

UNDERSTANDING THE EARLY CAREER SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATION – A REVIEW AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

PÁLYAKEZDŐ EXPATRIÓTÁK, KÜLÖNÖS TEKINTETTEL A NEM VÁLLALATI KIKÜLDÖTTEKRE (SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATES; SIE) – SZAKIRODALMI ÁTTEKINTÉS ÉS JÖVŐBELI IRÁNYOK

While the literature on self-initiated expatriation (SIE) is well-established in management, no systematic investigation has yet been conducted to explore the specificities of early career expatriation. This review article aims to identify and analyse publications that uniquely focus on self-initiated expatriates, who decide to start their career abroad, either with little or no prior work experience. After identifying relevant publications in this specific research field, the authors discuss the personal career motivations and behaviours of early career self-initiated expatriates and the relevance of this phenomenon for the global workforce. The contributions of this article are twofold. First, they integrate the relevant research findings from recent decades on early career self-initiated expatriates. Second, they provide information about managing early career SIEs and propose a future research agenda to address the knowledge gap identified in this review and apply the findings to practice.

Keywords: literature review, early career self-initiated expatriate, future agenda, multiparadigm literature review, functionalist approach, interpretivist approach

Az expatrióta irodalmon belül a nem vállalati kiküldötteknek (önerejéből külföldön elhelyezkedő; self-initiated expatriates; SIE) bejáratott irodalma van a menedzsmentben, azonban a pályakezdő expatrióták sajátosságaival eddig még senki sem foglalkozott. Jelen összefoglaló cikk célja, hogy azonosítsa és elemezze azokat a publikációkat, amelyek kifejezetten erre a csoportra fókuszálnak, azaz, akik úgy döntenek, hogy külföldön kezdik meg a pályafutásukat, beleértve a munkatapasztalat nélküli vagy csekély szakmai tapasztalattal rendelkezőket. Külön hangsúlyt helyezünk a karriermotivációjuk, viselkedésük, és globális karrierhez való hozzájárulásuk megértésére. A cikk két tekintetben járul hozzá a szakirodalomhoz, egyrészt összefoglalja a témában az elmúlt évtizedekben készített kutatások lényeges következtetéseit, másrészt információval szolgál a pályakezdő önerejéből külföldön elhelyezkedő munkavállalók menedzseléséről. Ezen felül jövőbeli kutatási irányokat is kínál, rámutatva az észlelt hiányosságokra és elősegítve a levont következtetések gyakorlati alkalmazását.

Kulcsszavak: szakirodalmi áttekintés, pályakezdő expatrióta, jövőbeli kutatási irányok, multiparadigmikus szakirodalmi áttekintés, funkcionista megközelítés, konstruktivista megközelítés

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In the 21st century, with the development of a globalized economy, the knowledge economy, technological innovation, migration flows, specialisation, work values, and labour markets have all changed dramatically. This has profoundly affected the individual career development of employees and the organisational career management of companies. The growing number of professionals who seek global careers beyond their home country (Hajo et al., 2019) makes it necessary to investigate expatriation, with a specific focus on self-initiated expatriation. It is assumed that an increasing number of young graduates within self-initiated expatriates are deciding to start their careers in new countries. This article focuses on their specific characteristics.

There are two distinct sets of academic research: one focusing on self-initiated expatriates independently of their career stage or age, and the other focusing on early career professionals. SIE literature focuses on a range of topics, including motivation (Thorn, 2009), adjustment (Begley et al., 2008; Peltokorpi & Jintae, 2009; Meurer et al., 2019), career capital (Jokinen et al., 2008; Al Ariss & Jawad, 2011), career development (Cerdin & Le Pargneux, 2010; Brewster et al., 2019), and repatriation (Chiang et al., 2017; David et al., 2020), while the literature on early career professionals deals with topics such as seeking challenging opportunities (Dries et al., 2008; Thorn, 2009; Baluku et al., 2018), career development (Pereira et al., 2016) cultural adaptation (Wechtler, 2018), repatriation (Goštautaitė et al., 2020), career advancement (McNulty et al., 2016), and career challenges (Waxin & Brewster, 2020). While there are overlaps between the two distinct sets of academic research, early career self-initiated expatriates have not received the necessary attention. This article aims to fill this gap by investigating the specific characteristics of early career SIEs, their motivation to start their careers abroad, and their impact on global HRM.

