



# Impact of Arabic Language Proficiency (ALP) on Expatriate Adjustment and Job Performance in Saudi Arabia: Role of Personal and Environmental Factors

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between Arabic Language Proficiency (ALP) and expatriate adjustment (EA), and job performance (JP) in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the moderating role of personal and environmental factors is investigated. This investigation employs a mixed-methods research design. The intended audience is the personnel of Saudi Arabia's Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). A survey was conducted for quantitative data, while interviews were used for qualitative data. CFA and SEM were used for quantitative data analysis, while thematic analysis was used for qualitative data analysis. The results of this study indicate that Arabic language proficiency significantly affects job performance and expatriate adaptation. It was also discovered that several personal and environmental factors contribute to the impact, including language barriers, the workplace environment, training, and support. This study is novel because it examines the effects of ALP on EA and JP in Saudi Arabia, in addition to personal and environmental factors; no prior study of this nature has been conducted in Saudi Arabia. The study is limited to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs); thus, its generalizability is restricted. The study is significant for Saudi Arabia's Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) because it emphasizes the significance of training and support, which would aid in adapting foreign employees, and enhancing their job performance.

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**Keywords:** Arabic Language Proficiency (APL), Personal Factors, Environmental Factors, Expatriate Adjustment, Saudi Arabia.

## 1. Introduction

Arabic has approximately 420 million linguists worldwide and 290 million native speakers, making it the fifth-largest language family on the planet (Superprof, 2022). To be proficient in Arabic, one must be able to comprehend the Arabic language and its culture and values. Those who speak Arabic fluently can conduct business and adhere to the language's numerous norms. Employers are beginning to recognize the benefits of employing multilingual employees, which has resulted in a significant increase in the demand for multilingual personnel (Oluwaniyi, 2023). Globalization encourages most nations to

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accept expatriates to meet their need for qualified and skilled labor. Most businesses must relocate their personnel to other countries while maintaining the quality of their goods and services (Dousin & Sulong, 2022). Work-related standards, loneliness, accommodation, education, variations in medical care, customs, languages, sex roles, the cost of living, meals, and homesickness are some challenges expatriates face.

Strong correlations exist between job satisfaction and organizational factors such as improved working conditions, employee wellness, and increased productivity (Chalghaf et al., 2019). Language learning in the workplace is gaining popularity as businesses across all industries recognize the financial benefits of recruiting multilingual employees. Employees who maintain cultural awareness throughout business negotiations are more likely to foster amicable and productive relationships. Learning a new language improves memory and focus, increasing employee productivity (Verbling, 2018). Companies with multilingual employees have reported positive effects in various areas, including an improved image in regional and international markets. The positive impact of language proficiency extends to employees, who perform better, feel more confident, and are more committed to their jobs (Forbes, 2017).

Despite the increasing quantity of research in this field, many unanswered questions remain regarding what influences foreigners' ability to adapt to a new culture. Although language difficulties are a prevalent issue for expatriates in their new countries, few studies have examined how proficiency in the host country's language affects their capacity for cultural adaptation. Numerous studies have examined the efficacy of cross-cultural training to enhance expatriates' adapting and job performance; however, few studies have specifically examined Western expatriates' adaptation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Dousin & Sulong, 2022).

Saudi Arabia is committed to utilizing its natural resources and developing an oil-independent economy. This will be accomplished by demonstrating the critical role of language in developing technological advancements, the nation's cultural assets, and the training of highly qualified workers (Alzahrani, 2017). This study aims to provide a quantitative evaluation of the impact of ALP on expatriate adjustment and work performance in Saudi Arabia, focusing on identifying personal and contextual variables that may moderate this association. The objectives of the present investigation are as follows.

1. To assess the impact of Arabic Language Proficiency (ALP) on expatriate adjustment among Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in Saudi Arabia
2. To assess the impact of Arabic Language Proficiency (ALP) on the job performance of expatriates in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in Saudi Arabia
3. To evaluate the moderating effect of personal factors on the association between ALP, expatriate adjustment, and job performance among Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in Saudi Arabia
4. To evaluate the moderating effect of environmental factors on the association between ALP, expatriate adjustment, and job performance among Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in Saudi Arabia

The research will also provide suggestions for strengthening ALP and increasing the success of expatriates in the country. The study would give helpful recommendations for increasing ALP among foreign residents in Saudi Arabia, which could improve their work performance and integration into the host country.

## 2. Definition of key terms

### 2.1 Language Proficiency

Language proficiency refers to a foreign national's degree of ease or control in a host country's language where they might be employed or traveling for leisure purposes (Selmer & Lauring, 2015).

### 2.2 Expatriate Adjustment

The expatriate adjustment refers to how expatriates can integrate into their lives in the host location. The adjustment or ability to "fit in" is characterized by the expatriate's difficulty managing routine activities (Selmer & Lauring, 2015).

### 2.3 Environmental Factors

Environmental factors mainly refer to the culture and our interaction with the social space or where we live or work. However, in the present study, environmental factors related to the work environment are defined as the elements comprising where an individual might be employed. These mainly include the freedom of expression, behaviors of peers and superiors, and other allowances, such as the ability to express creativity (Aronsson et al., 2017).

## 2.4 Personal Factors

Personality refers to distinctive features, traits, and patterns that distinguish one person's emotional, behavioral, and cognitive responses through a unique interaction style with the social and physical environment (Rubinstein, 2005). In the context of the present study, the personal factors can relate to the expatriates' skills or personalities, including their cultural values, job roles, and level of employment (Lauring, Selmer, & Kubovcikova, 2019).

## 2.5 Job Performance

Job performance refers to the accumulation of employee output or behaviors that have an expected positive value to the organization. Job performance can be contextual, task, and counterproductivity (Chernyshenko & Stark, 2005).

