

Rodrigo Mello

Pathways to Triumph

Antecedents and Outcomes of Expatriate Careers Success



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Tiivistelmä

Tässä väitöskirjassa tutkitaan ulkomailla työskentelyn vaikutuksia henkilön uramenestykseen sekä analysoidaan tekijöitä, jotka vaikuttavat menestyksen asteeseen. Akateeminen tutkimus käsittelee usein ulkomailla työskentelijöitä homogeenisena ryhmänä ja keskittyy yritysten ulkomaille lähettämien expatriaattien uramenestykseen kotimaahan paluun jälkeen. Samalla kuitenkin merkittävä osa ulkomailla työskentelevistä henkilöistä on hakeutunut itsenäisesti töihin ulkomaille ja kotimaahan paluun sijaan monet jatkavat työskentelyä uusissa tehtävissä ulkomailla. Tästä johtuen on tarvetta lisätä ymmärrystä ulkomailla työskentelevien uramenestyksen edellytyksistä erilaiset tilanteet huomioiden. Aiempien tutkimusten tulokset ovat lisäksi epäyhtenäisiä paljastaen sekä positiivisia että negatiivisia uravaikutuksia.

Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena onkin tarjota kattava käsitys niistä tekijöistä, jotka vaikuttavat eri tyyppisten ulkomailla työskentelevien henkilöiden uramenestykseen pidemmällä aikavälillä ulkomaan työkokemuksen jälkeen. Lisäksi työssä käsitellään muita laajempia seurauksia ulkomailla työskentelyn uravaikutuksista. Tutkimuksessa on mukana henkilöitä, jotka ovat palanneet kotimaahansa sekä niitä, jotka ovat lähteneet uudelleen ulkomaille töihin tai päättäneet jäädä samaan paikkaan pidemmäksi aikaa töihin. Samoin mukana on itsenäisesti ulkomaille töihin hakeutuneita henkilöitä sekä yritysten ulkomaille lähettämiä työntekijöitä.

Väitöskirjan ensimmäinen artikkeli on systemaattinen kirjallisuuskatsaus ulkomaantyöskentelyn uravaikutuksia koskevista empiirisistä tutkimuksista. Artikkelissa tunnistetaan tutkimuksessa käytettyjä teorioita sekä tutkimusten tuloksia. Tavoitteena on identifioida tulevaisuuden tutkimustarpeita sekä teorioita, joita ei ole vielä riittävästi hyödynnetty uratutkimuksessa kansainvälisessä kontekstissa. Väitöskirjan empiiriset artikkelit soveltavat valittuja moderneja urateorioita ulkomailla työskentelyn uravaikutusten analysoimiseen. Nämä teorat korostavat kansainvälisessä työssä oppimiseen liittyviä kehityksellisiä näkökohtia, sillä ulkomailla työskentelyn ovat havaittu olevan erittäin laajasti kehittävä kokemus, jolla on merkittäviä uravaikutuksia henkilö työuraan myös pitkällä aikavälillä.

Avainsanat: kansainvälinen työ, ulkomailla työskentely, expatriaatti, paluumuutto, objektiivinen ja subjektiivinen uramenestys, proaktiivinen käyttäytyminen, työn ja henkilön yhteensopivuus, urapääoma, urapolku, uravaihe.

Abstract

This dissertation explores antecedents and outcomes of expatriate career success, considering different types of expatriates and the myriad career trajectories available in today's interconnected world. Academic research often treats expatriates as a homogeneous group. That approach can downplay the transformative experiences of a diverse group accumulating a range of international work experience. This has led to studies with inconclusive findings, revealing both positive (e.g., Ramaswami et al., 2016) and negative career effects (e.g., Benson & Pattie, 2008). As an outcome, there is a need to increase our understanding of the antecedents of expatriate career success. This research aims to convey a comprehensive understanding of the factors driving expatriate career success in the context of different countries, organisations, career paths, and roles. The research addresses knowledge gaps concerning both company assignees and self-initiated expatriates. To do so, it covers the career paths of those who repatriate to their home-country and remain there, those who re-expatriate to continue their career in another country, and those who extend expatriation to continue to work in the same country.

The dissertation reviews empirical studies on the career impacts of expatriation to identify the antecedents of expatriate career success and the outcomes that follow. The constituent articles of the dissertation then apply modern career theories to identify the antecedents of expatriates' career success following international work experience. Such theories underscore the developmental facets integral to high-density global work and how they influence the career success of different types of expatriates.

Keywords: High-Density Global Work, Expatriation, Repatriation, Re-expatriation, Objective and Subjective Career Success, Assigned Expatriates, Self-initiated Expatriates, Proactive Behaviour, Job Fit, Career Adaptability, Career Capital, Career Path, Career Stage.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

More than ten years ago, I left my familiar surroundings in Brazil and ventured into the unknown landscapes of Europe. This journey was not just about a geographic move; it was a metamorphosis that involved transitioning from a domestic to an international career. I found myself confronted with challenges that demanded resources – both external and internal – that I initially lacked. My research became more than an academic endeavour; it was a coping mechanism that allowed me to understand the transition and find the motivation to persevere. The transformation was so profound that if I were to meet the person I was when I started, we would not recognise each other. This revelation encapsulates what I found to be the true meaning of success in the literature. Reflecting on this intense learning curve, I am deeply grateful to the people who enriched this transformative experience.

First and foremost, my deepest gratitude goes to Professor Vesa Suutari. He was far more than a supervisor to me; he was a mentor in the fullest sense of the word. As the ‘giant’ upon whose shoulders I stood, he provided the support that allowed me to reach new heights. Professor Suutari’s commitment to his doctoral students extends far beyond academia. Aware of the isolation I felt during my initial years living and working in Vaasa – especially during the challenging period of the pandemic – he went above and beyond, sacrificing his own personal and family time to check on my well-being. Professor Suutari embodies a broader definition of success, one transcending traditional metrics to include a sense of purpose and balance in life.

Following in the footsteps of giants, I must extend my heartfelt gratitude to my second supervisor, Professor Michael Dickmann (Cranfield University). Though geographically distant, the collaborative spirit between us knew no borders. Our decision-making process was harmonious operating in various settings, from academic conferences to remote meetings. Professor Dickmann always encouraged me, complimenting my hard work and helping me when I faced challenges. His affirmations and advice were not only a source of encouragement but also the ‘binoculars’ through which I could see even further in my academic journey.

I am also grateful to an array of individuals and institutions that have influenced my academic journey. During my time at the University of Vaasa, Professor Liisa Mäkelä and her doctoral student, Samu Kemppinen, played instrumental roles in guiding me through statistical challenges, enabling me to meet the standards of

academic research. Dean Adam Smale warmly welcomed me to the university through his early lunch invitations, and my colleagues, including Maria Pajuoja, Laura Urrila, and Anni Rajala, were pivotal in helping me adapt to the local culture. Within my research community, Professors Jaime Bonache and Kristiina Mäkelä provided encouraging pre-examination statements that strengthened my doctoral defence, underscoring the merits of my work. Lastly, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to European supporters, including the EU's Horizon 2020 Programme through the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Grant, the KAUTE Foundation, and the Foundation for Economic Education in Finland, for their belief in my research.

In reflecting on over a decade spent in Europe, I am reminded that the landscapes we live shape us as much as we shape them. My years in Germany are more than just a chapter in my life; they are the setting where I made mistakes, learned, and ultimately grew both as a person and a researcher. I offer my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who was part of that transformative period; those who spent time with me and witnessed my metamorphosis. I extend particular thanks to my master's degree supervisor, Professor Ingvill Mochmann, head of EUROLAB at GESIS-Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences in Cologne, who was instrumental in helping me realise my research potential.

In the course of life, there are lessons that no university can teach – lessons I have learned from my family. I am grateful for my sister's kindness and support during my life. My mother, who has faced life's ups and downs with extraordinary courage, is my hero. She has taught me that real strength is a matter of character, a lesson that no university could offer. Although we are physically distant, our emotional connection remains strong. As I often say, being close to someone is not about physical proximity but love. Thank you both for your enduring love and support despite the miles that separate us.

In the solitude of academic pursuits, particularly during the isolating times of the pandemic, I found an unexpected but profoundly enriching source of balance and inspiration: my wife. Amidst the endless hours of research and writing, her presence became my haven, reminding me that there is a world outside bibliographies and data sets. She not only opened her heart to me but also welcomed me into her family. Her support and love have been transformative, turning not just pages, but whole chapters in my life. She has become the driving force that emboldens me to envisage not just academic goals but also life goals, including the beautiful possibility of building a family together. For all of this and more, I owe her my deepest gratitude. It is to her, and the future we are building together, that I dedicate the efforts encapsulated in this dissertation.

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Abbreviations

AEs	Assigned expatriates
CFA	Confirmatory factor analysis
CFI	Comparative fit index
CLF	Common latent factor
CMB	Common methods bias
GLOMO	Global mobility of employees
RMSEA	Root mean square error of approximation
SRMR	Standardized root mean square residual
SEM	Structural equation modeling
SIEs	Self-initiated expatriates
TLI	Tucker-Lewis index
HRM	Human resource management

Publications

This dissertation is based on three appended papers:

[1] Mello, R., Suutari, V., & Dickmann, M. (2023). Taking stock of expatriates' career success after international assignments: A review and future research agenda. *Human Resource Management Review*, 33(1), 100913. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2022.100913>

[2] Mello, R., Suutari, V., & Dickmann, M. (in progress). Unraveling the long-term career impact of expatriation experiences: An examination of career adaptability, job fit, and expatriate type on post-expatriation career success. A revised version of this paper has been submitted to a journal, and an earlier version has been published as a competitive paper in the 82nd AOM Annual Proceedings (Vol. 2022, No. 1, p. 13308).

[3] Mello, R., Suutari, V., & Dickmann, M. (2023). Career success of expatriates: the impacts of career capital, expatriate type, career type and career stage. *Career Development International*, 28(4), 406-425. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-07-2022-0196>

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Despite the significant disruption to global mobility caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, recent studies continue to indicate an increase in the number of individuals engaging in global work following the effects of widespread vaccination and the easing of restrictions on global mobility (Sengupta et al., 2023; Végh et al., 2023). Consequently, empirical research on global workers continues to expand, focusing on a more diverse population whose careers are impacted by the unique challenges of international careers (Collings et al., 2019).

Building upon the theory of work experience (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998), global work has been defined as a form of high-density work (Akkan et al., 2022; Shaffer et al., 2012). This concept is characterised by the intensity and potency of experiences that foster significant developmental growth (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998). Global work exposes individuals to more challenging developmental experiences than domestic work, thus influencing their career outcomes (Kraimer et al., 2022; Shaffer et al., 2012). Therefore, it is essential to understand the distinct career trajectories of global workers and their associated career effects.

Expatriates are considered the primary type of global worker (Harzing et al., 2016), and the term encompasses 'legally working individuals who reside temporarily in a country of which they are not a citizen in order to accomplish a career-related goal, being relocated abroad either by an organization, by self-initiation or directly employed within the host country' (McNulty & Brewster, 2017). Expatriate work necessitates individual adaptation to novel career circumstances during and after expatriation (Guan et al., 2019a) in order to enhance their compatibility with new work environments (Chan et al., 2015). It is crucial to note that the nature of these challenging and developmental experiences is heavily influenced by the specifics of the work context (Chalutz-Ben Gal, 2023). However, current literature often overlooks the diversity inherent in expatriates' experiences and developmental opportunities, generally treating expatriation as a singular entity (Dabic et al., 2015; K. Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009).

Historically, research has predominantly focused on expatriates' experiences during expatriation, typically lasting one to three years (Cerdin & Selmer, 2014). More recently, scholars have begun investigating the repatriation stage (Kierner & Suutari, 2018) and the career impacts of expatriation (Ramaswami et al., 2016).

This shift in research interest has led to the identification of expatriates' dissatisfaction with post-repatriation treatment (Breitenmoser & Bader, 2021), which may stem from organisations' failure to recognise competencies developed abroad (Kraimer et al., 2009). Consequently, this can result in career dissatisfaction and an intention to change employer (Aldossari & Robertson, 2016).

Despite growing scholarly attention towards post-expatriation experiences (Reiche et al., 2023; Suutari et al., 2018b), a comprehensive understanding of the antecedents of career success remains elusive, particularly given the diversity of expatriate career paths (Jannesari & Sullivan, 2019; K. Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009; Reiche et al., 2023). Rather than simply repatriating, individuals may choose to re-expatriate to another host country (Ho et al., 2016) or indefinitely continue their careers in their initial host countries (Suutari et al., 2018b). Therefore, scholars have emphasised the need to explore a broader spectrum of expatriate career paths and antecedents of their career success. Such antecedents have been suggested to include important examples like career capital developed abroad (Kanstrén & Suutari, 2021), the challenging nature of work (Akkan et al., 2022; Kraimer et al., 2022), effective utilisation of competencies in new roles (Oleškevičiūtė et al., 2022), career adaptability (Jannesari & Sullivan, 2019), proactive career behaviour (Andresen et al., 2020a), social networks (Lauring & Selmer, 2020), and organisational support (Cao et al., 2014). By contributing to successful expatriate experiences, such factors ultimately facilitate career advancements (Ramaswami et al., 2016; Suutari et al., 2018b).

Furthermore, existing literature predominantly concentrates on the repatriation phase of assigned expatriates (AEs) who are relocated and supported by their employers (Suutari et al., 2018a). This focus contrasts with the limited attention paid to the career success of self-initiated expatriates (SIEs), who opt to work abroad independently without organisational support (Andresen et al., 2014). Additionally, there is a dearth of research on those who re-expatriate (Ho et al., 2016) and who may eventually embark on long-term global careers (Suutari & Mäkelä, 2007). The scarce evidence on the career impacts of these various types of expatriation and career paths has led to inconclusive findings, revealing both positive (e.g., Ramaswami et al., 2016) and negative career effects (e.g., Benson & Pattie, 2008). Accordingly, further research is necessary to examine the career impacts of expatriation on different measures of career success (Suutari et al., 2018b) – defined as the attainment of desirable objective and subjective work-related outcomes following work experiences (Arthur et al., 2005) – across different career realities, such as for repatriating individuals (Chiang et al., 2018), those who re-expatriate (Ho et al., 2016), and those who remain in the same

country (Suutari et al., 2018b). In accordance with the career literature (e.g., (Ng et al., 2005a), this dissertation differentiates objective career success, which denotes observable career achievements, from subjective career success, referring to personal evaluations of career outcomes.

Given these considerations, this dissertation aims to explore the antecedents of expatriates' career success following their expatriation across diverse forms of expatriate work and career paths. This investigation is relevant irrespective of expatriates' subsequent decisions to repatriate, re-expatriate, or continue residing and working in the host country. The aim is to shed light on the influence of high-density global work on the career success of a varied group of expatriates with distinct career trajectories, thereby filling the current research gap.

The first step involved comprehending what kinds of theories have been applied to study the antecedents and outcomes of expatriates' career success. In this context, Ng et al. (2005) conducted a meta-analysis, identifying four categories of career success predictors: stable individual differences, human capital, sociodemographic status, and organisational sponsorship. However, in recent years, the field of career success has seen the emergence of new theories, such as career construction theory and the protean career theory (Baruch & Sullivan, 2022), which emphasise self-directed career management. Furthermore, researchers have aimed to adopt a broader contextual perspective to investigate how factors like national culture influence expatriates' career success (Andresen et al., 2022). Acknowledging this theoretical diversity, Spurk et al. (2019) expanded the categories of theories explaining the antecedents of career success and, in addition, introduced categories of theories addressing outcomes subsequent to career success. The authors scrutinised various competing theoretical approaches to studying career success, considering their distinct perspectives. However, it is essential to note that Spurk and his colleagues did not concentrate on the context of international careers.

This dissertation first seeks to identify underutilised theories in expatriation research that are promising in the context of high-density global work. Modern career theories are central to numerous studies on high-density global work (Baruch & Sullivan, 2022; Shaffer et al., 2012). These theories underscore the developmental aspect of challenging work experiences, emphasising that expatriates must adapt their thought patterns and scripts to engage effectively with people across different cultures and adjust to varying situational demands (Shaffer et al., 2012). Furthermore, they consider how the new work-role requirements abroad disrupt employees' routines and activities outside work (Kraimer et al., 2022). It is also observed that expatriates' domestic jobs typically feature a

narrower task range and less autonomy than their roles abroad (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; K. Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009). Consequently, expatriate work is highly developmental, and such experiences can significantly impact expatriates' careers (Shaffer et al., 2012; Kraimer et al., 2022).

To identify pertinent career theories and related antecedents of career success, the initial stage of this dissertation involved conducting a systematic literature review of studies on the career success of expatriates following expatriation. Subsequently, the empirical stage of the first study focused on career success post-expatriation, incorporating both repatriates and re-expatriates. The second study expanded its scope to include individuals who had opted to work in the same host country long term. This dissertation leverages various career theories to identify critical antecedents of expatriate career success.

As a doctoral candidate at the University of Vaasa, I participated in the Global Mobility of Employees (GLOMO) project as one of 15 early-stage researchers. This international doctoral training network was part of the EU's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme and was funded by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action. The primary aim of the GLOMO project is to generate high-quality academic articles and significant societal impact through international collaboration. Comprising 15 subprojects, each headed by an early-stage researcher like myself (see www.glomo.eu), the project promotes cooperation through a joint research agenda and the co-authorship of academic articles by early-stage researchers and their supervisors in different countries. Each researcher is expected to lead the research and publication process targeting high-quality journals, similar to any standard PhD programme, as per the project's policy (Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 765355). The supervision model was dual-faceted, with each researcher being guided by two scholars, one from the home university (first supervisor) and another from a partner university, both of whom co-authored the articles as second and third authors.

1.2 Purpose of the dissertation and research questions

This research aims to explore the career impacts of long-term international work experience among various types of expatriates and career paths, with a particular focus on the antecedents of career success. Furthermore, the objective of this dissertation extends to understanding the subsequent outcomes of expatriates' career success, as elaborated in a conceptual article.

The research questions addressed in Articles 1, 2, and 3 are:

Article 1: What individual career impact results from expatriate work? 2) What are the antecedents of such career success? and 3) What are the outcomes of expatriates' career success?

Article 2: What are the impacts of the job fit with the new role, career adaptability, and expatriate type on the career success of expatriates after the expatriation?

Article 3: What are the impacts of career capital, expatriate type, career path, and career stage on the career success of expatriates?

Table 1. Summary of the purpose of the study, source of data, research approach and theoretical groundings

	Article 1	Article 2	Article 3
Title	Taking stock of expatriates' career success after international assignments: A review and future research agenda (<i>published at Human Resource Management Review</i>)	High-density global work and its career implications: A follow-up study on the career success of expatriates (<i>submitted at International Business Review</i>)	Career success of expatriates: the impacts of career capital, expatriate type, career path, and career stage (<i>accepted for publication at Career Development International</i>)
Purpose of the study	This study seeks to investigate the career impact of long-term international work experience among expatriates, delving into the antecedents and subsequent outcomes of career success for various types of expatriates.	This study investigates the impact of job fit with the new role, career adaptability, and expatriate type on the expatriates' job responsibilities development and their career satisfaction following long-term international work experience. Furthermore, it examines the moderating effect of the expatriate type on the relationship between career adaptability and the expatriates' job responsibilities development.	This study investigates whether career capital developed abroad, expatriate type, career path and career stage impact expatriates' promotions and perceived marketability.
Source of data	55 articles addressing different sub-dimensions of career success for AEs and/or SIEs after their expatriation.	An online survey was conducted among 202 expatriates (AEs: 88; SIEs: 114). Of these, 61 had re-expatriated, while 141 had repatriated.	An online survey was conducted among 327 expatriates (AEs: 117; SIEs: 210). Out of these, 186 had continued their international careers either by remaining in the same host country or by re-expatriating to a new country, while 141 had repatriated.
Research approach	Conceptual approach: Systematic literature review	Quantitative approach: regression analysis, moderation analysis	Quantitative approach: structural equation modelling
Theoretical groundings	Taxonomy of high-density global work (Shaffer et al., 2012).	Person–environment fit theory (Ehrhart, 2006): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Job fit</i> (Edwards, 1996) 	Taxonomy of high-density global work (Shaffer et al., 2012)

	Article 1	Article 2	Article 3
	Taxonomy of theoretical approaches used in career studies (Spurk et al., 2019)	Career construction theory (Savickas et al., 2009): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Proactive career behaviour (Parker & Collins, 2010)</i> • <i>Career adaptability (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012)</i> 	Career capital theory (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994) Person–environment fit theory (Ehrhart, 2006) Lifespan theory (Super, 1980)(Super, 1980) (Super, 1980)

The first article, a systematic literature review, was published in the *Human Resource Management Review*. Subsequently, two empirical studies were developed based on the findings from the systematic literature review. The second article was submitted to the *International Business Review* and is currently under revision. With regard to article three, it has been published in *Career Development International*. As encouraged by the GLOMO project, Articles 1, 2, and 3 are co-authored with supervisors in the GLOMO project. I took the lead role in all three articles. My principal responsibilities encompassed choosing the theoretical underpinnings, outlining the research strategies, collecting and analysing data, crafting and structuring the articles, and overseeing the review processes. The supervisors' role was to guide the process by providing insightful feedback and assisting in refining the articles before submission to journals and during revision processes. I also successfully applied for two research grants in Finland: one from the KAUTE Foundation in 2021 and another from Liikesivistysrahasto in 2023.

1.3 Intended contributions

This dissertation and its three academic articles aim to contribute to understanding the effects of expatriation on the objective and subjective career success of expatriates. The studies strive to identify relevant antecedents of expatriates' career success following long-term international work experience. The dissertation selects the most promising antecedents through the lens of modern career theories (Baruch & Sullivan, 2022), emphasising individual development through high-density work experiences abroad rather than being hindered by their inherent instability (Shaffer et al., 2012). Consequently, this research intends to broaden the knowledge of how expatriates' developmental experiences shape their career success post-expatriation.

The initial phase of this research pinpointed theories with significant potential for international career research. This approach involved a systematic literature review of existing research in the international career domain, paired with the use of the framework suggested by Spurk et al. (2019), which illustrates a variety of theoretical approaches adopted in general career research. The objective was to reveal theoretical frameworks that had been underutilised in the exploration of relevant antecedents of expatriates' career success. The expectation was that some additional theories and antecedents related to the specific nature of international careers would be identified to complement the framework proposed by Spurk and colleagues.

The second phase included designing two empirical studies based on the promising theories identified. Essentially, this dissertation strives to clarify expatriates' career success by applying underexplored career theories within the international career context. The primary contribution lies in the field of international careers, where the application of these theories and antecedents within this context has revealed that expatriate experiences and career success vary due to individual and contextual factors. Additionally, the systematic review and empirical studies generate insights applicable not only to the international career context, such as types of expatriates and career paths concerning repatriation or re-expatriation but also to general career settings as some theoretical contributions of the study aim to provide new insights into career theories in general.

1.4 Key concepts of the study

Defining the key concepts used in this dissertation to aid the reader's understanding is important.

Career

'A career is the evolving sequence of a person's work experiences over time' (Arthur, Hall, and Lawrence, 1989, p.295).

Career success

Career success is 'the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in time in a person's work experiences over time' (Arthur et al., 2005b, p. 179) (Arthur et al., 2005b, p. 179) (Arthur et al., 2005, p. 179). It is typically divided into objective and subjective career success (Spurk et al., 2019).

Objective career success

Objective career success is defined as directly observable by others and measurable in a standardised way (Arthur et al., 2005b; Gunz & Heslin, 2005).

Subjective career success

Subjective career success is defined as the focal career actor's evaluation and experience of achieving personally meaningful career outcomes (Spurk et al., 2019).

Expatriates

An expatriate is defined as 'legally working individuals who reside temporarily in a country of which they are not a citizen in order to accomplish a career-related goal, being relocated abroad either by an organization, by self-initiation or directly employed within the host country' (McNulty & Brewster, 2017, p. 46).

Assigned expatriates

Assigned expatriates are 'employees working for business organizations, who are sent overseas on a temporary basis to complete a time-based task or accomplish an organizational goal' (Shaffer et al., 2012, p. 1286).

Self-initiated expatriates

Self-initiated expatriates are 'individuals who initiate and usually finance their own expatriation and are not transferred by organizations. They relocate to a country of their choice to pursue cultural, personal, and career development experiences, often with no definite time frame in mind' (Shaffer et al., 2012, p. 1286).

The density of work experiences

The density of work experiences is defined as 'the intensity of experiences... similar to what Quiñones et al. (1995) refer to as the 'developmental punch' provided by an event' (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998, p. 329).

Person–job fit

Person–job fit is defined as 'the relationship between employee and job characteristics' (Chalutz Ben-Gal, 2023, p. 122).

Career capital

Career capital is defined as a stock of competencies valued within the career field (Bourdieu, 1986/2004). It assumes that people invest in their careers through different 'ways of knowing,' viewed as the 'forms, or currencies, of career capital' (Inkson & Arthur, 2001, p. 51) from which 'intelligent careers are made' (Arthur et al., 1995, p. 19).

Proactive career behaviour

Proactive career behaviours can be defined as 'the degree to which somebody is proactively developing his or her career as expressed by diverse career behaviours' (Hirschi et al., 2014, p. 577).

Career adaptability

Career adaptability is defined as a 'psychosocial construct that denotes an individual's resources for coping with current and anticipated tasks, transitions, and traumas in their occupational roles' (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012, p. 662)

1.5 The structure of the dissertation

This dissertation comprises two parts. The first consists of five chapters. In addition to this introduction, it presents the theoretical framework of the study, the methodological choices that have been made, the summaries of the included articles, and the discussion and conclusion of the dissertation. This first part starts with the introductory chapter that presents the background of the study, the research questions the purpose of the dissertation and its core concepts. Chapter 2 discusses the study's theoretical background, including the expatriates' career success perspective in the context of the high-density nature of global work. Chapter 3 describes the study's methodological perspectives in detail, including the philosophical considerations and selected methods. This chapter justifies the approaches taken for data collection and data analysis. Chapter 4 summarises the four articles included in this dissertation and presents their key contributions. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the study's theoretical and practical contributions and limitations and provides suggestions for future research. The second part of the dissertation consists of three individual articles.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Over the years, expatriation has become a significant area of academic investigation within the field of international human resource management (McNulty & Brewster, 2017). Initially, expatriates were perceived as employees assigned by their organisations to work abroad for a specified duration, typically spanning one to five years (Edström & Galbraith, 1977). However, this definition has evolved to reflect new career dynamics, notably encompassing SIEs – individuals who independently seek and secure employment in foreign countries for extended periods. This broader perspective has fundamentally reshaped our understanding of global workforces (Andresen et al., 2014).

The theoretical groundings underpinning the study of expatriation are multifaceted (Andresen, 2021; Guttormsen & Lauring, 2022; McNulty & Brewster, 2017). In this context, it is crucial to distinguish between *theory* and *phenomena*. The term theory refers to a systematic framework composed of concepts, definitions, and propositions that aim to explain or predict certain observable phenomena (Poole, 1989; Van de Ven, 1989; Wacker, 1998). Phenomena are those observable events or facts that the theories are designed to explain or predict (Kozlowski, 2012). For instance, *adjustment* represents phenomena that theories like adjustment theory (Black & Stephens, 1989) seek to explain. This study identified various theoretical perspectives that are especially relevant when studying career success in the context of high-density global work, such as person–environment theory (Ehrhart, 2006) and agency theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976).

The following sections will delve deeper into the specific dimensions of career success featured in this study. The context of high-density global work will be discussed to highlight how it has informed the selection of relevant theories that elucidate the profound impact of expatriation on career success. Furthermore, this dissertation will focus on promising yet underexplored theories in the field of expatriation research, specifically chosen to examine the antecedents that lead to career success among expatriates.

2.1 Career and career success

2.1.1 Definition and evolution of careers

Traditionally, a career can be broadly defined as an individual's work-related and professional experiences over the lifespan (Super, 1957). However, the nature of

careers has evolved substantially. Traditional career paths, generally linear and progression-oriented within a single organisation, have gradually given way to more flexible, boundaryless, and protean careers (Hall, 2002). In the current dynamic world of work, individuals often change jobs, roles, or even sectors, and the responsibility for career development has shifted increasingly towards the individual, reducing the organisational role in shaping employees' career trajectories (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Baruch & Sullivan, 2022)

2.1.2 Traditional careers

Historically, career paths were predominantly linear, defined by progressive advancements within a single organisation. These paths were often discussed in the context of traditional career frameworks, such as the concept of the *organisational man*, rather than theories in the academic sense and vocational choice approaches like trait-and-factor theory. Specifically, the concept of the organisational man (Whyte, 1956) describes an individual dedicating their entire career to one organisation, adopting its goals and values as their own in exchange for job security and upward mobility. This type of career path was considered standard in the mid-twentieth century. Likewise, the trait-and-factor theory of vocational choice (Parsons, 1909) posited that individuals would choose an occupation that best matched their skills and interests, with career success largely dependent on their ability to perform their chosen role proficiently.

The success of traditional careers was often evaluated in terms of hierarchical progression, tenure, and salary increments (Arthur et al., 1989). For instance, an employee who entered an organisation as a junior analyst and, over the years, moved up to the role of senior manager would be seen as having a successful career (Rosenbaum, 1984). Similarly, a worker who stayed with a company for a long duration and received regular pay raises was also considered successful (Gerhart & Rynes, 2003). These markers of success were external and observable (Ng et al., 2005), and the onus for career development generally lay with the organisation (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). However, these traditional career paradigms have been challenged by the shifting socio-economic dynamics and the emergence of new career realities (Baruch & Sullivan, 2022b; Inkson et al., 2012).

2.1.3 New career realities and modern career theories

The shift in career paradigms has given rise to new career realities that challenge traditional career theories. Modern career theories, like the boundaryless and protean career theory, better reflect the dynamics of contemporary professional

trajectories (Baruch & Sullivan, 2022). They place more emphasis on subjective career success by recognising a multitude of factors beyond hierarchical advancements, such as personal values, work-life balance, skill development, self-fulfilment, and adaptability.

The boundaryless career concept (Defillippi & Arthur, 1994) suggests that careers increasingly span several organisations, marking a shift away from the traditional paradigm of success. Simultaneously, the protean career theory (Hall, 2002) emphasises the individual's active role in shaping their career based on self-direction and personal values. Both theories acknowledge the increasing fluidity of modern career paths and the decreasing importance of organisational hierarchies.

Modern career theories underline the value of subjective career success and allow for a more holistic, multidimensional, and individual-centric approach. They acknowledge that career paths are as diverse as those who follow them (Baruch & Sullivan, 2022). In this context, international careers are seen as prototypes of boundaryless, protean careers in which individuals typically move across national and organisational borders, thereby underscoring the importance of subjective success in the modern career landscape (Briscoe et al., 2021).

2.1.4 Career success

The evolution of career paradigms from traditional to modern has seen a corresponding shift in how individuals understand career success (Spurk et al., 2019). Historically, career success has been evaluated largely through objective measures, while subjective aspects were less relevant. These externally observable, tangible aspects of a career can be evaluated by others and include factors such as salary, job position, number of promotions, and other forms of recognition (Gunz & Heslin, 2005). Applying objective measures of career success would mean a person would be deemed successful if they achieved a high-ranking position within their organisation, coupled with a significant income. However, as career theories have evolved, the understanding of career success has broadened to include a more nuanced, subjective dimension. This facet of career success focuses on the individual's assessment of their career, influenced by internal psychological criteria (Shockley et al., 2016). Subjective career success encapsulates elements such as job satisfaction, perceived career progress, work-life balance, personal sense of achievement, and alignment of career and personal values and goals. For example, individuals might consider themselves subjectively successful if they perceive they are acquiring new skills, making a meaningful contribution, or maintaining a desirable work-life balance, irrespective of their income or job title.

Reflecting on both perspectives, Arthur et al. (2005, p.179) define career success as ‘the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in time in a person’s work experiences over time.’ Within this view, a career is seen as a series of work experiences across an individual’s lifespan (Arthur, Hall & Lawrence, 1989). Accordingly, career success encapsulates both objective and subjective measures, creating a comprehensive view of individual career trajectories in modern contexts.

The recognition of new career realities has led to a more comprehensive understanding of career success. This transition reflects an evolution in the concept of careers, previously seen as merely a means of ensuring financial security, and now understood as significant contributors to personal identity, life satisfaction, and self-realisation (Guan et al., 2019). This enhanced perspective is echoed in the empirical design of this dissertation, which embraces both objective and subjective aspects of career success. While the systematic literature review covered all aspects of career success studied in the expatriate context, the empirical studies focused on the aspects of career success for which earlier evidence was limited or where the findings were controversial.

In the empirical studies of the dissertation, objective career success is assessed in terms of job responsibility development and promotions. Job responsibility development is a robust measure incorporating both vertical changes, that is, advances in hierarchical position, and horizontal shifts, that is, variations in the degree of responsibility. Both aspects are critical for the career success of expatriates (Breitenmoser et al., 2018). Furthermore, data on the number of promotions expatriates achieved following long-term international experience are also collected. Here, a promotion is defined as ‘any increase in level and/or any significant increase in job responsibilities or job scope’ (Ng et al., 2005b).

Subjective career success is assessed in the empirical studies in terms of career satisfaction and perceived marketability. Career satisfaction is designed to capture expatriates’ perceptions of their career progress, gauging their assessments relative to their goals, income level, advancement, and skill development (Briscoe et al., 2021). Similarly, perceived marketability is an aspect of subjective career success. It is defined as an individual’s belief in their value to their current employer, denoted as perceived internal marketability, and/or to another employer, referred to as perceived external marketability (Eby et al., 2003). In summary, this dissertation adopts a comprehensive approach to career success, acknowledging the importance of both objective and subjective career success measures in the context of contemporary career realities (Baruch & Sullivan, 2022).

2.2 The high-density nature of global work and expatriates' career success

Prior to delving into the theories underpinning the antecedents of expatriates' career success, it is imperative to comprehend the nature of high-density global work. This comprehension elucidates why expatriation experiences profoundly impact expatriates' career success.

The theory of work experience (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998), building upon Quinones et al.'s (1995) conceptual framework, posits that employees gain knowledge and skills through the density of their work experience rather than the time spent in a job. Work experience extends beyond employment duration in a job, organisation, or occupation, encompassing a multidimensional, temporally dynamic, and multilevel construct that integrates quantitative (e.g., time-based measures) and qualitative (e.g., task complexity) dimensions. Consequently, the theory underscores the developmental influence of diverse challenges individuals encounter in their jobs (Quinones et al., 1995). These qualitative factors might be responsible for what Tesluk and Jacobs (1998) referred to as the 'developmental punch' of such experiences. They could have a significant influence on individuals and shape their career choices.

Researchers have observed that all forms of global work, including expatriate work, meet the high-density criterion regarding both their quantitative and qualitative components, distinguishing them from the 'domestic' work experience. This distinction likely affects subsequent career trajectories and outcomes (Shaffer et al., 2012). Accordingly, based on Peiperl & Jonsen's (2007) global work characteristics, Shaffer and colleagues (2012) identified three aspects of global work: physical mobility, cognitive flexibility, and non-work disruption.

Physical mobility refers to 'the degree to which the work role necessitates that the employee travel or relocate internationally' (Shaffer et al., 2012, p. 1300). The number and duration of expatriations may offer an objective measure of expatriates' physical mobility and pertain to the subjective aspect of coping with mobility stress while adapting to varying cultural and institutional environments. Cognitive flexibility denotes 'the degree to which global work requires role incumbents to adjust their thought patterns and scripts to effectively interact with people and adapt to situational demands across cultures' (Shaffer et al., 2012, p. 1300). Cognitive flexibility pertains to the job itself, differing from psychological mobility, which is related to individual differences (Shaffer et al., 2012). Non-work disruption primarily distinguishes international jobs from domestic work. Defined as 'the degree to which the work-role requirements disrupt or interfere with the

employee's everyday activities and routines outside of work', non-work disruption is a particularly prominent element for many international employees (Shaffer et al., 2012, p. 1300). In simpler terms, separating personal and professional lives is more challenging in international career settings than in domestic ones.

Overall, expatriate work experience often fosters competence and encourages the pursuit of new career challenges (Shaffer et al., 2012; Kraimer et al., 2022). Reflecting the ever-changing job markets, individuals must constantly enhance their skills to maintain their employability. Scholars specializing in international careers have observed that learning and professional development are perceived as universal indicators of career success across diverse countries (Briscoe et al., 2021; Shen et al., 2015). Despite the inherent instability of working abroad, the focus for expatriates tends to shift towards individual development through these high-density work experiences. In summary, expatriates tend to view the enriching and intensive nature of their work experiences abroad as opportunities for growth rather than obstacles (Shaffer et al., 2012).

This dissertation applies these theoretical groundings describing the high-density nature of global work. Next, the focus is turned to theories adopted to explain the career success of expatriates.

2.3 Theories adopted to explain expatriates' career success

This research employs a range of theories to elucidate the factors contributing to expatriates' career success. Career capital theory serves as the foundation, suggesting that learning acquired from intensive work experiences, known as career capital, significantly influences career success (Dickmann et al., 2018; Jokinen et al., 2008; Mäkelä et al., 2016). The next stage involved utilising person–environment fit theory (Ehrhart, 2006) to underpin the concept of job fit, which becomes particularly relevant as expatriates seek roles congruent with their accumulated career capital and thus directly influence their career success. Career construction theory (Savickas, 2013) follows, introducing the idea of career adaptability. This notion emphasises the active role expatriates play in managing transitions, and it potentially accounts for variances in career success. The theory also encompasses the proactive career behaviours illuminated in proactivity literature (Spurk et al., 2020). These behaviours are especially pertinent for SIEs who self-initiate their expatriation, thereby impacting their career success (Parker & Collins, 2010; Smale et al., 2018). Finally, lifespan theory (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996) supports the investigation into how different career stages and life

transitions affect expatriate career success (Zacher & Froidevaux, 2021). These theories will be discussed in greater depth in the following sections.

