

# THE RELATIONSHIP AMONG RE-ENTRY SHOCK, COPING MODES, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RE-ADJUSTMENT OF ADULT LATVIAN RETURN MIGRANTS

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## ABSTRACT

Research has shown that it is more difficult to emotionally adjust to change when returning home compared to going abroad. The aim of this study was to explore the relationship among re-entry shock, modes of coping, and the indicators of psychological re-adjustment in a group of return migrants – Latvian nationals returning home. Coping modes and demographic indicators predicting re-entry shock were also addressed and the indicators of psychological re-adjustment (depression, anxiety, and stress). The group being studied consisted of 84 adults aged from 20 to 69 years ( $M = 39.59$ ;  $SD = 10.37$ ) who took part in an anonymous online survey. Re-entry shock was measured using the 16-item Re-entry shock scale (RSS; Seiter & Waddell, 1989). The coping modes regarding re-entry shock were determined using Re-entry Coping Modes (Adler, 1981), and psychological re-adjustment was measured using a shortened version of the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1999, adapted by Vanags & Rašcevska in 2015). Return migrants who reported higher re-entry shock also showed higher symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress. More difficulties with readjusting after returning to Latvia were reported by younger people, females, those who had lived abroad for a lengthy period, those who had recently returned, and those who had chosen ineffective coping strategies. It was concluded that important predictors for re-entry shock are age, the length of time spent abroad, and coping modes. In turn, important psychological re-adjustment predictors are gender and coping modes.

**Keywords:** *return migrant, re-entry shock, re-entry coping modes, psychological re-adjustment.*

## Introduction

Previous research has shown that it is more difficult to emotionally adjust to change when returning home than when going abroad (Callahan, 2010; Neuliep, 2015; Young, 2014). It might seem that coming back is easier than leaving, however, research results show that adjustment to life back home appears to be as, or even more, difficult than adjustment to life in the host country (Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992). Due to

expectations, there is an inconsistency between the real and the imagined – adjusting for many return migrants, turns out to be more difficult than expected.

### **Significance of the study**

The emigration experience has been emphasised in public discourse in Latvia, as it has in other parts of the world – it is the experience of individuals leaving home and adapting to life in the host country. Yet there is less interest in return, including the emotional difficulties felt at the individual level in cases of re-adjustment, highlighting the need to discuss this topic at the societal level, educate others about return processes, as well as to plan targeted and meaningful support at the level of policymaking, to assist Latvian nationals who decide to return to Latvia after living abroad.

International studies have emphasised that departure and the processes associated with it (acculturative stress or culture shock) are mainly studied in connection with return. Yet there is a lack of integration and coherence of various extensive theories, as well as clear definitions of the main concepts (Ward & Kennedy, 1994). Research is often conducted with specific groups, e.g., students (Akhtar et al., 2018; Arthur, 2003; Citron, 1996; Gaw, 2000, Le & LaCost, 2017) or corporate employees (Adler, 1981; Sussman, 2011). Specific and narrow topics have been highlighted, such as the return experience in relation to attitude change (Allison et al., 2012), communication (Brown, 2016; Cox, 2004; Niesen, 2010), self-disclosure (Fanari et al., 2021), social support (Lin, 2006), expectations (Cox, Khan, & Armani, 2013; Geeraert, Demes, & Ward, 2021), loss (Butcher, 2002; Chamove & Soeterik, 2006), locus of control (Seiter & Waddell, 1989) etc. However, in order to understand the specific difficulties and develop the support recommendations needed by return migrants upon reintegration in their home of origin, it would be necessary to focus on overall mental health signals, the most characteristic of which are indicators of anxiety, stress, and depression.

So far, limited studies in Latvia have been conducted on the psychological aspects of return migration, e.g., some studies in sociology have included questions with the aim of finding out the reintegration experience of return migrants (“An emigrant communities” (Mieriņa, 2015), “Circumstances of return and conditions” (Zača, Hazans, Bela, 2018). It has been possible to assess the emotional state of return migrants more in-depth through interviews and narratives of people’s experiences in the media and social networks, but to date significant research from a broader perspective, depicting the emotional factors of re-adjustment and return has not been carried out.

Thus, this research and literature review contribute to the study of the psychological aspects of return migration in Latvia, focusing on such variables as re-entry shock, coping with shock, and the psychological re-adjustment of return migrants following return to Latvia.

