

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Of discovery and dread: The importance of work challenges for international business travelers' thriving and global role turnover intentions

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Email: mdimitro@wu.ac.at**Summary**

As frequent travel across international borders has become common for an ever-increasing number of workers, it is essential to understand what helps these international business travelers (IBTs) thrive and embrace their global work responsibilities. This study's purpose is to examine the role of developmental opportunities (i.e., work role challenges) in helping IBTs see frequent travel as a predominantly beneficial experience. By integrating two theories of motivation—conservation of resources theory and the challenge-hindrance demands framework—I build a moderated mediation model of IBTs' intent to cease their global work responsibilities (i.e., global role turnover intentions). Using latent moderated structural equation modeling, I test the model on a sample of 204 IBTs collected at two time points. Results show that, through the psychological state of thriving at work, travel frequency has a negative indirect association with IBTs' global role turnover intentions when IBTs' work roles are challenging and a positive association when their work lacks challenge. This is primarily the case regarding the challenge of being responsible for others at work. The novelty of IBTs' work tasks is also a salient challenge but to a lesser extent. This study contributes to literatures on global work, work role design, and thriving.

KEYWORDS

conservation of resources (COR) theory, global role turnover intentions, international business travel, thriving, work role challenges

1 | INTRODUCTION

Although international leisure travel is weighted toward pleasure, traveling for work combines enriching experiences with frustration and hardship (Westman, 2004). International travel has become common because of employers' increasing need for a global presence. In particular, mobility is critical for international business travelers (IBTs) who make short, intermittent trips (Welch, Welch, & Worm, 2007). As organizations must increasingly attract and retain employees to travel internationally (Collings & Isichei, 2018), research into frequent international travel has grown (Shaffer, Kraimer, Chen, & Bolino, 2012). Still, neither what makes traveling enriching rather than depleting nor

when it motivates rather than deters IBTs to persevere in their global roles is clearly understood. Because IBTs often possess critical knowledge about foreign markets, company subsidiaries, and international clients (Oddou, Mendenhall, & Ritchie, 2000; Welch et al., 2007), failure to retain them in their global role could hinder organizations' ability to manage global functions.

Unfortunately, the factors that encourage IBTs to see frequent travel as a worthwhile and positive experience have garnered only sparse attention (see Mäkelä, Kinnunen, & Suutari, 2015; Niessen, Müller, Hommelhoff, & Westman, 2018). Moreover, past research was primarily focused on issues pertaining to the family/life domain (for a review see Saarenpää, 2015), the role of personal differences

(e.g., Mäkelä et al., 2015), and the influence of the organizational context (e.g., Ivancevich, Konopaske, & DeFrank, 2003). Thus, we do not know how to design IBTs' work roles to ensure that these global workers will see frequent travel as a valuable and developmental experience that is worth the effort. Because IBTs tend to pursue global work out of desire for growth and development (Demel & Mayrhofer, 2010; Shaffer et al., 2012), it is essential to shed light on the work role characteristics that help them thrive at work.

To this end, I propose and test a model of IBTs' global role turnover intentions, with a focus on the work role characteristics that help IBTs thrive despite the personal sacrifices associated with frequent international travel. In doing so, I integrate two theories of motivation: the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and the challenge and hindrance demands (CH) framework (Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling, & Boudreau, 2000).

The present study makes four important contributions. First, I add to the literature on international business travel by adopting a motivation-based lens to provide a nuanced assessment of the effects of travel frequency. In particular, I introduce work role challenges—work demands that create opportunities for employee development (Cavanaugh et al., 2000)—as conditions that bring out the advantages of frequent travel. Because work roles are composed of both the tasks that employees engage in and the social interactions with other work role actors (e.g., coworkers, clients, etc.; Katz & Kahn, 1978), challenge demands can be both task and relational based. Specifically, I look at work role novelty (i.e., task challenge) and responsibility for people (i.e., relational challenge). The focus is on these challenge demands because (a) they are representative examples of strongly developmental work opportunities and (b) are particularly suited to help IBTs see value in international travel. I demonstrate that as international business trips become more frequent, it is the IBTs with challenging and stimulating jobs who thrive and embrace global work. This brings to light the importance of the work role context as essential in determining the influence of international business travel.

Second, I advance research on IBTs in particular and employees in general by integrating principles from the CH framework with COR theory. Although COR theory has been applied in the IBT context (e.g., Westman, Etzion, & Chen, 2009), there are no studies based on the CH framework. This is unfortunate because this framework has been used extensively in the general management literature to shed light on the motivational effects of work demands (e.g., LePine, Podsakoff, & LePine, 2005; Podsakoff, LePine, & LePine, 2007) and could help us identify the conditions that make IBTs see frequent travel as beneficial. I also contribute to the general management literature, namely, I extend COR theory by positioning challenge demands as important contextual factors that can enhance the perceived value of resources—in particular of those resources produced in the course of doing work.

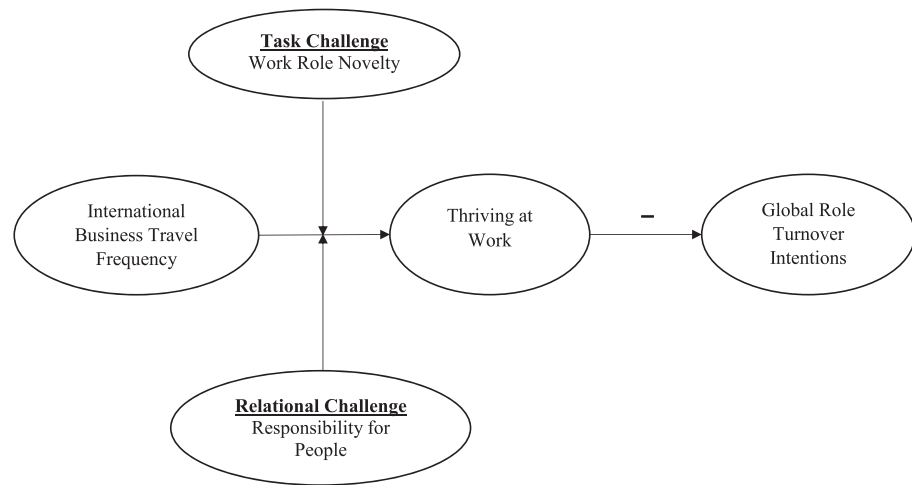
Third, in line with the motivational focus, I examine thriving at work (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005) as a central mediating mechanism connecting work characteristics to IBTs' intentions to cease their global work. Although thriving has not been examined in the context of IBTs, it is emerging as a

lynchpin in positive organizational scholarship, which focuses on promoting the development and flourishing of employees (e.g., Paterson, Luthans, & Jeung, 2014). Thriving at work represents an enriching psychological state, which subsumes both learning and vitality (Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson, & Garnett, 2012). Vitality is affective in nature and embodies feelings of energy and vigor, whereas learning is the cognitive aspect of thriving, characterized by a state of continuous improvement through acquiring and applying knowledge. As such, thriving comprehensively captures the “psychological experience of personal growth” (Porath et al., 2012, p. 251) and “forward movement in one's development” (Spreitzer, Lam, & Fritz, 2010, p. 135). Hence, it serves as an internal gauge that helps individuals assess whether their work context is conducive to their professional development—and if it is not, a lack of thriving signals that a change is in order (Spreitzer et al., 2005).