As a theoretical introduction we review the terminology of self-initiated expatriation in general, and Doherty's (2013) three level of analysis in particular, to clarify the definitions and concepts used. Next, we explain the methodology of literature search and selection: we adopt a multiparadigm approach, which includes a systematic review and co-occurrence analysis of a large database with functionalist principles as the first wave, and an in-depth investigation of a smaller, focused set of articles applying qualitative text analysis following interpretivist epistemology as the second wave. Our findings highlight that early career self-initiated expatriates are not a sporadic phenomenon in employment, and their presence has an impact on different countries at the macro level. Organizations need to develop strategies to effectively harvest the benefits of unique skills and knowledge of young professionals who seek employment outside of their home countries. Finally, personal motivation and cultural adaptation require further attention at the individual level.

Theoretical Introduction and Framework

Self-initiated Expatriation Terminology

Expatriation is a term introduced for experts who are sent for international assignments by their employers, mainly

for a limited time period, to distinguish company-assigned and self-initiated expatriates (Tharenou, 2015) described self-initiated expatriates, as expatriation is their own choice, they seek employment and their move is self-funded. Consequently, SIEs are characterised by self-initiated international relocation, regular employment, intentions of a temporary stay, and skilled qualifications (Cerdin & Selmer, 2014). While "self-initiated expatriation" is a well-defined term in literature, there is less clarity around the term "early career SIE". The lack of a uniform definition makes it difficult to identify early career SIEs. However, we can ensure that early career self-initiated expatriation is a starting point of their career (newcomer), not merely their first job as an expatriate. Therefore, this literature review addresses various young individuals who choose to undertake an international career path and analyses early career self-initiated expatriates' personal career motivation, behaviour, and relevance to the global workforce.

SIEs are different from corporate-assigned expatriates who have more autonomy to choose their career location. SIEs leverage their stronger cross-cultural adaptability to build their career capital during the expatriate experience and thus achieve career success (Kanstrén & Suutari, 2021; Paik et al., 2017). As SIEs are not supported by organizations, their personal characteristics play a critical role in their organizational success and eventually in their careers (Lauring & Selmer, 2018). SIEs cross the boundaries of different employers (enterprises) globally in pursuit of maximising their own interests and career development (Bernardo & Salanga, 2019; Utam et al., 2020).

Organisations offer career management plans to assist individuals in developing their careers, based on the specific skills the organisation needs to cultivate. These plans often involve career ladders. The concepts of boundless careers and expatriate careers emerged simultaneously and share similar connotations. According to Redondo et al. (2021), in the volatile career model employees manage their own careers and make decisions based on their career aspirations. The main criterion for judging career success is psychological success, that is, subjective success. In this career model, gaining a better understanding of organisational attitudes in the ever-changing career landscape can enhance the importance of employer perceptions of talented employees and avoid additional risks to the business in terms of employee commitment and intention to leave. Therefore, the development of the volatile career model is not constrained by a specific career path or organisation but is rather driven by personal aspirations, much like the self-initiated expatriate career trajectories observed in early career stages.

Three levels of self-initiated expatriate research

Doherty (2013) proposes the organising framework for SIEs that includes the following levels: micro level (individual and psychological experiences), meso level (organisational benefits and potential losses) and macro level (socio-economic processes).

At the macro level of analysis, the most important discussion of SIEs pertains to their contribution to the host country, the potential loss of talents in their home country, and the specific consideration of repatriation. More specifically, it examines whether SIEs' experience, skills and international network gained during their foreign exposure will be useful for the home country (Cohen, 2009; Cohen & Krantz, 2015). At this level, global resources and flow of talent are under scrutiny (Doherty, 2013). Migration and self-initiated expatriation are difficult to distinguish at this level, and their consequences are often inseparable. Furthermore, the study of gender self-initiated expatriation has revealed an interesting difference between company-assigned and self-initiated expatriation that has consequences at the macro level. Women are less likely to be sent abroad by their employers (Tung, 2008), but they might choose to pursue self-initiated expatriation when faced with a glass ceiling (Wechtler, 2018). Overall, the SIE community is predominantly male. However, female self-initiated expatriates make up a significant part of the community.