2.3.1 Career capital theory and career capital development

Owing to the high-density nature of their work, expatriates engage in continuous learning. Recent studies have employed career capital theory (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994) to explore expatriates' learning experiences abroad through a competency development framework (e.g., Dickmann et al., 2018; Jokinen, 2010, Jokinen, 2010; Mäkelä et al., 2016; Shaffer et al., 2012). The intelligent career model (Arthur et al., 1995; Brown et al., 2020) describes a collection of valued competencies in the career field (Bourdieu, 1986/2004) and posits that individuals invest in their careers through different 'ways of knowing' (Inkson & Arthur, 2001, p. 51), which form the basis of 'intelligent careers' (Arthur et al., 1995, p. 19). These ways of knowing encompass intellectual capital (knowing-how), social capital (knowing-whom), and psychological capital (knowing-why) (Parker et al., 2009; Järnlström et al., 2022). This concept represents a distinct portfolio of capital for expatriates that is acquired through intensive global work experience (Shaffer et al., 2012). Accumulated career capital serves as a resource for individuals to achieve future career objectives (Harvey, Novicevic, & Speier, 2000; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Parker & Arthur, 2000).

First, expatriates can build their knowing-how career capital by developing social, general management, and global leadership skills during expatriation, among others (Dickmann et al., 2016; Suutari & Mäkelä, 2007). Second, the knowing-whom career capital expatriates develop while abroad refers to the social network expatriates establish within and beyond their organisations. Such networks can provide access to career opportunities and job-related information (Bozkurt & Mohr, 2011; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009; Burt, 2005; Lin, 2001). Finally, knowing-why career capital encompasses expatriates' self-concept, values, interests, and personal growth, which are essential for their motivation, self-confidence, a sense of purpose, and work identification (Cappellen & Janssens, 2005; Inkson & Arthur, 2001; Parker et al., 2009). Studies suggest that expatriates enhance their knowing-why career capital by continually reflecting on and challenging themselves. That process can even lead to an identity shift (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994; Kohonen, 2005; Suutari & Mäkelä, 2007; Jokinen et al., 2008) and change the perception of career success (Andresen & Biemann, 2013).

While career capital development during expatriation has been examined, its long-term consequences have been explored less frequently (Dickmann et al., 2016; Suutari & Mäkelä, 2007). Expatriates often have high expectations of their career

progress post-expatriation (Dowling, Festing & Engle, 2013), but employers may not recognise the knowledge and skills gained overseas, which can lead expatriates to be dissatisfied with the positions they are offered (Suutari & Brewster, 2003; Ellis, Thorn & Yao, 2020). Inadequate management of the repatriation process by some organisations compounds the issue (Doherty & Dickmann, 2009), potentially adversely impacting expatriates' objective and subjective career success (Suutari & Mäkelä, 2007).

While not all expatriates experience positive career outcomes or achieve their expectations, individuals working abroad tend to accumulate more valuable career capital than their counterparts operating solely in their home markets (Suutari et al., 2018b). That accumulated career capital might contribute to greater career success post-expatriation than those without such international work experience. However, evidence on this is very limited, as reported in Article 1 of this dissertation. A study focusing on AEs by Mäkelä et al. (2016) reported a connection between career capital development and perceived marketability post-expatriation among AEs. Nevertheless, no quantitative empirical studies have examined the impact of career capital development on expatriates' objective career success, and evidence regarding SIEs remains limited. In response, this dissertation employs career capital theory to shed light on the career success of expatriates.

All in all, building on career capital theory, it is suggested that the perceived career capital development of expatriates abroad will be positively related to their perceived marketability (Article 3) and the number of promotions (Article 3).

2.3.2 Person–environment fit theory and job fit

Upon completing high-density expatriate jobs, finding a suitable job that aligns an expatriate's developed competencies with job requirements becomes crucial for career success, whether the person returns to their home country or takes a new job abroad (Vidal et al., 2007; Suutari et al., 2018b). Although the concept of fit has been widely discussed in career success literature (e.g., Erdogan & Bauer, 2005), its empirical application has been limited in the context of expatriation and, in particular, when studying expatriates' career success post-expatriation (Haslberger & Dickmann, 2016). Person–environment fit theory posits that fit is achieved through the interaction of both the person and environment (Ehrhart, 2006). It has traditionally been employed to examine job fit, focusing on the alignment of individual competencies and job requirements (Aycan, 2005). Job fit pertains to the level of congruence between job demands and employee capabilities (Edwards, 1991) and the extent to which job requirements match the employee's competencies (Edwards, 1996). Employees endeavour to harmonise their

perceived competencies with job demands and resources (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009).

According to person–environment fit theory, expatriates who experience a superior fit between their job and personal competencies can more effectively capitalise on the career competencies acquired during their overseas jobs. Job fit is thus viewed as a sound career decision for individuals (Tinsley, 2000) and an essential organisational target for employers. Scholars argue that job fit holds particular significance in the context of expatriation, given the high-density nature of global work and the necessity for expatriates to adapt to varying institutional contexts (Andresen & the 5C consortium, 2020). If an individual's strengths align with the requirements of their role (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), it contributes to career success (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2014). Therefore, it is expected that greater job fit after expatriation will result in increased career satisfaction, better overall performance and effectiveness (Zimmerman, 2008), and career advancement (Lyness & Heilman, 2006).

In light of person–environment fit theory, a high degree of job fit is expected to positively impact expatriates' job responsibility development (Article 2) and career satisfaction (Article 2).

2.3.3 Person–environment fit theory and career path

Career trajectories and outcomes are significantly influenced by structural factors such as job market conditions (Guan et al., 2019). Within the complex landscape of global job markets, expatriates who continue working abroad accumulate and utilise their career capital in international job markets, while repatriates, transitioning back to domestic markets post-expatriation, leverage their career capital domestically. In this dissertation, the term career path distinguishes these two distinct career paths, highlighting the differing experiences of expatriates and repatriates within the broader context of international careers.

If expatriates are to achieve successful career progress involving cross-border transitions, they must establish a match between their career capital and their employer's requirements (Dickmann & Doherty, 2010). Person–environment fit theory emphasises this fit and the environmental factors that can either facilitate or hinder the utilisation of resources, such as career capital, which are crucial for shaping performance and outcomes (Bretz et al., 1994). The environment is defined as 'A context in which individuals carry out task activities' (Tarique et al., 2006, p. 208). The theory posits that the interaction between an individual's attributes and environmental factors significantly influences career success (Spurk

et al., 2019). Given the dense nature of global work and the diverse institutional contexts expatriates must navigate, it is logical that expatriates might encounter difficulties finding roles that match their accumulated career capital. Therefore, person–environment fit theory can aid in comprehending the contextual factors contributing to why some expatriates achieve greater career success than others.

Research on international careers has predominantly focused on the experiences of repatriates rather than those who continue to build longer-term careers by either remaining expatriates in the same country or relocating elsewhere (Suutari et al., 2018b). However, given that a substantial proportion of expatriates undertake multiple expatriations (Jokinen et al., 2008; Cerdin et al., 2010), there is a growing interest in understanding the career trajectories of global workers who sustain long-term employment abroad. Consequently, further research on this topic is warranted (Dickmann, Suutari & Wurtz, 2018).

Based on fit theory, it can be expected that expatriates achieve a better fit if they continue to work in international job markets where international recruiters value their international career capital. As career capital is, to some extent, context-specific, the opportunity to use such capital may be greater if a person continues to work abroad (Jokinen, 2010). The careers of repatriates are not always effectively managed by organisations (Valk et al., 2015), and repatriates may struggle to optimise their career capital when back in their home country (Doherty & Dickmann, 2009). It can therefore be difficult for experienced international workers to reintegrate into their home-country job market (Begley et al., 2008), which can adversely affect their perceived marketability after repatriation. Therefore, a better fit is expected to lead to greater subjective career success in terms of perceived marketability among those who continue their international careers than among repatriates.

Apart from the degree to which employers value the career capital of expatriates, a favourable alignment between the demands of the job and the expatriates' career capital is likely to have a positive effect on their performance, enhancing their opportunities for advancement (Suutari & Brewster, 2003; Jokinen et al., 2008). In light of person–environment fit theory, it is expected that repatriates are likely to have lower levels of both perceived marketability (Article 3) and the number of promotions (Article 3) than those who continue their international careers.

2.3.4 Career construction theory and career adaptability

To thrive in high-density work environments and secure a suitable career path after expatriation, individuals must develop the competencies to adapt to diverse

career development requirements and employment demands (Benson & Pattie, 2008; Kraimer et al., 2009). It is widely acknowledged that expatriates acquire novel competencies during expatriation. Working in a foreign country may alter their identity, career interests (Kohonen, 2005; Suutari & Mäkelä, 2007), and perception of career success (Andresen & Biemann, 2013). As a result, the effectiveness of expatriates managing the transition between expatriation and future employment, either domestically or abroad, can significantly influence their career success.

In order to explore the extent of adaptability required by expatriates to navigate career transitions, the construct of career adaptability was selected to assess the degree of adaptability needed by expatriates coping with these transitions. This measure has been identified as a promising antecedent of career success (Spurk et al., 2019) and is particularly important in the context of the high-density work of expatriates, as identified in Article 1 of this dissertation. Career adaptability encompasses a set of individual behaviours, competencies, and attitudes employed 'in fitting themselves into work that suits them' (Savickas, 2005, p. 45). Consequently, career adaptability emphasises the importance of individual action in achieving such a fit, with adaptive capability relating to individuals' capacities to adjust to new work demands in various contexts and within different groups (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Career construction theory (Savickas, 2005, 2013) describes career adaptability as comprising four dimensions: career concern (considering and preparing for future opportunities), career control (making thoughtful decisions and taking conscientious actions), career curiosity (exploring various situations and roles); and career confidence (addressing obstacles and challenges).

First, both career concern and career control consider the aspect of self-directed career management that expatriates need, as it pertains to how individuals anticipate and prepare for future opportunities and the extent to which they take personal action to secure their career objectives (Guan et al., 2015). When companies fail to manage the expatriation process effectively, or when expatriates find themselves without external support, individuals must take the initiative by boosting self-direction and increasing their career enhancement activity. Expatriates would also benefit from career curiosity, which encompasses being open to various potential roles after expatriation and viewing these roles as opportunities for skills development (Guan et al., 2015). For example, when expatriates opt to continue their international careers after their current expatriation, they often need to modify their thought patterns and scripts to effectively interact with individuals and adapt to situational demands across cultures (Shaffer et al., 2012). In such situations, career adaptability could be a

valuable asset. Lastly, career confidence, which addresses employees' abilities to cope with challenges in their new work, should be a valuable attribute for those crossing borders and is an aspect that develops during expatriation (Shaffer et al., 2012; Suutari & Mäkelä, 2007). Accordingly, expatriates must adapt to jobs in new cultural environments as they move across countries. In summary, while job fit emphasises the ultimate fit achieved, career adaptability emphasises the role of individual activity in achieving such a fit.

Drawing from career construction theory, enhanced career success can be achieved through increased career adaptability (Haeggli & Hirschi, 2020). Research has shown that career adaptability leads to successful career transitions (Brown et al., 2012) and positive subjective career outcomes, such as perceived employability and career satisfaction (Chan & Mai, 2015; de Guzman & Choi, 2013; Guan et al., 2015; Rudolph et al., 2017). However, the evidence on the connections between career adaptability and objective career success is limited, and further research is needed (Rudolph et al., 2017).

This dissertation identified only a small number of studies exploring the role of career adaptability on the career success of expatriates despite its significance in the international career context. Expatriates engaged in high-density work frequently confront challenges around constructing their careers and identifying fulfilling job opportunities, both during and after expatriation, irrespective of repatriating or transitioning to a new job abroad (Guan et al., 2015). It is therefore logical to expect career adaptability to be advantageous for expatriates. Recent studies have examined the role of career adaptability in the performance and adjustment of SIEs while abroad (Jannesari & Sullivan, 2019) and its potential to moderate the relationship between perceived underemployment and career satisfaction among AEs (Ren et al., 2013). However, this dissertation focuses on the impact of career adaptability on objective career success in terms of job responsibility development and subjective career success measured by career satisfaction.

In light of career construction theory, a high degree of career adaptability is expected to positively impact expatriates' job responsibility development and career satisfaction (Article 2).

2.3.5 Career construction theory, proactivity and expatriate type

Both AEs and SIEs acquire high-density work experience abroad, yet their career paths differ markedly (Andresen & Biemann, 2013). These distinct trajectories might be responsible for the apparent disparities in career success between AEs

and SIEs (Suutari et al., 2018a). Specifically, SIEs choose to initiate their expatriation, whereas AEs are sent abroad by their employers (Selmer et al., 2022). The difference in their level of proactivity during this process could significantly influence their career success.

Proactivity, as delineated in career construction theory (Spurk et al., 2020), encapsulates the anticipatory actions that individuals undertake to shape their own career trajectories and to influence their work environments (De Vos et al., 2009; Spurk et al., 2020). These proactive actions manifest through core elements, such as taking control, anticipation, and information retrieval (Parker & Collins, 2010; Smale et al., 2018). The process of taking control reflects individuals exerting autonomy over their career paths. Anticipation signifies proactive responses to prospective situations, while information retrieval denotes the acquisition of pertinent career information and resources (Smale et al., 2018). An SIE often demonstrates heightened proactivity by preparing for international transitions, initiating expatriation independently, scouting job prospects abroad, and securing the resources necessary to ensure a successful transition.

Concerning subjective career success, the autonomy inherent in controlling one's career is often tied to personal perceptions of success (Smale et al., 2018). This sense of control, rooted in the belief in acting in one's own best interest, has been associated with heightened levels of subjective career success (Raabe et al., 2007). Consequently, the proactive behaviour exhibited by SIEs could result in greater satisfaction than AEs could achieve. The latter's actions during the expatriation process are more likely to be dictated by organisational mandates (Andresen, 2021; Suutari et al., 2018a). Accordingly, SIEs can be expected to achieve greater career satisfaction after expatriation than AEs (Article 2).

Transitioning to the concept of objective career success, scholars argue that personal initiative and autonomy in planning and managing one's career (taking control) can enhance job performance, thereby heightening objective career success (Tornau & Frese, 2013). This notion aligns with findings that individual career planning and management tend to yield higher levels of objective career success than organisational career management does (Spurk et al., 2019; Mello et al., 2023; Breitenmoser et al., 2018). Consequently, it is plausible to expect SIEs to demonstrate a higher level of job responsibility development than AEs (Article 2).

Article 3, although not directly rooted in proactivity literature, adopts the common research approach towards SIEs in emphasising the role of self-initiation (Andresen, 2021). Existing studies indicate that self-initiation often results in a lack of organisational support, which can impact career trajectories (Andresen et

al., 2014). In contrast, AEs despatched abroad by their employers benefit from considerable organisational support during their career transitions (Mäkelä et al., 2022), which is likely to enhance their career prospects. The paper primarily focuses on perceived marketability, used as a measure of subjective career success, and the number of promotions, serving as an indicator of objective career success. The organisational support AEs receive can be crucial in shaping such success measures. For instance, the network, resources, and mentoring organisations provide could increase the perceived marketability of AEs by enhancing their visibility and reputation (Mäkelä et al., 2016). Furthermore, organisational support could facilitate career advancement – represented by the number of promotions – by providing structured career paths and skills development opportunities (Suutari et al., 2018b; Dickmann et al., 2018). Therefore, the organisational environment and the attendant resources could provide AEs with certain advantages in terms of perceived marketability and promotion opportunities compared to their SIE counterparts.

2.3.6 Lifespan theory and career stage

Although the career stage of individuals has been recognised as a crucial factor in the success of employees in general (Spurk et al., 2019), it has not received much consideration in international career research (Article 1). Therefore, this dissertation utilises lifespan theory, a ‘theoretical approach that focuses on how the progression of an individual through different life or career stages affects career success’ (Spurk et al., 2019, p. 14). According to Zacher and Froidevaux (2021), the career stage is linked to personal and contextual traits that can collectively affect career outcomes. Therefore, lifespan theory holds a career is a continuous life process marked by ongoing development throughout different career stages, as suggested by McMahan & Patton (2018).

Demerouti et al. (2012) reported that expatriates’ career capital varies across different career stages. During the early-career stage, expatriates typically have limited career capital as they are still developing their careers and striving to secure more challenging positions at higher organisational levels (Upadyaya & Salmela-Aro, 2017). Participating in high-density global work can significantly enhance their career capital by providing access to learning opportunities that may not be available in their home countries. Such developmental experiences can create new career prospects, and studies indicate that expatriates who embark on their first expatriation earlier in their careers tend to have a more favourable perception of their career success (Mäkelä et al., 2016). In contrast, by their mid-career stage, expatriates have typically accumulated substantial career capital and

achieved some career stability (Super, 1957). Consequently, such expatriates may prioritise career stability and work-life balance (Vos et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, expatriates in the mid-career stage may still be interested in opportunities to acquire new competencies that can accelerate their rise to senior positions (Phillips et al., 2002; Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2018). Alternatively, they may seek to maintain good performance to secure their current roles (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996). This group of individuals constitutes a highly attractive talent pool for employers, given their extensive experience and advanced level of career capital. Individuals in the late-career stage typically possess significant career capital (Roberts et al., 2006) that can positively impact their career success. However, a new expatriation may not substantially enhance their career capital at that stage. Moreover, expatriates in the late-career stage may face age discrimination (Benson & Pattie, 2008), which can impede their career progression. As a result, many employers tend to favour hiring individuals in the early or mid-career stages as they have the potential for a longer tenure with the organisation (Riach & Rich, 2010). In some cultures, there is also a perception that older individuals may lack the drive to succeed compared to their younger counterparts (Kooij et al., 2008). Therefore, we may anticipate that expatriates in the late-career stage may derive fewer benefits from their expatriation in terms of career success than those in earlier career stages.

While previous studies have not specifically examined career stage as a determinant of expatriates' long-term career success, research has indicated that advanced age correlates with declining job offers for AEs (Benson & Pattie, 2008). Moreover, the perceived employability of SIEs may decrease as they advance in their careers (Makkonen, 2015), potentially complicating their pursuit of employment opportunities across borders. As a result, individuals advancing in their careers may confront increased challenges related to international mobility, stemming from limited available employment opportunities and job prospects. It is plausible to hypothesise that perceived marketability will decrease as individuals approach the late-career stage. Previous research has also discovered that AEs' perceived marketability in their home country is diminished when they reach an advanced career stage (Mäkelä et al., 2016). This dissertation examines the international work experiences of two types of expatriates who have followed different career paths (including repatriation, re-expatriation, or remaining in the same job abroad) and are at different career stages. It is anticipated that different career stages will influence expatriates' perceptions of their marketability (Article 3) and the number of promotions (Article 3) they achieve throughout their careers.

In light of lifespan theory, it is expected that the career stage (Article 3) of expatriates will influence their objective and subjective career success.

2.3.7 Conservation of resources theory and the outcomes of career success

According to Spurk et al. (2019), career success can be conceptualised as a resource that helps individuals attain various outcomes. On the one hand, indicators of career success, such as high salaries or elevated status positions, function as signals influencing the perceptions, emotions, and behaviours of others (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Consequently, individuals perceived as successful tend to garner social prestige and peer respect (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Heilman et al., 2004), leading to the attainment of valuable internal and external states or objects. On the other hand, conservation of resources (COR) theory posits that individuals must invest resources to gain or protect their career success, potentially resulting in negative outcomes (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Pursuing and maintaining career success might necessitate the investment of resources such as time, energy, and money, potentially depleting these resources for other pursuits. Hence, attaining and maintaining career success can be a double-edged sword, yielding either positive or negative outcomes depending on various personal and contextual variables (Spurk et al., 2019).

Spurk et al. (2019) categorised the outcomes of career success into five types (withdrawal, career attitude, self-concept, well-being and health, and reactions to the environment). Firstly, withdrawal outcomes pertain to cognitions or behaviours leading to leaving the job, organisation, or occupation, such as turnover or retirement intentions. Previous career studies have suggested that both objective and subjective career success impact withdrawal, with subjective career success being a more proximal predictor (Spurk et al., 2019). Secondly, career attitude outcomes refer to individual attitudes related to the work and career domain, such as career self-efficacy beliefs or career calling. Such outcomes are more often associated with subjective career success, as it is tied to internal psychological processes (Shockley et al., 2016; Spurk & Abele, 2014). Research indicates that career success can positively affect career attitudes, reinforcing the notion that career success is a resource influencing resource management behaviours and attitudes (Spurk et al., 2019).

Thirdly, self-concept outcomes refer to self-perceptions about personal characteristics or attributes, such as self-esteem or core self-evaluations. However, research evidence on self-concept changes in response to career success is limited, making it difficult to conclude how and which type of career success might affect

aspects of the self-concept (Spurk et al., 2019). Regarding the fourth category of outcomes, well-being and health, Spurk and his colleagues found no studies examining career success's effects on subsequent well-being or health changes. Lastly, the category of reactions from the environment (Work and non-work) outcomes refers to the reaction of others in the work or non-work domain to an individual's career success. Past studies have assumed that past or current objective career success signals valuable information to the social environment (e.g., Singh et al., 2009b; Westman & Etzion, 1990), increasing the chances of receiving mentorship, for instance (Singh et al., 2009b).

3 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study employs conceptual and empirical methodologies to address the research problem and objectives. The conceptual approach (Article 1) employs a systematic literature review, analysing outcomes from 55 previous studies on expatriate career success post-expatriation. Meanwhile, the empirical approach adopted for Articles 2 and 3 uses quantitative methods to explore the antecedents of both objective and subjective career success among expatriates. Table 1 summarises the various research methods implemented in the study. The philosophical perspectives underpinning these choices will be addressed before discussing the rationale behind the methodological selections.

3.1 Philosophical considerations of the dissertation

This subsection discusses the research's paradigmatic position and underlying assumptions of this dissertation, providing insights into the social-scientific reality that informs the methodological choices made in the current study.

The business and management domain encompass diverse theoretical foundations, leading to philosophical debates and the coexistence of multiple research philosophies, paradigms, and methodologies (Saunders et al., 2015). Research philosophy includes the foundational assumptions related to ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (the nature of knowledge), axiology (the researcher's values), and human nature (the 'model of man'). These distinctions characterise different research philosophies concerning knowledge development in a specific field and influence a researcher's perspective on the nature of social science (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Saunders et al., 2015). The methodology is the approach adopted to investigate and acquire knowledge about the social world (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 2). A paradigm constitutes a philosophical stance and a distinct perspective for examining social-scientific contexts (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Researchers require awareness and reflexivity to determine their research philosophy, design a research project, and justify methodological choices (Saunders et al., 2015). In this doctoral dissertation, the research philosophy is grounded in the positivist paradigm.

Positivism is suited for studying objective phenomena that can be observed, measured, and quantified, focusing on identifying cause-and-effect relationships and generalisable patterns (Saunders et al., 2015). Objectivity, detachment, neutrality, well-defined research questions, and quantitative methods characterise this paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The choice of the research paradigms depends on the research question, the nature of the phenomena being studied, and

the most appropriate methodological approach (Saunders et al., 2015). Researchers should weigh the assumptions and limitations of each paradigm to determine which best aligns with their research goals and objectives (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). This dissertation adopts a positivist position as it aims to measure the impact of selected antecedents on the career success of expatriates.

3.2 Methods

3.2.1 Conceptual approach: The rationale for a systematic literature review.

The decision to utilise a systematic literature review for this research was made after careful consideration of the method's various advantages, particularly regarding expatriate career success. A systematic literature review, by its nature, allows for a comprehensive and unbiased analysis of existing empirical studies on a given topic (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). This method is advantageous in that it provides a structured and replicable process for identifying, evaluating, and synthesising high-quality research, thereby reducing the risk of bias and increasing the reliability of the findings (Popay et al., 2006).

A systematic review is especially pertinent in the context of expatriate career success. Expatriate studies span several disciplines (Stahl, Miller, & Tung, 2002), which makes the aggregation and synthesis of knowledge a challenging endeavour. A systematic review can provide a comprehensive understanding of the fragmented and multidisciplinary nature of the field (Tharenou, 2003). Moreover, while there is an increasing body of research on expatriate career success, the results of those studies are mixed, and our understanding of the factors that influence career success remains incomplete (Suutari & Brewster, 2003; Suutari et al., 2018b; Tharenou, 2013). This dissertation uses a systematic review to identify gaps in the existing literature and suggest directions for future research (Kitchenham, 2004). Therefore, the systematic literature review method is an appropriate and effective approach for this study, ensuring a comprehensive and structured overview of the empirical research on expatriate career success.

3.2.2 Empirical approach: The rationale for a quantitative approach

This doctoral dissertation empirically investigates the antecedents of expatriates' objective and subjective career success post-expatriation. The study uses quantitative research strategies to promote a comprehensive understanding of

these phenomena (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). A quantitative approach facilitates collecting measurable and generalisable data, focusing on statistical analyses and generalisable patterns (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). This investigation relies on the following methods:

- **Data Collection:** Data on expatriates' careers was gathered using structured surveys with different methods. First, responses to questions measured on a Likert-type scale captured respondents' perceptions of the antecedents and career success dimensions, such as perception of career capital development and career satisfaction, respectively. In addition, ratio data, such as the number of promotions during and after expatriates' tenure abroad, was elicited by asking direct questions.
- **Data Analysis:** Statistical analyses, including descriptive statistics, correlation, confirmative factor analysis, regression analyses, moderation analyses, and structural equation modelling, were conducted using appropriate software, such as SPSS or Mplus.

Then, while maintaining a quantitative research strategy, this approach acknowledges the potential influence of human perception, biases, and social contexts on career success (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Saunders et al., 2015). The following methods will be applied:

- **Data Analysis:** In addition to the previously mentioned analysis, further sophisticated and rigorous statistical techniques, such as common method bias and common method variance, will be employed, such as the common latent factor (CLF) and the marker-variable approach.

3.3 Conceptual article: The systematic literature review

The first phase of this doctoral dissertation comprises a systematic literature review, which serves as the foundational step in the research process. The outcomes of this systematic review are presented in Paper 1.

Tranfield et al. (2003) assert that literature reviews play a pivotal role in management research by facilitating the organisation and synthesis of knowledge pertinent to a specific academic inquiry. In order to enhance the existing understanding of expatriates' career success following expatriation, it was deemed appropriate to undertake a systematic and integrative review. The review process adhered to the guidelines put forth by Tranfield et al. (2003) for conducting a

systematic literature review. Figure 2 delineates the process involved in the systematic literature review.

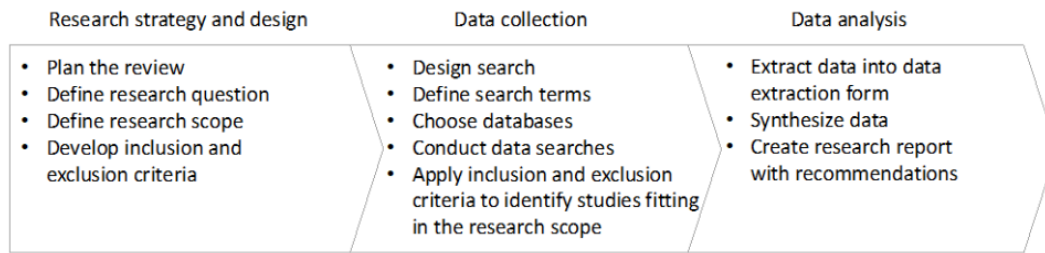


Figure 1. The systematic literature review process

3.3.1 Research strategy and design

The conceptual study aims to explore existing empirical literature on expatriate career success following expatriation. This assessment sought to provide an all-encompassing analysis of the prevailing state of knowledge in the field and to delineate priorities for subsequent research endeavours. The study was designed to address the following research questions: 1) What individual career impact results from expatriate work? 2) What are the antecedents of such career success? and 3) What are the outcomes of expatriates' career success?

The current research sets initial criteria for inclusion and exclusion to delimit its boundaries and guide the selection of relevant research articles within the scope of the review. A 'reference set,' comprised of a select group of articles identified early in the process, played a crucial role in formulating these criteria, supplying necessary terms, and evaluating the effectiveness of the search process. The primary inclusion criteria were empirical studies presenting findings on the impact of expatriation experiences on the career success of AEs and SIEs or studies reporting on the antecedents of career success or outcomes subsequent to career success after expatriation. Further details regarding the criteria for including or excluding articles are outlined in the following subsection.

3.3.2 Data collection

The design of the data search encompassed the specification of search terms and the selection of appropriate databases. The search was crafted to elicit all accessible articles pertinent to the topic while avoiding the retrieval of an excessively large volume of unrelated results. An iterative process ensured the

various search strings were assessed and refined. The search string incorporated Boolean operators AND/OR to combine synonyms or alternative terms related to the subject matter.

The initial phase, from January to June 2021, involved searching the Web of Science, EBSCO, and SCOPUS databases using Boolean search techniques combining general and specific terms derived from the career success and expatriation literature. Four groups of words were formulated based on a preliminary examination of the career and global mobility literature: general terms from expatriation literature (e.g., expatriation, expatriates, repatriation, repatriates, international assignment), specific terms from expatriation literature (e.g., SIEs and AEs), and general as well as specific terms from the career success literature (e.g., promotions, perceived employability, competencies, satisfaction). The next stage considered full English-text articles from peer-reviewed academic journals. Due to the moderate number of studies addressing career success following an expatriation experience, it was feasible to include all identified studies without imposing any time limitations.

Over 30 keyword combinations were utilised in the initial stage of the search process, resulting in approximately 1,900 articles. The titles were scrutinised to eliminate articles not related to expatriation or career topics, which reduced the pool to roughly 400 articles. Following a review of the abstracts, articles with a strictly domestic focus were eliminated, narrowing the list down to 144 articles. At this point, the selection criteria were further narrowed to focus solely on long-term AEs and SIEs. The change resulted in the exclusion of other forms of international experience, such as short-term assignments and the experiences of flexpatriates and international business travellers. Studies focusing on expatriates who were still in the same job abroad, for example, van der Heijden et al., 2009, were also excluded as they did not offer insights into expatriate career success, nor did they provide findings on the antecedents or outcomes of such success post-expatriation. However, an exception was made for studies focused exclusively on career capital development, even if they included expatriates who remained abroad (for example, Jokinen, 2010). This exception was actioned because such a diverse and hybrid framework of career competencies development (Spurk et al., 2019) continues to develop during an expatriate's international work experiences and can influence their subsequent career stages after repatriation or re-expatriation. Notably, most of the identified articles addressing competency development as an outcome of expatriation involved expatriates currently working abroad, a remarkable exception being Dickmann et al., 2018. Conversely, studies that focused exclusively on a single competency development (for instance, Li, Mobley, & Kelly, 2013) were excluded as they failed to adequately capture the comprehensive range of career

capital competencies that shape international careers (Shaffer et al., 2012). After applying these criteria, 81 articles remained under consideration at this stage.

A few studies were excluded where the international experience was operationalised as a sum variable consisting of different forms of international experience, such as studying abroad and travelling (e.g., Schmid, Altfeld, & Dauth, 2018), as these experiences were deemed distinct from long-term expatriation. Additionally, research that combined international experience with other variables (e.g., overall professional experience, as in Andresen & Biemann, 2013) was omitted to maintain focus. Consequently, the final selection comprised 55 articles addressing sub-dimensions of career success for expatriates after expatriation.

The systematic literature review identified all empirical evidence that met the pre-specified inclusion criteria to address the three research questions. By employing transparent and systematic methods in reviewing articles and incorporating all available evidence, the potential for bias was minimised, leading to more reliable findings (Moher et al., 2009). Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognise that while systematic reviews can enhance the quality of a review, they can introduce a degree of rigidity, potentially limiting the coverage of all pertinent aspects (Carver, Hassler, Hernandez, & Kraft, 2013).

3.3.3 Data analysis

A data extraction form guided the analysis of the review material, as Tranfield et al. (2003) recommended. This form, developed at the beginning of the review process, was refined throughout to facilitate the effective synthesis of data. The first step identified the characteristics of the publication (e.g., authors, year of publication, source title, and impact factor) and those of the study (e.g., methodological approach, study design, informants, and country).

The next step was to apply a taxonomy to conduct the thematic synthesis of the selected studies. This taxonomy was based on theories addressing the antecedents and outcomes of career success, as well as the overall impact on the careers of individuals, as detailed by Spurk et al. (2019). The thematic synthesis is a well-established method in systematic reviews of qualitative data that facilitates coding raw data into descriptive and analytical themes. This approach ensured a transparent link between the primary studies and the review's conclusions, as stipulated by systematic review principles (Thomas & Harden, 2008).

To ensure a rigorous analysis and clear presentation of findings, the results related to the career success of expatriates were organised in a structured manner. That

structure was based on Spurk and colleagues' work, examining both objective and subjective aspects of career success and also their antecedents and subsequent outcomes following career success. The findings were then integrated into a comprehensive thematic framework, as Gioia et al. (2013) recommended. This approach facilitated an exhaustive and meaningful synthesis of the data.

3.4 Empirical articles: A quantitative approach

3.4.1 Research strategy and design

The research strategy employed in this doctoral dissertation is based on a quantitative research design to investigate the impact of international work experience on expatriates' objective and subjective career success. This choice of strategy is informed by the nature of the research questions and the need to establish generalisable findings regarding the antecedents of expatriates' career success after their expatriate work experiences. Such a quantitative approach is grounded in the positivist paradigm.

3.4.2 Sample characteristics

This dissertation focused on individuals working legally, temporarily residing for at least one year in a country where they are not citizens and relocating abroad to achieve career-related goals. These individuals undertook relocation through organisation-assigned, self-initiated, or directly within the host country employment means.

Data for this study were collected via an online survey administered to expatriate members of two Finnish trade unions: 'The Business School Graduates' and 'Academic Engineers and Architects in Finland TEK.' The high union membership rates in Nordic countries suggest that the sample is representative of Finnish graduates working abroad in these fields (Suutari et al., 2018b). In 2015 and 2016, the unions identified individuals working abroad; in 2020, they were sent a follow-up questionnaire. This approach was advantageous, as it overcame issues with locating respondents who had changed jobs or relocated to other countries; a common issue when relying on alternative sources such as employers and websites. Consequently, it was possible to obtain contact information for expatriates, both AEs and SIEs, who were working abroad or had repatriated in 2015 and 2016, a goal that would likely be unattainable through alternative means.

This method also allowed for reaching a diverse range of career paths, such as repatriates, re-expatriates, and expatriates still working in the same job. However, the focus of Article 3 is on all these groups, whereas Article 2 specifically targets the career success of expatriates after expatriation. As a result, expatriates in the same job were excluded from Article 2. Detailed information about the data is available in Articles 2 and 3 within this dissertation.

3.4.3 Data collection

Primary data for this study were gathered through structured online surveys distributed to a select sample of expatriates. The questionnaire included sections addressing demographic information, requesting details of international work experience, and assessing objective and subjective career success. Objective career success included factors such as the number of promotions and job responsibility development, while subjective career success focused on aspects like career satisfaction and perceived marketability.

Initially, invitations to participate in the survey were extended to 422 individuals. After follow-up reminders, we collected 219 responses, indicating a response rate of 51.90%. Additionally, an open call to members who had worked abroad in 2015 and 2016 elicited a further 108 responses, thus augmenting the sample size. We ensured that there were no significant differences in the career success of expatriates between the subsamples. As a result, Article 3 was based on a total of 327 responses, which included 117 AEs and 210 SIEs.

However, for the purpose of Article 2, we excluded 125 respondents from the analysis. Their ongoing employment in the same country and position made evaluating their post-expatriation career progression infeasible. Consequently, Article 2 was based on a sample of 202 respondents, comprising 88 AEs and 114 SIEs. In essence, Article 2 narrows its focus on career success following international work experiences, while Article 3 accounts for a broader array of career paths. Despite the differences, both articles seek to explore the variances in career success between AEs and SIEs, with the findings reflective of these sample variations.

3.4.4 Measures

This dissertation employs validated multi-item scales to ensure the robustness of its findings. By dividing the questionnaire into distinct sections for predictors and outcomes, the study seeks to minimise the impact of common method variance.

Moreover, to enhance the reliability of responses, the study safeguarded the anonymity of respondents and encouraged them to provide candid and spontaneous answers (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Dependent variables.

Article 2:

Job responsibility development, which measures objective career success, was gauged using the job responsibility development scale (Breitenmoser et al., 2018). The respondents compared their experiences before and after expatriation on the scale (e.g., Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009; Suutari & Brewster, 2003) to advance the study's goal to evaluate career success following international work experience. Two items from the original scale were adapted: 'Compared to your position before your job abroad (in 2015), is your current position a (1) demotion ... (5) promotion?' and 'Compared to your project responsibility before your job abroad (2015), do the projects you are currently responsible for represent a (1) reduction in responsibility ... (5) an increase in responsibility?' The scale had a Cronbach's alpha of .911.

Subjective career success was evaluated by assessing expatriates' perceptions of career satisfaction using the five-item career satisfaction scale by Greenhaus et al. (1990). A representative item is 'The progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement.' All items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .901.

Article 3:

Perceived marketability is usually segmented into internal and external dimensions (Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003). This study, informed by Suutari et al. (2018b), adapted this scale to align with its focus—assessing the career success of expatriates' post-international work experiences. Consequently, two scales were adapted for the expatriation context. Firstly, perceived internal marketability was measured using three items (example: 'Following my international work experience [in 2015/16], numerous opportunities were available to me within my organisation'), producing a Cronbach's alpha of 0.776. Secondly, perceived external marketability was assessed with three items (example: 'After my international work experience [in 2015/16], I secured or could have easily secured a comparable position with a different employer'), with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.809.

