an expert in qualitative research, where after the coding, notes, analysis and interpretation were compared

Data analysis

The data were analysed using two phases (primary and secondary cycle coding) to develop themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2016; Tracy, 2013). First cycle coding included open-coding and descriptive coding to explore and explain psychologists' descriptions of the connection between strengths of Hope, Gratitude and Curiosity with resilience and well-being of AEPs. Second cycle coding entailed conceptual level analysis to consider the relationship between the different therapeutic approaches on which psychologists rely to enhance AEPs' character strengths, resilience and ultimately their well-being.

In order to ensure rigorous, systematic analysis, the coding techniques and principles of Saldaña (2016) were applied. Coding was facilitated using ATLAS.ti (Version 8) (Friese, 2019).

Reporting style

In order to honour participants' anonymity and ensure that their responses were dealt with in a confidential manner, no identifying elements were included in the data and the researchers' notes were stored securely. Psychologists who participated in the study were identified as "Participant 1", "Participant 2" etc.

Results

Four distinct themes emerged from the psychologists' perspectives on the role that these character strengths play on AEPs' resilience and well-being abroad therapeutic approaches or techniques that could enhance these constructs. The themes were labeled: (1) Perspectives on Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope; (2) The positive impact of strengths; (3) Therapeutic engagement and goal-setting; and (4) Facilitating well-being through strengths and resilience.

The themes and sub-themes are graphically illustrated in Table 1 and described below, with supportive evidence cited from the data transcripts (quotation references in parenthesis, e.g. Participant number; Quote number).

Table 1:
Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Perspectives on Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope	Elements of strengths The time frame of strengths
2. The positive impact of strengths	Positive experiences of strengths Personal growth
3. Therapeutic engagement and goal-setting	Assessment of context Setting goals
4. Facilitating AEP's well-being through strengths and resilience	Cultivating strengths and resilience Organizational support and other supportive relationships

Perspectives on Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope

In addressing research question 1, the participant psychologists provided their own description or working definition of what these strengths involve and contextualized it with reference to the reality of the AEP. They also indicated how the presence of these three strengths could not only assist in AEPs’ successful adjustment in the host country, but also contribute to greater well-being. Perspectives on Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope involves the elements and time frame psychologists ascribe to these strengths.

Elements of strengths

Psychologists pointed out that the strength of *Curiosity* encompasses an open-mindedness and excitement about experiencing new things and exploring new possibilities. Participant 2

suggested that “curiosity can encourage a person to learn and think in different ways” (Participant 2; Quote 3). Psychologists highlighted that not only does curiosity encompass inquisition about all things new, it also promotes a sense of adventure and exploration, which clearly relates to AEPs’ decision to embark on expatriate assignment. According to Participant 3, “the positive rewards for curiosity is a wider world view and deeper and more meaningful experience of well-being” (Participant 3; Quote 18). Further, in the context of expatriation, Participant 3 proposed that “... [seeing] and subjectively [becoming] part of something new would seem more positive than being bored with the familiar” (Participant 3; Quote 17). Participant 2 concurred by stating: “Life is never boring for a curious person” (Participant 2; Quote 5).

The participating psychologists describe *Gratitude* in many different ways. One participant stated that gratitude “represents a willingness or ability” (Participant 1; Quote 5) to recognize what is good in life. Another participant proposed that gratitude refers to “a general state of thankfulness and appreciation” (Participant 2; Quote 13) and furthermore adds that it is a “life orientation that helps you notice and appreciate the world around you” (Quote 15). Further, one participant stated that gratitude makes it possible to recognize “good beyond [the] self” (Participant 4; Quote 11). Another participant agreed, adding that “the source of goodness lies at least partially outside themselves” (Participant 2; Quote 20), which “helps people connect to something larger than themselves as individuals — whether to other people, nature, or a Higher Power” (Quote 21). The reality is that AEPs are faced with numerous challenges prior to as well as during international relocation. In line with this, one of the practicing psychologists added: “I have found that some clients who have experienced, and are currently experiencing challenging times, seem to naturally move, or choose gratitude as a coping skill” (Participant 3; Quote 5).

As suggested by Participant 1, *Hope* “represents a motivation to look and expectation to find positive and beneficial details in one’s present and future” (Participant 1; Quote 6).

Participant 2 and Participant 3 concurred, and stated that hope acts as a motivating factor to take positive actions and therefore “seems to create the platform from which they can launch their choices for their lives” (Participant 3; Quote 25). In addition, hope “develops people’s capacity for persistence and long-term efforts that makes them authors of their [own] lives” (Participant 2; Quote 27). This participant added that hope is “a vital coping resource against despair” (Participant 2: Quote 28b), as this strength prompts efforts to “seek improvement of unsatisfactory situations” (Quote 28a). It was evident that participating psychologists felt that when people have hopeful attitudes, they naturally trust and have faith that things will work out, despite their current reality of approaching the unknown. With regard to the role that hope plays in therapy with AEP clients, Participant 3 summarized it well, saying: “In my experience clients who have a clearly defined sense of future, that manifests in hope for a good future, are far more resilient than those who have vague ideas of what they want for their lives” (Participant 3: Quote 22).

The time frame of strengths

In this sub-theme, participating psychologists appeared to connect the strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope to either the past, present, future, or a combination of these time frames. This seems to inform how psychologists use them in therapy, which is brought into focus later on in this section. Participating psychologists agreed that *Curiosity* is situated in the present moment as well as in the future. Participant 2 stated that [curiosity] “helps you focus on the positive in the here and the now” (Participant 2; Quote 18). Participant 3 added that “the strength of curiosity drives certain people into making life decisions that others would avoid” (Participant 3; Quote 19). Participant 1 stated that the strength of *Gratitude* is used when reflecting on personal achievements in the past, and appreciating the present moment. Participant 4 concurred, adding that “drawing up a list of achievements” (Participant 4; Quote 61) can act as emotional leverage when facing other challenges. *Hope* on the other hand entails envisioning what is yet to

come. Participant 3 stated: “Hope seems to bring thought together in a coherent picture, or narrative, or plan for ordering their expectations for the future” (Participant 3; Quote 23).

Participants’ perceptions of the strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope seemed to confirm the significance of these strengths and the role they play in the adaptation process of AEPs. Contextualized to the reality of the AEP, the reflections of practicing psychologists suggest that each strength has a specific description or working definition and appears to be linked to a specific time frame.

The positive impact of strengths

This theme is based on the positive impact that strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope have on AEPs’ daily experiences as well as contributing to a sense of personal growth.

Positive experiences of strengths

Participants reported that positive experiences are associated with all three of the strengths mentioned above. One participant commented that “the positive experience of new things would soften the more severe challenges” (Participant 3; Quote 16), which suggests that the strength of Curiosity will have a positive effect on facing the daily challenges of adjusting to a foreign environment. International relocation signifies a traumatic life event that can often cause AEPs to feel uncertain, insecure, anxious and fearful (cf. Chapters 1, 2, and 3). In line with this, another participant stated that Curiosity “acts as a positive counterweight to anxiety and fear” (Participant 2; Quote 11), suggesting that this strength plays a significant role in AEPs’ successful adaptation abroad. With respect to the positive experiences that Gratitude fosters, it was said that “gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships” (Participant 2; Quote 22). Hope appears to be the strength that counteracts despair by fostering optimistic expectations that ultimately lead to meaningful experiences (Participant 2; Quote 25).

Personal growth

Personal growth related to both Curiosity and Gratitude entailed making informed life decisions and overcoming fear and anxiety. One participant shared that “curiosity can open new doors and help [the AEP] to explore new possibilities and therefore make better informed choices” (Participant 2; Quote 6). Participants suggested that Gratitude leads to coping better in the face of challenges and being more grateful due to exposure to negative life events. Another participant emphasized the “importance of gratitude as a dimension for happiness, personal growth and success” (Participant 4; Quote 4). In accordance with Participant 4, Participant 3 affirmed that practicing gratitude in the AEP’s new environment, can result in “a possible growth experience through adversity and emotional memory recall - ‘I can remember that when I was grateful that I felt better’ or ‘let me find something to be grateful for and then experience gratitude intentionally’” (Participant 3; Quote 12). Although participants assert that practicing these strengths contribute to personal growth, it was also mentioned that the “growth mindset of a person enhances her well-being and resilience” (Participant 2; Quote 8). Simultaneously, “it is often in the evaluation of a real event that the deep experiences are realized” (Participant 3; Quote 41).

Therapeutic engagement and goal-setting

In addressing research question 2, therapeutic engagement refers to the aspects that practicing psychologists believe to be important when consulting with an AEP. Participants pointed out that a realistic initial assessment of context is imperative, and that it naturally leads to setting goals.

Assessment of context

The first aspect of therapeutic engagement is an assessment of the AEP’s context. Participant 2 suggested that the starting point of the therapeutic process should be a “realistic

initial assessment of personal resources and of external conditions and resources (Participant 2; Quote 60). Participant 4 echoed that it is very important to know what the current context of the AEP is, and especially “how much autonomy or choice the individual has to work with” (Participant 4; Quote 48). According to this participant, this information “would then set the tone with regards to how prepared the AEP can be prior to arriving to their new post i.e. using their forethought to create their future” (Participant 4; Quote 49). Many AEPs feel like they are “trailing” partners whose needs are not considered in the assignment contract (cf. Chapter 3). As discussed in Chapter 3, most of the AEPs had to give up their careers in their home country and become stay-at-home parents in the host country. Participant 4 highlighted the fact that psychologists should “encourage the AEP to find out what the benefits [of the assignment] are so that she can be prepared for the adventure ahead and set up some goals” (Participant 4; Quote 50).

Setting goals

In addition to the initial assessment, psychologists highlighted the importance of taking the next step in therapy, and that is setting goals with AEPs. In line with the time frame of Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope, goal-setting starts with a deliberate focus on the present moment and current context of the AEP. Thus: “Actively embrace the here and the now, creating a sense of future that allows the family to enjoy the new adventure” (Participant 3; Quote 43). Participant 1 highlighted: “AEPs who naturally (or deliberately) incorporate gratitude, curiosity and hope into their lives are more likely to notice the things that are going well, [and] assign more meaning to them and possibly act in ways that confirm and elicit further such experiences” (Participant 1; Quote 10 and 11). Participant 3 agreed and added that “the deliberate focus on life content that leads to gratitude leaves people feeling less vulnerable in times of challenge” (Participant 3; Quote 3), which suggests that conscious optimism in the present moment leads to feeling stronger in times of adversity. However, participants do not however proclaim that a

deliberate focus on all things positive will do away with challenges. Rather, in highlighting “intentional and mindful focus on what is good, would minimize the focus on the obvious challenges” (Participant 3; Quote 29).

Envisioning the goal connects the present with the future, similar to strengths of Curiosity and Hope. This enables AEPs to increase their awareness of what they wish themselves to achieve in the future, which is “one of the best ways to have hope” (Participant 2; Quote 53). In the context of being an AEP in a foreign country, one participant suggested that “AEPs should develop the mindset of approaching their situation with the intention of discovering something useful that can help them to live a more fulfilling and interesting life” (Participant 2; Quote 37). Participants emphasized the fact that AEPs have their own hopes and dreams, that are just as relevant as the other family members’ hopes and dreams. Envisioning the goal is to be aware of “what [the AEP] is hoping for and what [the AEP] would like from the experience” (Participant 3; Quote 39).

Facilitating AEPs’ well-being through strengths and resilience

The final theme that emerged from participating practitioners’ reflections on the present model refers to the facilitation of AEPs’ well-being through strengths and resilience. This theme is therefore directly related to research question 2.

Cultivating strengths and resilience

As can be seen from the results above, participating psychologists’ reflection confirmed that the strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope as well as Resilience play vital roles in AEPs’ adaptation process and life abroad. They furthermore concurred that these elements or concepts can be cultivated and suggested a number of practical ways in which this could be achieved through informed intervention. The four psychologists who participated in the study appeared to have different therapeutic approaches and techniques that they utilize when consulting with

AEPs. All of these techniques are aimed at fostering strengths, resilience and ultimately well-being of AEPs. Approaches included solution-focused techniques such as *best hopes*, *resource talk*, *preferred future description*, *scaling questions* and *invitation to notice details*. Other techniques that participants used were, among others, vision boards, journaling, jar of visions, reading and gaining knowledge, and meditation. In addition to the therapeutic techniques mentioned above, participants pointed out alternate ways in which to cultivate strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude, Hope as well as AEPs' levels of resilience.

One participant stated that “*Curiosity* would probably be the most obvious strength that I would expect to be present in this context [expatriation]” (Participant 3; Quote 14). According to another participant, “Curiosity can be cultivated by challenging clients to be open to new experiences and to remember to never stop learning and growing – which is the most exciting part of being alive” (Participant 2; Quote 36). Participant 2 furthermore suggested that psychologists can assist AEPs in cultivating curiosity in a number of ways, e.g. by motivating her to always ask questions and immerse herself in reading up on everything about the host country. Participant 3 agreed, and added that curiosity “can be enhanced by having sufficient information about where you are going, [and asking questions such as] ‘What will we experience that is unique to our new destination?’ [and] make a list of all the things that you want to do in your new city/country” (Participant 3; Quote 32). Once the AEP has arrived in the host country, one participant suggested that “families should be encouraged to participate in as many things as they can and to regularly talk to natives with the aim of trying to understand their world and viewpoints. Encourage families to form friendships. Demonstrating curiosity towards someone is a great way to build closeness with them” (Participant 2; Quote 38). In addition, the following: “The excitement and positive experience of travel and exposure to new cultures can of course just lead to easy and realistic gratitude. Just being grateful for the privilege and the experience could also be a logical explanation for the presence of gratitude” (Participant 3; Quote 13).

Participants proposed that *Gratitude* can be cultivated by introducing intentional, expressive practices to AEPs, such as rituals, mindfulness, deliberate focus on the positive, and also initiating self-care techniques. Participant 3 emphasized the importance of teaching AEPs that “intentional gratitude changes the emotions that they feel in the present and that it can be done wherever they are, the prerequisite being that they have to do it!” (Participant 3; Quote 30). Another participant echoed that gratitude can be cultivated, irrespective of where in the world they are, simply by “noticing details of $x + 1$ [recognizing the positive] happening in their lives” (Participant 1; Quote 16). Further, participants pointed out that gratitude can be cultivated within the AEP’s belief system, by prayer, meditation or a mindful focus on the feeling of gratitude. Another participant shared that she would “encourage the [AEP] to envision with hope ... then sit in the gratitude of the present moment, get comfortable with the unfamiliar as the new knowledge the [AEP] gains in the unfamiliar will help her discover the ‘how to’s’” (Participant 4; Quote 63).

Hope can be cultivated by utilizing this strength as a personal resource or coping mechanism. Participants pointed out that most AEPs are able to find hope in something and that it is of great importance to “explore their best hopes from the expatriate assignment in detail” (Participant 1; Quote 11). Cultivating hope seems to correlate with goal-setting, as described in Theme 2. This is further highlighted by Participant 2, stating that “being able to see how the steps you are taking will lead to desired change is critical to having hope” (Participant 2; Quote 48). However, participants maintained that “in order to have hope, it is important to make sure that the vision the AEP has for herself is realistic. If not, it may cause hopelessness” (Participant 2; Quote 51). Other ways that appeared to cultivate hope, were to motivate AEPs to “practice mindfulness while doing acts of kindness and in your everyday life” (Participant 2; Quote 57), turn to their faith, and also spend time with people who have been through a similar experience.

There was only one participant who mentioned how the psychologist can assist in promoting the AEPs' levels of resilience, stating: "For bounce back ability I get them to draw up a list of achievements that they can leverage off emotionally when faced with a challenge" (Participant 4; Quote 61). This example suggests that by shifting the focus on the positive, the AEP will feel stronger.

In addition to the above-mentioned suggestions regarding therapeutic strategies for the enhancement of these strengths in AEPs and thereby increasing their adaptability to the expatriate context, participating psychologists identified two important aspects. These included the important role of organizational support and the support received from other important interpersonal and community relationships.