Finally, the insights from this study are also important for organizations that wish to ensure they have the necessary globally mobile workforce. Given that attracting and retaining global talent is essential for the performance of multinational entities (Collings & Isichei, 2018), this study elucidates which work role demands provide the right conditions to make global work an enriching experience that helps employees thrive and embrace their global roles.

2 | A MODEL OF IBTS' GLOBAL ROLE TURNOVER INTENTIONS

Instead of focusing solely on organizational turnover intentions (i.e., intention to quit), which employees can find harder to do because of various constraints (e.g., financial reasons, job availability, etc.), I examine *global role turnover intentions*. The construct captures IBTs' intent to redesign their work role (see Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, for a discussion on job crafting) to make it nonglobal and predominantly domestic. This is regardless of whether the change is a result of quitting, switching jobs within the organization, or refusing travel assignments while remaining in the same position. Global role turnover also differs from the more general construct of occupational change, which captures career transitions that involve a significant change in skills, knowledge, and work environment (Feldman & Ng, 2007). Employees who abandon roles as IBTs may retain their general occupation (e.g., a marketing specialist can still be a marketing specialist even without traveling internationally). Nevertheless, an IBT moving into a domestic work role can be as undesirable an outcome for an employer as the IBT quitting the organization or changing careers. All of these leave fewer employees who are willing to travel, impeding the organization's ability to acquire valuable global knowledge (Welch et al., 2007). Although this study does not assess actual organizational turnover or role change, intentions provide a strong approximation of future behavior, as they are the strongest predictor of turnover (Steel & Ovalle, 1984). Figure 1 presents the proposed model with global role turnover intentions as the outcome of interest. Below, I elaborate on the proposed relationships and their theoretical underpinnings.

FIGURE 1 Hypothesized model

3 | INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS TRAVEL THROUGH THE LENS OF COR THEORY

According to COR theory, individuals are motivated to protect and conserve the resources they have, but also seek to acquire new and valuable resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, and Westman (2014) define resources as those entities individuals perceive as helpful in achieving their goals. To acquire new resources, one needs to invest available resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014). For example, an aspiring pianist practices for long hours each day to improve her abilities; hence, she invests time and effort (i.e., available resources) to gain new skills (i.e., acquired resources). Through the lens of COR theory, international business travel is a *multifaceted experience*, which can simultaneously deplete resources—because it requires resource investment—and bring in additional resources (Niessen et al., 2018; Westman, 2004).

The more frequent the trips, the more IBTs must invest their available resources (e.g., time, energy, health, family support, etc.), which risks depleting them (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Frequent international travel not only makes travelers forego personal time (e.g., Demel & Mayrhofer, 2010) but also depletes their energy. Studies describe a plethora of issues—airport delays, jet lag, and demanding meetings, among others—that result in exhaustion (e.g., Demel & Mayrhofer, 2010; Striker, Dimberg, & Liese, 2000). Likewise, frequent travel can take a toll on a traveler's physical and mental health, as living a healthy lifestyle can be difficult (e.g., Demel & Mayrhofer, 2010; Striker et al., 2000). Frequent absences also disrupt life routines, making it harder for IBTs to maintain their social resources, such as support from family and friends. Traveling prevents IBTs from fulfilling family obligations and from participating in family activities (Demel & Mayrhofer, 2010). Travelers also find it difficult to fit social activities into their full schedule, hindering their ability to maintain friendships (Demel & Mayrhofer, 2010).

However, international travel also allows travelers to acquire new resources. Notably, traveling can enhance one's human capital resources. Oddou et al. (2000) suggest that international business

travel can be instrumental in developing cultural knowledge and acumen, as well as cognitive flexibility and the ability to manage uncertainty. In fact, travelers cite that one of the main benefits of traveling is the chance to learn about different cultures and working habits as this helps them develop intercultural competence and improves their ability to communicate and cooperate with diverse colleagues (e.g., Demel & Mayrhofer, 2010; Gustafson, 2014). More generally, IBTs see traveling as a way to develop their professional skills and abilities (e.g., Demel & Mayrhofer, 2010). Welch et al. (2007) observed that IBTs acquired broad knowledge about aspects of their job, foreign markets, and subsidiary operations. Furthermore, IBTs consider traveling as instrumental in developing personal resources like cognitive flexibility (Mayerhofer, Müller, & Schmidt, 2010). Beyond human capital, IBTs can gain social capital resources. Frequent travels allow IBTs to develop contacts abroad (Demel & Mayrhofer, 2010) and to expand their professional connections and social networks (Mayerhofer et al., 2010). Gustafson (2014) observed that travelers especially appreciate meeting colleagues and clients face-to-face, which helps them establish trust and build relationships. Finally, Bozkurt and Mohr (2011) report that international business travel is instrumental in developing broad and diverse professional networks, which IBTs use to gain access to expertise or advice.

Because of this duality of international business travel, I do not propose a direct relationship between travel frequency and thriving at work, as this could be either positive or negative. As a psychological state, thriving is not a fixed disposition and is largely shaped by the work context (Spreitzer et al., 2010). Because the resources produced in the course of doing work are thought to facilitate thriving (Spreitzer et al., 2005), resources acquired through international travel could potentially help individuals thrive. However, because frequent travel is also resource depleting, it may hinder IBTs' ability to thrive, because losing resources is undesirable and could be harmful (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Thus, it is important to understand the conditions under which the positives outweigh the negatives. In other words, when are the resources gained through international travel more salient than the resources lost?

4 | THE MODERATING EFFECT OF WORK ROLE CHALLENGES—INTEGRATING COR THEORY WITH THE CH FRAMEWORK

Resource investment is inherently risky because as finite resources are invested, they also are depleted (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Thus, the new resources gained need to be sufficiently valuable to warrant the investment (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Hence, IBTs are more likely to invest resources in frequent travel if they see it as beneficial, in other words, they need to perceive that the resources they acquire through travel are *valuable*. Although international travel can facilitate the acquisition of resources, their value is largely context dependent (Halbesleben et al., 2014). To this end, the CH framework (Cavanaugh et al., 2000) sheds light on the work role characteristics that can *enhance the value* of the acquired resources.

Like COR theory, the CH framework explicates how certain work role aspects can create a motivating work context (see LePine et al., 2005). The framework maintains that some work role demands—responsibility, task complexity, and so forth—provide opportunities for employee development and growth (i.e., challenge demands; Cavanaugh et al., 2000). It distinguishes these from demands seen as detrimental—role ambiguity, role conflict, and so forth (i.e., hindrance demands)¹. Challenge demands create a “high performance opportunity” (Webster, Beehr, & Love, 2011, p. 506) in which employees must use their skills and knowledge to successfully handle the challenge presented. Such circumstances stretch their cognitive and physical limits, but are ultimately motivating and stimulate personal and career growth (LePine et al., 2005). In this context, resources gain importance and become *valuable* because they help individuals to overcome challenges and achieve goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Halbesleben et al., 2014).

