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Career success across eleven countries: implications for international human resource management

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Abstract

This qualitative study examines perceived meanings of career success across eleven countries. The results show that people define career success in ways that enrich and illuminate the basic dichotomy of objective and subjective career success and establish their relative strengths across countries. Juxtaposing our data with human resource management (HRM) practices, we contribute to the universalist versus contextualist debate in HRM by adding the career management angle. We shed light on the relative importance of cultural and institutional factors for HRM in the area of careers and add a global perspective to the discussion about agentic careers. In our discussion we offer practical suggestions for multinational companies including how to individualize HRM to address diverse views of career success.

Key Words: Career success; cross-cultural comparison; universalist versus contextualist HRM; agentic careers; qualitative study

Introduction

In order to align their HRM policies and practices with the many identities and goals to which their employees aspire, multinational companies (MNCs) need to be aware of how employees in different countries define career success. While there is relevant research within homogeneous cultural and institutional settings (e.g. Judge, Cable, Boudreau and Bretz 1995; Rasdi, Ismail and Garavan 2011; Tu, Forret and Sullivan 2006), only limited empirical insights exists regarding individuals' views on careers and career success in different countries across the globe (Thomas and Inkson 2007). Building on views of workers in respective national contexts, our study explores perceived meanings of career success across different occupational groups located in various culture clusters across the globe and probes commonalities and differences.

This is important on several accounts. At the descriptive level, the global profile of views on career success is largely empty beyond the WEIRD-countries (Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic). Currently, no adequate comparative perspective on career success exists due to a lack of systematically generated diverse views on career success across different countries, cultures and institutional contexts. At the theoretical level, our research draws on two sources. First, it fits into the ongoing discussion about universalist versus contextualist views in HRM (Brewster 1999b). While the former emphasizes universal underlying principles and looks for common best practice in HRM, the latter focuses on contextual specifics and searches for good fit between various practices and the respective situation (Brewster and Mayrhofer 2011). Within the contextual view, there is an extensive literature on the role of the cultural (Reiche, Lee and Quintanilla 2012) and institutional (Wood, Psychogios, Szamosi and Collings 2012) context for HRM. However, the debate about their relative importance is still open and we know very little with respect to careers in this area.

Second, it relates to research on careers and career success where implicitly there is a universalist assumption built into much of career research, often disregarding the importance of context (Mayrhofer, Meyer and Steyrer 2007). In addition, evidence suggests that definitions of career success are in flux, and employees' expectations of their companies are changing (Cappelli 1999; Dries 2011). There is discussion in the literature of a more agentic orientation towards careers, reflecting a boundaryless mindset (Arthur and Rousseau 1996) and a self-directed and values-driven career orientation (Hall 2002). This agentic view of the career suggests one that focuses more on the individual's own personal definition of meaning and success. However, research in this area has been largely limited to employees in North America and Europe (Briscoe, Hall and DeMuth 2006; De Vos and Soens 2006) and we do not know how this plays out at a more global level.

Our exploratory study of perceived meanings of career success uses data from 226 in-depth interviews with employees in eleven countries distributed across Schwartz' (1994; 2006) seven global culture clusters. Conceptually, it is rooted in the discussion about the universalist versus contextualist paradigm in HRM as well as in research on career success and the emergence of agentic careers. After briefly presenting our conceptual background and methodology, we will provide a richer descriptive profile of conceptualizations of career success across different countries as well as a starting point for future research. Based on these findings, we explore the extent to which these meanings of career success are universal across the eleven countries, and whether there are specific meanings of career success that are more prevalent in certain countries. Finally, we will discuss implications of our analysis for various aspects of HRM research.

Our study makes three contributions. First, we provide a better basis for HRM policies and practices in MNCs regarding how to handle careers of their workforce in different countries and institutional contexts. Second, we add a cross-cultural perspective to the discussion about agentic careers. Finally, we inform the universalist versus contextualist debate in HRM by adding a career management perspective.

Conceptual background

Career success and the emergence of the agentic career

Career success is defined as 'the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person's work experiences over time' (Arthur, Khapova and Wilderom 2005, p. 178). Interest in the notion of career success has increased in theoretical and practical relevance in step with a dramatic shift in the basis of the psychological contract between the individual and the employer. This shift has been from a relational contract, in which the focus was a long term relationship, to a transactional contract, in which the focus is on an exchange of mutually-satisfying contributions (Arthur and Rousseau 1996; Hall 2002; Larsen 2004). For the individual this has entailed a change to being much more proactive or agentic, as many organizations are assuming less responsibility for career management. This agentic career has been variously described as the boundaryless career (Arthur and Rousseau 1996), the protean career (Hall 2002), and the post-industrial career (Peiperl and Baruch 1997). While these concepts denote different phenomena, they all share a shift away from an organizational locus of control and toward the individual's self-direction and stronger role as the agent of his or her career. Career success, as an internal compass, is integral to these changes.

Along with the change in the locus of control of the career, there has been a shift in the aspects of career success that are being studied. Building on early descriptive occupational studies in different areas such as homeless men (Anderson 1923), salesladies (Donovan 1929), young delinquents (Shaw 1930), young female dancers (Cressey 1932), or waitresses (Cressey 1932) and influenced by and contributing to the Chicago school of interactionism (Shaffir and Pawluch 2003), Hughes (1937) viewed career success as having both objective and subjective elements, a differentiation now firmly established (Derr 1986; Heslin 2005). Historically, the career that emerged with industrialization and then bureaucracy was one which was associated with the organization (Hughes 1958), with the assumption that one depended upon the organization in order to have security, job satisfaction and career performance. As such, there was traditionally a strong interest in objective career success such as income or hierarchical advancement that is visible and 'objectively' measurable (Judge et al. 1995; Ng, Eby, Sorensen and Feldman 2005).

With the shift to a more agentic view of careers, the understanding of one's career identity as a socially-constructed phenomenon that results from a personal narrative (Ibarra 1999; Ibarra and Barbulescu 2010) and examining the individual's inner dialogue regarding the subjective career success have become more important. Subjective career success depends on individuals' idiosyncratic construction and is usually operationalized as career or job satisfaction (Judge et al. 1995; Ng et al. 2005). Hall's notion of psychological success as the main motivator for the protean career (2002), Derr's career orientations (1986) and Schein's career anchors (1985) helped to conceptualize the varieties of subjective career success. The main construct used most often to measure subjective career success is still simply career satisfaction (Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Wormley 1990). Recently, however, efforts have been made to

explicate the many ways in which subjective career success can vary (Arthur et al. 2005; Dries, Pepermans and Carlier 2008; Heslin 2005) although this has been on a theoretical or single-country level.