At the meso level of analysis, discussions about SIEs mainly focus on the fact that company-assigned expatriates aim to pursue organizational goals during their international assignment, while SIEs are individualistic and their personal motives might or might not contribute to the organizations. They are nonconformist, self-reliant, self-directed, and proactive (Mayrhofer et al., 2008). At the same time, the professional value of SIEs has been acknowledged (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010), and the challenges of integration have been investigated as a decisive criterion for the potential of SIEs' contribution to their organization (Abbas et al., 2021). When SIEs perceive discrimination or prejudicial behaviour among local employees, this has a negative impact on their work attitude, while they can bring their unique expertise and skills to their host organization when they establish positive interaction with co-workers. Gender differences have also been identified at the meso level (Bastida, 2018). Isakovic and Whitman (2019) examine the direct effects of organisational support and adjustment on retention willingness, work engagement, and the mediating impact of adjustment on self-initiated expatriation among low-skilled women in the United Arab Emirates. The results show that perceived organisational support (POS) and job adjustment has a significant, positive, and direct impact on retention and willingness to participate. Additionally, the study found that the job adjustment of SIEs moderated the relationship between POS and work engagement and POS and retention willingness, to a certain extent. Siyal et al. (2021) examine the impact of inclusive leadership on fostering innovative work behaviours and creativity among employees. Through a comprehensive analysis of diversity, they reveal that inclusive leadership positively impacts innovative work behaviour and creativity.

Micro level discussion is concerned with individual characteristics and motives which foster self-initiated expatriation, and push and pull factors have been identified (Doherty, 2013). Al Ariss and Jawad (2011) elaborate on

the complex system of decision-making factors that lead to international mobility, as it is influenced by professional status, education, economic resources and social networks. Jannesari and Sullivan (2019) discuss the career success of SIEs from psychological perspectives and conclude that occupational adaptability is positively correlated with performance and adaptability, whereas psychological availability mediates the relationship between occupational fitness and performance and adaptation. However, supportive organisational supervision does not moderate the relationship between occupational fitness and performance or adjustment. Cultural adaptability is also considered a key factor, and there are also returnees with expatriate experience who feel that they can maximize their career potential only at home. Ellis et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of a strong alignment between return expectations and the actual repatriation experience, recognising the importance of individual institutions and the impact of the repatriation. Remennick (2022) analyses the experience of multiple returnees who return home after working in other countries around the world. Most returnees believe that only at home can they maximise their career potential. They show a strong national identity, culture, and filial piety.

Methodology

In terms of analysis methods, to date, the literature has been mainly data-driven functionalist in approach (Cile-siz & Greckhamer, 2020; Roulston & Bhattacharya, 2018; Symon et al., 2018). This has resulted in a lack of in-depth analysis from an interpretivist perspective, particularly in the context-rich analysis of unexplored phenomena. Qualitative research is receiving increasing attention for its effect on key empirical, conceptual, and theoretical contributions (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2020; Primecz, 2020; O'Kane et al., 2021; Richardson, 2021). Moreover, paradigm reflexivity and openness towards new paradigmatic and methodological approaches are required to explore novel fields of inquiry. For instance, Wechtler (2018) introduced new insights into SIE research by drawing on qualitative research from blogs and incorporating feminist and existentialist reflections.

Acknowledging the value of both functionalist and interpretivist approaches, some authors select a multiparadigm strategy (Primecz, 2008; Primecz et al., 2023). Relying on functionalist principles, the first author began with a systematic search strategy to identify key articles from multiple disciplines. Three journal databases, namely Web of Science, Google Scholar and Proquest Thesis, were searched for articles published between 2003 and 2022 using a set of keywords, including immigration, early career expatriates, entry-level position, international graduate student, student affairs professionals, motivation, challenges, resilience, repatriation, culture adaptation. The literature search was completed in two waves. In the first wave, 1703 academic publications were identified by keyword search, including journal articles, theses, books, book chapters and conference papers.