To assess the number of promotions, a commonly-used method for evaluating expatriates' objective career success (Kraimer et al., 2009; Breitenmoser et al., 2018), expatriates reported how many promotions they had secured since the previous survey in 2015/2016.

Independent variables.

Article 2:

The demands-abilities fit scale developed by Cable and DeRue (2002) measures job fit based on three items. Respondents were asked to indicate 'to what extent they felt the skills and abilities developed during their work abroad (2015/16) meet the requirements of their current job'. The items were measured on 5-point Likert scales anchored with not at all (1) and completely (5). The Cronbach's alpha was .920.

The study employed the career adapt-ability scale (CAAS-SF) to measure career adaptability, combining the items to yield a total score (Maggiore et al., 2017). When responding, participants were given the following description and related question: 'Different people use different strengths to build their careers. No one is good at everything; each of us emphasises some strengths more than others. Please rate how strongly you have developed each of the following abilities using the scale below.' Sample items included 'Thinking about what my future will be like' (Concern), 'Making decisions by myself' (Control), 'Observing different ways of doing things' (Curiosity), and 'Overcoming obstacles' (Confidence). All items were measured on 5-point Likert scales. The Cronbach's alpha was .706.

To aid in classifying expatriates as AEs or SIEs (expatriate type), the respondents were asked whether they (1) had been sent abroad by their employer or (2) had sought a job abroad on their own initiative. SIEs were coded 0 and AEs 1.

Article 3:

The career capital scale was employed to measure career capital development (Dickmann et al., 2018). Participants were asked, 'To what extent did your international work experience (2015/16) develop the following abilities?' All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale anchored with did not improve/increase at all (1) and improved/increased very much (7). Career capital was operationalised as a multidimensional scale with three dimensions—knowing-how, knowing-whom, and knowing-why career capital—as subfactors of career capital. The three ways of knowing are related and complement each other (Inkson & Arthur, 2001). The scale consists of 28 items measuring expatriates'

development of CC while working abroad (see Dickmann et al., 2018, for the items). Cronbach's alpha was .947.

Respondents were asked whether they had been sent abroad by their employer or had sought a job abroad on their own initiative. Those who had been sent abroad were categorised as the AE expatriate type and coded zero, while others were designated as SIE type and coded one.

The career path was identified by asking whether respondents were still working abroad or whether they had been repatriated. Repatriates were coded as 0, and those who had continued their international careers as 1.

Within the career domain, prominent lifespan and developmental models connect specific age frames with distinct career stages (Zacher & Froidevaux, 2021; Super, 1980). The majority of researchers have embraced age categories as a foundation for career stages (Dutta et al., 2021). Age categories are considered valid indicators of career stages (De Voz et al., 2021; Dutta et al., 2021; Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2018) due to their influence on individual personality (Caspi, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005), the meaning of work (Kooij et al., 2011), job attitudes (Ng & Feldman, 2010), and behaviours (Ng & Feldman, 2008). Consequently, this study follows the operationalisation by Salmela-Aro and Upadyaya (2018), similar to Dutta et al. (2021), and codes career stages as follows: early-career stage (0) for individuals under 35 years old; mid-career stage (1) for those aged 35–49; and late-career stage (2) for individuals aged over 50. Dummy coding was employed for the analysis, utilising the early-career stage as a reference group.

Control variables.

Article 2

This study incorporated control variables such as age, gender, and location. Age has been associated with a negative influence on promotions, perceived external employability (Suutari et al., 2018b), and home-country marketability (Mäkelä et al., 2016). Gender can affect the career success of expatriates, and research indicates that female managers typically report reduced career satisfaction after expatriation than their male counterparts (Ren et al., 2013). In the coding system, males were assigned a code of 0, while females received a code of 1. Finally, the respondent's location, either in their home country or working in a new overseas role, was controlled owing to evidence that career success varies between these groups post-expatriation (Biemann & Braakmann, 2013). Repatriates were given a code of 0, while re-expatriates were assigned a code of 1.

Article 3

The study accounts for several control variables to ensure the accuracy of the findings. Gender was also controlled for the same reasons explained above with regard to Article 2. Males were coded as 0 and females as 1. Additionally, the study controlled for educational background, as expatriates in the sample represent two distinct fields—business and engineering. Business-educated expatriates were coded as 0, while engineering-educated expatriates were coded as 1. Furthermore, the number of expatriate jobs was controlled, as previous research has shown that increased transitions abroad correlate with a more pronounced influence of expatriation on career success (Shaffer et al., 2012; Kraimer et al., 2009). Finally, the hierarchical position of expatriates was controlled, as it has been demonstrated to be relevant to expatriates' career success (Cavazotte et al., 2021; Wurtz, 2022; Tornikoski, 2011; Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Following Mäkelä et al. (2022), respondents were asked to rank their current position in their organisation on a continuous scale from 1 to 10, with 10 representing the highest level, 5 or 6 a medium level, and 1 the lowest level.

3.4.5 Data analysis

This subsection presents the rationale for selecting regression analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) to investigate the impact of expatriation experiences on expatriates' objective and subjective career success.

Regression analysis:

Regression Analysis was chosen as the analytical method to examine the influence of antecedents on expatriates' objective and subjective career success in Article 2. Multiple regression analysis allows for the estimation of the relationship between a dependent variable (career success) and multiple independent variables (various aspects of international work experiences) (Hair et al., 2019). It provides a robust framework to identify and quantify the influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable while controlling for potential confounding variables. Furthermore, regression analysis enables the assessment of both the overall model fit and the individual contribution of each independent variable to the model, offering a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing objective career success (Field, 2018).

Structural equation modeling:

Article 3 uses SEM to investigate the influence of several theoretically relevant antecedents of expatriates' objective and subjective career success. The rationale was that SEM is a powerful statistical technique that estimates and tests complex relationships among observed (e.g., number of promotions) and latent variables (perceived marketability). Latent variables are unobservable constructs that are inferred from observed variables. The current research is particularly suitable for SEM, enabling simultaneous analysis of multiple dependent variables (Hair et al., 2019b). Moreover, SEM accommodates the incorporation of measurement error and allows for the testing of competing models, thereby providing a rigorous framework to analyse the influence of antecedents on expatriates' objective and subjective career success (Kline, 2023).

Moderation analysis:

Moderation analysis was chosen for this research (Article 2) owing to its ability to reveal the circumstances under which certain relationships persist (Baron & Kenny, 1986). This type of analysis helps to identify and understand the factors that might change the strength or direction of the relationship between independent and dependent variables (Hayes, 2013). In the context of this dissertation, using the expatriate type as a moderator provided nuanced information about variations in career success among different types of jobs abroad. The choice reveals complex relationships and fosters more precise predictions, which can be central to formulating and implementing more effective policies and interventions tailored to different subgroups or situations.

Moreover, moderation analysis can help reconcile conflicting findings in previous research. For instance, if a particular relationship was found in one study but not in another, the cause might be a different moderating variable in the two studies. Identifying such a moderating variable could thus resolve the apparent contradiction and advance our understanding of the phenomenon under study (Aguinis, Edwards, & Bradley, 2017).

3.4.6 Validity and reliability

This subsection presents a detailed account of the analyses employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the study's constructs and measurement instruments.

Validity

Several steps were taken to address construct validity, ensuring that the constructs accurately represent the concepts they are designed to measure. Initially, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to validate the measurement model, specifically examining both convergent and discriminant validity. In the context of this dissertation, CFA was utilised to validate the constructs used to measure the impact of international work experiences on expatriates' objective and subjective career success. CFA employs various statistical indicators, including the chi-square test, comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), to evaluate the fit of the hypothesized model to the data. Following the standard guidelines (for instance, Hu & Bentler, 1999), the model is deemed to have an acceptable fit if it meets the following criteria: the chi-square test of model fit is non-significant, CFI is equal to or greater than .90 (ideally .95), TLI is equal to or greater than .90 (ideally .95), RMSEA is less than .08 (ideally less than .06), and SRMR is less than .08.

The acronyms are statistical indicators used to evaluate the fit of a hypothesised model to the data.

1. The chi-square test is used to assess the goodness of fit of a model. In this context, the test evaluates the difference between the observed covariance matrix (the covariance matrix obtained from the data) and the expected covariance matrix (the covariance matrix predicted by the model). A significant chi-square test (i.e., p-value less than .05) in this context suggests that the model does not fit the data well - that is, the observed covariance matrix is significantly different from the expected covariance matrix. However, the chi-square test is sensitive to sample size and often rejects models when the sample size is large, even if the misfit is minor. Thus, other fit indices like CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and SRMR are often used alongside the chi-square test.
2. CFI: This index compares the fit of the user-specified model to a null or baseline model. Values range from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating a better fit.

3. TLI: This index also compares the fit of a user-specified model to a null model. Like the CFI, values for the TLI range from 0 to 1, and higher values indicate a better fit.
4. RMSEA: This index provides a measure of the discrepancy between the hypothesised model with optimally chosen parameter estimates and the population covariance matrix. RMSEA values range from 0 to 1. Lower values (typically less than .05 or .06) suggest a better fit.
5. SRMR: This is the standardised difference between the observed and the predicted correlation matrices. Lower values indicate a better fit, with values less than .08 typically considered acceptable.

Second, evidence of discriminant validity was provided by a CFA with multiple latent variables demonstrating a good fit and further affirmed by ensuring each measure was most strongly associated with its intended construct. Discriminant validity was also assessed, which ensures that each construct is unique. This stage is critical when running analyses that treat them as independent entities. A failure to establish discriminant validity can lead to issues such as multicollinearity, distorting the results of the analysis (Sarstedt, 2019).

Finally, to address potential concerns related to common methods bias (CMB), which can distort the true relationships among constructs and affect construct validity, several techniques were used, including Harman's single-factor test, the CLF approach, and the marker-variable approach. Generally, CMB has not been an issue in human resources management (HRM) research (Bozionelos & Simmering, 2022). First, the marker-variable technique was employed (Lindell & Whitney, 2001), in which an unrelated variable is included in the analysis to assess the extent of common method variance. If the correlations between the marker variable and the study variables are substantial, it indicates the presence of CMB. In this study, the correlations between the marker and study variables were low, providing additional evidence that CMB is not a significant issue. Second, the CLF test was implemented in the CFA model (Williams, Hartman, & Cavazotte, 2010). This method introduces a CLF to account for the shared variance among all observed variables, thereby isolating the common method variance from the true relationships between variables. The results of the CLF test indicated that common method variance was not a significant issue, as the relationships between variables remained significant after accounting for the CLF. Finally, Harman's single-factor test was conducted by loading all the items onto a single factor in exploratory factor

analysis (EFA) (Podsakoff et al., 2003). If one factor accounts for a majority of the variance, it indicates the presence of a common method variance. In this study, the first factor did not account for a majority of the variance, suggesting that CMB is not a significant concern.

Reliability

In terms of reliability, which ensures the constructs consistently measure the same concept, this study used Cronbach's alpha, a commonly employed measure of internal consistency. It is essential that the alpha coefficients exceed the threshold value of 0.70 for each construct to establish adequate reliability (Nunnally, 1978). Cronbach's alpha was applied to provide support for the reliability of the measures used, thus establishing a robust basis for subsequent analyses focused on expatriates' career success antecedents.

Finally, CMB is a critical concern for both validity and reliability in research. With respect to validity, as already described, CMB can produce false associations between variables that do not accurately reflect the genuine relationships among constructs, thereby affecting construct validity (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). As such, multiple techniques were employed in this study to assess and control for CMB, including Harman's single-factor test, the CLF approach, and the marker-variable approach (Williams, Hartman, & Cavazotte, 2010; Lindell & Whitney, 2001).

Conversely, CMB can also affect reliability, albeit misleadingly. While it may appear to enhance the measure's reliability due to inflated associations between individual items of the construct, this increase is artificial and may not reflect the true reliability of the measure (Podsakoff et al., 2003). CMB could lead to similar response patterns, which are more attributable to the shared method of data collection rather than the actual level of agreement among the constructs. Therefore, the techniques used to mitigate CMB in terms of validity are equally critical to ensure the reliability of the constructs in this study.

In conclusion, by employing these analyses, this study ensured the validity and reliability of the constructs and measurement instruments used.

4 SUMMARIES OF ARTICLES

This chapter outlines the objectives, key findings, and contributions of this dissertation's three articles. Article 1 is a systematic literature review examining the career impacts of expatriation, focusing on the outcomes and antecedents of career success post-international work experience. Article 2 presents an empirical investigation into the antecedents of expatriates' career success following their international work experience. It delves into the job fit with the new role, career adaptability, and expatriate type. Finally, Article 3 empirically explores expatriates' career success, emphasising career capital development, expatriate type, career path, and career stage.

4.1 Article 1 - Taking stock of expatriates' career success after international assignments: A review and future research agenda

Article 1 delves into studies investigating the objective and subjective career success of AEs and SIEs after their expatriation experience. This examination is crucial, given the limited current knowledge concerning the career impacts of expatriation (Brewster et al., 2014; Suutari et al., 2018b). The field has also been marked by inconsistent findings related to the career success of expatriates. Moreover, much of the existing evidence derives from the experiences of long-term expatriates (AEs), with relatively scant research focusing on SIEs who find work abroad independently (Andresen, 2018; Brewster et al., 2014). It is important to explore both categories since empirical studies suggest that the nature of expatriation can lead to differing career success outcomes (Andresen, 2018; Shaffer et al., 2012; Suutari et al., 2018b).

This article builds on previous reviews of theories adopted when studying career success to enrich our comprehension of expatriate career success (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; Ng & Feldman, 2014a; Ng & Feldman, 2014b; Spurk, Hirschi, & Dries, 2018). It investigates the latest advances in career success theory and analyses both the antecedents of expatriate success as well as outcomes of career success.

The article relies on a systematic literature review, a method recognised for its rigour in literature analysis (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). This study asserts that integrating the international career context into existing career frameworks is critical to accurately represent the intricacies of high-density global work (Shaffer, Kraimer, Chen, & Bolino, 2012). This angle is often overlooked in the literature but accounts for the diverse influences at the macro-, meso-, and micro-levels that

shape global career success (Mayrhofer, Smale, Briscoe, Dickmann, & Parry, 2020). The review helps create a new framework for the career success of expatriates, which in turn paves the way for a future research agenda.

The systematic review aims to answer three main questions: 1) What individual career impact results from expatriate work? 2) What are the antecedents of such career success? and 3) What are the outcomes of expatriates' career success? The article responds to those questions by synthesising empirical research conducted up until 2020. It forms a framework that illustrates the existing evidence on how expatriation influences expatriates' career success and also identifies antecedents and outcomes. The framework enables researchers to identify underutilized theories and related antecedents to guide future research on expatriate career success. It also suggested potential outcomes of expatriates' career success.

This article contributes by identifying previously untapped theories and suggesting their application to expatriation research, thus introducing new antecedents of career success. Importantly, this study augments the notion of international work density by incorporating two additional job-related dimensions, task challenge and job autonomy, to complement the previous framework of aspects of high-density global work (Shaffer et al., 2012).

Recognising the rich experience that expatriates accumulate through their work experiences abroad, this review identifies two additional theories – the learning and institutional theories – that can provide substantial insight into expatriate career success. Additionally, the review reveals distinct career patterns not considered in prior reviews lacking an international career focus, such as the continuous re-expatriation pattern of global careerists (Suutari & Mäkelä, 2007). This review also updates earlier works to reflect a period of intense migration flows and vigorous discourse on new nationalism (The Expat Survey, 2019; Valluvan, 2017), thereby further underlining its unique contribution to the field. The article concludes by proposing a potential future research agenda.

4.2 Article 2 - Unravelling the long-term career impact of expatriation experiences: An examination of career adaptability, job fit, and expatriate type on post-expatriation career success

Article 2 examines the key determinants of expatriates' career success following their long-term international work experience, taking into account the unique context of high-density global work. The research investigates three main elements: the job fit with the new role, employing person–environment fit theory; career adaptability, grounded in career construct theory; and expatriate type, distinguishing between AEs and SIEs through the lenses of career construction theory and proactivity literature. These elements were selected due to their potential to influence career success in the expatriation context, as highlighted in Article 1. A follow-up quantitative study was conducted on 202 expatriates who were abroad in 2015/2016, providing insights into the experiences of both AEs and SIEs, as well as repatriates and re-expatriates. In summary, this article investigates how job fit with a new role, career adaptability, and expatriate type influence the subjective and objective assessments of career success among expatriates following their expatriation.

In essence, this study serves as a foundation for a more nuanced understanding of expatriate career success, particularly in relation to job responsibility development and career satisfaction in the post-expatriation context. Employing robust quantitative methodologies and examining a diverse expatriate sample, the research applies not only person-environment fit and career construction theories in the expatriate context but also fills critical gaps in the existing literature. First, it highlights the crucial role of job fit in objective and subjective career success, a key insight for expatriates accumulating significant career capital through global work. Second, the study adopts the career adaptability concept, advancing career construction theory by highlighting its role in shaping subjective career satisfaction following expatriation. Intriguingly, our findings reveal that career adaptability indirectly influences objective career success through the mediating role of the expatriate type but does not have a direct impact. This invites a re-evaluation of existing theoretical premises, especially regarding the differential career trajectories of AEs and SIEs, potentially influenced by their proactive career behaviour. Finally, the study challenges prevalent assumptions on the career success of SIEs, confirming that SIEs not only match AEs in terms of objective career success but better their scores in career satisfaction terms.

4.3 Article 3 - Career success of expatriates: The impacts of career capital, expatriate type, career path, and career stage.

Article 3 investigates the antecedents of expatriates' career success, considering both those who have been repatriated and those who continue to work abroad, either in the same host country or in another country. This research builds on the findings of Article 1 of this dissertation, which highlighted the relevance of modern career theories to the careers of expatriates. It focuses on four career-related antecedents in the expatriation context that merit further examination: career capital acquired abroad, expatriate type, career path, and the expatriate career stage.

The quantitative study was conducted in collaboration with two Finnish labour unions and investigated the careers of 327 expatriates. This study offers valuable insights into expatriate career success in several ways. First, it provides new evidence on the impact of the development of career capital abroad on expatriate career success, a topic that has been generally addressed but not specifically explored in previous research. Second, this study presents novel comparative findings on the career success of AEs and SIEs. Third, it contributes much-needed information on the career success of those expatriates who continue their careers abroad: a group underrepresented in career success research, which has primarily focused on repatriated employees. Finally, this study enriches career success research among expatriates by incorporating the perspective of different career stages.

The findings on the career impacts of expatriation from Article 3 challenge the predominantly negative view that repatriates are often dissatisfied with their career outcomes when the career capital they develop abroad is not recognised or valued by employers (Begley et al., 2008; Valk et al., 2015). It is thus suggested that expatriates might benefit from their developed career capital as it can contribute to their job performance, even if employers do not fully recognise the value of expatriation. This shift in understanding emerges from investigating both AEs and SIEs and a broad range of career paths, including those encompassing repatriating, re-expatriating, or continued working in the same host country longer term. The findings underscore that all expatriate roles and career paths are not alike, resulting in a variance in career capital development abroad and also career success after expatriation.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This section outlines the dissertation's contributions, intertwining discussions on theoretical implications in both international career and general career theory. While most contributions target our understanding of careers within an international context, the dissertation also offers some insights into career theories in general. Theoretical implications and future research directions are discussed concurrently. Finally, the dissertation's practical contributions and limitations will be addressed.

5.1 Theoretical contributions and direction for future research

5.1.1 Theoretical contributions from the conceptual paper

The conceptual part of this dissertation featured a systematic literature review (Article 1) that led to a fresh framework for investigating the career success of expatriates, laying the groundwork for subsequent research (see Figure 1 or Article 1).

The theoretical contribution of this review spans three key areas: first, it broadens the understanding of aspects of high-density expatriate work; second, it identifies underutilised theories and related antecedents in expatriation research; third, it reveals two promising theories – learning and institutionalisation theory – that could provide a more nuanced understanding of expatriate career success. It also identifies research gaps regarding the outcomes of expatriate career success and discusses, in particular, re-expatriation as an outcome that is relevant in the international career context. These contributions will be explored more thoroughly in the sections that follow.

Aspects of High-Density Global Work

This dissertation critically examines the dimensions of high-density expatriate work. It expands on the work of Shaffer et al. (2012), which has explored the fundamental nature of high-density work. Shaffer et al. (2012) delineate three dimensions of high-density global work: physical mobility (employees travel or relocate internationally), cognitive flexibility (assignees need to adjust their thought patterns and behaviours to adapt to situational demands across cultures), and non-work disruption (work-role requirements disrupt employees' usual activities outside work), providing a robust groundwork for understanding the

high-density nature of global work. This dissertation builds on that foundational work to augment the notion of international work density by incorporating two additional job-related dimensions: task challenge and job autonomy. These dimensions are commonly identified and impactful characteristics of expatriate work in the review. It was also suggested that these two job-related characteristics significantly influence the career success of expatriates following their international work experiences.

The unique nature of expatriate work is accentuated by a broader range of tasks and elevated job autonomy that expatriates face during their international work experiences (e.g., Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Suutari & Mäkelä, 2009). Expatriate jobs often involve more challenging tasks than domestic jobs and at higher organisational levels than the expatriates' jobs before expatriation (Solomon, 1995; Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Additionally, expatriates often grapple with a scarcity of immediate support and expertise due to the limited size of foreign affiliates (Harzing, 2001; Reiche et al., 2011). As a result, expatriates are compelled to rely heavily on their internal and external resources to navigate work-related hurdles while concurrently balancing personal and professional demands (Kraimer et al., 2022).

By adding these unique job-related challenges of expatriate roles as aspects of high-density expatriate work, the first article of this dissertation broadens the original taxonomy of aspects of high-density global work presented by Shaffer et al. (2012). This expansion underscores the significance of these job-related elements in shaping expatriates' career paths following expatriation. As a result, this dissertation seeks to refine the definitions of task challenge and autonomy, framing them specifically within the high-density context of expatriate work.

- **Task Challenge:** *In the context of expatriate work, 'task challenge' refers to the heightened complexity and variety of tasks that expatriates undertake while working abroad compared to their roles in their home countries. It pertains to the increased difficulty and demands inherent in an expatriate's job, driven by the unique requirements of the foreign work environment to the work and non-work domain and the augmented responsibility typically associated with those roles.*
- **Autonomy:** *Within the context of expatriate work, 'autonomy' denotes the amplified level of independence and discretion that expatriates experience in managing their professional roles compared to their home-country positions. This increased autonomy stems from the inherent challenges of functioning in a foreign work environment*

and the limited availability of support from corporate entities and/or personal networks.

Underutilised theories and related antecedents of career success in an international career context

Based on the review of existing research in the international career context and the framework by Spurk et al. (2019) that specifies different theoretical approaches applied in general career research, this dissertation contributes by identifying various underutilised theoretical frames in existing research on antecedents of expatriate career success. Aligned with Spurk's review, this dissertation recognises dominant theories and related antecedents of career success, such as human capital theory (e.g., education) and role theory (e.g., gender).

However, this dissertation also highlights those theories that seem underutilized and most promising in the context of high-density global work. For example, the concept of person–environment interactions could be useful given that the high-density work experience assignees are immersed in makes finding a suitable job after international work experiences challenging. Similarly, career agency theories and career transition theories are interesting approaches, given that expatriates, particularly SIEs, often do not receive appropriate organisational support to manage career transitions in an international context. Expatriation is a high-density work experience that affects family members; thus, theories such as the kaleidoscope career model that incorporates relationships, personal values, and interests outside the workplace can help illuminate the area.

The dissertation further proposes promising moderators and mediators for the relationships between expatriate work experiences and career success. For example, it suggests that person–environment interaction theories, in particular, along with theories related to the individual agency of careerists, could align well with the nature of global, boundaryless careers and effectively address the interaction between expatriates and their environment. For more detailed information about all the theories and antecedents identified, refer to section 4.2 of Article 1.

This dissertation meticulously synthesises existing research and highlights the unexplored yet potent theories explaining expatriate career success. Consequently, it offers valuable insights into expatriate experiences and presents a comprehensive roadmap for future research in this critical area. The details of all

theoretical perspectives and related antecedents are presented in Table 3 and Figure 1 of Article 1.

Additional suggested theories: Institutional theories and the career success of expatriates

The review mentioned above examined theories in the category of contextual macro-resources, unveiling an essential yet under-explored aspect in the study of expatriate career success. Existing research has primarily focused on the cultural component of contextual macro-resources alone. However, considering that careers tie individuals to organisations, professions, institutions, and society, it is crucial to look beyond micro and meso considerations and incorporate macro factors (Tina Dacin et al., 2002). The literature review (Article 1) identifies a scarcity of studies investigating the influence of the institutional context on expatriates' career success. Despite the limited research, the few available studies often report significant findings (Breitenmoser et al., 2018; Schmid & Wurster, 2017). Hence, a comprehensive understanding of the impact of contextual macro-resources on expatriate career success necessitates further research on various facets of institutional contexts.

An expatriate's career success is affected by the broader institutional profile of the host country, encompassing its culture and extending beyond it (Shen et al., 2015). This influence persists during and after expatriation (Lee & Liu, 2006; Makkonen, 2015). As careers are inherently contextual, greater emphasis should be placed on contextual differences in career studies (Mayrhofer et al., 2007), particularly in expatriation research (Andresen et al., 2020a). In the larger scheme, it is noteworthy that organisations operate within a network of distinct institutional systems (Roth & Kostova, 2003), which exert complex pressures that necessitate proactive managers continually tackling arising challenges (Kostova et al., 2008).

Macroeconomic conditions in host/home countries can affect organisations' ability to leverage the competencies acquired by expatriates, which in turn impacts their employability and promotion opportunities (Begley et al., 2008; Valk et al., 2015). Moreover, the regulatory environment in a country can restrict work opportunities and career progress, impeding expatriate career success and long-term career prospects (Kostova, 1999; Kostova & Zaheer, 1999a; Al et al., 2010; Begley et al., 2008). Additionally, technological considerations should be investigated to understand institutional aspects, as Phillips, Karra, and Tracey (2007) suggested. Technological disparities across countries, or *technology distance*, present unique challenges for companies and expatriates. Nevertheless,

no studies have explored how a host country's technological level influences career success.

An outcome of the review is to suggest that institutional theories could provide a valuable perspective on this issue, emphasising how different countries' multilevel institutional environments affect expatriates' global work (Chan & Makino, 2007). The high-density nature of expatriates' jobs positions them at the convergence of overlapping institutional factors, primarily due to the physical mobility required of them (Shaffer et al., 2012). Consequently, expatriates experience non-work disruptions, take on more challenging tasks with increased autonomy, and adapt their thought patterns and scripts to various situational demands. These factors stem from cross-cultural interaction (Peiperl & Jonsen, 2007) and broad institutional disparities between home and host countries (Kostova, 1997).

Ultimately, numerous opportunities exist to explore how various home and host country institutional attributes directly or indirectly influence long-term expatriate career success. Institutional theory indicates the predominant focus on national cultures should be broadened to include other critical aspects thus far overlooked (Mayrhofer et al., 2020).

Additional suggested theories: Experimental learning theories and career capital development of expatriates

The high-density work undertaken by expatriates in various cultural contexts necessitates an elevated learning requirement. The literature review suggests the most significant positive impacts of international work experiences stem from the development of career capital. Expatriates often acquire a range of skills that foster cross-cultural knowledge transfer and underpin their success in new host cultures or upon their return home (Dickmann et al., 2018). Such developmental experiences significantly impact the long-term career interests and outcomes of expatriates. Consequently, it is essential to consider learning theories when investigating the precursors of career success.

Developing career capital involves learning from international experiences (Jokinen, 2010; Jokinen et al., 2008). However, the way individuals assimilate international experiences often differs even among expatriates in apparently similar situations (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004). While numerous learning approaches exist, some theories may be more relevant to the expatriate context than others. Career capital development aligns closely with the broader concept of experiential learning because most expatriate learning likely occurs outside formal

educational systems (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991; Kolb, 1984). The situation contrasts starkly with traditional learning theories focusing primarily on learning as a behavioural or cognitive outcome (Ng et al., 2009).

Kolb (1984) describes experiential learning as a process of knowledge creation through the transformation of experience. The description emphasises the central role of experience in learning, viewing learning as a process of holistic adaptation to the world. It outlines a learning process involving four modes: experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting, to convert experience into learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). This theory explains why individuals do not learn equally from their international work experiences; only some individuals will complete the entire experiential learning cycle when faced with new experiences during their expatriation (Ng et al., 2009). Kolb's depiction also encompasses the varying learning abilities, styles, skills, and developmental learning capacities of expatriates (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004).

Experiential learning theory offers a robust foundation for researchers to comprehend the antecedents of career capital development of expatriates as a measure of career success. Studies seeking to understand development fostered during cross-cultural learning abroad have emphasised the relevance of experiential learning theory (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004). Others suggest the role of learning style as a moderator between international work experiences and the development of cultural intelligence (Li et al., 2013). However, empirical research on expatriates' experiential learning remains sparse, bar a few notable exceptions (Jarvis, 2012; Morris, 2020; Li et al., 2013). Expatriates may need to cultivate multiple learning abilities, styles, and skills to align their learning capacities with the high-density nature of global work. Such learning could propel other measures of career success, including career satisfaction, marketability, job offers, and promotions.

In conclusion, experiential learning theory seems to offer new opportunities for future research on expatriates, thus contributing to the understanding of career capital development in the context of expatriation.

The career success of expatriates leading to re-expatriation and a global career

This dissertation enriches Spurk's taxonomy of outcomes of career success by presenting re-expatriation – or potential global careers – as a new outcome of career success in the international career context. Most research in the domain of

expatriation and global careers regards international work as an isolated occurrence. However, such work often constitutes a repeated pattern. Suutari and Brewster's (2003) work helps distinguish between two categories of global careerists: those consistently transitioning between foreign assignments and those who alternate between international assignments and periods in their home country. Regardless of the category, competency and career development remain the common motivators for expatriates (Doherty et al., 2011). Notably, the value of developmental opportunities and intrinsic job attributes – such as autonomy and job meaningfulness – escalates during a long-term international career owing to the intensity of overseas work (Suutari, Tornikoski, & Mäkelä, 2012).

Suutari and Brewster (2003) identified two distinct professional types among experienced global careerists. The first are individuals with a deliberate international career focus who have successfully sought and seized overseas opportunities. Conversely, a second group began their global careers primarily driven by their employers' initiatives. Upon accepting these opportunities, they found high-density international work enriching and rewarding, which provided an impetus to continue that global career trajectory.

The motivation to re-expatriate often stems from career ambitions and prior successful international experiences. However, disappointment with career progression after repatriation can also lead to re-expatriation (Ho et al., 2016). These repeated cycles of expatriation and repatriation can ultimately mould these individuals into global careerists (Suutari & Mäkelä, 2007) – an aspect overlooked by much of the existing global career research.

As global workers traverse the complex tapestry of cultural landscapes, it was suggested that Sussman's (2010) cultural identity model offers valuable insights. It examines the identity shifts as assignees move away from their home culture and adapt to a new one. Such changes do transpire during expatriation (Kohonen, 2005), and repatriates often find their changed identity to be in conflict with the cultural identity of their home country (Peterson and Plamondon, 2009). Greater shifts in cultural identity can make repatriation more challenging (Sussman, 2010), which can then affect career satisfaction and spur a desire for another stint overseas (Ho et al., 2016). In the long run, such truly international careers can morph into long-term global careers featuring a variety of international roles in different locations (Valk et al., 2015). Therefore, future research should examine career trajectories more holistically (McNulty & Vance, 2017), exploring how career success abroad and after repatriation influences re-expatriation intentions and global mobility.

5.1.2 Theoretical contributions from empirical studies on antecedents of expatriate career success.

This section outlines the theoretical contributions made by Articles 2 and 3. The empirical articles build on the conceptual framework established in Article 1 to assess six antecedents across five dimensions of expatriate career success, with perceived marketability accounting for both internal and external aspects. In addition to these antecedents, one article introduces a moderating variable to the investigation. Table 1 offers a comprehensive overview detailing all tested antecedents, moderators, and career success outcomes. It also identifies which relationships proved significant. Within the scope of this research, the two empirical articles examine 20 relationships between antecedents/moderators and expatriate career success. Of these, 12 were significant, whereas eight were not. Furthermore, among these tested relationships, two involved indirect links between antecedents and outcomes via moderation. One such indirect relationship yielded a significant result, while the other did not. The subsequent discussion delves deeper into the theoretical contributions of these findings.

Table 2. Comprehensive summary of empirical findings: Influences of selected antecedents and theories on expatriates’ career success.

Selected theories and antecedents/moderators		Objective CS		Subjective CS		
Article 2: 6 direct relationships and 2 moderations Article 3: 12 direct relationships		Article 2	Article 3	Article 2	Article 3	Article 3
Antecedents and Moderators.	Theory	Job Resp. Develop	Promotions	Career Satisfaction	Internal Perceived Mkt	External Perceived Mkt
Career Capital Development (Article 3)	Career Capital Theory	-	S	-	S	S
Expatriates Type (Article 3)	Proactivity Literature	NS	NS	S	NS	NS
Job Fit (Articles 2 and 3)	Person–Environment Theory	S	-	S	-	-
Career Path (Article 3)	Person–Environment Theory	-	NS	-	S	S
Career Adaptability (CAAS, Article 2)	Career Construct Theory	NS	-	S	-	-

Selected theories and antecedents/moderators		Objective CS		Subjective CS		
Article 2: 6 direct relationships and 2 moderations Article 3: 12 direct relationships		Article 2	Article 3	Article 2	Article 3	Article 3
Exp. Type x CAAS* (Article 2)	Proactivity Literature	S	-	NS	-	-
Career Stage (Article 3)	Lifespan Theory	-	S	-	NS	S

* Moderation analysis; S = Significant; NS = Non-significant; - = no test

The career capital theory and career success

The conclusions drawn from Article 3 underpin the assertions of career capital theory that the development of expatriates' career capital abroad significantly influences their perceived internal and external marketability and the number of promotions they receive. Such findings concur with the expectation that competency development facilitates future career success (Ramaswami et al., 2016).

However, the disparity between the theory and the reality has been challenging in the international career context when considering the career outcomes of repatriates. Prior research has focused on discussing how repatriates are often disillusioned when their organisations fail to acknowledge or appreciate the career capital they accumulate from their international work experience (Begley et al., 2008; Valk et al., 2015). Such negative experiences can compromise their perception of their marketability.

The findings of Article 3 offer a more optimistic view. The results demonstrate that career capital developed abroad relates to expatriate career outcomes. However, this positive revelation is nuanced by acknowledging that not all expatriate jobs or experiences yield the same learning outcomes. Therefore, the development of career capital abroad can vary considerably, depending on the specifics of the role and the experience acquired. Consequently, career implications also differ between expatriates. This finding emphasises the need to scrutinise the various expatriate jobs offering different learning opportunities. The situation presents an

intriguing area for future research, given the evidence that companies may not fully recognise the value of international work experience (Kraimer et al., 2009).

If they find employers cannot offer the kind of positions they expect after their expatriation, individuals can apply their proactive career management skills to find jobs that leverage the competencies they have accumulated, even if that demands a change of employer or location (Dickmann et al., 2018). As a result, organisations may need to reassess their strategies for managing expatriate careers, taking into consideration the different degrees of career capital developed through international work experience. Furthermore, this viewpoint necessitates an additional examination of the mechanisms by which career capital cultivated abroad can be effectively recognised, utilised, and rewarded upon repatriation. Such an approach could mitigate repatriation disappointments and enhance career satisfaction and progression.

Person–environment fit

This dissertation extends our comprehension of how person–environment fit theory can be applied to elucidate expatriates' objective and subjective career success. Article 2 makes a pivotal contribution as it illuminates the integral role of job fit in shaping expatriates' career success after expatriation. In contrast to previous smaller-scale, qualitative studies largely centred on repatriated AEs, which do not apply person–environment fit theory (e.g., Bossard & Peterson, 2005), Article 2 employs a quantitative approach with a robust methodology enabling it to offer new empirical evidence, linking job fit to both the objective and subjective career success of expatriates. The article utilises a broad sample, encompassing both AEs and SIEs and encompasses both repatriates and re-expatriates. That approach is a significant advance, filling a gap in the existing literature by providing a more nuanced understanding of the different career trajectories of expatriates. The study underlines the particular relevance of job fit for expatriates, whose international experiences amplify their career capital (a finding reported in Article 3). Moreover, Article 2 highlights the necessity of long-term career planning for expatriates. It illuminates the need for individuals to efficiently leverage the diverse skills they acquire abroad. It seems that job fit increases their motivation and encourages them to develop the new skills essential for good performance. Conversely, a poor job fit may lead to employees leaving the organisation, a pattern that is often observed among repatriates (Vidal et al., 2007).

Second, Article 3 is the first study to apply person–environment fit theory with regard to the career path of expatriates following their international work experience. The study distinguishes between the career paths of repatriates and those who continue working abroad long term. The expectation was that those who continue their international career would be better able to utilize their developed competencies than those repatriating back to their home country. However, the findings revealed that repatriates tend to perceive a greater degree of internal and external marketability than those who continue to work abroad despite there being no discernible difference in the number of promotions between the two groups. This result raises an intriguing question: despite the potential repatriation challenges (Chian et al., 2018), why are repatriates more optimistic about their market value than their counterparts living abroad?