Organizational support and other supportive relationships

In an attempt to help facilitate AEPs' well-being, participants referred to the role that organizational support and other supportive relationships play.

As previously mentioned (cf. Chapters 1, 2 and 3), the AEP plays a pivotal role in determining whether the international assignment is successful or not. It is a known fact that expatriate failure has a detrimental effect on cost-to-company. Participants expressed the importance for organizations (henceforth referred to as MNCs) to offer psychological support to AEPs prior to expatriation as well as during the period abroad. However, participants however pointed out that there appears to be a lack of, or insufficient support being offered to AEPs. One of the practicing psychologists who participated in the current study had been an AEP until 2018. She stated the following: "I'm told that in the past there was a person at head-office that tracked and kept up to date on each expatriate and their family. This individual had an in-depth knowledge of each family and their needs and I'm told offered invaluable support to the spouses. Over time this person was either retired or made redundant. I suspect that this individual's role was merged into a general department and/or left to in-country personnel to deal with"

(Participant 4; Quote 41). In addition, “I’ve never really received any company AEP type support” (Participant 4; Quote 42).

She furthermore pointed out that the contract of employment should be taken into account, stating that “[contractual information] is relevant though as it affects the AEP’s experience” (Participant 4; Quote 27). According to this participant, contractual elements that appear to be important to AEPs included housing; transport; job security of the employee; living expenses; medical aid; tax deductions; security; schooling and opportunities such as studying, working or volunteering in the host country (Participant 4; Quotes 29 – 38). Participant 3 agreed and suggested that all of the above should be taken into account prior to expatriation, to “avoid leaving the post as an alternative to resolving the crisis there” (Participant 3; Quote 45).

Participants pointed out that there are other supportive relationships that also contribute to the facilitation of AEPs’ well-being, such as shared AEP experiences, family relationships and building networks in the host country. This seems to correlate with the findings in Chapter 3. One participant stated that “the community becomes the support network that [AEPs] would have had back home” (Participant 4; Quote 44). Participants also emphasized the value of joining various expatriate groups in the host country and on social media. It appears as though fellow AEPs can motivate, empower and support one another (Participant 4; Quote 43). Most participants emphasized the importance of the family spending time together in the host country (Participant 2; Quote 38).

Discussion

Outline of results

The practicing psychologists’ reflections and insights based on their professional experience highlighted the pivotal role that strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope and personal levels of resilience play in not only the AEPs’ adjustment process abroad, but also on

their mental health. It is clear from their reflections that each strength has a specific role to play within the context of expatriation and is connected to a specific time frame. Where Curiosity was situated in the present moment and in the future, Gratitude was used when reflecting on achievements in the past and appreciating the present moment. Hope entailed envisioning what is yet to come, and was thus associated with a futuristic time frame. As mentioned in the results section, when considering the time frame connected to the above-mentioned strengths, participating psychologists pointed out that interventions had to start with a deliberate focus on the present moment, i.e. the current context of the AEP. In practice, this would imply that by establishing the starting point of the intervention, the opportunity is created to reflect on previous achievements, ascribe meaning to them in the present moment and set goals for themselves (as AEPs). By reflecting on previous achievements and ascribing meaning to them, the strength of gratitude is used, whereas setting goals incorporate strengths of curiosity and hope.

In turn, an increased awareness of what AEPs' perceived as personal character strengths as well as challenges they successfully faced in the past, resulted in personal growth. This affirms that strengths can be cultivated and that the enhancement of strengths will have a positive effect on AEPs' levels of resilience and overall well-being. The findings of this study indicate that not many psychologists deliberately focus on the enhancement of resilience. Panter-Brick and Leckman (2013) describe resilience as "the process of harnessing biological, psychosocial, structural, and cultural resources to sustain well-being" (p.333). As fellow psychologists we have to take note and challenge ourselves to explore ways to use our clients' unique resources with the purpose of enhancing resilience and ultimately increase well-being. Facilitating the strengths of curiosity, gratitude and hope seems to be especially relevant within the context of expatriation.

In addition to the enrichment of strengths and resilience to ultimately affect mental health, organizational support along with other supportive relationships (e.g. shared AEP experiences, family relationships and building networks in the host country) were considered as

key elements in AEPs' adaptation process and their mental health abroad. Furthermore, the findings of this study indicate that MNCs could experience better business outcomes through particular AEP supportive interventions, as employee's performance at work is likely to improve when he receives moral support from the AEP and his family (Lauring & Selmer, 2010). This implies that supportive interventions for AEPs are of great importance, but also that it can possibly be an easy and cost effective way for MNCs to increase their employees' productivity and to improve the company's financial gain. Once again, the relevance of AEPs' mental health is affirmed. To be able to support the working partner, the AEP needs to feel strong.

Practical implications

As mentioned earlier, the AEP plays a fundamental role in not only the decision-making process prior to relocation, but also during the period abroad. In order to ensure successful expatriate assignments, it is of utmost importance that MNCs consider the needs of AEPs in the contract between the company and the working partner and that they offer them the appropriate psychological guidance and support while abroad. The challenges that MNCs, the working partner, the AEP and the family face during expatriation cannot be underestimated. The findings of an international study done by Lazarova et al. (2015) indicated that AEPs felt that "the support they received was largely inadequate (p. 9). To our knowledge, only one study has been done exploring the preparation, support and training requirements of South African expatriates, their spouses and families (Vögel, van Vuuren, & Millard, 2008). More than ten years later, the results of the above-mentioned study are still relevant, as South African AEPs neither receive the preparation nor the psychological support they need. Psychological guidance and support can be provided by psychologists who regularly consult with working partners, AEPs and their families. As mentioned above, it is important that psychologists start with a thorough assessment of the current context of the AEP, where after personal expectations and goals can be put forward. By creating a solid starting point for the therapeutic intervention, the foundation is laid to

incorporate strengths, enhance resilience and increase well-being.

Limitations and recommendations

It is important to note a few important limitations of this study. First, the sample group was relatively small ($n = 4$). Although the number was offset by the fact that there was representation from all three registration categories (i.e. clinical counselling and industrial psychologists) that often work with expatriates, and the large degree of overlap between practitioners' reflections indicated a degree of data saturation, the possibility exists that participants' respective reviews might not be as comprehensive as a larger sample groups' review would have been. Second, while not necessarily a limitation, it should be noted that only practicing psychologists were included in the sample group, thus excluding human resource personnel of the MNC, business coaches or other counsellors. Insights from the MNC and other counsellors were therefore not included in the study and they may have provided valuable insight. Another possible limitation was that a simplified version of the path model (see Figure 2) was provided to participants, and this model did not include the strength of Humility that appeared to be negatively associated with well-being (cf. Chapter 2). Despite the negative association between Humility and well-being, the researchers wanted to explore constructs that contribute to greater mental health.

It can be proposed that this study be expanded by including influential role players and obtaining insight from a human resource perspective. Our results clearly suggest that MNCs consciously include AEPs in conversations and decision-making prior to relocation, and that they would benefit from being mindful of not only the factors that could have a negative effect on AEPs levels of resilience or well-being abroad, but also of the aspects that could potentially contribute to greater mental health. It is thus proposed that proactive attention to AEPs' mental health will benefit all parties involved, including the AEP, the working partner (expatriate), their

children (if applicable). It is a well-established fact that the happiness or contentment of AEPs is a determining factor in the success or failure of the expatriate assignment. Perhaps most importantly from a business point of view, and especially within a context of an ever-increasing number of expatriate assignments, the mental health of AEPs should be regarded as top priority.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore how character strengths and resilience could be enhanced to ultimately facilitate the well-being of AEPs. Four practicing psychologists firstly reflected on reasons why strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope were positively associated with AEPs' personal levels of resilience and self-perceived well-being, and secondly, provided insight into various therapeutic approaches or techniques that could potentially be used to cultivate these constructs. Participant psychologists confirmed that within the context of expatriation, all three strengths play important roles in the AEPs' resilience and well-being abroad. The process of expatriation denotes change and embarking into the unknown. The strength of Curiosity is fueled by change and the exposure to new experiences. Gratitude referred to the ability to recognize the goodness in life, and was also described as a coping skill, especially during challenging times. Further, it was evident from participants' reflections that people who practice Hope, naturally trust and have faith that things will work out, despite their current reality of approaching the unknown. Psychologists furthermore pointed out that these strengths were characterized by specific time frames, connecting the AEP either to the past, the present, the future or a combination of these. As mentioned in the results section, the participant psychologists appear to have different therapeutic approaches and techniques aimed at fostering strengths, resilience and ultimately well-being of AEPs. However, it was evident that practical strength-based techniques were incorporated into all four participants' reflections. This study highlights the important role that both MNCs and psychologists should play in ensuring successful adaptation of AEPs. By providing AEPs with sufficient guidance and psychological

support, it is proposed that the employee's work performance and the success rate of expatriate assignments will increase.

Acknowledgements

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are the authors' own and not an official position of the institution.

Competing interests

The authors declare that there were no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Author contributions

This article served as a partial requirement for the first author's PhD degree. Professor Potgieter was the promotor and Professor Botha the co-promotor. The first author was responsible for setting up the research design, writing the literature review, as well as the process of data collection and data analysis. Professors' Potgieter and Botha guided the research process, edited and co-authored this article.

References

Aburn, G., Gott, M., & Hoare, K. (2016). What is resilience? An integrative review of the empirical literature. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 72(5), 980–1000.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.12888>

Amcoff, J., & Nedomysl, T. (2015). Is the tied returnee male or female? The trailing spouse thesis reconsidered. *Population, Space and Place*, 21, 872–881.

Anon. (2019). What is curiosity? Retrieved September 9, 2019, from www.viacharacter.org

- Arar, K. H. (2019). The challenges involved when Arab women forge a path to educational leadership: Context, personal cost, and coping. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 47(5), 749–765.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143217753191>
- Armenta, C. N., Fritz, M. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2017). Functions of positive emotions: Gratitude as a motivator of self-improvement and positive change. *Emotion Review*, 9(3), 183–190. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073916669596>
- Babbie, E. (2016). *The practice of social research* (14th ed.). Canada: Cengage Learning.
- Black, J. S., & Gregersen, H. B. (1991). The other half of the picture: Antecedents of spouse cross-cultural adjustment. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 22(3), 461–477.
Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/154918>
- Britt, T. W., Shen, W., Sinclair, R. R., Grossman, M. R., & Klieger, D. M. (2016). How much do we really know about employee resilience? *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 9(2), 378–404. <https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2015.107>
- Caligiuri, P., & Bonache, J. (2016). Evolving and enduring challenges in global mobility. *Journal of World Business*, 51(1), 127–141. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2015.10.001>
- Campbell, E. (2015). Six surprising benefits of curiosity. *Greater Good Magazine*. Retrieved from www.greatergood.berkeley.edu
- Cangià, F. (2017). (Im)Mobility and the emotional lives of expat spouses. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 25(October), 22–28. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2017.10.001>

- Cangià, F., Levitan, D., & Zittoun, T. (2018). Family, boundaries and transformation: The international mobility of professionals and their families. *Migration Letters, 15*(1), 17–31.
- Chia, T. (2008, July). Confessions of a trailing spouse. *Elle Magazine, 70–73*.
- Cole, N. D. (2011). Managing global talent: Solving the spousal adjustment problem. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 22*(7), 1504–1530.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2011.561963>
- Cole, N., & McNulty, Y. (2012). Perceptions of organizational justice during expatriation: A framework for examining trailing spouse adjustment. In *The 11th World Congress of the international federation of scholarly associations of management (IFSAM)* (pp. 1–28). Lemirick, Ireland.
- Cole, N., & Nesbeth, K. (2014). Why do international assignments fail? The expatriate families speak. *International Studies of Management and Organization, 44*(3), 1–17.
<https://doi.org/10.2753/IMO0020-8825440304>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Davies, S. E., Stoermer, S., & Froese, F. J. (2019). When the going gets tough: The influence of expatriate resilience and perceived organizational inclusion climate on work adjustment and turnover intentions turnover intentions. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 30*(8), 1393–1417.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2018.1528558>

- Dholakia, U. (2017). What's the difference between optimism and hope? Retrieved September 9, 2019, from www.psychologytoday.com
- Disabato, D., Goodman, F., Kashdan, T., Short, J., & Jarden, A. (2016). Different types of well-being? A cross-cultural examination of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Psychological Assessment, 28*(5), 471–482.
- Dodge, R., Daly, A., Huyton, J., & Sanders, L. (2012). The challenge of defining wellbeing. *International Journal of Wellbeing, 2*(3), 222–235. <https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v2i3.4>
- Eggerman, M., & Panter-Brick, C. (2010). Suffering, hope, and entrapment: Resilience and cultural values in Afghanistan. *Social Science & Medicine, 71*, 71–83. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2010.03.023>
- Emmons, R. (2012). Queen of the virtues? Gratitude as a human strength. In *Reflective practice: Formation and supervision in ministry* (Vol. 32, pp. 49–62).
- Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (2003). Counting blessings versus burdens: An experimental investigation of gratitude and subjective well-being in daily life. *Journal of Personality, 84*(2), 377–389. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.2.377>
- Föbker, S., & Imani, D. (2017). The role of language skills in the settling-in process – experiences of highly skilled migrants' accompanying partners in Germany and the UK. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 43*(16), 2720–2737.
- Friese, S. (2019). *Qualitative data analysis with ATLAS.ti* (3rd ed.). London: Sage.
- Goodman, F., Disabato, D., Kashdan, T., & Kauffman, S. (2018). Measuring well-being: A comparison of subjective well-being and PERMA. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 13*(4), 321–332. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2017.1388434>

- Hadi, M., & Closs, S. (2016). Ensuring rigour and trustworthiness of qualitative research in clinical pharmacy. *International Journal of Clinical Pharmacy*, 38, 641–646.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11096-015-0237-6>
- Harry, T. T., Dodd, N., & Chinyamurindi, W. (2019). Telling tales: Using narratives and story-telling to understand the challenges faced by a sample of self-initiated expatriates in South Africa. *Journal of Global Mobility*, 7(1), 64–87. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JGM-05-2018-0024>
- Hart Weber, C. (2013). *Flourish: Discover vibrant living*. Franklin, Tennessee: Carpenter's Son Publishing.
- Harvey, M. (1998). Dual-career couples during international relocation: The trailing spouse. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 9(2), 309–331.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/095851998341116>
- Harvey, M. G. (1985). The executive family: An overlooked variable in international assignments. *Columbia Journal of World Business*, Spring, 84–92.
- Harvey, M., Napier, N., & Moeller, M. (2009). Dual career couples' family life-cycles: Identifying strategic windows of global career opportunity. *Research and Practice in Human Resource Management*, 17(2), 14–35.
- Honor, G. (2016). Resilience. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, 31(3), 384–390.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pedhc.2016.09.005>

- Huta, V., & Waterman, A. (2014). Eudaimonia and its distinction from hedonia: Developing a classification and terminology for understanding conceptual and operational definitions. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 15*, 1425–1456. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-013-9485-0>
- Hutchinson, A., Stuart, A., & Pretorius, H. (2010). Biological contributions to well-being: The relationships amongst temperament, character strengths and resilience. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 36*(2), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v36i2.844>
- Jayawickreme, E., Forgeard, M., & Seligman, M. (2012). The engine of well-being. *Review of General Psychology, 16*(4), 327–342. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027990>
- Keyes, C. (2002). The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 43*(2), 207–222.
- Keyes, C., Shmotkin, D., & Ryff, C. (2002). Optimizing well-being: The empirical encounter of two traditions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 82*(6), 1007–1022. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.82.6.1007>
- Keyes, C., Wissing, M., Potgieter, J., Temane, M., Kruger, A., & van Rooy, S. (2008). Evaluation of the mental health continuum- short form (MHC-SF) in Setswana-speaking South Africans. *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy, 15*(3), 181–192. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cpp.572>
- Lämsä, A. M., Heikkinen, S., Smith, M., & Tornikoski, C. (2017). The expatriate's family as a stakeholder of the firm: a responsibility viewpoint. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 28*(20), 2916–2935. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2016.1146785>

- Lauring, J., & Selmer, J. (2010). The supportive expatriate spouse: An ethnographic study of spouse involvement in expatriate careers. *International Business Review*, *19*(1), 59–69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2009.09.006>
- Lazarova, M., McNulty, Y., & Semeniuk, M. (2015). Expatriate family narratives on international mobility: Key characteristics of the successful moveable family. In L. Mäkelä & V. Suutari (Eds.), *Work and Family Interface in the International Career Context* (pp. 29–51). eBook: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-17647-5_3
- Lazarova, M., Westman, M., & Shaffer, M. (2010). Elucidating the positive side of the work-family interface on international assignments: A model of expatriate work and family performance. *Academy of Management Review*, *35*(1), 93–117. Retrieved from <http://10.0.21.89/AMR.2010.45577883%0Ahttp://proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=45577883&site=ehost-live>
- Lee, L.-Y., & Kartika, N. (2014). The influence of individual, family, and social capital factors on expatriate adjustment and performance: The moderating effect of psychology contract and organizational support. *Expert Systems with Applications*, *41*(11), 5483–5494. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eswa.2014.02.030>
- Li, N., & Jackson, M. H. (2015). Global relocation: An examination of the corporate influence on expatriate adjustment. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, *53*(4), 471–489. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1744-7941.12063>
- Littman-Ovadia, H., & Niemiec, R. M. (2016). Character strengths and mindfulness as core pathways to meaning in life. In P. et al. Russo-Netzer (Ed.), *Clinical Perspectives on Meaning* (pp. 383–405). Springer. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-41397-6>

Lomas, T., Hefferon, K., & Ivtzan, I. (2014). *Applied positive psychology: Integrated positive practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Long, T., & Johnson, M. (2000). Rigour, reliability and validity in qualitative research. *Clinical Effectiveness in Nursing*, 4, 30–37.