### **The situation of re-entry in Latvia**

Upon examination of the data on the volume of return migration, it is evident that approximately 145–187,000 adult return migrants lived in Latvia in the period between

2010 to 2019 (Hazans, 2020). Data from the Central Statistics Office show an increase in return migration in recent years. If, from 2013 to 2020, on average, approximately 5,500 people moved back to Latvia every year, then in 2021 the number of return migrants reached almost 7,000, and in 2022 more than 9,000 returned (Official statistics portal, 2023). Although net migration has decreased significantly, the data on repeated emigration are worrying. That is, a quarter of return migrants who lived in Latvia between 2015–2018 had moved abroad again by 2019 (Hazans, 2020).

The return of emigrants to Latvia is reported in the media in the form of success stories about starting new businesses and other achievements after their return, which in essence is an accentuation of individual successful cases, rather than objectively portraying the overall situation. For returnees, this can create false expectations, because if the portrayal contrasts with the personally experienced reality after returning home, it can result in a feeling of disappointment. The experience of failure to fit in and other emotional difficulties that do not match the positive information available in the public space may not motivate one to seek emotional support, but may be an incentive to consider repeated emigration. This could partly explain the above-mentioned data on repeated emigration.

Looking at the main reasons why people decide to return to Latvia, feelings based on emotions are predominant. In a sociological study on the reasons for return migration, respondents revealed that they missed family and friends, and also experienced homesickness (Zača, Hazans, & Bela, 2018). This differs from their reasons for leaving – in many cases, emigration is motivated by economic factors, specifically the desire to improve one's quality of life and seek broader work opportunities abroad (Hazans, 2016). A 2018 study conducted in Latvia asked the participants of the survey (return migrants) to assess how difficult it was to adapt upon returning home, and the responses showed that adaptation difficulties had been experienced to almost the same extent by all age and gender groups – 40–50% noted that it was “rather difficult”, “difficult” or “very difficult” to adapt to life in Latvia (Zača, Hazans, & Bela, 2018). Thus, by excluding psychological aspects when analysing the data on return migration, the experience of return migrants is not explained fully.

## **A theoretical framework for the re-entry experience of return migrants from a psychological perspective**

Betina Szkudlarek (2009) made a significant contribution to research by collecting and systematising theories on return. Szkudlarek analysed more than 150 studies on the topic and introduced guidelines for looking at the conflicting and different studies when explaining the return experience of return migrants. Szkudlarek offers a three-dimensional framework for looking at theories of return: affective, behavioural and cognitive (ABC model). This is also used as the basis for the theoretical frame of this study.

### **The affective dimension of re-entry**

The affective category is characterised by the emotional reactions and psychological well-being of return migrants. Return migrants are observed to experience a wide range

of emotions upon return: loneliness, stress, depression, anxiety, alienation, disorientation, anger, hostility, helplessness, frustration and social exclusion (Gaw, 2000; Young, 2014). One of the most intense emotions experienced by return migrants is grief (Chamove & Soeterik, 2006), which identifies a loss of the life abroad. In general, regardless of the length of absence, the purpose of emigration and the country, almost everyone experiences discomfort when returning home (Fanari et al., 2021).

The most influential and widely known theory is Reverse Culture Shock, also known as the W-curve theory (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). It is a theoretical addition to the initially developed culture shock or U-curve hypothesis (Furnham, 2019), which explained the feeling of shock experienced when encountering a foreign culture. Similar stages are attributed to Reverse Culture Shock as for the stages of Culture Shock, noting that the fall phase may not be as deep (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). The W-curve stages of adjustment have been conceptualised by other authors as well, labelling them similarly, but the general idea is the same – initially return migrants feel excitement, which turns into anxiety, but as time goes by, it gradually recovers (Szkudlarek, 2009). The W-curve is explained in terms of four stages: leaving the host country, the honeymoon, reverse culture shock, and re-adjustment stages, accompanied by strong affective reactions that can influence the re-adjustment outcome (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). It is noteworthy that the U- and W-curves have also received a lot of criticism because other researchers have failed to prove the rise and fall stages of the adaptation process (Szkudlarek, 2009). It also does not explain why individuals end up in one or another phase, as well as what the enhancing and limiting factors in each of the phases are (Black & Mendenhall, 1991). There has also been a call for culture shock and similar theories to stop their victory march and create a new research-proven concept (La Brack, 2010).

### **The behaviour dimension of re-entry**

The premise of this theory is that when living away from the country of origin, individuals experience personal changes and learn to internalise a new spectrum of behavioural responses specific to their host country environment. Thus, some of the behavioural reactions learned in the homeland are abandoned and replaced by equivalent reactions specific to the host country (Szkudlarek, 2009). This fundamentally explains why, upon return, return migrants need time to learn about the changes that occurred during their absence and adjust their behaviour accordingly (Black & Gregersen, 1991).