One possible interpretation is that repatriates have a heightened sense of certainty about their future marketability after securing employment in their home country. This confidence may stem from a realization that their domestic and international experiences are highly valued (Begley et al., 2008). In turn, the international business landscape, fraught with uncertainty, may create a different experience for those continuing to work abroad. Global careerists, who often work on fixed-term contracts, have expressed concerns about their upcoming career progression (Suutari et al., 2012). This uncertainty may prompt some expatriates to continually evaluate job opportunities beyond their current employer and in different countries. The decision to stay abroad or return home, coupled with uncertainty about future career moves, could potentially temper an expatriate's optimism regarding their marketability. Overall, the underlying career decision-making processes and factors influencing the perceptions of marketability warrant further investigation. It is also worth noting that these findings could be somewhat influenced by the specific nature of the Finnish labour market, where foreign work experience may be particularly highly esteemed (cf. Andresen et al., 2022).

The career construct theory: proactive career behaviour and career adaptability

In the context of modern career theories, the constructs of proactive career behaviours and career adaptability stand out as being commonly examined through the lens of career construction theory (Spurk et al., 2020; Johnston, 2016; Parker & Collins, 2010; Rudolph, Lavigne, & Zacher, 2017). These constructs elucidate individual strategies for managing transformations and obstacles inherent in career progression (Parker & Collins, 2010; Rottinghaus, Day, &

Borgen, 2005; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). The following section examines the theoretical contributions of these analyses.

Proactive career behaviour

Study 2 is grounded in proactivity literature (e.g., Smale et al., 2018) and underscores the role of proactive career behaviour when analysing the career success of AEs and SIEs. The main theoretical contribution of this work is its application of career construction theory through the use of proactive career behaviour to understand differences in the career outcomes of AEs and SIEs. The study thus provides a much-needed theoretical foundation to clarify the differences between AEs and SIEs, an area of research currently typically neglected in the literature.

In line with proactivity literature, the results of the study indicate that SIEs demonstrated a greater level of subjective career success than AEs when measured by career satisfaction. However, the conjecture that SIEs would surpass AEs in terms of job responsibility development as a measure of objective career success received no empirical support. Despite not outperforming AEs concerning job responsibility development, SIEs did match AEs' level of job responsibility development. Interestingly, this observation aligns with the findings of Suutari et al. (2018b) on promotions when measured eight years post-expatriation.

In Article 3, career success is examined in terms of perceived marketability and the number of promotions. Theoretically, the study emphasised self-initiation of expatriation, a typical approach towards SIEs in earlier research. Although this self-initiation does not directly stem from proactivity literature, it contains a similar idea of emphasising the role of the individual in the decision-making process (Andresen, 2021). Existing research posits that arranging their own expatriate career deprives SIEs of organisational support during their career transitions (Suutari et al., 2018a). Consequently, SIEs are seen to be in a weaker position when repatriating as they must use their own resources to find a new job after expatriation. Organisational support to AEs significantly influences their career success by providing access to internal career paths, networks, and other resources (Suutari et al., 2018a; Dickmann et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, the results reveal comparable levels of perceived internal marketability, perceived external marketability, and the number of promotions in both groups. Again, these findings echo those of Suutari et al. (2018b), indicating similar career success among AEs and SIEs.

These results prompt an enquiry into whether current literature overemphasises the external constraints on SIEs' career success due to the dearth of large-scale research. The extant research is predominantly qualitative and concentrates on particular kinds of SIE in specific contexts. It is important to take into account the context in which career success is studied to prevent potential misinterpretations (Andresen et al., 2020a). The temporal dimension of measuring a career may also affect findings. At the time of repatriation, SIEs might grapple with reintegration into their home country's job market due to a lack of organisational support and employment arrangements. They may still gradually reap the benefits of their earlier expatriation after consolidating their work experience domestically (Begley et al., 2008). For those continuing to work abroad, circumstances might initially closely mirror those of AEs at the outset, meaning both groups can accumulate comparable rewards from their prior international experience. Nonetheless, the high level of career satisfaction reported by SIEs could theoretically be connected with SIEs' proactive approach to managing their careers.

Career adaptability

Study 2 accessed career adaptability literature to investigate the career impacts of expatriation. It seems to be the first empirical examination of the effect of career adaptability on the post-expatriation career success of both AEs and SIEs. The investigation thus contributes to both the understanding of career success among expatriates and to the broader academic discourse by providing empirical evidence of the influence of adaptability in later career stages, as called for by Rudolph et al. (2017).

The findings of the article suggest that career adaptability might be even more significant to international careers than domestic ones, although that assertion would require validation by further research. Corroborating career construction theory, heightened career adaptability was found to boost the career satisfaction of expatriates following their international work experience.

Interestingly, the study found no direct link between career adaptability and job responsibility development as a measure of objective career success among expatriates. However, data supporting a relationship between career adaptability and objective career success remain sparse, pointing to a need for additional investigation (Rudolph et al., 2017). The study thus provides new empirical evidence pertaining to expatriates.

Nevertheless, this study did find an indirect connection between career adaptability and objective career success through expatriate type. The main finding was that career adaptability appears to influence the career success of AEs,

but the effect was not observed among SIEs. This research seems to be pioneering in reporting such an effect.

The findings prompt the question of why career adaptability and job responsibility development are unrelated among SIEs. A plausible explanation could be the heightened proactivity of SIEs, which reduces their dependence on adaptability capabilities. An SIE will often need to anticipate changes and respond by actively seeking resources and engaging in continuous learning before the need for adaptation becomes essential (Andresen et al., 2020b). In contrast, AEs generally exhibit less proactive career-oriented behaviour because they can rely on organisational support, and career adaptability – primarily employed during and after critical incidents (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2020) – will usually only become essential if the employer fails to support the AE's career post-expatriation. Future research might expand on those dynamics.

Moreover, the career success of SIEs might be significantly influenced by constraints in the external environment, such as the domestic and international job situation, as they traverse organisational boundaries during expatriation. While it has been suggested that proactive career behaviour becomes critical under these circumstances (Smale et al., 2018; Andresen, 2021), the current findings do not corroborate that point. No evidence suggests enhanced career adaptability leads to stronger objective career success among SIEs, which implies the structural perspective dominates the agentic one (Mayrhofer et al., 2007) in terms of shaping the career outcomes of SIEs. Another explanation might be the heterogeneity among SIEs, which includes diverse groups like recent graduates seeking international exposure, partners of expatriates, or individuals reacting to domestic unemployment by seeking jobs abroad (Suutari & Brewster, 2000; Mello et al., 2021). For such SIEs, working abroad might not have the same career impact on job responsibility development as it would for the typically more experienced AEs dispatched abroad by their employers.

Lifespan theory

The findings from this study offer several practical implications. First, the research offers critical insights for individuals considering the career implications of working abroad. Although literature frequently suggests that companies do not recognise career capital developed abroad (Chiang et al., 2018), these findings connect it with long-term career success. This should inspire individuals to consider expatriation, as jobs abroad will often present more developmental opportunities than their current roles. Additionally, expatriation provides a route

to transfer acquired career capital to a new country (Oleškevičiūtė, Dickmann, Andresen & Parry, 2022). Contemporary career theories highlight the development of various aspects – including those represented within career capital – but may downplay the necessity for career capital transfer and sensitivity to various time horizons (Oleškevičiūtė et al., 2022; Mayrhofer & Gunz, 2023). Given the career impacts for AEs and SIEs are comparable, the findings suggest individuals could glean similar career benefits by self-initiating their expatriation if such opportunities are not available within their company. When contemplating expatriation for career enhancement, it would be preferable to do so at an earlier career stage rather than a later one.

These findings also shed light on several practical implications for organisations. First and foremost, they highlight the crucial role of job fit in career success. This insight transcends current norms by implying that organisations should enhance their career management practices to efficiently identify suitable roles for repatriates (Doherty & Dickmann, 2009). Improved career management should facilitate the career progression of AEs post-expatriation. Furthermore, organisations should aim to expand the array of opportunities offered to returning AEs. Developing career structures with a greater variety of options could potentially amplify career satisfaction over time. However, the success of these initiatives depends on acquiring a fuller understanding of the high-density nature of expatriate jobs. Incorporating these insights when presenting roles to returning expatriates will foster effective matching of job opportunities.

Organisations would also do well to recognise and recruit individuals demonstrating high levels of career adaptability for expatriate roles. Not only could this practice offer a competitive edge, but it could also validate organisational investment in global work. This dissertation affirms the value of competency development by expatriates as a significant asset that can support achieving organisational goals (Harzing, 2001). The research encourages organisations to consider both SIEs and AEs when addressing the drivers of global mobility, such as leadership development programmes, knowledge transferability, filling competency gaps, and control and coordination (Collings & Scullion, 2012; Collings & Sheeran, 2020). Despite the lack of organisational support, SIEs' positive perception of career capital developed abroad reveals their potential as a less costly yet highly skilled and motivated global workforce. This finding invites organisations to reconsider their global talent strategies to encompass seeking out SIEs, managing them and guiding their careers.

Implementing the above initiatives would demand an understanding of individual contexts, such as career stage, that impact expatriate learning and career

outcomes. This knowledge should motivate organisations to implement a more flexible career progression system supporting inclusion and diversity (Shortland & Perkins, 2022). Nevertheless, crafting such a flexible approach would not be straightforward; it would require an individual-level analysis of expatriate experiences, related development, and evolving career interests to ensure expatriates and repatriates are placed into roles aligned with their competencies during and after expatriation.

5.2 Limitations

The present dissertation also has certain limitations, which offer future research opportunities to address them. First, this dissertation employs cross-sectional data, as does much expatriate research. Although the approach provides a valuable snapshot of the phenomena under investigation, it may not fully capture the dynamics of cause and effect between variables. When the goal is to probe the causal impact of various precursors on outcomes, longitudinal research designs are more desirable, as they help clarify the temporal sequencing of these factors that might be obscured in cross-sectional studies. Consequently, this dissertation advocates more multi-source data collection and longitudinal study designs within expatriate research to provide a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of expatriate experiences and outcomes.

Second, the expatriate participants informing this study were all highly educated engineers and business professionals, potentially limiting the generalisability of the findings. Expatriate employees with lower levels of formal education or those with varying career competencies and expectations might not derive the same career advantages from expatriation. Although many expatriate studies focus on highly educated professionals, future research could provide valuable insights by extending the exploration to less-educated and perhaps low-skilled expatriates (Haak-Saheem, Brewster & Lauring, 2019).

Third, all expatriate participants were Finnish citizens, raising the potential for cultural bias. The respondents acquired their international work experience in different countries, yet cultural contexts can affect the perceived value of international work experience (Andresen et al., 2020a). As a small society heavily reliant on international trade, Finnish culture might place greater importance on international experience than some others do. Consequently, more research is needed to examine how institutional contexts, in both home and host countries, impact expatriates' career success.

Finally, the study used an age-based approach to operationalise career stages, which may not fully capture the nuanced progression of an individual's career. Age is certainly a factor, but theories such as Levinson's life stage developmental model (Levinson, 1986) and Super's lifespan model (Super, 1980) also incorporate other elements, including individual performance and learning advancements, which can vary greatly across career phases (Nagy et al., 2019; Kraimer et al., 2019). Individuals of the same age can be at considerably different career stages (Aryee et al., 1994; Kooiji et al., 2008; Kooiji & Boon, 2018). Future studies might benefit from exploring alternative measures of career stages that transcend purely age-based metrics.

5.3 Practical implications

This dissertation offers several implications on the individual and organisational levels. At the individual level, this research offers critical insights for individuals considering the implications of working abroad. Although literature frequently suggests that companies do not recognise the career capital developed abroad (Chiang et al., 2018), these findings connect such development with long-term career success, which should inspire individuals to consider expatriation, as jobs abroad often present more developmental opportunities than were available in prior roles. Additionally, expatriation provides an avenue to transfer acquired career capital to a new country (Oleškevičiūtė et al., 2022). Contemporary career theories highlight the development of various aspects of international work experiences— including the development of career capital (Oleškevičiūtė et al., 2022; Mayrhofer & Gunz, 2023). Given that career impacts for AEs and SIEs are comparable, the findings suggest individuals could harvest similar career benefits by self-initiating their expatriation if opportunities are unavailable within their company. If contemplating expatriation for career enhancement, it is preferable to do so at an earlier career stage than a later one.

These findings offer several practical implications for organisations. First, improved career management would facilitate the career progression of AEs post-expatriation. Furthermore, organisations should aim to expand the array of opportunities offered to returning AEs. Developing career structures with a greater variety of options could amplify career satisfaction over time. However, the success of such initiatives would depend on acquiring a comprehensive understanding of the high-density nature of expatriate jobs. Incorporating these insights when presenting roles to returning expatriates would foster a more effective matching of job opportunities.

Also, this dissertation affirms the value of competency development among expatriates as a significant asset supporting organisational goals (Harzing, 2001). The research encourages organisations to consider the utilization of both SIEs and AEs when addressing the drivers of global mobility of organisations, such as leadership development programmes, knowledge transferability, filling competency gaps, and control and coordination (Collings & Scullion, 2012; Collings & Sheeran, 2020). Despite lacking organisational support, SIEs' positive perception of their career capital reveals their potential as a less costly yet highly skilled and motivated global workforce. This finding invites organisations to reconsider their global talent strategies to encompass sourcing, managing SIEs, and guiding their careers.

The implementation of these initiatives demands an understanding of individual contexts, such as career stage, that affect expatriate learning and career outcomes. This knowledge should motivate organisations to implement a more flexible career progression system supporting inclusion and diversity (Shortland & Perkins, 2022).

When discussing the implications of global work, it is necessary to take account of the trend of digitisation. The digital economy is fundamentally reshaping the way we work, offering new paradigms that are highly relevant to both individuals and organisations engaged in expatriation (Trittin-Ulbrich et al., 2021). First, the digital economy allows for greater flexibility in work arrangements, including remote work and decentralised organisational structures (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021). In such a context, career capital developed abroad may be more flexibly applied along non-linear career paths. This boost in digitalization adds another layer of complexity to expatriate careers, making them even more non-linear by providing additional options and pathways for career development previously unavailable. Second, digital technologies serve as facilitators and accelerators of virtual global mobility activities (Selmer et al., 2022). Online tools can assist competency development, enabling expatriates to acquire valuable skills without traditional, location-bound training programmes. This is particularly advantageous for SIEs, who may lack formal organisational support but are often highly skilled and motivated. These individuals may leverage digital resources, such as professional social network sites (e.g., LinkedIn), to access real-time information about the global job market, enhancing their employment prospects post-expatriation (Davis et al., 2020). Thirdly, the advent of the digital economy necessitates a re-evaluation of organisational talent management strategies. As traditional roles evolve or become obsolete, new skill sets become increasingly important (Jooss et al., 2023). In this evolving landscape, the competencies developed abroad can be significant assets. Organisations must, therefore,

proactively align their global talent strategies with the new realities (Jooss et al., 2023), ensuring they capitalise on the skills of both AEs and SIEs. Additionally, individuals must be more aware than ever of the need to acquire and develop skills that align with the changing nature of work and their personal career aspirations (Chalutz-Ben Gal, 2023). Finally, the digital economy can potentially lower traditional barriers like geographical location, thereby allowing organisations access to a more diverse and inclusive talent pool (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021).

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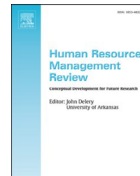
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Taking stock of expatriates' career success after international assignments: A review and future research agenda

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ABSTRACT

This systematic literature review explores studies addressing the objective career success and subjective career success of company-assigned and self-initiated expatriates after their long-term international assignments. Expatriate work is defined as high-density work that affects employee learning and career trajectories. We develop a holistic expatriate career success framework exploring the following questions: 1) What individual career impact results from international assignments? 2) What are the antecedents of such career success? and 3) What are the outcomes of assignees' career success? A previously neglected range of theoretical perspectives, antecedents, and outcomes of expatriate career success is identified. Subsequently, a threefold contribution is made. First, we extend the conceptualization of international work density to unveil the differences between general and global career concepts. Second, we identify promising theories that have not been utilized in expatriation research, emphasizing context-related and learning theories that chime with the specific nature of global careers. Lastly, we suggest an extensive future research agenda.

1. Introduction

In recent years, an increasingly interdependent global economy has transformed how MNCs operate across the world, creating a strong need for culturally sophisticated, and globally agile leaders (Caligiuri, 2013), who must manage international operations effectively. It has become more common for employees to obtain global work experience (Stahl, Miller, & Tung, 2002), which has triggered an increase in empirical studies on expatriates over the past 20 years. The main interest has been in long-term assignments lasting at least one year (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011), and very commonly around 2 or 3 years, given that such expatriation is a transitional experience for both expatriates and their families. According to previous studies, expatriate work seems to be more complex and demanding than domestic work (e.g., Shin, Morgeson, & Campion, 2007), suggesting that expatriates' work is of the high-density type. High-density professional work affects individuals' competencies, work interests, and future careers (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998: 329).

Most expatriation research is concerned with expatriates' experiences abroad. There is less research devoted to analyzing the experiences of assignees after an international assignment (IA), although this area of interest is slowly expanding in the literature (Brewster, Bonache, Cerdin, & Suutari, 2014). When such research has been conducted, the focus has typically been on repatriation adjustment (Kierner & Suutari, 2018) or related support needs (e.g., van der Heijden, van Engen, & Pauwe, 2009). Another angle

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attempts to understand the career impact of IAs (e.g., Ramaswami, Carter, & Dreher, 2016). Such interest has been boosted by findings on assignee dissatisfaction with their treatment after repatriation (e.g., Doherty & Dickmann, 2009). That disappointment may also stem from the nature of the job undertaken and the assignees seeking to safeguard their career progression, as companies may not recognize the competencies repatriates developed when abroad (e.g., Suutari & Brewster, 2003). As a result of high-density developmental experiences, expatriates often feel competent to take on more demanding jobs and may also have developed greater career aspirations (Dowling, Festing, & Engle, 2013). In turn, disappointment with job and career opportunities after the IA may lead to career dissatisfaction, strengthen intentions to leave an employer (Kraimer, Shaffer, & Bolino, 2009), and increase staff turnover rates among repatriates (Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007). Such disappointment runs counter to the very definition of expatriate career success that regards it as the accomplishment of desirable, positive psychological or work-related outcomes resulting from an IA (Holtbrügge & Ambrosius, 2015; Suutari, Brewster, Mäkelä, Dickmann, & Tornikoski, 2018).

The above indicates that incorporating context in international career studies is highly important. Nevertheless, this aspect is neglected in the literature (Andresen, Aspori, et al., 2020). We argue that existing general career frameworks would benefit from incorporating international career elements. Doing so, would better capture the realities of international work density (Shaffer, Kraimer, Chen, & Bolino, 2012) and take account of the more complex and varying macro-, meso-, and micro-level influences that shape global career success (Mayrhofer, Smale, Briscoe, Dickmann, & Parry, 2020).

In addition, the existing evidence on the career impact of IAs is still fairly limited (Brewster et al., 2014; Suutari et al., 2018). Mixed findings exist in relation to the career experiences, career success implications, and other outcomes associated with working abroad. The evidence is drawn mainly from one type of long-term assignees, assigned expatriates (AEs), while research on self-initiated expatriates (SIEs), being those who have gained work abroad on their own initiative, is limited (Andresen, 2018; Brewster et al., 2014). The consideration of both types is important because empirical studies among expatriates indicate that career success can vary according to the type of IA undertaken (Andresen, 2018; Shaffer et al., 2012; Suutari et al., 2018). Assigned expatriates are sponsored by their employers and move internationally within the boundaries of one organization. The work experience acquired often contributes to their organizational career development. In contrast, self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) usually arrange their own expatriation to a country of their choice to pursue personal and career development experiences (Jokinen, Brewster, & Suutari, 2008), often with no definite residence period in mind (Tharenou, 2013). These different starting points and job experiences abroad may influence personal development and growth (Andresen & Biemann, 2013; Suutari et al., 2018) and lead to variations in career success between the two types of assignees. For all the reasons above, it is important to undertake a systematic literature review to identify how much we know about the career impact of IAs. Such a review allows us to design a more nuanced career success framework, which in turn supports the development of a future research agenda to condense and enrich expatriate career success insights.

The current research builds on earlier reviews in the field of career success in general to refine the approach to understanding the career success of international assignees (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; Ng & Feldman, 2014a, 2014b; Spurk, Hirschi, & Dries, 2018). It draws upon recent developments in general career success theories to analyze the antecedents of success among expatriates augmenting insights of what success means in the context of IAs. In particular, Spurk et al. (2018) identified different theoretical perspectives that help systematically apply their suggested antecedents to expatriate career success. Crucially, we identify promising theories that have not been utilized in expatriation research, incorporate context, and list new antecedents. Finally, research into career success outcomes is limited despite many theoretical connections, such as well-being or withdrawal, being suggested (Spurk et al., 2018). We have integrated further theoretical connections as outlined in the section describing the organizing framework.

Starting from general career success provides additional theoretical breadth and practical detail to the two previous reviews that have explored the international career context (Chiang, van Esch, Birtch, & Shaffer, 2018; Shaffer et al., 2012). Shaffer and colleagues investigated the individual choices, challenges, and career consequences associated with different global work experiences. The focus of our study is different. We identify antecedents and explore outcomes of expatriate career success, which Shaffer et al. did not. In addition, we provide a more comprehensive analysis of the career impact of IAs on assignees by examining career success sub-dimensions (e.g., promotions, salary, career satisfaction). That analysis will allow academics to refine their understanding and target their research more accurately. Chiang et al. (2018) have conducted a review of research into the repatriation stage covering both antecedents and outcomes. Our broad theoretical approach led to identifying pockets of studies previously neglected and consequently theoretical perspectives not covered in their review, such as institutionalization and learning theories. Given the high-density experience that expatriates gain by working abroad, we argue that learning theories in particular can contribute significantly to understanding expatriates' career success. Finally, we cover additional career patterns, such as that of global careerists, who re-expatriate (Suutari et al., 2018). We also update both earlier reviews during a time of strong migration flows and a substantial debate on new nationalism (The Expat Survey, 2019; Valluvan, 2017).

The primary goals of our systematic review are to answer three questions: What individual career impact results from IAs? 2) What are the antecedents of such career success? and 3) What are the outcomes of assignees' career success? Based on an overview of the empirical research carried out up to 2020, we address those three questions and develop a framework that depicts the impact of IAs on expatriates' career success while delineating both antecedents and outcomes. Crucially, this enables us to broaden our understanding of objective and subjective career success factors, identify antecedents and theories currently neglected in the study of expatriate career success, and suggest additional outcome factors. We conclude by presenting a potential future research agenda.

2. Review method

In thematically reviewing articles that focus on the career impacts of long-term IAs on the future career of expatriates, this study addresses empirical findings on career success and its antecedents and outcomes among AEs and SIEs. Our database selection follows

clear, specified criteria by adopting a replicable, scientific and transparent process (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003).

First, between January and June 2021, we searched the Web of Science, EBSCO, and SCOPUS databases using Boolean search techniques combining general and specific terms from the career success and expatriation literature. Four groups of words were developed based on an initial analysis of the career and global mobility literature: general terms from the IAs literature (e.g., expatriation, expatriates, repatriation, repatriates, international assignment), specific terms from the IAs literature (e.g., SIEs and AEs), and general as well as specific terms from the career success literature (e.g., promotions, employability, competencies, satisfaction). Next, we narrowed the focus to long-term AEs and SIEs and thus excluded other forms of international experience (e.g., short-term assignments and those of “flexpatriates” and international business travelers). Finally, we considered full English text articles from peer-reviewed academic journals that publish expatriation research. Owing to the moderate number of studies addressing career success after an expatriation experience, it was possible to include all identified studies without any time limitation.

More than 30 combinations of the above keywords in the first wave and found about 1900 articles were used. We read headlines and searched for repetition to exclude articles that did not address global assignment or career issues. That action filtered the total down to about 400 articles. Reading abstracts alerted us to purely domestic articles and, excluding these, produced a final list of 144 manuscripts. Two members of the author team read each article individually to produce a precise manual analysis of the 144 articles. They cross-checked their decisions and discussed them with the third author. Studies on expatriates who were still on assignment (e.g., van der Heijden et al., 2009) and studies focused on experiences during expatriation (e.g., Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010) were excluded. The excluded studies did not provide any evidence on expatriate career success after working abroad or findings on antecedents or outcomes of such career success after the IA. However, studies exclusively addressing career competencies were considered even when expatriates were still abroad (e.g., Jokinen, 2010). That is because such diverse career competencies are continually developed and utilized during further career steps after the IA. We excluded studies that addressed a single competency development (Li, Mobley, & Kelly, 2013) as they do not genuinely reflect the breadth of career competencies that shape international careers. At this stage, the list of articles numbered 81 papers. Finally, to improve clarity, we excluded a few studies in which international experience was operationalized as a sum variable consisting of different kinds of international experience. Examples included studying abroad and traveling on the grounds that the experience would be different from that gained on a long-term assignment (Schmid, Altfeld, & Dauth, 2018). To improve focus, we also excluded research that combined international experience with other variables (e.g., including overall professional experience as in Andresen & Biemann, 2013). Therefore, the final selection consisted of 55 articles addressing some sub-dimensions of career success for AEs and/or SIEs after their assignment. Appendix 1 shows these articles marked with a number in the list of references.

Overall, the systematic literature review has identified all empirical evidence that fit our pre-specified inclusion criteria to answer the three research questions. By using explicit and systematic methods when reviewing articles and incorporating all available evidence, bias was reduced, thus providing more reliable findings (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009). However, it is important to acknowledge that while systematic reviews can augment the quality of the review they can also lead to some ‘rigidity’ that may represent limits to cover all relevant angles (Carver, Hassler, Hernandez, & Kraft, 2013).

3. An organizing framework for the review

The high-density nature of global work as a theoretical frame for understanding why expatriation has an extensive impact on careers will be discussed first. Next, we explain why AEs and SIEs are separated in our review. After that, we thematically categorize studies in three steps: the impact of IA on the career success of expatriates, antecedents of such career success, and outcomes of career success.

3.1. The high-density nature of global work

Discussing the nature of expatriate work creates the foundation to understand why global work experiences are so impactful for careers. Scholars have suggested that global work is a form of high-density work experience. For instance, Shaffer et al. (2012) adopted Peiperl and Jonsen’s (2007) characteristics of global work as a starting point to differentiate three different peculiarities of global work: a) physical mobility (employees travel or relocate internationally), b) cognitive flexibility (assignees need to adjust their thought patterns and behaviors to adapt to situational demands across cultures), and c) non-work disruption (work role requirements disrupt employees’ usual activities outside work). Therefore, expatriation extensively affects individuals’ work motives, competencies, and careers (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998: 329).

We extend the concept of international work density by adding *task challenge* and *autonomy* as additional aspects of the high-density nature of expatriate work. These aspects of expatriate work are commonly reported and are likely to significantly impact expatriate work experiences and career outcomes after an IA. First, expatriates are typically responsible for a greater variety of tasks abroad than in previous domestic jobs (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Suutari & Makela, 2007) and many of them also work at a higher organizational level when abroad (Solomon, 1995; Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Their jobs abroad can therefore be more challenging than at home. Second, expatriates have jobs with a higher level of autonomy than they did before (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Suutari & Makela, 2007). In turn, expatriates may have access to less help owing to foreign affiliates often being small in size (Harzing, 2001). Accordingly, in such work, there are fewer other highly skilled experts available, and expatriates often find that experts from HQ are not very helpful as they do not understand the specific challenges of a local context (Reiche, Kraimer, & Harzing, 2011). Consequently, expatriates are more dependent on their social networks to resolve work-related challenges than home-based staff would be (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009).

3.2. The impact of IA on the career success of expatriates after the IA

Career success is typically divided into objective career success (OCS) and subjective career success (SCS) in career theory and research. We categorize the evidence on the career success of AEs and SIEs accordingly. In addition, we classify the evidence in relation to different measures used in research on OCS and SCS.

Objective career success is indicated by factors that can be directly observed and measured by others in a standardized way (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005; Gunz & Heslin, 2005). Typical measures of OCS are salary increases (Spurk et al., 2018), career advancement (Shaffer et al., 2012), and job offers (Suutari et al., 2018). Alternative perspectives on OCS have also been applied, such as whether IAs facilitate or accelerate employees' route to the top (Bolino, 2007; Stahl et al., 2002). In contrast, SCS is defined as the focal actor's evaluation and experience of achieving career outcomes that are meaningful to them personally (Ng et al., 2005; Shockley, Ureksoy, Rodopman, Poteat, & Dullaghan, 2016). Typical measures of SCS include career satisfaction (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990), perceived career success (Heslin, 2003), and perceived employability (Wittekind, Raeder, & Grote, 2010).

Furthermore, the accumulation of career competencies during IA has been considered a horizontal perspective of career success (Shaffer et al., 2012). Career development is among the commonly perceived meanings of career success regardless of location (Shen et al., 2015). Shaffer et al. (2012) observed that many expatriates perceive career benefits in terms of the development of career capital competencies (CCC) abroad (Dickmann et al., 2018). The conceptualization and operationalization of CCC development are based on DeFillippi and Arthur's (1994) career competencies framework. The framework suggests that people invest in their careers through three "ways of knowing" that broadly reflect an individual's psychological capital (knowing why), intellectual capital (knowing how), and social capital (knowing whom) (Parker, Khapova, & Arthur, 2009). Such development can be explored either as an aspect of SCS (perceived development of CCC) or as OCS (CCC development observed and measured by others) (see Arthur et al., 2005; Gunz & Heslin, 2005). Next, we need to look at the antecedents that influence career success.

3.3. Theories addressing the antecedents of expatriates' career success after IA

We augment the theories used to identify antecedents of career success. Previous reviews have organized those antecedents based on theory. Ng et al. (2005) ran a meta-analysis based on four categories of predictors of career success: stable individual differences, human capital, sociodemographic status, and organizational sponsorship. The study identified a number of variables commonly used as predictors of career success. However, in recent years, new theories have been employed in the field of career success (e.g., career capital and the protean career) that place more onus on self-directed career management. In addition, different jobs offer diverse development and career opportunities (Brewster et al., 2014; Shaffer et al., 2012). Further, scholars have attempted to use a broader contextual perspective examining how factors such as national culture influence expatriates' views of their careers (Andresen, 2018).

Aware of such theoretical heterogeneity and based on the conservation of resources (COR) theory, Spurk et al. (2018) extended the number of theoretical groups used by Ng et al. (2005). Spurk and colleagues examined competing theoretical approaches used to study career success and examined competing perspectives of the different theoretical approaches. The authors identified seven theoretical categories applied when analyzing the antecedents of career success: 1) *personal resources* (sub-categories: *human capital, roles and identity, and performance*); 2) *environmental resources* (sub-categories: *social and work environments*); 3) *resource management behaviors and attitudes* (sub-categories: *career agency, stress and coping*); 4) *personal key resources* (sub-category: *stable traits*); 5) *contextual macro-resources* (sub-category: *national culture*); 6) *resource accumulation, and dynamics* (sub-categories: *person-environment interactions, life span, and career transitions*); 7) *hybrid* (mixing several aspects of the above approaches). We adopted this classification of antecedents in our review since this up-to-date approach is a high-quality framework that draws together the existing theories and research in the career field (see Spurk et al., 2018 for an overview). In contrast to other reviews (e.g., Ng et al., 2005), Spurk et al.'s framework treats career success itself as a resource that helps achieve other outcomes that follow career success. In line with this suggestion, one of the promising directions for future research identified by this review is the need for more research on such outcomes of career success.

The description of different theories (see Spurk et al., 2018) enabled us to classify the majority of antecedents. When possible, we also examined whether the authors of the reviewed articles had connected a particular antecedent with certain theories in their empirical studies (e.g., human capital theory is often used when studying the impact of different skills on career success). We also considered how Spurk and colleagues had connected different antecedents with career theories. In those very few cases when the authors of the reviewed studies had not used any specific theory to connect certain measures to career success and no clear guidance was available from the literature, the author team jointly analyzed different theories and their related antecedents to determine the appropriate categorization. Furthermore, due to our focus on the international career context, we were also able to identify antecedents and related theories that did not fit any sub-category in the framework. For example, we found a set of identified antecedents related to different aspects of the institutional context of the host country (not only national culture as a subdimension in the framework). Consequently, a new sub-category, *Institutional Theories*, was suggested. Similarly, adding career competency development as a measure of career success made it possible to add new theories to the framework, such as learning theories and their related antecedents. The method resulted in a broader, yet more nuanced, framework of expatriates' career success which we will outline below. Furthermore, we will discuss the theories and antecedents that emerged through our analysis in our conclusions section.

3.4. The types of outcomes of expatriates' career success after IA

Career success can be seen as a resource that helps individuals attain other outcomes (Spurk et al., 2018). On the one hand, career

success indicators, such as high-status positions, might influence individuals' interpretations of people around them. These indicators can work as resources that impact their emotions and behaviors (Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018). Hence, when individuals are perceived as successful and treated differently by others, a number of valued internal and external states and objects can be attained via the social prestige and respect gained from others (Hall & Chandler, 2005). On the other hand, COR theory conceptualizes that, in order to pursue career success, employees must use their resources to receive new or protect existing resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This might also result in negative outcomes. People tend to chase career success by investing resources (e.g., money, time, energy). Those resources cannot then be used to achieve other valuable goals such as well-being or free time. Consequently, accomplishing career success might be a double-edged sword, where the depletion of valued resources that accompanies career success may result in either positive or negative outcomes, depending on a number of personal and contextual variables (Spurk et al., 2018).

We will categorize our review into five different types of outcomes of career success as identified by Spurk et al. (2018): withdrawal (e.g., intention to leave), career attitudes (e.g., career calling), well-being and health (e.g., burnout), reactions from the (work) environment toward someone's career success (e.g., being pointed as potential global leader), and self-concept (e.g., self-esteem).

4. Results and analysis

Table 1 provides an overview of studies assessing career success per two types of assignment. From the 55 studies reviewed, 35 included only AEs; seven included only SIEs; and eight included both AEs and SIEs. Five studies do not clearly express whether the expatriates in question are AEs or SIEs.

4.1. IAs impact on the career success of expatriates

We analyzed how IAs impact the objective and subjective career success of AEs and SIEs after their next move. A key discussion in the literature is whether working abroad is beneficial for assignees (Brewster et al., 2014; Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Table 2 summarizes the main findings from the identified studies assessing different dimensions of career success. The findings demonstrate that scholars should intensify their efforts to investigate the career success of SIEs after their IA empirically.

4.1.1. Objective career success

Our analysis revealed some underlying tensions and surprising gaps in our knowledge. Starting with studies addressing dimensions of OCS, we identified findings concerning four factors: *salary*, *career advancement*, *time to top position*, and *job offer*. First, the research showed that German AEs experience a positive impact on their salaries (e.g., Biemann & Braakmann, 2013). Second, the evidence of the impact was quite mixed for career advancement. Positive impact studies reported that, on average, American and Finnish AEs were working at a higher organizational level after their assignment than they were previously (Magnusson & Boggs, 2006; Suutari & Brewster, 2003, respectively). Surprisingly, American repatriates (AEs) of one large professional services firm were less likely to have been promoted than employees without IA experience (Benson & Pattie, 2008). A better exploration of the reasons for these diverse findings would be beneficial. Third, AEs from Europe and the USA appear to need a longer time to reach top positions (e.g., Hamori & Koyuncu, 2011). However, these authors did not analyze whether IAs increase their chances of reaching such positions. Finally, no connection was found between IAs and the number of job offers expatriates receive after repatriation to the USA (Benson & Pattie, 2008). Interestingly, the SIE research does not cover OCS impact: the identified studies did not assess career advancement, time to top, job offers, or job responsibility development. While some practical challenges can be acknowledged, we conclude that more OCS indicators in SIE career success studies would be highly welcome.

Table 1
Identified studies on career success of AEs and SIEs.

	Objective career success					Subjective career success				Studies
	Salary	Career advancement	Time to top	Job offer	Job responsibility development	Career satisfaction	Job satisfaction	Perceived employability	Perceived CC development	
SIEs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	4, 20, 37, 38, 44, 52, 55
AEs	4	15	4	1	1	3	4	9	9	1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 39, 40, 42, 43, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 53
AEs SIEs	3	1	0	1	0	3	0	2	1	2, 6, 16, 23, 27, 41, 45, 49
Not defined d	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	11, 13, 22, 31, 54
Total	7	16	4	2	1	7	4	15	17	

In many areas, the evidence regarding OCS is very limited, even among AEs. The studies that found that the time to reach top positions (e.g., Hamori & Koyuncu, 2011) was extended would have benefited from a broader investigation. Just taking CEOs, who are the likely winners in terms of OCS, precluded investigation of whether IAs improve the likelihood of expatriates reaching top positions, and whether the developmental experiences embodied in their higher-density work make a difference to job performance. In addition, we also identified one study assessing job responsibility development as a dimension of OCS after IA (Breitenmoser, Bader, & Berg, 2018). In contrast to most studies, this study compared the job responsibilities during the IA (rather than before) with the responsibilities after the IA. The high-density nature of expatriate jobs naturally impacts findings because responsibilities are typically broader. Many expatriates also work at higher organizational levels abroad than they had in their home country. Future studies could compare the situation before and after the IA.

We only found two studies analyzing the number of job offers received as a subdimension of OCS after an IA (Benson & Pattie, 2008; Suutari et al., 2018) and so further research is necessary to verify the findings. The literature on career success, in general, has also suggested alternative dimensions of OCS that have been relatively neglected in expatriation research. Typical elements of objective success are embodied not only in a hierarchical (vertical) perspective (promotion or hierarchical position) but also in movements that may be horizontal, such as greater job security and longer vacation allowances (Nabi, 1999), or network connections and material success (Nicholson & Waal-Andrews, 2005), or development of career competencies (Shaffer et al., 2012). Future studies could incorporate such horizontal elements of OCS.