Following, a challenging work role can provide IBTs with opportunities to use and benefit from the resources gained through travel, making the acquired resources more valuable than the ones lost. This can help IBTs see that international travel is not “all for nothing”—transforming it into a meaningful activity. The more they undertake meaningful activities, the more likely they are to experience benefits (Hackman & Oldham, 1980), like thriving (Spreitzer et al., 2005). However, if IBTs' job does not challenge them, they may not regard the resources gained through travel as valuable. In addition, when resources are not used, they may degrade over time (Halbesleben et al., 2014), thus further decreasing their value. Consequently, IBTs may see travel as a largely taxing experience, with little benefit, that can hinder their thriving. Thus, whether travel frequency relates positively or negatively to IBTs' thriving likely depends on the level of work role challenges. Following, I examine the moderating influence of two work role challenges—that is, *work role novelty* (i.e., a task challenge) and *responsibility for people* (i.e., a relational challenge).

4.1 | Work role novelty and responsibility for people

The less employees can rely on prior knowledge, skills, or habits that they have used in their previous work roles to complete tasks in their present role, the higher is their work role novelty (Nicholson, 1984). On the other hand, responsibility for people captures the degree to which employees have to mentor, supervise, or develop other employees (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1980). Because they provide opportunities to demonstrate one's competence and abilities and for on-the-job development, both novelty and responsibility are work role challenges and have been associated with various positive outcomes (Kawai & Mohr, 2015; Mayes, Barton, & Ganster, 1991; McCauley, Ruderman, Ohlott, & Morrow, 1994; Nicholson, 1984; Nicholson & West, 1988; Schaubroeck & Fink, 1998).

I focus on these challenge demands because they are not only common across professions and industries but also likely to be particularly motivational for IBTs because they provide suitable opportunities to use the skills, knowledge, and other resources that IBTs acquire when traveling. Furthermore, not all work challenges are made equal. For example, it is unlikely that time pressure, another challenge demand (Cavanaugh et al., 2000), would help IBTs see frequent travel as beneficial. It is easy to imagine that thriving may be out of reach for those IBTs who must deliver results under tight deadlines while also having to travel frequently. In contrast, although novelty and responsibility can similarly stretch individuals beyond their capacity, they represent particularly developmental challenges (McCauley et al., 1994). Novel work roles render past routines and habits inadequate, which gives individuals an opportunity to try out new behaviors and ways of thinking, thus promoting development (McCauley et al., 1994; Nicholson, 1984). Likewise, work roles with high responsibility are characterized by greater visibility and a chance to make significant impact, which motivates employees to demonstrate their competence and to learn and grow professionally (McCauley et al., 1994). Furthermore, being responsible for others at work makes one accountable not only for their own actions but also for the work outcomes and success of fellow coworkers—raising the significance of this challenge demand.

4.2 | The moderating role of work role novelty

Resources that IBTs gain during their international experiences can prove useful in the context of high work role novelty. In the case of large multinational organizations, IBTs are able to learn about the processes and practices of subsidiaries by visiting them and thus building up a more complete picture of their work environment (Gustafson, 2014). Research shows that knowledge and understanding of the larger organization increases role clarity (e.g., Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003), making it easier for employees to execute tasks that are new to them. Furthermore, during their travels, IBTs also gain practical experience (Demel & Mayrhofer, 2010; Oddou et al., 2000) that can be instrumental to more easily handle novel tasks. The opportunity to connect with internationally dispersed colleagues, clients,

¹Because this study focuses on challenge demands as opportunities for development, I do not advance hypotheses about hindrance demands, but include them as control variables at the analysis stage because of their likely role as suppressors (e.g., Cavanaugh et al., 2000).

and other individuals can also be invaluable in handling novel situations. From internationally dispersed colleagues, IBTs get information on the best way to approach their tasks; they benefit from the expertise and advice of those with greater experience (Bozkurt & Mohr, 2011).

Thus, IBTs who face high levels of novelty at work may be more likely to perceive frequent international travel as beneficial and facilitative of their development and thus enter a state of thriving. On the other hand, when their day-to-day tasks are not novel and challenging, IBTs are not able to use and apply the resources they gain through traveling. As a result, frequent travel is more of a burden, a resource drain, and a hindrance to thriving.

Hypothesis 1. *Work role novelty moderates the relationship between international business travel frequency and thriving in such way that the relationship is positive when work role novelty is high and negative when it is low.*

4.3 | The moderating role of responsibility for people

Similarly, responsibility for people could also moderate the relationship between international business travel frequency and thriving. To be successful in mentoring and supervising others, one should be knowledgeable about the organization, have a wide range of skills and abilities, and have a broad professional network, among others (Allen & Poteet, 1999; Feeney & Bozeman, 2008)—all of which are human and social capital resources that could be enriched through international travel experiences. Global leadership competencies—such as understanding diverse viewpoints, managing uncertainty, and cultural sensitivity—could also be developed through international business travel (Oddou et al., 2000), along with improved communication skills and cultural acumen (Welch et al., 2007). IBTs can use these skills and knowledge to more effectively counsel colleagues and subordinates. Furthermore, the networks that IBTs built and maintain through repeated travels with others in the organization and in the host environment put them in a position of boundary spanners and disseminators of knowledge (Bozkurt & Mohr, 2011; Welch et al., 2007). This ability to acquire and share knowledge about foreign operations and the host-country context can be especially valuable when IBTs are responsible for developing and mentoring others.

Following, when IBTs have a high responsibility for people, they are likely to see frequent international travel as a beneficial experience that helps them grow, develop, and thrive. In contrast, IBTs for whom the relational aspects of their work roles are not challenging are likely to feel that frequent travel is a waste of their time and resources and a detriment to thriving.

Hypothesis 2. *Responsibility for people moderates the relationship between international business travel frequency and thriving, in such a way that the relationship is positive when responsibility for people is high and negative when it is low.*

4.4 | Thriving as a gauge—Bridging work role characteristics and global role turnover intentions

The intention to move to a nonglobal work role is captured in this study by IBTs' *global role turnover intentions*. In the context of IBTs, one would expect that a lack of thriving is likely to be related to a desire to cease their global responsibilities. When employees feel thwarted in their development, they seek to modify and change their work context to make it more favorable (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Thus, thriving serves as an *internal gauge* that helps employees evaluate their work context, through both cognitive (i.e., state of learning) and affective (i.e., state of energy) means (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Because thriving conveys to an individual an experience of continuous personal growth—feeling energized and motivated to learn—it is likely that IBTs who are thriving will want to continue those same work activities that created the sense that they are thriving (Spreitzer et al., 2005). Thus, it is not surprising that thriving is associated with employees proactively engaging in initiatives aimed to further facilitate their current career path (Porath et al., 2012) and is linked to lower turnover intentions (Kleine, Rudolph, & Zacher, 2019) and higher global employee retention (Ren, Yunlu, Shaffer, & Fodchuk, 2015). Thus

Hypothesis 3. *Thriving at work is negatively related to global role turnover intentions.*