The nature of career success is often bounded within and influenced by a country's unique contexts (Pringle and Mallon 2003). Culture studies (Hofstede 1984; Schwartz 2004; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997) show different (work) values across the globe, suggesting that conceptualizations of career success – being strongly influenced by individual and collective values – vary across cultures, too. Indeed, a few non-US-based studies based on agentic career concepts (in singular regions) did show they are less salient in Asia such as Singapore and China (Kelly, Brannick, Hulpke, Levine and To 2003) and in Europe such as France, Germany, Netherlands and Portugal (Dany 2003; Rodrigues and Guest 2010).

HRM practices: Universalist versus contextualist perspective
When HRM started to replace personnel management in the early 1980s, the seminal texts (Beer, Spector, Lawrence, Quinn Mills and Walton 1984; Fombrun, Tichy and Devanna 1984) clearly pointed towards a link between organizations and their contexts such as contextual antecedents of practices or outcomes linked to the respective communities. Later developments, in particular the strategic HRM discussion and the efforts of linking HRM and organizational performance, tended to ignore or downplay these contingencies. As a result, much of HRM research is universalistic (Brewster, 1999a), searching for best-practices rather than contextual fit and overemphasizing organizational agency at the cost of contextual embeddedness and restraints.

However, strong voices question this approach. From a theoretical perspective, both institutional (e.g. Powell and DiMaggio 1991; Meyer, Boli, Thomas and Ramirez 1997) and

cultural (e.g. Hofstede 1980; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997) theory emphasize enabling and constraining contextual forces. Similarly, substantial empirical evidence, in particular provided by comparative HRM research (see, e.g., the contributions in Brewster and Mayrhofer 2012), shows the limitation of a universalistic approach and argues for a contextualist perspective in HRM. While the former looks for good or even best practices to ultimately improve organizational performance, the latter is more multi-dimensional. It searches for an overall appreciation of what is contextually unique and why it is different, focusing on understanding what is distinctive between and within HRM in various contexts (as it relates to different stakeholders of HRM).

The discussion in international HRM about the basic approach to people management is relevant here as well as it is closely related to career management. Building on a framework for basic orientations when internationalizing (Perlmutter 1965), one can differentiate in MNCs between ethnocentric, polycentric, regiocentric and geocentric staffing or, indeed, approaches towards HRM as a whole. None of these approaches per se is superior (see, e.g. Mayrhofer and Brewster 1996 who argue in favour of ethnocentric staffing in Europe).

Our primary research question is to explore how career success is defined in different and similar fashions across countries. This allows us to explore as well how contextualist versus universalist approaches might be most appropriate in understanding career success as well as implications for HRM. All of this is done with acknowledgement and consideration of the agentic career which has been postulated, but not fully documented, as a new reality across cultures.

Methods

Sample

We deemed a qualitative design as ideal to uncover the meanings of career success in different work settings and in different national contexts (see Ituma, Simpson, Ovadje, Cornelius, and Mordi 2011). It answers the call for using qualitative methods in IB studies (Birkinshaw, Brannen, and Tung 2011), such as in comparative cultural research (Doz 2011).

Given the nature of our research, it was important to recognize that we are taking an interpretive rather than a positivistic approach (Sandberg 2005). We attempted to develop our interpretations from direct communications with workers in diverse settings based on their lived experience. Our goal was not to represent every possible variation nor to imply that all possible samples were represented in each country, but to have a reasonable degree of diversity in our sample(s) so that meaningful categories could be generated in regard to the above research questions. Looking at the careers literature, four important aspects of diversity emerge: the cultural and institutional context (Thomas and Inkson 2007), occupational differences (Tolbert 1996), age (Levinson 1978) and gender (Tharenou 1999). These four aspects guided us when choosing the sample.

For our sampling strategy across countries we used cultural clusters based on Schwartz's theory of Cultural Values (1994; 2006). This was because of the methodological rigor in his sampling technique and triangulation of data at various levels of analysis. A further advantage was that he designated seven finite world regions based upon his analyses which offered a rationale for national/cultural sampling decisions. It was sought to involve at least one country from each region in order to yield a more globally diverse sample to adequately address our main

research question. A main concern was to have more than the usual western (only) presence and have greater representation of cultural perspectives than past research on career success.

Beyond being contained within a specific region, countries were selected based upon more pragmatic considerations such as having potential research team(s) staffed with researchers having expertise in career theory and qualitative methods as well as the temporal and financial resources to conduct the study. This constrained the potential pool of countries. The final sample comprised eleven countries according to Schwartz's framework of designated regions: Austria and Spain (from Schwartz's Western European region), China and Japan (from Confucian Asia), Malaysia (from South Asia region), Costa Rica and Mexico (from Latin American region), Serbia (from the Eastern European region), South Africa (from the Africa region), the US (from the English-speaking region), and Israel (which was not assigned to a specific cluster).

To be more specific, we gathered samples from three diverse work settings we would approach all over the world: people associated with business (broadly including managers, entrepreneurial business owners, accountants, consultants, and venture capitalists), health care professionals (nurses), and manual workers (manual labor such as plumber, waiter, craftsman, carpenter, cook, and factory assembler). These groups exist in every country, have a relatively similar qualification profile across countries and cultures, and represent a range of requisite training and education. We are well aware that these groups by no means constitute homogeneous units and are governed by different occupational and cultural norms as well as various institutional regulations such as professional regulations. Given that documenting diverse views on career success is one of our major goals for this exploratory study, we do see this as an additional source of variety. However, this has to be taken into account when interpreting the data in terms of explaining commonalities and differences.

In addition, we selected interviewees that were near the beginning or end of their careers (Sturges 1999; Whiteoak, Crawford and Mapstone 2006), here called early and late career, respectively, in order to encompass potential changes in subjective career success meanings. Subsequently, individuals in early (at or below 30; average sample age 27.5 years) and late career (at or over 50; average age 57) were selected. In total, 226 individuals – a rough gender balance of 121 men and 105 women – were interviewed. Table 1 gives an overview of the samples for each country.

Insert Table 1 about here

Data collection and analysis

Since this study focuses on how individuals view their career success in their specific work settings, an inductive and interpretative approach is appropriate (Yin 2003). Emerging theory often relies on an interpretive approach to elucidate the meaning of a phenomenon within a specific context (Corley and Gioia, 2004; Eisenhardt 1989). Furthermore, in order to contribute to theory building a qualitative approach is recommended in the early cycles of phenomena investigation (McGrath, 1982; Edmondson and McManus 2007). While much of the research on career success to date has been conducted in one or a small number of countries, our study is the first to explore individuals' perception of career success in a wide range of country contexts, which demands flexibility. Therefore, we considered our research novel and opted for a qualitative design. Especially, interviews are considered as a useful form of data-gathering when flexibility is required (Patton 1990).