out the emphasis on early career. In all cases where it was not obvious from the title and abstract whether an article would be relevant, we included them for full-text reading. The first author conducted the reading and coding of full-text articles with the help of NVivo qualitative software. This led to eliminating six further articles, which proved to be irrelevant upon thorough investigation of their content. The 16 selected articles were coded, while seven of them were eventually eliminated after they were fully coded due to their content; and to ensure a comprehensive coverage of published articles on the chosen topic, further searches for articles were conducted. The first author used the snowballing strategy to follow references and citations to these publications during the full-text analysis until no new relevant publications were found. The eligible publications were evaluated and subsequently analysed based on particular research that addressed the identified issues. The study involved a thorough reading of full texts. Ultimately, 18 articles were identified as key articles on early career SIEs and were coded with the help of NVivo software. As a result of the coding process and the in-depth analysis of the interplay among different levels, three main themes emerged, which the second author validated.

Authors used various coding processes to organise the analysis at the contextual, organisational, and individual levels in terms of coding schemes. The early career SIE was then explored from a range of perspectives, as shown in Figure 2, which synthesises the following theoretical models from the research evaluated into a complete field map. Finally, a research gap in literature was identified.

Findings

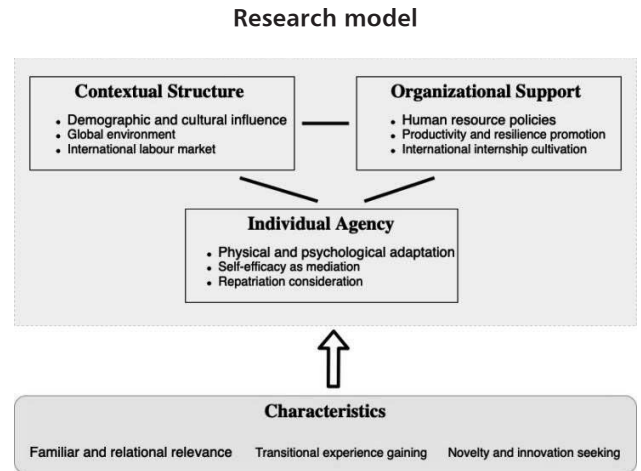
The rapid development of globalisation has encouraged international companies to take an interest in the growth of job mobility and employee relocation to meet global labour demand. These companies rely heavily on expatriate employees to manage their operations abroad and in other cities (Ruel & Jaegler, 2021; Shortland & Perkins, 2022). Many globally relevant work experiences, such as corporate and self-initiated expatriates, as well as novel forms of corporate global workforces have been analysed in terms of personal choices, challenges, and careers associated with development (Shaffer et al., 2012). The structure and types of expatriate employees are complex and diverse, including factors such as gender differences, differences in early occupation and professional SIEs, differences in the country or length of time of expatriates, and differences in the field of expatriates. Many scholars have studied the structure and occupational characteristics of early career SIE. Based on the literature analysis and interpretative coding, the research model is demonstrated in Figure 2.

Early career self-initiated expatriates' characteristics

Young foreign students often have larger social circles and are generally given greater opportunity for self-disclosure. Additionally, they are also perceived as temporary residents in the host-country. Understanding the

characteristics of early career SIEs is beneficial for global HRM, and their characteristics can be summarised and analysed based on familial and relational relevance, gaining transitional experiences and novelty and innovation-seeking.

Figure 2



Source: own compilation

The relevance of familial and relational links in expatriation is evident early in one's career and is moderated by personal circumstances after graduation (Tharenou, 2003). Young students are unlikely to be married; however, if they have strong attachment to parents, friends and community, they may be less receptive to working abroad compared to those who have weaker attachments. The early career SIEs regard their mobility as gaining transitional experiences. The early career paths of young self-initiated employees are potentially impeded by linguistic and cultural skill shortages, as well as financial constraints (Kristensen, 2004).

