

Job exhaustion among assigned and self-initiated expatriates –the role of effort and reward

Article

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JOB EXHAUSTION AMONG ASSIGNED AND SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATES –THE ROLE OF EFFORT AND REWARD

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4 **JOB EXHAUSTION AMONG ASSIGNED AND SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATES –**
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6 **THE ROLE OF EFFORT AND REWARD**
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17 **Abstract:**

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19 **Purpose:** We explore whether expatriation type (assigned expatriates versus self-initiated
20 expatriates) is linked to job exhaustion via possible differences in required efforts for their jobs
21 and the rewards they gain from them, and/or the balance between efforts and rewards. Adopting
22 effort-reward imbalance and job demands/resources theories, we study the possible role of effort
23 and reward and their imbalance as a mediator between expatriation type and job exhaustion.
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30 **Design/methodology/approach:** An on-line survey was carried out in co-operation with two
31 Finnish trade unions, providing data from representative data from 484 assigned and self-
32 initiated expatriates. We test our hypotheses through latent structural equation modelling and the
33 analysis was conducted with Stata 17.0 software
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39 **Findings:** The results show that effort, rewards and the imbalance between them are correlated
40 with the job exhaustion of expatriates in general and there are no direct
41 links between expatriation type and job exhaustion. The required effort from assigned expatriates
42 was higher than that from self-initiated expatriates though no difference was found for rewards,
43 and the match between effort demands and rewards is less favourable for AEs than SIEs. AEs
44 experienced higher job exhaustion than SIEs because of the higher effort demands and greater
45 imbalance between efforts and rewards.
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53 **Originality:** The study examines the work well-being of two types of expatriates and explores
54 the underlying mechanisms that may explain why they may differ from each other.
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10 **Key words:** self-initiated expatriates, assigned expatriates, job exhaustion, effort-reward
11 imbalance, job demands-resources.
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Journal of Global Mobility

INTRODUCTION

Understanding globally mobile employees, especially different types of expatriates, is vital (McNulty and Brewster, 2019; McNulty and Selmer, 2017). The essential reason for that is organisations need skilled and high-performing employees who may be required to work in a new country due to their work, that is, to become expatriates. Expatriate work has been described as high-density global work (Shaffer *et al.*, 2012) and international relocation and job factors faced when working abroad (e.g. role ambiguity and role novelty) can be stressful and create substantial pressure (Hussain and Deery, 2018; Lapointe, Vandenberghe and Fan, 2020) and negatively affect expatriate work well-being (see for a meta-analysis Biswas, Mäkelä and Andresen, 2021). Nurturing employees' performance involves taking care of their work well-being (Guest, 2017; Kleine, Rudolph and Zacher, 2019) and, therefore, this should be of great interest to employers, especially for those employees that may face additional challenges in their working life, such as expatriates.

One important (negative) indicator of employee work well-being is job 'burnout' (Maslach and Leiter, 1997; Maslach, 2018), and emotional exhaustion is a core component of burnout: it refers to continuous feelings of strain and experiences of emotional resources being fully consumed by work. Typical symptoms are a lack of energy and chronic fatigue (Maslach, 2018; Salmela-Aro *et al.*, 2011). Job burnout has been explained using different work stress theories, most typically using job demands and resources theory (JD-R;), arguing that that every job has its specific demands and resources which affect employee well-being (Bakker, *et al.*, 2014; Bakker, *et al.*, 2022), and effort-reward imbalance (ERI) theory, building upon the idea of social reciprocity and highlighting the importance of balance between the amount of effort required or expected from an employee compared to the rewards gained (Siegrist, 2002).