Building research teams for cross-cultural collaboration

Our cross-cultural collaboration effort began in 2004 with the broad goal of understanding career success and career management from a multi-country perspective (Briscoe, Chudzikowski, Demel, Mayrhofer, and Unite 2012). Country teams were recruited and invited based upon cultural regions (Schwartz 2004) as well as an interest in the framing purposes of the organization. Each national research team was composed of at least two members with a background in careers study and proficiency in both English and their respective local language. The research teams held meetings twice a year to develop the research agenda and to discuss key issues and concerns regarding the research process and findings. These face-to-face meetings as well as regular virtual conversation were essential to build communicative validity (Sandberg 2005) and validate our interpretations through discussion and mutual consent.

Developing an interview guide

After developing an interview guide within a core group of our cross-national research team in 2005, the guide was translated and back-translated by each national research team. We paid particular attention to the translation of important key constructs (e.g., careers) so that they are not only equivalent to the English version but also relevant and meaningful in specific national contexts. The interview guide was designed to use narratives of career paths as a starting point and to draw a timeline of careers to give an overall structure to the interviews. The interview guide was used to facilitate the dialogue with the interviewee, leaving enough flexibility for individuals to tell their life and career stories.

Two major themes were emphasized – how individuals conceptualize career success and how they manage their career transitions. The main question employed to unveil stories about

meanings of career success was, 'looking back at your career experiences and your experiences so far, what would you describe as success'? Prior to this question, there were questions aimed to help the person reflect more deeply on his or her career history and recent transition phases. Following the key questions, further probes and follow ups helped us clarifying and refining the interviewees' explanations.

Interviews

Each research team conducted semi-structured interviews, face-to-face in the respective national languages between 2005 and 2006 at locations that interviewees preferred (e.g., the researchers' university, the interviewee's office, a coffee shop, etc.). At the beginning of each interview, we clearly stated our research purpose, interview process (e.g., their participation is voluntary and they could withdraw any time during and after the interview), and issues of confidentiality. On average, interviews lasted 45 minutes, were tape-recorded (with the consent of the interviewee) and fully transcribed. Interviewees were approached through professional associations, alumni organisations, and/or personal networks.

Data analysis

Data were coded using content analysis to inductively generate conceptual categories (Mayring 2003). In the first round, all national research teams inductively coded their interview data separately in order to generate culture specific conceptual categories and main themes. Before the coding started the definition of a coding unit was discussed and agreed upon at the research meeting. A coded statement typically consisted of a sequence of sentences conveying a coherent point in participants' stories. Based on this agreement and upon Mayring's method, the coders of each research team first defined relevant text passages in their materials as units of analysis,

paraphrased them, and then generalized them at a higher level of abstraction which can be named as first and second order categories. Data analysis was supported by QSR NVivo 7. Face-to-face team discussion was held to solve coding discrepancy and achieve coherent interpretation across independent coders. Consequently, each country team generated a set of country-specific categories in their own language before translating them into English for the subsequent discussion during the global research meetings.

At the second round, country teams met to create a 'Global Coding Book' (GCB) that integrated the various countries' findings in English language. This coding scheme was built by carefully integrating each country's respective schemes of categories into an overall scheme with detailed definitions for each core category and their sub-categories which was communicatively validated at the face-to-face research meeting. For generating a framework of the global core categories within and between countries, the constant comparative method was used among and across research teams. The basic goal of this procedure was to construct a reasonably sophisticated picture of main themes in each country. Core tools in this process are qualitative data analysis matrix displays which have been effectively used to compare data (Miles and Huberman 1994).

At the third round, all the country teams recoded the interview data following the GCB, with inter-rater reliability ranging from 85 to 90%. After national teams finalized their coding process, the country specific themes – meanings of career success categories and subcategories, with illustrative quotes, were ranked from the most frequently mentioned to the least frequently mentioned in each country so that universalist versus contextualist themes could emerge based on global comparison.

In sum, we used a specific variant of content analysis to identify themes and inductively generate basic categories from the interview texts. We compared these emerging themes based on their occurrence across the eleven countries. By necessity we crafted some additional research approaches because of the specific setting – people from different countries speaking different languages both as interviewees and as members of the research team. For this, we partly constructed our own devices such as several rounds of coding and discussion, the GCB, the decision when to switch from the local language to English in processing the texts and used elements from other qualitative approaches which seemed to help our data analysis. While we did not use a grounded theory method per se, we did borrow some analytical tools from that tradition in order to accommodate expanding content categories of career success, and afford flexibility. Our approach, therefore, has elements of the communication processes that Sandberg (2005) recommends (e.g., being 'attentive and open to possible variations and complexities of lived experience' (p. 60), withholding our own interpretations, focusing on description, 'horizontality,' or treating all data equally) for truth-finding with an interpretive approach.

Results

The presentation of our results follows the major goals of the paper. Descriptively, we aim at contributing to filling the global profile on diverse views of career success. In addition, our paper also seeks to find commonalities and differences in the views that individuals raise across different countries, work settings, and age groups. While we draw on the debate about the role of context in HRM and careers, we are not specifically leaning to a universalist or contextualist position, respectively. Rather, in line with the exploratory focus of the paper, we use these positions to group and make sense of the categories emerging from our inductive qualitative

analyses. With this in mind, we break our results into three sections. First we present the key categories of career success derived from data analysis across our sample of eleven countries. Second we present the extent of commonalities regarding career success meanings and then contrast this with findings of a more contextual, divergent understanding of career success reflecting the complexity of culture and institutional contexts. We liken these two perspectives to that of a satellite picture, with the universal perspective showing the high level broad patterns of career success across the world, versus the more multifaceted, detailed, and contextualized picture seen up close.

Key categories of career success: A broader picture

The key categories of career success stem from the collective comments of our participants across eleven countries. Based upon the inductive efforts at a country level and the integration across countries, we were able to generate eleven major categories of career success. Table 2 outlines the major categories, definitions, and representative quotes for each of these.

Insert Table 2 about here

These shared categories of career success identified from the study demonstrate a broad picture of how individuals in different countries perceive career success in terms of personal values and preferences, task characteristics, and relational orientations. They expand the existing dichotomy of objective success (salary and promotion) and subjective success (satisfaction) and suggest that existing conceptualization of career success in the careers literature are in fact limited. Similar to country-level research (Dries et al. 2008) that expands our basic

understanding of career success, this study is the first with a global scope to demonstrate the diversity of career success meanings around the world.