4.1.2. Subjective career success

For SCS, we identified three key aspects: *career satisfaction, perceived employability, and perceived career capital competencies (CCC) development*. The evidence, however, is limited. Lazarova, Dimitrova, Dickmann, Brewster, and Cerdin (2021) reported mixed findings on assignees' career satisfaction when working for an inter-governmental organization and Biemann and Braakmann (2013) report a positive impact of IAs on career satisfaction among a mixed sample of German AEs and SIEs. In contrast, most studies have analyzed the impact of an IA on perceived employability after the assignment, and again results are mixed. Studies reporting positive findings have found that AE repatriates in the USA (Benson & Pattie, 2008), including women repatriates (Culpan & Wright, 2002), perceived greater external employment opportunities than employees without IA experience. However, some studies with SIEs reported negative perceived employability (e.g., Begley, Collings, & Scullion, 2008). For instance, an assignment to China may be an example of a placement in a host country that does not seem highly appreciated by future employers (e.g., Makkonen, 2015). Finally, most articles reported a positive perception of career capital development abroad (e.g., Jokinen, 2010). However, in some contexts, such as Qatar (Rodríguez & Scurry, 2014) and China (Yao, 2014), SIEs seem to be disadvantaged by contextual factors and they experienced reduced development. The evidence above indicates that further context-specific research is needed due to differences in expatriation and location effects.

To avoid erroneous interpretations, it is worth noting that in some areas of research, it is necessary to consider that the use of concepts and measures differs across studies. For example, we found scholars treating *perceived employability* as external and/or internal employability perceived by expatriates (Benson & Pattie, 2008; Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007; Mäkelä, Brewster, Dickmann, Torikoski, & Christelle, 2015; Suutari et al., 2018), or as something embodied in personal characteristics of and competencies accumulated by expatriates (Andresen, 2018; Makkonen, 2015). Future research should pay attention to these different conceptualizations and related measures to add clarity to our insights.

In addition, the literature on career success has suggested various other dimensions of SCS (Dries, Pepermans, & Carlier, 2008; Gunz & Heslin, 2005). Future research aiming to reflect a broad view on the SCS of expatriates could apply the alternative interpretations of SCS among expatriates listed below. Those include the work of Shockley et al. (2016), who suggested that career success as a construct consists of multiple dimensions (e.g., authenticity, meaningful work, personal life, quality work, and recognition). Authenticity refers to the direction of one's career reflecting personal needs and preferences. This notion of authenticity aligns well with the interpretations of success typical of the *new career* and *modern careerist* mindsets. Meanwhile, the personal-life dimension relates to a career that impacts life outside of work in a positive way (Shockley et al., 2016). Given that global work is characterized by a considerable degree of non-work disruption and physical mobility compared to careers in domestic settings (Shaffer et al., 2012), authenticity and personal life might be important measures for SCS.

There are also some methodological issues to overcome, for instance, perceived CCC development is typically measured as self-reported/perceived development. We lack studies using more objective measures such as development observed/measured by others in a standardized way (see Arthur et al., 2005; Gunz & Heslin, 2005).

Overall, we have identified the need to explore and contrast career success issues before, during, and after an IA. It would be beneficial to refine our methods and both broaden and contextualize our approaches. In particular, the SIE context is under-researched.

4.2. Antecedents of expatriates' career success

Forty-four studies reported findings on antecedents of post-assignment career success. We identified whether the antecedents consider the high-density nature of global work (see Table 3). The transitions among countries expose expatriates to different types of jobs in different cultural and institutional environments that require continuous adaptation (Caligiuri, 2013), which would have consequences for a career (Shaffer et al., 2012). Our analysis offers new antecedents and expands the theoretical discussion exploring the career success of assignees. The high-density working experience abroad is a learning experience that impacts assignees' career success.

We categorize the identified antecedents into the theoretical categories used by Spurk et al. (2018): *personal resources, proximal*

environmental resources, resource management behaviors and attitudes, personal key resources, contextual macro-resources, resource accumulation and dynamics, and hybrid approaches.

5. Personal resources theories

Personal Resources include three sub-categories: human capital, roles and identity, and performance.

5.1. Human capital

Assignees who accumulate knowledge and skills during IAs expect that they will subsequently benefit their OCS and SCS. Skill development has often been found to affect career advancement (Benson & Pattie, 2008) and perceived employability (Guo, Porschitz, & Alves, 2013). However, it is also suggested that companies may not recognize the development of assignees (Suutari & Brewster, 2003).

International assignments result in AEs and SIEs acquiring different forms of human capital. Human capital theory predicts that developmental job experiences (such as international assignments) provide valuable learning that should have a positive impact on employees' long-term careers within and/or beyond their organizations (Benson & Pattie, 2008; Kraimer et al., 2009; Ng et al., 2005). It has been argued that high-density expatriate jobs are more complex and demanding than domestic jobs (e.g., Shin et al., 2007). Therefore, assignees might have different career outcomes because they had different development opportunities while abroad. Differences in skills development between AEs and SIEs seem to be hitherto underexplored in research. Generally, SIEs work in lower hierarchical positions in organizations (Doherty, Dickmann, & Mills, 2011; Jokinen et al., 2008) and may have less challenging tasks than AEs (Suutari & Brewster, 2000). The SIE might therefore have comparatively lower density work and thus relatively lower skill development than AEs (Suutari et al., 2018). Accordingly, the short and long-term career impacts for the two types of expatriate might be different (Doherty & Dickmann, 2009), resulting in divergent internal promotion and salary growth trajectories.

5.2. Roles and identity

Gender (in)equality seems to be an important antecedent affecting cultural adjustment, engagement, performance, and perceived career success. During international assignments, expatriation exposes expatriates to cultural environments with different degrees of gender (in)equality (Rendall, 2013). Ramsey and Lorenz (2020) reported that the work adjustment of female expatriates was hindered by lack of gender equality at the workplace or the dominance of male co-workers in host countries. When women are embedded in host environments with lower degrees of gender equality (e.g., glass ceiling), their engagement and performance might be affected, which would possibly influence their career success. For instance, women CEOs in China received lower salary increases after IAs (Peng, Sun, & Markóczy, 2015), and female managers in the USA were less satisfied with their careers after IAs than men (Ren, Bolino, Shaffer, & Kraimer, 2013), possibly due to the glass ceiling affecting female repatriates (Baruch & Lavi-Steiner, 2015; Linehan & Scullion, 2002). However, facing greater adjustment challenges seems to spur women to learn more and accumulate more career capital when abroad than men do (Myers & Pringle, 2005).

Identity theories represent a further research opportunity. The concept of identity refers to how individuals develop a sense of self during their career, taking into account that individuals change roles over time, which influences how individuals interpret environmental stimuli (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 2002). Therefore, identity theories illuminate how assignees adjust their thought patterns to new environments across cultures during high-density work experiences. Expatriation has been reported to affect the identity of individuals and their career interests (Kohonen, 2005). Ongoing international work may lead to global careers that are more long-term oriented. The shift is typified by various international assignments in different locations and the emergence of a so-called global career identity (Suutari & Makela, 2007) or an international employee identity (Kraimer, Shaffer, Harrison, & Ren, 2012). The connection between such identity changes and career success (e.g., career satisfaction) merits further attention.

5.3. Performance

Performance theories are underutilized in research on the career success of international assignees. This review did not identify antecedents that could be categorized as performance theories. Tournament theory suggests that organizations and sports tournaments have similar characteristics (Rosenbaum, 1989). The relevance of tournament theory to expatriation research is clear as there is a lot of discussion of the "out of sight – out of mind" phenomenon, as seen when expatriates absent from their home-country units or HQs are overlooked when job opportunities arise. The situation can lead to repatriates lacking appropriate jobs when returning to their home country (Dickmann & Doherty, 2008a). Given that high-density work experiences are characterized, for instance, by greater autonomy and demanding task challenges, it would be good to understand how repatriates use their capabilities to search for and acquire meaningful roles. Second, contest-mobility theory suggests that people can get ahead based on their abilities and performance and that they compete with others to maintain upward social mobility (Ng et al., 2005; Turner, 1960). It has been argued that companies struggle to recognize the development of expatriates abroad (Begley et al., 2008; Scullion & Collings, 2011), and that expatriate performance evaluations are complicated by distance and cross-cultural issues (Bonache & Noethen, 2014). It would be interesting to analyze whether and how those challenges limit the career success of assignees.

6. Personal key resources

Personal key resources only feature *stable traits* as a sub-category. Stable traits is a category used previously in general career success research and it would be beneficial to apply the same to advance investigations of expatriate career success.

6.1. Stable traits

Personal key resources theories focusing on personality characteristics have not yet been applied to expatriate career success research, although personality has been found to be an important antecedent of various work-related outcomes and behaviors (Barrick & Mount, 1991). For example, the 'Big 5' personality characteristics have been reported to influence expatriate behavior and cultural adaptation (Bhatti, Battour, Rageh, & Sundram, 2014; Caligiuri, 2000), and thus could impact career success. In addition, Zhang and Arvey (2009) applied the *incentive-enhancing property of personality* and reported two personality traits that predict career success: social potency and achievement. Individuals who score highly on social potency are forceful, decisive, and persuasive; they also like to influence others, to take charge of social events, and to be noticed at them. As expatriates need to integrate themselves into new social networks abroad, and later reintegrate into their networks at home, such social potency should be useful. A person scoring highly on achievement is someone who likes demanding work and is willing to put a lot of effort into work, even to the detriment of their personal life. Again, such a trait should help deal with the high-density nature of expatriate work and could have a longer-term career impact.

7. Proximal environmental resources theories

The proximal environmental resources category has two sub-categories: social environment and work environment.

7.1. Social environment

More context-sensitive explorations of social networking relationships and their impact on expatriates' career success are needed. Assignees' distance from home has an impact on social ties. It may either strengthen (networks abroad) or weaken (networks at the home country) both internal and external networks (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009; Reiche et al., 2011). While IA experience and network development can help AEs get promoted (Baruch, Steele, & Quantrill, 2002) there is no clear empirical evidence of the same effect among SIEs. Andresen (2018) reported the relevance of social networks to access job opportunities upon return, but a comparison between SIEs and AEs is not available. Nevertheless, the author observed a substantial social recognition for AEs upon return.

Global mobility exposes expatriates to two types of social capital: international or host country connections and those in the home country. The challenge concerning the social capital of expatriates is that during expatriation, international social capital expands while home-country connections weaken (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009). This shift affects the ease of identifying future career options through networks. That is why personal activity in networking has been reported as an antecedent of the accumulation of competencies (Jokinen, 2010; Jokinen et al., 2008; Suutari & Makela, 2007). Indeed, assignees tend to increase their awareness of networking activities as they change countries.

Future exploration of the more context-sensitive perspectives on social capital could enhance the understanding of expatriate career success. One possible route might be an investigation of the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship (see Harris, Kacmar, & Carlson, 2006) between local leaders and expatriates. Cross-cultural differences might make it difficult for expatriates to forge a good relationship with their leaders, which could adversely affect their performance and their job evaluations, and thus have

Table 2
Impacts of IAs on the career success of expatriates.

Dimensions of career success	Number of success factors (one study may assess more than one factor)				
	Positive (+)	Negative (-)	No Impact	Mixed (+ and -) ^a	In total
Objective career success					
Salary	4	0	2	0	6
Career advancement	4	3	0	2	9
Time to top positions	0	4	0	0	4
Job offer	0	0	1	0	1
Job responsibility development	1	0	0	0	1
Subjective career success					
Career satisfaction	1	0	0	1	2
Job satisfaction	0	0	0	0	0
Perceived employability	5	5	0	1	11
Career competencies development	16	0	2	0	18
In total	31	12	5	4	52
Studies' number	6, 11, 20, 34, 40, 41, 44, 45, 48, 51, 52, 54, 55	1, 4, 7, 8, 19, 21, 37, 46	3, 6, 44, 55	2, 3, 5, 50	

^a Study 5 found promotion (-) and perceived employability (+), while studies 2, 3 and 50 found (+ and -) to the same success factor.

Table 3
The identified antecedents of career success organized based on Spurk et al. (2018) theoretical categorization.

	Objective career success			Subjective career success				
	Salary	Career advancement	Job offer	Time to the top	Job responsibility development	Career satisfaction	Perceived employability	Perceived CC Development
Personal Resources (Human Capital, Roles and Identity, Performance)	Human Capital - Importance of money Roles and Identity - Having children - Gender			Human Capital - Education - Gender			Human Capital - Education - Skills development - Education Roles and Identity - Gender - Ethnicity	
	Social Environmental: - Number of mentor ^a Work Environmental: - Profit and loss of responsibility at the home country - Line vs staff ^a - Industry - Non-global or not-for-profit organization - Job title at home and abroad - The number of team members ^a			Social Environmental: - Career planning - Psychological contract breach / compensation - Degree of the IA's development purpose ^a - Management of expatriates' expectations ^a			Social Environmental: - Social capital ^a - Number of mentors ^a Work Environmental: - Career planning - The perceived value of IA experience by organization - Degree of the IA's developmental purpose ^a - Higher task challenging ^a - Organizational support ^a - Job rotation ^a - Non-global or not-for-profit organization - Job title ^a - The type of IA ^a	
Proximal Environmental Resources (Social Environment, Work Environment)	Social Environmental: - Number of mentor ^a Work Environmental: - Social capital - Career planning - Psychological contract breach / compensation - Degree of the IA's development purpose ^a - Management of expatriates' expectations ^a			Work Environmental: - Organizational support for repatriation - Job fit after IA - Psychological contract breach / compensation of expatriates' expectations ^a			Social Environmental: - Social capital - Career planning - The perceived value of IA experience by organization - Degree of the IA's developmental purpose ^a - Higher task challenging ^a - Organizational support ^a - Job rotation ^a - Non-global or not-for-profit organization - Job title ^a - The type of IA ^a	

(continued on next page)

Table 3 (continued)

	Objective career success			Subjective career success					
	Salary	Career advancement	Job offer	Time to the top	Job responsibility development	Job satisfaction	Career satisfaction	Perceived employability	Perceived CC Development
Resource Management Behaviors and Attitudes (Career Agency, Stress and Coping)	Stress and Coping				Career Agency	Stress and Coping	Career Agency	Career Agency	Stress and Coping
	- The number of hours worked ^a				- Self-directed career management	- Self-adjustment upon repatriation	- Self-directed career management	- Self-directed career management	- Cross-cultural adjustment ^a
Personal Key Resources									
Contextual Macroresources (National Culture, Institutional Theories)		National Culture						National Culture	National Culture
		- Country specific career structure ^a			Institutional Theories			- Country specific career structure ^a	- Cultural distance ^a
Resource Accumulation and Dynamics (P-E Fit, Life Span, Career Transitions)									
		- The economic development of the host country ^a			- The economic development of the host country ^a			- The economic development of the home country ^a	- The economic development of the host governments ^a
Hybrid (e.g., Career capital)									
Studies									

^a Antecedents that occur only during an expatriate assignment.

consequences for promotion and salary growth. It might also be more difficult for expatriates to build strong local networks.

7.2. Work environment

Differences in expatriate management, organizational characteristics, and job characteristics impact expatriates' learning and career success and are topics that merit further investigation. Considering international work is often of a high-density nature, it is easy to understand why the requirements for constant learning and development during extended global careers can prove very taxing for international professionals and their families (Mäkelä et al., 2015; McNulty & Brewster, 2017; McNulty & Vance, 2017). Therefore, support from within the work environment can be extremely important for assignees. That is why this is the theoretical sub-category with the largest number of antecedents and why we have organized them into the groups expatriate management, organizational characteristics, and job characteristics.

Much research has been done on expatriates owing to the high-density experience and related career expectations and turnover outcomes. Studies addressing antecedents related to expatriate management focus on the career success impact on AEs. This focus makes sense as SIEs are not affected by expatriate management processes. It seems that the degree to which organizations plan the careers of AEs before their assignment impacts AEs' accumulation of career capital when abroad. That same planning also affects how AEs leverage opportunities to extend their networking in other countries, adapt to different cultures, and function in jobs marked by high levels of task challenge and autonomy. Career planning impacts AEs' promotions (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Doherty & Dickmann, 2009; Valk, van der Velde, van Engen, & Szkudlarek, 2015), perceived employability (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Valk et al., 2015), and the perceived accumulation of CCC (Dickmann & Doherty, 2008b; Dickmann & Harris, 2005). Repatriation management also impacts the perceived employability of repatriates (Doherty & Dickmann, 2009) and organizational support offered to repatriates contributes to a repatriate's job responsibility development and career satisfaction (Breitenmoser et al., 2018).

The impact of IA on the career success of assignees is also related to the characteristics of their organizations and jobs. First, it has been reported that business units (Benson & Pattie, 2008) and industries (Ramaswami et al., 2016) influence the number of times a recruiter offers a job to an AE and the salary obtained. Dickmann and Cerdin (2018) interviewed SIEs working for an international governmental organization and found that the UN organization in question had high barriers to accumulating competencies and their transferability. In addition, the job characteristics of the work IAs conduct affect career success. For instance, the functional background makes a difference as expatriates in line management tasks reported higher internal perceived marketability than expatriates working in other functions such as general management and marketing (Suutari et al., 2018). In fact, AEs received more job offers than SIEs. These studies offer interesting findings, but they were conducted on a Finnish graduate population. There is a need to explore these topics among a broader target population of AEs and SIEs worldwide.

8. Resource management behaviors and attitudes theories

The resource management behaviors and attitudes category has two sub-categories: *career agency* and *stress and coping*.

8.1. Career agency

Career agency, especially in relation to career adaptability and repatriation, is a promising area of research. Scholars found that assignees are more aware of their strengths, weaknesses and career interests than their employers are (Breitenmoser et al., 2018). Furthermore, experience of the foreign high-density work fosters such awareness (Suutari & Makela, 2007). It is reported that self-directed career management is more efficient in advancing careers than the less customized repatriation and career support practices applied by organizations (Breitenmoser et al., 2018). However, the evidence based on career agency theories is very limited. Self-directed career management as an aspect of protean career attitudes has been shown to help expatriates to perceive an accumulation of CCC abroad (Jokinen et al., 2008; Kirk, 2016) and to affect expatriate job responsibility development and career satisfaction after an IA; more so than does organizational support (Breitenmoser et al., 2018). In the case of SIEs, it is even more relevant, as they cannot call on organizational support. SIEs' personal agency in searching for a job before returning home positively impacted the perceived employability of repatriates (Guo et al., 2013). As staff working in the domestic environment do not face the challenges associated with high-density jobs, it would be interesting to contrast the attitudes of SIEs and AEs to career self-management with that of non-expatriated staff. The call is strengthened by the concepts of the boundaryless career and protean career attitude being central to the cognitive flexibility of assignees (Shaffer et al., 2012).

High-density work experience abroad may also have other impacts. For many AEs, IAs are a form of promotion (Dowling and Welch, 2005). The roles will carry greater autonomy, a broader area of responsibility and, at the top management level, more prominent roles in the local community. Overall, this indicates a greater task challenge and a degree of autonomy likely to raise status (Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Upon return, repatriates are often expected to resume their old positions within the home company, resulting in the loss of status and autonomy. A loss of special status affects family members too, and they can feel the effects of non-work disruption to their lives similarly (Dowling and Welch, 2005; Shaffer et al., 2012). Expatriate families might have benefited from having domestic help while abroad, and the assignment might have brought them into contact with the host country's social and economic elite and an array of senior international managers. Returning home can invoke feelings of social disappointment flowing from a loss of status and self-esteem (Black et al., 1992).

Experience gained abroad can affect assignees' future careers. People who have successfully navigated a high-density work role must be adaptable to have coped with the transitions involved. Career adaptability represents a pivotal construct in career construction

theory (Savickas, 1997) and reflects the constellation of individuals' behaviors, competencies, and attitudes engaged "in fitting themselves into work that suits them" (Savickas, 2005, p. 45). Our review shows that more research is needed into repatriation experiences and phenomena such as career adaptability. Similarly, if assignees continue on an international career track, well-developed career adaptability skills should help them adjust to new career situations.

8.2. Stress and coping

Having accumulated high-density experiences abroad, and being away from their home country, returnees may face repatriation challenges that can hinder their career progression. Examples include employer demands that SIEs encounter when they need to find new jobs at home (Begley et al., 2008). Alternatively, when AEs repatriate they might find that the job they return to does not correspond to their expectations (Valk et al., 2015). In addition, reverse cultural shock is negatively connected to the career satisfaction of repatriates. Moreover, repatriates' levels of self-adjustment upon repatriation are positively related to job satisfaction (Ho, Seet, & Jones, 2016). In terms of work density, the cognitive flexibility of repatriates might counter reverse cultural shock and may be related to the career and job satisfaction of repatriates. The evidence is limited, and more studies comparing the experiences of SIEs and AEs are warranted.

Scholars seeking to understand how the high-density of global work influences assignees' career success can turn to stress and coping theories. The classic definition of coping by Lazarus and Folkman (1984: 141) describes coping as: "the constantly changing cognitive & behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person." Expatriates are constantly adjusting to their new host country environment and must then readjust to their home-country context upon repatriation. Career scholars have largely overlooked the cultural context of stress and coping (Heppner, 2008) as many studies have not addressed international career settings. However, assignees and their family members face international transitions when moving across borders. In addition to cultural adjustment, many issues can induce stress and necessitate effective coping tactics. Moving abroad adds to the workload (e.g., pre-departure preparations) and can involve challenges such as coping with a new social and country context, mastering multiple visa, social security, and tax compliance issues, and public health or education systems. The resources available to cope with the challenges of transitions will influence how much extra effort expatriates will be required to make and how much of the burden is shouldered by their employers (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011). Existing support structures have a bearing on perceived career success during such international transitions (van der Laken, van Engen, van Veldhoven, & Paauwe, 2016). Additionally, expatriates—and potentially their family members too—will need to adapt to new jobs and different cultural and institutional environments. Moreover, expatriates will have to re-adjust to their home country and often to a new job after repatriation (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). An employee working in the same country is unlikely to face the same degree of transition and consequent career outcomes (Andresen & Biemann, 2013).

9. Contextual macro-resources theories

The contextual macro-resources theories category has only one sub-category—national culture. The situation is a clear limitation that does not facilitate a holistic understanding of career success.

9.1. National culture

Due to global mobility, people work across different cultures. The cultural differences encountered are a source of learning, but it can be challenging to transfer that learning to a substantially different context. In addition, employers may not value experiences acquired in culturally distant countries. Schmid and Wurster (2017) found that the greater the cultural distance in the host country, the longer it takes for managers to reach the board level in their home country. Furthermore, the career structure dominant in the home country can affect assignees' career success; for example, when the perceived employability of repatriates varies between the Netherlands and India (Valk et al., 2015). Cultural norms seem to influence how international experience is valued in different countries.

Interestingly, Spurk et al. (2018) do not discuss the relevance of institutional theories when analyzing the relevant theories in career success research. However, in addition to culture, variables such as the sophistication of industrial production, service delivery, and the state of economic development are important factors in assignment decisions (Koleša, Burger, & Dickmann, 2022) and subsequently impact career success. We could identify other institutional factors supporting the notion that adding an institutional theories sub-category is important to understanding careers in the international context. We expand this analysis in Section 5 of this article.

10. Resource accumulation and dynamics theories

The *resource accumulation and dynamics* category includes three sub-categories: *life span*, *career transitions*, and *person–environment interactions*.

10.1. Life span

Age is an important factor in the career success of assignees. Life span theories present people's lives as a progression of stages

categorized by age (Levinson, 1986). It has been reported that increasing age impacts negatively on home-country marketability (Mäkelä et al., 2015) and the number of job offers AEs receive (Benson & Pattie, 2008). In addition, Makkonen (2015) identified a negative impact of aging on the perceived employability of SIEs. The finding indicates that the older the assignee becomes, and the longer they stay abroad, the harder it is to adapt to returning to work in the home country, and to find a job that exploits their new skills. In addition, companies may avoid recruiting older people when re-integration back into a home-based role may take some considerable time.

Numerous theories address career development over a person's lifespan, such as Levinson's life stage developmental model (Levinson, 1986), Super's lifespan model (Super, 1957, 1990), and Cron's career stages theory (Cron, 1984). These theories not only consider adult lives as a progression of stages influenced by their age, but also how individuals' performance during previous phases influences their career progress (Nagy, Froidevaux, & Hirschi, 2019). It might be that the earlier individuals gain international experience, the more pronounced the impact on their career success, owing to their augmented capabilities having undertaken high-density work. For instance, *age at first assignment* is related to perceived international marketability (Mäkelä et al., 2015). Lengthy re-integration spells might, however, mean it takes individuals years to reap the career benefits from working abroad.

10.2. Career transitions

The number and context of international career transitions impact the career success of expatriates. The high-density work experience gained abroad might trigger other types of moves, such as inter and intra-organizational mobility between countries (see Andresen & Biemann, 2013). Hence, the number and the length of IAs seem relevant to assignees' careers. The more transitions they experience abroad, the more pronounced is the impact of the high-density of global work on their career success (Shaffer et al., 2012). For instance, it has been found that the overall *number of IAs* is negatively related to career advancement upon repatriation (Kraimer et al., 2009) and to the time it takes to reach top positions (Blanco & Sastre Castillo, 2020; Hamori & Koyuncu, 2011). In addition, there is a negative influence of the total *length* of international work experience on time required to reach CEO or CFO positions (Blanco & Sastre Castillo, 2020; Hamori & Koyuncu, 2011; Schmid & Altfeld, 2018; Schmid & Wurster, 2017). However, the number of IAs seems to increase the perceived CCC developed abroad of AEs and SIEs equally (Jokinen, 2010; Jokinen et al., 2008).

Family issues are important in international career transitions. For instance, family influence and involvement is instrumental in every stage of an assignment—from the willingness of the expatriate to accept an assignment (Brett and Stroh 1995; Konopaske, Ribie and Ivancevich 2005) to the way repatriation is managed (Caligiuri, Hyland, Bross and Joshi 1998; Grant-Vallone and Ensher 2001). The number of times that assignees decide to relocate to another country impacts the entire family and the career journey of individuals. Therefore, decisions about whether to return home, stay in the same country, or move to another country should consider the assignees' family members. That approach will influence the career outcomes of global workers in terms of objective and subjective factors.

10.3. Person–environment interactions

Theories conceptualizing person–environment interaction are under-represented in IA career success research. Spurk et al. (2018) identify important person–environment (PE) interactions when assessing career success. Interestingly, while scholars in the field of cultural adjustment have used PE theories (Lauring & Selmer, 2018; Makkonen, 2015), the literature on expatriates' career success (after their IAs) clearly neglects them. Nevertheless, it has been argued that accumulated CCC developed abroad is valued by assignees when the augmented capabilities fit the next job in terms of utilization (Dickmann & Doherty, 2010) and can be transferred (Dickmann & Harris, 2005). This probably explains why Eugenia Sánchez Vidal et al. (2007) found that a suitable match of repatriates' skills and their jobs positively affects repatriate job satisfaction.

Person–environment fit theory refers to the environmental condition that can either facilitate or hinder the use of resources that will impact performance and outcomes (Bretz & Judge, 1994). Examples include person–organizational fit (Bretz & Judge, 1994), person–job fit (Cable & DeRue, 2002), and culture–fit (Holtschlag, Morales, Masuda, & Maydeu-Olivares, 2013). After having high-density jobs abroad, assignees can face challenges finding similar, interesting jobs back home and person–environment theories could therefore offer promising new research avenues. There might not be a match between the organization and individual; for example, if the organization is not international, repatriates may not be able to use their international competencies, which might lead to dissatisfaction.

11. Hybrid theories

Hybrid Theories can offer promising insights into expatriates' career success. Career capital theory as a hybrid theory (Spurk et al., 2018) has also been applied when studying the antecedents of expatriate career success. For instance, Mäkelä et al. (2015) reported that the development of knowing-how *career capital* abroad was positively connected with perceived external marketability while the development of knowing-why or knowing-whom career capital has little impact on any aspect of perceived marketability. This may relate to the fact that companies are better able to recognize (or value more highly) the development of knowing-how aspects of career capital than those in other areas. In addition, we previously discussed the challenges related to social capital acquired abroad after the IA.

Given that extant research has focused predominantly on work relationships, we would benefit from a clearer understanding of career impacts related to other types of relationships, such as family issues impacting career success. For example, the *kaleidoscope*

career model incorporates relationships, personal values, and interests outside the workplace (Maniero & Sullivan, 2006). The high-density of global work tends to invite non-work disruption and involves considerable challenges. Therefore, the kaleidoscope career model could offer a promising starting point for expatriation research. For example, assignees may take jobs involving less responsibility, fewer working hours per day, and more flexible hours to spend time with their families which might affect the salaries and career progress of global workers.

Table 3 reports the findings on the antecedents of career success and organizes the identified antecedents according to the theoretical classification by Spurk et al. (2018). Crucially, this overview table is a starting point for our analysis in Section 5. That analysis flows from mapping our insights against the specific context of high-density work during IAs and also identifies future research opportunities.

12. Moderators and/or mediators

More sophisticated global careers research is needed as moderators and mediators are often neglected. Many factors in the organization, the job, and the environment, might also moderate and/or mediate the relationship between IAs and career success (Bolino, 2007). For example, the way assignees and organizations perceive the value of IAs to careers may moderate the impact of IAs on assignees' career satisfaction after they complete their assignments (Ren et al., 2013). However, many empirical studies seem to ignore those variables (Biemann & Braakmann, 2013). While almost two hundred studies were identified in general career research (Spurk et al., 2018), we found only a few incorporating moderators and mediators in the global careers field.

A variety of factors relating to people and their environment could moderate and/or mediate the relationship between expatriation and career success. International careers are a type of boundaryless career; one in which the role of individuals in managing their careers is emphasized even more than in domestic careers (Andresen, Ariss, Akram, & Walther, 2012). Therefore, factors under the resource management behaviors and attitudes theoretical category such as self-directed career management (De Vos & Soens, 2008) and career adaptability (Guan, Zhou, Ye, Jiang, & Zhou, 2015) warrant further attention. In addition, the diversity of institutional contexts is a key element that distinguishes international from domestic career research (Mayrhofer et al., 2020). The political system of a country is an example. Peng et al. (2015) investigated firms listed on the Shanghai and Shenzhen Stock Exchanges between 2001 and 2008 and reported that CEOs with IA experience could receive higher compensation if they were politically connected to external directors. Political connection is pronounced in China as most companies are state-owned enterprises (Peng et al., 2015) with CEOs directly appointed by the political strata. Peng and colleagues argued that human capital manifested in political ties leads to prestige and wealth. Thus, factors listed under the contextual macro-resources theoretical category could be relevant. In addition, we suggest PE fit theory (see Fig. 1) that emphasize resource accumulation and dynamics given that career success could be moderated and/or mediated by factors related to the fit between the individual and job or organization after the IA. For example, Erdogan and Bauer (2005) found that person-organization fit and person-job fit moderate the relationship between proactive personality and career satisfaction.

12.1. Outcomes of career success

We identified fourteen studies¹ that analyzed the outcomes of expatriate career success, but surprisingly, found no expatriation studies addressing how career success shapes career attitudes, well-being and health, the expatriate's self-concept, or reactions from the environment linked to other outcomes. Clearly, some opportunities to refine our understanding of expatriates' career success exist. In addition to the outcome categories identified by Spurk et al. (2018), we identified three studies that analyzed the connection between expatriate career success and re-expatriation as a new outcome factor. We thus added a new category, *re-expatriation*. Identifying that category is an important finding related to the high-density nature of global work. Expatriates are often interested in continuing on an international career track due to the development and career opportunities offered (Suutari & Brewster, 2003).

13. Withdrawal

Twelve studies focused on withdrawal. They address how expatriates' career success after their high-density IA experience influences their intention to leave their job, the organization, or occupation, and also the action of quitting.

The studies show that *career advancement*, *perceived employability*, and *job satisfaction* are antecedents of *withdrawal*. First, a negative relationship between career advancement and turnover intentions has been identified among American repatriates (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Kraimer et al., 2009; Pattie, White, & Tansky, 2010). Second, perceived external employability was positively related to the turnover intention of AEs in France, the USA, and Canada (Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007), and academic AEs repatriates in Sri Lanka (James & Azungah, 2019). Finally, the greater the job satisfaction among repatriated managers, the lower are their turnover rates (Eugenia Sánchez Vidal et al. (2007)).

Withdrawal as an outcome of career success among assignees is not surprising since expatriate turnover is one of the key challenges that companies face with regard to repatriation (Kraimer et al., 2009; Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007). The issue can be connected to the high density of expatriate work and the related high expectations of future careers. When an organization recognizes IA experience by

¹ Outcomes of career success: studies 1, 3, 8, 18, 23, 25, 29, 30, 32, 33, 39, 50, 51, 53

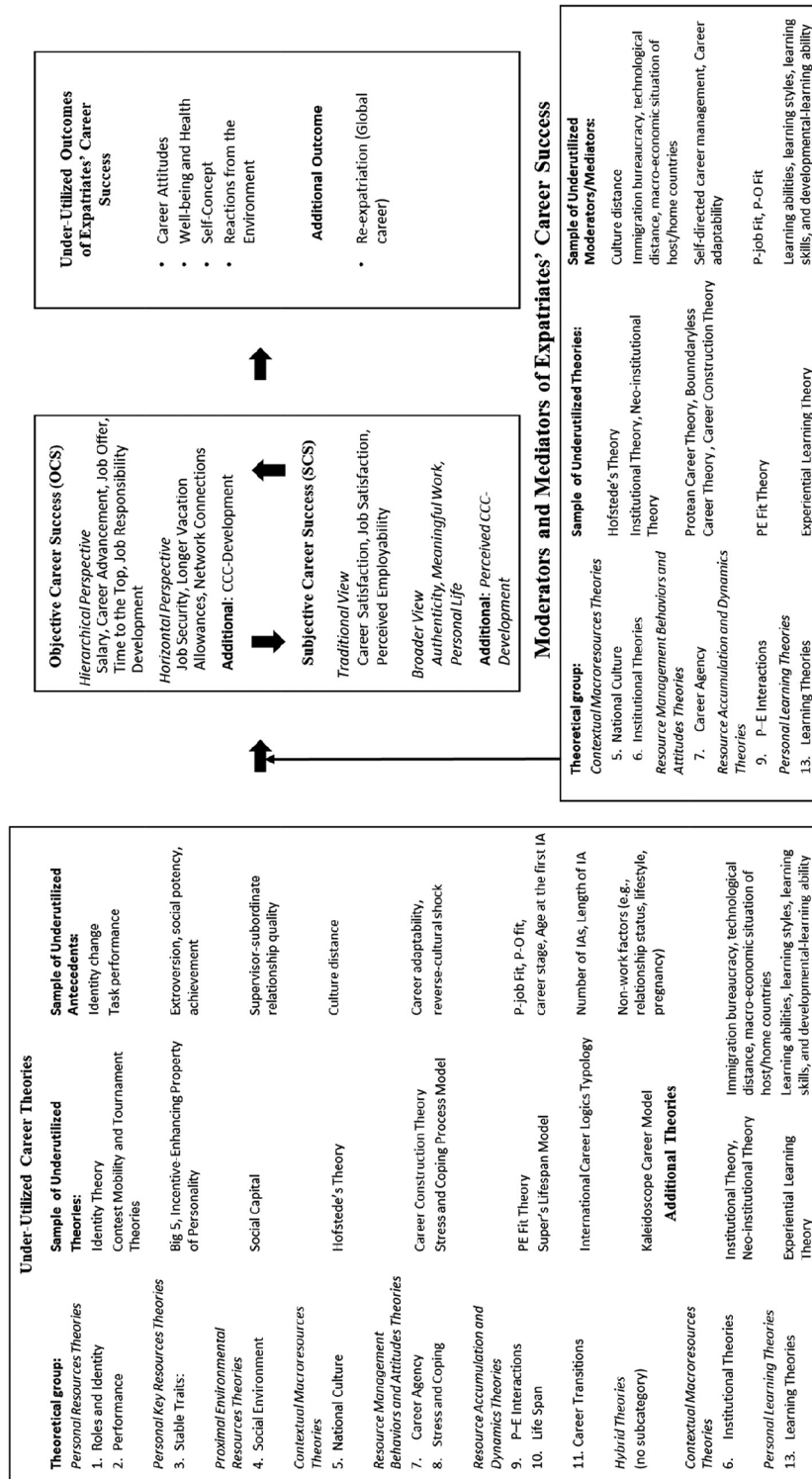


Fig. 1. A framework for exploring the career success of expatriates: towards a future research agenda.

ensuring the career progression of its assignees, those staff members demonstrate a stronger intention to stay in the company. Conversely, when staff perceive that their organization does not value the experience gained from an IA, they are more likely to leave their employer upon repatriation in search of better opportunities (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011). We did not find studies reporting withdrawal as an outcome of career success among SIEs. Unlike AEs that engage in IA for organizational reasons and seeking promotions, the motives of SIEs are more subjective, for example, personal development and family reasons (Tharenou, 2013). Scholars trying to understand the impact of career success on an assignee's intention to leave a job, an organization, or an occupation should perhaps consider that non-work disruption factors might be the most significant driver of SIEs leaving a country (and consequently a job and an organization). Assigned expatriates, in contrast, have stronger connections to organizational objectives (Andresen, Bergdolt, Margenfeld, & Dickmann, 2014; Andresen & Biemann, 2013). In addition, the perception of how an organization values an SIE's IA experience might not be as relevant as for AEs. Dickmann and Cerdin (2018) reported that many SIEs working for an international humanitarian governmental organization did not focus on maximizing their career-relevant capabilities or social networks. Instead, they pursued international careers and intentionally sacrificed internal career progression in favor of their aid duties.

There are underutilized theories that address the outcomes that follow the career success of assignees. We suggest new opportunities for expatriation research through utilizing existing theories and studies from the general career success literature. First, future researchers could investigate how career success impacts expatriates' attitudes to the work and career domains (Praskova, Hood, & Creed, 2014). Second, research might identify the role of SCS for expatriates, such as career satisfaction, interacting with the achievement of OCS, and of well-being (Shockley et al., 2016). Third, scholars could look at the reaction of other individuals from both the work and non-work domains to expatriates' career success. These might include issues such as how these individuals' reactions help expatriates obtain mentoring (Singh, Ragins, & Tharenou, 2009b) or trigger a perception of failure (Westman & Etzion, 1990). Moreover, future researchers could investigate whether generalized self-perceptions about personal characteristics or attributes (e.g., self-esteem or core self-evaluation) might be impacted by career success (Sutin, Costa, Miech, & Eaton, 2009).