Lyubomirsky, S., & Layous, K. (2013). How do simple positive activities increase well-being? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22(1), 57–62. Retrieved from <http://cdp.sagepub.com/lookup/doi/10.1177/0963721412469809%5Cnhttp://cdp.sagepub.com/lookup/doi/10.1177/0963721412469809%5Cnhttp://cdp.sagepub.com/content/22/1/57.abstract>

Masten, A. (2014). Invited commentary: Resilience and positive youth development frameworks in developmental science. *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, 43, 1018–1024. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-014-0118-7>

Masten, A. (2016). Resilience in developing systems: the promise of integrated approaches integrated approaches. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 13(3), 297–312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405629.2016.1147344>

McNulty, Y. (2012). ‘Being dumped in to sink or swim’: an empirical study of organizational support for the trailing spouse. *Human Resource Development International*, 15(4), 417–434. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2012.721985>

Mohr, A. T., & Klein, S. (2004). Exploring the adjustment of American expatriate spouses in Germany. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 15(7), 1189–1206.

- Morse, J., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K., & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *1*(2), 1–21.
- Morse, J. M. (2003). Principles of mixed methods and multimethod research design. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *The Handbook of Mixed Methods in social and behavioral research* (pp. 189–208). SAGE Publications.
- Morse, J. M. (2015). Critical analysis of strategies for determining rigor in qualitative inquiry. *Qualitative Health Research*, *25*(9), 1212–1222.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315588501>
- Naude, C. J., & Vögel, J. (2018). Repatriation turnover revisited: A focus on South African multinational enterprises. *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, *21*(1), 1–12.
- NetExpat, & EY. (2018). *Relocating partner: 2018 survey report*.
- Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2015). Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, *18*(2), 34–35. <https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2015-102054>
- Noor, N., Rahman, N., & Zahari, M. (2018). Gratitude, gratitude intervention and well-being in Malaysia. *The Journal of Behavioral Science*, *13*(2), 1–18.
- Panter-Brick, C., & Leckman, J. (2013). Editorial commentary: Resilience in child development – interconnected pathways to wellbeing. *The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *54*(4), 333–336. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12057>

- Park, N., Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. (2004). Strengths of character and well-being. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 23*(5), 603–619.
<https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.23.5.603.50748>
- Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. (2004). Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification (p. 818). New York and Washington DC: Oxford University Press and American Psychological Association.
- Proyer, R. T., Ruch, W., & Buschor, C. (2013). Testing strengths-based interventions: A preliminary study on the effectiveness of a program targeting curiosity, gratitude, hope, humor, and zest for enhancing life satisfaction. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 14*, 275–292. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-012-9331-9>
- Rash, J. A., Matsuba, M. K., & Prkachin, K. M. (2011). Gratitude and well-being: Who benefits the most from a gratitude intervention? *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being, 3*(3), 350–369. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-0854.2011.01058.x>
- Roemer, A., & Harris, C. (2018). Perceived organisational support and well-being: The role of psychological capital as a mediator. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 44*(0), 1–11.
- Rosenbusch, K., Cerny, L. J., & Earnest, D. R. (2015). The impact of stressors during international assignments. *Cross Cultural Management, 22*(3), 405–430.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/CCM-09-2013-0134>
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Sansone, R., & Sansone, L. (2010). Gratitude and well-being: The benefits of appreciation. *Psychiatry, 7*(11), 18–22.

- Schultze-Lutter, F., Schimmelman, B. G., & Schmidt, S. J. (2016). Resilience, risk, mental health and well-being: associations and conceptual differences. *European Child Adolescent Psychiatry, 25*, 459–466. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00787-016-0851-4>
- Seligman, M. (2003). *Authentic happiness: Using the new positive psychology to realize your potential for lasting fulfillment*. London: Nicholas Brealy Publishing.
- Seligman, M. (2011). *Flourish*. London: Nicholas Brealy Publishing.
- Seligman, M. (2016). VIA Institute on Character. Retrieved August 14, 2016, from www.viacharacter.org
- Shaffer, M. A., & Harrison, D. A. (2001). Forgotten partners in international assignments: Development and Test of a Model of Spouse Adjustment. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*(2), 238–254.
- Shortland, S. (2018). Female expatriates' motivations and challenges: the case of oil and gas. *Gender Management: An International Journal, 33*(1), 50–65.
- Smith, J., & Noble, H. (2014). Bias in research. *Evidence-Based Nursing, 17*(4), 100–101. <https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2014-101946>
- Southwick, S., Bonanno, G., Masten, A., Panter-Brick, C., & Yehuda, R. (2014). Resilience definitions, theory, and challenges: interdisciplinary perspectives. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology, 5*, 1–14.
- Takeuchi, R. (2010). A critical review of expatriate adjustment research through a multiple stakeholder view: Progress, emerging trends, and prospects. *Journal of Management, 36*(4), 1040–1064. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206309349308>

- Takeuchi, R., Yun, S., & Tesluk, P. E. (2002). An examination of crossover and spillover effects of spousal and expatriate cross-cultural adjustment on expatriate outcomes. *The Journal of Applied Psychology, 87*(4), 655–666. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.4.655>
- Teague, J. (2015). Corporate preparation for the cross-cultural adaptation experience of the accompanying expatriate spouse. *Journal of International Business Research, 14*(2), 139–151.
- Thexton, B. (2019). Cultivating curiosity - where did it go? And how do you get it back? Retrieved September 9, 2019, from www.quarterlife.co
- Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. eBook: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Tung, R. L. (1979). Dimensions of organizational environments: An exploratory study of their impact on organization structure. *Academy of Management Journal, 22*(4), 672–693.
- Turaga, R. (2018). The power of hope. *The IUP Journal of Soft Skills, XII*(4), 41–46.
- Ungar, M. (2012). Researching and theorizing resilience across cultures and contexts. *Preventive Medicine, 55*, 387–389. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2012.07.021>
- Ungar, M., & Hadfield, K. (2019). The differential impact of environment and resilience on youth outcomes. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, 51*(2), 135–146.
- Van Bochove, M., & Engbersen, G. (2015). Beyond cosmopolitanism and expat bubbles: Challenging dominant representations of knowledge workers and trailing spouses. *Population, Space and Place, 21*, 295–309.

- Van den Berg-Overbreek, A. (2014). The psychology of expatriation. *Global Living Magazine*, 6.
- Varma, A., & Russell, L. (2016). Women and expatriate assignments: Exploring the role of perceived organizational support. *Employee Relations*, 38(2), 200–223.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-02-2015-0019>
- Vignansky, E., Addad, M., & Himi, H. (2018). Despair will hold you prisoner, hope will set you free: Hope and meaning among released prisoners. *The Prison Journal*, 98(3), 334–358.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0032885518764920>
- Vögel, A. J., van Vuuren, J. J., & Millard, S. M. (2008). Preparation, support and training requirements of South African expatriates. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 39(3), 33–48.
- Wagnild, G. (2009). A review of the resilience scale. *Journal of Nursing Measurement*, 17(2), 105–113. <https://doi.org/10.1891/1061-3749.17.2.105>
- Wagnild, G. M., & Collins, J. A. (2009). Assessing resilience. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing & Mental Health Services*, 47(12), 28–33.
- Wagnild, G. M., & Young, H. M. (1993). Development and psychometric evaluation of the Resilience Scale. *Journal of Nursing Measurement*, 1(2), 165–178.
- Wiese, D. L. (2013). Psychological health of expatriate spouses: A neglected factor in international relocation. *Asian Journal of Counselling*, 20(1–2), 1–31. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2014-03299-001&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Chapter 5

Conclusions and recommendations

Introduction

This chapter concludes the study and contains brief descriptions and concluding remarks on the research process, findings, limitations, recommendations and the personal reflections of the PhD candidate (i.e. researcher). This chapter is written in the first person, and commences with comments on the research process.

Research process

My PhD journey started with an interview and proposal I presented to a panel of academics on the 2nd of March 2016. At that stage, the fields in which I was interested for research were positive psychology, “trailing spouses”, post-traumatic growth, resilience and international relocation. The topic of my presentation was titled *Exploring character strengths’ contribution to post-traumatic growth during international relocation: A positive psychology approach*. During the literature review prior to my presentation it was clear that there is a gap in research with regard to the mental health of “trailing spouses” and expatriates living in Third World countries on the African continent. Professors Johan C Potgieter and Karel FH Botha were appointed as my promoters. Both of these gentlemen are registered clinical psychologists with extensive experience in practice and scientific research in the field of resilience, grit and well-being, using both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.

I then started with my research proposal, and the study was approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00362-16-S1) (see Addendum A1) on 16 December 2016. The title of the study was registered as *Flourishing beyond borders: Character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being of the accompanying expatriate partner during international relocation*.

As set out in Chapter 1, this study was undertaken in three phases, each phase reported as a research article (cf. Chapters 2, 3 and 4). In my discussions with my promoters, it was decided that a multimethod research design was suited the purposes of this study, as illustrated in the figure below:



Figure 3: Multimethod research design

The decision to make use of a multimethod research design implied that each phase would have a unique research approach, design as well as possible risks or dangers involved. The study was non-experimental, and a cross-sectional design was used. The titles of the respective articles were:

- **Phase 1 / Article 1 / Chapter 2:** *Flourishing beyond borders: The character strengths, resilience and well-being of the South African AEP in Africa.*
- **Phase 2 / Article 2 / Chapter 3:** *Flourishing beyond borders: A qualitative exploration of the AEPs’ character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being.*
- **Phase 3 / Article 3 / Chapter 4:** *Flourishing beyond borders: Facilitating the well-being of the AEP.*

The overall aim of this study was to explore the role that character strengths and resilience play in the self-perceived well-being and adaptation of AEPs during international relocation. During the first phase of the study, AEPs’ character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being were measured and described, where after significant associations were determined and a model was proposed that indicated the association between these constructs. During the second phase of the study, I wanted to invite a smaller group of AEPs to qualitatively review the model in an effort to explain and substantiate the associations between AEPs’

character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being. I also wanted to explore and interpret their subjective experiences with regard to the interplay between these constructs in their daily lives. During the third phase of the study, I wanted to draw from the knowledge and expertise of fellow to explore ways in which to enhance character strengths and resilience, and ultimately facilitate the well-being of AEPs.

One of the reservations I had from the start was that I would not be able to recruit enough participants to make this study statistically significant. Since expatriates or AEPs are a difficult sample group to locate, I relied on non-probability sampling techniques, such as snowball sampling. At that stage, we were living in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and as I was an AEP myself, I was part of the South African Women's Group (SAWG) of Tanzania. This group's administrator agreed to act as gatekeeper of the study, which meant that the first point of entry was the AEPs who were at the time part of the database of SAWG and living in Tanzania. Sample recruitment is discussed in great detail in Chapter 1. The fact that we had to rely on snowball sampling and that we recruited participants in various African countries had an impact on our timeline as it took much longer to gather data than expected or planned. I decided to rather extend the period(s) of data collection than not have sufficient data to answer the respective research questions. My promoter and I ultimately applied for an extension period of 12 months. Even though the study took longer to complete, we are excited about the topic, and I personally believe that the findings will not only contribute to the field of expatriation and psychology, but provide insight and guidance to psychologists who have the privilege of consulting with AEPs.

Findings

A brief discussion of the results is presented below.

Phase 1 / Article 1 / Chapter 2: The aim of the first phase of this study was to describe the character strengths, levels of resilience and self-perceived well-being of South African AEPs and to propose a model that indicates the association between these constructs. Participants were required to complete the Virtues in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-72), the Resilience Scale (RS) and the Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF). A total of 70 South African AEPs living in a number of different countries on the African continent completed the full set of questionnaires. The results indicated that the strengths of Integrity/Honesty, Love, Fairness, Appreciation of beauty, Gratitude and Kindness ranked highest. Furthermore, the strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude, Hope and Zest were not only positively associated with participants' levels of resilience and well-being, but were also the most significant predictors of AEPs' resilience and well-being. These findings may inform intervention programmes aimed at equipping AEPs with the necessary skills prior to expatriation, as well as support them while abroad. In turn, such interventions could contribute to the success rate of expatriate assignments.

Phase 2 / Article 2 / Chapter 3: The aim of the second phase of this study was to inform our understanding of the quantitative model created during Phase 1 of the study by exploring the subjective experiences that AEPs have of the strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope in their lives abroad, and how these strengths were related to their resilience and self-perceived well-being during expatriation. Five distinct themes were generated from the data gathered from 17 AEPs (all of whom participated in Phase 1). The themes included: (1) Spirit of adventure; (2) Elements of adjustment; (3) Sense of belonging; (4) Personal growth; and (5) the Cost of remaining strong. Findings indicated that AEPs experienced a positive interplay between their strengths, resilience and overall well-being during international relocation. They did, however, also point out that these strengths were accompanied by a number of challenges in that applying them successfully demands energy, effort and personal compromise. These findings once again expanded our knowledge of the mental health of AEPs and affirm the importance of optimal

psychological support. It also indicates that AEPs should be included in the initial selection process and pre-departure training so that they are well equipped before the international assignment.

Phase 3 / Article 3 / Chapter 4: The aim of the third and final phase of this study was to qualitatively explore therapeutic ways to enhance character strengths, resilience and ultimately the well-being of AEPs. Four practicing psychologists who have experience in consulting with expatriates participated in this phase of the study. We hoped that their reflections, insights and expertise would provide practical guidelines to fellow psychologists on how to facilitate the well-being of AEPs abroad, with specific reference to practical implementation of the model emanating from the first two phases of this study. Findings indicated that there were specific elements and time frames that characterize the strengths of Gratitude, Curiosity and Hope, and that this should be kept in mind when therapeutically addressing AEPs. Results from this phase also alluded to the fact that personal growth is leveraged through the positive effect of strengths; that therapeutic engagement and goal-setting promotes change; and that various therapeutic approaches and techniques can assist in the enhancement of strengths, resilience and ultimately well-being. These psychologists highlighted the importance of incorporating approaches and techniques within the framework of positive psychology. They pointed out that AEPs have to reflect on previous achievements and draw energy from them, especially if those achievements entailed overcoming great adversity. These findings can guide organizations, psychologists or counsellors in preparing AEPs for the challenges of expatriate assignment prior to departure, and to enhance their well-being during expatriation.