### **The cognitive dimension of re-entry**

The cognitive aspects of return are underlined by two well-known theories: the Expectations Model and the Cultural Identity Model. The Expectations Model explains the confronting difference between the expectations of return migrants before return and the reality experienced after return (Adler, 1981; Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992; Rogers & Ward, 1993). Arman (2009) has pointed out that before returning, individuals may have various positive and negative thoughts and expectations but when faced with reality, many find that what they imagined is not confirmed, that is, return migrants do

not return to the home that they remember (Andreason & Kinner, 2005). The perceived emotional difficulties of return can be explained by the assumption that their homeland is well known and familiar to return migrants, however, contact with reality after the return reveals that having intercultural experience has significantly changed the individual, and additionally changes have taken place in the homeland (Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992). Studies show that return migrants experience higher stress symptoms if there is no previous preparation before the return and there is a lack of understanding and knowledge about return processes (Chamove & Soeterik, 2006).

The two most known representatives of the Cultural Identity model are Sussman and Cox who theorise that return migrants experience a personality transformation characterised by changes in cultural identity and sense of belonging that become apparent when repatriation occurs (Cox, 2004; Sussman, 2000).

### **Re-entry shock and strategies of coping**

The difference between culture shock and re-entry shock, according to researchers, is that the latter is unexpected, highlighting one of the reasons why adjustment back to the home environment can be difficult (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). A similar conclusion can be found in another study, in which culture shock was evaluated as previously predicted contact with the unknown. In contrast, re-entry shock has defined as a previously unexpected confrontation with a relatively well-known environment (Mathews, 1994).

Studies have indicated that though all return migrants may experience various symptoms of re-entry shock, the differences can only be observed to the degree to which they are expressed. But the trend is unequivocal – the longer the absence, the more pronounced the re-entry shock (Tohyama, 2008; Fanari et al., 2021). Re-entry shock is a temporary process, that is, it takes time to subside (Storti, 2001).

Another important factor that has been highlighted is the importance of prior preparation. Emigrants prepare quite seriously when leaving their country of origin, but do not take preparation seriously enough when they return (Sussman, 1986). While living abroad, one might feel that home in the country of origin remains the same. However, on return, it creates a feeling of alienation, because one must conclude that changes have taken place after all. Difficulties in understanding what people are talking about and why they are reacting in a particular way are described as signs of this (Sussman, 1986). The feeling of disappointment that follows the failure to meet expectations can be fuelled by a lack of interest from friends and family in hearing about return migrants' experiences abroad. This is explained by the fact that the peers of a return migrant may feel threatened or even jealous (Storti, 2001). The inadequacy of social support creates anxiety, loneliness, and a sense of loss for return migrants (Mooradian, 2004).

Re-entry shock is usually associated with negative and unpleasant feelings, however, it should be noted that not everyone experiences it at the level of distress, and at the same time it can also include positive aspects. For example, returnees experience new self-identities and worldviews (Le & LaCost, 2017; Mooradian, 2004), become less judgmental,

express greater tolerance and openness to others' opinions, and feel more self-confident (Allison et al., 2012). An equally important benefit is a sense of maturity, a more realistic view of the possibilities of more effective change, and a sense of accomplishment (Talanwanich, Jianvittayakit & Wattanacharoensil, 2019).

The most common among coping theories is Adler's model of four re-entry coping modes (1981), which has gained considerable popularity in the return literature. Re-entry coping modes defined by Adler are proactive, resocialised, rebellious and alienated (Adler, 1981). This model was originally created in organisational psychology to explain the return of corporate employees after gaining work experience abroad, but was eventually generalised to other groups of return migrants. Adler explains modes as the attitude with which returnees treat their return and efforts to fit back into their home environment. It is characteristic of active returnees to change themselves in order to adapt back to their home environment. For passive returnees, however, it is more difficult to make changes within themselves. Optimistic return migrants are able to integrate the experience gained abroad into the home environment and will be optimistic about their ability to adapt, while the pessimistic type tend to have a more negative attitude towards their ability to adapt again. By taking into account influencing factors, it is possible to predict which individuals may have more difficulty returning. Although the percentage distribution of modes tends to vary from study to study, in the original study conducted by Adler (1981), the four modes were divided in the following proportions: resocialised – 51%, proactive – 25%, alienated and rebellious – 12% each.