# 3. Literature Review

## 3.1 Arabic Language Proficiency and Expatriate Adjustment

It is necessary to speak Arabic to effectively communicate with natives in Saudi Arabia, where most of the population speaks Arabic. Those fluent in Arabic and with a strong language command are most likely to experience a smoother transition in Saudi Arabia (Thomas & Thomas, 2022). These expatriates may be better equipped to develop relationships with Saudi Arabians, navigate various social situations, and understand the cultural nuances of the region. In contrast, expatriates who are not proficient in Arabic or have a low command of it may struggle or abandon the country (Fenech, Baguant, & Abdelwahed, 2022). Consequently, they may encounter many challenges and obstacles when attempting to comprehend the country's cultural norms. In addition, they experience communication difficulties due to their inability to acclimate to Saudi Arabian culture (Andresen, Brewster, & Suutari, 2020). These factors inevitably result in isolation, frustration, and culture shock.

Consequently, it has a negative impact on all dimensions, including job performance and well-being. Regarding expatriate adaptation in Saudi Arabia, Arabic language proficiency has been shown to have a significant effect (Dousin & Sulong, 2022), as expatriates employed by the government in various organizations can be assisted in learning and mastering the Arabic language. This may entail various language-related training programs and opportunities for language immersion (Alshammari, 2020). Companies can promote expatriate adjustment if the government invests in various language proficiency initiatives to assist their employees in achieving success in multiple sectors of the country. Consequently, the evidence supports the hypothesis that:

**H1:** *There exists an association between Arabic Language Proficiency and Expatriate Adjustment.*

## 3.2 Arabic Language Proficiency and Job Performance

Arabic language proficiency is required for communication and interaction with Saudi Arabians. It has been observed that expatriates with a high level of Arabic language proficiency can better interact with their customers and co-workers to navigate cultural and social situations (Christie & Conger). Furthermore, expatriates with a high level of Arabic language proficiency tend to receive more opportunities and job roles in Saudi Arabia. Additionally, these expatriates are better equipped to understand the local business market and practices, allowing them to develop relationships with Saudi students and workers (Dousin & Sulong, 2022). Numerous researchers assert that these dimensions contribute to job performance and higher levels. Furthermore, expatriates with a limited command of Arabic may find it difficult to execute their jobs efficiently and effectively. They struggle to communicate and interact with consumers and co-workers (Kumar, Pandey, & Mukherjee, 2022). They frequently encounter delays, adders, and misunderstandings in their daily tasks. In addition, their ability to interact with and develop relationships with local suppliers and partners is severely hindered by their inability to fully comprehend Saudi Arabia's cultural norms and business practices (Uddin, Hussin, & Ab Rahman, 2020). However, it has been observed that organizations and the country's government consider measures and take steps to aid them in learning and developing the language's fundamentals (Jochems, 2019). This positively impacts job performance and the organization's various training and coaching programs. Consequently, the evidence supports the hypothesis that:

**H2:** *There exists an association between Arabic Language Proficiency and Job Performance*

## 3.3 Environmental factors Moderate between Arabic Language Proficiency and Expatriate Adjustment

Before relocating to another state, the expatriate must make adjustments, considering several factors (Alqurashi, 2018). In addition, the expatriate tends to assess the distinctions between their own culture and the host culture to evaluate the availability of various social networks and support offered by the country

(Uddin et al., 2020). An expatriate may not need language skills to navigate a new environment if he works in a city with an established infrastructure and a large expatriate population that can accommodate ex-pats (Al-Shammari & El-Masry, 2017). This could include social organizations or housing schools. Al-Shammari and El-Masry (2017) found that ambient factors moderate the relationship between language proficiency and expatriate adjustment in the state, which numerous researchers supported.

Nevertheless, certain variables may play a role in this regard. As an expatriate living in an environment with a significant cultural gap and without adequate support, language proficiency can significantly influence their ability to flourish in their job role and adapt to the new culture (Little, 2019). Environmental factors, such as organizational support, cultural similarity, and social networks, can moderately influence language proficiency and expatriate assimilation in the state (Alshahrani, 2022). However, its strength and weakness hinge entirely on these dimensions. Consequently, the evidence supports the hypothesis that:

**H3:** *Environment factors moderate the relationship between Arabic Language Proficiency and Expatriate Adjustment.*

### 3.4 Personal Factors Moderate between Arabic Language Proficiency and Job Performance

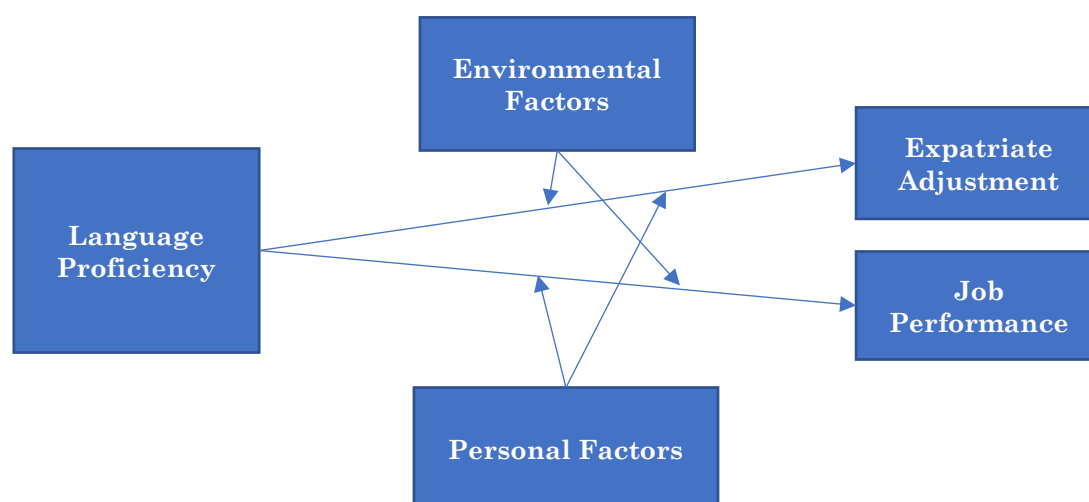
There is a correlation between an employee's personality, motivation, and cognitive abilities and their language proficiency and efficacy on the job. According to one study, employees who invest more effort and time in enhancing and learning a language are more likely to be highly motivated to learn and achieve more (Alshahrani, 2022). This aptitude enables them to accomplish more, positively affecting their job performance. Furthermore, openness to new objects and experiences strengthens the relationship between variables, i.e., "Language Proficiency" and "Job Performance." Those individuals are typically more efficient and effective at their employment and communicate frequently (Dinglasa, 2020). Such individuals are more familiar with carrying on conversations in multiple languages. Besides these characteristics, other significant factors affect the extent to which language proficiency ultimately translates into employment performance (Altheeb, 2020). Working memory, word fluency, and diverse problem-solving skill sets are essential cognitive abilities, and it can be asserted that people who are more adept at applying and grasping various professional and language skills have higher cognitive abilities (Uddin et al., 2020). This contributes to improved job performance (Muhamad, 2022).

Nonetheless, it is important to observe that personal factors can interact in complex ways with language proficiency and job performance. In addition to this, it is also possible that the impact may vary based on job requirements and individual requirements. Consequently, the evidence supports the hypothesis that:

**H4:** *Personal factors moderate the relationship between Arabic Language Proficiency and Job Performance.*

### 3.5 Theoretical Approach

(Ryan & Deci, 2020) The Self-Determination Theory asserts that individuals have psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. This influences their engagement and motivation concerning tasks such as work performance and language acquisition. "Self-Determination Theory" provides support for the literature. Those with a sense of competence, autonomy, and relatedness in their cultural contacts and language tend to be more engaged and motivated in the learning process (Ryan & Deci, 2022). In the context of expatriate assimilation, this results in adaptation and improved language proficiency.



**Figure 1.** *Research Model*

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Collection of Data

This study collected data and analyzed the results using a mixed-methods approach guided by the pragmatic philosophy. To answer research queries, the mixed method combines elements of quantitative and qualitative research (George, 2021). Utilizing quantitative aspects of data collection, the survey instrument is used. The survey technique is utilized effectively because it enables the researcher to collect data from a larger population and, as a result, has efficient statistical power and validated models (Mansourian, 2008). This study collects data from respondents through interviews using a qualitative data acquisition method. The interview method is effective because it enables the researcher to understand respondents' opinions comprehensively.

This study's population consists of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in Saudi Arabia, and data is collected and organized from relevant Higher Educational Institutions' (HEIs) employees. A valid and appropriate questionnaire containing fundamental questions for respondents was developed for quantitative data collection. The literature review of the present study aids in the questionnaire's formulation, and the questionnaire's design consists of two sections: one section pertaining to respondent demographics and the other section containing questions pertinent to the respondent population. The measurement indicators were taken from previous studies, tested for reliability and validity, and then distributed to respondents. Language proficiency was evaluated based on the five items employed by Takeuchi, Yun, and Russell (2002). The gauge was originally designed to assess English language proficiency, but it has since been adapted to Arabic. The work environment was measured using the scale items suggested and utilized by Hanaysha (2016). Originally, there were five items on the scale, but item 5 was eliminated due to low inter-item correlation (loading values). The job performance was evaluated using the scale items developed by Manzoor et al. (2019). Originally, there were five items on the scale, but items four and five were eliminated due to low loading values, which is sometimes the result of small sample sizes (Jung & Lee, 2011). Black (1988) developed eleven items to assess expatriate adjustment. Due to insufficient loading values, however, items 8-11 were removed (Fawcett, Brau, Rhoads, Whitlark, & Fawcett, 2008). Originally, the dimension contained four items, but item 4 was eliminated from the present study due to its low loading value. Table 1 provides additional information regarding the scale of relevant variables.

**Table 1.** Measurement Scales

SR. No	Variable Name	Variable Position	Author	No of the items original in the study	Items used
1	Language proficiency	Independent variable	(Takeuchi et al., 2002)	5	5
2	Expatriate Adjustment	Dependent variable	(Black, 1988)	11	7
3	Job Performance	Dependent variable	Adapted from (Manzoor et al., 2019)	5	3
4	Personal factors	Moderator	(Fawcett et al., 2008)	4	3
5	Environmental Factors	Moderator	Adapted by (Hanaysha, 2016)	5	4

Respondents' responses were calculated using a five-point Likert scale. The final text of the questionnaire was emailed to expatriates working in Saudi Arabia's Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). From the initial response of 200 respondents who completed the questionnaire, 150 effective responses were finalized. The instrument for qualitative data collection was semi-structured interviews. The interview questions comprised eight significant inquiries related to the study's variables. Participants consisted of ten employees of Saudi Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs), and sampling was conducted using a probability sampling technique that randomly selected employees as a sample (McCombes, 2019). Participants are encouraged to provide unrestricted feedback to investigate the phenomenon in depth. The interview guide was emailed to participants the day before the interviews. The interview was conducted via telephone, lasting between 20 and 30 minutes. Every interview was recorded, and a transcription was produced.