On the one hand, McCoy and Masuch (2007) describe an ethnographic investigation of women's experiences in the early years of their work in non-regulated occupations, utilising their transferrable abilities throughout this transitional time. On the other hand, Doherty (2013) studies young westerners in good positions in developed countries, with defined professional and growth goals, who have opted to become mobile. Therefore, young SIEs, who are more self-directed learners, rely heavily on technology to achieve collective consensus and acceptance from their social groups, since they have a strong sense of belonging to a peer group, which is echoed by Shaw and Fairhurst (2008).

According to Dries et al. (2008), the main motivation for early career SIEs to move abroad is seeking challenging opportunities. Early career SIEs want to pursue novelty and innovation, they have stronger mobility ambitions and may gain international experience on the entry-level professional road (Fourage & Ester, 2007). Although only 12.6% of the sample population aged 18-24 in Europe considered moving to another country in the next five years, early career SIEs consider that longer international work experience can equip them with a

long-term perspective. Thorn (2009) uses a quantitative methodology to conclude that chances for travel and adventure, as well as job advancement, are important socio-cultural and economic motives for young self-initiated expatriates.

Women in early stages of their careers are motivated by challenge and ambition because they perceive their SIE experience as an opportunity “brimming with unlimited possibilities” (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007). Inkson and Myers (2003) conducted an exploratory qualitative study of the young self-initiated expatriates from New Zealand and found that the motivations are a search for a different way of life, excitement and partner influences, rather than work or career-related factors. The findings also showed that while the SIE experience brings benefits, the process is unpredictable and complex; therefore,

it requires greater self-direction, internationalisation and flexibility. Tharenou (2003) conducted a study on 213 young entry-level workers (with an average age of 23 years) using social cognitive career theory and taking age, gender, and marital status into consideration. The study found that the early career SIE had a strong sense of personal agency and less influence from family relationships, with worldwide options, and an increased openness to take up foreign professions.

Three levels of analysing early career SIEs

This literature review provides an overview of previous research on early career SIEs, examining the topic from three levels of analysis: structural, organisational and the level of individual agency. The summary is presented above in Table 1.

Table 1

The summary of articles on the early career self-initiated expatriate

	Perspective	Author	Year	Principle findings	Journal
Characteristics	Familial and relational relevance	Tharenou	2003	Strong sense of personal agency and less influence from family relationships	Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology
	Transitional experience gaining	McCoy & Masuch	2007	Utilising transferrable abilities	Comparative Migration Studies
	Novelty and innovation seeking	Inkson & Myers	2003	Different way of life, excitement and partner influences	Career Development International
		Thorn	2009	Cultural exposure, travel, and a desire for adventure	Career Development International
Three levels	Contextual structure	Doherty et al.	2010	Geographical factors and site preference	Career Development International
		Goštautaitė et al.	2020	Adversely linked with home country career and community embeddedness; feedback decreases SIE intention	Career Development International
		Jonbekova et al.	2021	Socioeconomic and cultural factors, intergenerational clashes, and scholarship program regulations	Higher Education
	Organisational support	Joardar	2011	Task-based and relationship-based group acceptance activity	International Journal of Cross Cultural Management
		Makkonen	2017	The employability of newcomer self-initiated expatriates in China: employers' perspective	Asia Pacific Journal Human Resource
		Felker	2011	Individuals work in positions below levels of credential education and capability; information gaps and insufficient search preparation; lack of organisational support	International Journal of Training and Development
		Oh	2016	Adjustment to working in organizations, resulting in socialization and mediating effects on relationships	Asia Pacific Education Review
	Individual agency	Weedon	2012	Professional expertise and academy as an insular host culture	International Review for the Sociology of Sport
		Pereira et al.	2016	U-curve model does not operate in the early career SIEs; SIEs regard change as a chance to expand their knowledge and abilities	Journal of International Management
		Egilsson & Dolles	2017	Problem-focused coping strategies have been more effective than emotion-focused strategies	Journal of Global Mobility
		Baluku et al.	2018	Importance of flexibility and personal initiative	Journal of Global Mobility
		Seok-Young & Jang	2021	Embracing cultural diversity and entrepreneurship; involvement in training programs, and a supportive work environment	Career Development International
		Milne	2001	SIEs possess more skills upon repatriation	New Zealand Medical Journal
Wechtler		2018	Escape, confrontation with reality, identity reconstruction, purpose of expatriation	Career Development International	

Source: own compilation

Contextual structure

The contextual and structural levels that affect SIE's labour integration mainly represent the employment structure of the country. The factors at this level are complex, including a series of transnational conventions, international regulations, national legislation, and in some cases multilateral auxiliary clauses. This article reviews the relevant literature on SIE from a structural level.