Exhaustion or burnout has been studied as an indicator of expatriates' work well-being (Bhanugopan and Fish, 2006; Cavazotte, *et al.*, 2021; Silbiger *et al.*, 2017; Silbiger and Pines,

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4 2014) and earlier studies concerning antecedents for expatriate burnout have shown that different
5
6 job characteristics, in particular, role conflict, role overload and role ambiguity (Bhanugopan and
7
8 Fish, 2006) increase the risk of burnout. General stress does the same (Silbiger and Pines 2014).
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10 Moreover, leader cultural intelligence (Cavazotte *et al.*, 2021) and higher levels of work
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12 adjustment and interaction adjustment lead to reduced expatriate burnout (Silbiger *et al.*, 2017).
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14 So far, studies have focused on assigned expatriates (AEs) who have been sent abroad by their
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16 employer, or the type of the expatriation has not been specified in publications.
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19 This century has seen a rapid increase in studies of those who have found themselves a job
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21 abroad on their own (Andresen, *et al.*, 2021), referred to as self-initiated
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23 expatriates or SIEs (Suutari *et al.*, 2018). In general, expatriation research has tended to
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25 concentrate on one or the other category, either AEs or SIEs, and there are still relatively few
26
27 studies that directly compare the two (Selmer *et al.*, 2022) although it is likely that they differ
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29 from each other, for instance, because of level of personal agency of finding and accepting a job
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31 abroad, and job embeddedness when relocating. As the work situation of AEs and SIEs seems to
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33 differ, we might expect that the efforts, rewards, and the balance between these two factors
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35 and related outcomes, such as job exhaustion, would differ too. Therefore, we rely on both JD-R
36
37 and ERI theories to get more nuanced understanding about possible risk and protective factors
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39 for different types of expatriates. So, to better understand the work well-being of assigned and
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41 self-initiated expatriates, our research aims to answer to following question: is expatriation type
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43 related to the pressure for job effort and to rewards and balance between them, through them,
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45 to emotional exhaustion as a core component of burnout?
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48 The contribution of this study is threefold. First, our contribution to the current expatriation
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50 literature is that we use JD-R and ERI to compare the work well-being of two types of
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52 expatriates and our findings reveal the underlying mechanisms explaining how the difference in
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54 job exhaustion is different for AEs and SIEs. Second, this study contributes on work stress
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56 theories JD-R and ERI by testing them in a same study and in a novel context, international
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4 relocations. Third, this study contributes to work stress theories by highlighting the value of
5 taking account of the diversity of employee groups (here two types of expatriates) when the
6 antecedents of work well-being outcomes are being studied.
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10 11 12 13 **EFFORTS, REWARDS AND EFFORT-REWARD IMBALANCE AMONG ASSIGNED** 14 15 **AND SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATES** 16 17

18 The ERI model was originally developed for studying the health effects of effort-reward
19 imbalance at work (Siegrist *et al.*, 2019). Nowadays, however, it is a widely adopted model
20 for studying psychological well-being at work, including workplace stress and burnout (for a
21 review, see Pennie *et al.*, 2016). Effort refers to the physical, emotional and psychological
22 demands of the work and considers, for instance, the level of responsibility the work
23 involves and the pressure to work overtime (Siegrist *et al.*, 2004). Reward refers to money,
24 esteem (the respect and support that the employee receives at the workplace from superiors and
25 colleagues), career opportunities (whether the employee feels their current position reflects their
26 education, and perceptions about opportunities for promotion) and job security (feelings of
27 confidence in the continuation of the job, and the unlikelihood of undesirable changes at the
28 work). The balance between effort demands and rewards is key to employee well-being since, if
29 the required effort is not reciprocated with rewards, it elicits strong negative emotions and leads
30 to impaired health. ERI has proved useful in different work contexts, especially in the world of
31 modern, globalised business (Siegrist *et al.*, 2009; Mäkelä, *et al.*, 2015) and is, therefore, adopted
32 in this study where we focus on expatriates.
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49 Thus, ERI-theory builds on the idea that balance between demands and rewards is optimal for
50 work well-being and JD-R theory suggests that demands and resources have independent effects
51 on it (Bakker, *et al.*, 2014; Bakker, *et al.*, 2022), JD-R theory does not specify what are the job
52 demands and resources that should be studied and very similar job characteristics have been
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4 named as job demands that are called efforts in ERI theory and resources, similarly, are often
5 referred to as rewards (Schaufeli and Taris, 2014). Therefore we adopt these two perspectives in
6 order to gain a more holistic view of work well-being and its antecedents among different types
7 of expatriates.
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15 *Assigned and self-initiated expatriates*