### 4.2 Data Analysis

This research employs statistical methods to analyze the collected data. SPSS was used for descriptive statistics, and AMOS was used for inferential statistics in quantitative analysis. SPSS is suitable for this investigation because it facilitates data acquisition and organization. It provides an efficient method for determining whether the study's objectives have been met and provides feedback to aid the researcher's decision-making. In addition, it ensures the adoption of an effective strategy (TMT, 2021). In conclusion, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to evaluate the hypothesis formulated in the literature review section. SEM facilitates the simultaneous use of multiple indicators per construct, resulting in a reliable result at every construct level (Werner & Schermelleh-Engel, 2009).

Thematic analysis, in which the edited version of transcripts is used to analyze data, was used for qualitative research. The NVivo software is used to formulate themes following an effective identification of participant opinions.

## 5. Results and Interpretation

### 5.1 Demographics

The following three graphs illustrate the demographic information of the study's respondents. The first graph depicts 101 male respondents and 99 female respondents. In comparison, the second shows 27 respondents between the ages of 25 and 35, 65 respondents between the ages of 36 to 45, 75 respondents between the ages of 46 to 55, and 33 respondents older than 55. 23 employees have less than two years of experience, 105 employees have between two and five years of experience, 65 employees have between five and eight years of experience, and seven employees have more than eight years of experience.

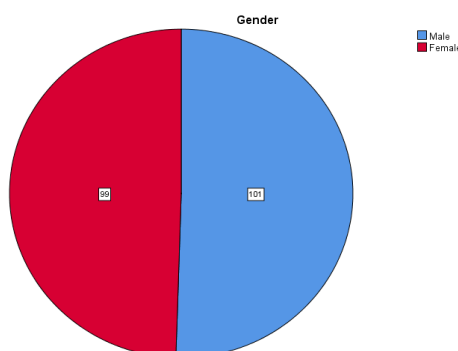


Figure 2. Gender distribution of the sample

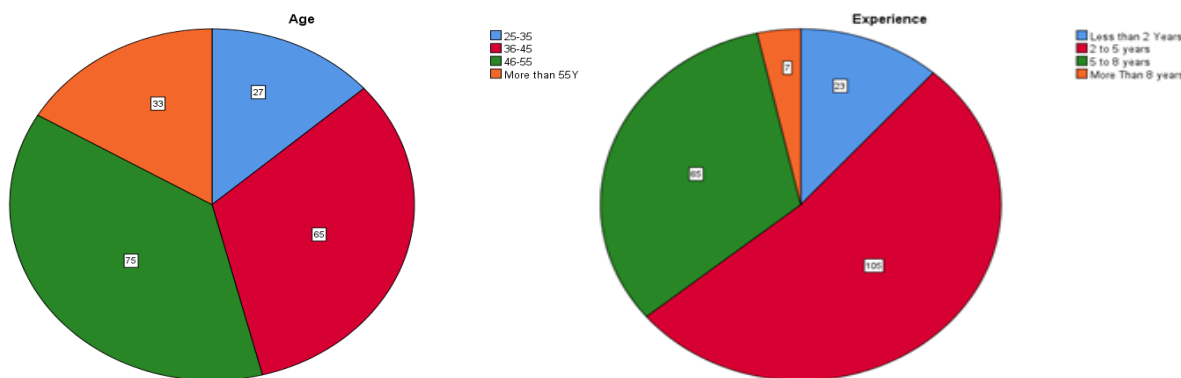


Figure 3. Age and experience of respondents

### 5.2 Descriptive Analysis

The researcher conducted a descriptive analysis of the study using SPSS. The purpose of descriptive analysis is to evaluate summaries, explanations, and descriptions of information about variables (Fisher & Marshall, 2009). Table 2 provides descriptive analysis details for each constructed variable. The table offers each variable's minimum, maximum, standard deviation, and skewness values.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	
		Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error
JP	200	1.00	5.00	3.8367	.94694	-1.198	.172
LP	200	1.20	5.00	3.7980	.92209	-1.052	.172
PERS	200	1.25	5.00	3.7613	.89992	-.844	.172
ENV	200	1.00	5.00	3.5337	.96245	-.362	.172
EA	200	1.00	5.00	3.5100	.97644	-.534	.172
Valid N	200						

“JP= Job Performance, LP= Language Proficiency, PERS= Personal Factors, ENV= Environmental Factors, EA= Expatriate Adjustment.”

### 5.3 KMO and Bartlett's test

The factor loading has been analyzed to check the sustainability of the measurement scales. The researcher has conducted KMO and Bartlett's tests to examine whether an underlying association exists between the items of the measurement scales (Hadi, Abdullah, & Sentosa, 2016). The results of this test are presented in Table 3 below. A value of KMO greater than 0.7 is considered significant (Shrestha, 2021); therefore, it can be seen that the value of this test is significant for the present study.

**Table 3.** KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		
	Approx. Chi-Square	.948
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Df	3180.474
	Sig.	253
		.000

### 5.4 Rotated Component Matrix

After determining the sample's adequacy and suitability, the researcher carried out a rotated component matrix, as shown in Table 4 below. According to Thorndike (1987), factor loading makes sure that there is no duplication in the items of measurement scales. Another critical purpose of this matrix is to ensure that there is no cross-loading of the items of measurement scales of the constructs; for this purpose, all the observed variables are presented in separate columns.