Findings of universal categories of career success

Table 3 illustrates what each country describes as their top four most important perceived meanings of career success. One of the key themes emerging from the data is the dual presence of both universalist and contextualist meanings of career success across the eleven countries. Here we define a career success meaning as 'universalist' if it is found in all or most of the countries sampled. We do not imply that every member of a given country holds the meaning.

Insert Table 3 about here

There are four categories which seem particularly prominent across all or most of the countries starting with *Achievement*, *Job task characteristics*, *Satisfaction*, and finally, *Learning and Development*. Table 4 examines each of these categories and their sub-categories. Looking at each more closely, *Achievement* is mentioned as one of the most important categories in every country. More specifically, while our research found that people define achievement in different ways, 'financial achievement' such as getting a high salary is the only type of achievement that is commonly identified in our global sample. The following quotes illustrate how individuals in Malaysia and South Africa perceive career success in terms of 'financial achievement'.

> *'Career success to me, I think it's only money-wise. If we've got a lot of money, then that is called success. As you know, cost of living in Kuala Lumpur is so high, so more money means better life.'*

'So I don't measure success by getting to the top of the organization or managing a business or having my own company. Some of those are desirable but at the same time I think I probably would just measure it in terms of being financially independent by 40, 45 or something like that.'

Financial Achievement, Early Career South African Man

Insert Table 4 about here

While it is apparent that financial achievement is a key category of career success worldwide, there are other aspects of general achievement that are also prominent amongst the sample. 'Promotion/advancement' can be described as a sense of career success based upon attaining a better position or assignment and is emphasized in nine countries (Table 4). As one man in Austria and one woman in China express it:

'Well, within the next two years I want to get the master craftsman's certificate … At the moment I am the shift foreman's assistant and within the next two years I would like to become a foreman myself. And then I want to promote to master craftsman and maybe take a leading position in the production area.'

Promotion/advancement, Early Career Austrian Man

'From nurse, to head nurse, to the director of the nursing department, which is the highest position to me, I think this is a successful career'.

Promotion/advancement, Early Career Chinese Woman

The other two sub-categories under *Achievement* including 'gaining/extending influence' and 'Owning company/self-employment' are less prevalent across different cultures than 'financial achievement' and 'promotion/advancement'.

'I decided to study Business because since I was 15 or 16 my father would tell me stories about his own company. I used to find it fascinating! I think that (having one's own company) is very cool, very exciting.'

Owning company/self-employment, Early Career Spanish Woman

Job-Task Characteristics is another central category in nine of the eleven countries. It refers to the content of the work itself as a source of success, work that has intrinsic meaning. As regards the sub-categories, 'having challenges' and 'having responsibility' in one's job are stressed across almost every country, followed by 'having autonomy/participation' (Table 4).

'Challenge, that's probably the only thing that keeps you really liking a job. If you go in there every day and it is the same old thing, you know, you have to have a whole different mindset which I never had. I had no patience with doing the same old thing over and over'.

Challenge, Late Career American Man

'I love my job since it allows me to be autonomous in what I am doing. When I look back, I can say that I succeeded in my career. I made decisions on my own and different situations with kids require instant and new solutions every time.'

Autonomy/Participation, Late Career Serbian Woman

While responsibility, challenge, autonomy and participation are important job characteristics, there are other sub-categories which also show deferential importance in different

countries. As Table 4 illustrates, interviewees in Israel, Spain, and the US emphasize 'working with others' as an important factor; in Serbia, China, and Japan they value 'opportunities for learning'; and in the US and Mexico they mention the desire of 'seeing results' in their job. These findings suggest that around the world people value the intrinsic nature of their work; however the specific factors which are emphasized may vary by context and country. The following quotes illustrate those themes.

> *'It was a very good job, but I really did not enjoy it, I didn't like it. I like being with people, working with people. To be in an office fighting against papers... that was not what I wanted to do!'*
>
> Working with others, Late Career Spanish Woman

> *'I always want to learn more things... Making sample clothes does not provide learning opportunities because of the working schedule ... For people like me who are now working at the bottom level, I don't have much time to learn. Therefore, I considered leaving the company.'*
>
> Opportunities for learning, Early Career Chinese Woman

Satisfaction is another important theme of career success in eight of the eleven countries except China, Japan, and the US. Instead, interviewees in Japan and the US placed more emphasis on *Recognition* and those in China stressed *Survival and Security*. This clearly indicates institutional or contextual influences of these countries. 'Job or career satisfaction' is one of the sub-categories of *Satisfaction* and describes the sense of reward from the person's work. This sub-category is the single most important in seven of the eight countries (Table 4). As one Spanish woman and one Mexican man describe it.

'Before starting this job I thought in a few years I would study for an exam that gets you a good stable job. I thought that getting a good salary would be great. However, now I'm making good money and I do not feel satisfied with it. I'm realizing that feeling good with what I do is much more important than making good money.'

Job/Career satisfaction, Early Career Spanish Woman

'I think a successful person is the one that finds the job that really pleases him or her.'

Job/Career satisfaction, Late Career Mexican Man

In addition, 'enjoyment and fun' and 'identification with one's job or company' emerged as important sub-categories. The former are especially salient in Austria, Serbia, and Malaysia, Mexico, and Israel, and the latter in Austria, Spain, South Africa, Costa Rica, and Mexico. The following quotes highlight that career success is more than financial achievement or any other tangible accomplishment. It is firmly rooted in subjective elements such as enjoyment and a need for a sense of belonging.

'Of course there is always a financial side, but that is not really a crucial factor, what really makes fun is a great thing (for me).'

Enjoyment and fun, Late Career Austrian Man

'I don't like it when business is just about making money…. that's not how I think. For me, business is doing something that we have an interest in.'

Enjoyment and fun, Early Career Malay Man

'Even though I didn't know anything about cooking, I did like working in the culinary field and I identified with it from the beginning.'

Identification with one's job, Early Career Mexican Man

'Success is feeling useful. You feel identified with your job, (and) you try to do it well. And then you notice the response, (and) you feel motivated completely. I think that being a nurse is a profession more about taking care of the sick than about curing.'

Identification with one's job, Early Career Spanish Woman

Learning and Development is the final category that has been identified in seven out of the eleven countries (Table 2). It refers to learning more and growing as a person including acquiring professional skills through formal education and certificate programs ('formal learning'), or learning through changes and failure one has experienced ('informal learning'). Generally speaking, formal learning is more prevalent when individuals conceptualize career success (Table 4), particularly in Austria, Spain, China, Japan, and South Africa. The following quotes illustrate this theme.

'Career success for me is, of course, finishing this education, (and it) means success to me'

Learning and Development, Early Career Austrian Woman

'Well, career success means that I must experience more and develop and go farther in my career.'