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17 In the management literature, expatriates are foreigners working legally in the receiving country
18 for what is intended to be a finite term (McNulty and Brewster, 2017). From the existing studies
19 focusing on different types of expatriates, we know that SIEs are driven by different motivators
20 than AEs (Doherty, *et al.*, 2011; Linder, 2019), their career paths (Peltokorpi and Froese, 2009)
21 and psychological contracts are different (Casado and Caspersz, 2021), and their commitment
22 to their current employer seems to be different (Casado and Caspersz, 2021; Hussain and Deery,
23 2018; Lapointe, *et al.*, 2020; Linder, 2019). Furthermore, AEs' generally have higher levels of
24 authority at work, being usually in managerial or senior technical roles, and they are more likely
25 to work for larger organisations (and, by the definition of AEs, for multinational
26 enterprises), than SIEs (Meuer *et al.*, 2019; Andresen, *et al.*, 2015). In turn, they get more
27 organisational and financial support from their employer, while SIEs rely more on their own
28 resources (Hussain & Deery, 2018).
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42 Expatriates have to learn how to work in a new country, and how to work in a new foreign unit
43 of the employer organisation if they are AEs, and in a totally new organisation if they
44 are SIEs. AEs may have been enthusiastic about the opportunity to move abroad but most will
45 be following a suggestion from the company: they often have little time to prepare for the move
46 (Doherty, *et al.*, 2011). SIEs, by contrast, make their own decision to go to a certain country.
47 Hence, due to the limitations in their choice of host country and in preparation time, AEs may
48 experience greater adjustment gaps and have a greater cognitive difference to the host country
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4 (Haslberger and Brewster, 2009), and this may trigger more substantial knowing-why changes
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6 (Dickmann, *et al.*, 2018). AEs also develop more organisational knowledge and knowing-whom
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8 career capital, though in most areas both groups experience similar development (Dickmann, *et*
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10 *al.*, 2018). Finally, SIEs' tend to be abroad longer than AEs (Alshahrani and Morley, 2015;
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12 Farcas and Gonsalves, 2017), have more interest in considering more permanent global careers
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14 (Doherty, *et al.*, 2011) and to have higher level of on-the-job embeddedness in the host country
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16 than AEs (Meuer, *et al.*, 2019). Despite this, it has recently been reported that SIEs' repatriation
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18 adjustment may be an easier process than might be expected (Ellis, *et al.*, 2020).
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21 ***Expatriation, the Effort-Reward Bargain and Exhaustion***

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24 Expatriate work has been described as high-density global work (Shaffer *et al.*, 2012; Mello *et*
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26 *al.*, 2022) with three different characteristics: physical mobility (i.e. the work role is conducted in
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28 a different country), cognitive flexibility (i.e. expatriates have to adjust their thought patterns and
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30 scripts to effectively interact with people and adapt to situational demands across cultures), and
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32 non-work disruption (i.e. the work role requirements disrupt or interfere with the employee's
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34 normal activities and routines outside work). Expatriates leave behind most of their connections
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36 and support networks and have to adjust to living in a new context (Haslberger, *et al.*, 2014;
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38 Lapointe, *et al.*, 2020).
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42 Expatriates work involve a wide diversity of tasks and with a variety levels of autonomy
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44 (Bossard and Peterson, 2005; Suutari and Mäkelä, 2007), leading to high demands on their
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46 competence. As an outcome, expatriation is a transitional experience which develops assignees'
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48 self-awareness/confidence, competences and networks (Dickmann, *et al.*, 2018), and may also
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50 lead to identity changes (Kohonen, 2005). In turn, these challenges and learning requirements -
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52 in an unfamiliar context - lead to increased stress and overload, and therefore the well-being of
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54 assignees may be impacted (Ali *et al.*, 2020; Carraher *et al.*, 2004; Van der Zee, *et al.*, 2005;
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4 Wang and Kanungo, 2004). We therefore examine the job effort demands and rewards balance
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6 for this group of internationally mobile workers.
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10 Following the ERI model, if an employee perceives that the efforts demanded for work are
11 continuously higher than is merited by the rewards received, negative consequences such as
12 emotional exhaustion are likely to follow (Dai *et al.*, 2008; Willis, *et al.*, 2008; Kinman, 2019).
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14 Furthermore, following the argumentation in JD-R theory, both efforts (job demand) and rewards
15 (job resource) may have individual effects on employee well-being. If employee are required to
16 invest a lot of effort in their job, that will be associated with stressful short-term experiences
17 (Ilies, *et al.*, 2007) and with declining well-being over time, predicting, for example, emotional
18 exhaustion (Hakanen, *et al.*, 2008), which is the primary symptom of burnout (Maslach, 2018).
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20 Gaining rewards may reduce the likelihood of burnout (Landolt *et al.*, 2017).
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28 To date, we know little about expatriates' job-related well-being, burnout and its core dimension
29 of job exhaustion, but studies have shown that expatriates experience role conflict and role
30 ambiguity, which may increase requirements for effort, and these are related to higher levels of
31 burnout (Bhanugopan and Fish, 2006). And positive experiences at work, such as successful
32 work adjustment or meaningful expatriate jobs, or 'rewards' in our terminology here, are linked
33 to a lower likelihood of burnout (Silbiger, *et al.*, 2017; Silbiger and Pines, 2014). There is no
34 empirical evidence of the effects of imbalance between effort and rewards among expatriates.
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41 Therefore, using ERI and JD-R theories and the existing empirical evidence, we hypothesise
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46 *H1a) higher imbalances between effort demands and rewards are associated with higher*
47 *job exhaustion;*
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50 *H1b: High effort demands are positively associated with expatriates' job exhaustion*

