



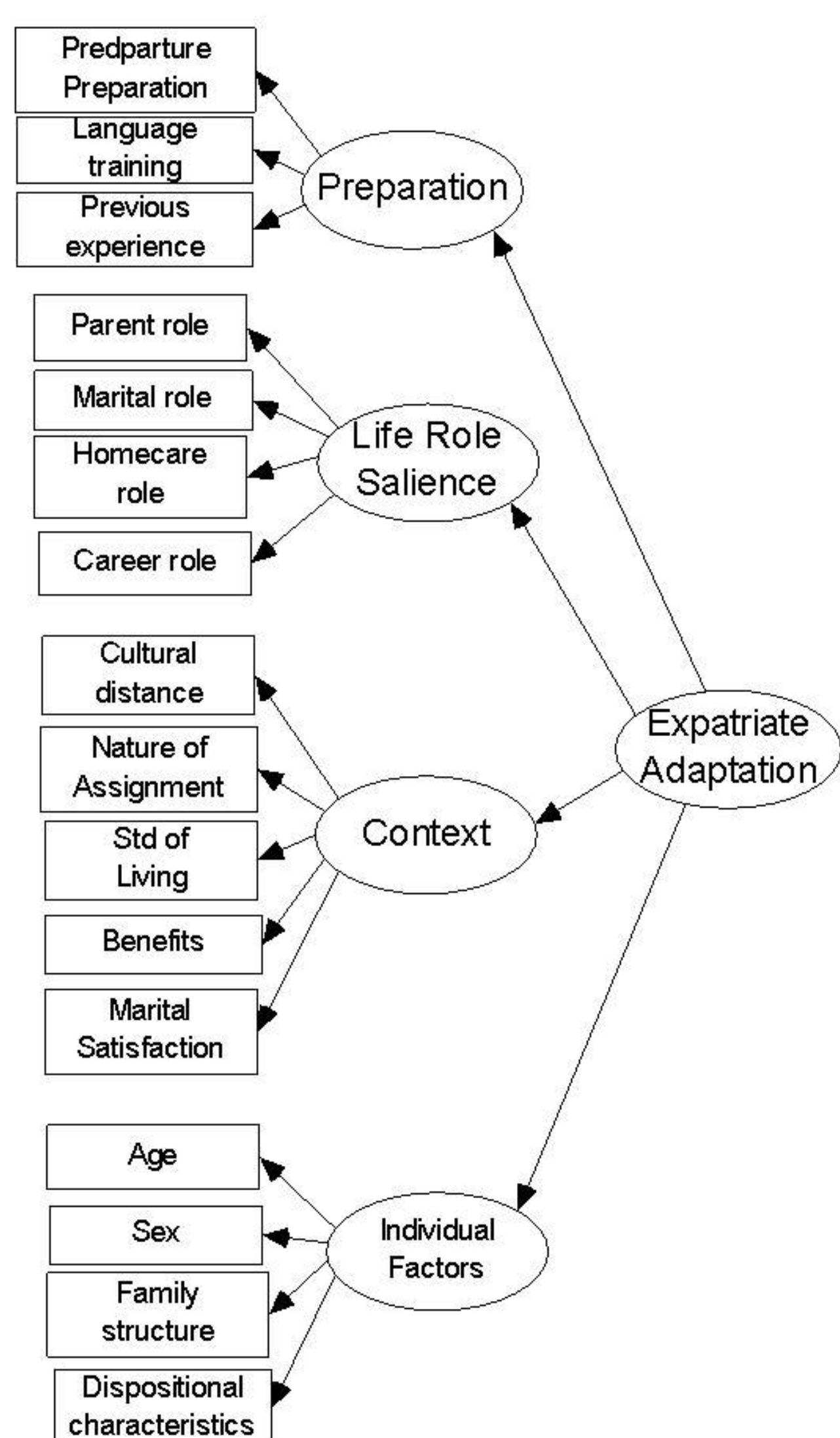
Toward a Career Adaptability Model of Understanding the Expatriate Transition

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Introduction

Super's Life-Space, Life-Span approach to career development (see Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996), and in particular the *career adaptability* and *life role salience* constructs provide a unique perspective for developing a model of expatriation to a foreign country. In recent studies the Culture Shock model has been found inadequate to explain the process of transition to a foreign country. Additionally, models originating from human resources and business perspectives (e.g., Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991) emphasize the outcome of a successful placement and downplay the role of psychosocial variables. Consequently, our project tests tenets arising from career adaptability construct with data from a sample of female, expatriate spouses on assignment in Ankara, Turkey.

Our concept of career adaptability and the variables that contribute to it are presented in the structural model below. Given our limited sample size and the variables available, we were not able to test the complete model. Rather, we chose to represent adaptation by the observed variable, psychological well-being. We chose a small sample of observed variables (representing the latent variables preparation, life role salience, and context) to predict psychological well-being.



Method

Participants

The female volunteers ($N = 86$) were from North American and English-speaking Western European countries who expected to stay in Turkey on assignments that ranged from 1 to 10 years ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.68$). Participants ranged in age from 24 to 56 ($M = 38$, $SD = 6.09$) and had previous international living experiences ranging from less than one to 25 years ($M = 6.73$, $SD = 4.98$).