14. Re-expatriation

Re-expatriation outcomes address how the career success of expatriates influences an assignee's intention to return to work abroad, which might constitute a step toward becoming a global careerist. This outcome is exclusive to expatriates, and therefore, was not identified by Spurk et al. (2018). Our analysis is explicated in Section 5, where we focus on factors that are strongly connected to the high-density nature of expatriate jobs.

15. Future research directions

Expatriate work is a high-density work experience that has a substantial impact on the development of expatriate careers and expatriates' career interests and career outcomes. Beyond the three aspects (physical mobility, cognitive flexibility, and non-work disruption) of global work identified in earlier work (Peiperl & Jonsen, 2007; Shaffer et al., 2012), we add two characteristics: *task challenge* and *autonomy*. Expatriates often have more demanding jobs due to broader or higher level responsibilities and also more autonomy than domestic employees. This extension of the concept is important to fully capture the high-density nature of expatriate work and to understand the career consequences of such experiences.

This section discusses the conclusions from our review in four separate subsections. In the first subsection, we summarize our review findings on the future research agenda for expatriation research that appeared when we compared existing theoretical approaches on careers organized by Spurk et al. (2018) and the existing research in the international career context. In particular, we highlighted promising theories for career research in the international career context. The remaining subsections discuss selected theoretical angles that expand the framework by Spurk et al. (2018) with new theoretical angles identified as being very important in international career research. First, we discuss the central role of career competency development of expatriates in the overall expatriation experience. We believe it should be considered as a career success dimension in itself (see also Briscoe, Hall, & Mayrhofer, 2012; Shaffer et al., 2012; Shen et al., 2015) and be added to the career success measures in the framework of Spurk and colleagues. Next, we discuss two theoretical approaches that seem particularly relevant in the international, high-density career context but are not sufficiently utilized in the reviewed research: institutional and learning theories. In these areas, we also thus contribute to general career research by expanding the framework of Spurk et al. (2018). Fourth, our review leads to the identification of a new outcome that commonly follows the career success of expatriates: re-expatriation. The last subsection thus addresses how the career success of assignees following their high-density working experience abroad may lead global workers to re-expatriate, in other words, they might become global careerists. Finally, we also make several suggestions on how future research might address the methodological limitations that constrain investigating the issue at hand.

Fig. 1 draws together the suggested research agenda for future expatriation research, including both underutilized theories and new theoretical angles that we suggest are relevant in the exploration of expatriates' career success after IAs.

15.1. Underutilized theories to explore the career success of expatriates

Based on our review of existing research in the international career context and the framework by Spurk et al. (2018) that specifies different theoretical approaches applied in general career research, we contribute by identifying various underutilized theoretical frames in existing antecedent research (see Section 4). Crucially, Fig. 1 adds previously unidentified theories and novel antecedents unused or underused in expatriate career studies.

We have also highlighted the theories that seem most promising in the context of high-density global work. For example, the concept of person–environment interactions could be useful given that the high-density work experience assignees have been immersed in makes finding a suitable job after the IA challenging. Similarly, career agency theories and career transition theories seem to be interesting approaches given that expatriates, and particularly SIEs, often do not get appropriate organizational support in managing their career transitions in an international career context. Expatriation, as a high-density work experience, affects family members, thus theories such as the kaleidoscope career model that incorporates relationships and personal values and interests outside the workplace can help illuminate the area.

Furthermore, we suggested promising moderators and mediators of the IA and career success relationship. We suggest that person–environment interactions theories in particular and theories related to individual agency of the careerist could connect well with the nature of global, boundaryless careers and address the interaction between assignees and their environment. Finally, we identified many underutilized theories with regard to outcomes of career success where the focus of existing research has been mainly on withdrawal. These theories were already discussed in subsection 4.3 and are thus not discussed again here in such detail. Instead, we present potential future avenues for expatriation research.

15.2. *The role of CCC as a measure of career success among expatriates is central*

As shown in Table 2, despite the “dark side of international careers” arguments associated with the repatriation and global career literature, the majority of studies reported positive impacts of IA experiences on the careers of assignees. In particular, the perceived accumulation of CCC abroad is highly significant for our results. That is because assignees often report a very positive perception of learning experiences. The reviewed literature also indicates that such extensive development has major impacts on expatriates’ career success after their IA and other outcomes such as retention (Kraimer et al., 2009) and re-expatriation (Ho, Seet, & Jones, 2016). Thus, we suggest that it should be included among the success measures in the framework of Spurk et al. (2018), which in turn leads to the identification of additional antecedents and related relevant theories.

The high-density work experience concept belongs to theories addressing the modern career landscape. The protean career concept highlights the importance of flexibility, freedom, continuous learning, and intrinsic rewards (Hall, 1976). In addition, Arthur and Rousseau (1996) introduced the boundaryless career, defined as a career that is independent of traditional organizational career arrangements with a single organization (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994). Subsequent research suggests that certain factors, such as learning and development (Granrose & Baccili, 2006), are more important to career success in those individuals who have a boundaryless mindset. Although these theoretical perspectives differ to some extent in their foci, the idea that success has an internal evaluative component based on learning and development is a common underlying pattern. While learning and development is emphasized in this context, it is worth noting that it can be regarded as a commonly perceived meaning of career success across countries (Briscoe, Henagan, Burton, & Murphy, 2012; Shen et al., 2015). That perception reflects the nature of turbulent job markets, which means constant development is expected of individuals if they are to remain employable. Accordingly, development itself appears to be part of career success in these new career realities.

The developmental angle is closely connected with the high density of expatriate work and has a broad connection to expatriate careers. Expatriates’ career interests and expectations concerning their future jobs and careers change when they perceive they have developed substantially. Accordingly, their development alters their perceptions of what is an interesting job and will be reflected in their career satisfaction with their future work. The level of dissatisfaction reported in repatriation studies may decrease overall motivation among repatriated assignees and often leads individuals to leave the organization. If staff do stay, their diminished motivation may impinge on their job performance, which can undermine career progress in the longer term. Such observations stress the importance of paying attention to the relationship between SCS and OCS (Arthur et al., 2005; Hall & Chandler, 2005). For example, Abele and Spurk (2009) discuss how “broaden and build theory” (Fredrickson, 1998, 2004) suggests that the perception of positive experiences leads to processes that broaden a people’s perspectives and build their resources. They also found that subjective success is not just a by-product of objective success, but it also has a strong influence on objective attainments over time. Accordingly, we argue that the developmental angle we explored above has important connections with other aspects of expatriate career success. The only studies found that analyze the connections between OCS and SCS explored how OCS affects SCS when job responsibility development (Breitenmoser et al., 2018) and high compensation (Vidal et al., 2007) were positively related to career satisfaction after the IA. Consequently, the links from perceived development to other aspects of career success merit further attention.

15.3. *High-density working experiences place institutional and learning theories as antecedents of career success*

This review has not only identified a number of underutilized theoretical categories that have the potential to improve our understanding of global career success, but it also suggests two new theoretical angles not identified in previous studies. This section explores how institutional theories and learning theories may be relevant in this undertaking.

15.3.1. *Institutional theories and career success of assignees*

We argue that the contextual macro-resources category seems to be an essential and underutilized one in studies of expatriates’ career success. Research addressing contextual macro-resources has to date focused on the cultural angle. However, because careers link individuals to organizations, occupations, institutions, and society in general, they are relevant not only to micro and meso concerns but also to broader macro concerns (Dacin, Goodstein, & Scott, 2002). This review has found very few studies exploring the impacts of certain aspects of the institutional context on the career success of expatriates. However, when the research was analyzed,

significant findings were often reported (e.g. Breitenmoser et al., 2018; Schmid & Wurster, 2017). More research would be needed on various aspects of institutional contexts, to fully understand the impact of contextual macro-resources on the career success of expatriates.

The broader institutional profile of a host country, which includes but is not limited to its culture (Khanna, Palepu, & Sinha, 2005), exerts pressure on expatriates that affects their career success both while they work abroad and after their assignment ends (Carr, Inkson, & Thorn, 2005; Lee & Liu, 2006; Makkonen, 2015). Careers are always embedded in a context. Therefore, more attention should be paid to situational differences when studying careers (Mayrhofer, Meyer, & Steyrer, 2007), especially in expatriation research (Andresen, Brewster, & Suutari, 2020). On a broader level, a relevant issue noted is how organizations tend to operate in an intertwined web of different institutional systems (Roth & Kostova, 2003). These systems create such complex pressures that organizations need particularly active managers to address the constantly emerging challenges (Kostova, Roth, & Dacin, 2008).

Institutional theories offer a useful theoretical angle on the above issue. The multi-level institutional environments of different countries influence expatriates' global work (Chan & Makino, 2007). Indeed, it has been argued that the high-density of their jobs places expatriates at the intersection of overlapping institutional factors, primarily due to the physical mobility required of expatriates (Shaffer et al., 2012). As a result, expatriates face non-work disruptions, undertake more challenging tasks with more autonomy, and adjust their thought patterns and scripts to different situational demands. These factors arise not only owing to cross-cultural interaction (Peiperl & Jonsen, 2007) but also to broader institutional differences between home and host countries (Kostova, 1997; Scott, 1995).

Concerning specific aspects of the institutional context, the national culture dimension has attracted the most attention as the only sub-category of the contextual macro-resources category suggested by Spurk et al. (2018). Studies addressing national culture have focused on the *cultural distance* between the home and host countries (Schmid & Wurster, 2017) or cross-cultural differences in career structures (Andresen, 2018).

We identified only a few studies suggesting that *the macro-economic situations of host/home countries* can undermine the ability of organizations to use the new set of competencies acquired by their expatriates or repatriates. Challenges to transfer and application of competencies impact the perceived employability and promotion opportunities of expatriates (Begley et al., 2008; Valk et al., 2015). Economic situations in a particular country influence the overall labor market situation. The contextual factors prevailing in a country affect the agentic efforts made by SIEs to accumulate career competencies (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2014; Yao, 2014). Differences in economic factors therefore impact the career success of expatriates.

Further, *the regulatory environment* in a country also affects expatriate careers (Kostova, 1999; Kostova & Zaheer, 1999a). That environment may limit work opportunities (Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2010) or career progress when abroad (Begley et al., 2008) and thus can hinder expatriates' career success, which would, in turn, affect their long-term career prospects. Employment regulations might undermine SIEs' job hunting and erect institutional barriers to working in some host countries (e.g., onerous requirements to obtain a visa) (Hajro, Stahl, Clegg, & Lazarova, 2019).

Looking beyond employment practices and regulations, Phillips, Karra, and Tracey (2007) propose that *technologies* should be investigated to understand institutional aspects. Technologies are standardized solutions to certain challenges that are not present at the same level across countries (referred to as *technologies distance*). This distance poses different challenges for companies and expatriates. There are different options to assist learning how to work with the latest technology. We could not identify any studies addressing how the technological level of the host country affects career success. Presumably, expatriates would gain more from working in technologically advanced countries, and companies would value an IA in an advanced technological context, such as Silicon Valley (Valk et al., 2015).

Overall, there are still plenty of opportunities to investigate how different institutional characteristics in the home and host country directly or indirectly affect long-term expatriate career success. In light of institutionalization theory, the focus on national cultures has been overly dominant (Mayrhofer et al., 2020), while other crucial aspects have been neglected.

15.3.2. Using learning theory to investigate career capital competencies (CCC) and the development of assignees

Assignees have a heightened need to learn owing to their high-density work in various cultural contexts. Our review indicates that the most extensive, positive impacts of IA flow from the development of CCC. Expatriates tend to acquire various skills that facilitate success in a new host culture or back in their home country and which facilitate the transfer of knowledge across cultures (Spreitzer, McCall Jr., & Mahoney, 1997). Existing research also indicates that such developmental experience has an extensive impact on career interests and outcomes among expatriates in the longer term. Given the importance of learning in the overall expatriate experience, we suggest research pay more attention to learning theories when analyzing the antecedents of career success. The development of CCC is a process of learning from international experience (Jokinen, 2010; Jokinen et al., 2008), and expatriates learn differently from similar international experiences (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002; Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004).

Although there are many different approaches to learning, it is not within our purview to explore them all. Expatriates often learn across cultures without formal training or education in cross-cultural skills (Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang, 2009). As expatriate learning seems likely to occur mainly outside of any formal educational system, CCC development fits naturally under the more general category of experiential learning (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991; Kolb, 1984). That is in contrast to traditional learning theories that focus on learning as a behavioral or cognitive outcome (Ng et al., 2009). Experimental learning theory has commonly been connected with various cross-cultural learning experiences (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991; Li, 2013; Ng et al., 2009). Surprisingly, however, learning theories do not seem to feature in attempts to understand the antecedents of CCC development.

Experiential learning is defined by Kolb (1984) as the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. It emphasizes the central role of experience in the learning process and regards learning as a holistic adaptation process to

the world. In essence, it prescribes a process of learning where the learner should undergo four modes of learning—experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting—to transform an experience into learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Individuals do not learn equally from their IA experiences because only some individuals engage in the entire experiential learning cycle when exposed to new experiences during their IAs (Ng et al., 2009). Expatriates possess different *learning abilities, learning styles, learning skills, and developmental-learning ability* (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004).

Experiential learning theory would support scholars seeking to understand the antecedents of CCC development as a measure of objective or subjective career success, and may also function as a moderator. Scholars aiming to understand development when abroad with regard to cross-cultural learning have stressed the relevance of experiential learning theory (Yamazaki & Kayes, 2004). Other research suggests it is important to consider the role of learning style as a moderator between IAs and the development of cultural intelligence (Li, Mobley, & Kelly, 2013). Relatively little empirical research has been conducted on the experiential learning of expatriates (Jarvis, 2012; Morris, 2020), an exception being Li et al. (2013), who focus on how the learning style of global leaders influenced the development of cultural intelligence during expatriation.

We might expect that different antecedents related to learning theory would be similarly connected to different aspects of CCC development. Assignees' learning processes seem relevant because the learning from concrete experiences acquired working abroad (knowing how) triggers the development of a sense of identity and self-awareness (knowing-why) through reflection on those experiences, and therefore, leads expatriates to adapt their networking behavior (knowing-whom). Inkson and Arthur (2001) depict this interaction between the three ways of knowing and encourage individuals to take the initiative to manage their own careers. Assignees may need to develop multiple learning abilities, styles, and skills to match their learning abilities to the high-density nature of global work. Consequently, their learning might lead to other career successes as it may drive career satisfaction, marketability, job offers, and promotions. In conclusion, experiential learning theory seems to offer extensive opportunities for future research on expatriates.

15.4. *The career success of assignees leading to re-expatriation and a global career*

Most expatriation and global career research regards working abroad as a one-time phenomenon, although it may be part of a repeated pattern of how individuals shape their domestic and international careers. There has been some research that defines different global careers. Suutari and Brewster (2003) identifies two groups of global careerists: those moving from one assignment to the other and those alternating between assignments abroad and some periods in their home countries. Existing research indicates that all kinds of expatriates are commonly motivated by factors such as competency development and career development when living abroad (Doherty et al., 2011). During a longer-term international career, development opportunities and the nature of the job (e.g., the autonomy available and the meaningfulness of a job) become even more central given the high-density work experienced abroad (Suutari, Tornikoski, & Mäkelä, 2012).

When analyzing how and why global careerists have international careers, two types of professionals have been identified (Suutari & Brewster, 2003). First, some individuals were very clear on their international orientation; they had purposefully looked for study and job opportunities abroad and been successful in their efforts. However, this was not always the case. There is another group of global careerists who started their global career at the instigation of their employers. After taking on this opportunity, respondents found that high-density international work was highly stimulating and rewarding, and then determined to continue on the global career path.

While in many instances setting off to work abroad again might be motivated by expatriates' career drivers and the career success experienced from working in a foreign country, in some cases, re-expatriation may also be the outcome of a disappointment with career progression after repatriation (Ho et al., 2016). Due to their repeated expatriation patterns, these international workers may become global careerists (Suutari & Makela, 2007). Global career research has largely ignored repeated foreign sojourns and their impact on careers.

Given the various cultural environments that such global workers are embedded in throughout their careers, the cultural identity model (Sussman, 2010) might be a useful framework to employ. It explores identity change as assignees lose their identification with the home culture and increase cultural flexibility in a new culture. Identity changes happen during IAs (Kohonen, 2005) and repatriates often find that their new sojourner identity no longer matches the cultural identity of their home country (Peterson and Plamondon, 2009). The more the cultural identity changes, the more distressing the repatriation experience can be (Sussman, 2010). Such distress can in turn affect career satisfaction and increase the readiness to move on to another sojourn upon return home (Ho et al., 2016). In the long run, such 'truly international' careers may lead to long-term global careers with various international jobs and assignments in different locations (Valk et al., 2015). Overall, future studies should pay more attention to holistic career journeys (McNulty & Vance, 2017) and how career success both abroad and afterwards impacts re-expatriation intentions and actual global mobility.

15.5. *Future research: using more sophisticated methods agenda*

Reviewing the research methods applied in the field indicates several limitations that should be taken into account in future research. Context and time is relevant to the assessment of assignees' career success (Holtbrügge & Ambrosius, 2015; Mayrhofer et al., 2020; Ng et al., 2005). First, most existing studies concentrate on a few geographic regions (e.g., Begley et al., 2008). Second, most studies in this review collected data shortly after an IA (e.g., Kraimer et al., 2009). Therefore, they can only estimate short-term outcomes arising from the repatriation process, ignoring the cumulative effects over time (Fuller, 2008). Only a few studies adopted longitudinal research designs (e.g., Biemann & Braakmann, 2013; Ramaswami et al., 2016) or collected data as part of a follow-up study a long time after the IAs (e.g., Suutari et al., 2018) to provide evidence of the long-term career impacts of expatriation.

Furthermore, most career studies are carried out among repatriates; many assignees do not repatriate but continue on their internal career track in the same host country or another foreign state (Suutari et al., 2018). In addition, only a few studies address a global sample (e.g., Hamori & Koyuncu, 2011) to reflect different institutional and cultural perspectives that might also moderate and/or mediate the relationship between IA and career success. Finally, expatriate studies typically collect data only among expatriates, and less research is available comparing expatriates and employees working in their home country (e.g., Benson & Pattie, 2008). Appendix 1 provides sample information.

16. Conclusion

This study takes the theoretical categorization of the antecedents and outcomes of expatriates' career success by Spurk et al. (2018) as its starting point. We conducted a systematic literature review which is a high quality approach to literature analysis (Tranfield et al., 2003) although such an approach, like all research, is not without methodological challenges (Carver et al., 2013). The review explored the antecedents of expatriates' career success and their outcomes in terms of OCS/SCS. Crucially, we also explored other outcomes that follow the career success of expatriates after their IAs. The main contribution of this research lies in developing a framework of expatriate career success and its outcomes to guide a future research agenda. Overall, it became clear that the available international career research still has many gaps and promising areas for further investigation. We suggest using our framework to develop a more holistic and refined understanding of the career success of expatriates and its consequences. Doing so would allow researchers to understand why and under what conditions expatriates experience career success. In addition, the results would inform researchers, individuals, and organizations of a range of different outcomes, be they positive, negative, or a mixture of both. This enhanced understanding would enable global mobility stakeholders to make more informed decisions and better manage expatriate journeys, to shape the career success of expatriates, and to manage broader outcomes such as retention. Finally, using our suggested framework might allow us to distinguish the empirical results found in general career success studies from research focused especially on the careers of expatriates. The difference seems to be an outcome of the high-density nature of global work, which is likely to have substantial practical implications for individuals, organizations, and countries.

Credit author statement

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- Conceptualization: Ideas; formulation or evolution of overarching research goals and aims
- Methodology: Development or design of methodology; creation of models
- Software: Develop a excel tool to organize and match the data
- Validation: Verification of theoretical categorization.
- Formal analysis: Interpretation of the data
- Investigation: Collection and allocation of the data
- Resource: Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, patients, laboratory samples, animals, instrumentation, computing resources, or other analysis tools
- Data Curation: Management activities to annotate (produce metadata), scrub data and maintain research data (including software code, where it is necessary for interpreting the data itself) for initial use and later reuse
- Writing - Original Draft: Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically writing the initial draft (including substantive translation)
- Writing - Review & Editing: Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work by those from the original research group, specifically critical review, commentary or revision – including pre-or post-publication stages
- Visualization: Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically visualization/ data presentation

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- Conceptualization: Ideas; formulation or evolution of overarching research goals and aim
- Methodology: Development or design of methodology; creation of models
- Formal analysis: Interpretation of the data
- Writing - Review & Editing: Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work by those from the original research group, specifically critical review, commentary or revision – including pre-or post-publication stages
- Supervision: Oversight and leadership responsibility for the research activity planning and execution, including mentorship external to the core team
- Project administration: Management and coordination responsibility for the research activity planning and execution
- Funding acquisition: Acquisition of the financial support for the project leading to this publication

- Resource: Provision of stud

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Appendix

Appendix 1 Sample characteristics.

	Sample	Type of expatriate	Research method	Home-country	Host-country
1	14	AEs	Qualitative	Saudi Arabia	UK
2	40	AEs, SIEs	Qualitative	Germany and France	Europe, Asia, North-America, Africa
3	15	AEs	Qualitative	UK	Europe
4	11	SIEs	Qualitative	Ireland	Europe, USA, Japan, Canada, Saudi Arabia
5	82	AEs	Quantitative	USA	38 countries
6	159	AEs, SIEs	Quantitative	Germany	–
7	169	AEs	Quantitative	Latin America	Asia, Latin America, Europe North America
8	20	AEs	Qualitative	USA	Pacific Northwest
9	295	AEs	Quantitative	Germany	–
10	245	AEs	Quantitative	USA	–
11	14	–	Mixed	–	USA
12	18	AEs	Qualitative	UK, Asia	–
13	29	–	Qualitative	Asia, USA, Africa, Europe, South America	Asia, Africa, South America, USA
14	26	AEs	Qualitative	UK	–
15	14	AEs	Qualitative	UK	–
16	207	AEs, SIEs	Quantitative	Finland	Global
17	13	AEs	Qualitative	UK	–
18	81	AEs	Quantitative	Spain	–
19	163	AEs	Quantitative	Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany and the United Kingdom	–
20	20	SIEs	Qualitative	China	Canada, UK, Australia, USA, Germany, France, Algeria
21	1001	AEs	Quantitative	USA, Europe	–
22	154	–	Quantitative	Austria	Global
23	290	AEs, SIEs	Quantitative	Vietnam	Australia, UK, USA, France, Singapore
24	59	AEs	Quantitative	USA	Germany
25	112	AEs	Quantitative	Sri Lanka	Asia and other developed countries
26	16	AEs	Quantitative	Finland	–
27	200	AEs, SIEs	Quantitative	Finland	Global
28	38	AEs	Qualitative	–	USA, Europe, South America, Asia
29	84	AEs	Quantitative	Majority USA	China, USA, Japan, Brazil, Mexico, Germany, Canada
30	133	AEs	Quantitative	France, USA, Canada	–
31	333	–	Quantitative	African, Asian-Pacific, Europeans, North American, Latin American and Caribbean	–
32	124	AEs	Quantitative	Taiwan	–
33	118	AEs	Quantitative	Taiwan	–
34	78	AEs	Quantitative	USA	–
35	20	AEs	Qualitative	Finland	Europe, Asia, Africa, Saudi Arabia, Chile, Australia.
36	113	AEs	Quantitative	Finland	–
37	23	SIEs	Qualitative	Western Europe	China
38	50	SIEs	Qualitative	New Zealand	–
39	295	AEs	Quantitative	USA	Western Europe, Japan
40	1581	AEs	Quantitative	China	–
41	440	AEs, SIEs	Quantitative	Asian, Canadian, Europe, US	–
42	143	AEs	Quantitative	32 countries	Germany
43	84	AEs	Quantitative	Majority USA	China, USA, Japan, Brazil, Mexico, Germany, Canada,
44		SIEs	Qualitative	UK, USA, Asia	Qatar
45	170	AEs	Quantitative	Germany	–
46	212	AEs	Quantitative	Germany	–
47	305	AEs	Quantitative	japan	–
48	79	AEs	Quantitative	Finland	Europe, USA, Asia
49	203	AEs, SIEs	Quantitative	Finland	–
50	20	AEs	Qualitative	Finland	Hungary, China, Switzerland, Germany, France, Chile,
51	55	AEs	Qualitative	Indian, The Netherlands	Russia, Austria, Turkey, Hong Kong, Guatemala, The USA, Pakistan
52	30	SIEs	Qualitative	Indian	Indian, The Netherlands Bangalore and New Delhi

(continued on next page)

Appendix 1 (continued)

Sample	Type of expatriate	Research method	Home-country	Host-country	
53	30	AEs	Qualitative	Indian, The Netherlands	Indian, The Netherlands
54	28	–	Qualitative	China	Australia, Europe, US, New Zealand
55	28	SIEs	Qualitative	China	Europe, UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand

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Article 2

Unravelling the long-term career impact of expatriation experiences: An examination of career adaptability, job fit, and expatriate type on post-expatriation career success

ABSTRACT

What outcomes are associated with the career choices of expatriates in the long run? Expatriation significantly influences the career paths of individuals following their international work experiences. Drawing on person-environment fit and career construction theories, this study examines the role of job fit, career adaptability, and expatriate type in shaping both objective and subjective career success. Our 2020 sample comprised 202 expatriates who had worked abroad four to five years prior. This group included both self-initiated and assigned expatriates, as well as repatriates and re-expatriates, providing a broader scope than is typical in expatriation studies. The research uncovers that job fit, career adaptability, and expatriate type substantially affect career outcomes. It also identifies that the type of expatriate moderates the relationship between career adaptability and objective career success. This investigation not only deepens our understanding of the factors driving career success post-expatriation but also provides valuable insights for the effective management of international careers.

Keywords Expatriation, Career Success, Proactive Behaviour, Job Fit, Career Adaptability, Repatriation, Re-expatriation.

INTRODUCTION

Expatriate work, where expatriates move across national and often also organisational borders during and after expatriation, is seen as highly developmental (Shaffer et al., 2012; Mello et al., 2023a). This type of work is considered more complex and demanding than work in the domestic market (Shin et al., 2007) and is classified as high-density (H-D) work (Kraimer et al., 2022; Shaffer et al., 2012). It significantly influences individuals' competencies, work interests, and future careers (Shaffer et al., 2012; Dickmann et al., 2018; Mello et al., 2023a). The theory of work experience defines "*density*" as the character of work that offers a "*developmental punch*" of intense experience over time (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998, p.329). As such, H-D work requires expatriates to adapt to new career situations both during and post-expatriation (Guan et al., 2019) in order to achieve a better fit with their new work environments (Chan et al., 2015).

The developmental nature of expatriation experiences has prompted an interest in understanding the long-term career impacts of varying types of individuals (Stahl et al., 2002). Existing literature provides conflicting findings, suggesting both positive (Ramaswami et al., 2016) and negative (Benson & Pattie, 2008) career effects. These inconsistencies are likely due to most studies not incorporating a diverse array of expatriate types, such as Assigned Expatriates (AEs), who are sent abroad by their employers, and Self-Initiated Expatriates (SIEs), who seek opportunities abroad on their own initiative (Andresen et al., 2020) to the same study. Furthermore, most studies are done among repatriates while it is also common for expatriates to continue their international career as re-expatriates (Ho et al., 2016). This limited focus affects our understanding of varying career paths and outcomes. Our research addresses these gaps by looking at the career outcomes of both AEs and SIEs as well as repatriates and re-expatriates. Consistent with the career literature (e.g., Ng et al., 2005), we distinguish between objective (i.e., observable career achievements) and subjective (i.e., subjective evaluations of career outcomes) career success (CS).

Our study employs person-environment fit theory (Ehrhart, 2006) alongside career construction theory (Savickas, 2009) as conceptual frameworks to navigate the complexities of expatriate CS. These theories have been identified as promising frameworks to guide future research on careers (Spurk et al., 2018; Mello et al., 2023a). First, our study applies person-environment fit theory to the context of expatriate CS, broadening its scope beyond traditional domestic settings and beyond merely subjective career outcomes (Guan et al., 2021). This perspective is especially pertinent for expatriates undergoing phases of repatriation or re-expatriation, which are often characterised by heightened career expectations due

to enriching international experiences (Suutari et al., 2018). Therefore, securing roles that align with the competencies cultivated during their work experiences abroad can significantly influence not only their subjective CS (Vidal et al., 2007; Dickmann & Doherty, 2010; Oleškevičiūtė et al., 2022) but also their objective CS in the new position (Mello et al., 2023a). Furthermore, our methodological approach contributes by applying robust quantitative methods to validate these theoretical constructs, thereby enhancing their empirical rigour and broadening their applicability across diverse expatriate types and career paths.

Second, career construction theory emphasises the role of expatriates as proactive agents in managing their career transitions. This theory introduces the concept of career adaptability, a construct that offers a valuable lens to understand variations in CS (Spurk et al., 2019), including among expatriates (Jannesari & Sullivan, 2019). This theory acknowledges the agency of individuals in navigating their career transitions (Savickas et al., 2012), emphasising the proactive role they play in securing job fit (Hirschi et al., 2015). As H-D global work necessitates cognitive flexibility, expatriates must demonstrate adaptability as they transition across organisational and national boundaries (Shaffer et al., 2012). By weaving the element of career adaptability into our study, we underline the importance of individual efforts in tackling the challenges and leveraging the opportunities inherent in H-D global work (Jannesari & Sullivan, 2019). Given that SIEs generally exhibit more proactivity than AEs in initiating and preparing for their expatriations, we leverage insights from the proactivity literature (Parker & Collins, 2010) to understand the differences in CS of these two types of expatriates. This is notable, as SIE empirical studies have been criticised for lacking any theoretical grounds (Mello et al., 2023a; Suutari et al., 2018).

Lastly, we propose that the career adaptability requirements for SIEs and AEs differ during these career transitions following international work experiences. This variation stems from SIEs' absence of corporate support during career transitions (Haak-Saheem et al., 2022; Richardson & Mallon, 2005) and their elevated level of proactivity (Andresen et al., 2020). Therefore, we investigate whether the type of expatriate serves as a moderating factor in the relationship between career adaptability and CS.

All in all, the objective of the present study is to investigate how job fit with the new role, career adaptability, and expatriate type influence the objective and subjective CS of expatriates following their H-D work experiences abroad. We contribute to understanding the CS of individuals undertaking global work in several ways. Firstly, while job fit is an essential antecedent of CS in domestic careers (e.g., Erdogan & Bauer, 2005), its role in the context of expatriate careers

has not been sufficiently examined (c.f. Dickmann & Doherty, 2010). Our quantitative study employs the theoretical construct of job fit to explicate the CS of expatriates. While general career theory has previously established the relationship between job fit and subjective CS (Erdogan & Bauer, 2005), our study contributes by extending these insights to encompass objective CS within the expatriation context. Traditional studies in this area have often been small-scale, qualitative, and focused solely on subjective CS (e.g., Makkonen, 2015). Contrary to prior work, our research encompasses a broader range of expatriate types and career paths. We argue that the highly developmental nature of expatriate work experiences amplifies the relevance of job fit, not just for subjective but also for objective CS. Our findings furnish new empirical support for this extended application. Second, our study adds empirical evidence on the importance of career adaptability in the CS of expatriates years after their foreign work. Expatriates need to adapt first to their expatriate jobs and, later, to a new job back at home or in another international location. We explore how career adaptability leads to enhanced CS (Chian et al., 2018; Ho et al., 2016) as has been called for (Rudolph et al., 2017; Mello et al., 2023a). Third, our study represents a pioneering effort to apply a theoretical foundation, specifically career construction theory, to investigate empirically the differences in CS between AEs and SIEs following their expatriation experiences. It presents novel evidence regarding the career impact of working abroad in these two groups and spans a broader range of career patterns (repatriates and re-expatriates). Finally, our study also shows that career adaptability indirectly influences expatriates' CS when moderated by the expatriate type, a finding that contributes to both general and international career research.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Career success of expatriates

Researchers have measured CS using objective factors such as salary (Spurk et al., 2018), promotions (Kraimer et al., 2009), and job responsibility development. Conversely, subjective CS has been assessed using measures like career satisfaction (Shaffer et al., 2012) or perceived marketability (Eby et al., 2003). In this study, we employ job responsibility development as a more comprehensive measure of objective CS, incorporating both vertical (changes in hierarchical positions) and horizontal (changes in responsibility levels) perspectives, both of which are significant post-expatriation (Breitenmoser et al., 2018). Moreover, we focus on career satisfaction as an subjective CS measure, reflecting expatriates' perceptions of their career progress with reference to goals, income level,

advancement and skill development (Briscoe et al., 2021). This choice reflects our interest in the long-term career impacts of expatriation.

There has been increasing interest in studying the CS of expatriates. Expatriate work is a form of H-D global work (Shaffer et al., 2012) offering extensive development opportunities and, thus, typically has extensive career consequences (Mello et al., 2023a). The theory of work experience (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998) suggests that employees learn through the density of work experience rather than the time spent in their jobs. Accordingly, the theory highlights the importance of the “developmental punch” stemming from the various challenges people encounter in their jobs (Quinones et al., 1995; Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998). Researchers have advocated further investigation of such developmental challenges (Akkan et al., 2021).

Research to date has queried what makes global work a form of H-D work (e.g., Akkan et al., 2021). First, H-D global work involves international relocation thereby triggering an adjustment of expatriate thought patterns and scripts to effectively interact with people and adapt to situational demands across cultures (Shaffer et al., 2012). The work role requirements also disrupt or interfere with employees’ usual activities and routines outside work (Kraimer et al., 2022). Subsequent research suggests that substantial task challenges and autonomy are typical characteristics of H-D global work (Mello et al., 2023a). That corroborates the idea that expatriates often assume broader task responsibility than in their previous jobs, while having a higher level of autonomy and fewer support structures; a combination that has an extensive impact on individuals (Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Dickmann et al., 2018).

Expatriates’ H-D work experiences mean they normally feel increasingly competent and develop an interest in new career challenges (Shaffer et al., 2012) and high career expectations (Dowling et al., 2013). In turn, the changes in job duties, social relations, and work environments that they experience during transitions may also spawn career risks (Guan et al., 2019). Expatriates may face problems finding sufficiently challenging and interesting jobs after expatriation (Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Overall, expatriation can have major long-term career implications for expatriates (Kraimer et al., 2022).

The evidence regarding the CS of expatriates after working abroad is limited and broadly focused on AEs who have repatriated. Studies report mixed findings. There is very little evidence on objective CS concerning measures such as job offers and job responsibility development (Mello et al., 2023a). Accordingly, further research is needed to fully understand the career impacts of expatriation. In

particular, research evidence relating to SIEs (Suutari et al., 2018) and those who re-expatriate (Ho et al., 2016) remains very limited.

Antecedents of expatriate career success

Besides understanding how expatriation impacts future careers generally, it is even more important to understand why some expatriates are more successful than others, that is, to understand the antecedents of expatriate CS. Figure 1 illustrates our conceptual framework depicting suggested antecedents of expatriates' job responsibility development and career satisfaction after experiencing H-D global work. These relationships are explained below.

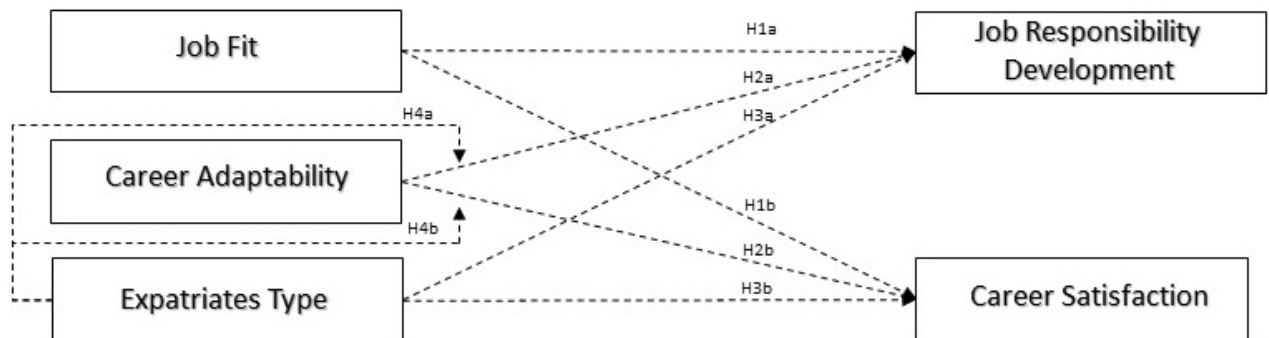


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The job fit of expatriates after expatriation

Having undertaken H-D work abroad, it is critical for expatriates that they perceive they will subsequently find suitable jobs. A suitable job would be one in which there is a fit between their new level of competencies and the job (Vidal et al., 2007), or even their careers goals (Lazarova et al., 2021). That is the case whether the next job is at home or abroad (Suutari et al., 2018). The concept of fit features in the literature on CS (e.g., Erdogan & Bauer, 2005) but has seldom been used in empirical research on expatriates' career experiences and success (Haslberger & Dickmann, 2016). The theory of person-environment fit is based on the premise that a person and environment interact (Ehrhart, 2006). Traditionally, this theory has been used concerning job fit (Ehrhart, 2006), focusing on a person's competencies and the job requirements (Aycan, 2005). Employees strive to secure

a fit with their own perceived competencies, job demands, and job resources (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). The evidence relating to AEs indicates that companies are somewhat unsuccessful in arranging suitable jobs following repatriation (Dickmann & Doherty, 2008; Suutari et al., 2018). For their part, SIEs will typically need to find a new employer and role upon repatriation (Andresen et al., 2013). These changes might impact expatriates' long-term CS, as job fit can either promote or obstruct the utilization of resources, subsequently impacting performance and outcomes (Bretz & Judge, 1994).