**Table 4.** Rotated Component Matrix

	1	2	3	4	5
<b>JP1</b>	.671				
<b>JP2</b>	.722				
<b>JP3</b>	.712				
<b>LP1</b>		.742			
<b>LP2</b>		.722			
<b>LP3</b>		.718			
<b>LP4</b>		.674			
<b>LP5</b>		.723			
<b>PERS1</b>			.518		
<b>PERS2</b>			.773		
<b>PERS3</b>			.610		
<b>ENV1</b>					.630
<b>ENV2</b>					.642
<b>ENV3</b>					.843
<b>ENV4</b>					.640
<b>EA1</b>				.540	
<b>EA2</b>				.798	
<b>EA3</b>				.582	
<b>EA4</b>				.760	
<b>EA5</b>				.821	
<b>EA6</b>				.525	
<b>EA7</b>				.620	

"JP= Job Performance, LP= Language Proficiency, PERS= Personal Factors, ENV= Environmental Factors, EA= Expatriate Adjustment."

### 5.5 Convergent and discriminant validity

The convergent validity analysis examines how closely the tests that explore the measurement of similar constructs are associated (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). In research, the greater significance is given to convergent validity because it examines if a test measures the concept that it is assigned to measure or not. For measuring the convergent validity, composite reliability and average variance extracted are used (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). The results of the validity are shown in Table 5 below.

**Table 5. Results of validity**

	CR	AVE	MSV	Max R (H)	JOB	LANG	PERSON	EX-PAT	ENVIR
<b>JOB</b>	0.925	0.804	0.870	0.925	<b>0.897</b>				
<b>LANG</b>	0.883	0.601	0.870	0.884	0.933***	<b>0.775</b>			
<b>PERSON</b>	0.747	0.496	0.792	0.749	0.870***	0.847***	<b>0.704</b>		
<b>EX-PAT</b>	0.888	0.532	0.731	0.895	0.855***	0.787***	0.725***	<b>0.730</b>	
<b>ENVIR</b>	0.812	0.519	0.792	0.812	0.762***	0.768***	0.890***	0.708***	<b>0.721</b>

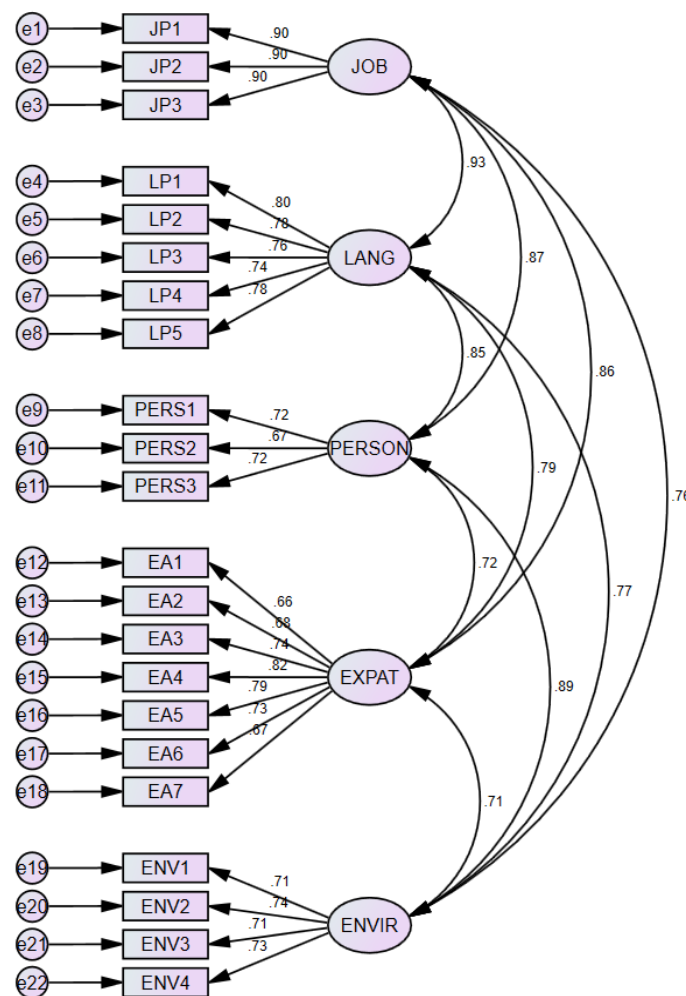
“JOB= Job Performance, LANG= Language Proficiency, PERSON= Personal Factors, EXPAT= Expatriate Adjustment, ENVIR= Environmental Factors.”

**5.6 Confirmatory Factors Analysis**

Hoyle (2000) describes confirmatory factor analysis as a statistical technique to validate the "factor structure" of a set of observable study variables. The measurement model of the investigation was analyzed with the aid of CFA (Harrington, 2008). Table 6 presents the results of model fit indices. In the table, one column displays the threshold values of the model fit indicators, while the other column displays the model's actual values. Based on the obtained values, the overall model fits well.

**Table 6. Goodness of Model Fit**

Indicator	Threshold value	Obtained Value
CMIN/df	Between 1 and 3	2.265
GFI	>0.95	.841
CFI	0.95	.915
IFI	>0.90	.914
RMSEA	<0.08	0.08