Integrated conclusion

The main question that guided this study was whether South African AEPs' character strengths and resilience play a role in their self-perceived well-being during expatriation. The

first phase of this study followed a quantitative approach, which can be described as objective, structured, analytical and including numeric data. I wanted to measure and describe AEPs' character strengths, resilience and well-being, where after I set out to explore the relationship between these constructs. The quantitative model that was constructed by means of structural equation modelling illustrated the associations between these constructs. The interplay between these constructs may indeed have an impact on the successful adaptation of AEPs while abroad.

It was then proposed that the subjective experiences of a smaller sample group of AEPs could inform and extend our understanding of the proposed model. This second phase of the study followed a qualitative approach, which can be described as assigning personal meaning to any form of data. I wanted to expand my knowledge of the daily experiences of AEPs abroad. Findings revealed that AEPs did subjectively experience an interplay between their character strengths, resilience and well-being, but pointed out that it was not always easy to practice their strengths while abroad and that the cost of remaining strong required energy, effort and personal compromise.

Phase 3 also followed a qualitative approach. I wanted to draw from the knowledge and expertise of psychologists who regularly consult with expatriates, AEPs and their families. These psychologists highlighted the fact that it was of great importance to know that there are various perspectives on individual strengths, resilience and well-being. Furthermore, it is imperative to have an understanding of your own theoretical stance, the elements you ascribe to these constructs and to recognize the time frame associated with them. Only then will it be possible to set realistic, attainable goals with the AEP and work towards cultivating their strengths, resilience and ultimately well-being. MNCs and psychologists should not underestimate the vital roles they play in the success rate of expatriate assignments.

The overall findings of the study indicate that character strengths and resilience do play a pivotal role in AEPs' self-perceived well-being while abroad. AEPs expressed the need for psychological support prior to and during their time abroad. Results pointed specifically to the importance of the character strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope, and their interplay with resilience and psychological well-being of AEPs while abroad. Furthermore, these results will inform psychological interventions prior to and during international relocation, and promise to not only enhance their personal levels of mental health, but also contribute to improved work performance of their partners, and ultimately increase the likelihood of successful expatriate assignments.

Limitations

The limitations related to each of the individual sub-study are discussed in detail in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. With regard to the overall study, the following general challenges and limitations should be mentioned:

First, the sample group was relatively small. This can be ascribed to the difficulties experienced in locating participants. No consolidated list of South African expatriates exists, and I therefore had to rely on snowball sampling to increase the sample size. This also affected the time line of data collection. I initially hoped to gather sufficient data within a period of two months, but ended up extending the period of data collection to five months.

Second, the study included a very specific population group, i.e. South African AEPs living in African countries (excluding South Africa). The findings from this study should therefore not be generalized to other population groups.

Third, cross-sectional research does not allow for assumptions about the existence of causal relationships between variables. I therefore remained careful not to infer any causality while reporting on quantitative results and regularly consulted with Professors Potgieter and Ellis to

ensure that conclusions were justified given the nature of the data and the means by which it was analysed.

Fourth, using self-reported data creates the risk of participants manipulating their responses for the sake of providing socially desirable reflections. Risks inherent to self-reported data were minimized by triangulating quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, as well as the sources of research data.

The *fifth* limitation was a discrepancy in the number of participants who completed the standardized questionnaires in Phase 1 ($n = 110$ for RS and MHC-SF; $n = 70$ for VIA-72). Due to the fact that there were two web links to direct participants to a) the RS and MHC-SF, and b) the VIA-72 (cf. Chapter 2) and the responses were submitted to two independent databases, not all participants completed all three measurements. With the assistance of Professor Suria Ellis at the SCS, it was possible to link the participant codes of the participants who failed to complete the VIA-72 to their e-mail addresses. Follow-up e-mails were then sent that once again included the instructions as well as the web-link that directed participants to the VIA-72, resulting in 70 complete data sets. Based on power analysis, this number met the minimum requirements to conduct SEM analysis.

Sixth, the RS that was used to measure the resilience of AEPs regards this as an intrinsic trait and therefore does not take ecological perceptions of this construct into account. However, in the qualitative reflections of both AEPs and practicing psychologists in the field, the importance of environmental context and participants' ability to navigate toward environmental resources did come to the fore and therefore formed an important part of the overall outcome of this study.

As mentioned in my personal reflection later, another challenge and possible limitation that deserves to be mentioned is the fact that I had been an AEP in Dar es Salaam from 2015 to 2018 and was part of the South African Women's Group that served as our point of entry into the broader expatriate community. This created the risk of bias on the researcher's side, and ethically

it was pivotal to remain conscious of my personal and professional boundaries during data collection and analysis. On a practical level, it meant deliberately focussing on compartmentalizing my daily activities abroad. In order to ensure objective interpretation of results, the SCS assisted with the quantitative data analysis, and an independent coding reviewer was appointed to assist with qualitative data analysis.

Recommendations

Based on the results and limitations of this study, the following recommendations are made:

Recommendations for practice

The results of this study indicate that the strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude and Hope specifically are at play in the adaptation process of AEPs, and that these strengths along with AEPs' levels of resilience ultimately have an impact on their self-perceived well-being. These results can be used to inform future interventions aimed at facilitating AEPs' levels of well-being prior to and during international relocation.

Providing psychological support to the families of the working partner and deliberately concentrating on their strengths and inner resources, may empower them and equip them with the necessary skills to overcome the expected challenges that international relocation involves.

If sufficient psychological support is given to AEPs and they experience a healthy sense of well-being abroad, the possibility exists that not only themselves, but also their working partners (employees), families and the MNC involved would benefit from such intervention.

Recommendations for future research

A number of the results from the current study lend themselves to further investigation. The following is suggested for future research in the context of expatriation:

- Exploring South African AEPs' mental health in countries beyond the African continent. The inclusion of First World countries will increase our understanding of the possible interplay between AEPs' mental health and their environment. It will furthermore indicate the unique nature of expatriation to African countries and clarify whether custom-built intervention programmes could be proposed based on the country to which AEP's relocate, or whether generic intervention programmes would suffice.
- Investigating AEPs' mental health over a period of time, i.e. prior to relocation; six months after arrival in host country; twelve months after their arrival and so forth. This will provide insight into the adaptation process of AEPs as well as factors that might play a role in successful adaptation as it unfolds chronologically.
- Exploring factors that could potentially derail AEPs' well-being. This will provide valuable insight into potential psychological difficulties that could be addressed in therapy prior to relocation.
- Qualitatively exploring the negative associations between the strengths of Social intelligence, Kindness and Modesty/Humility and resilience and self-perceived well-being (cf. Chapter 2). AEPs' subjective experiences will inform psychologists' understanding of the emotional cost of certain strengths and provide insight into how it can be addressed in therapy.
- Exploring the mental health of expatriate partners who do not accompany their working partners abroad, i.e. who choose to stay in their home country while the working partner commutes. This will provide insight into the ways in which family dynamics are affected, although this specific context falls beyond the scope of this study.
- Including the working partner (expatriate) and investigating the role of his character strengths, resilience and well-being while abroad in acknowledging the family unit or system of which both partners form a part. However, the mental health of the working partner falls beyond the scope of this study.

Contributions of study

The contribution of this study was to describe the character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being of a group of South African AEPs and to provide insight into the relationship between these constructs. The findings confirm that strengths of Curiosity, Gratitude

and Hope were positively associated with resilience and contribute to a greater sense of well-being. It furthermore illustrates how AEPs subjectively experience the interplay between their strengths, resilience and well-being while abroad. This contributes to a greater understanding of AEPs' daily realities, making it easier for psychologists to construct intervention frameworks when consulting with families who are in the process of accepting international assignments, or have already made that decision and are struggling to adjust abroad. Furthermore, a panel of four psychologists reviewed and reflected on the findings of the first two sub-studies. Although it was a relatively small sample group, their thoughts and insights did contribute to a greater understanding of psychologists' perspectives on strengths, resilience and well-being. By deliberately focusing on AEPs' character strengths, resilience and well-being and utilizing strength-based approaches and techniques, practicing psychologists would increase their effectiveness in assisting AEPs with the process of adapting to the daily realities of life abroad. Lastly, no other study could be found that explored the role that character strengths and resilience play on South African AEPs' self-perceived well-being in Africa. On a theoretical level, this study added valuable literature to the field of expatriation and psychology.

Personal reflection

The motivation for this study was threefold. First, as a psychologist, positive psychology has always resonated with me. I believe that people have inner strengths and personal resources that enable them to not only confront challenges, but also thrive amid adversity. During my career I have had the privilege of working with a large number of families who have, for a period of time, relocated to various countries. Their experiences continuously reminded me that resilience, adaptability, perseverance and courage are at the core of all people and that these were inner strengths that come to the fore in times of adversity. In such a way, that they sometimes stand amazed at what they have overcome.

Second, ever since I registered as a psychologist, I knew that one day, I would do a PhD in Psychology. I have always worked full-time and being a mother to two young daughters, I simply did not have the time (or energy) to embark on such a journey (yet). Having worked as a psychologist in private practice for twelve years, of which the last nine years leading up to May 2015 was at a church-based Wholeness Centre in Johannesburg, I was fueled by my interactions with clients and colleagues. My career provided a sense of purpose and identity. It has always been a privilege to listen to my clients' narratives, to witness their resilience and applaud their courage, wisdom, perseverance and self-determination. This contributed to the fact that I wanted to choose a topic for a PhD that is positive. I wanted to focus on human strengths and how people manage to not only cope or survive, but how they manage to thrive...

Third, having personally been an AEP in Tanzania for four years until December 2018, I hold the topic of expatriation and the mental health of AEPs in particular near to my heart. Having said this, I was consciously aware of the possibility that my personal experience could potentially cause bias in the approach to this study. I remained mindful throughout the research process by keeping a research journal, appointing an independent external code reviewer to assist with qualitative data analysis and regularly consulting with my promoters.

When my husband was offered a position in Dar es Salaam for four years, our family was faced with an enormous decision: Do we stay or do we go? Staying would most definitely have been the safe and secure choice, and going meant selling our beautiful house; closing my practice; finding loving homes for our dogs; leaving our beloved family and friends; and telling the children that they would not be completing their primary school careers in the school in which they were extremely happy. My husband left five months before we did, and during that time, just like so many other AEPs, I had to sell our house, pack our earthly belongings and ensure that our girls are emotionally as strong as they can possibly be during our transition

period. During this period, a colleague gave me a card in which the following piece of Scripture was printed:

“Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance character, and character, strength” (Romans 5:3–4)

It was clear that my personal life and professional fields of interests have joined forces to become a PhD. It was clearly stipulated in my husband’s contract that the “trailing spouse” was not allowed to work in the host country, and I was therefore not granted a work permit. I had to become a stay-at-home parent in a foreign country on the East Coast of Africa. What felt like a sentence into obscurity, turned out to be the biggest gift. I was granted a window opportunity of four years to use as I choose. I was blessed with the gift of time to pursue a PhD in psychology.

In closing

Embarking on our expatriate assignment was one of the most difficult, yet rewarding and life-altering experiences I have had in my life. Prior to our departure an industrial psychologist told me that I would be “a disaster of an expat wife”, purely because the self-report questionnaire that he requested I complete, was handed to me a week before my husband and I were leaving for our “look-see” trip, and my levels of anxiety and uncertainty were off the chart. Neither my husband nor I had resigned from our then current positions, and we also had not yet told our daughters about the possibility of moving abroad. During the four days abroad, my husband was working and I had to find a house for us to live in and enroll our daughters (aged 5 and 8 at the time) at a school. The pressure, uncertainty and stress during that time cannot be put into words. Upon reflection, I can honestly say that I underestimated my own resilience, intuition, courage and determination. Those are universal strengths that exist within us all.

I am grateful to all the South African AEPs for taking part in this study. You all deserve medals of honour. Thank you for sharing your experiences with me. May you flourish beyond borders!

She stood in the storm, and when the wind did not blow her way, she adjusted her sails.

Elizabeth Edwards

Addenda

Addenda A: Ethics

Addendum A1: NWU Ethics Approval



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIWA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom,
South Africa, 2520

Tel: (018) 299-4900
Faks: (018) 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee

Tel: +27 18 299 4849
Email: Ethics@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE OF STUDY

Based on approval by Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) on 07/12/2016 after being reviewed at the meeting held on 16/11/2016, the North-West University Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-IRERC) hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-IRERC grants its permission that provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Flourishing beyond borders: Character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being of the accompanying expatriate partner during international relocation.																															
Study Leader/Supervisor:	Prof JC Potgieter																														
Student:	T Botha																														
Ethics number:	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>3</td><td>6</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>6</td><td>-</td><td>A</td><td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Institution</td> <td colspan="5">Study Number</td> <td colspan="2">Year</td> <td colspan="5">Status</td> </tr> </table>	N	W	U	-	0	0	3	6	2	-	1	6	-	A	1	Institution			Study Number					Year		Status				
N	W	U	-	0	0	3	6	2	-	1	6	-	A	1																	
Institution			Study Number					Year		Status																					
Application Type: Single study																															
Commencement date: 2016-12-07	Risk: Minimal																														
Continuation of the study is dependent on receipt of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation up to a maximum period of three years.																															

Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

- The applicants will have to amend the methodology to be used during Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the study i.e. by specifying the semi-structured open-ended questions to be used in both phases, as the project progresses via amendment requests to the HREC. These amendment requests have to be approved by the HREC before being implemented in the study.
- Translation of the Informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the HREC (if applicable).
- Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the HREC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

<p>General conditions:</p> <p>While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The study leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-IRERC via HREC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, and upon completion of the study without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study. Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit. The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader must apply for approval of these amendments at the HREC, prior to implementation. Would there be deviation from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited. The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started. In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-IRERC and HREC retains the right to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study; to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process. withdraw or postpone approval if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected, it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the HREC or that information has been false or misrepresented, the required amendments, annual (or otherwise stipulated) report and reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately, new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary. <p>HREC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via Ethics-HRECApply@nwu.ac.za or 018 299 1206.</p>
--

The IRERC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the IRERC or HREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

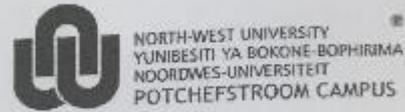
Linda du Plessis

Digitally signed by Linda du Plessis
DN: cn=Linda du Plessis, o=NWU, ou=Kyal Triangle Campus, email=Linda.duplessis@nwu.ac.za, c=ZA
Date: 2016.12.12 10:08:35 +02'00'

Prof Linda du Plessis

Chair NWU Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IRERC)

Addendum A2: Proof of Ethics Training



Private Bag X5001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299 1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research,
Training and Support
Tel: 018 298 2052
Fax:
Email: minnie.greeff@nwu.ac.za

22 April 2016

Dear Mrs Truida Botha (HPCSA registration number: PS 0085049)

PROOF OF ATTENDANCE

This letter certifies that you have attended the 2 day ethics training, entitled:

The Basics of Health Research Ethics

(Accreditation number: UP1163 from University of Pretoria CPD accreditation department)

presented by Prof Minnie Greeff (Head of the Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support) on 19 and 20 April 2016.

This proof of attendance, as recognised by HREC and the Ethics Office, NWU, is valid for 3 years and expires on the 19th of March 2018, Where applicable. Ethics CEUs awarded: 27 Ethics CEUs

Yours sincerely

Prof Minnie Greeff
Head of Health Sciences Ethics
Office for Research, Training and Support

Prof Awie Kotzé
Dean of Faculty of Health Sciences



Ms Truida Botha
HPCSA No: PS0085049

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics
Office for Research, Training
and Support

Tel: 018 299 2092
Email: minnie.greeff@nwu.ac.za

15 April 2019

Dear Ms Botha

PROOF OF ATTENDANCE AND ASSESSMENT

This letter certifies that you have attended the 2-day ethics training entitled:

The Basics of Health Research Ethics
(Accreditation number: PSB002/110/01/2019 from University of Free-State CPD accreditation department accredited by the HPCSA)

Presenter: Prof M Greeff (Head of the Health Sciences Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support) on the 05th – 06th March 2019.