Firstly, demographic and cultural factors play an important role in early career SIEs' career trajectories. According to Doherty et al. (2010), geographical factors are significant for SIE since they take into account time, distance, and the possibility of regular return to the home country. They suggest that data from both the country of origin and the host country can help determine the size and type of national disparities, including the influence of language ability and site preference. However, it would be informative to examine security concerns operating as a deterrent to returning to the home country. Goštautaitė et al. (2020) find that self-initiated expatriation intention is adversely linked with career and community embeddedness in the home country and that developmental feedback decreases SIE intention.

Secondly, the global environment and international labour market are the structure of young SIEs' mobility. In terms of contextual factors in the labour market, there are information asymmetries between graduates and employers. William et al. (2018) suggest graduates feel more employable than they are in the market due to rivalry for graduate positions and limited resources. In a qualitative research of 45 Kazakh expatriates Jonbekova et al. (2021) found that international scholarship alumni with positional advantages face difficulties in their transition to the job market due to socioeconomic and cultural factors, intergenerational clashes, and scholarship program regulations.

Organisational support

Organisations play a critical role in assisting self-initiated expatriates' transition to a new culture, particularly through interventions during the adjustment periods. Therefore, organisational views of graduates abroad are essential (Shen & Herr, 2004; Hippler et al., 2015). At the organisational level, it mainly means that multinational companies and human resources managers should provide expatriate training and support for early-career SIE candidates. They can also send local employees to help early-career SIEs communicate in the host country. There are many relevant types of research on early SIE at the organisational level. Makkonen (2017) investigates western newcomer self-initiated expatriates (NC-SIEs) with no prior work experience in cross-cultural career contexts from the perspective of employers, and the findings show that both organisational and contextual drivers define the value of individual ability and skill.

It is necessary to formulate an organisational plan and support different types of talent with specific policies by using SIEs as one of the ways talent development motivates expatriates in the global economic trend. Joardar (2011) applied expectancy violation theory to demonstrate that

a foreign newcomer's task-based and relationship-based group acceptance changes when the newcomer's performance and cross-cultural adaptability do not confirm the group's expectations. This results in the workgroup functioning properly. Oh (2016) proposes personal-organizational (P-O) fit theory to demonstrate the importance of international graduates' formal learning, intended informal learning, and unintended informal learning experiences in influencing self-initiated newcomers' adjustment to working in organizations, resulting in socialization outcomes and mediating effects on relationships.

Felker (2011) conducted in-depth interviews with 22 young, well-educated Eastern Europeans who relocated to Western Europe in quest of professional growth chances. The findings reveal that individuals work in positions below their levels of credential education and capability due to information gaps and insufficient searching preparation. Meanwhile, organizations do not fully utilize the available human capital offered by Eastern Europeans, implying untapped opportunities to gain a competitive advantage through human capital. Recognising that various variables impact foreign students' future aspirations and that these plans differ from person to person, it becomes evident that career service support should be offered to the international graduate student population. Additionally, establishing international student communities and coordination between career counselling and placement centres are recommended.

Individual agency

Baluku et al. (2018) investigate early career self-initiated expatriates' diverse career paths, emphasizing the role of flexibility and personal initiative. When it comes to job choices, the results show that early career SIEs should focus on improving their capacity to be flexible and career orientation. Wechtler (2018) adopts a new approach to examining the motivations of single childless female SIEs deciding to work abroad, finding that there are four main reasons for opting for self-initiated expatriate career, namely, escape, confrontation with reality, identity reconstruction, and purpose of expatriation.

One of the most important factors affecting early career SIEs task completion is individual cognition. The early career stage of SIEs is the main factor that affects their success rate in achieving their missions and reduces their turnover intention. International graduate students bear the physical and psychological costs to follow their ambitions through international education, with the ultimate objective of achieving their own career goals (Leong & Chou, 1996; Shen & Herr, 2004).