Learning and Development, Early Career South African Woman

Findings of context-specific categories of career success

In addition to the four categories of success that appear to be universal, we also extracted other categories of success that were specific to certain countries. Table 2 and 3 summarizes the contextualized meanings of career success across our sample. While we saw that *Achievement* seems to be valued by individuals across the eleven countries, the other major categories of

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career success including *Making a Difference, Work-life context/balance, Survival and Security, Recognition, Job performance,* and *Self-actualization* all displayed unique importance within different countries. The 'satellite' view of career success must be brought into sharper focus as all countries cannot be understood adequately with a solely universal perspective. In many cases the cultural and institutional contexts shape the meanings of career success amongst individuals.

A good example of this is *Survival and Security,* which is particularly salient in China, Costa Rica, and Mexico. This category highlights one's fundamental need for security (both job-related and financially-related) and for basic necessities to support oneself and one's family. As the quote from a Chinese man illustrates, 'job security' is one of the important sub-categories when people perceive career success, particularly when the external environment is fast-changing.

> *'At that time, all I thought was how to make money...I went to cities that were once hot spots within Deng Xiaoping's economic reform blueprint...I don't care what kind of job I am doing, but it should be secure and safe, and completely consistent with the labor regulation...To me, career success means that I can secure my pension after retirement.'*
>
> Survival and security, Late Career Chinese Men

In addition to one's own survival, the ability to support one's family and provide them with a sense of security as the result of one's career is also perceived as career success, as one Mexican man describes:

'We would like to have financial security so (our kids) would have a good base to be able to pursue a career because we never know if we are going to have a job in the future, in the event of an accident or something.'

<div align="right">Survival and security, Early Career Mexican Man</div>

Making a difference is one of the four most important categories identified in the US and South Africa ('helping others') as well as in Malaysia ('helping others' and 'having a positive impact upon society'). The following quotes illustrate these themes.

'Success to me is measured by the results in terms of the impact of what I have done on other people. (It is) not so much about whether I have gained personally but more about whether I have made a difference in the lives of others.'

<div align="right">Making a difference, Late Career Malay Woman</div>

'What's becoming more and more apparent for me (is that) career success is actually being able to make a very pleasant environment for my colleagues at work. I've got a program going, which started with all the black employees' children having their school fees paid by us. The plan behind that was to get the black kids out of township schools into better schools.'

<div align="right">Helping others, Late Career South African Man</div>

Work-Life Context/Balance is a very dominant theme in Serbia and Spain (focusing on 'combining personal and professional objectives' and 'addressing others' needs'*)*, and South Africa (emphasizing 'combining personal and professional objectives'*)*.

'I got to the point where I didn't want to advance hierarchically because that would have conflicted with my family life, which is very important to me. I love my wife and my

<div align="right">23</div>

children. I love my friends … To get promoted would have meant that I had to work even longer hours.'

'I think if you're successful you know [it] is having a balance, I think that is quite important. Being good at your job, being brilliant at your job, but if you just have work, you are so buried and you can only work so much. That's a sign of success for me, personally, a good healthy balance between the two.'

Other meaningful career success categories identified from the data, including *Social Working Environment*, *Recognition*, *Job Performance*, and *Self-actualization*, are among one of the top four categories in only one or two countries (Table 4). For instance, social working environment, particularly regarding positive relationships with one's superiors, peers and clients, is prominent in Serbia and Israel. This is not surprising considering the importance of embedded relationships in individuals' lives in these two countries, particularly compared with the US, Austria, and Spain in which individualism and autonomy are more valued. *Recognition* is relatively salient in the US and Japan, with the emphasis on 'securing positive feedback from one's colleagues, boss or customers'. *Job performance* and *Self-actualizatio*n are important in the US and South Africa respectively. The following three quotes highlight the diversified meanings of career success across countries.

'I feel that I succeeded in my career since I had an opportunity to work with many different people who provided me with their acceptance, support and respect.'

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'Career success (is) working in a job where you think you are appreciated and respected.'

<div align="right">Recognition, Late Career American Woman</div>

'I think (career success is) probably achieving the goals that I set out to achieve … I set very specific goals when I was young, much younger and then I achieved those goals.'

<div align="right">Self-actualization, Late Career South African Woman</div>

In sum, our results suggest a number of important points. First, substantially enlarging existing conceptualizations of career success in the literature, our results demonstrate the wide range of ways that people from different countries define career success. We also find from a broad 'satellite view' that achievement and particularly financial achievement, is an important perspective shared by interviewees across countries when they define career success. However, when one takes a closer, 'zoomed in' look, the picture is more complex. While the space limitations do not allow us to detail each country context in depth here, we do document that individuals' definitions of career success are diverse and vary by the culture and context to which they belong. These results have important implications for human resource managers and their effective implementation of HRM strategies at a country level. The findings suggest that while financial incentives may be effective strategies in many cases, more 'boutique', individual level practices to motivating and developing employees may need to be explored.

Discussion

Our results contribute to research on career success and HRM in various ways. They present a descriptive profile of meanings of career success across the globe; shed light on the relative importance of institutional and cultural context for HRM; help us understand better the degree to

which a more agentic view of careers is relevant on a global level; inform MNCs in their decisions about HRM policies and practices in the area of careers; and, finally, strengthen a contextualist view of HRM. We will deal with these issues in turn.

Global profile of career success conceptualizations

The first main purpose of our research is to provide a more robust profile of career success meanings across the globe. While advancement in definitions in career success has been made in some specific countries (Dries et al. 2008), this is the first study to systematically generate categories of career success across a wide range of countries featuring different cultural and institutional contexts. Beyond traditional objective success based upon salary and promotion (Heslin 2005; Ng et al. 2005) and subjective success based upon career satisfaction (Greenhaus et al. 1990), our results indicate that individuals perceive their career success from a broader range of dimensions. The main findings echo Ituma et al. (2011)'s arguments that the objective versus subjective dichotomy cannot fully explain the complexities of individuals' career experiences across different contexts. Our results highlight the necessity to enrich the career success construct by incorporating more dimensions such as relational (e.g., *Work-Life Context/Balance* and *Social Working Environment*) versus personal (Ituma et al. 2011) and self-versus other-referent factors (e.g., *Recognition*) (Lau, Shaffer, and Au 2007), together with moving beyond the samples of professionals and managers in WEIRD countries (e.g., the salience of *Security and Survival* for manual labor in less developed countries).