### **Psychological re-adjustment**

Psychological re-adjustment is attributable to the emotional state, cognitive perception and personality of returnees. Return migrants may experience stress and anxiety when faced with changes after returning home (Seiter & Waddell, 1989), which may affect their ability to adjust and at the same time would be considered as indicators of re-adjustment. Signs that might indicate that the return migrant has psychologically adjusted to the home environment include the subsiding of mood swings and depression (Mooradian, 2004).

From the point of view of the experience of change, psychological re-adjustment could be compared with other life events that also require adjustment to a previously known environment, such as divorce, release from prison, surviving a serious illness, etc. The common factor for such transitions are the fundamental changes that must be learned in order to successfully adjust to the new environment or role. However, in the case of the return migration experience, the association with false expectations and unforeseen difficulties is highlighted, as home seems to be a familiar environment (Mathews, 1994). These false expectations can be referred to as an idealised view of home (Young, 2014), which prevents one from achieving the intended goal – returning home to exactly the same place from which one left. One study shows that returnees who report higher levels of re-entry shock are more likely to report adjustment problems (Gaw, 2000). Thus, it can be assumed that those who show stronger re-entry shock symptoms will

have more pronounced difficulties in readjusting to the home environment. Furthermore, some return migrants may also not be able to fully re-adjust after returning home (Brein & David, 1971). Those individuals who report difficulties in re-adjustment speak of a sense of homelessness. The feeling of alienation also marks the return home as a stage of grieving – returnees mourn the loss of personal relationships, newly acquired experiences and lifestyle (Butcher, 2002), as well as giving up an already established routine, habits, lifestyle and material resources (Arthur, 2003). Such a feeling of alienation towards home, which cannot be overcome with time, can become a reason to go to a place where one feels a sense of belonging.

On the other hand, emotional support from friends and family is one of the impacting factors that can facilitate re-adjustment (Van Gorp et al., 2017). While living in the host country, the individual's personal values and beliefs change gradually. However, upon returning home, these changes become acutely apparent (Martin, 1986) and can become disruptive and difficult to adjust to.

### **Individual factors affecting return**

Some studies find no significant differences between genders in the return process (Sussman, 2001). Other studies show that women have higher rates of re-entry difficulties (Szkudlarek, 2009; Yoshida et al., 2009). At the same time, there are studies in which more pronounced difficulties are associated with the male gender (Szkudlarek, 2009, Rohrlich & Martin, 1991).

Studies of adults do not confirm any differences between age groups (Wolfe, 2005). Different results emerge when children and youth samples are included in studies. The results of several studies show a positive correlation of return difficulties with age – the younger the return migrant, the more difficulties he faces when returning (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Cox, 2004; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Rohrlich & Martin, 1991). This is explained by the immature value system and unconsolidated habits that are characteristic of young people (Storti, 2003), as well as by their inherent openness to cultural differences, which means that during their absence they experience more changes under the influence of the host country (Cox, 2004). So when one comes back, there are more changes that need to be adjusted to.

Addressing family status, Wolfe (2005) does not find confirmation for the return of couples being easier than those who move alone. This contradicts previous findings in other studies that those who return home alone will experience more stress (Wolfe, 2005). The explanation is that those who move abroad alone have a stronger identification with the host country in comparison with couples, in which case partners can also be a support person for each other, overcoming the difficulties of return (Cox, 2004).

Personality traits such as neuroticism, lack of self-efficacy, and pessimism appear to exacerbate difficulties during re-entry (Kranz & Goedderz, 2020). Self-efficacy is noted in several studies as a positive aspect of more successful adjustment (Andreason & Kineer, 2005).

Research shows a relationship between length of absence and return problems, in other words, the longer the time spent away from the country of origin, the more pronounced the difficulties in adjustment upon return (Kranz & Goedderz, 2020; Cox, 2004).

The length of time after return is also an important aspect. Research shows that time is a significant predictor of adjustment, with the tendency for symptoms of re-entry shock to diminish as time passes after returning home (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963).

Common to all theories of psychological re-adjustment is the emphasis on alternating stages. Adjustment is a time-varying process in which the returnee experiences discomfort and a sense of alienation, interspersed with stages of having to overcome unpleasant feelings.

Research highlights the significance of factors such as prior preparation, pre-formed expectations that may not be fulfilled upon return, loss of their previous life abroad, alienation, and a longer time away from home. Positive effects are correlated with social support and proactive personality characteristics, such as self-efficacy.