Physically, graduates overseas need to navigate the system, understand the language, and get access to information in order to succeed in the academic and professional communities (Shen & Herr, 2004). Because of the short term of overseas assignments, Pereira et al. (2016) demonstrate that the U-curve model does not operate in the early career SIEs' research setting; consequently, evaluating the duration of time for expatriate adjustment is critical. They examined how young, highly qualified and

mobile self-initiated expatriates tend to prefer relying on their own resources and information to find employment opportunities in the job market.

Seok-Young and Jang (2021) employ a mixed-method approach to explore how young Korean SIEs adapt to work. Personal attributes, such as willingness to accept cultural diversity and entrepreneurship, participation in training programs, and a supportive work environment, are positively related to social and cultural adaptation in the process of job transformation. Therefore, organisations should create an environment conducive to learning, encourage learning in the workplace, and recruit employees who possess characteristics required for an assignment. Therefore, when selecting SIEs, organisations should create supportive learning environments to facilitate workplace learning and seek out expatriates with suitable characteristics.

The psychological factor for early career SIEs is that their success in performing expatriate tasks is mainly influenced by their expatriate cultural adaptability, which also mitigates their willingness to leave. Egilsson and Dolles (2017) explore the transitional experiences of talented young Icelandic footballers, and their result show that problem-focused coping strategies have been more effective than emotion-focused strategies. In contrast, Weedon (2012) investigates the transitional acculturation experiences of migrant young footballers. The findings suggest that professional expertise and academy as an insular host culture assist young SIEs in coping with cultural challenges when they experience emotion-related culture shock in the host country.

Cross-cultural adaptation (CCA) is an essential factor determining whether early career self-initiated employees can successfully complete tasks. The research basis of expatriate acculturation comes from the fields of sociology and anthropology and mainly emphasises the process of behavioural and psychological adaptation after individuals enter a heterogeneous culture, taking into consideration the time frame and task at hand (Luef, 2020).

Self-efficacy takes a mediated role and is typically associated with a protean attitude and employed to accomplish desired professional objectives (King, 2004). Bernardo et al. (2019) investigate 669 young people and their career attitudes in the Philippines using the four-factor structure of the protean and boundaryless career attitudes scale. They aim to examine the component structure, association with related constructs, and psychometric qualities of the protean and boundaryless career scales in the early career SIE. The study assessed career adaptability, career optimism, perceived professional expertise, and cultural intelligence, and found internal consistency across the four component scales.

Repatriation is also an essential topic for early career SIEs. Milne (2001) claims that better qualified and fitter young SIEs aim to possess more skills when they choose to return. When compared to their compatriots who choose to remain abroad, returning early-career researchers display higher levels of parochialism, manifested by stronger community ties and patriotic loyalty, as well as

geographically constrained employment search (Israel & Cohen, 2022).

Discussion

The main structural factor affecting the work performance and success rate of early career SIEs is their cultural adaptability to different national structures. Apart from that, the organisational level plays a key role in assisting early career SIEs with their transition and cultural adaptation, especially through interventions provided by their organisations in the adjustment period (Hippler et al., 2014). This demonstrates the role of psychological availability as a means of psychological engagement for SIEs and their host-country colleagues during the process of adjusting to work and social interactions. This view is consistent with the conclusions of Jannesari et al. (2017). Lastly, an individual's ability to adapt to the expatriate culture is the main factor that affects the success rate of their mission, which is also the main reason for reducing expatriates' turnover intention.

At the macro level, it is necessary for countries to formulate relevant public support measures for early career SIEs. By holding regular social etiquette classes, relevant institutions in different countries actively invite host country employees, local teachers or government departments to make suggestions on how to strengthen the interaction between self-initiated expatriates and locals, and take measures according to the actual situation. It is necessary to train communication etiquette and skills for early professional SIEs. People should not regard different cultures, religions and values as a burden, but rather embrace and adapt to the diversity of the world. This approach can help us avoid misunderstandings caused by improper communication with the host country's personnel. Finally, it is important to educate early career professional SIEs on how to respect the host country's personnel and culture, and approach economic interests with a mindset of achieving a win-win situation.