The theory of person-environment fit suggests that expatriates with a better job fit can extract greater benefit from career competencies acquired abroad (Guan et al., 2021). Job fit is considered a wise career choice (Tinsley, 2000) and a situation an employer should target. Job fit is highly relevant in the context of expatriation owing to the H-D nature of global work and the fact that expatriates need to adjust to working in different institutional contexts (Andresen et al., 2022). When individuals' strengths fit the requirements of roles (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), the situation contributes to subjective CS (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2014). Accordingly, we expect that job fit after expatriation leads to greater career satisfaction. Job fit also affects their overall performance, effectiveness (Zimmerman, 2008), and career progress (Lyness & Heilman, 2006). We propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: A high degree of job fit positively impacts a) expatriates' job responsibility development and b) expatriates' career satisfaction.

The career adaptability of expatriates

To succeed in H-D work and find suitable career options after expatriation, individuals must acquire the competencies to adapt to different career development requirements and employment demands (Benson & Pattie, 2008). We selected career adaptability to reveal the degree of adaptability expatriates require to cope with their career transitions. The measure has been proposed as a promising antecedent in international career research (Mello et al., 2023a). It represents a crucial element of *career construction theory* (Savickas, 2012). Career adaptability encompasses the constellation of individual behaviours, competencies, and attitudes deployed "in fitting themselves into work that suits them" (Savickas, 2005, p. 45). According to career construction theory (Savickas, 2005, 2012), career adaptability consists of four aspects: career concern (considering future possibilities and preparing for them), career control

(purposeful decision-making and conscientious action), career curiosity (investigating various situations and roles), and career confidence (dealing with barriers and problems). While job fit emphasises the final fit achieved, career adaptability stresses the role of individual activity in achieving such a degree of fit (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2020). Adaptive capability refers to individuals' capacity to adapt to new work demands in different environments and diverse groups (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

According to career construction theory, career adaptability leads to greater CS (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2020). Empirical evidence suggests that career adaptability results in successful career transitions (Brown et al., 2012) and positive career outcomes (Rudolph et al., 2017). The findings concentrate on subjective CS (Rudolph et al., 2017), such as perceived employability (de Guzman & Choi, 2013) and career satisfaction (Chan & Mai, 2015). A recent meta-analysis concludes that there is very little evidence in terms of the connections between career adaptability and objective CS, which invites further research (Rudolph et al. 2017).

Research on career adaptability among expatriates is even scarcer (Mello et al., 2023a; Jannesari & Sullivan, 2019). The H-D work of expatriates often requires them to build their careers alone and to find jobs that will satisfy them in the future (Guan et al., 2021). They must also be able to adapt to different kinds of jobs after expatriation, regardless of whether they return home or move to a new job abroad. Accordingly, we expect that expatriates benefit from career adaptability after their international work experiences.

Career adaptability has recently been studied in connection with SIEs' performance and adjustment while abroad (Jannesari & Sullivan, 2019). It has also been suggested that it moderates the connection between perceived underemployment and career satisfaction among AEs (Ren et al., 2013). However, our study focuses on the role of career adaptability in job responsibility development and career satisfaction after expatriation. Building on career construction theory, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: A high degree of career adaptability positively impacts a) expatriates' job responsibility development and b) expatriates' career satisfaction.

Expatriate type

Both AEs and SIEs undertake H-D work abroad, but their career trajectories differ (Suutari et al., 2018). The primary distinction between the two types of expatriate is that SIEs initiate their own expatriation, while AEs are sent abroad by their employer organisations (Selmer et al., 2022). Given this core difference, we use the proactivity literature (Parker & Collins, 2010) to explain why and how an individual's proactive career behaviours contribute to CS.

Proactive career behaviours are theoretically linked to career construct theory (Spurk et al., 2020), a psychological theory that explains how individuals construct their careers and derive meaning from their work experiences, enabling them to comprehend their personal values, motivations, and goals (Savickas, 2012). Proactive career behaviours can be defined as “the degree to which somebody is proactively developing his or her career as expressed by diverse career behaviours” (Hirschi et al., 2014, p. 577) and consist of three core components: taking control, anticipation, and information retrieval (Parker & Collins, 2010; Smale et al., 2019).

Taking control involves individuals exercising autonomy in managing their careers. Anticipation denotes proactive action in response to future situations, and information retrieval refers to obtaining relevant career information and resources (Smale et al., 2018). SIEs demonstrate greater proactivity in taking control of their careers by initiating their expatriation, exploring job opportunities abroad, preparing for an international move, and seeking necessary resources to facilitate expatriation. These proactive behaviours are likely perceived as volitional and self-endorsed, which should satisfy the basic need for autonomy (Van den Broeck et al., 2016) and yield career consequences (Andresen et al., 2020).

Scholars argue that the autonomy inherent in controlling their career leads individuals to the subjective perception of personal success, akin to thinking, “I am doing what I know is best for me” (Smale et al., 2019). In line with that notion, feeling in control of one's career has been associated with higher levels of subjective CS (Raabe et al., 2007). Accordingly, proactive behaviour undertaken by SIEs may result in a higher level of satisfaction than that felt by AEs. The latter are subject to management by their organisation and thus to its organisational directives during the expatriation process (Smale et al., 2019). Therefore, we expect SIEs to have greater career satisfaction than AEs after expatriation. Scholars of objective CS have argued that having the personal initiative and autonomy to plan and manage their career (taking control) helps individuals improve job performance and, consequently, objective CS (Tornau & Frese, 2013). The idea is supported by findings that individual career planning and career management are associated with higher levels of objective CS (Mello et al., 2023a),

more so than in organisational career management (Breitenmoser et al., 2018). Therefore, we expect SIEs to have a higher degree of job responsibility development as a measure of objective CS than AEs do.

The empirical findings among expatriates are conflicting. Studies focusing exclusively on SIEs or AEs report expatriation can exert both a positive and negative influence on CS (see Mello et al., 2023a). In addition, the few studies that compare AEs' and SIEs' CS after expatriation found few significant differences (e.g., Suutari et al., 2018). This study limits the investigation to the original postulation of the proactive literature, which argues that SIEs' CS can benefit from their more pronounced autonomy and freedom concerning career decisions. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: People whose international work experience was gained as an SIE will have higher levels of a) job responsibility development and b) career satisfaction after expatriation than people whose international work experience was gained as an AE.

The moderation role of expatriate type between career adaptability and career success

Expatriates benefit from career adaptability during their international careers. However, SIEs are more reliant on career adaptability due to their lack of organisational attachment, support (Chen & Shaffer, 2017) and the increased likelihood of substantial job and employer changes (Andresen et al., 2020). As a result, SIEs need to foster career adaptability when evaluating career options (career concern), making career-related decisions (career control), exploring job and career-related opportunities (career curiosity), and overcoming barriers (career confidence).

This reasoning implies that career adaptability may play a more significant role in coping with the increased career risks associated with cross-border transitions for SIEs than it does for AEs (Andresen et al., 2020). Drawing from the proactive literature, we contend that career adaptability is even more crucial for job responsibility development and career satisfaction of SIEs than AEs. The basis for this perspective lies in the fact that SIEs proactively initiate their international moves, which is likely to lead to a situation where they lack the same level of organisational support that AEs receive during and after their expatriation. This

disparity puts SIEs in a more vulnerable position than AEs. We propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Expatriate type moderates the positive relationship between career adaptability and a) job responsibility development and b) career satisfaction such that the relationship is stronger for SIEs than AEs.

METHOD

Sample

The data were collected through an internet survey among expatriate members of two Finnish unions: The Association of Business Schools Graduates and the Union of Academic Engineers and Architects. Since union membership figures in Nordic countries are exceptionally high, this group likely represents almost all Finnish graduates working abroad in these fields (Suutari et al., 2018). The unions were able to identify and survey individuals working abroad in 2015 and 2016, and we then sent them our questionnaire in 2020. This is an important benefit of surveys through this data source as other potential sources (e.g., employers, websites) struggle to contact respondents who may have left their employer or changed countries. It is unlikely that any other source would permit the collation of such a representative database giving the contact information for 2020 of those who were expatriates—whether AEs or SIEs—in 2015 and 2016.

The survey was circulated to 422 individuals. After reminders, 219 survey responses were returned (51.90 %). Next, we excluded 80 respondents as they were still in the same country and job; thus, their careers after their expatriate work could not be analysed. We were left with a total of 139 respondents. Seeking to expand the database, we made an additional open call through the online communication channel of the union for additional members who had previous expatriate experience to participate in the study. We also checked that the CS of expatriates of these subsamples was the same. This extension gained 62 further respondents. Table 1 shows that the study attracted 202 respondents (88 AEs and 114 SIEs).

Table 1. Background of the Sample (N=202).

<i>Expatriate type</i>	Frequency	Percent
<i>Expatriate type</i>		
AE	88	43,5 %
SIE	114	56,4 %
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	116	57,4 %
Female	86	42,1 %
<i>Career Path</i>		
Repatriates	141	69,8 %
Re-expatriates	61	30,2 %
<i>Age in years (Mean/Std. Deviation)</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
	45.5	10.0

Measures

Our study relies on validated multi-item scales. First, we divided questionnaire sections when entering scales for predictors and outcomes to mitigate the effects of common method variance. Furthermore, we guaranteed respondents anonymity and encouraged them to be honest and spontaneous when replying (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Dependent variables

Using job responsibility development (Breitenmoser et al., 2018), we aimed to compare the career impacts of international work experience after expatriation. We asked respondents to compare their experiences before and after expatriation on the job responsibility development scale (c.f. Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009; Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Adapting the original two items, we used: “Compared to your position before your job abroad (in 2015/16), is your current position a (1) demotion ... (5) promotion?” and “Compared to your project responsibility before your job abroad (2015/16), do the projects you are currently responsible for represent a (1) reduction in responsibility... (5) an increase in responsibility?” The Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .911.

We elicited expatriates’ perceptions of subjective career satisfaction, measured with the five-item career satisfaction scale by Greenhaus et al. (1990). A sample

item is “The progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement.” All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (Cronbach’s alpha.901).

Independent variables

The demands–abilities fit scale developed by Cable and DeRue (2002) measures job fit based on three items. We asked respondents to state to what extent they felt the skills and abilities developed during their work abroad (2015/16) meet the requirements of their current job on a scale anchored with *not at all* (1) and *completely* (5). Amongst the items were: “The match was very good between the demands of my current job and my personal skills,” “My abilities and training were a good fit with the requirements of my current job,” and “My personal abilities provided a good match with the demands that my current job places on me.” The items were measured on 5-point Likert scales (Cronbach’s alpha .920).

We used the *career adapt-ability scale* (CAAS-SF) to measure career adaptability, combining the items to yield a total score (Maggiori et al., 2017). When replying, participants were instructed with the following description and related question: “Different people use different strengths to build their careers. No one is good at everything; each of us emphasises some strengths more than others. Please rate how strongly you have developed each of the following abilities using the scale below”. Sample items included “Thinking about what my future will be like” (Concern), “Making decisions by myself” (Control), “Observing different ways of doing things” (Curiosity) and “Overcoming obstacles” (Confidence). All items were measured on 5-point Likert scales (Cronbach’s alpha.706). We categorised the respondents into two distinct types of expatriates: Assigned Expatriates (AEs) and Self-Initiated Expatriates (SIEs). Participants were asked to ascertain whether their expatriation was initiated by their employer (AEs) or self-initiated (SIEs). For the purpose of coding, SIEs were assigned a code of 0, while AEs were assigned a code of 1.

Control variables

We controlled for age, gender, and career path. First, extant literature indicates that age has a negative influence on both promotions and perceived external employability (Suutari et al., 2018), as well as on home-country marketability (Mäkelä et al., 2015). Age was controlled for as a continuous variable. Gender has an impact on the CS of expatriates. For instance, women managers are less

satisfied with their careers after expatriation than men (Ren et al., 2013). Men were coded 0 and women 1. Finally, we controlled for the career path (expatriates who have repatriated vs those who have re-expatriated) because it has been reported that CS can differ between these groups following their expatriation (Biemann & Braakmann, 2013; Mello et al., 2023b). Repatriates were coded as 0 and re-expatriates as 1.

Analysis

First, we provided a descriptive analysis of the study variables and conducted CFA to check if the model fits the data. Based on the standard suggestions (e.g. Hu & Bentler, 1999), the model fit is acceptable with CFI =.90/.95, TLI =.90/.95, RMSEA <.06/.08, and SRMR <.08. Due to negative disturbance variance, we constrained the disturbance of confidence to .001. Then, following the validation article of the CAAS-SF (Maggiori et al., 2015), we allowed two measurement residuals of curiosity items (“*I investigate options before making a choice*” and “*observing different ways of doing things*”) and two measurement residuals of confidence’s items (“*taking care to do things well*” and “*working up to my ability*”) to correlate. The fit indices of the CFA with $X^2=337.98$, $df=196$, $p<.001$, CFI =.92, TLI =.91, RMSEA=.06, and SRMR =.06 indicate an acceptable fit. Then, we tested for common method bias using the marker variables technique (Simmering et al., 2015). The model comparison showed no common method bias related issue as the model with marker variable associations to the indicators of other variables were not significantly different ($p=.72$) than the model without associations from the marker variable to the indicators. This finding suggests that common method variance is not a critical issue in our data, as the estimate lies clearly below the threshold of 50% (e.g. Eichhorn, 2014). Finally, we performed multicollinearity tests (tolerance and VIF) to confirm that multicollinearity was not present in the statistical model. All independent variables of our regression model showed tolerance levels higher than 0.10 and VIF lower than 10, in line with the recommendations of Hair et al. (1998) (see Table 3).

We conducted multiple regression analyses to test our research hypotheses. We also used the centred scores for each component of the interaction term to reduce multicollinearity (Aiken & West, 1991). Lastly, concerning the moderated regression, we included only the indirect effects of career adaptability on CS moderated by expatriate type in the model. However, we excluded the other indirect effects as we tested that the expatriate type did not moderate the relationship between job fit and CS.

RESULTS

Means, standard deviations, and correlations between study variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Woman	0,42	0,50	201							
2 Age	45,48	9,93	199	-,146*						
3 Career Path	0,30	0,46	202	-,236**	0,008					
4 Job Fit	3,92	1,00	195	-0,075	-0,045	0,024				
5 Career Adaptability (CAAS-SF)	4,00	0,44	202	,212**	0,041	-0,087	,276**			
6 Expatriate Type	1,56	0,50	202	-0,057	-,177*	,208**	0,023	-0,051		
7 Job Resp. Development	3,98	1,13	195	0,009	-,327**	0,009	,427**	,142*	0,071	
8 Career Satisfaction	3,76	0,84	198	0,004	0,022	0,029	,486**	,314**	-0,139	,360**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

The results are presented in Table 3 and depicted in Figure 2.

Table 3. Regression Results for Hypothesized Relationships.

	Job Responsibility Development	Collinearity Statistics		Career Satisfaction	Collinearity Statistics
Number of Respondents	192	Tolerance VIF		190	Tolerance VIF
	Standardized B			Standardized B	
Gender	-.001	.872 1.146		-.003	.928 1.077
Career Path	.018	.895 1.117		-.0143	.949 1.053
Age	-.353***	.936 1.069		-.039	.928 1.078
Job Fit	.458***	.891 1.122		.366***	.905 1.105
Career Adaptability (CAAS)	-.066	.662 1.510		.155**	.870 1.149
Expatriates Type	-.029	.908 1.101		.289**	.902 1.108
Interaction Exp. Type and CAAS	.392*	.707 1.414		.100	.705 1.419
R2	.322***	- -		.291***	- -

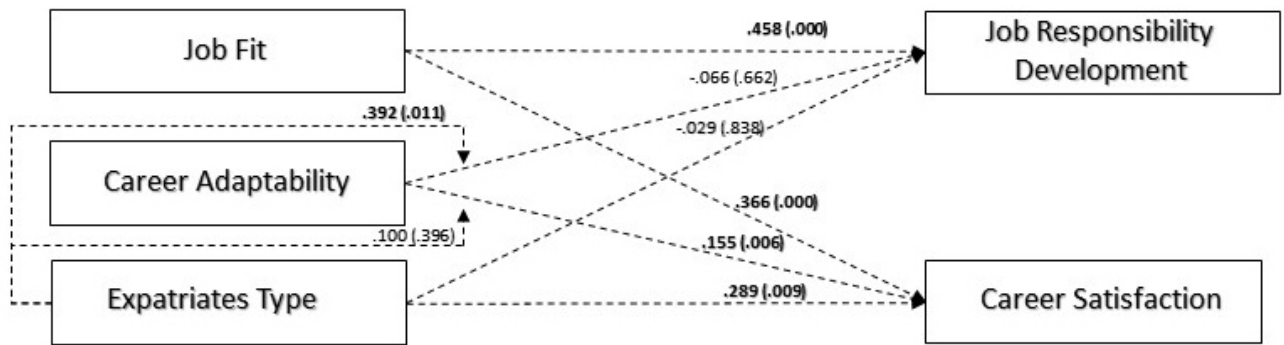


Figure 2. Model (standardized path coefficients and p-values)

Starting with control variables, we found that age had a negative influence on the job responsibility development of expatriates; in other words, the older the expatriates, the lower their job responsibility development ($\beta = -.353$ $p < .001$). Other control variables had no significant impact. Results for all relationships outlined in Figure 2 are provided subsequently.

Turning to Hypothesis 1, we anticipated a higher degree of job fit to positively influence expatriates' 1a) job responsibility development and 1b) career satisfaction. Confirming this expectation, our data showed job fit to significantly affect both job responsibility development ($\beta = .458$ $p < .001$) and career satisfaction ($\beta = .366$ $p < .001$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 received full support.

In Hypothesis 2, we suggested that increased career adaptability would positively impact 2a) expatriates' job responsibility development and 2b) career satisfaction. Contrary to our expectations, our findings indicated that career adaptability only significantly influenced career satisfaction ($\beta = .155$ $p < .01$), with no discernible effect on expatriates' job responsibility development. Consequently, we only found support for Hypothesis 2b.

Shifting to Hypothesis 3, we proposed that individuals with international work experience as SIE would demonstrate greater 3a) job responsibility development and 3b) career satisfaction than AE. The data, however, revealed that while SIEs had higher career satisfaction than AEs ($\beta = .289$ $p < .01$), there was no significant difference in job responsibility development between the two groups. Hence, support was found only for Hypothesis 3b.

Lastly, we hypothesised in Hypothesis 4 that expatriate type would moderate the relationship between career adaptability and CS, predicting that increased career adaptability would more strongly relate to 4a) job responsibility development and

4b) career satisfaction in SIEs than AEs. Our findings showed that expatriate type indeed moderated the relationship between career adaptability and job responsibility development ($\beta=.392$ $p < .05$), but not the relationship between career adaptability and career satisfaction. Unexpectedly, the observed moderation did not align with our predictions, leading to the rejection of Hypothesis 4. As Figure 3 illustrates, AEs displayed lower job responsibility development than SIEs at low career adaptability levels. However, when career adaptability was high, AEs achieved greater job responsibility development than SIEs. Further exploration of this significant interaction, by plotting the relationship between career adaptability and job responsibility development separately for SIEs and AEs, revealed that career adaptability was significantly associated with job responsibility development for AEs ($\beta=.314$ $p < .05$), but not SIEs. This suggests that career adaptability influenced the job responsibility development of AEs, but not SIEs. Results for all hypotheses related to the direct relationships in Figure 2, and the indirect interaction in Figure 3, are discussed accordingly.

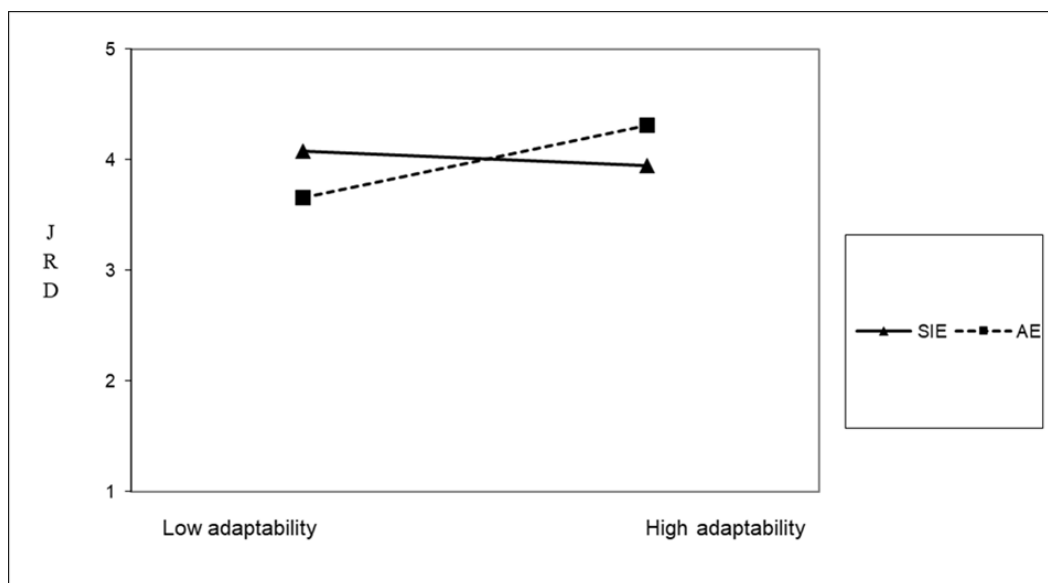


Figure 3. Interaction Effect between Career Adaptability and Expatriate Type

DISCUSSION

This study explores the influence of job fit, career adaptability, and expatriate type on expatriates' job responsibility development and career satisfaction after international work experiences. Uniquely, our research emphasizes the long-term outcomes and diverse career trajectories that expatriates may experience, areas

that remain underexamined and undertheorized, particularly within the frameworks of person-environment fit theory and career construction theory. These gaps are especially pertinent in the expatriate context (Mello et al., 2023a). Our empirical results reveal that the selected antecedents explain a significant proportion (32%) of both the subjective and objective CS post-expatriation. Furthermore, we delve into the moderating role of expatriate type in the relationship between career adaptability and job responsibility development as a measure of objective CS. The subsequent sections elaborate on our primary findings and their theoretical implications.

Theoretical and empirical contributions

Our study makes several critical contributions to the existing body of knowledge. Firstly, while prior research using person-environment fit theory has often focused narrowly on subjective career outcomes (e.g., Bossard & Peterson, 2005; Makkonen, 2015), our study broadens the scope by incorporating both objective and subjective measures of CS. This more holistic approach fills a critical gap in our understanding of expatriates' career trajectories post-expatriation. Specifically, the study sheds light on the significant role that job fit plays in CS, an observation that is particularly pertinent for expatriates. Notably, as expatriates accumulate significant levels of career capital through international work experiences (Dickmann et al., 2018), our findings suggest that aligning this enhanced career capital with appropriate job opportunities has implications for both objective and subjective aspects of CS. Our research stands out for its robust quantitative methodology and its inclusion of a diverse sample of expatriate types, such as SIEs and re-expatriates, thereby further validating the applicability of person-environment fit theory to a broader array of expatriate experiences.

Secondly, our study significantly extends the literature by addressing a relatively underexplored aspect: the long-term implications of career adaptability for expatriates' CS across a variety of career paths and expatriate types. Previous research has been limited in scope, focusing mainly on immediate outcomes or limited aspects of expatriate careers (Suutari et al., 2018). Our novel approach adds much-needed depth to this conversation by delving into the complex, and often nonlinear, trajectories expatriates experience post-transition. Theoretically, our findings enrich career construction theory by elucidating the role of adaptability in these diverse career paths. We respond to calls for more empirical focus on adaptability, especially in later career stages (Rudolph et al., 2017), revealing that adaptability takes on increased importance in shaping subjective CS, particularly career satisfaction, after repatriation or re-expatriation.

While prior research has discussed adaptability in domestic contexts (Spurk et al., 2019), our study suggests that its role may be even more pronounced in the international realm, thereby opening avenues for future inquiries. Intriguingly, our data did not confirm a direct relationship between career adaptability and objective CS, as measured by job responsibility development. This deviation from expectations based on career construction theory indicates a nuanced relationship that warrants further study. Nonetheless, an indirect relationship was observed between career adaptability and objective CS, mediated by the type of expatriate, adding an additional layer of complexity to our understanding. As existing empirical data on this relationship are limited (Rudolph et al., 2017), our study serves as a catalyst for further nuanced investigations.

Thirdly, our study addresses a critical gap in the empirical literature by providing a theoretical foundation to rigorously elucidate the differences between AEs and SIEs. While scholars have noted these distinctions (Andresen et al., 2020), the field has been wanting for empirical evidence backed by a comprehensive theoretical framework. Bridging this gap, we draw upon career construction theory and proactivity literature (Spurk et al., 2020) to underscore the significance of proactive career behaviour in determining the CS of both AEs and SIEs. Empirically, our results align with the proactivity literature (Smale et al., 2019), revealing that SIEs experience higher levels of subjective CS when assessed via career satisfaction. However, contrary to expectations, SIEs did not outperform AEs in objective CS, as measured by job responsibility development. They did, however, match AEs in this regard, which is an observation consistent with prior research on promotions post-expatriation (Suutari et al., 2018).

The implications of these findings are twofold and serve as a clarion call for re-evaluating prevailing assumptions in the literature. First, our research challenges existing perspectives that tend to overly emphasise limitations on SIEs' CS (Suutari et al., 2018). Predominantly qualitative and specific to certain contexts (e.g., Makkonen, 2015), existing research has been somewhat restrictive in its generalisability. It is, therefore, pivotal to acknowledge the particular context and temporal dimension in the examination of CS. Our findings underscore the importance of accounting for both the specific context and temporal dimensions when examining CS (Andresen et al., 2020). For example, upon repatriation, SIEs may confront barriers to reintegration within their domestic job markets, largely attributable to the absence of organisational support and structured employment arrangements. Nonetheless, such challenges do not negate the likelihood of SIEs subsequently capitalising on the benefits accumulated from their prior international work experiences (Begley et al., 2008). Moreover, for those electing to continue their international careers, initial conditions and career advancements

may closely align with those experienced by AEs. Secondly, elevated levels of career satisfaction amongst SIEs signify a proactive approach to career management, thereby distinguishing them from AEs. This divergence not only substantiates the empirical findings of the present study but also paves the way for further scholarly inquiry. Specifically, future research would do well to investigate the comparative proactivity of AEs and SIEs following their international work experiences.

Finally, the current study advances existing literature by being the first to identify a moderating effect of expatriate type—specifically, AEs versus SIEs—on the relationship between career adaptability and job responsibility development. While extant research exploring the linkage between career adaptability and objective CS is limited (Rudolph et al., 2017), our results reveal that career adaptability is positively correlated with job responsibility development solely among AEs. This divergence raises a pertinent question: Why does career adaptability not relate to job responsibility development among SIEs? A plausible explanation could be that the heightened proactivity exhibited by SIEs reduces their reliance on adaptability. SIEs are likely to engage in anticipatory actions, proactively seeking resources and engaging in continuous learning before the need for adaptation arises (Andresen et al., 2020). In contrast, AEs are often dependent on organisational support, a resource that is frequently lacking in post-expatriation career planning (Kraimer et al., 2009). Consequently, career adaptability—a resource employed following critical incidents (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2020)—emerges as more vital for AEs, who generally exhibit less proactive career behaviour.

Additionally, it may also be that the CS of SIEs may be more influenced by external situational factors, such as the domestic or international job markets, than by their own proactive career behaviour. This finding contradicts the existing literature, which posits proactive behaviour as salient in such contexts (Smale et al., 2019; Spurk et al., 2020). Our results did not establish a positive correlation between enhanced career adaptability and objective CS for SIEs, thereby corroborating the notion that CS is context-dependent and may be more influenced by structural rather than agentic factors (Mayrhofer et al., 2007; Andresen et al., 2021). Given the heterogeneous backgrounds of SIEs, including both young graduates and those seeking employment abroad due to domestic unemployment, our findings imply that the career impact of international experience on job responsibility development may be less straightforward for SIEs than for more experienced AEs.

Limitations and direction for future research

Like other studies, our research has its limitations. First, like most expatriation research, our work relies on cross-sectional data. When the aim is to investigate

the causal effect of antecedents of outcomes, longitudinal research designs are better suited as the temporal order of the antecedents and outcome may be unclear in cross-sectional design studies. We call for more multi-source data and longitudinal designs in expatriate research. Second, all expatriates were university-level educated engineers and business professionals. The career benefits of expatriation may appear differently among people with less education. Further research among low-skilled expatriates is warranted (Haak-Saheem et al., 2020). Third, all expatriates were Finnish and different cultures value expatriation experiences differently (Andresen et al., 2020), which could have affected the findings. We can access little research on how the institutional context impacts the CS of expatriates (Andresen and the 5C consortium, 2020). In addition, the career situation may differ between those who continue their career internationally and those who repatriate. We thus need further research into those who re-expatriate (Ho et al., 2015).

In terms of specific avenues for future research, the intricate role of job fit in the relationship between career capital and CS for expatriates merits further scrutiny, thereby offering a more comprehensive view of the factors contributing to their career development. Furthermore, while job fit is a pivotal element in shaping an expatriate's CS, it is not the sole determinant. Person-environment fit theory introduces additional dimensions of fit, such as person-organisation and person-culture fit (Guan et al., 2021), and more recently person-skill fit (Chalutz-Ben Gal, 2023). Future research should, therefore, explore these nuanced dimensions to provide a more holistic understanding of the factors that contribute to expatriates' CS. Moreover, considering that organisations often fail to adequately plan the careers of AEs post-expatriation (Kraimer et al., 2009), future studies should investigate the role of career adaptability as a critical resource, particularly following significant incidents (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2020). This focus would add depth to our understanding of AEs, who generally exhibit less proactive career-oriented behaviour compared to SIEs (Andresen et al., 2020). In addition, our findings suggest the need for subsequent studies to investigate and compare the proactive career behaviours of both AEs and SIEs post-expatriation, to validate our initial observations on divergent career satisfaction and self-management strategies. Lastly, given the potential divergence in career paths between those continuing international careers and those who repatriate, additional investigations into re-expatriation scenarios are also warranted (Ho et al., 2015; Mello et al., 2023b).

Practical implications

Our findings offer several salient practical implications for both organisations and individuals. With regard to organisations, our data illuminate the critical role of job fit in expatriates' CS, emphasising the need for organisations to enhance their career management practices to find more suitable positions for repatriates (Dickmann & Doherty, 2010) or re-expatriates (Ho et al., 2018). Firstly, our research suggests that organisations would benefit from developing career structures that afford AEs a broader array of choices, thereby potentially augmenting their career satisfaction over the longer term. When it comes to SIEs, recruiters and HR managers should be attuned to the career growth and diverse international experiences of all types of expatriates when offering positions that align with their unique qualifications and aspirations. Additionally, organisations stand to gain from identifying and recruiting individuals who demonstrate high levels of career adaptability, particularly for roles that require international mobility and resilience.

For individuals, understanding their role in shaping their career paths is crucial. They are likely to be acutely aware that their proactive efforts in preparing for, and engaging in, international roles—both abroad and upon return—significantly affect their career trajectory. Therefore, aligning these roles with their accumulated career capital and broader professional aspirations is paramount for achieving both objective and subjective CS. This is particularly relevant for SIEs who may lack organisational support, but it also applies to AEs, as organisations frequently fail to provide adequate support to their expatriates (Kraimer et al., 2009).

These considerations extend to the need for a shift in focus from the predominantly short-term career implications of expatriation to its long-term impacts, a domain that remains largely underexplored.

CONCLUSION

The present study offers a significant and nuanced contribution to the existing body of research on expatriates' CS, particularly focusing on job responsibility development and career satisfaction in the post-expatriation context. By employing robust quantitative methodologies and examining a diverse sample of expatriate types, this work extends the applicability of person-environment fit theory and career construction theory within the complex landscape of expatriate careers.

Firstly, the study fills a critical gap in the literature by taking a holistic approach to CS, considering both its objective and subjective dimensions. It specifically accentuates the role of job fit as a decisive factor in expatriates' CS, a key insight for expatriates who accumulate significant career capital through international work experiences. Secondly, the research deepens the discourse on career adaptability, shedding light on its long-term implications for expatriates. It advances career construction theory by elucidating adaptability's nuanced role, especially its significance in shaping subjective CS, such as career satisfaction, after an expatriate returns home or embarks on another job abroad. Intriguingly, while the study shows that career adaptability has an indirect influence on objective CS through the mediating role of the expatriate type, it does not exert a direct effect. This nuanced finding invites a re-evaluation of current theoretical assumptions, particularly as it suggests that career adaptability differentially influences the career trajectories of AEs and SIEs, which could be influenced by their proactive career behaviour (Spurk et al., 2020). Finally, by providing a robust theoretical framework to differentiate between AEs and SIEs, the study challenges prevailing assumptions that tend to overlook or undervalue SIEs' CS. Our findings confirm that SIEs not only match AEs in objective CS but surpass them in subjective CS, particularly in career satisfaction.

In summary, our findings invite a reimagining of expatriation, valuing global experiences, and carving unique career paths in our interconnected world. This research serves as a cornerstone for a more nuanced understanding of expatriates' CS, revealing complex dynamics that are both theoretically enriching and empirically grounded.

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Career success of expatriates: the impacts of career capital, expatriate type, career type and career stage

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper investigates whether career capital (CC) development abroad, expatriate type, career type and career stage affect expatriates' career success in terms of perceived marketability and the number of promotions.

Design/methodology/approach – The study presents findings from a 2020 follow-up study among 327 expatriates, including assigned expatriates (AEs) (n = 117) and self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) (n = 220), who worked abroad in 2015 and 2016. Among that group, 186 had continued their international career, while 141 had repatriated. Structural equation modeling with robust maximum likelihood estimation was used to test this study's hypotheses. MPlus 8.6 software supported the analysis.

Findings – The study outlines that CC developed abroad positively impacts perceived marketability and the number of promotions. Second, repatriates reported a greater degree of perceived marketability than those continuing an international career. Career type did not predict the number of promotions. The expatriate type did not influence any of the career success measures. Finally, expatriates in their late-career stage did not achieve a similar level of career success as those in other career stages.

Research limitations/implications – All the expatriates were university-educated Finnish engineers and business professionals, and the career benefits of expatriation could differ for different sample groups. The study calls for more context-sensitive global careers research. The findings have positive implications for self-guided career actors considering working abroad. Organizations could focus more of their global talent attraction, management and career efforts on SIEs.

Originality/value – To analyze the impacts of these four antecedents on the career success of expatriates, the authors cooperated with two Finnish labor unions in 2020 to explore the careers of 327 expatriates, having surveyed the same group in 2015/2016. Such follow-up studies are not very common in expatriation research since it is difficult to keep track of expatriates who change locations and employers.

Keywords Career success, Perceived marketability, High-density global work, Assigned expatriates, Self-initiated expatriates, Career capital, Career type, Career stage

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Expatriate work is a form of high-density global work that offers extensive learning opportunities. That is because expatriates face cross-border transitions, need to adapt to different cultural and institutional environments and deal with non-work disruptions caused

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by their international movements that impact their personal lives (Shaffer *et al.*, 2012). The high density of expatriate work is often also due to increased task challenges (e.g. a wide variety of tasks and high-level organizational positions) and greater autonomy (Mello *et al.*, 2023). Due to the developmental opportunities and challenging work experiences that expatriation offers (Kraimer *et al.*, 2022), expatriates feel capable of taking on more demanding jobs and have high career expectations (Dowling *et al.*, 2013). In turn, they may not always have the career they expected after expatriation (Suutari and Brewster, 2003). There has been growing interest in understanding the career impacts of expatriation and also the antecedents of expatriate career success (Suutari *et al.*, 2018b).

Career success is “the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in time in a person’s work experiences over time” (Arthur *et al.*, 2005, p. 179). It is typically divided into objective and subjective career success (Spurk *et al.*, 2019). The focus of the present study is perceived marketability as a measure of subjective career success and the number of promotions as a measure of objective career success. Perceived marketability is defined as an individual’s belief that they are valuable to their current employer (perceived internal marketability or PIM) and/or to another employer (perceived external marketability or PEM) (Eby *et al.*, 2003). Promotion is defined as “any increase in level and/or any significant increase in job responsibilities or job scope” individuals receive throughout their careers (see Ng *et al.*, 2005). Regarding expatriates’ career success, the nature of high-density global work ties into contemporary career theories, such as boundaryless and protean career theory (Baruch and Sullivan, 2022). These theories emphasize self-career management, where individuals capitalize on career transitions by acquiring career competencies instead of being hindered by inherent instability (Shaffer *et al.*, 2012). Essentially, acknowledging the influence of these contemporary career landscapes when defining objective and subjective career success entails a shift in focus. It moves away from external, organization-defined success measures towards internal, individual-centric success measures (Baruch and Sullivan, 2022). This transition underlines the importance of personal values, goals and psychological fulfillment in evaluating career success.

Expatriate career success following working abroad is a controversial topic. Both positive (e.g. Ramaswami *et al.*, 2016) and negative (e.g. Benson and Pattie, 2008) career outcomes have been reported. That divergence emphasizes the importance of understanding the antecedents of career success. In addition, career impacts may vary due to contextual factors, which merit further attention in expatriation research (Andresen *et al.*, 2020a). The present study identifies four important antecedents in the context of expatriation that warrant further attention: Career capital (CC) developed abroad, expatriate type, career type and the career stage of expatriates. They are outlined below.