This letter of attendance serves as proof of ethics training and assessment and is valid for three (3) years and expires on 31 March 2022. (Where applicable: Ethics CEUs awarded: 14 CEUs)

Yours sincerely



Prof Minnie Greeff
University of Free State
Faculty of Health Sciences
Ethics Office for Research, Training and Support

Prof Minnie Greeff
Head of Health Sciences Ethics
Office for Research, Training and Support



Prof Jeannetta du Plessis
Deputy Dean: Research and Innovation
Faculty of Health Sciences

Addendum A3: License Agreement: The Resilience Scale (RS)

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LICENSE AGREEMENT Students & Residents of Developing Countries

This Intellectual Property License Agreement ("Agreement") is made and effective this **29 August 2016** ("Effective Date") by and between The Resilience Center, PLLP ("Licensor") and **Truida Botha** ("Licensee").

Licensor has developed and licenses to users its Intellectual Property, marketed under the names "the Resilience Scale," "RS", "14-item Resilience Scale" and "RS14," and (the "Intellectual Property").

Licensee desires to use the Intellectual Property.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual promises set forth herein, Licensor and Licensee agree as follows:

1. **License.**
Licensor hereby grants to Licensee a 1-year, non-exclusive, limited license to use the Intellectual Property as set forth in this Agreement.
2. **Restrictions.**
Licensee shall not modify, license or sublicense the Intellectual Property, or transfer or convey the Intellectual Property or any right in the Intellectual Property to anyone else without the prior written consent of Licensor. Licensee may make sufficient copies of the Intellectual Property and the related Scoring Sheets to measure the individual resilience of **up to 300** subjects, for non-commercial purposes only.
3. **Fee.**
In consideration for the grant of the license and the use of the Intellectual Property, subject to the Restrictions above, Licensee agrees to pay Licensor the sum of **US\$75**.
4. **Term.**
This license is valid for twelve months, starting at midnight on the Effective Date.
5. **Termination.**
This license will terminate at midnight on the date twelve months after the Effective Date.
6. **Warranty of Title.**
Licensor hereby represents and warrants to Licensee that Licensor is the owner of the Intellectual Property or otherwise has the right to grant to Licensee the rights set forth in this Agreement. In the event any breach or threatened breach of the foregoing representation and warranty, Licensee's sole remedy shall be to require Licensor to do one of the following: i) procure, at Licensor's expense, the right to use the Intellectual Property, ii) replace the Intellectual Property or any part thereof that is in breach and replace it with Intellectual Property of comparable functionality that does not cause any breach, or iii) refund to Licensee the full amount of the license fee upon the return of the Intellectual Property and all copies thereof to Licensor.
7. **Warranty of Functionality.**
Licensor provides to Licensee the Intellectual Property "as is" with no direct or implied warranty.
8. **Payment.**
Any payment shall be made in full prior to shipment. Any other amount owed by Licensee to Licensor pursuant to this Agreement shall be paid within thirty (30) days following invoice from Licensor. In the event any overdue amount owed by Licensee is not paid following ten (10) days written notice from Licensor, then in addition to any other amount due, Licensor may impose and Licensee shall pay a late payment charge at the rate of one percent (1%) per month on any overdue amount.
9. **Taxes.**
In addition to all other amounts due hereunder, Licensee shall also pay to Licensor, or reimburse Licensor as appropriate, all amounts due for tax on the Intellectual Property that are measured directly by payments made by Licensee to Licensor. In no event shall Licensee be obligated to pay any tax paid on the income of Licensor or paid for Licensor's privilege of doing business.
10. **Warranty Disclaimer.**
LICENSOR'S WARRANTIES SET FORTH IN THIS AGREEMENT ARE EXCLUSIVE AND ARE IN LIEU OF ALL OTHER WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO, THE IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY AND FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE.

Addendum A4: Permission to use the Mental Health Short Form (MHC-SF)

From: **Keyes, Corey** ckeyes@emory.edu 
Subject: **Re: Permission to use the Mental Health Continuum Short Form (MHC-SF) for research purposes**
Date: 10 August 2016 at 5:04 PM
To: **Truida Botha** truidab.psych@gmail.com
Cc: **Johan Potgieter** johan.potgieter@nwu.ac.za

KC

Dear Truida,

You may use my measure of course! I have attached a copy just in case.

Best, Corey

Corey Keyes
The Winship Distinguished Research Professor, Emory University
Co-Founder of Simply Flourishing <http://simplyflourishing.com>
<<http://simplyflourishing.com/>>

On 8/9/16, 1:50 AM, "Truida Botha" <truidab.psych@gmail.com> wrote:

Dear Prof Keyes,

Please find attached a letter requesting permission to use the Mental Health Continuum - Short Form as part of my PhD in Psychology.

Kind Regards,
Truida Botha, M Ed (Psych)

This e-mail message (including any attachments) is for the sole use of the intended recipient(s) and may contain confidential and privileged information. If the reader of this message is not the intended recipient, you are hereby notified that any dissemination, distribution or copying of this message (including any attachments) is strictly prohibited.

If you have received this message in error, please contact the sender by reply e-mail message and destroy all copies of the original message (including attachments).



Addendum A5: Permission to use the Virtues in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-72)

From: Kelly Aluloo KellyA@viacharacter.org
 Subject: VIA Research Request
 Date: 10 August 2016 at 7:58 PM
 To: truidab.psych@gmail.com



Dear Truida,

We are very pleased to provide permission to use the VIA Surveys in your research project, thereby expanding the knowledge base on the VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues. Are you planning to use the VIA Survey in English or a translated version?

Please note if you plan to use a translated version of the VIA Survey in your study: You may check this page on the VIA website to see a list of translations for the VIA Survey <http://www.viacharacter.org/www/The-Survey#nav>. The translations listed with an asterisk () are currently "in development" and cannot be considered validated at this time. If you have questions feel free to contact me.

Since you are using the VIA-72 version of the Survey, please have your subjects go to this address to register and complete it:

<http://www.viame.org/Via72>

Please tell your participants to watch for the field requesting a research code (after completing the survey), and to be certain to enter your code:

UT8166

Use of the code will enable us to compile your data for you into a single Excel spreadsheet. When you want your results, just let me know via e-mail. You may not charge your research subjects any fee for taking the VIA survey. ****Please note that we will not release identifying information (name or email address) for the individuals on the Excel sheet. The report you will receive from the VIA Institute will not include this information with the VIA scores—only age and gender will be included. If you need to identify individual participants you will need to assign them a "Participant ID Code". The "Participant ID Code" field will be immediately after the "Research Code" field. If you do not need to identify individual participants, you may instruct them to leave this field blank.**

We very much want to retain the scientific integrity and reputation of the VIA Survey of Character, and so request that you limit your application and interpretation of results to that which is provided by VIA and otherwise is scientifically based. Here is a link to the VIA Institute's Guidelines for Use and Interpretation:

<http://www.viacharacter.org/www/About-Institute/Guidelines-and-Permission-for-Use>

The VIA Survey, in its entirety, should not be published with your research analysis/dissertation. You may contact ryan@viacharacter.org to learn the appropriate use of the Survey questions.

Finally, in exchange for providing this free service, VIA requests that you share your research results with us. Please do so by e-mailing me a report, which I shall share with the VIA staff.

Again, thank you for your interest in expanding the body of scientific knowledge on character strengths and for including the VIA Survey on Character in your work. We look forward to learning of your results and wish you good luck in conducting your study. Don't hesitate to get in touch if you

Addenda B: Informed Consent and Confidentiality Undertaking

Addendum B1: Informed Consent for Phase 1 and 2

Flourishing beyond borders: Character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being of the accompanying expatriate partner during international relocation.

* Required



Information

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in our research study. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this study and answer a number of questions you might have.

For practical purposes of the proposed study, “she” or “her” will be used as personal pronouns. The researcher’s intent is non-sexist.

The title of the study is: Flourishing beyond borders: Character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being of the accompanying expatriate partner during international relocation.

This study has been approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the North-West University (NWU-00362-16-S1), South Africa, and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Structures (South African Department of Health, 2015). Your participation will be entirely voluntary and you are free to decline participation. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part now.

The main purpose of this study will be to explore the character strengths, resilience and well-being of the accompanying expatriate partner during international relocation. This study will involve the completion of three online questionnaires at a time that is convenient to you. We wish to explore the personal experiences of the accompanying expatriate partner and to eventually propose a peer-reviewed intervention framework to promote the well-being of the accompanying expatriate partner.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to be part of this study because:

- You are a South African citizen who is currently accompanying your life partner on an expatriate assignment in an African country.
- You are living as an expatriate partner in an African country other than South Africa for a minimum period of six months.
- Your life partner is formally deployed on an expatriate assignment for a minimum period of two years.
- You are adequately skilled in English to complete the relevant questionnaires.
- You are not formally employed whilst on an expatriate assignment.

You will NOT be able to take part in this research study if:

- You have either already returned to South Africa or moved on to a new assignment in a country outside the African continent.
- You know or are familiar with the researcher.

What will be expected of me?

- During the first phase of the study you will be expected to complete three online questionnaires consisting of 111 questions in total. This will take you approximately 30-45 minutes to complete.
- During the second phase of the study (approximately six months after the first phase), the researcher will discuss and confirm the results of the questionnaires with a smaller sample group. This sample group will be randomly selected and should you be selected, you will be requested to answer a few semi-structured, open-ended questions. This questionnaire will not take longer than 30 minutes to complete.

It is important to note that the data collection process will take place completely anonymously. A unique participant code will be used to link your email address with the answers you provide. All biographical and other information that can potentially be used to connect you with your data will be removed before we analyse the data. Results of the study may be published, but there will be no disclosure of identities – your anonymity during publication will be ensured.

There will be no direct benefits should you choose to take part in this study. However, you will be equipping researchers, psychologists and counsellors who work with expatriates with greater insight in and a better understanding of the life and reality of the accompanying expatriate partner whilst living in Africa.

The researcher also aims to develop a model and intervention framework to empower future expatriate partners, which will be based on the results of this study.

Should I choose to take part in this study, are there any risks involved and what will be done to prevent possible risks?

Possible risks linked to participation and precautionary measures that will be put in place, are listed below.

Risk #1: Physical exhaustion and/or boredom due to the time spent completing the questionnaires.

Precaution: You will be given enough time to complete the questionnaires, and you will be able to complete them in the comfort of your own home.

Risk #2: Some emotions might surface during and/or after answering the questions.

Precaution: The questions in the questionnaires will emphasize your personal strengths and resilience. The aim of the study will be to ultimately gain insight into the well-being of the accompanying expatriate partner during international relocation in Africa.

Should you experience any upsetting emotions, the researcher will assist you by arranging a Skype consultation with a registered psychologist associated with the Institute for Psychology and Well-being (IPW) at the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, at a convenient time (contact details to follow).

Your Skype address will only be made available to the appointed psychologist.

Risk #3: You might fear that results will be discussed with your partner or the company that he/she is employed by.

Precaution: Data will be dealt with confidentially. Data will only be accessed by the researcher, her supervisors and the Statistical Consultation Service responsible for the data analysis. No personal information will be made public or discussed with employers or any other party and no identities will be made known.

- Should you be willing to participate in phase 2, the researcher has to be able to contact you. You will, therefore, be asked to provide us with your email address. Participants will be assigned a unique code linking their email address with their answers. Only the researcher and her supervisors will have access to these unique codes. Your e-mail address will not be used / distributed for any other purpose than those mentioned above.
- Biographical and other information that can potentially be used to connect you with your data will be removed when the data analysis is done.
- The results of this study may be published, but there will be no disclosure of identities. Anonymity will be ensured during the publication of results.

What will happen with my data?

The data gathered will only be used for this particular study and will be destroyed after a period of five years. During this period the data will be securely kept at the North-West University.

Will I be informed about the results of this research?

No individual feedback will be provided. Once the thesis has been completed, a report containing the following will be sent by email to all of the participants:

- The overall results of our study.
- Supplementary reading in the field of positive psychology and expatriation.
- A link to the scientific publications emanating from this study.

Will I be paid to take part in this study and will I be responsible for any costs related to participation?

You will not be paid to take part in the study. Participation will not involve any costs on your part.

You are more than welcome to contact Truida Botha (flourishing.beyond.borders@gmail.com) or Johan Potgieter (johan.potgieter@nwu.ac.za) if you have any additional questions or concerns. A copy of the informed consent form will be available from any of the above email addresses should you require it. Please do not hesitate in contacting us.

You can also contact the Health Research Ethics Committee via Prof. Minrie Greeff (Minrie.Greeff@nwu.ac.za) should you have any concerns or complaints.

Declaration by participant

By clicking on the "I AGREE" button at the end of this document, your consent to the following is implied:

I declare that:

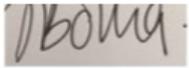
- I have read this information and understand the content of this document.
- I have been given the means and opportunity to ask additional questions, and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary and I have not been pressured into doing so.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time, and will not suffer any negative consequences if I decide to do so.

Declaration by researcher

I, Truida Botha, declare that I have included all the required information regarding the proposed study in this document.

I declare that:

- I encouraged the participant to ask questions and email addresses were provided if the participant has additional questions or concerns.
- Informed consent was obtained by an independent person.
- I am satisfied that once the participant has read the informed consent form, she will adequately understand all the aspects of the study.
- I am satisfied that the participant had time to discuss the content of this document with others if she wished to do so.



Signature of researcher
Mrs Truida Botha



Signature of principal investigator
Prof. Johan C. Potgieter

Do you agree? *

I agree

 Page 1 of 7

NEXT

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google. Report Abuse - Terms of Service - Additional Terms

Google Forms

Addendum B2: Initial e-mail to practitioners

2 July 2019

Dear Colleague,

I trust that this email finds you well. I am currently busy with a PhD in Psychology under the study guidance of Prof Johan Potgieter and Prof Karel Botha at the North-West University, Potchefstroom campus.

The title of the study is:

'Flourishing beyond borders: Character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being of the accompanying expatriate partner in Africa.'

In the study thus far we explored the character strengths, levels of resilience and well-being of 110 participants living in 17 different African countries. Result were used to construct a model that broadens our understanding of the subjective experiences of South African accompanying expatriate partners living in Africa. At this point in time, we are busy with the final phase of the study for which we will need the expert opinion of psychologists who work / have worked with individuals and families considering taking on an expatriate assignment.

During this final phase we want to ask you (in your capacity as Psychologist) to provide us with your thoughts and comments on a proposed intervention framework that we have developed based on preceding results. The intervention framework will be sent to you, and you will be requested to answer two questions. You can expect to receive the information by the end of July 2019. We kindly ask for your feedback within two weeks after receiving the framework. Please note that you are under no obligation to take part. Should you be willing to assist, your input will be anonymous.

Thank you in advance for considering our request to participate. Your comments will give us valuable information to effectively assist the ever-growing

number of South African families who embark on the adventure of living and working abroad.

Please let us know whether you will be willing to participate.

We look forward to your response.

Kind regards,

Mrs Truida Botha, Prof Johan Potgieter and Prof Karel Botha

Addendum B3: Informed Consent for Phase 3

‘Flourishing beyond borders: Character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being of the accompanying expatriate partner in Africa.’

Mrs Truida Botha (PhD candidate), Prof Johan Potgieter (Promoter), Prof Karel Botha (Co-promoter)

Department of Psychology, North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus

31 July 2019

Dear Colleague,

Thank you once again for your willingness to participate in the final part of our study. As psychologists we have an important role to play in assisting our clients to achieve what they dream of achieving, especially in the face of change and/or adversity. As you already know, we are doing research on a very specific group of individuals, facing very specific challenges. Your expert opinion will assist tremendously in the successful achievement of our ultimate goal, which is to optimise strategies to support individuals who embark on expatriate assignments with their life partners.

