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The Impact of Global Work on the Career Success of Assignees

The 'High Density' Nature of Global Work

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This systematic literature review aims to understand how global work experiences impact expatriates' career success, taking into account the time after their international assignments (IAs).

First, we focus on objective career success (OCS) and subjective career success (SCS) of assigned expatriates (AEs) and self-initiated expatriates (SIE) after their long-term international assignments (IAs). We focus on these two types of assignments since short-term assignees often do not face the same challenges that long-term expatriates encounter.

Second, we differentiate domestic jobs from the jobs that expatriates do. Scholars have suggested that global work is a 'high density' work experience that impacts employee learning and career trajectories. The high density' nature of global work is characterized by physical mobility (i.e., the work role requires that the employee travel or relocate internationally), cognitive flexibility (i.e., the work involves role incumbents to adjust their thought patterns and scripts to effectively interact with people and adapt to situational demands across cultures), and non-work disruption (i.e., the work role requirements disrupt or interfere with the employee's usual activities and routines outside work). Due to such characteristics, expatriation impacts extensively individuals' work motives, competencies, and careers (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998: 329).

Third, we develop a holistic expatriate career success framework exploring the following questions: 1) What is the individual career impact resulting from IAs? 2) What are

the antecedents of such career success? and 3) What are the outcomes of assignees' career success? In so doing, we identify a range of theoretical perspectives, antecedents, and outcomes of expatriate career success that have been neglected in extant research.

Finally, we make a threefold contribution. First, we extend the conceptualization of international work density, drawing attention to context, and illuminating further differences between general and global career concepts. Second, we identify promising theories that have not been utilized in expatriation research, with an emphasis on context-related theories that chime in with the specific nature of global careers. Lastly, we suggest an extensive future research agenda.

Main sources

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