As an internal gauge, thriving is likely a mediating mechanism between the work role characteristics (travel frequency and work challenges) and the IBTs' intention to leave their global role. Individuals use the state of thriving to assess whether their work context is sufficiently developmental. Based on this not necessarily “overly conscious and rational” evaluation, they decide whether a change is needed (Spreitzer et al., 2005, p. 545). Consequently, past research has viewed thriving at work as a proximal response to the work context and as an intermediary step to various behavioral and health outcomes (e.g., Porath et al., 2012; Ren et al., 2015; Spreitzer et al., 2005). Turnover intentions, on the other hand, are a distal and indirect outcome of work role characteristics (e.g., Podsakoff et al., 2007). As discussed, in the context of an insufficiently challenging work role, IBTs' perception of a net loss of resources as a result of frequent travel may hinder their ability to thrive. The lack of thriving motivates them to hold on to any valuable resources (e.g., time and energy) they have left. In these circumstances, IBTs may consider changing to a nonglobal work role as further travels would likely continue to deplete their resources without adding benefits. Through the lens of COR theory, this entire process represents a response to a loss of resources and the subsequent tendency to become more cautious and economical in investing one's remaining resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014).

Based on the above—and because Hypotheses 1 and 2 suggest that the relationship between travel frequency and thriving is positive or negative depending on the level of work role challenges—the indirect effect between travel frequency and global role turnover

intentions is likely to vary at levels of work role challenges (i.e., first-stage moderated mediation; see Edwards & Lambert, 2007). As travel frequency is not theoretically expected to relate to thriving without considering the moderating influence of work role challenges, there can also be no indirect effect if these are not considered. Following, I propose that

Hypothesis 4. *Work role novelty moderates the indirect effect of international business travel frequency on global role turnover intentions via thriving in such a way that the indirect effect is negative when work role novelty is high and positive when it is low.*

Hypothesis 5. *Responsibility for people moderates the indirect effect of international business travel frequency on global role turnover intentions via thriving in such a way that the indirect effect is negative when responsibility for people is high and positive when it is low.*

5 | METHOD

5.1 | Sample and data collection

I collected data through a voluntary online panel (Qualtrics). As compensation, participants received reward points redeemable for merchandise. This data collection method is useful for reaching employees across many industries and occupations, and its use has been increasing (Porter, Outlaw, Gale, & Cho, 2019). The survey was distributed to IBTs who are English-speaking adults residing in the United States. About 1,841 panel members attempted to complete the survey. Because the study focused on employees whose work requires international travel, I excluded those who did not work full time or had not traveled internationally in the previous year. I implemented survey-internal attention checks (e.g., time for survey completion and attention filter questions) to ensure that participants took the time needed to complete the survey. Data collection concluded when completed surveys reached 620. Capping the first wave of data collection at this number of participants permitted an adequate sample size to test the hypothesized model at an anticipated 30% response rate at Wave 2, while also controlling study costs. Wave 2 was conducted 1 month later, so as to introduce sufficient time lag between the assessment of predictor and criterion variables, to minimize common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). About 258 participants attempted to complete the second survey. After additional automatic and manual quality checks and deletion of respondents who had changed employers in the interim, the sample size decreased to 204 observations.

Most participants were male (59%), the average age was 40 years, and about 73% were married or in a committed relationship. Nearly half were middle managers (47%) and had been in a global work role requiring international travel for an average of 7 years. They were from diverse industries, such as manufacturing,

communication, and trade. The sample demographics were comparable with past studies on IBTs (e.g., Mäkelä et al., 2015), but women were somewhat more represented in this sample. The average trip lasted 6 days, 76% traveled at least one to two times per quarter, and the trips were primarily for training purposes and negotiations. The travel destinations were mostly Canada, the UK, and other European countries.

5.2 | Measures

I measured all independent variables and controls at Time 1 and thriving and global role turnover intentions at Time 2. All measures demonstrated good reliability.

5.2.1 | Global role turnover intentions

I adapted global role turnover intentions from Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh's (1979) three-item turnover intention scale. Instead of measuring intentions to exit an organization, I modified the scale to reflect the intention to move from a work role with global work responsibilities to a nonglobal work role. This was a 5-point Likert scale (1 [*strongly disagree*] to 5 [*strongly agree*]). A sample item was "I will probably try to move to a nonglobal work role in the next year." The Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = 0.94$.

5.2.2 | Thriving at work

Thriving is a higher order construct (Porath et al., 2012) that consists of two dimensions (i.e., learning and vitality) with five items each (1 [*strongly disagree*] to 5 [*strongly agree*]). A sample item from learning was "I am developing a lot as a person," and a sample item from vitality was "I am looking forward to each new day." Two items were reverse scored; I subsequently deleted these after the results of the confirmatory factor analysis. Following Porath et al. (2012) and others (e.g., Ren et al., 2015), I aggregated the two dimensions to reflect the overall thriving construct ($\alpha = 0.92$).

5.2.3 | Responsibility for people

I adapted responsibility for people from Ivancevich and Matteson's (1980) scale to assess the degree to which IBTs were responsible for managing, mentoring, and/or counseling others in the organization as opposed to explicitly asking participants to rate their level of stress caused by being responsible for people at work, as in the original scale. This modification allowed the scale to better measure the underlying demand without confounding it with the experience of stress. The scale consisted of five items (1 [*strongly disagree*] to 5 [*strongly agree*]), and a sample item was "My responsibilities in this organization are more for people than for things" ($\alpha = 0.86$).

5.2.4 | Work role novelty

Work role novelty was measured with a scale from Nicholson and West (1988) and consisted of three items ($\alpha = 0.88$). Participants had to rate the degree to which the requirements of their present job differed from those of their previous job (1 [not at all] to 5 [to a great extent]) relative to the tasks involved, required skills, and methods used. I dropped an item from the original four-item scale because it focused on interactions with others at work.

5.2.5 | International business travel frequency

I measured travel frequency with the question "How many times did you travel internationally for business in the last 12 months?" Answer options were 1 (one to three times in the last 12 months), 2 (one to two times each quarter), 3 (one to three times each month), and 4 (one to three times each week). An interval scale like this more effectively captures the prominence of international business travel in the IBTs' work role, as opposed to assessing the exact number of trips during the past year, given that the latter does not necessarily reflect how frequently IBTs travel.

5.2.6 | Control variables

I considered sex (0 [male], 1 [female]), marital status (0 [married or in a committed relationship], 1 [not married or in a committed relationship]), and the number of years IBTs had traveled internationally for business (i.e., years traveling) as demographic controls. The longer IBTs have traveled, the more likely they are to be comfortable in their global work role. I also measured trip duration (i.e., average duration of the international trips) as studies often assessed it along with travel frequency to more comprehensively capture international travel (e.g., Mäkelä et al., 2015).

Given that disruptions to family life are ubiquitous in this type of global work (Shaffer et al., 2012), I assessed work-family conflict as it may drive IBTs to quit their global roles. This was a 5-item scale (1 [strongly disagree] to 5 [strongly agree]; $\alpha = 0.94$) from Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian (1996). A sample item is "Due to work-related duties, I have to make changes to my plans for family activities." In line with past studies (e.g., Shaffer et al., 2016), I directed participants to treat the term "family" as whomever they define as members of their family.