To explore the relationship among re-entry shock, modes of coping, and the indicators of psychological re-adjustment, the following *research questions* are posed:

1. What relationships exist between the scores for re-entry shock, coping modes, psychological re-adjustment symptoms and demographic indicators for return migrants after returning to Latvia?
2. How can coping modes and demographics predict the scores for re-entry shock and psychological re-adjustment (depression, anxiety, and stress)?



## Methodology

### Research participants

The target audience of the study are return migrants of Latvian origin who have moved back to live in Latvia after a period of absence. 117 participants between the ages of 20 and 69 commenced filling out the questionnaire (block of demographic indicators) ( $M = 39.59$ ;  $SD = 10.37$ ). The number of respondents who filled out the entire survey was 84 ( $M = 38.76$ ;  $SD = 9.70$ ).

**Table 1** Absolute and relative frequencies of sample demographic indicators

	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Gender	117	100
Women	94	80
Men	23	20
Duration of absence	117	100
Up to 1 year	5	4.3
Up to 5 years	34	29.1
Up to 10 years	40	34.1
Up to 15 years	20	17.2
More	18	15.5
Duration since return	117	100
1 year	35	29.8
2 years	32	27.4
3 years	12	10.3
4 years	10	8.5
5 years and more	28	23.9
Reasons for return	117	100
Longing for home, family, friends	29	24.8
Family or personal circumstances	23	19.7
Wish for children to live/study in Latvia	14	12
Received an attractive job offer/plans to start own business	10	8.5
Loved one lives/returned to Latvia	6	5.1
Expired work/study contract, visa	6	5.1
Other reason	29	24.8
Covid-19 as a reason for return <sup>a</sup>	6	
Re-entry coping modes	92	100
Proactive mode	45	49
Resocialised mode	16	17
Alienated mode	16	17
Rebellious mode	15	16

Note. <sup>a</sup> 6 respondents entered the Covid-19 pandemic as a reason for return in the free text field under "Other reason".

## Instrumentation

*Demographic survey.* Multiple-choice questions were asked about individuals' gender, age, length of absence and time since return to Latvia.

*Re-entry Shock Scale* (RSS, Seiter & Waddell, 1989). The translation into Latvian and the adaptation were made within the framework of this study. The RSS is a self-report survey with 16 questions where respondents answer on a Likert scale from 1 ("strongly agree") to 7 ("strongly disagree"). Internal consistency indicators are  $\alpha = 0.83$ .

*Re-entry Coping Modes* (Adler, 1981). The author of the survey is Alice Fanari (2021), who, based on the guidelines of Nancy Adler's theory and the description of the study, has created a similar version of the survey. The translation into Latvian and the adaptation were made within the framework of this study. The survey consists of 9 questions, each of which had to be evaluated on a level of difficulty of the semantic differential scale. The first block of questions determines the respondents' pessimistic or optimistic attitude, the second block of questions determines the passive or active attitude. The pessimism-optimism measure was calculated by associating a lower result with the negative spectrum, and a higher one with the positive spectrum. Similarly, passivity-activity measures were calculated. The re-entry coping modes of the respondents were calculated using the score from the pessimism-optimism dimension and the score from the passivity-activity dimension (Adler, 1981).

Resocialised mode optimism – passive	Proactive mode optimism – active
Alienated pessimism – passive	Rebellious mode pessimism – active

**Figure 1** Re-entry coping modes (Adler, 1981)

*Depression Anxiety Stress Scales* (DASS-42, Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995), the Latvian version (Vanags & Raščevska, 2015)). The full version of the self-report questionnaire consists of 42 items and three subscales for measuring depression, anxiety and stress. The shortened version of the survey – DASS-21 – which was used in the study, includes 21 questions. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which the statement applied to their experience in the previous week, using a Likert-type scale. The item scores of the subscales were summed to obtain depression, anxiety, and stress subscale scores. Internal consistency scores for scales across studies range from  $\alpha = 0.84$  to  $\alpha = 0.89$  (Vanags & Raščevska, 2015).

## Procedure

The research data was collected in electronic format in March and April 2021. The online questionnaire was hosted at [www.questionpro.com](http://www.questionpro.com). In order to reach return migrants, an invitation to fill out the questionnaire was published in return migrant support groups available on social networks and on the [www.latviesi.com](http://www.latviesi.com) web portal.

Respondents were informed at the beginning of the survey that their anonymity would be ensured and data would be analysed in an aggregated form, and also that data would be used for scientific purposes only. All study participants took part in the study voluntarily and received no compensation. Filling out the survey took an average of 15–20 minutes. The study has been approved by the Academic Ethics Commission of the University of Latvia.