Measures

Participants completed measures assessing extensive background information and:

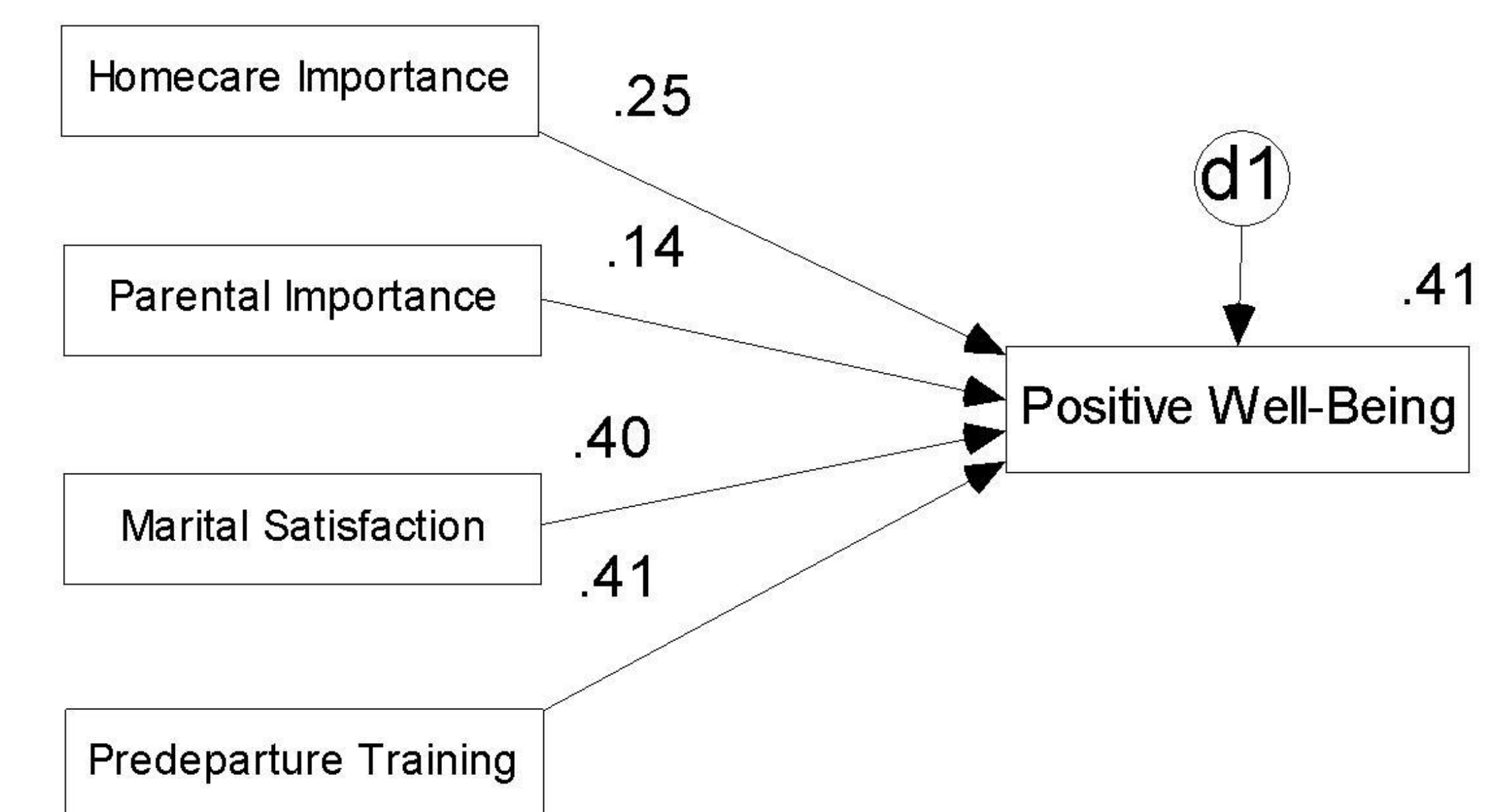
- *Psychological well-being.* The Mental Health Inventory (MHI; Stewart & Ware, 1998; Veit & Ware, 1983)
- *Marital satisfaction.* Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS; Schumm, Milliken, Poresky, Bollman, & Jurich, 1983)
- *Alcohol use.* Quantity*Frequency for a composite, continuous/interval, drinks-per-week variable (Conrod, Stewart, & Pihl, 1997)
- *Life Role Salience.* The Life Roles Salience Scales (LRSS; Amatea, Cross, Clark, & Bobby, 1986)

Limitations

The most limiting feature of our project is the small sample size. Sizes of around 200 – 300 would allow the inclusion of more predictor variables and the capacity to create latent variables.

Additionally, our inclusion of *only* female spouses living exclusively in Ankara, Turkey, limits the generalizability of the findings.

Results & Discussion



Path analysis in Structural Equation Modeling was performed using AMOS 6.0. Our predictors of predeparture training, homecare role, parent role, and marital satisfaction predicted 41% of the variance. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), which takes into consideration the complexity of the model and assesses the badness of fit, was .047 and the comparative fit index (CFI), which is adjusted for estimated parameters, was .93; both indicated an adequate fit (Byrne, 2001).

The strong relationship between predeparture training and PWB is consistent with previous literature on the importance of training (e.g., Black & Mendenhall, 1990) and speaks to the importance of the *preparation* factor. The marital satisfaction loading speaks to the importance of the *context* factor, and the homecare and parenting roles are a strong representation of the *life role salience* factor. Consequently, we believe our model provides preliminary support for testing an increasingly robust model of expatriate adaptation from the *career adaptability* frame.