Cavanaugh et al. (2000) observed that hindrance demands have a suppression effect and need to be included as control variables so that challenge demands can demonstrate strong positive effects on valued outcomes. Thus, I considered two hindrance demands: the task demand of work role overload and the relational demand of dysfunctional interpersonal conflict (see Ilies, Johnson, Judge, & Keeney, 2011; LePine et al., 2005). Work role overload (Bolino & Turnley, 2005) consisted of three items (1 [strongly disagree] to 5 [strongly agree]). A sample item is "It often seems like I have too much work for one person

to do" ($\alpha = 0.77$). I assessed dysfunctional interpersonal conflict with four items (Amason, 1996). Participants had to think about their work relationships and assess the affective interpersonal dynamics when working on daily tasks, solving problems, or making decisions. The responses ranged from 1 (none) to 5 (a great deal) ($\alpha = 0.95$). A sample item is "How much personal friction is there?"

Finally, I also considered global role turnover intentions at Time 1 as a potential control variable in relation to the dependent variable of global role turnover intentions at Time 2. The Cronbach's alpha at Time 1 was 0.94, which is the same as for the Time 2 measure.

6 | RESULTS

6.1 | Preliminary analyses

I conducted a confirmatory factor analysis with a robust maximum likelihood estimation in Mplus 8 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998) to assess the measurement structure of all latent variables: global role turnover intentions (Times 1 and 2), thriving, responsibility for people, work role novelty, work-family conflict, work role overload, and dysfunctional interpersonal conflict. The fit of this 8-factor model was only marginally acceptable ($N = 204$; $\chi^2 = 1,071.99$, $p < .001$; $df = 566$; comparative fit index [CFI] = 0.90; root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.07; standardized root mean square residual [SRMR] = 0.10). In addition, the loadings of the two reverse-scored items in the thriving scale were near or below the recommended 0.40 threshold (Hinkin, 1998) and had cross loadings on other factors. Removing these items significantly improved model fit ($N = 204$; $\chi^2 = 761.52$, $p < .001$; $df = 499$; CFI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.05; SRMR = 0.05), all items had loadings above 0.50, and there were no cross loadings. A 9-factor model where thriving was separated into learning and vitality had the best fit ($N = 204$; $\chi^2 = 693.57$, $p < .001$; $df = 491$; CFI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.05; SRMR = 0.05). However, the two thriving dimensions were highly correlated at .83 (DeVellis, 2012). In light of this and because thriving was validated as a higher order construct (Porath et al., 2012), I aggregated these dimensions into an overall measure of thriving (e.g., Ren et al., 2015).

Table 1 presents means, standard deviations (SDs), correlations, and reliabilities of the study variables. In the hypotheses tests, I included only the controls significantly correlated with the endogenous variables. These were years traveling, work role overload, dysfunctional interpersonal conflict, work-family conflict, and global role turnover intentions (Time 1). Eliminating uncorrelated controls maintains power for detecting significant effects and reduces the chances of spurious relationships that may inflate Type I errors (Becker, 2005). As expected, travel frequency was not significantly correlated with global role turnover intentions (Time 2) or thriving. However, it had a small significant and positive correlation to turnover intentions at Time 1, which though becomes not significant after accounting for the control variables (see Table SA1 in the supporting information). In addition, both work role novelty and responsibility for people significantly and positively related to thriving, supporting the use of these

TABLE 1 Means, standard deviations, internal consistency reliabilities, and correlations for study variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Global role turnover intentions (Time 2)	2.60	1.20	(.94)												
2. Thriving (Time 2)	4.17	0.63	-.34***	(.92)											
3. Responsibility for people	3.57	0.91	.05	.31***	(.86)										
4. Work role novelty	3.53	1.06	.12	.21**	.38***	(.88)									
5. International travel frequency	2.23	0.93	.06	.09	.22**	.24***	–								
6. Sex ^{a,c}	0.41	0.49	.03	.08	.01	.05	-.09	–							
7. Marital status ^{b,c}	0.28	0.45	.05	-.09	-.09	-.06	-.05	-.01	–						
8. Years traveling	7.17	6.35	-.19**	.15*	.11	-.18*	-.05	-.03	-.13	–					
9. Trip duration (days) ^c	6.00	3.82	-.02	.10	-.03	-.04	-.15*	-.01	-.01	.16*	–				
10. Work-family conflict	2.93	1.15	.45***	-.16*	.18**	.27***	.13	.08	-.05	-.15*	.02	(.94)			
11. Work role overload	3.12	1.01	.45***	-.16*	.17*	.18**	.09	.04	.01	-.08	-.10	.52***	(.77)		
12. Dysfunctional interpersonal conflict	2.40	1.19	.47***	-.15*	.22**	.27***	.20**	.10	-.02	-.10	-.02	.58***	.46***	(.95)	
13. Global role turnover intentions (Time 1)	2.50	1.26	.61***	-.23**	.11	.24***	.15*	.09	.06	-.17*	-.01	.50***	.57***	.58***	(.94)

Note. N = 204. Internal consistency reliabilities are in parentheses on the diagonal.

Abbreviation: SD, standard deviation.

^a0 = male, 1 = female.

^b0 = married/committed relationship, 1 = not married/committed relationship.

^cVariables not included in the final analysis.

**p* < .05.

***p* < .01.

****p* < .001.

stressors as representative of typical challenge stressors. These correlations were stronger when I controlled for the hindrance demands of work role overload and dysfunctional interpersonal conflict, demonstrating the suppression effect of hindrance demands (see Table SA1).

6.2 | Hypotheses tests

To account for measurement error, because—with the exception of travel frequency—all hypotheses involve latent constructs, I analyzed the model using structural equation modeling (SEM). The proposed moderated mediation model makes it necessary to estimate an interaction between an observed variable (i.e., travel frequency) and a latent variable (i.e., work role novelty or responsibility for people). There are various methods for testing such interactions with SEM (see Cheung & Lau, 2017; Sardeshmukh & Vandenberg, 2017, for an in-depth discussion), but the most recent and unbiased approach uses latent moderated structural equation modeling (LMS; Cheung & Lau, 2017). The LMS approach in Mplus requires the use of a maximum likelihood estimation in conjunction with an estimation of random intercepts and slopes in combination with numerical integration. This approach is superior to past methods for estimating latent variable interactions and is preferable over regression, as the latter does not take into account measurement error, which can bias results (Cheung & Lau, 2017).

Due to many indicators for some constructs and the computational intensity of the LMS approach in complex models, I created latent variables by averaging the items for each scale to form a single indicator per scale. I then set each single indicator to load onto the respective latent factor with a loading set to 1 (Kline, 2011). To account for measurement error, I fixed the error variance for each single indicator at the $(1 - \text{scale reliability}) \times \text{factor variance}$ (Kline, 2011). This single-indicator approach is used often in SEM studies to reach an appropriate sample size-to-parameter ratio (e.g., Foulk, Woolum, &

Erez, 2016). In the context of LMS, the single-indicator approach—compared with a model with all factor items—demonstrates similar accuracy, takes substantially less time to calculate, and provides slightly greater power in detecting interaction effects (Cheung & Lau, 2017). As the relative influence of one moderator over the other was not of interest, I assessed the moderated mediation effects in two separate models, Models 1 and 2 (see Figures 2 and 3 respectively; additional results provided in Table SB1). In each SEM model, I accounted for the main effects of both moderator variables (work role novelty and responsibility for people). Because in SEM, latent variables have a mean of zero (Hayduk, 1987), I centered the observed variables (i.e., travel frequency and years traveling) for consistency and to ease interpretation (Aiken & West, 1991; Muthén & Muthén, 2012).