**Figure 4. CFA**



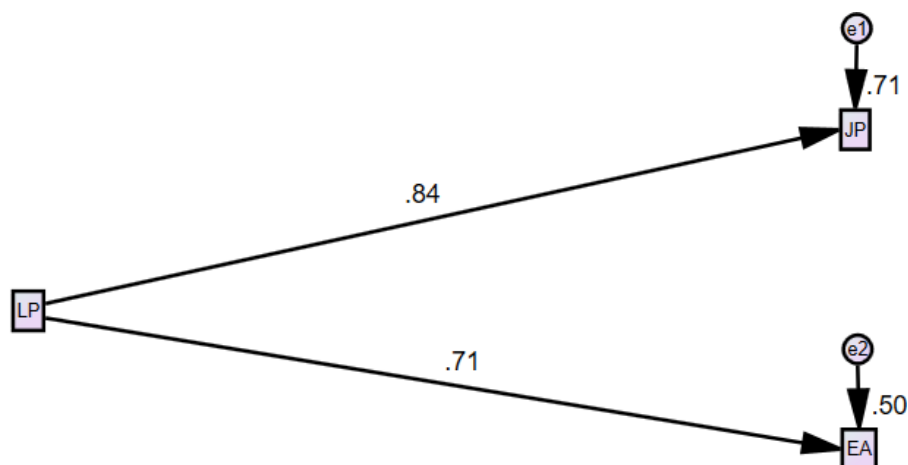
### 5.7 Structural Equation Modelling

(Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010) Structural equation modeling is a widely used statistical method for examining and measuring the relationship between the study's latent and observed variables. Kelloway (1995) argues that SEM is more applicable and promising than regression analysis. The researcher used structural equation modeling to examine direct and indirect relationships, i.e., formulated the study's hypothesis. The SEM results are presented in Table 7 below:

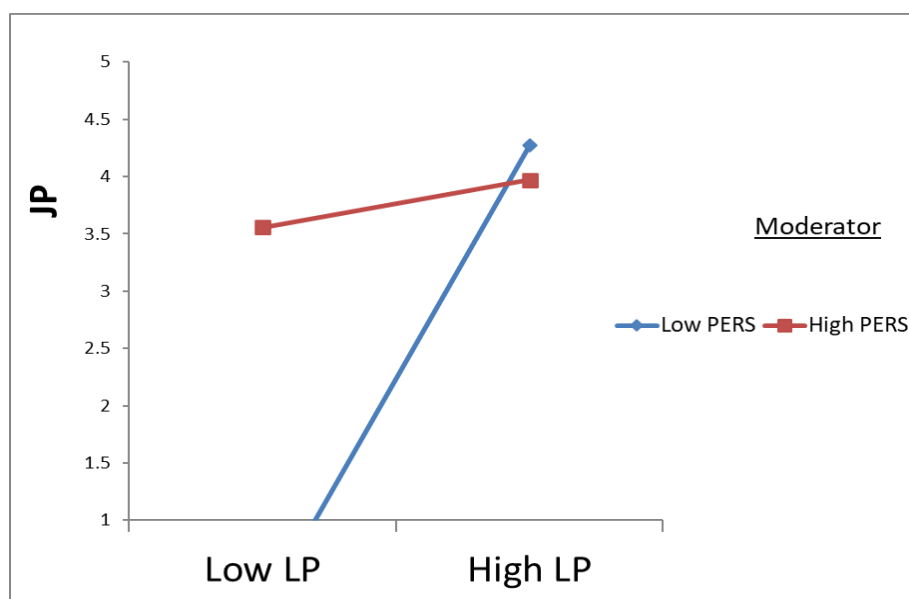
**Table 7. SEM Results**

	Parameter	Estimate	Lower	Upper	P
EA	<--- LP	.707	.642	.780	.003
JP	<--- LP	.841	.799	.878	.005
ZJP	<--- ZENVXLP	-.137	-.788	.639	.721
ZJP	<--- ZPERSXLP	-.914	-1.672	-.161	.024
ZEA	<--- ZENVXLP	.539	-.195	1.377	.264
ZEA	<--- ZPERSXLP	-1.243	-2.083	-.435	.020

The table shows that both direct hypotheses of the study get accepted, having p-values of 0.003 and 0.005, respectively. The indirect (moderation) hypothesis  $ZJP \leftarrow ZENVXLP$  got rejected, having a p-value of 0.721, thus insignificant.  $ZJP \leftarrow ZPERSXLP$  got accepted with a p-value of .024, therefore significant. The hypothesis  $ZEA \leftarrow ZENVXLP$  got rejected with a p-value of 0.264, and the last indirect hypothesis of the study, i.e.,  $ZEA \leftarrow ZPERSXLP$ , got accepted with a p-value of .020, was thus significant and accepted.



**Figure 5. SEM**



**Figure 6. PERS dampens the positive relationship between LP and JP.**

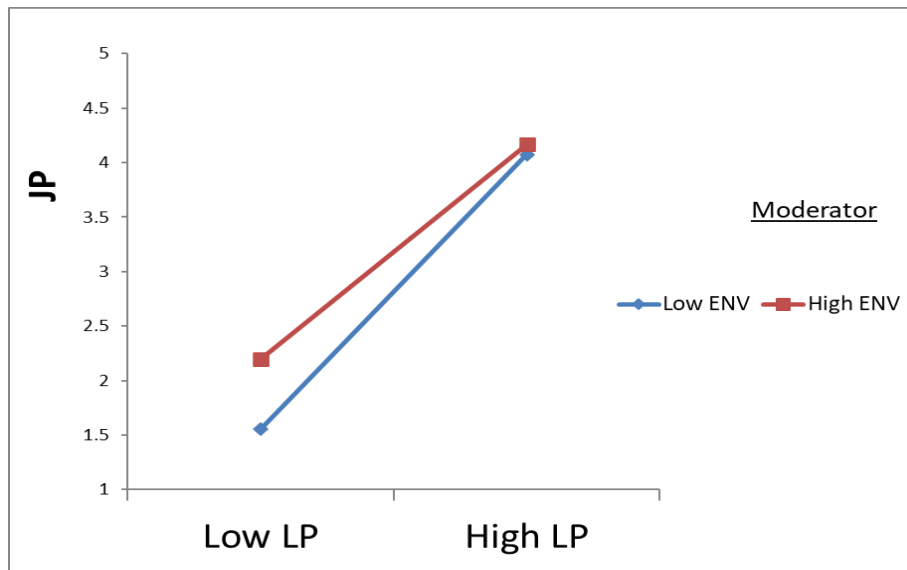


Figure 7. ENV dampens the positive relationship between LP and JP.