First, CC theory, rooted in the concept of intelligent career theory (Arthur *et al.*, 1995), defines career capital as a “stock” of competencies valued within the career field (Inkson and Arthur, 2001; Bourdieu, 2011). This “stock” represents an investment that individuals make in their careers through different “ways of knowing”. These “ways of knowing” are considered the “forms or currencies” of CC (Inkson and Arthur, 2001, p. 51), contributing to the development of “intelligent careers” (Arthur *et al.*, 1995, p. 19). CC development has been suggested to impact career success as the greater the stock of CC, the greater the probability of career success in today’s turbulent career environment (Guan *et al.*, 2019). Although companies may not always recognize or value CC developed abroad (Ren *et al.*, 2013), it can be connected to career success as expatriates may benefit from their developed competencies in their future jobs. CC theory is built on the intelligent career model (Arthur *et al.*, 1995; Parker *et al.*, 2009; Brown *et al.*, 2020) has been described as a hybrid theory (Spurk *et al.*, 2019) incorporating several aspects of different career theories. Those include boundaryless career theory (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996) and protean career theory (De Vos and Soens, 2008).

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CC theory underlines individuals' role in managing the development and success of their careers (Sullivan and Baruch, 2009; Baruch and Sullivan, 2022; Shaffer *et al.*, 2012). While a body of research has addressed the development of CC (e.g. Dickmann *et al.*, 2018a, b; Jokinen *et al.*, 2008), the impact of the developed CC on career success among expatriates has not been sufficiently explored (Mäkelä *et al.*, 2016).

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Second, it has been argued that expatriate type may impact career patterns and career success (Andresen and Biemann, 2013). Traditionally, the focus has been on assigned expatriates (AEs) who have been sent abroad by their employer (Bolino, 2007) and are therefore supported by that employer during expatriation (Andresen *et al.*, 2014). However, more recently, scholars have directed attention to self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) as a separate expatriate type who have searched for a job abroad on their own initiative (Cerdin and Selmer, 2014). An SIE will typically lack organizational career support (Andresen *et al.*, 2020c) and may thus be more vulnerable during career transitions. Such differences may have career consequences for expatriates (Brewster *et al.*, 2021). Taking up a call for more research, we analyze the impact of the expatriate type on career success (Suutari *et al.*, 2018b).

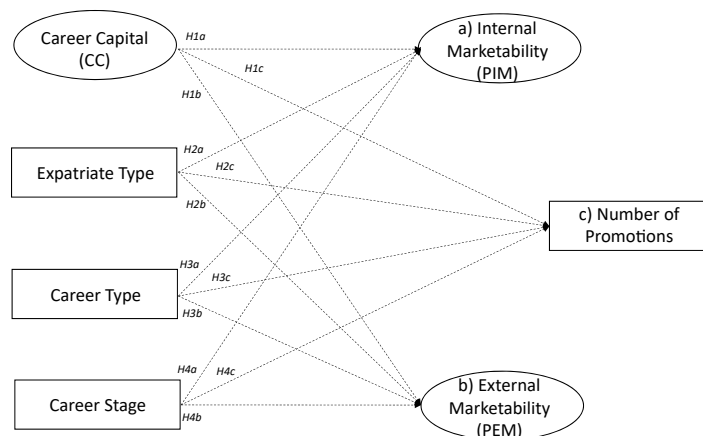
Third, we analyze the impact on their career success of whether expatriates repatriate back to their home country or continue their international career in the longer term (Biemann and Braakmann, 2013; Benson and Pattie, 2008). Person-environment fit theory (Bretz *et al.*, 1994) highlights the importance of a fit between job demands and the CC of an individual. Expatriates should benefit from their CC when that fits with the requirements of their next job(s) (Dickmann and Doherty, 2008). Career success is influenced by context (Eggenhofer-Rehart *et al.*, 2018; Spurk *et al.*, 2019); thus, repatriates and those continuing their international careers may differ in the extent of fit. Evidence remains limited, and more research is called for on career success among those who repatriate (Chiang *et al.*, 2018) and those who continue their international career (Suutari *et al.*, 2018b).

Fourth, individual contextual factors, such as the career stage of individuals, are important when trying to understand the career impacts of expatriation. According to the life span theory (Super, 1957), a career is an ongoing life process of constant development during career stages (McMahon and Patton, 2018). Career movements at different career stages seem to influence competency development and career outcomes (Zacher and Froidevaux, 2021). We include the career stage antecedent in this study because it is important to career success (Spurk *et al.*, 2019) but has not been studied much in the international career context.

To analyze the impacts of these four antecedents on the career success of expatriates, we cooperated with two Finnish labor unions in 2020 to explore the careers of 327 expatriates, having surveyed the same group in 2015/2016. Such follow-up studies are not very common in expatriation research since it is difficult to keep track of expatriates who change locations and employers. The present study contributes to understanding expatriate career success in several respects. First, while there have been several studies on CC, the present article provides new evidence on the impact of such development on expatriates' career success. Second, our study provides new comparative evidence on the career success of AEs and SIEs. Third, we can add much-needed evidence on those expatriates who continue their careers abroad, as earlier studies on career success have been carried out mostly among repatriated employees. Finally, we contribute by adding the angle of different career stages to the career success research among expatriates.

2. Conceptual framework and hypothesis development

Figure 1 illustrates our conceptual framework, depicting the suggested antecedents (CC developed abroad, expatriate type, career type and career stage) of expatriates' PIM, PEM and the number of promotions they have had. These relationships are explained in more detail in the following sections.

The impacts of
career capital

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Figure 1.
Conceptual framework

2.1 Expatriate career success

The career outcomes of expatriation are increasingly of interest to scholars. However, the evidence is still quite limited overall and focuses on AEs who have repatriated. In contrast, findings on the career success of SIEs and those who continue their international careers remain limited (Suutari *et al.*, 2018b). The findings are also quite controversial (Mello *et al.*, 2023).

Scholars define objective career success as factors everyone can observe and measure (e.g. number of promotions), while subjective career success is a perceived perspective of career success in which individuals evaluate the experience of achieving career outcomes that are meaningful to them personally (e.g. perceived marketability) (Spurk *et al.*, 2019). As outlined earlier, we adopt the concept of perceived marketability as a measure of subjective career success and the number of promotions as a measure of objective career success. In the next section, we introduce the four antecedents of career success analyzed.

2.2 Antecedents of expatriate career success

In light of the high-density nature of expatriate work, we have adopted several antecedents relevant to research on expatriate careers. Two of those antecedents (CC developed abroad and career stage) have been studied in domestic settings (Spurk *et al.*, 2019) but not in the context of international career research, while others are specific to the international career context (expatriate type and job location).

2.2.1 Career capital development. Expatriates are in a heightened state of learning owing to the high-density nature of their work, and their transitions across borders present associated learning opportunities. Researchers have recently used the CC Theory (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994; Parket *et al.*, 2009) to understand what expatriates learn abroad through a competency development framework (e.g. Dickmann *et al.*, 2018a, b; Jokinen, 2010; Mäkelä *et al.*, 2016; Shaffer *et al.*, 2012). This theoretical framework refers to a “stock” of competencies valued within the career field (Inkson and Arthur, 2001; Bourdieu, 2011). It assumes that people invest in their careers through different “ways of knowing,” viewed as the “forms, or currencies, of career capital” (Inkson and Arthur, 2001, p. 51) from which “intelligent careers are made” (Arthur *et al.*, 1995, p. 19). The theory refers to the CC framework, where knowing-how, knowing-whom and knowing-why are designed to be universally applicable across various career contexts (Baruch and Sullivan, 2022).

First, knowing-how refers to human and cultural capital, equipping an individual with the necessary work-related skills, knowledge and understanding to excel in their role (DeFillippi

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and Arthur, 1994). Second, knowing-whom or social capital, refers to professional relationships and reputations both within and beyond our professional lives (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994). Finally, knowing-why refers to individual motivation and personal meaning, providing the individual with a sense of purpose, identity and drive in their work (Arthur *et al.*, 1995).

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As expatriates typically develop CC abroad (Shaffer *et al.*, 2012), it is not surprising that they often have high expectations of their future career success (Suutari and Brewster, 2003) and a strong belief in their marketability (Mäkelä *et al.*, 2016). We can also expect that the greater the CC developed abroad, the greater the perception of marketability. Despite this, expatriates may be disappointed by the nature of the jobs they are offered in their next career stages, as employers may not recognize the knowledge and competencies developed internationally (Ellis *et al.*, 2020). While not all expatriates experience positive career outcomes in terms of promotions following expatriation, expatriates who accumulate more CC abroad should have greater career success in the longer term than those who accumulate less CC.

Although CC developed abroad has received some attention, it has rarely been used to understand the consequences of accumulated competencies in the longer term (Dickmann *et al.*, 2016). The evidence is limited, but Mäkelä *et al.* (2016) report in the case of AEs that particularly knowing-how CC is connected with perceived marketability after working abroad. No quantitative empirical studies have analyzed the impact of CC on the number of promotions among expatriates. CC theory would indicate that development abroad can lead to greater perceived marketability and more promotions in the future. Based on the CC framework and the arguments presented above, we propose the following hypothesis:

- H1. CC developed abroad is positively related to expatriates' (a) PIM, (b) PEM and (c) the number of promotions.

2.2.2 Expatriate type: AEs and SIEs. Both AEs and SIEs have international careers, but the logic of career trajectories differs to some extent between the two types (Andresen and Biemann, 2013). As SIEs search for their job abroad alone, their foreign sojourn implies moving between organizations simultaneously with physical transitions across national borders. In contrast, AEs are sent abroad by their employer; thus, while they move across borders, they normally stay with the same employer both when going abroad and when repatriating. This difference leads to essential variations in career patterns. An SIE would not usually have the same level of support as an AE, who is more likely to have access to a repatriation program, for example (Andresen *et al.*, 2014; Ho *et al.*, 2016) and benefits derived from internal connections within the company.

Furthermore, when AEs are sent abroad, the costs of doing so are normally so high that they are typically used in demanding professional and managerial jobs. In contrast, an SIE's search for a top job can be impeded by a lack of social connections in the host country (Andresen *et al.*, 2020b, c), and SIEs might have periods of underemployment, which adversely affect their career progress (Chwialkowska, 2020). An SIE may hold a lower hierarchical position (Koveshnikov *et al.*, 2022) and have less-challenging responsibilities than an AE (Suutari and Brewster, 2000). It is also more common for AEs to work for large MNCs than it is for SIEs to do so (Andresen *et al.*, 2015); SIEs are more likely to work for smaller local companies offering fewer career opportunities. The situation may spur SIEs to seek new employment opportunities more often than AEs do. Overall, when looking for new career options, SIEs tend to have more job and organizational transitions than AEs, both while they are abroad and upon returning home (Biemann and Andresen, 2010). Finally, SIEs also tend to stay abroad longer, while AEs typically have fixed-term contracts with an expectation of a return after a few years (Koveshnikov *et al.*, 2022). Due to their extended stay abroad and the starting point of leaving the employer in the home country, SIEs' connections back to their home country are weaker than those of AEs (Suutari *et al.*, 2018a). Consequently,

integration into the home country's job markets can be more challenging for SIEs if they repatriate (Begley *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, it is more likely that AEs perceive themselves to be more marketable than SIEs.

Similarly, because AEs have more demanding jobs abroad, their future promotion opportunities should benefit from those experiences. In contrast, SIEs often struggle to find suitable roles during career transitions (Andresen *et al.*, 2014). Expatriation may offer better promotion opportunities for AEs, as many MNCs expect their employees to have an international experience before progressing to more senior positions in the company. A multinational might then use expatriation as one element in their talent development programs (Suutari *et al.*, 2018b). In light of these arguments, we form the following hypothesis:

- H2. People who gained international work experience as an AE will have a greater (a) PIM, (b) PEM and (c) number of promotions than people who gained international work experience as an SIE.

2.2.3 Career type: longer-term expatriates and repatriates. Career trajectories and career success are also strongly constrained by structural factors such as job market realities (Guan *et al.*, 2019). If expatriates are to have successful career trajectories that involve crossing borders, they must find a fit between their CC and their employer's demands (Dickmann and Doherty, 2008). Person-environment fit theory emphasizes such fit, which refers to the environmental conditions that can facilitate or hinder the use of resources such as CC that will impact performance and outcomes (Bretz *et al.*, 1994). The theory addresses how the interplay between individuals' characteristics and those of the environment affects career success (Spurk *et al.*, 2019). Having had high-density jobs abroad, expatriates may struggle to find jobs that offer a good fit with their accumulated CC. Person-environment fit theory could thus help understand why some expatriates have more successful careers than others.

We have more evidence on the careers of those who have repatriated than those who continue building longer-term global careers either by continuing as expatriates in the same country or by re-expatriating elsewhere (Suutari *et al.*, 2018b). However, there is increasing interest in longer-term global careers following reports that around 40–70% of expatriates have undertaken several assignments abroad (Jokinen *et al.*, 2008; Cerdin and Pargneux, 2010). Accordingly, further research into the careers of global workers who continue to be employed abroad longer term would be welcome (Dickmann *et al.*, 2018a).

Fit theory would suggest expatriates achieve a better fit if they continue in international job markets where they can leverage their international CC when it is highly valued by international recruiters. Firms do not always manage the careers of repatriates well (Valk *et al.*, 2015) and those repatriating can find it hard to optimize their CC (Doherty and Dickmann, 2009). That sub-optimal career progression can mean experienced international workers find integration back into their home-country job market challenging (Begley *et al.*, 2008). An outcome is that repatriates' perceptions of their marketability can be expected to decrease after repatriation. In turn, as CC is, to some extent, context-specific, the opportunity to use such capital may also be greater if a person continues to work abroad (Jokinen, 2010). Therefore, we expected that such better fit would result in a higher perceived marketability among those who continue their international careers than among repatriates.

In addition to the extent to which expatriates' CC may be valued by employers, a good match between job requirements and their CC is likely to positively influence expatriates' performance, which should strengthen their claims for promotion (Suutari and Brewster, 2003; Jokinen *et al.*, 2008). Nevertheless, repatriates have often been disappointed in the number of promotions offered and thus in their career progress (Chiang *et al.*, 2018). Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

- H3. Repatriates have a lower degree of (a) PIM, (b) PEM and (c) number of promotions than those who continue their international career

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2.2.4 Expatriate's career stage. The career stage of individuals has been discussed as an essential factor in the career success of employees in general (Spurk *et al.*, 2019), but the topic has received little attention in international career research. Zacher and Froidevaux (2021) suggest that the career stage is associated with both personal and contextual characteristics, which may, in turn, jointly impact career outcomes. Consequently, life span theory relates the career to an ongoing life process of constant development during career stages (McMahon and Patton, 2018).

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Expatriates' CC varies in different stages of their careers (Demerouti *et al.*, 2012). In the early-career stage, their CC is often not yet extensive (Upadyaya and Salmela-Aro, 2017) and expatriate workers are still building their careers to target more demanding jobs at higher organizational levels. Therefore, high-density global work may extensively boost their CC by offering learning opportunities unavailable in the home country. New career opportunities can emerge following such developmental experiences, and there is evidence that expatriates who have their first expatriation earlier in their careers perceive they have greater PIM (Mäkelä *et al.*, 2016). In the mid-career stage, expatriates usually have a substantial level of CC and have achieved some stability in their careers (Super, 1957). Overall, such expatriates may value greater stability and work-life balance in their careers (De Vos *et al.*, 2020).

However, expatriates at the mid-career stage may still also be concerned with opportunities to develop new competencies (Phillips *et al.*, 2002). Those competencies can speed their advance to top positions (Salmela-Aro and Upadyaya, 2017) or at least maintain good performance to secure their role. This group of individuals represents a very attractive employment pool for employers owing to their experience and advanced level of CC. Finally, individuals in the late-career stage normally have a high level of CC (Roberts *et al.*, 2006) that can be expected to positively affect career success. However, it may also be that a new expatriation has little impact on their CC. In that stage, expatriates may also face age discrimination (Benson and Pattie, 2008), which can be detrimental to their career. Many employers are interested in recruiting individuals in the early or mid-career stages because they potentially have a long career with the organization (Riach and Rich, 2010). In some societies, there is also a belief that older people may not have as much drive to succeed as their younger colleagues (Kooij *et al.*, 2008). Consequently, we might expect expatriates in the late-career stage to derive less benefit from their expatriate experience in terms of promotions than those in earlier career stages.

While previous research has not included career stage as an antecedent of expatriates' career success in the longer term, it has been reported that as AEs get older, they receive fewer job offers (Benson and Pattie, 2008). Being at a more advanced career stage also appears to weaken the perceived employability of SIEs (Makkonen, 2015). Therefore, with increasing career maturity, mobility across borders may become more challenging due to fewer employment and job options. It can be expected that perceived marketability decreases when reaching the late-career stage.

An advanced career stage has been found to decrease the home-country perceived marketability of AEs (Mäkelä *et al.*, 2016). We expect expatriates' international work experience at different career stages to influence their views on their perceived marketability and the number of promotions achieved in the longer term. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

- H4. The career stage of expatriates will influence the (a) PIM, (b) PIM and (c) number of promotions of expatriates.

3. Method

3.1 Sample

The data were collected through an internet survey involving expatriate members of two Finnish trade unions: *The Business School Graduates* and *Academic Engineers and Architects in*

Finland TEK. All graduates in these fields can join a trade union. Typically, members also subscribe to the union's unemployment fund; however, it is also possible to be a member without subscribing to that fund (e.g. entrepreneurs with a business degree have their own activity group within the union). The unions offer many services, including career guidance, various training events and other social networking activities and other member benefits (e.g. insurance, journals, etc.). Union memberships are attractive to individuals and members tend to remain association members, even after changing jobs, including when they become self-employed or work overseas. Since union membership figures in Nordic countries are high, this sample is likely to be representative of Finnish graduates working abroad in these fields.

The two unions were able to identify and follow up with individuals working abroad in 2015 and 2016, and we sent them a follow-up questionnaire in 2020. This is an important benefit of administering surveys in cooperation with unions since other sources (e.g. employers and websites) can struggle to contact respondents who have left their employer or changed countries. It is unlikely that any other source would facilitate the collection of such a representative database and would, in 2020, be able to provide the contact information of those who were expatriates—whether AEs or SIEs—in 2015 and 2016 and information on whether they then worked abroad or had repatriated. [Table 1](#) provides more details about the sample.

The survey was circulated to 422 individuals. After reminders, 219 survey responses were returned (51.90%). We made an additional open call to members who had worked abroad in 2015 and 2016 through the online communication channel of the union to expand the dataset. We also checked that there was no difference in the career success of expatriates of the subsamples (i.e. the follow-up sample and the open-call sample). The extension effort led to 108 further responses. Ultimately, we obtained 327 responses from 117 AEs and 210 SIEs.

3.2 Measures

The present study relies on validated multi-item scales. To address concerns over common method variance, we first divided the questionnaire sections when entering scales for predictors and outcomes. Furthermore, we guaranteed respondents anonymity and encouraged them to be as honest and spontaneous as possible when replying ([Podsakoff et al., 2003](#)).

Sample description (N = 327)

Gender	Male	62.08%
	Female	37.00%
Educational background	Business field	43.12%
	Engineering field	56.88%
Expatriate type	AEs	64.22%
	SIEs	35.78%
Career type	Long-term expatriates	57.19%
	Repatriates	42.81%
Function	Accounting and finance	19.88%
	Marketing and sales	17.43%
	R&D	15.29%
	General administration	14.68%
	Technical functions	10.70%
	IT and data processing	7.65%
	Other	14.37%
Age in years (mean/SD)		46.3/10.32
Organizational position (mean/SD)*		6.7/1.83
Number of expatriations (mean/SD)		1.9/1.54

Note(s): *Scale from 1 (lowest level) to 10 (highest level)

Table 1.
Sample description

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3.2.1 Dependent variables. Perceived marketability is often divided into internal (PIM) and external (PEM) dimensions (Eby *et al.*, 2003). We, therefore, adapted two scales to suit the expatriation context. First, PIM was measured with three items (sample item: “After working abroad [in 2015/16], there were many opportunities available for me in my company”). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was 0.776. Second, the PEM was also measured by three items (sample item: “After working abroad [in 2015/16], I obtained/could have easily obtained a comparable job with another employer”). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was 0.809.

To assess the number of promotions, we asked expatriates to share how many promotions they had achieved since the previous survey in 2015/2016. The number of promotions is a typical way to assess the objective career success of expatriates (Kraimer *et al.*, 2009; Breitenmoser *et al.*, 2018).

3.2.2 Independent variables. We used the *CC scale* to measure CC development (Dickmann *et al.*, 2018a, b). The participants were asked: “To what extent did your international work experience (2015/16) develop the following abilities?” A 7-point Likert scale anchored with *did not improve/increase at all* (1) and *improved/increased very much* (7) measured all items. CC was operationalized as a multidimensional scale with three dimensions—knowing-how, knowing-whom and knowing-why CC—as subfactors of CC. The three ways of knowing are related and complement each other (Inkson and Arthur, 2001). The scale consists of 28 items measuring expatriates’ development of CC while working abroad (see Dickmann *et al.*, 2018a, b for the items). Cronbach’s alpha was 0.947.

Our survey asked the respondents whether they had been sent abroad by their employer or had sought a job abroad on their own initiative. Those who had been sent abroad were the AE expatriate type and coded zero, while the others were designated the SIE type and coded one.

We identified career type by asking whether the respondents were still working abroad or whether they had been repatriated. Repatriates were coded as 0 and those who had continued their international careers as 1.

In the career field, major life spans and developmental models associate an age frame with each career stage (Zacher and Froidevaux, 2021; Super, 1980) and most scholars have adopted an age category as the basis for career stages (Dutta *et al.*, 2021). Age category has been considered a valid indicator of career stage (Dutta *et al.*, 2021; Salmela-Aro and Upadyaya, 2017) due to the effect of age on individual personality (Caspi *et al.*, 2005), the meaning of work (Kooij *et al.*, 2011), job attitudes (Ng and Feldman, 2010) and behaviors (Ng and Feldman, 2008). Therefore, we followed the operationalization by Salmela-Aro and Upadyaya (2017), similarly to Dutta *et al.* (2021) and coded career stage as early-career stage 0 = under 35 years old; mid-career stage 1 = 35–49 years old; late-career stage 2 = 50 years old and above. The career stage was dummy-coded for the analysis, with the early-career stage as a reference group.

3.2.3 Control variables. We controlled for gender because studies show gender impacts the career success of expatriates. For instance, female managers are less satisfied with their careers after expatriation than their male counterparts (Ren *et al.*, 2013): Men were coded with zero and women with one. As we had expatriates representing two unions from different fields (expatriates with an educational background in business or engineering). We controlled for the impact of that by coding those with a business education *zero* and those with an engineering education *one*. In addition, it has been reported that the more transitions expatriates experience abroad, the more pronounced is the influence of expatriation on their career success (Shaffer *et al.*, 2012; Kraimer *et al.*, 2009). Therefore, we control for the number of expatriation assignments. Finally, we controlled for the hierarchical position of expatriates, as that has been reported to be relevant to expatriates’ career success (Cavazotte *et al.*, 2021; Wurtz, 2022; Tornikoski, 2011; Suutari and Brewster, 2003). Following Mäkelä *et al.* (2022), we asked respondents to rank their current position in their organization on a scale of one to 10 (a continuous variable), with ten representing the highest level, five or six a medium level and one the lowest level.

4. Results

4.1 Preliminary analysis

We first performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to check if the model fit the data. The standard suggestions (e.g. Hu and Bentler, 1999) are that the model fit is acceptable when comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.90/.95, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.90/.95, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) <0.06/.08 and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) <0.08. Due to a negative disturbance variance, we constrained the disturbance of knowing-how to 0.001. Similarly, we constrained the disturbance of the knowing-why subfactor, self-knowledge, to 0.001. The fit indices of the CFA with chi-square (X^2) = 838.29, degree of freedom (df) = 479, $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.06 and SRMR = 0.08 indicate an acceptable fit. We also tested for common method bias (CMB) using the common latent factor (CLF) method. The model comparison showed no CMB-related issue, as the zero models did not differ from the unconstrained model ($p > 0.05$). Most of the factor loadings related to the CMB factor were also non-significant.

4.2 Hypotheses testing

To test the hypotheses, we used structural equation modeling (SEM) with robust maximum likelihood (MLR) estimation. We used the MPlus 8.6 software (Muthén and Muthén, 1998-2017). We applied full information maximum likelihood to account for missing information. The results of the SEM are presented in Figure 2.

Using MLR estimation showed acceptable fit indices for the estimated model ($X^2 = 1377.79$, $df = 749$, $p < 0.001$, CFI = 0.90, TLI = 0.89, RMSEA = 0.05 and SRMR = 0.06). The educational background of expatriates was a significant predictor of PIM ($\beta = -0.152$, $p < 0.05$). The results indicate that respondents from the engineering field perceive they have a greater degree of PIM than those from the business field. Furthermore, the organizational position was a significant predictor of PIM ($\beta = 0.248$, $p < 0.01$), PEM ($\beta = 0.235$, $p < 0.01$), as was the number of promotions ($\beta = 0.141$, $p < 0.05$). A higher organizational position leads to greater PIM, PEM and to more promotions. The other controls were not significant.

Hypothesis 1 proposed that CC developed abroad would positively relate to expatriates' (a) PIM, (b) PEM and (c) the number of promotions. The results in Figure 2 clearly show that the development of CC is positively related to expatriates' (a) PIM ($\beta = 0.364$, $p < 0.001$), (b) PEM ($\beta = 0.205$, $p < 0.01$) and (c) the number of promotions ($\beta = 0.141$, $p < 0.05$). The data therefore support Hypotheses 1a, 1b and 1c.

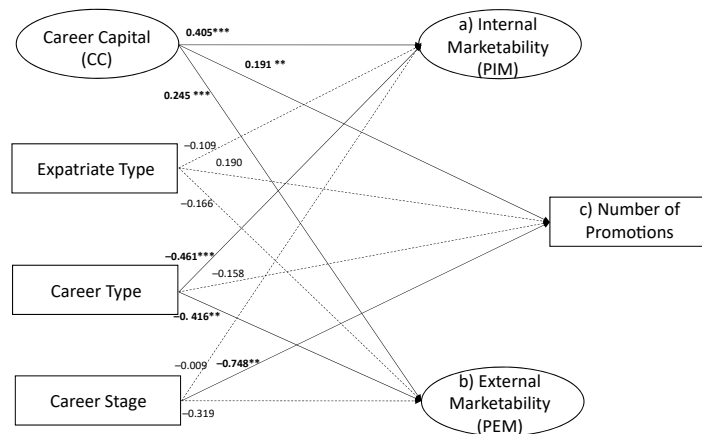


Figure 2.
Results of SEM

[Hypothesis 2](#) proposed that people who had acquired international work experience as an AE would have a greater (a) PIM, (b) PEM and (c) number of promotions than people whose international work experience stemmed from being an SIE. None of the above relationships was significant [1]. Therefore, the data do not support Hypotheses 2a, 2b and 2c.

[Hypothesis 3](#) proposed that expatriates who repatriate would have a lower (a) PIM, (b) PEM and (c) number of promotions than expatriates who continue working in international job markets. Surprisingly, the results show that repatriates perceived they had a higher degree of (a) PIM ($\beta = -0.194, p < 0.01$) and (b) PEM ($\beta = -0.210, p < 0.01$) than expatriates who had continued working in international job markets. However, career type did not predict the number of promotions. As the findings were not in line with the hypothesis, the data do not support the hypothesis.

Finally, we predicted that the career stage of expatriates would influence (a) PIM, (b) PEM and (c) their number of promotions. Using the early-career stage as a reference group, the results show that career stage is not relevant for PIM and PEM. However, the data show that expatriates in the late-career stage ($\beta = -0.417, p < 0.001$) have fewer promotions (0.417) than expatriates in the early-career stage. The results do not show a significant difference between the early and mid-career stages regarding promotions, PIM and PEM. To compare the late and mid-career stages, we changed the reference group from the early to the mid-career stage. We found that expatriates in the late-career stage have fewer promotions ($\beta = -0.306, p < 0.001$) and lower PEM ($\beta = -0.340, p < 0.001$) than expatriates in the mid-career stage. These findings indicate that the career stage is connected with the number of promotions and PEM, which indicates Hypotheses 4b and 4c are supported, while [Hypothesis 4a](#) is not.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The goal of the present study was to investigate whether CC developed abroad, expatriate type (AEs and SIEs), career type (longer-term expatriates vs repatriates) and career stage impact perceived marketability and the number of promotions among expatriates. We aimed to extend the literature by applying a set of important antecedents and related theories that are important in the context of high-density global work and have been underutilized in international career research ([Mello et al., 2023](#)).

Our results indicated that CC developed abroad is indeed connected with PIM, PEM and the number of promotions expatriates achieve, as CC theory would predict. Competency development should lead to future career success ([Ramaswami et al., 2016](#)). Previous studies report that repatriates are often disappointed about their career outcomes when companies do not recognize or value the CC they developed abroad ([Begley et al., 2008](#); [Valk et al., 2015](#)). Such experiences would naturally be reflected in their perceptions of their marketability and affect the number of promotions awarded. Our findings challenge this rather negative overall view by providing more positive data for Finnish expatriates as the extent of CC developed abroad is connected with career outcomes. At the same time, it emphasizes that all expatriate jobs and overall expatriation experiences are not similar and thus CC development abroad varies from case to case.

Second, there has been discussion in the literature that SIEs might have less career success after their expatriation than AEs because they are less likely to benefit from organizational career management support ([Tharenou, 2013](#)). An SIE might also have fewer opportunities to acquire transferable capabilities and build networks that could benefit their career ([Mäkelä and Suutari, 2013](#)). The consequences for SIEs could involve enduring high risk, uncertainty and insecurity ([Richardson and Mallon, 2005](#)). The scarcity of available comparative studies between these groups means research evidence is very limited. Our data show that PIM, PEM and the number of promotions were equally pronounced in both groups, a finding in line with observations by [Suutari et al. \(2018b\)](#) in the context of an even longer-term career follow-up.

This raises an important question: Could it be that the literature overemphasizes the limits on the career success of SIEs? As the numbers of SIEs and self-initiated repatriates increase (Andresen *et al.*, 2013), employers are working more frequently with such people and might have begun to value their experience more than previously assessed (Collings *et al.*, 2011). As an outcome of having such positive career experiences, SIEs' perceptions of their marketability could have strengthened. Similarly, their chances of being promoted would have improved if their experiences were more highly valued. This change would be good news for people interested in working in different cultures who are sufficiently motivated to forge their own career paths in this highly internationally interconnected world.

Third, contrary to expectations, the results show that repatriates perceive a higher degree of PIM and PEM than those who continue working abroad, while there was no difference with regard to the number of promotions between the two groups. The results here prompt the question of why repatriates were more optimistic about their market value than those who continued living abroad, despite possible repatriation challenges (Chiang *et al.*, 2018), especially given that no such difference was observed in the number of promotions. One interpretation is that after expatriates have found repatriation jobs, they feel more certain about their perceived future marketability at home than those who continue to work abroad. Indeed, it might be that once repatriates have secured their first job back in their home country, they notice that their domestic and overseas experience is valued more strongly (Begley *et al.*, 2008). Consequently, their perceptions of their marketability may strengthen over time. In addition, the international business environment may be perceived as an uncertain career environment. Experienced global careerists, who often work on fixed-term contracts, have reported frequently being concerned about their next career move (Suutari *et al.*, 2012). The uncertainty can persuade some expatriates to frequently consider employment opportunities beyond their current employer and across countries. Concern about the next career move—including the decision to stay abroad or return to the home country—might override an expatriate's optimism concerning their perceived marketability. Overall, the actual considerations, processes and drivers of such perceived marketability considerations merit further exploration. The finding may also be somewhat related to the specific context of the (Finnish) labor market in which foreign work experience may be particularly highly rated (cf. Andresen *et al.*, 2022).

Finally, our findings signaled differences in PEM and the number of promotions across the career stages. First, we found that expatriates in the late-career stage have fewer promotions than expatriates in the early-career stage. Second, we found that expatriates in the late-career stage had fewer promotions and lower PEM than those in the mid-career stage. These findings provide evidence of the relevance of the career stage as an antecedent in expatriation research. In turn, no differences were identified with regard to PIM. Our findings on differences across career stages might be related to older people hitting a career plateau and the reduced availability of promotions at higher hierarchical levels (Smith-Ruig, 2009). Employees at this stage are also less interested in putting in discretionary effort to achieve career progress, as many of them are already in a position that matches their expectations (Flaherty and Pappas, 2002). The most experienced expatriates in the late-career stage may thus look for other issues, such as securing a better work-life balance (Salmela-Aro and Upadyaya, 2017) or career stability (Super, 1957) instead of career progress. In contrast, the focus is more on performance and on working for promotion during the mid-career stage, and individuals have a higher level of CC than people at an early-career stage. These differences may distinguish PEM and promotions during different career stages.

Like all research, our study has some limitations. First, all expatriates were university-level educated engineers and business professionals. Expatriate employees with a lower level of formal education or who have different career competencies and expectations might not see the same career benefits from expatriation. While it is common that expatriate research

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focuses on such elites, future research among less-educated expatriates and perhaps low-skilled expatriates would be welcome (Haak-Saheem *et al.*, 2019). Second, all expatriates were Finnish. While they had acquired overseas working experience in various countries, different cultures might value international work experiences differently (Andresen *et al.*, 2020a), which might influence the results. Finland is a small society that depends on international trade; accordingly, international experience may be valued more highly there than in some other cultures. Overall, there is insufficient research on how the institutional context impacts the career success of expatriates in relation to both the home-country and host-country experiences of the expatriate. With regard to career stages, we used an age-based operationalization of career stages, an approach that might have limitations stemming from there being elements other than age involved with career-stage thinking. Theories such as Levinson's life stage developmental model (Levinson, 1986) and Super's lifespan model (Super, 1980) consider adult lives as a progression of stages influenced by age but also incorporate the individuals' degree of development in terms of performance and learning that might be more pronounced in particular career phases (Nagy *et al.*, 2019; Kraimer *et al.*, 2019) as individuals of the same age may be at different career stages (Aryee *et al.*, 1994; Kooiji *et al.*, 2008). Future studies might therefore explore other measures of career stages besides age-based measures.

Similarly, we need further research on the career success of global careerists because the nature of their careers and their career outcomes can differ from those of people with largely domestic careers (Dickmann *et al.*, 2018a, b). Concerning the different types of expatriates, AEs and SIEs, the field would benefit from more comparative and larger-scale quantitative studies. The available evidence, particularly that for SIEs, comes from small-scale qualitative studies. Such studies may also have focused on particular types of SIE, such as academics (Selmer and Lauring, 2011) or nurses (González *et al.*, 2021). The research stream would benefit from greater awareness of the context in which we study career success to avoid inaccurate interpretations (Andresen *et al.*, 2020a).

Our research has a range of practical implications. Individuals would benefit from understanding the career implications of working abroad. While the literature often discusses that companies do not recognize the CC developed abroad (Chiang *et al.*, 2018), our findings indicate that such development is connected with CS in the long run. This finding should encourage individual to expatriate as jobs abroad are typically found to be more developmental than previous jobs individuals have had and that they have opportunity to transfer their CC into the next country (Oleškevičiūtė *et al.*, 2022). In fact, many modern career theories stress the development of various aspects – including those that are represented within CC – but may underplay the need for CC transfer and the need for sensitivity to various time horizons (Oleškevičiūtė *et al.*, 2022; Mayrhofer and Gunz, 2023). As the career impacts of expatriates are similar to AEs and SIEs, the findings also indicate that if such opportunities are not available within company individuals could get the same career benefits by self-initiating their expatriation. If expatriating with career benefits in mind, the recommendation would be to expatriate at earlier career stage than in later stages. More comprehensive insight into the contextual levers that impact their career success could inform decisions on whether to seek work abroad as an AE or SIE and also whether to repatriate or continue working abroad. While such decisions are obviously complex and driven by various factors, our research illuminates promotion and perceived marketability aspects hitherto neglected.

In the light of our findings, the competency development of expatriates can be seen as an organizational asset that helps to achieve organizational goals (Harzing, 2001). Both SIEs and AEs constitute a workforce that should be considered when MNCs need to respond to the drivers of global mobility, such as leadership development programs, transferability of knowledge and filling competency gaps and control and coordination (Collings and Scullion, 2012; Collings and Sheeran, 2020). Our study presents evidence that CC acquired from

expatriation justifies the organizational investment in global work. We confirm that organizations should offer career support to AEs in finding suitable jobs during and after expatriation assignments (Doherty and Dickmann, 2009). In addition, the positive perspective of CC by SIEs, despite their lack of organizational support, shows they can be a less costly alternative pool of highly skilled and motivated global workers. That finding should thus prompt organizations to reconsider their approaches to securing global talent to ensure they expressly factor in how to source and manage SIEs and how to guide their careers. Organizations should understand the high-density nature of expatriate work to successfully implement such initiatives, which would enable them to better match the job opportunities available for expatriates and repatriates. In addition, organizations would also benefit from recognizing that a variety of individual contexts, such as career stage, impact expatriates' learnings and career outcomes, which should encourage organizations to implement a more flexible career progression system in terms of inclusion and diversity (Shortland and Perkins, 2022). Of course, the creation of such a flexible approach is no easy task: Placing expatriates and repatriates into jobs matching their competencies during and after expatriations requires an individual-level analysis of expatriate experiences, related development and changed career interests. We hope the current article will help organizations develop the sensitivity and insight to undertake such an endeavor.

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Note

1. PIM: $\beta = -0.109$, $p = 0.446$; PEM: $\beta = -0.166$, $p = 0.222$; and number of promotions: $\beta = 0.190$, $p = 0.446$

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