Certain categories of career success are more prevalent across the eleven countries. *Achievement, particularly financial achievement,* is the most common meaning ascribed to career success across countries. Studies on Nigerian managers by Ituma et al. (2011) and on

Chinese entrepreneurs by Lau et al. (2007) also identified financial attainment as one of the prevailing career success dimensions in non-Western contexts. These findings reinforce our arguments that achievement can be conceptualized as a universal success factor. *Job/Task Characteristics, Satisfaction,* and *Learning and Development* are also shared across many if not all sample countries as a dominant meaning of career success. Within these relatively 'universalist' meanings of career success are several more nuanced sub-categories. Attention must be given to meanings beneath the surface for those wishing to understand career success.

Beyond the four categories of career success above, several other meanings of career success are highly prevalent in only one or a few countries. For example (as displayed in Table 4), *Work-Life Context/Balance* is ranked highly in Serbia, Spain and South Africa. The very fact that the importance of these career success categories varies across different cultures attests to the need to understand career success across and within contexts.

Relative importance of different contextual forces for HRM

Our results also address the issue of the relative weight of contextual factors for explaining HRM issues. By using cultural differences as one of our sampling criteria, we show the relevance as well as the limitations of a cultural explanation for career success conceptualizations. The culture dimensions are helpful for explaining part of our results. For example, China and Japan from the Confucian culture cluster both emphasize objective meanings of career success, which matches their cultural values of high hierarchy and mastery (Schwartz 2004). However, looking at the specific categories mentioned, we observe significant differences between countries of the same culture cluster. For instance, compared to Japan, *Survival and Security* is more salient in our Chinese sample. This may be explained by the big

difference in economic development, or the system of industrial relations which differs between these two countries. Thus, our findings suggest that while culture is important, it alone is not sufficient to explain similarities and differences across countries – institutional factors clearly matter, too.

Institutional perspectives concentrate on the institutions within a society as being the environmental structures that keep them distinctive, emphasizing both this distinctiveness and the effects of these institutions on organizing. Theories of comparative institutionalism in the varieties of capitalism literature (e.g., Amable 2003; Hall and Soskice 2001; Whitley 1999) argue that existing differences between systems of economic organization are not likely to disappear given the differences in institutional arrangements at the national levels and their relative inertia. Whitley (1999) indicates that "[n]ation states constitute the prevalent arena in which social and political competition is decided in industrial capitalist societies" (p. 19). This points out differences, the slow nature of institutional change (Djelic and Quack 2003) and the limits of globalization (Guillén 2001). Institutions are likely to shape the social construction of the nature of organizations and will certainly structure policies and practices within them. Institutional theory also points out that organizations are subject to a range of forces – e.g., coercive, mimetic and normative (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) – that require them to develop behavioral patterns perceived to be legitimate by influential stakeholders. Relating visibly to existing global drivers such as 'performance', 'efficiency' or 'rationality' helps organizations to symbolically demonstrate that they are prepared to successfully contribute to the economic system, thus securing legitimacy for the organization (for a discussion about different views of neo-institutional arguments see Tempel and Walgenbach 2007 and for a number of useful suggestions for new ways of examining the effects of historical, cultural, and ideological

contexts on perceived career success, see Dries, 2011). At the individual level, it can be argued that these drivers permeate many, if not all areas of life, and manifest themselves in personal accounts of one's work. In other words, performance and achievement are expected to have a visible influence on individuals' views about career success. Thus institutional theory helps to explain why Achievement is highly valued across countries and why certain career success factors such as Survival and security are only emphasized in China, Costa Rica and Mexico.

Overall, neither an exclusively culturalist nor an exclusively institutional approach seem to be satisfactory. While the two explanations are not necessarily mutually exclusive, they are not easily consoled on a theoretical level. This confirms the conclusion that 'both institutional and cultural dimensions […] have an important impact on HRM practices in different countries' (Romani 2004, p. 163).

Global relevance of agentic view of careers

Some of the meanings of career success that are prevalent across our country samples can be considered to at least encompass elements of agentic careers. For example, the pursuit of *Learning and Development* implies a certain posture toward one's career of action and purposive behavior. An emphasis upon Satisfaction may reflect the idea of fulfillment which might be considered protean (Hall 2002) in part. Yet, there is also clear evidence showing that 'traditional' or organizational careers are still relevant (Roper, Ganesh and Inkson 2010) across the globe. *Achievement*, which may be driven by agentic desires, is also a traditional meaning of career success which often relies upon the validation of others and is thus tied to tradition. *Survival and*

Security are very basic career success meanings for some people in all cultures and clearly some of the most traditional meanings of career success imaginable.

Thus, the new more agentic career is relevant to at least some dimensions of the population across the countries we researched while traditional career priorities remain evident. In that vein, it is important that MNCs are prepared to manage their workforce in ways that meet the needs or traditional and more agentic employees alike.

HRM in MNCs

For MNCs, our results have considerable relevance for handling the traditional tension between differentiation and standardization in HRM. Some areas of managing careers within MNCs seem to lend themselves more readily to standardization. There seems to be considerable agreement between individuals from different countries, work settings, age groups and gender that these categories are essential when dealing with career success. First of all, this includes *Achievement,* particularly 'financial achievement', which is the most important dimension in most countries. Therefore, it would apparently make sense to devote attention to overarching and companywide systems of performance management. This provides a universal basis to tie performance to strategy, assess performance using common standards, and determine pay and bonuses as degrees of formal recognition across the company regardless of the country locations. Of course, at a more concrete level, a number of adaptations have to be made, for example, to be in line with national labor and tax law or the competitive situation in the respective country as well as adapting to local views on performance.

Likewise an emphasis upon *Satisfaction*, for example via development and monitoring of employee engagement (Saks 2006) or climate surveys, would make sense on a global scale. The

same could be said for *Job/Task Characteristics* and *Learning and Development*. While the data show *Job/Task Characteristics* and *Learning and Development* as widely associated with career success around the world, these areas are much less emphasized than achievement (via pay and promotion) and general job satisfaction.

Beyond job performance and pay, how can MNCs strengthen their standardization efforts and, at the same time, influence the more commonly held meanings of career success? They can emphasize common cultural values that would support congruent career success meanings through attempting to inculcate a common culture. Other options might involve an organizational and HRM architecture that designs jobs that are challenging and offering responsibility and participation and jobs that provide relatively similar structures and procedures known to increase motivation and work satisfaction (O'Toole and Lawler 2006). Finally, a globally focused HRM strategy strengthening the standardization efforts would support development and learning plans that keep employees engaged in their own learning and growth beyond the formal performance of their tasks.

In contrast to standardization, some of our results strengthen the differentiation needs of MNCs. For example, a very strong work-family program might be a priority in Spain, to provide a strong focus on family benefits and family-friendly work policies that employees would find attractive. In China, in addition to financial achievement, the use of short-term and long-term assignments in other country locations will be effective motivators, particularly for those younger employees who also value learning and development. For leaders, instead of implicitly relying on universal assumptions about 'basic needs', 'classes of motives' or 'universal drives', they need to have a thorough understanding of the unique and culturally influenced expectations and aspirations of employees in different countries and with culturally mixed teams.