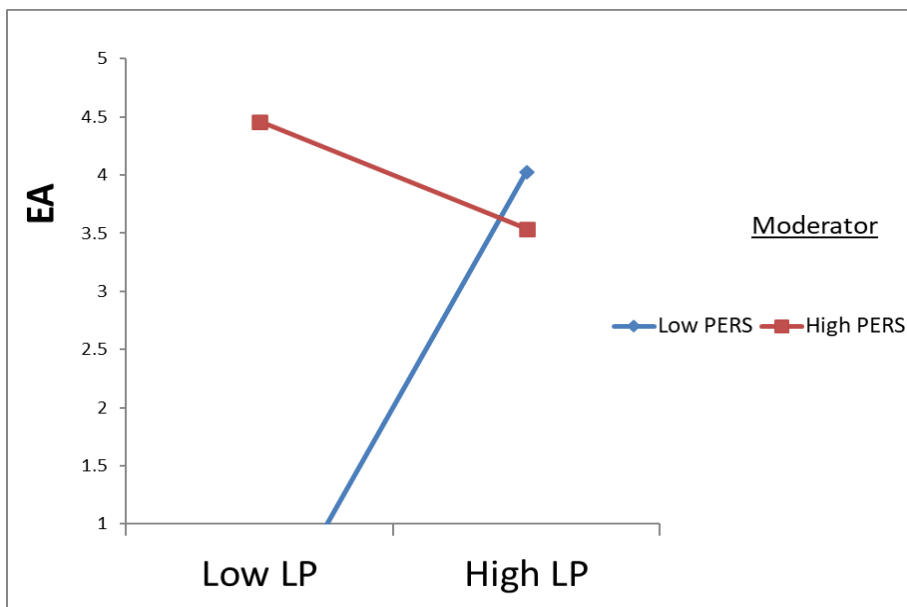


Figure 8. PERS dampens the positive relationship between LP and EA.

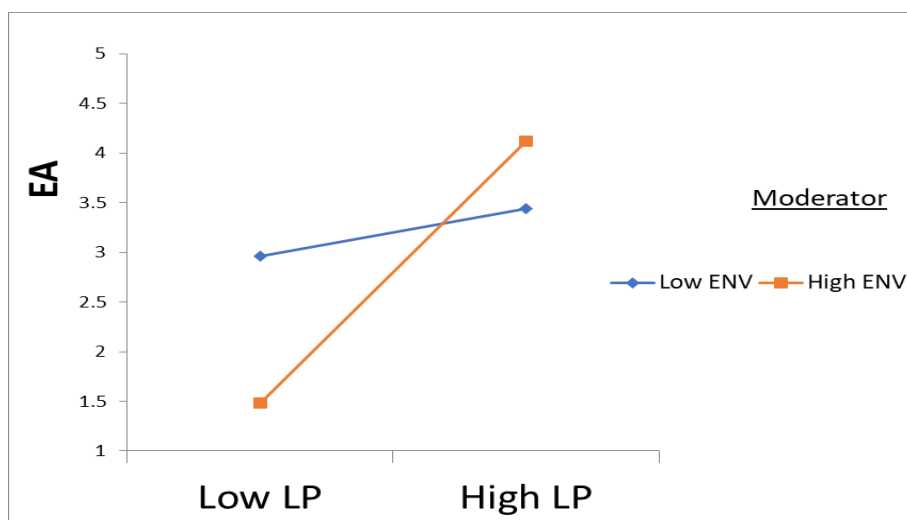


Figure 9. ENV strengthens the positive relationship between LP and EA.

### 5.8 Key findings from the interview:

The researcher manually evaluated the transcriptions and identified essential themes. Most themes were derived from the interview questions, and the respondent then color-coded the data according to the themes. The interview queries are included in Appendix 1 and can be consulted for further clarification of the interviews' focus. The respondents' perceptions regarding the cultural and contextual factors that influence the performance of expatriates in Saudi Arabia are presented in the table below through thematic analysis.

**Table 8. Thematic Analysis**

Themes	Common responses identified	Exemplary response
<b>Proficiency in Language</b>	Low or medium level	“Hi. I work at this university as Assistant Professor and have two years of experience. I have a medium proficiency in Arabic, as I understand commonly used words but am not fluent in speaking Arabic.” <b>(Interviewee – 1)</b>
<b>Job Performance</b>	Helpful in job performance, increase job engagement	“I think that proficiency in Arabic impacted my job performance; after learning a basic understanding of the language, I have seen much improvement as I better communicate with my manager and subordinates and better understand my work roles.” <b>(Interviewee – 2)</b>
<b>Personal factors</b>	Personality, cultural backgrounds, values, etc.	“In my opinion, it is essential to understand the cultural norms, values, and language to adjust as an employee in Saudi Arabia.” <b>(Interviewee – 3)</b>
<b>Environmental factors</b>	Language barriers, workplace environment, etc.	“Language barrier is a significant factor that contributes towards job engagement, and it also helps make good relationships with Saudi clients and other employees.” <b>(Interviewee – 4)</b>
<b>Training programs and support</b>	Cultural awareness, language training courses and programs, in-job training, off job training, informal training, casual conversation with colleagues and HOD, Dean, etc.	“I have intermediate proficiency in Arabic; my firm has given me in-job training to learn about the university culture and language. Also, my colleagues and Dean helped me in learning the language.” <b>(Interviewee – 5)</b>

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1 Findings and Conclusion

The qualitative and quantitative findings of the study indicate that Arabic language proficiency significantly influences expatriate adjustment and job performance. The acceptance of the study's first, second, fourth, and sixth hypotheses had a substantial effect. Nonetheless, the third and fifth hypotheses, which examined the moderating role of environmental factors, were rejected, indicating that environmental factors do not substantially influence expatriate adjustment and Arabic language proficiency based on the current sample size. In addition, the interviews also yielded relevant quantitative analysis results.