Having been an accompanying expatriate spouse (AEP) myself, I have learnt that although everyone's experiences might be different, there are certain realities within the process of expatriation that are experienced by all (e.g. leaving your home country, friends and family behind; initial adjustment whilst finding a new routine in the host country; as well as the realization that life abroad is temporary). The AEP's unhappiness abroad and / or failure to adjust in the host country, have been cited as one of the main reasons for failed expatriate assignments. In addition to the personal costs, breaking contract ahead of time leads to multinational companies losing a great deal of money. It is therefore unfortunate that neither the AEP's mental health, nor psychological support and guidance regarding the process of expatriation, has been given the necessary research attention. In an effort to facilitate AEPs' successful

adjustment and overall well-being whilst abroad, we would like to draw from your experience and expertise.

What follows is a **short summary** of what has been done so far:

Phase 1: We explored the character strengths, levels of resilience and well-being of 110 AEP's living in 17 different African countries. Results were used to construct a model indicating the associations between these constructs.

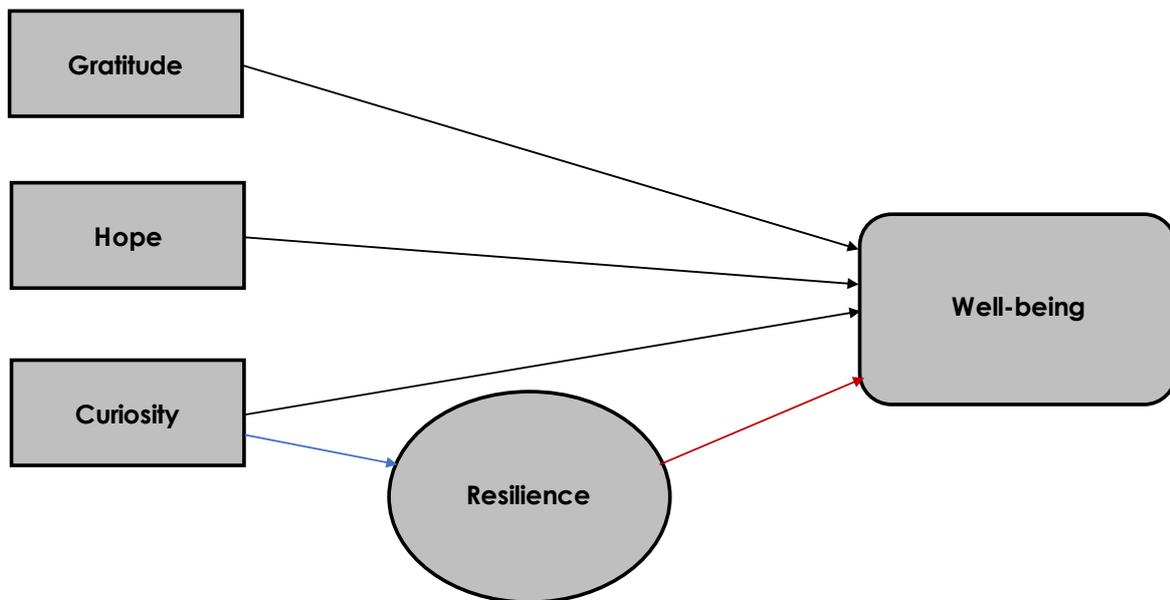


Phase 2: We presented the model to a smaller sample group of AEPs, all of whom also took part in phase 1. The aim of this part of this part of the study was to broaden and enrich our understanding of the subjective experiences of this group of South African AEPs living in Africa.



Phase 3 (Current and final phase): During this final phase we want to ask you (in your capacity as Psychologist) to provide us with your thoughts and comments on the proposed model that could potentially be used as an intervention framework when working with prospective or current AEPs. We realize that there is no 'one size fits all' approach, as people come from different backgrounds, find themselves in different contexts, and present with different personalities, all of which may affect the way in which they deal with challenges and/or major life events. However, we are optimistic that the model presented below represents aspects and experiences shared by the majority of the participants in our study. This creates the possibility for an intervention that could assist AEPs to successfully adapt to their new environment.

The results from phase 1 indicated that there were strong associations between strengths of **Gratitude, Hope and Curiosity** with both **resilience** and **well-being** in this group of AEPs (graphically indicated below).



When asked about their personal experience regarding the model and its components, AEPs reflected on 5 main aspects:

1. **How they deal with change:** This includes initial adjustment in the host country; missing “home”, family, friends and all things familiar; as well as personal identity, seeing that most AEP’s worked full-time before relocating to the host country.
 e.g. *“The initial adjustment was the hardest”*
 “I am now the dreaded trailing spouse...with no purpose”
2. **Spirit of inquiry:** This includes AEP’s sense of adventure; experiencing new things in the host country; and their love to travel.
 e.g. *“I love to experience new things and see different countries”*

3. **Personal growth:** This includes resilience, grit, perseverance and the overall feeling of empowerment as a result of being an AEP.

e.g. *“I am much stronger and wiser today”*

“This experience has shown that I am tough...and if I can make it through this, I can make it through anything life throws my way”

4. **Sense of belonging:** This refers to AEP's desire to be part of something bigger and sharing their stories with others. It furthermore includes the need to feel spiritually connected and “belonging” to God.

e.g. *“We are all in the same boat”*

“I can do all things through Him who gives me strength”

5. **The emotional cost of well-being:** This refers to the ‘hindering’ effect of strengths – When it takes too much energy to feel in control of their life abroad.

e.g. *“On an intellectual level I know that I am supposed to feel grateful about this experience. But I just don't”*

“I find it hard to put myself out there”

“It is a real effort to feel well when things are tough”

With this information in mind, we would like you to indicate your willingness to consent to the following:

1. I am willing to participate in this study by providing the researcher with my reflections on the two questions set out below.
2. I agree to maintain confidentiality with regard to the findings of the previous phases of the study as indicated above.
3. I agree to the researcher using my reflections as data and that understand that all responses will be anonymized.

Signed

Date

You are welcome to type as much as you want, but please don't hesitate to elaborate as much as you can. You are reminded that all responses are anonymous and that there are no right or wrong answers. **Please ensure that you save the document before you e-mail it back to us.**

Thank you for taking the time to participate!

Kind regards

Truida Botha and the research team

1. In your opinion and with your expertise, what might be possible explanations (or motivation) for Gratitude, Curiosity and Hope to be the three strengths that correlated positively with the resilience and well-being, specifically bearing in mind the challenges faced by AEPs?
2. If approached by an AEP/family about to embark on an expatriate assignment, how would you therapeutically address the enhancement of these character strengths, and ultimately the resilience and well-being of AEPs? Please do not hesitate to be very practical in your reflections.

Addendum B4: Confidentiality Undertaking by external code reviewer



CONFIDENTIALITY UNDERTAKING

entered into between:

I, the undersigned

Prof / Dr / Mr / Ms Dr Carlien Kahl

Identity Number: 8307040112089

Address: 126 Kamp Street, Potchefstroom

hereby undertake in favor of the **NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY**, a public higher education institution established in terms of the Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997

Address: Office of the Institutional Registrar, Building C1, 53 Borchard Street, Potchefstroom, 2520

(hereinafter the "NWU")

1 Interpretation and definitions

1.1 In this undertaking, unless inconsistent with, or otherwise indicated by the context:

1.1.1 "Confidential Information" shall include all information that is confidential in its nature or marked as confidential and shall include any existing and new information obtained by me after the Commencement Date, including but not be limited in its interpretation to, research data, information concerning research participants, all secret knowledge, technical information and specifications, manufacturing techniques, designs, diagrams, instruction manuals, blueprints, electronic artwork, samples, devices, demonstrations, formulae, know-how, intellectual property, information concerning materials, marketing and business information generally, financial information that may include remuneration detail, pay slips, information relating to human capital and employment contract, employment conditions, ledgers, income and expenditures and other materials of whatever description in which the NWU has an interest in being kept confidential; and

1.1.2 "Commencement Date" means the date of signature of this undertaking by myself.

1.2 The headings of clauses are intended for convenience only and shall not affect the interpretation of this undertaking.

2 Preamble

2.1 In performing certain duties requested by the NWU, I will have access to certain Confidential Information provided by the NWU in order to perform the said duties and I agree that it must be kept confidential.

2.2 The NWU has agreed to disclose certain of this Confidential Information and other information to me subject to me agreeing to the terms of confidentiality set out herein.

3 Title to the Confidential Information

I hereby acknowledge that all right, title and interest in and to the Confidential Information vests in the NWU and that I will have no claim of any nature in and to the Confidential Information.

4 Period of confidentiality

The provisions of this undertaking shall begin on the Commencement Date and remain in force indefinitely.

5 Non-disclosure and undertakings

I undertake:

5.1 to maintain the confidentiality of any Confidential Information to which I shall be allowed access by the NWU, whether before or after the Commencement Date of this undertaking. I will not divulge or permit to be divulged to any person any aspect of such Confidential Information otherwise than may be allowed in terms of this undertaking;

5.2 to take all such steps as may be necessary to prevent the Confidential Information falling into the hands of an unauthorised third party;

5.3 not to make use of any of the Confidential Information in the development, manufacture, marketing and/or sale of any goods;

5.4 not to use any research data for publication purposes;

5.5 not to use or disclose or attempt to use or disclose the Confidential Information for any purpose other than performing research purposes only and includes questionnaires, interviews with participants, data gathering, data analysis and personal information of participants/research subjects;

5.6 not to use or attempt to use the Confidential Information in any manner which will cause or be likely to cause injury or loss to a research participant or the NWU; and

5.7 that all documentation furnished to me by the NWU pursuant to this undertaking will remain the property of the NWU and upon the request of the NWU will be returned to the NWU. I shall not make copies of any such documentation without the prior written consent of the NWU.

6 Exception

The above undertakings by myself shall not apply to Confidential Information which I am compelled to disclose in terms of a court order.

7 Jurisdiction

This undertaking shall be governed by South African law be subject to the jurisdiction of South African courts in respect of any dispute flowing from this undertaking.

8 Whole agreement

8.1 This document constitutes the whole of this undertaking to the exclusion of all else.

8.2 No amendment, alteration, addition, variation or consensual cancellation of this undertaking will be valid unless in writing and signed by me and the NWU.

Dated at Potchefstroom this 3 May 2019

Witnesses:

1 Bona.
.....
2 [Signature]
.....
(Signatures of witnesses)

[Signature]
.....
(Signature)

Addenda C: Data collection

Addendum C1: E-flyer

FLOURISHING BEYOND BORDERS!

Are you a South African expatriate partner living in Africa?

You are invited to take part in a study exploring the character strengths, resilience and well-being of accompanying expatriate partners during international relocation.

You will be eligible to participate in the study if you are currently accompanying your partner on an expatriate work assignment in Africa, and are not formally employed yourself.

A couple of minutes of your time could help us make a real difference to the well-being of expats living in Africa. Please visit the following website if you are willing to participate.

Kindly forward this invitation to any person you might know, and who fits these inclusion criteria. Click below.
<https://goo.gl/forms/5jMpu6ch30mcDer2>

 NWU

Addendum C2: Qualitative questionnaire for Phase 2

Flourishing beyond borders: A qualitative validation of a model based on the character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being of the accompanying expatriate partner.

* Required



Demographic questionnaire

The following information is needed to link your anonymous ID with the results gained in phase 1. Please complete the following:

Year of birth (YY) *

Month of birth (MM) *

Day of birth (DD) *

First letter of your surname *

A note from the researchers:

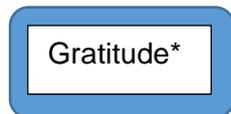
Dear accompanying expatriate partner,

You have received the link to these questions because you indicated on the initial document that you would be interested in taking part in phase 2 of this PhD study. During the 1st phase of the study, we measured your character strengths, resilience and well-being and ultimately constructed a model based on the group's results. THANK YOU FOR YOUR VALUABLE INPUT THUS FAR!

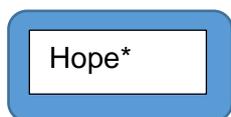
During the 2nd phase we are particularly interested in your personal experience as an expat partner. More specifically, we would like to know how you experience the relationship between your character strengths, resilience and well-being in your day-to-day reality whilst living abroad?

Before we present you with a couple of questions, we want to provide you with short definitions for all the concepts.

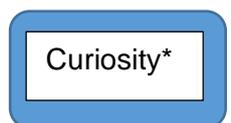
Definitions:



Being thankful for the good things that happen and taking time to express thanks. Feeling blessed and not taking anything for granted.



Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it.



Taking an interest in ongoing experiencing, exploring and discovering.



The ability to get up after a setback. To carry on, despite challenges along the way, and even grow from these challenges.



Well-being refers to your mental health, and overall "happiness". Feeling good and functioning well.

Questions:

Please note: There are no right or wrong answers. We would appreciate open and honest responses in an effort to gain a better understanding with regards to the personal experiences of the accompanying expatriate partner.

1. What gives you the most meaning in your life?
2. As you look over your life, what would you say are your biggest strengths?
3. Tell me about your well-being as an accompanying expatriate partner (AEP).
- 4.1. How do you experience Gratitude in your life as an AEP?
- 4.2. How do you express Gratitude?
- 4.3. How does Gratitude relate to your well-being?
- 5.1. How do you experience Hope in your life as an AEP?
- 5.2. How do you express Hope?
- 5.3. How does Hope relate to your well-being?
- 6.1. How do you experience Curiosity in your life as an AEP?
- 6.2. How do you express Curiosity?
- 6.3. How does Curiosity relate to your well-being?
7. Do you think that your curiosity plays a part in your resilience as an AEP? If so, how?
8. What role does Gratitude play in your well-being as an AEP?
9. What role does Hope play in your well-being as an AEP?
10. How would you describe the relationship between your levels of resilience and your well-being as an AEP?

Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in phase 2 of our study!

Please note:

- Only the research team (Mrs Truida Botha, Prof Johan Potgieter, Prof Karel Botha and Prof Suria Ellis) will have access to your data.
- Your e-mail address will not be used / distributed for any other purpose than this PhD study.
- The data collection process will take place completely anonymously.
- A unique participant code will be used to link your email address with the answers you provide.
- All biographical and other information that can potentially be used to connect you with your data will be removed before we analyse the data.
- Results of the study may be published, but there will be no disclosure of identities – your anonymity during publication will be ensured.

Best wishes,

The research team

Contact details of the research team:

You are more than welcome to contact Truida Botha (flourishing.beyond.borders@gmail.com), Johan Potgieter (johan.potgieter@nwu.ac.za) or Karel Botha (karel.botha@nwu.ac.za) if you have any additional questions or concerns.

You can also contact the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) via Ms Carolien van Zyl at +27 18 299 1206 or carolien.vanzyl@nwu.ac.za should you have any concerns or complaints.

>>>>SUBMIT

Addendum C3: Qualitative questionnaire for Phase 3

'Flourishing beyond borders: Character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being of the accompanying expatriate partner in Africa.'

Mrs Truida Botha (PhD candidate), Prof Johan Potgieter (Promoter), Prof Karel Botha (Co-promoter)

Department of Psychology, North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus

31 July 2019

Dear Colleague,

Thank you once again for your willingness to participate in the final part of our study. As psychologists we have an important role to play in assisting our clients to achieve what they dream of achieving, especially in the face of change and/or adversity. As you already know, we are doing research on a very specific group of individuals, facing very specific challenges. Your expert opinion will assist tremendously in the successful achievement of our ultimate goal, which is to optimise strategies to support individuals who embark on expatriate assignments with their life partners.

Having been an accompanying expatriate spouse (AEP) myself, I have learnt that although everyone's experiences might be different, there are certain realities within the process of expatriation that are experienced by all (e.g. leaving your home country, friends and family behind; initial adjustment whilst finding a new routine in the host country; as well as the realization that life abroad is temporary). The AEP's unhappiness abroad and / or failure to adjust in the host country, have been cited as one of the main reasons for failed expatriate assignments. In addition to the personal costs, breaking contract ahead of time leads to multinational companies losing a great deal of money. It is therefore unfortunate that neither the AEP's mental health, nor psychological support and guidance regarding the process of expatriation, has been given the necessary research attention. In an effort to facilitate AEPs' successful

adjustment and overall well-being whilst abroad, we would like to draw from your experience and expertise.