51 *H1c: High rewards are negatively associated with expatriates' job exhaustion*
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55 ***Job Effort and Reward Differences between AEs and SIEs*** 56 57 58 59 60

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4 *Job effort demands:* Given the differences identified so far between the situation of AEs and
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6 SIEs, we examine how job effort demands and rewards may differ between these two types of
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8 expatriates. There is relatively little empirical evidence about the differences between AEs and
9
10 SIEs in terms of job characteristics and job demands. Studies comparing the work of these two
11
12 types of expatriate report generally support the view that AEs are more likely to work in more
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14 challenging roles than SIEs (Doherty, *et al.*, 2011), typically being in higher organisational
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16 positions and working at higher organisational levels (Alshahrani and Morley, 2015; Froese and
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18 Peltokorpi, 2013) – though there are studies that show no difference between them in terms of
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20 their being staff or managers (Froese and Peltokorpi, 2011) or CEOs or non-CEOs (Lauring, *et*
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22 *al.*, 2019). Reflecting the difference in jobs, AEs weekly working hours are longer than SIEs
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24 (Ballesteros-Leiva *et al.*, 2017, 2018). For instance, Andresen and her colleagues (2015) found
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26 that even with the same levels of education and at the same phase in life, AEs' level of authority
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28 in organisations was higher than SIEs. This probably reflects the fact that, due to the high costs
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30 of sending an assigned expatriate, multinational enterprises commonly use them only
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32 for positions that are strategically important. SIEs may be less interested in high-pressured, high-
33
34 status jobs abroad or they need more experience than AEs to reach the higher level positions. For
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36 example, SIEs working as CEOs have spent a longer time in their host location, in their current
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38 job and they had worked longer abroad as an expatriate when compared to their AE counterparts
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40 (Selmer *et al.*, 2016). Although all these results are linked on objective measures of job
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42 characteristic, we expect them also to be linked on demands for effort at work as a subjective
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44 perception, here, demands for effort being higher for AEs compared to SIEs.
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47 *Job rewards:* There is little information available comparing the salaries of AEs and SIEs, and it
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49 is likely that some elements of the compensation of globally mobile employees may have
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51 changed (Mercer, 2021) since they were published. Tornikoski (2011) found that, as might be
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53 expected from the differences in hierarchical position, monthly gross salary was higher for AEs
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55 than SIEs. However, it has also been reported that there were no significant difference in annual
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4 salary between AEs and SIEs (Biemann and Andresen, 2010), though the salaries of SIEs
5 showed a much greater standard deviation, reflecting the range of their status in organisational
6 hierarchies (Suutari and Brewster, 2000). Furthermore, although some SIEs may work
7 for multinational employers, even when they do, they are employed on local terms and
8 conditions and rarely share the same benefits as AEs (Froese and Peltokorpi, 2011, Cartus,
9 2016).