## Data analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used for analysis of the results, using SPSS version 22. Descriptive statistical analysis of the data was performed for all study variables and the mean and standard deviation were calculated. Also, for all variables, the fit of the empirical distribution to a normal distribution was calculated using the Shapiro-Wilk test. Inferential statistical methods used: correlation analysis and regression analysis.

## Results

All variables were tested for internal consistency and descriptive statistics were calculated (Table 2). Since the empirical distribution for all variables does not correspond to the statistical normal distribution, for the analysis of the inferential statistics calculations were made with non-parametric statistical analysis methods.

For the “passive-active” dimension, including all four questions, Cronbach’s alpha showed a low result. Dropping two questions improved the score, and therefore the dimension containing only the first and second questions was used in further calculations.

To answer the first question – what are the relationships between re-entry shock, the coping modes and psychological re-adjustment symptom scores, as well as their relationship with demographic indicators, correlation coefficients were calculated (Tables 3 and 4).

**Table 2** Measures of internal consistency and descriptive statistics for respondents’ re-entry shock, coping dimensions and depression, anxiety and stress scales ( $N = 84$ )

Variable	$\alpha$	$M$	$SD$	$W$
Re-entry shock	0.86	4.63	1.04	0.98
Re-entry coping modes				
Pessimism-optimism	0.72	4.75	1.23	0.96*
Passive-active <sup>a</sup>	0.61	4.33	1.47	0.96*
DASS-21				
Depression	0.88	14.38	11.30	0.93***
Anxiety	0.83	8.02	9.04	0.81***
Stress	0.91	17.60	12.47	0.93***

Note. \* .05. \*\* .01. \*\*\* .001.

**Table 3** Spearman correlation coefficients of the relationship between re-entry shock, re-entry coping modes, and DASS-21 scales (depression, anxiety, and stress) ( $N = 84$ )

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
Re-entry shock	--				
Pessimism-optimism	-.35**	--			
Passive-active	.00	.19	--		
Depression	.40**	-.36**	-.18	--	
Anxiety	.27*	-.21	-.01	.72**	--
Stress	.32**	-.19	-.13	.80**	.76**

Note. \* .05. \*\* .01.

**Table 4** Spearman correlation coefficients of the relationship between re-entry shock, re-entry coping modes, DASS-21 scales and demographic parameters ( $N = 84$ )

Variable	Gender <sup>a</sup>	Age	Duration of absence	Return duration
Re-entry shock	.06	-.22*	.21*	-.25*
Re-entry coping modes				
Pessimism-optimism	-.05	-.12	-.13	.27*
Passive-active	-.17	.08	.07	.24*
DASS-21				
Depression	-.09	-.09	.05	.00
Anxiety	-.16	-.05	.00	.00
Stress	-.23*	-.04	.06	.00

Note. \* 0.05. \*\* 0.01.

Gender is coded as "woman" – 1, "man" – 2

A relationship to re-entry shock appears with all three DASS-21 scales. Those return migrants who show a higher re-entry shock score show more pronounced psychological symptoms of re-adjustment. The Re-entry Shock and Depression scale shows statistically significant negative associations with the pessimism-optimism dimension, meaning that higher pessimism scores are associated with higher respondent-reported re-entry shock and depression scores.

Several statistically significant relationships were observed. Re-entry shock showed a statistically significant negative relationship with age, meaning that younger people reported more difficulty adjusting to their return. Similarly, re-entry shock showed statistically significant associations with the duration of absence and negative associations with the duration of return – the longer the time return migrants had spent away from Latvia, the more strongly they experienced the symptoms of re-entry shock. On the other hand, the negative correlation of the return duration indicated that the shock of re-entry decreases over time and return migrants feel it more strongly immediately after their return. Coping dimensions of re-entry show statistically significant relationships with return duration. So, the longer the time has passed since return, the more pronounced

was the tendency that the respondents' attitude towards the return remained more optimistic and they became more active in evaluating their homecoming. A statistically significant negative correlation appears for gender in relation to the stress scale, which indicates that women feel stress more strongly.

To answer the second question – how re-entry coping modes and demographic indicators predict re-entry shock and psychological re-adjustment indicators (depression, anxiety, and stress), backward regression analysis was performed (Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8).