Evaluating model fit in LMS is achieved by first estimating a baseline model that does not contain the interaction effect. Because an LMS model containing an interaction effect does not provide overall model fit indices (Cheung & Lau, 2017), its fit is assessed in comparison with this baseline model using the log-likelihood difference test ($\Delta - 2LL$; Maslowsky, Jager, & Hemken, 2015). A significant change in the log likelihood after the addition of the interaction effect indicates that the model containing the interaction is preferable over the baseline model. The baseline model had a marginally acceptable fit to the data ($N = 204$; $\chi^2 = 41.95$, $p < .001$; $df = 15$; CFI = 0.95; RMSEA = 0.09; SRMR = 0.08). Because the sign of the relationship between travel frequency and thriving depends on the level of the moderators (i.e., an example of disordinal interaction), a baseline model without the interaction effects may not have a good fit (Sardeshmukh & Vandenberg, 2017). Next, I estimated the two models containing the interaction effect of work role novelty (i.e., Model 1) and of responsibility for people (i.e., Model 2). The log-likelihood difference test confirmed that both models are to be preferred over the baseline model ($\Delta - 2LL[1] = 4.26$, $p < .05$ for Model 1; $\Delta - 2LL[1] = 8.14$, $p < .01$ for Model 2).

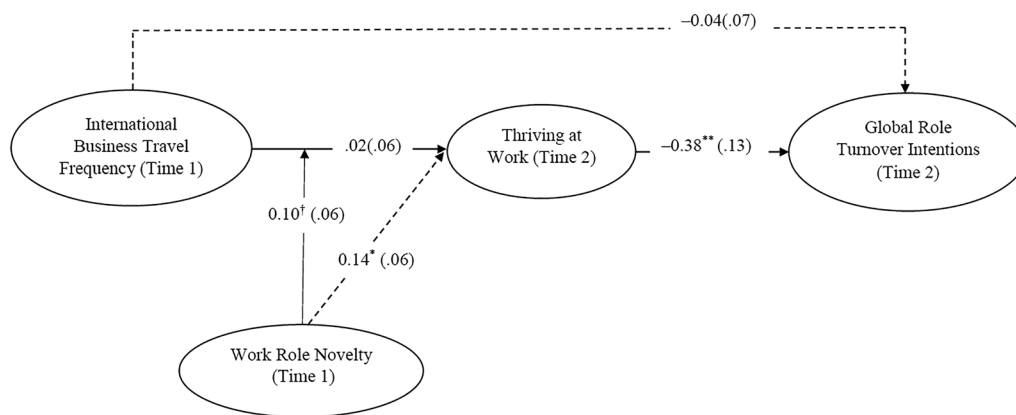


FIGURE 2 Moderated mediation with work role novelty (Model 1). $N = 204$. Unstandardized path coefficients with their standard errors in parentheses. The control variables of years traveling, work–family conflict, work role overload, and dysfunctional interpersonal conflict are set to relate to both thriving and global role turnover intentions. Global role turnover intentions (Time 2) is also regressed on global role turnover intentions (Time 1), and thriving is also regressed on responsibility for people. For clarity purposes, these relationships as well as the correlations among exogenous latent variables are not presented. The dotted lines represent additional paths that are not hypothesized but are needed to test moderated mediation. † $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

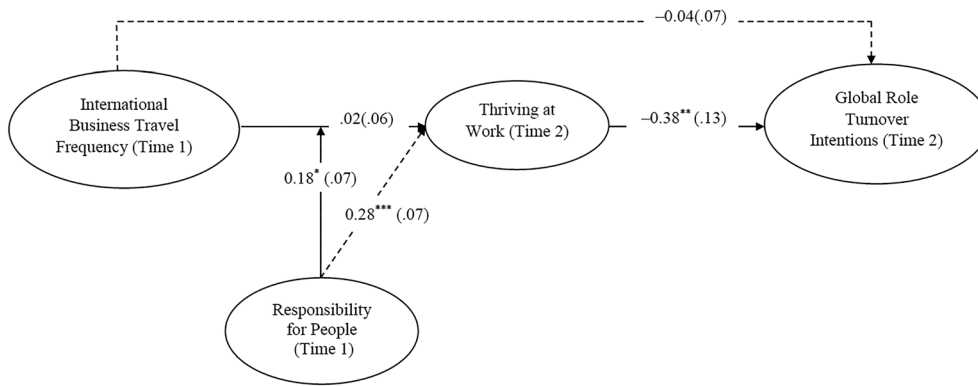


FIGURE 3 Moderated mediation with responsibility for people (Model 2). $N = 204$. Unstandardized path coefficients with their standard errors in parentheses. The control variables of years traveling, work–family conflict, work role overload, and dysfunctional interpersonal conflict are set to relate to both thriving and global role turnover intentions. Global role turnover intentions (Time 2) is also regressed on global role turnover intentions (Time 1), and thriving is also regressed on work role novelty. For clarity purposes, these relationships as well as the correlations among exogenous latent variables are not presented. The dotted lines represent additional paths that are not hypothesized but are needed to test moderated mediation. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Hypothesis 1 suggested that work role novelty moderates the relationship between international business travel frequency and thriving. The moderating effect of work role novelty was not significant at the .05 p value level, but was below a p value of .10 ($b = 0.10$, standard error [SE] = 0.06, $p = .070$; see Figure 2). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was not supported. Similarly, Hypothesis 2 proposed that responsibility for people moderates the relationship between travel frequency and thriving. This moderating effect was significant ($b = 0.18$, SE = 0.07, $p = .016$; see Figure 3). The relationship between travel frequency and thriving was positive and significant when responsibility for people was high (+1 SD from the mean;

$b = 0.17$, SE = 0.08, $p = .034$). However, this relationship was negative but not significant when responsibility was low (−1 SD from the mean; $b = -0.13$, SE = 0.09, $p = .132$). When responsibility for people was very low (i.e., evaluated at −2 SD from the mean), the relationship between travel frequency and thriving was significant ($b = -0.28$, SE = 0.14, $p = .044$; see Figure 4). Taken together, these results support Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 3 held that the relationship between thriving and global role turnover intentions would be negative. Because there was indeed a significant negative relationship ($b = -0.38$, SE = 0.13, $p = .004$), this hypothesis is supported.