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17 In terms of the rewards gained in the form of esteem, the evidence is even thinner. SIEs are more
18 likely to work under host-country supervisors than AEs which, in turn, has been found to lead to
19 lower satisfaction (Froese and Peltokorpi, 2013), perhaps linked to AEs gaining more support
20 from their supervisor than do SIEs. Furthermore, AEs gain more social support from their
21 colleagues than SIEs and are provided with stronger organisational support structures and
22 resources (Agha-Alikhani, 2016), reinforcing their perceptions of higher rewards.

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30 Career opportunities and job security are also important elements of reward. SIEs may expect
31 higher benefits from international experience for their future careers than AEs, since they start
32 from a lower base (Biemann and Andresen, 2010) but, when development of career capital due
33 to international work has been reported, development in such areas as organisational
34 knowledge has been higher among AEs than SIEs (Dickmann, *et al.*, 2018). Breaches or
35 violations of the psychological contract have resonance with the security element of rewards and
36 occur more frequently among SIEs, often linked directly to uncertainties in their job security and
37 career development opportunities (Zhang and Rienties, 2017). AEs get offers of further work
38 more often than SIEs, both from their own employer and others, even if long-term career
39 outcomes do not differ much between equally qualified AEs and SIEs (Suutari, *et al.*,
40 2018). Further, whilst career sponsorship and support from important people in the organisation
41 has been found to be correlated with career success (Ng *et al.*, 2005; Benson and Pattie, 2008),
42 SIEs have neither repatriation agreements nor home country units to repatriate to and, therefore,
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4 no such sponsorship (Tharenou and Caulfield, 2010). Putting these factors together, we
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6 hypothesise that:

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8 *2a: Effort demands are higher for AEs than for SIEs;*

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10 *2b: AEs experience greater rewards than SIEs*

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13 *Balance between effort demands and rewards:* ERI theory suggests that the balance between
14 effort and rewards is important. In particular, if employee perceives that there is no need to
15 devote high effort to their work they do not expect to gain as much rewards back compared to
16 those who experience that they need to put lots of effort into their work (Dai *et al.*, 2008;
17 Willis, *et al.*, 2008; Kinman, 2019). We have noted that whilst AEs may experience higher
18 effort demands than SIEs', they are also likely to gain higher rewards from their job. However,
19 in terms of balance between effort and rewards, it is possible that although SIEs may experience
20 less effort and rewards than AEs, the experience of balance is similar in both groups and thus we
21 set a hypothesis:
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33 *2c: AEs and SIEs experience of effort demands-reward imbalance does not differ from each*
34 *other.*

35 36 37 38 ***Expatriation type and exhaustion, and the mediating role of effort demands and rewards***

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40 Studies of burnout amongst expatriates have, to date, all been conducted among AEs, so we do
41 not have any empirical evidence about whether AEs and SIEs levels of burnout or
42 exhaustion may differ. Therefore, we do not offer a hypothesis suggesting a difference between
43 these two groups of expatriates, but we control our study model (see Figure 1) for a possible
44 direct link from expatriation type for exhaustion.
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51 We know that the requirements imposed on AEs and SIEs for effort, and their rewards, may
52 differ. In addition, JD-R theory suggest that every job has its own kind of demands and
53 resources and this theory does not take into account how diversity of certain group of employees
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4 may actually be linked to how similar kinds of job demands and resources are perceived. Thus, it
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6 is possible that although the health impairment and motivational paths from job demands and
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8 resources to work well-being can be similar for different employee groups, taking one step back
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10 in the path and including the employee groups as a first step of the analysis may reveal an
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12 underlying mechanism explaining work well-being in more precise ways. Therefore we suggest
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14 that AEs benefit from several job resources (rewards), thus we may expect them to become less
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16 job exhausted via the positive link from resources to work well-being. However, at the same
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18 time, they are under high job demands (expected effort) and thus, via an ill-health process, they
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20 may experience higher job exhaustion than SIEs. Therefore, expected efforts and rewards may
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22 mediate the link between expatriation type and exhaustion and we hypothesise that:

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24 *3) H3: (a) effort demands, and (b) rewards mediate the relationship between expatriates'*
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26 *type and job exhaustion.*
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30 According to ERI theory, an unfavorable imbalance between job effort demands and rewards
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32 (high required effort not being met by rewards) impacts job exhaustion. If an employee perceives
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34 that the efforts demanded for work are continuously higher than is merited by the rewards
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36 received, negative consequences for their well-being are likely to follow (Dai *et al.*, 2008; Willis,
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38 *et al.*, 2008; Kinman, 2019). So, we can assume that AEs' high effort is balanced with high
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40 rewards, and efforts expected from SIEs' are balanced with rewards at an equivalent level.
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42 Therefore, relying on the ERI theory and earlier expatriate literature, we may assume that effort-
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44 reward imbalance perceptions are not mediating the path from the type of the expatriation and on
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46 job exhaustion. Thus, we hypothesise:

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49 *4): There is no indirect relationship between expatriation type and job exhaustion*
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51 *via mediating effect by the effort demand-reward imbalance.*
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55 Our hypotheses and research questions are summarised in Figure 1.
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[Figure 1 The hypothesised models about here]

METHODOLOGY

Data collection

To test these hypotheses, we collected data through an internet survey. The survey was carried out in co-operation with two Finnish trade unions, the Finnish Association of Business School Graduates and the Academic Engineers and Architects in Finland (TEK). Given the high levels of union membership in Finland (Fulton, 2015), it is likely that this is a representative sample of the relevant highly qualified groups of workers in the country. Both unions sent an e-mail invitation to all 1910 (742 + 1168 respectively) members shown by their members' registers as living outside Finland. A total of 527 (222+305) survey responses were returned. 42 responses were excluded because the respondents did not work while living abroad (they were e.g. retired, unemployed or were taking care of home and/or children while living abroad). The final total of eligible responses was 484, giving us a final response rate of 25.3%. Of the respondents, 37.2 % were AEs and 61.6 % were SIEs (1.9 % did not report their expatriation type). 69.1 % were men. The average age of respondents was 42.2 years and 82 % have a Master's degree. 73 % of the respondents were married and 47 % of the respondents did not have children. The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Measures

Expatriation type was measured with responses to a single statement: "At the moment, I am on international assignment sent by my employer" OR "I have self-initiated my work abroad". Therefore, expatriation type was coded as 0 (self-initiated expatriation) and 1 (assigned expatriation).

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4 *Job effort demands and rewards* were measured using a Finnish version (Kinnunen, *et al.*, 2008)
5 of the ERI scale developed by Siegrist *et al.* (2004). We used a five-item version of the
6 *Effort demand* scale (see Siegrist *et al.*, 2004) for measuring demanding aspects of the
7 psychosocial work environment (e.g., “I am under constant time pressure due to a heavy
8 workload”). The items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly
9 agree). The efforts scale showed satisfactory composite reliability (CR=0.75) and Cronbach’s
10 alpha ($\alpha=0.77$) values. Average variance extracted (AVE=0.39) value was a bit lower than the
11 threshold value of 0.4 (see e.g., Fornell, C., & Larcker, 1981; Malhotra, 2010), however, we
12 decided to use the scale as the AVE value is just marginally below the threshold value, and CR
13 and Cronbach’s alpha values were satisfactory. Note that what is being measured is not the effort
14 an employee puts in, but the requirement for that effort: it is the ‘pressure for effort’ that is being
15 assessed here. *Reward* was measured by 11 items, including three subscales: esteem (e.g., “I
16 receive the respect I deserve from my superiors”); career opportunities (e.g., “My job promotion
17 prospects are poor”); and job security (e.g., “My job security is poor”). The rating and scoring
18 were the same as for the effort items. The scale showed good internal consistency (CR=0.84;
19 Cronbach’s $\alpha=0.83$), the AVE value was 0.34, which falls a bit below the threshold value.