What follows is a **short summary** of what has been done so far:



Phase 1: We explored the character strengths, levels of resilience and well-being of 110 AEP's living in 17 different African countries. Results were used to construct a model indicating the associations between these constructs.

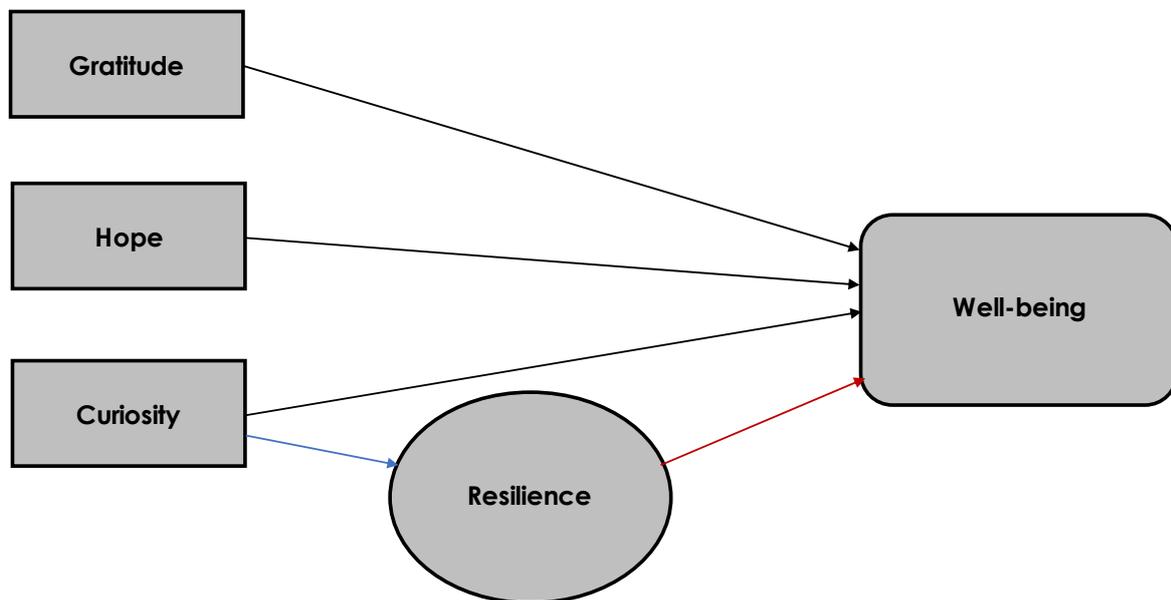


Phase 2: We presented the model to a smaller sample group of AEPs, all of whom also took part in phase 1. The aim of this part of this part of the study was to broaden and enrich our understanding of the subjective experiences of this group of South African AEPs living in Africa.



Phase 3 (Current and final phase): During this final phase we want to ask you (in your capacity as Psychologist) to provide us with your thoughts and comments on the proposed model that could potentially be used as an intervention framework when working with prospective or current AEPs. We realize that there is no 'one size fits all' approach, as people come from different backgrounds, find themselves in different contexts, and present with different personalities, all of which may affect the way in which they deal with challenges and/or major life events. However, we are optimistic that the model presented below represents aspects and experiences shared by the majority of the participants in our study. This creates the possibility for an intervention that could assist AEPs to successfully adapt to their new environment.

The results from phase 1 indicated that there were strong associations between strengths of Gratitude, Hope and Curiosity with both resilience and well-being in this group of AEPs (graphically indicated below).



When asked about their personal experience regarding the model and its components, AEPs reflected on 5 main aspects:

1. How they deal with change: This includes initial adjustment in the host country; missing “home”, family, friends and all things familiar; as well as personal identity, seeing that most AEP’s worked full-time before relocating to the host country.

e.g. “The initial adjustment was the hardest”

“I am now the dreaded trailing spouse...with no purpose”

2. Spirit of inquiry: This includes AEP’s sense of adventure; experiencing new things in the host country; and their love to travel.

e.g. “I love to experience new things and see different countries”

3. Personal growth: This includes resilience, grit, perseverance and the overall feeling of empowerment as a result of being an AEP.

e.g. “I am much stronger and wiser today”

“This experience has shown that I am tough...and if I can make it through this, I can make it through anything life throws my way”

4. Sense of belonging: This refers to AEP's desire to be part of something bigger and sharing their stories with others. It furthermore includes the need to feel spiritually connected and “belonging” to God.

e.g. “We are all in the same boat”

“I can do all things through Him who gives me strength”

5. The emotional cost of well-being: This refers to the ‘hindering’ effect of strengths – When it takes too much energy to feel in control of their life abroad.

e.g. “On an intellectual level I know that I am supposed to feel grateful about this experience. But I just don't”

“I find it hard to put myself out there”

“It is a real effort to feel well when things are tough”

With this information in mind, we would like you to indicate your willingness to consent to the following:

1. I am willing to participate in this study by providing the researcher with my reflections on the two questions set out below.
2. I agree to maintain confidentiality with regard to the findings of the previous phases of the study as indicated above.
3. I agree to the researcher using my reflections as data and that understand that all responses will be anonymized.

Signed

Date

You are welcome to type as much as you want, but please don't hesitate to elaborate as much as you can. You are reminded that all responses are anonymous and that there are no right or wrong answers. Please ensure that you save the document before you email it back to us.

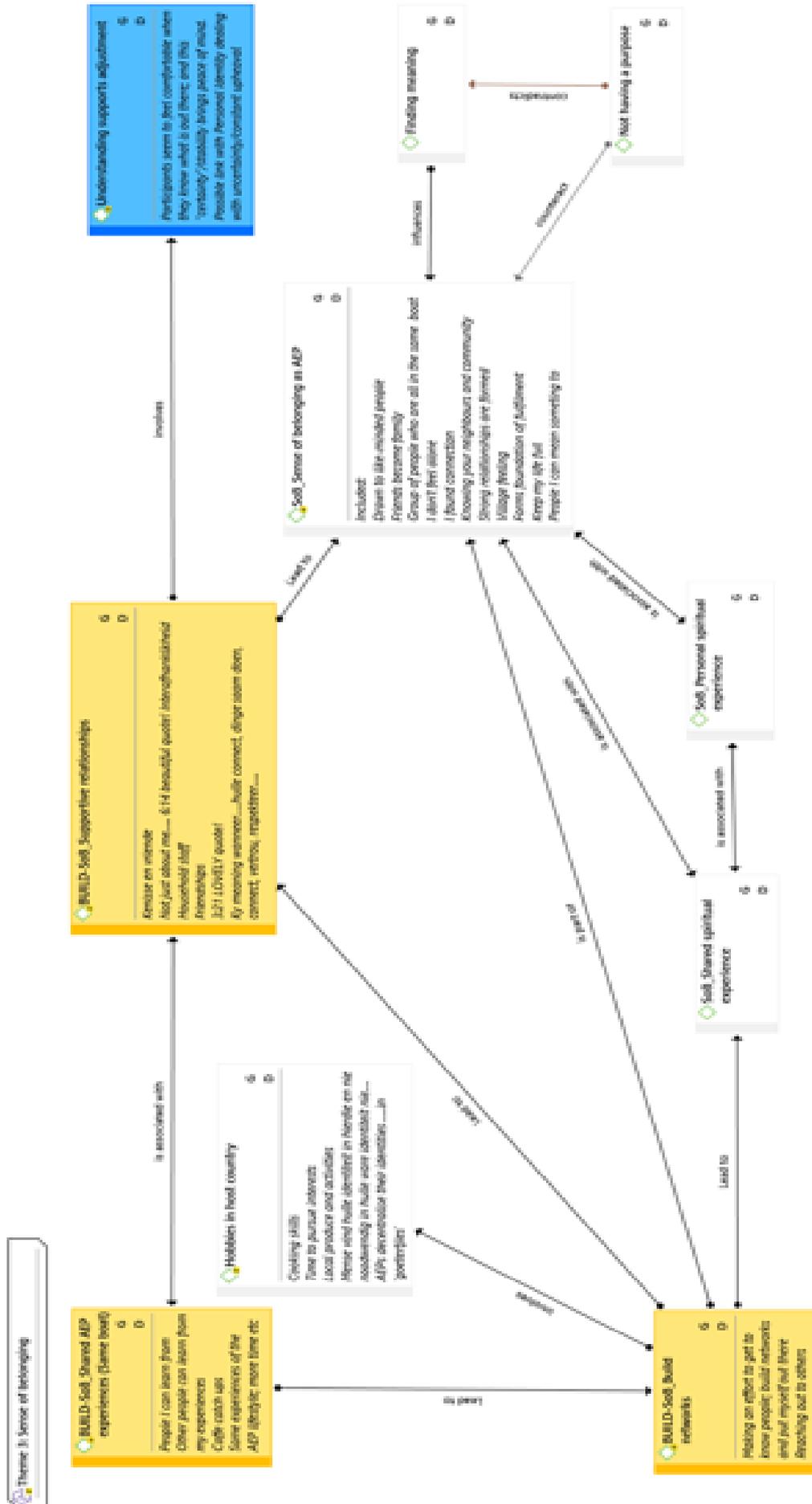
Thank you for taking the time to participate!

Kind regards

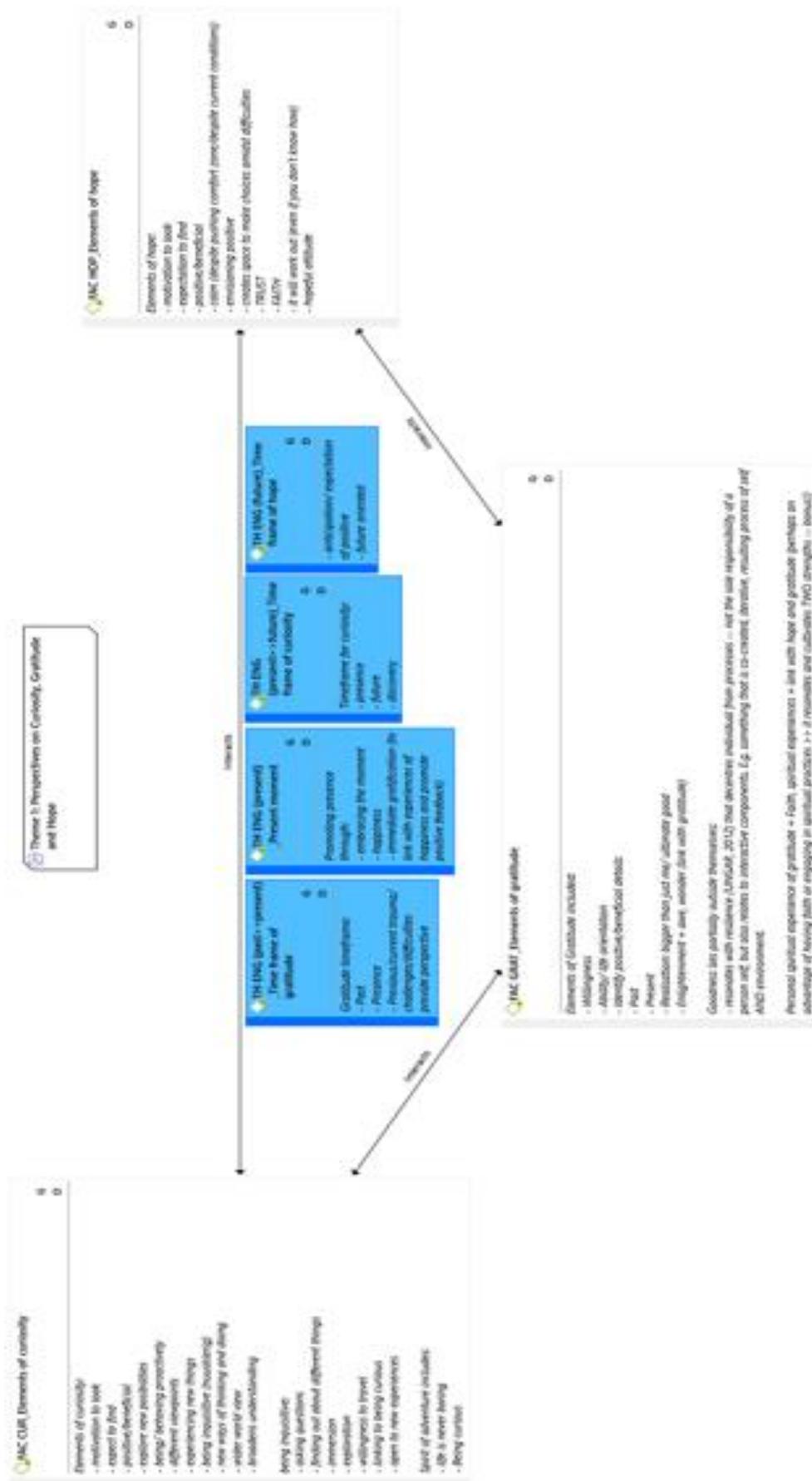
Truida Botha and the research team

1. In your opinion and with your expertise, what might be possible explanations (or motivation) for Gratitude, Curiosity and Hope to be the three strengths that correlated positively with the resilience and well-being, specifically bearing in mind the challenges faced by AEPs?
2. If approached by an AEP/family about to embark on an expatriate assignment, how would you therapeutically address the enhancement of these character strengths, and ultimately the resilience and well-being of AEPs? Please do not hesitate to be very practical in your reflections.

Addenda D: Data Audit Trail Overview



Addendum D2: Network analysis view of the themes in Chapter 4/Article 3



Addenda E: Supplementary documents

Addendum E1: Journal guidelines for submission to SAJP (Article 1)

Instructions to authors

SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHOLOGY

Submission of a manuscript

SAJP is a peer-reviewed journal publishing empirical, theoretical, and review articles on all aspects of psychology. Articles may focus on South African, African, or international issues. Manuscripts to be considered for publication should be e-mailed to sajp@up.ac.za. A covering letter with postal address, e-mail address, and telephone number should be included. The covering letter should indicate that the manuscript has not been published elsewhere and is not under consideration for publication in another journal. An acknowledgement of receipt will be e-mailed to the author (within seven days, if possible) and the manuscript will be sent for review by three independent reviewers. The manuscript number must always be quoted in ALL correspondence to the editor.

Only one article per author will be published per calendar year. Exceptions to this rule will be at the sole discretion of the editor (with the associate editors) in the case of an exceptional article that needs to be published, a special issue where the specific article will make a significant contribution, or a written response to a riposte, etc.

Where authors are invited to revise their manuscripts for re-submission, the editor must be notified (by e-mail) of the author's intention to resubmit and the revised manuscript re-submitted within six weeks. After a longer period, it will be treated as a completely new submission.

Manuscript structure

Manuscripts (including references and tables) should be no longer than 20 pages (5 000 words), and must include the full title of the manuscript, the name(s) of the author(s) and their affiliations, and the name, postal address, and e-mail address of the corresponding author.

An abstract, no longer than 300 words, and an alphabetical list of at least six keywords should be provided. The introduction to the article does not require a heading. Tables and figures, with suitable headings/captions and numbered consecutively, should follow the reference list, with their approximate positions in the text indicated.

The manuscript should be an MS Word document in 12-point Times Roman font with 1.5 line spacing. The American Psychological Association (APA, ver. 5) style guidelines and referencing format should be adhered to.

Short submissions

SAJP invites short reports on any aspect of theory and practice in psychology. We encourage manuscripts which either showcase preliminary findings of research in progress or focus on larger studies. Reports (of no more than 2 500 words) should be presented in a manner that will make the research accessible to our readership.

Language

Manuscripts should be written in English. It is compulsory that manuscripts be accompanied by a declaration that the language has been properly edited, together with the name and address of the person who undertook the language editing.