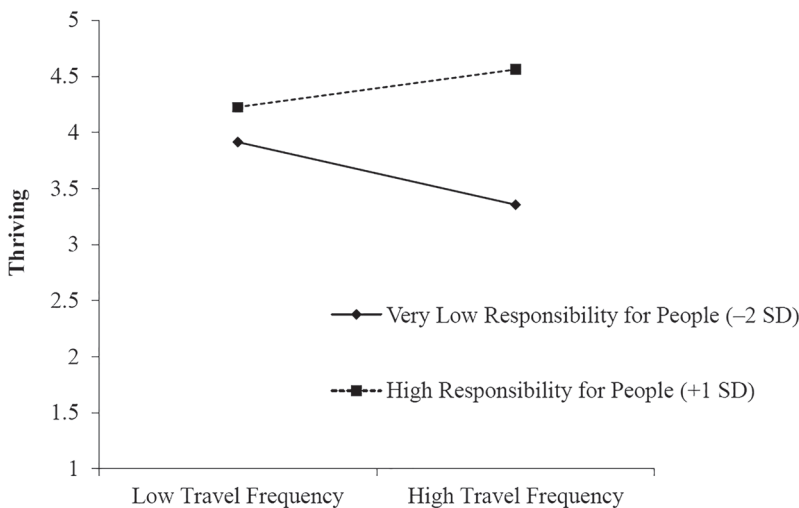


FIGURE 4 Moderating effect of responsibility for people. Simple slopes at −2 SD/+1 SD of responsibility for people are significant at $p < .05$

Simple slopes at −2 SD/+1 SD of responsibility for people are significant at $p < 0.05$.

Hypotheses 4 and 5 specified moderated mediation effects. I used bootstrapping ($k = 10,000$) and bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals (BCCI) to assess these effects. Bootstrapping is preferable because there is a general agreement that indirect effects do not follow a normal sampling distribution and bootstrapping does not assume normality (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004). The significance of moderated mediation effects is demonstrated through the index of moderated mediation (Hayes, 2015), which captures the change in the indirect effect of travel frequency on global role turnover intentions through thriving for a unit of change in the challenge demand moderators. If the confidence interval for this index does not contain zero, the indirect effects at various levels of the moderator are deemed significantly different (Cheung & Lau, 2017; Hayes, 2015).

Hypothesis 4 proposed that work role novelty moderates the indirect effect of travel frequency via thriving on global role turnover intentions. The index of moderated mediation was significant (index of moderated mediation = -0.04 , $SE = 0.02$; 95% BCCI [$-.096$, $-.003$]), which is possible even in the absence of a significant simple moderation effect for work role novelty (Hayes, 2015). The significant index of moderated mediation provides evidence for the existence of a moderation of the indirect effect. However, the indirect relationship between frequency of international business travel and global role turnover intentions was not significant at the different levels of work role novelty. That is, it failed to reach significance at high levels of work role novelty (+1 SD ; $b = -0.05$; $SE = 0.03$; 95% BCCI [$-.134$, $.000$]), at low levels (-1 SD ; $b = 0.03$; $SE = 0.03$; 95% BCCI [$-.024$, $.104$]), and at very low levels (-2 SD ; $b = 0.07$; $SE = 0.05$; 95% BCCI [$-.012$, $.187$]). The very high level (+2 SD from the mean) was outside the range of the variable and thus is not presented. These results at least partially support Hypothesis 4, given that the index of moderated mediation was significant—demonstrating that the nature of the indirect effect indeed depends on the level of work role novelty—and the conditional indirect effects were in the hypothesized direction, despite their lack of significance.

Hypothesis 5 proposed that responsibility for people moderates the indirect effect of travel frequency via thriving on global role turnover intentions. Here, the index of moderated mediation was significant (index = -0.07 , $SE = .03$; 95% BCCI [$-.156$, $-.022$]). The indirect relationship between travel frequency and global role turnover intentions was significantly negative when responsibility for people was high (+1 SD ; $b = -0.06$; $SE = 0.04$; 95% BCCI [$-.171$, $-.013$]). This means that when IBTs have high responsibility for people, the higher the frequency of traveling, the more likely they are to experience thriving and to have lower intentions to leave their global work role. However, the indirect relationship was not significant when responsibility for people was low (-1 SD), as expected after the results from the simple interaction test. Nevertheless, when responsibility for people was very low (-2 SD), the indirect relationship was positive and significant ($b = 0.11$; $SE = 0.05$; 95% BCCI [$.026$, $.257$]). That is, when IBTs' responsibility for people is very low, the more frequently they travel, the less they thrive and the more likely they are to want to leave their global work role. These results support Hypothesis 5.

7 | DISCUSSION

Given the growing demand for globally mobile employees, it is necessary to understand what motivates IBTs to embrace their work roles, which—due to frequent international travel—are often associated with high personal and social costs (Shaffer et al., 2012). To this end, this study provided support for a theory-based model of global role turnover intentions. Specifically, it brings forth the importance of work role challenges in making international travel worthwhile to IBTs.

7.1 | Theoretical implications

This study makes several important theoretical contributions. First, it shifts the focus of IBT research away from work–life issues, personality, and the organizational context to IBTs' work roles. In doing so, the study provides evidence for the importance of work role design in fostering positive outcomes for IBTs. Although the focus on the work role characteristics that make up a motivating work role is dominant in the organizational behavior literature (Oldham & Hackman, 2010), this has not sparked sufficient interest among scholars studying IBTs. This is unfortunate because global work and international business travel in particular are relatively new work contexts that are becoming common in today's globalized world. Thus, we should not only seek to apply theories of work role design to the global work context but also use this relatively novel setting to provide new insights that can enrich and extend traditional theories on work role characteristics (Grant, Fried, Parker, & Frese, 2010).

To this end, I examined the interplay and the resulting synergy between one unique, multifaceted aspect of IBT work roles (i.e., international business travel) and two work role challenges that are common across work contexts (i.e., work role novelty and responsibility for people). Responsibility for people enhanced IBTs' view of frequent travel as a worthwhile activity that helps them thrive, while very low responsibility rendered traveling as detrimental to thriving. A similar pattern was observed with work role novelty, although the simple interaction test failed to reach significance at the .05 level. It is possible that novelty is more relevant to organizational newcomers, as they may find the differences between their current and past tasks more salient (Nicholson, 1984). However, additional analysis incorporating organizational tenure in a triple interaction with travel frequency and novelty did not yield significant results (see Table SC1 in the online appendix). It may be that IBTs see relational challenges as more salient than task challenges. In this day and age, the social aspects of work might have become more prominent than they were in the past because of changes to the way we work (Oldham & Hackman, 2010).