Additionally, organisations should pay attention to employees' cross-cultural adaptation when improving their job satisfaction and early career SIEs' retention intention. Good cross-cultural adaptability can effectively improve expatriates' job satisfaction and retention intention. To ensure general adaptation, business organisations can provide employees with life guides or documentaries about the host country, so as to help expatriate employees understand the host country's weather, climate, customs, legal system, and the like (Sahoo et al., 2022). Meanwhile, before SIEs go abroad, colleagues who have previously worked on foreign projects should provide a detailed introduction to the actual situation of foreign life, highlight potential difficulties and problems, and express their own experiences to enhance the vitality and credibility of training early professional SIEs.

Finally, at the micro level, it is necessary to fully understand the work habits and objectives in the host country and not solely focus on maximising economic benefits as the only standard of value for work. In case of conflicts,

people should not blindly work or complain, but rather explain the reasons for working with a professional attitude and technology. It is also useful to share some of the host country personnel work concepts with SIE employees through training.

Future Research Directions

Early career SIEs have been researched by a number of authors. However, there are some points which the previous literature raises that are worth reflecting on, as they provide directions for subsequent research in related fields. Methodologically, more comprehensive and diversified research methods should be adopted in the future. Therefore, forthcoming research should employ diverse research methods to reveal the complex phenomena. The cross-level research method can be used to combine the influences at the individual level and the organisational level for analysis. From the content perspective, four directions are described in the following section.

Firstly, to summarise the above structural, organisational and individual level and explore the post-COVID-19 epidemic influences on early career SIEs' attitudes and behaviours, it is crucial to manage and develop the subsequent careers of early career SIEs (Abdalla & Al-Zufairi, 2020).

Secondly, individuals who lived in a foreign country as teenagers regard themselves as international, have higher openness to different cultures, and have greater international job preferences, travel and future orientation, and have lower settling-down inclinations (Selmer & Lam, 2003). Since there is a lack of literature that compares early career SIEs to individuals born in the host country, it is advisable to analyse how adult third culture kids (ATCKs) view their future ability to complete international tasks. ATCKs see themselves as the truly competent source of expatriate talent based on their international experiences as children and their ability to adapt to the social culture in a chameleon-like fashion (Westropp et al., 2016). Therefore, the difference between early career SIEs with local and international credentials is also a relevant issue which needs further exploration.

Thirdly, this finding does not apply to older employees, indicating the need for future research which would address differences between younger and older employees. It may be particularly relevant for the organisations to focus on the initial development of receptivity.

All studies have their limitations, and this work is not an exception, especially in field of the rapidly changing world of international employment. While it may have seemed during the COVID-19 pandemic that the internationalization of careers will slow down or be replaced by extended distance work, the direction of such development is not unequivocal. Therefore, we have to treat past and present research results with reservation. It is possible that we experience major changes in globalization and internationalization of individual careers in the near future and this is why further studies including empirical and literature reviews will be necessary.

Conclusion

Through review and analysis, this article presents the existing outputs and proposes future research directions from a multi-disciplinary perspective, hoping to help promote the success rate of SIEs' assignment in early career in enterprise management. There is an urgent need to fill the current knowledge gap in the field of professional assignment and management. This article not only summarises and analyses relevant literature on early career SIEs at the structural, organisational and individual level, but also analyses the follow-up prospect of early career SIEs at the macro, intermediate and micro level. It is believed that the cultural adaptability of early career SIEs can generate more enthusiasm and sense of belonging to the enterprise organisation. Only in this way can the relevance and applicability of studying the motivation and challenges of expatriates be tested in different countries and environments.

With the continuous improvement and implementation of economic development strategies, management scholars and practitioners need to pay attention to their own knowledge reserves and professional abilities, and recognize the necessity of effective research and practice in the field of career management at macro, intermediate and micro levels. However, as society continues to progress, the trend of economic globalization will continue to deepen, leading to the further refinement of enterprise management for SIEs. The hope is, therefore, that this review can provide direction for comprehensive, detailed, and diverse expansion in the field of internationally self-initiated expatriate management.

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