Ethics

Authors should take great care to spell out the steps taken to facilitate ethical clearance, i.e. how they went about complying with all the ethical issues alluded to in their study, either directly or indirectly, including informed consent and permission to report the findings. If, for example, permission was not obtained from all respondents or participants, the authors should carefully explain why this was not done.

Instructions to authors are available at:

<http://sagepub.com>

Addendum E2: Journal guidelines for submission to JGM (Article 2)

Instructions to authors

JOURNAL OF GLOBAL MOBILITY (JGM)

The following guidelines are to be used to prepare the manuscript before submission:

Format

Article files should be provided in Microsoft Word format. LaTeX files can be used if an accompanying PDF document is provided. PDF as a sole file type is not accepted, a PDF must be accompanied by the source file. Acceptable figure file types are listed further below.

Article length

Articles should be between 5000 and 8000 words in length. This includes all text including references and appendices. Please allow 280 words for each figure or table.

Article title

A title of not more than eight words should be provided.

Author details

All contributing authors' names should be added to the ScholarOne submission, and their names arranged in the correct order for publication.

- Correct email addresses should be supplied for each author in their separate author accounts
- The full name of each author must be present in their author account in the exact format they should appear for publication, including or excluding any middle names or initials as required
- The affiliation of each contributing author should be correct in their individual author account. The affiliation listed should be where they were based at the time that the research for the paper was conducted

Biographies and acknowledgements

Authors who wish to include these items should save them together in an MS Word file to be uploaded with the submission. If they are to be included, a brief professional biography of not more than 100 words should be supplied for each named author.

Research funding

Authors must declare all sources of external research funding in their article and a statement to this effect should appear in the Acknowledgements section. Authors should describe the role of the funder or financial sponsor in the entire research process, from study design to submission.

Structured abstract

Authors must supply a structured abstract in their submission, set out under 4-7 sub-headings:

- Purpose (mandatory)
- Design/methodology/approach (mandatory)
- Findings (mandatory)

- Research limitations/implications (if applicable)
- Practical implications (if applicable)
- Social implications (if applicable)
- Originality/value (mandatory)

Maximum is 250 words in total (including keywords and article classification, see below).

Authors should avoid the use of personal pronouns within the structured abstract and body of the paper (e.g. "this paper investigates..." is correct, "I investigate..." is incorrect).

Keywords

Authors should provide appropriate and short keywords in the ScholarOne submission that encapsulate the principal topics of the paper. The maximum number of keywords is 12.

Whilst Emerald will endeavour to use submitted keywords in the published version, all keywords are subject to approval by Emerald's in house editorial team and may be replaced by a matching term to ensure consistency.

Article classification

Authors must categorize their paper as part of the ScholarOne submission process. The category which most closely describes their paper should be selected from the list below.

Research paper. This category covers papers which report on any type of research undertaken by the author(s). The research may involve the construction or testing of a model or framework, action research, testing of data, market research or surveys, empirical, scientific or clinical research.

Viewpoint. Any paper, where content is dependent on the author's opinion and interpretation, should be included in this category; this also includes journalistic pieces.

Technical paper. Describes and evaluates technical products, processes or services.

Conceptual paper. These papers will not be based on research but will develop hypotheses. The papers are likely to be discursive and will cover philosophical discussions and comparative studies of others' work and thinking.

Case study. Case studies describe actual interventions or experiences within organizations. They may well be subjective and will not generally report on research. A description of a legal case or a hypothetical case study used as a teaching exercise would also fit into this category.

Literature review. It is expected that all types of paper cite any relevant literature so this category should only be used if the main purpose of the paper is to annotate and/or critique the literature in a particular subject area. It may be a selective bibliography providing advice on information sources or it may be comprehensive in that the paper's aim is to cover the main contributors to the development of a topic and explore their different views.

General review. This category covers those papers which provide an overview or historical examination of some concept, technique or phenomenon. The papers are likely to be more descriptive or instructional ("how to" papers) than discursive.

Headings

Headings must be concise, with a clear indication of the distinction between the hierarchy of headings.

The preferred format is for first level headings to be presented in bold format and subsequent sub-headings to be presented in medium italics.

Notes/Endnotes

Notes or Endnotes should be used only if absolutely necessary and must be identified in the text by consecutive numbers, enclosed in square brackets and listed at the end of the article.

Figures

All Figures (charts, diagrams, line drawings, web pages/screenshots, and photographic images) should be submitted in electronic form. All Figures should be of high quality, legible and numbered consecutively with arabic numerals. Graphics may be supplied in colour to facilitate their appearance on the online database.

- Figures created in MS Word, MS PowerPoint, MS Excel, Illustrator should be supplied in their native formats. Electronic figures created in other applications should be copied from the origination software and pasted into a blank MS Word document or saved and imported into an MS Word document or alternatively create a .pdf file from the origination software.
- Figures which cannot be supplied as above are acceptable in the standard image formats which are: .pdf, .ai, and .eps. If you are unable to supply graphics in these formats then please ensure they are .tif, .jpeg, or .bmp at a resolution of at least 300dpi and at least 10cm wide.
- To prepare web pages/screenshots simultaneously press the "Alt" and "Print screen" keys on the keyboard, open a blank Microsoft Word document and simultaneously press "Ctrl" and "V" to paste the image. (Capture all the contents/windows on the computer screen to paste into MS Word, by simultaneously pressing "Ctrl" and "Print screen".)

Photographic images should be submitted electronically and of high quality. They should be saved as .tif or .jpeg files at a resolution of at least 300dpi and at least 10cm wide. Digital camera settings should be set at the highest resolution/quality possible.

Tables

Tables should be typed and included in a separate file to the main body of the article. The position of each table should be clearly labelled in the body text of article with corresponding labels being clearly shown in the separate file.

Ensure that any superscripts or asterisks are shown next to the relevant items and have corresponding explanations displayed as footnotes to the table, figure or plate.

References

References to other publications must be in **Harvard** style and carefully checked for completeness, accuracy and consistency. This is very important in an electronic environment because it enables your readers to exploit the Reference Linking facility on the database and link back to the works you have cited through CrossRef.

You should cite publications in the text: (Adams, 2006) using the first named author's name or (Adams and Brown, 2006) citing both names of two, or (Adams *et al.*, 2006), when there are three or more authors. At the end of the paper a reference list in alphabetical order should be supplied:

For books

Surname, Initials (year), *Title of Book*, Publisher, Place of publication.

e.g. Harrow, R. (2005), *No Place to Hide*, Simon & Schuster, New York, NY.

For book chapters

Surname, Initials (year), "Chapter title", Editor's Surname, Initials, *Title of Book*, Publisher, Place of publication, pages.

e.g. Calabrese, F.A. (2005), "The early pathways: theory to practice – a continuum", in Stankosky, M. (Ed.), *Creating the Discipline of Knowledge Management*, Elsevier, New York, NY, pp. 15-20.

For journals

Surname, Initials (year), "Title of article", *Journal Name*, volume issue, pages.

e.g. Capizzi, M.T. and Ferguson, R. (2005), "Loyalty trends for the twenty-first century", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 72-80.

For published conference proceedings

Surname, Initials (year of publication), "Title of paper", in Surname, Initials (Ed.), *Title of published proceeding which may include place and date(s) held*, Publisher, Place of publication, Page numbers.

e.g. Jakkilinki, R., Georgievski, M. and Sharda, N. (2007), "Connecting destinations with an ontology-based e-tourism planner", in *Information and communication technologies in tourism 2007 proceedings of the international conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2007*, Springer-Verlag, Vienna, pp. 12-32.

For unpublished conference proceedings

Surname, Initials (year), "Title of paper", paper presented at Name of Conference, date of conference, place of conference, available at: URL if freely available on the internet (accessed date).

e.g. Aumueller, D. (2005), "Semantic authoring and retrieval within a wiki", paper presented at the European Semantic Web Conference (ESWC), 29 May-1 June, Heraklion, Crete, available at: <http://dbs.uni-leipzig.de/file/aumueller05wiksar.pdf> (accessed 20 February 2007).

For working papers

Surname, Initials (year), "Title of article", working paper [number if available], Institution or organization, Place of organization, date.

e.g. Moizer, P. (2003), "How published academic research can inform policy decisions: the case of mandatory rotation of audit appointments", working paper, Leeds University Business School, University of Leeds, Leeds, 28 March.

For encyclopedia entries (with no author or editor)

Title of Encyclopedia (year) "Title of entry", volume, edition, Title of Encyclopedia, Publisher, Place of publication, pages.

e.g. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1926) "Psychology of culture contact", Vol. 1, 13th ed., Encyclopaedia Britannica, London and New York, NY, pp. 765-71.

(For authored entries please refer to book chapter guidelines above)

For newspaper articles (authored)

Surname, Initials (year), "Article title", *Newspaper*, date, pages.

e.g. Smith, A. (2008), "Money for old rope", *Daily News*, 21 January, pp. 1, 3-4.

For newspaper articles (non-authored)

Newspaper (year), "Article title", date, pages.

e.g. *Daily News* (2008), "Small change", 2 February, p. 7.

For archival or other unpublished sources

Surname, Initials, (year), "Title of document", Unpublished Manuscript, collection name, inventory record, name of archive, location of archive.

e.g. Litman, S. (1902), "Mechanism & Technique of Commerce", Unpublished Manuscript, Simon Litman Papers, Record series 9/5/29 Box 3, University of Illinois Archives, Urbana-Champaign, IL.

For electronic sources

If available online, the full URL should be supplied at the end of the reference, as well as a date that the resource was accessed.

e.g. Castle, B. (2005), "Introduction to web services for remote portlets", available at: <http://www-128.ibm.com/developerworks/library/ws-wsrp/> (accessed 12 November 2007).

Standalone URLs, i.e. without an author or date, should be included either within parentheses within the main text, or preferably set as a note (roman numeral within square brackets within text followed by the full URL address at the end of the paper).

For data

Surname, Initials (year), *Title of Data Set*, Name of data repository, available at: Persistent URL

e.g. Campbell, A. and Kahn, R.L. (1999), *American National Election Study, 1948*, ICPSR07218-v3, Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (distributor), Ann Arbor, MI, available at: <http://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR07218.v3>

Instructions to authors are available at:

<http://www.emeraldgroupublishing.com>

Addendum E3: Journal guidelines for submission to SAJIP (Article 3)

Instructions to authors

SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Qualitative Research full structure

Title

The article's full title should contain a maximum of 95 characters (including spaces).

Abstract

The abstract, written in English, should be no longer than 250 words and must be written in the past tense. The abstract should give a succinct account of the objectives, methods, results and significance of the matter. The structured abstract for a Qualitative Research article should consist of seven paragraphs labelled Orientation, Research purpose, Motivation for the study, Research approach/design and method, Main findings, Practical/managerial implications and Contribution/value-add.

Introduction

Provide the following, each under their own heading.

- Orientation
- Research purpose and objectives
- Literature review

Research design

Provide the following, each under their own heading and subheading.

- Research approach
- Research strategy
- Research method
 - Research setting
 - Entrée and establishing researcher roles
 - Research participants and sampling methods
 - Data collection methods
 - Data recording
 - Strategies employed to ensure data quality and integrity
 - Data analysis
 - Reporting style

Results

The reporting of the results must be clearly linked to the research objectives and research hypotheses. Tables may be used or models (diagrams/figures) may be drafted to indicate key components of the results of the study.

Discussion

Provide the following, each under their own heading.

- Outline of the results
- Practical implications
- Limitations and recommendations

Conclusion

Provide a brief conclusion that summarises the results and their meaning or significance in relation to each objective of the study.

Acknowledgements

Those who contributed to the work but do not meet our authorship criteria should be listed in the Acknowledgments with a description of the contribution. Authors are responsible for ensuring that anyone named in the Acknowledgments agrees to be named. Also provide the following, each under their own heading:

- **Competing interests:** This section should list specific competing interests associated with any of the authors. If authors declare that no competing interests exist, the article will include a statement to this effect: *The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.*
- **Author contributions:** All authors must meet the criteria for authorship as outlined in the **authorship** policy and **author contribution** statement policies.
- **Funding:** Provide information on funding if relevant
- **Disclaimer:** A statement that the views expressed in the submitted article are his or her own and not an official position of the institution or funder.

References

Authors should provide direct references to original research sources whenever possible. References should not be used by authors, editors, or peer reviewers to promote self-interests. Refer to the journal referencing style downloadable on our *Formatting Requirements* page.

Instructions to authors are available at:

<http://www.sajip.co.za>

Addendum E4: Proof of submission to SAJP

From: South African Journal of Psychology onbehalf@manuscriptcentral.com
Subject: South African Journal of Psychology SAP-19-0181
Date: 13 November 2019 at 6:06 PM
To: truidab.psych@gmail.com, johan.potgieter@nwu.ac.za, Suria.Ellis@nwu.ac.za



13-Nov-2019

Dear Mrs. Botha:

Your manuscript entitled "Flourishing beyond borders: The character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being of the South African expatriate partner in Africa" has been successfully submitted online and is presently being given full consideration for publication in South African Journal of Psychology.

Your manuscript ID is SAP-19-0181.

You have listed the following individuals as authors of this manuscript:
 Botha, Truida; Potgieter, Johan; Ellis, Suria

Please mention the above manuscript ID in all future correspondence or when calling the office for questions. If there are any changes in your street address or e-mail address, please log in to ScholarOne Manuscripts at <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/sap> and edit your user information as appropriate.

You can also view the status of your manuscript at any time by checking your Author Center after logging in to <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/sap>.

As part of our commitment to ensuring an ethical, transparent and fair peer review process SAGE is a supporting member of ORCID, the Open Researcher and Contributor ID (<https://orcid.org/>). We encourage all authors and co-authors to use ORCID iDs during the peer review process. If you have not already logged in to your account on this journal's ScholarOne Manuscripts submission site in order to update your account information and provide your ORCID identifier, we recommend that you do so at this time by logging in and editing your account information. In the event that your manuscript is accepted, only ORCID iDs validated within your account prior to acceptance will be considered for publication alongside your name in the published paper as we cannot add ORCID iDs during the Production steps. If you do not already have an ORCID iD you may login to your ScholarOne account to create your unique identifier and automatically add it to your profile.

Thank you for submitting your manuscript to South African Journal of Psychology.

Sincerely,
 Anne Kramers-Olen
 South African Journal of Psychology
sajp@psyssa.co.za

Addendum E5: Proof of submission to JGM

From: **Journal of Global Mobility** onbehalf@manuscriptcentral.com
 Subject: **Journal of Global Mobility - JGM-11-2019-0053**
 Date: **14 November 2019 at 2:56 PM**
 To: truidab.psych@gmail.com



14-Nov-2019

Dear Mrs. Mrs. Truida Botha,

Your manuscript entitled "Flourishing beyond borders: A qualitative exploration of accompanying expatriate partners' character strengths, resilience and self-perceived well-being" has been successfully submitted online and is presently being given full consideration for publication in the Journal of Global Mobility.

Your manuscript ID is JGM-11-2019-0053.

Please mention the above manuscript ID in all future correspondence or when calling the office for questions. If there are any changes in your street address or e-mail address, please log in to ScholarOne Manuscripts at <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jgmob> and edit your user information as appropriate.

You can also view the status of your manuscript at any time by checking your Author Centre after logging in to <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jgmob>.

Please note that Emerald requires you to clear permission to re-use any material not created by you. If there are permissions outstanding, please upload these when you submit your revision or send directly to Emerald if your paper is accepted immediately. Emerald is unable to publish your paper with permissions outstanding.

Open Access?

All of our subscription journals give you the option of publishing your article open access, following payment of an article processing charge (APC). To find the APC for your journal, please refer to the APC price list: http://www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/openaccess/apc_price_list.pdf

Emerald has established partnerships with national consortium bodies to offer a number of APC vouchers for eligible regions and institutions. To check your eligibility please refer to the open access partnerships page: <http://www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/openaccess/oapartnerships.htm>

If you would like to publish your article open access please contact openaccess@emeraldgroup.com

Thank you for submitting your manuscript to the Journal of Global Mobility.

Yours sincerely,
 Jan Normann
 Journal of Global Mobility

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8823-4877>