Second, I contribute to both the IBT literature and the general management literature by integrating two theories of motivation: COR theory and the CH framework. COR theory and related theories such as the job demands–resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) have been applied in research on business travel and IBTs (e.g., Dimitrova, Chia, Shaffer, & Tay-Lee, in press; Mäkelä &

Kinnunen, 2018; Niessen et al., 2018). However, these studies emphasized the need to have additional “external” resources (e.g., organizational and supervisor support) to make travel beneficial as opposed to detrimental. In contrast, by focusing on work challenges, I examine when the resources *acquired in the course of doing work* (i.e., engaging in frequent travel) become salient and valuable. I demonstrate that as long as there is synergy between frequent travel and work role demands, additional “external” resources may not be necessary for IBTs to thrive. This supports Spreitzer et al.’s (2005) assertion that resources produced in the course of doing work can help employees thrive, even in contexts that lack the more traditionally studied external resources. However, this does not imply that additional resources will not be helpful. For example, preventive coping—preemptively accumulating a surplus of resources (e.g., social and family support)—can highlight the positive effects of frequent travel (Niessen et al., 2018). Moreover, my study adds to the recent interest in explicating the links between COR theory and the CH framework (e.g., O’Brien & Beehr, 2019). It demonstrates that challenge demands are not simply motivational in their own right, but could be positioned within COR theory as important contextual factors that enhance the value of resources acquired in the course of doing work. Thus, challenge demands can encourage individuals to continue investing in the work activities that have helped them gain these resources in the first place. This further expands recent views that resources become salient when individuals face high levels of challenge demands (see Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Finally, I extend research on IBTs and global work in general, by highlighting thriving as an intervening mechanism that connects work role characteristics with IBTs’ intentions to continue in their global roles. Given that IBTs often pursue this line of global work out of a desire for personal and career growth (Demel & Mayrhofer, 2010; Shaffer et al., 2012), we should not overlook thriving as a factor influencing their intentions to continue to engage in global work. Thriving is also relevant to research on other global employees, such as expatriates, who are motivated for similar reasons (Shaffer et al., 2012). Unfortunately, thriving, with its antecedents and outcomes, remains largely unexamined in this context (for an exception see Ren et al., 2015) and could thus be the subject of future research in this area.

7.2 | Practical implications

Perhaps, the most important practical implication of this study is the call to design IBTs’ work roles in a way that is, first and foremost, interesting and stimulating. For example, IBTs can be given greater responsibility for others at work even when they are not in a supervising role. One way to do this is to encourage them to mentor their colleagues as part of formally organized mentoring programs. Task novelty can also be enhanced by purposefully giving IBTs the chance to get involved with new projects, in particular those that do not allow them to rely on past habits and abilities. Employees may also choose to proactively redesign and craft their work roles to provide themselves with the necessary work role challenges. However, it may be

harder for IBTs who are not thriving to realize that they can improve their situation by seeking more challenges instead of opting out of their global responsibilities. Due to the primacy of resource loss (Halbesleben et al., 2014), it is more likely that IBTs would be more focused on curtailing the loss of resources they incur through international travel.

Furthermore, it is essential that managers and organizations recognize that IBTs who are not thriving are likely to consider quitting their global role responsibilities. Because thriving subsumes a state of continuous learning and vitality, organizations that foster and promote an environment where IBTs are able to develop and grow may be more successful in creating a sustainable workforce of global employees. Although thriving is a “tool” that individuals can use to monitor their own progress, organizations can also gauge employee thriving. For example, they can include a self-assessed measure of thriving within their annual employee satisfaction surveys.

It is worth noting that international business travel often entails traveling by air. This is an essential consideration for organizations not just from a cost perspective but also in light of worldwide efforts to reduce the carbon footprint of travel (e.g., WBSCD/WRI, 2004). Although alternatives exist, such as computer facilitated communication, the perception of organizations and employees is that face-to-face on site interactions are often irreplaceable (Oddou et al., 2000; Welch et al., 2007). It is necessary to clarify that this study does not encourage frequent international travel, but that if employees do have to travel internationally, their work roles need to be sufficiently challenging to justify at least in part the personal, economic, and social costs.

7.3 | Limitations and future research

This study has limitations that represent avenues for future research. Although self-reports are useful in assessing perceptions (e.g., thriving; Spector, 1994), problems due to common method bias may occur (Podsakoff et al., 2012). However, I assessed the endogenous variables (i.e., thriving and global role turnover intentions) approximately 1 month after the work role characteristics. In addition, although travel frequency was self-reported, it is not a psychological construct; hence, it is fairly objective. Furthermore, common method bias primarily inflates main effects, which makes the detection of interactions more difficult (Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010). This was not an issue in this study, as significant moderating effects were observed.

Second, although the directionality of the relationships between work role characteristics, thriving and global role turnover intentions is theoretically driven and justified, the study design precludes causal interpretations. Even though the analysis included the time lag for global role turnover intentions along with other relevant control variables, it is not possible to provide an unequivocal empirical support for causality. To make causal inferences, future research may conduct a randomized field experiment. One way to do this is through organizational intervention where participants are randomly assigned to different levels of travel frequency and/or challenge demands. It

would also be beneficial if the model were tested using a repeated-measures design with data collected at three points in time.

Third, future research should consider other factors in and outside of work. For example, personal preferences may influence how IBTs respond to frequent travel in combination with challenge demands. Those with an international career orientation may be better “matched” to their global work roles (Mäkelä et al., 2015) and may experience more benefits from traveling, as may those with compatible lifestyle preferences (Mayerhofer et al., 2010). Because this study's focus was the work context, I only controlled for the potential disruptions to family life (i.e., work–family conflict). However, because the family domain may strongly impact work-related decisions (e.g., accepting more responsibilities; Greenhaus & Powell, 2012), future research should examine the influence of family factors on IBTs' intentions to remain in global roles. Additionally, it was beyond the scope of this study to explore the influence of every kind of work role challenge. Thus, although I considered two representative and context-appropriate examples of developmental challenges, there could be others with similar effects. For example, task complexity and other cognitive demands may likewise serve as high-performance opportunities where IBTs can use the acquired through travel resources.

Fourth, some international business trips may be more developmental than others, making them more conducive to resource acquisition (e.g., Oddou et al., 2000). To check whether the developmental nature of the trips plays a role, I compared participants who mainly traveled for training and learning new skills (33% of the sample) with those who traveled for other reasons. It could be that in the context of a challenging work role, the positive relationship between travel frequency and thriving will be stronger when the trips are primarily for development—implying a triple interaction between frequency, work role challenges, and trip purpose. However, there was no support for such an interaction effect (see Table SD1). Furthermore, the correlations between trip purpose and the outcomes of thriving ($r = .09, p = .23$) and global role turnover intentions ($r = .06, p = .38$) were not significant. Thus, there is no evidence that the trip purpose plays a meaningful role. Furthermore, the model set forth in this paper does not hinge on the *level* of acquired resources but on the work role characteristics that make these resources *valuable*. This point was made explicit in Halbesleben et al.'s (2014) extension of COR theory: “it is not necessarily the one with the most resources that thrives but the one that is best able to allocate those resources to maximize their fit with the environment” (p. 1339).

Finally, I do not assess actual global role turnover. Even though intentions are the strongest predictor of turnover (Steel & Ovalle, 1984), it is still worthwhile to see whether global role turnover intentions are associated with actual role change within 6 months or even a year.

8 | CONCLUSION

Grounded in two theories of motivation, this study provides evidence for a model of the global role turnover intentions of IBTs. Results

indicate that travel frequency is indirectly associated with IBTs' intentions to abandon their global work roles, whether this indirect relationship is positive or negative hinges largely on the level of work role challenges. Study results further point to the importance of thriving as an intervening mechanism. This study emphasizes that travel may become detrimental when IBTs are stuck in a work role that lacks opportunities for growth and development, that is, a work role that is just not stimulating.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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