**Table 5** Backward regression analysis for the dependent variable re-entry shock, independent variables: gender, age, length of absence, length of return, pessimism-optimism and passive-active dimensions of coping with re-entry shock ( $N = 84$ )

Independent variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Step 1			
Gender	.21	.26	.08
Age	-.04	.01	-.34**
Duration of absence	.07	.02	.34**
Return duration	-.01	.05	-.01
Pessimism-optimism	-.30	.08	-.36**
Passive-active	.06	.07	.09
Step 5			
Gender	-.04	.01	-.34**
Duration of absence	.07	.02	.34**
Pessimism-optimism	-.29	.08	-.35**

Note. Step 1  $R^2 = .26$ , .001. Step 5  $R^2 = .25$ , .001.

\*.05. \*\*.01.

**Table 6** Backward regression analysis for the dependent variable depression, independent variables: gender, age, duration of absence, duration of return, pessimism-optimism and passive-active dimensions of coping with re-entry ( $N = 84$ )

Independent variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Step 1			
Gender	-5.37	2.99	-0.19
Age	-0.26	0.14	-0.23
Duration of absence	0.33	0.25	0.15
Return duration	0.40	0.55	0.08
Pessimism-optimism	-3.59	0.97	-0.39**
Passive-active	-1.13	0.83	-0.15
Step 6			
Pessimism-optimism	-3.43	0.95	-0.37**

Note. Step 1  $R^2 = 0.23$ , .002. Step 6  $R^2 = 0.14$ , .001.

\*.05. \*\*.01.

The results showed that age, length of absence and the pessimism-optimism dimension were statistically significantly associated with an increase in re-entry shock. Younger people reported higher re-entry shock. Likewise, the length of absence was an important predictor – the longer the time spent away from Latvia, the higher the re-entry shock rates. On the other hand, the negative result of the pessimism-optimism dimension indicated a relationship between pessimism and more pronounced re-entry shock symptoms. The model was statistically significant and explained 25% of the variation in variables.

The result obtained in Table 6 revealed that a more pessimistic attitude predicts higher scores on the depression scale. The model was statistically significant and its total explained value was 14% of the variation.

**Table 7** Backward regression analysis for the dependent variable anxiety, independent variables: gender, age, duration of absence, duration of return, pessimism-optimism and passive-active dimensions of coping with re-entry ( $N = 84$ )

Independent variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Step 1			
Gender	-4.71	2.52	-1.87
Age	-0.18	0.12	-1.55
Duration of absence	0.24	0.21	1.13
Return duration	0.03	0.46	0.07
Pessimism-optimism	-2.09	0.82	-2.55*
Passive-active	0.30	0.70	-0.43
Step 5			
Gender	-4.90	2.40	-0.21*
Pessimism-optimism	-2.07	0.77	-0.28**

Note. Step 1  $R^2 = 0.14$ , 0.056. Step 5  $R^2 = 0.11$ , .007.  
\*.05. \*\*.01.

**Table 8** Backward regression analysis for the dependent variable stress, independent variables: gender, age, duration of absence, duration of return, pessimism-optimism and passive-active dimensions of coping with re-entry ( $N = 84$ )

Independent variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Step 1			
Gender	-9.58	3.44	-0.30**
Age	-0.17	0.16	-0.14
Duration of absence	0.24	0.29	0.10
Return duration	0.33	0.63	0.06
Pessimism-optimism	-2.47	1.12	-0.24*
Passive-active	-1.25	0.95	-1.32
Step 5			
Gender	-8.34	3.31	-0.26*
Pessimism-optimism	-2.47	1.07	-0.24*

Note. Step 1  $R^2 = 0.16$ , .035. Step 5  $R^2 = 0.12$ , .006.  
\*.05. \*\*.01.

In Table 7, a higher score on the anxiety scale indicated negative associations with both gender and the pessimism-optimism dimension, i.e. women and respondents with a more pessimistic attitude showed a higher result on the anxiety scale. The model was statistically significant and explained 11% of the variation.

Women and respondents with a more pessimistic attitude had higher stress symptoms. The model was statistically significant and explained 12% of the variation.

## Discussion

The aim of the study was to determine the relationships among re-entry shock, coping modes and psychological re-adjustment shown by return migrants who are Latvian nationals. In order to explain this, the relevant theory and research conducted both abroad and in Latvia were examined, and a study, obtaining and processing quantitative data, was conducted.

The results of the study suggest that return migrants who scored higher on the re-entry shock scale also reported more difficulties with depression, anxiety, and stress. This is consistent with research showing that alienation (Talawanich et al., 2019), bereavement (Butcher, 2002) and negative psychological health indicators (Gaw, 2000; Fanari et al., 2021) are associated with elevated scores on the re-entry shock scale. However, the correlation analysis does not allow us to infer the direction of the association, namely that perhaps those who face more difficulties in the return process experience more shock.