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Beyond focusing on organizational activities and tailoring HRM to culturally and institutionally driven views of career success, another approach is to set up HRM processes that allow the employee(s) themselves to customize their own priorities where possible. This is in line with a more agentic view of careers. For example, some companies are much more intentional about designing career and leadership development initiatives that require active 'authorship' and participation on the part of the employee. One company the authors are familiar with had employees 1) go through a systematic and disciplined process of values introspection to inform the company's changing strategy; 2) decide if they felt a 'fit' with the company still; and, if they did, 3) pursue development opportunities congruent with the new strategy as well as the employees' own values.

Overall, the existing knowledge about HRM and part of our major findings point towards the interplay between the organizational and the individual level, respectively, when dealing with careers. At the organizational level, HRM in MNCs faces the tension between standardization and differentiation in its strategic orientation; whereas at the individual level, employees have a specific mixture of either agentic or traditional career orientations. Slightly simplified, this leads to a two-by-two matrix showing different combinations of these factors (see Table 5).

Insert Table 5 about here

Companies emphasizing standardization may find that this approach works well for 'traditional' employees, in that whatever universal rewards – such as financial awards or promotions for achievement, or placement into more challenging, enriched jobs – they provide

would be highly valued by employees who are seeking these kinds of organizational recognition. However, this approach could fall short of fulfilling more agentic career employees, in that this limited set of universal rewards might not fit with any individual's specific motivations.

Companies leaning towards a differentiation approach may be more likely to recognize (or discover) the individual differences of their employees. More agentic employees in all cultures will likely be more attached to such an approach and if such an approach is taken, it should be transparently communicated to new recruits and existing employees. On the other hand, it is possible that employees desiring a more predictive and structured career path (traditional orientation) will identify more with a more universal, standardized HRM system.

Of course, companies' approaches can and probably should be hybridized to ensure the advantages of predictability and structure as well as flexibility and adaptation. This requires a certain strategic and operational maturity and sophistication on the part of HRM to balance the opportunities of flexibility with the consistency and structure of a more predictive standardization approach.

Importance of contextualist perspective in HRM

Our results support a contextualist perspective in HRM. Notwithstanding the emerging joint career dimensions across the globe, the study shows the importance of taking into account contextual factors coming both from the cultural and institutional areas as there is no one best way of managing human resources in the area of careers.

For HRM research in general and career research in particular, they both call for further theoretical and empirical work. At the theoretical level, a major emphasis should be put on a more comprehensive view of interacting contextual factors. At present, many current views of

HRM include various kinds of contextual variables as part of the picture. However, they neither put context and its effects at the centre of the argument nor do they clearly elaborate on the 'which' and 'how' of the linkages between context and HRM. Thus, it is all too easy in concrete research to 'forget' context, simply pay lip service to it or put it as 'only one among many' into the picture. In addition, cultural and institutional perspectives are largely separated from each other. Building bridges between these two streams of thought would further strengthen our understanding of the interplay between context and HRM.

At the empirical level, strengthening the contextualist view requires a careful selection of the sample. This usually leads to 'country' as a major criterion. However, in some countries this might be misleading. Take Canada or Belgium for example: in both countries, language and culture constitute substantial divides within the national borders. Depending on the theoretical angle, in such cases it might be necessary to form units of analysis which do not focus on national boundaries only.

Limitations

Several limitations of this study need to be acknowledged. Although the number of individuals interviewed in this study is sufficient for an exploratory and qualitative study, conclusions have to be drawn with due caution. The aim of the study was to gain a fuller picture of career success that goes beyond very particular, mostly WEIRD perspectives. Regarding the methods used in this multi-country study, one issue is language, particularly the potential loss of richness of the data material through various rounds of translation.

Beyond that, for further insight and a more detailed global picture of career success, the inclusion of more countries with diversified cultural and institutional contexts is needed. While

we strived to include at least one country from each of Schwartz's global regions (2004), our findings mainly provide starting tools and motivation to expand this and additional studies to many other inadequately understood cultures, such as Nigeria in the 'Global South'. This is one of the focuses of our second-phase study.

A greater focus might be warranted within countries as well. National populations can vary in terms of values within subcultures (Greenfield 2014) although Schwartz (2014) maintains that the degree of shared values within countries has not decreased in recent years.

The focus of upcoming research phases will be on important sample characteristics beyond culture and age, e.g., gender, occupation or ethnicity, some of which have been explored but not discussed here due to space restrictions.

In spite of these limitations, the results have important implications for HRM literature and practice as well as for our knowledge in the area of applying qualitative methods in different country contexts.

Conclusion

This is the first global qualitative study on individuals' conceptualization of career success. The main findings provide insights for a much richer depiction of meanings of career success and show the degree of commonalities and differences across a wide range of country contexts. Our results add insights into the universalist versus contextualist HRM debate. Both universalistic and contextualist approaches make sense in some situations, but a hybrid approach probably makes the most sense. What is clear is that companies that wish to best attract, motivate and retain a quality global workforce will have to match their offerings with both traditional and

emerging aspirations that are more diverse than we have known. In addition, insights related to methods and procedures in a global study have been proposed to better inform future cross-cultural research and collaboration.

Notes

1. Please note, while we do not claim to be generating new theory, we consider that we are expanding current theory by generating a more complete set of career success definitions.

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Table 1. Overview of country samples

Cluster	English-Speaking	Western Europe		Eastern Europe	Confucian Asia		South Asia	Africa/ Middle East	Latin America		Israel	Total
Countries	*US*	*Austria*	*Spain*	*Serbia*	*China*	*Japan*	*Malaysia*	*South Africa*	*Costa Rica*	*Mexico*	*Israel*	*N=*
Sample size	20	18	21	21	28	20	18	24	19	18	19	**226**
Female/ male	11/9	8/10	17/4	14/7	15/13	7/13	8/10	16/8	11/8	6/12	8/11	**121/105**
Early/ late career	9/11	9/9	8/13	10/11	16/12	10/10	9/9	14/10	10/9	9/9	10/9	**114/112**
Business/ Nurses/ Blue-collar	8/6/6	6/6/6	6/6/9	7/8/6	8/6/14	8/6/6	6/6/6	9/7/8	6/6/7	5/6/7	6/6/7	**75/69/82**

Table 2. Perceived Meanings of Career Success: Major Categories, Definitions, and Representative Quotes