Multiple personal and environmental factors moderate the relationship between these relationships. For instance, [Okpara, Kabongo, and Lau \(2021\)](#) analyzed the adjustment of Chinese foreign employees in Nigeria in a study. The study examined the impact of cross-cultural training, and the results demonstrated that prior overseas experience and language training significantly impacted the assimilation of Chinese expatriates in Nigeria. In addition, the findings of this study are supported by [Lian and Lim's \(2020\)](#) analysis of several factors that contribute to the assimilation of expatriates in Malaysia. To investigate this effect, the study examined the impact of length of residence in the country, open-mindedness, common language proficiency, cultural intelligence, monthly income, and international experience. Except for monthly income and overseas assignments, the study's findings reveal a significant influence of all other factors. The results of [Chen and Lin \(2019\)](#) are supported by a second study, which concludes that language proficiency contributes to comprehending cultural differences and improves job performance.

Several multinational corporations dispatch their employees abroad to work in foreign subsidiaries or branches to enhance global cooperation ([Caligiuri, De Cieri, Minbaeva, Verbeke, & Zimmermann, 2020](#); [Orts, 2019](#)). Businesses require their expatriates to operate internationally and spread their talents across geographical borders. Several factors contribute to an individual's ability to adapt to Saudi Arabia. In

addition, they influence their job performance, which can affect their growth and success in achieving organizational objectives, as well as their early return or failure. Language proficiency is crucial to adaptation to a new culture, job performance, and motivation (Wu, Fan, & Dabasia, 2023).

## 7. Implications

This research has numerous Implications. First, it contributes to the existing literature on relevant variables. Second, it has greater value from a practical and policy standpoint. The study recommends that Saudi higher education institutions (HEIs) provide appropriate training and support to expatriate workers, which assists them in adjusting to a foreign country and increases their job performance commitment and engagement. The study also suggests policymakers design cultural and language training programs for expatriate employees.

## 8. Limitations and Recommendations

Every scientific investigation has limitations. In the present study, the context and findings are restricted to a specific sector, namely the Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in Saudi Arabia; as a result, the generalizability of the study has been compromised. Another potential limitation could be the social acceptability and desirability of the interviewees. Since interviews were used to collect qualitative data, it is possible that respondents did not express their true feelings and instead provided more socially acceptable answers.

Based on the study's limitations, future researchers are encouraged to evaluate the impact of Arabic language proficiency in multiple industries, which would expand the scope of the study's findings. The sample size of the present study is modest; therefore, it is suggested that a larger sample size be used to determine whether the results are consistent or vary. Future researchers should also investigate the influence of variables such as workplace culture, personality traits, etc.

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## Appendix

### Appendix – 1 Interview Questions

Following are the interview questions that the researcher has asked from the employees of Higher Educational Institutions (HEI's) in Saudi Arabia:

- Please tell me about yourself, your designation in the company and your number of years of experience.
- Is Arabic Language Proficiency essential for the adjustment of expatriate employees working in Saudi Arabia (HEI's) companies?
- How much proficiency do you have in Arabic, and do you feel it has impacted your job performance?
- Which environmental factors are critical for the adjustment of expatriate workers living and working in the Saudi Higher Educational Institutions (HEI's)?
- Do Saudi Higher Educational Institutions (HEI's) support and train expatriate employees to assist them towards job adjustment?

### Appendix – 2 Scale items and Sources:

Sr	Items	Reference
<b>Language proficiency</b>		
	I feel confident in....	(Takeuchi et al., 2002)
1	Using Arabic in general	
2	Writing in Arabic	
3	Speaking Arabic	
4	Reading and understanding Arabic	
5	Listening to Arabic	
<b>Work Environment</b>		
1	I am satisfied with the space allocated for me to do my work.	(Hanaysha, 2016)
2	My workplace is exceptionally clean	
3	There is adequate space between me and my nearest colleague.	
4	Overall, my work environment is pleasant and visually appealing.	
5	My work environment is quiet. (D)	
<b>Expatriate Adjustment</b>		
1	How adjusted are you to your job and responsibilities?	(Black, 1988)
2	How adjusted are you to working with Saudi Arabian co-workers?	
3	How adjusted are you to the transportation system in Saudi Arabia?	
4	How adjusted are you to working with Saudi Arabian outside your company?	
5	How adjusted are you to the food in Saudi Arabia?	
6	How adjusted are you to the weather in Saudi Arabia?	
7	How adjusted are you to interacting with Saudi Arabian in general?	
8	How adjusted are you to shopping in Saudi Arabia? (D)	
9	How adjusted are you to supervising Saudi Arabian subordinates? (D)	
10	How adjusted are you to living in Saudi Arabia? (D)	
11	How adjusted are you to the entertainment available in Saudi Arabia? (D)	
<b>Personal Factors</b>		
1	Knowing that I am being treated fairly and equally	(Fawcett et al., 2008)
2	Knowing that I am providing support for my loved ones	
3	Not feeling stupid, foolish, or embarrassed	
4	Helping significantly with my financial needs (D)	
<b>Job Performance</b>		
1	I (employee) consistently complete the duties specified in my job description.	(Manzoor et al., 2019)
2	I (employee) consistently meet the performance requirements of the job.	
3	I (employee) fulfil all responsibilities required by my job.	
4	I (employee) consistently fulfil my obligations to perform for my job. (D)	
5	I (employee) often fail to perform essential duties. (D)	