A significant result showed that younger people perceive the return as more difficult. Similar results have been obtained by other researchers (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Cox, 2004; Rohrllich & Martin, 1991), especially in samples of children and adolescents who experience more profound personality changes during the absence, and thus experience the return as more emotionally challenging (Storti, 2003; Cox, 2004). Higher rates of re-entry shock are also associated with the length of time spent abroad. The results obtained are consistent with the findings of other studies, showing that longer absences are associated with higher symptoms of re-entry shock (Cox, 2004; Kranz & Goedderz, 2020).

In this study, a significant relationship was additionally found between re-entry shock and time since return. Participants who have recently returned to Latvia show higher rates of re-entry shock, but the longer they have spent time back in Latvia, the more pronounced the decrease in this rate. This is consistent with the theoretical proposition that the re-entry shock curve flattens over time (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). The pessimism-optimism and passive-active dimensions of coping on return also show a similar result – the longer the time that has passed after returning to Latvia, the more successful the coping strategies indicated by the return migrants; namely a more optimistic and active attitude towards return.

Considering that re-entry coping modes and demographics predict re-entry shock and psychological re-adjustment scores (depression, anxiety, and stress); gender and re-entry coping strategies were found to be significant predictors of re-entry shock.

Return migrants who indicated a more pessimistic attitude towards returning home were also predictably associated with higher rates of re-entry shock. Studies that look at ties to the personality of return migrants show pessimism as an aggravating factor (Kranz & Goedderz, 2020). The opposite is also true. Individuals who show more successful coping strategies, for example, traits such as self-efficacy, are likely to be more able to support themselves in the return process by seeking help and information (Andreason & Kineer, 2005). In the study, a significant relationship appears between the stress scale and gender as women experience greater stress. In the Latvian context, one could speculate that different cultural environments have an impact, and that women, as primary caretakers of children, thus carry the responsibility for their well-being.

Considering future research in this area, the sample should be expanded and made more representative by including more men. Studies conducted in other countries have conflicting results regarding marital status, particularly on whether it is easier to return alone or with a family. On one hand, the family can be a supporting factor in the re-adjustment process (Wolfe, 2005; Cox, 2004). On the other hand, children are the ones who find it more difficult to adapt to the country of origin and can provide the reason for repeated emigration.

In general, the study is significant, as it confirms that return migrants who are Latvian nationals also face re-entry shock and psychological re-adjustment difficulties, and exhibit similar experiences to those shown in studies abroad. The results highlight that return migrants should receive more support: returning home causes more difficulties for younger people, women, those who have spent a longer period of time as emigrants, those who returned home relatively recently, and those who are more pessimistic about their ability to settle into life in Latvia.

These conclusions form the basis for developing interventions to psychologically support return migrants and to increase awareness in society about return processes and emotional difficulties that return migrants may face, as well as to improve migration policies in the provision of support measures, specialist education, and the involvement of non-governmental organisations and society, which would reduce repeated emigration in the future, as well as create a more supportive policy for return migrants, ultimately increasing the number of people who return to live in Latvia. The summarised information, research results, and adapted surveys are useful for anyone who works with return migrants on a daily basis.

## Limitations

This research has several limitations. Although the study sample was sufficient, larger samples might reflect more nuanced results.

The sample of return migrants who returned home within the last year was insufficiently represented (35 respondents or 29.8%). This is the period of time when the re-entry shock can be felt most strongly (re-entry shock is felt from a few weeks to a year or more (Storti, 2001) and can limit the generalisability of research results.



Another limitation of this study, as recognised also by other researchers, is Adler's (1981) theoretical model of re-entry coping modes for which the original survey instrument is not available. When calculating the research data, two dimensions were used: passive-active and pessimism-optimism, which conceptually represent positions included in the theory, on which research in other countries is also based.

## Conclusions

Analysing the results of the study, it was concluded that return migrants who have shown higher rates of re-entry shock also show higher symptoms of re-adjustment difficulties, such as stress, anxiety and depression. Of the surveyed return migrants, 56% confirm that they experienced signs of re-entry shock after returning to Latvia.

The symptoms of re-entry shock are felt more by younger people, those who have lived abroad for a longer period of time and have returned to Latvia relatively recently, and are also more pessimistic about returning home.

Significant predictors of difficulties with psychological adjustment are gender and the re-entry coping strategies of respondents, i.e. it is expected that women and persons with a more pessimistic attitude will experience more difficulties in re-adjusting to the home environment.

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