Main Categories	Definition	Representative Quotes
1. Achievement	Securing material (e.g., money) and/or symbolic things (e.g., higher status or greater power and influence) from one's career, such as financial achievement, promotion, and owning company.	*'Success is money, luxury, being able to purchase things above average.'* Early Career, Israeli Woman
2. Job-task characteristics	Engaging in a job/task with specific features that one values, such as responsibility, autonomy, and challenge.	*'It brought about a big difference (in the company) even till now when I became the manager since 2002. (I was responsible) for strategic planning and budget control in the project'.* Late Career, Japanese Man
3. Satisfaction	Being pleased and content with how one's career has turned out, such as 'being satisfied with one's job/work' or 'having fun'.	*'A successful person is the one that fully enjoys what she or he does and enjoys when she or he succeeds.'* Late Career, Mexican Man

4. Learning and Development	Continuous learning and growing as a whole person, either formally (e.g., certificate programs) or informally (e.g., experiential learning).	*'It is never to get up in the morning and find out that you need to work on the same exact machine putting the same exact screw... I'm always learning, and that's what makes me be motivated and feel satisfied, because I can be always up to date'.* Early Career, Spanish Man
5. Making a difference	Feeling one has contributed in some positive ways to others or to the world, such as developing and helping others.	*'In my life it was always, you know, (about) people. How can I help to make it easier or better? ... If I can do something to help out something or somebody, you know, I do it. So, to me I think I am successful, not in monetary terms but in other ways'.* Late Career, Malay Woman
6. Work-life context/balance	Successfully integrating and/or managing work and non-work dimensions of one's life, such as 'achieving work-life balance' or 'having time to fulfil one's personal goals'.	*'I feel I haven't succeeded in my career; the bureaucracy simply eats the people – I don't have time for my master studies, I don't have time for my family or to plan my personal life.'* Early Career, Serbian Woman
7. Survival and security	Feeling secure and striving to survive as the	*'Now I am old, without strong educational background and*

	result of one's career, such as 'having job security' or 'having the basic necessities (food, shelter, etc.) for survival'.	*competences. I only what a stable job, with a certain amount of money and a secured peaceful life till my formal retirement at the age of 60'.* Late Career, Chinese Man
8. Social working environment	Experiencing positive relationships and psychological climate at work, such as having good relationships with one's peers, supervisors, or clients.	*'For me the most important thing is to feel satisfied with the people you work with and with the clients... because in principle, I really like being a waitress; but if there was a bad feeling with my peers, I would quit the job'.* Early Career, Spanish Woman
9. Recognition	Being formally and explicitly recognized for what one did at work, such as getting awards or positive feedback.	*'I'd say recognition is the word. If you're working hard, you would like to be recognized for what you're doing.'* Early Career, South African Woman
10. Job performance	One's degree of excellence or relative superiority in performing one's job.	*'I have been able to establish quite a good basis at work and I have been successful I have to say; I don't want to show off here, but the numbers indicate it.'*

		Early Career, Austrian Man
11. Self-actualization	Becoming a 'better' or full person as a result of one's career, such as 'pursuing one's calling' or 'leaving a legacy'.	*'Career success is that I can still help people even though I'm fifty-two and I'm religious I can still help people. It is important to grow and not stagnate. It is how you progress as a person'.* Late Career, American Woman

Table 3. Meanings of career success in eleven countries: the top four success categories in each country

Categories / Cultural Clusters → Countries ↓	English Speaking	Western Europe		Eastern Europe	Confucian Asia		South Asia	Africa/ Middle East	Latin America		Israel	No. of countries within this rank
	USA	Austria	Spain	Serbia	China	Japan	Malaysia	South Africa	Costa Rica	Mexico	Israel	
Achievement	1	1	4	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	3	**11**
Job/task characteristics	2	3	2	2	2	1			2	3	1	**9**
Satisfaction		1	1	1			4	2	1	2	2	**8**
Learning and development		2	4		2	4	3	3	3			**7**
Making a difference	2						2	2				**3**
Work-life context/balance			3	1				3				**3**
Survival and Security					2				3	4		**3**
Social working environment				2							4	**2**
Recognition	2					2						**2**
Job Performance	2											**1**
Self-actualization								3				**1**

Note: This table lists the four most important meanings of career success in each country. The same number means the same level of importance.

Table 4. Sub-dimensions of achievement, job-task characteristics, and satisfaction

Culture Cluster / Categories	English Speaking US	Western Europe Austria	Spain	Eastern Europe Serbia	Confucian Asia China	Japan	South Asia Malaysia	Africa/ Middle East South Africa	Latin America Costa Rica	Mexico	Israel Israel	No. of Countries within this rank
Achievement												**11**
Financial Achievement	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**11**
Promotion/advancement	2	1		2	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	**10**
Gaining/extending influence	2	2	3	3	3	2					2	**7**
Owning Company/self-employment			2				3	2	3	3	3	**6**
Job/Task Characteristics												**9**
Responsibility	3	1	**2**	1		**1**			1	1	**2**	**8**
Challenge	**3**	**2**	**2**		**3**	**1**			**2**	**3**	**1**	**8**
Autonomy/participation	**2**	**1**	**2**	1	**3**				**1**			**6**
Scope and variety of tasks			1		1						2	**3**
Opportunities for learning				2	3	1						**3**
Working with others	3		1								1	**3**

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Category											Total
Reasonable work load			2		2				3		**3**
Seeing results	1								2		**2**
Satisfaction											**8**
Job/Career satisfaction		**1**	**2**	**1**			**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**8**
Enjoyment and fun		2		2			3			3	2	**5**
Identification with job or company		3	1					2	2	2		**5**
Happiness		3					2		2		3	**3**
Life Quality			3	3				2				**3**
Learning and Development												**7**
Formal learning		**1**	**1**		**1**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**2**			**7**
Informal learning		2	2		2	2	1	2	1			**7**

Note: Cells without numbers mean the specific career success categories are not among the four most important categories in the corresponding countries. For example, job/task characteristics is not among the four most important categories in Malaysia and South Africa.

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Table 5. Congruence between HRM strategy and employee career orientations

Modal Employee's Career Orientation

HRM Strategy		Agentic	Traditional
	Differentiation	Good fit: Individualized intrinsic and extrinsic career opportunities and outcomes to increase subjective success.	Potentially good fit, if organization recognizes importance of traditional organizational recognition to employees, but also the need for agentic employees to have flexible options in their development and performance outcomes.
	Standardization	Likely to be the lowest-fit condition: Employees with agentic orientation seek a wider range of rewards than those related to the universalist meaning/assumptions of success categories.	Good fit: Universalist rewards (e.g., awards for achievement) fit with employees' goals (e.g. high value for formal organizational recognition).