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The balance between effort and reward, the ERI ratio, was computed as follows: because the
number of items in efforts and rewards are not equal, the reward score was multiplied by a
correction factor of 0.5454, which is calculated from the number of items in efforts divided by
the number of items in rewards (=6/11) (See e.g., Kinnunen *et al.*, 2008) and then we placed the
effort score as the nominator and the reward score as the denominator. A value close to zero
indicates a favourable condition, in which effort is relatively low and reward is relatively high,
whereas values much beyond 1.0 reflect a large amount of effort required that was not matched
by the reward received. For testing the model, we used the logarithmic ERI ratio, which is
recommended in the prior research, as it can be treated as a continuous variable and it has been

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4 found to be a more powerful formulation of ERI than the dichotomous version of the variable
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6 (see e.g., Kinnunen *et al.*, 2008; Siegrist *et al.*, 2004).
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9 *Job exhaustion* we measured using the five-item scale from the Bergen Burnout Inventory (BBI–
10 15) (Salmela-Aro *et al.*, 2011) and the scale showed good reliability and validity (AVE=0.51;
11 CR=0.84; Cronbach's α =0.83). The items were rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from
12 1 (completely disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).
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18 *Control variables*: We controlled for gender, age, the duration of stay in the host country and
19 organisational position, because each of these have been found to play a role in expatriate
20 experiences (see e.g. Cavazotte *et al.*, 2021; Wurtz, 2022) and to effect efforts and rewards
21 (Siegrist *et al.*, 2004). Our study findings remain the same also if control variables are left out.
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29 ***Tests of measures and analytic procedures***

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31 Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to assess the quality of the 3-factor measurement
32 model. The 3-factor measurement model (including efforts, rewards, and exhaustion) provided
33 an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2=386.23$, $df=159$; $\chi^2/df=2.43$; RMSEA=0.06; CFI=0.94;
34 TLI=0.92; SRMR=0.08). All items loaded significantly on their latent constructs ($p<0.001$).
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41 We also tested the extent to which the survey items of efforts, rewards and exhaustion might
42 foster common method variance. Common method variance was tested with different statistical
43 techniques. The single-factor test has been criticised for not revealing all the potential issues of
44 common method variance, however, we decided to use it, because the specific source of method
45 bias is unknown (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). The results of the single-factor test done by CFA
46 method, showed poor fit to the data ($\chi^2/df=10.3$; RMSEA=0.14; CFI=0.49; TLI=0.44;
47 SRMR=0.17). In addition, we conducted Harman's test, which indicates that common method is
48 not an issue in the data, as multiple factors emerge, and the biggest factor constitutes only 23 %
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4 of the variance. These results indicate that common method variance is not threatening the
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6 interpretation of the results of the study.
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9 The analysis was conducted with Stata 17.0 software. Structural equation modelling with
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11 maximum likelihood estimation is used to test the study hypotheses. Direct and indirect effects
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13 are estimated in the model. The model includes all the control variables presented in the
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15 measures section. In addition to the research model, we tested the mediating effects of ERI ratio
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17 in a separate model.
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19 20 RESULTS

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23 Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and the correlation matrix for the constructs used in the
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25 study. Further, we tested whether the means of construct between AEs and SIEs are significantly
26
27 different. We conducted t-tests, which showed that effort demands are significantly higher for
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29 AEs ($t=3.12^{**}$) and the ERI-ratio is unfavorable for AEs as well ($t=-2.62^{**}$). AEs also reported
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31 higher level exhaustion ($t=2.16^*$). Levene's test statistics showed that variances are equal in
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33 effort demands ($F=0.89$, $p=0.35$) and exhaustion ($F=2.1$, $p=0.15$). The mean difference of
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35 rewards was not statistically significant.
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38 **[Table 1 Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix about here]**
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41 The hypotheses were tested through latent structural equation modelling (SEM), using Stata 17.0
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43 software. To test for the mediating effects of rewards and efforts (model 1) and ERI ratio (model
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45 2), we followed the suggestions of James *et al.* (2006). Their SEM approach was considered
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47 appropriate in comparison to the more commonly used Baron and Kenny (1986) method, which
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49 is considered overly conservative. The SEM approach for mediation does not require a
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51 statistically significant direct relationship between antecedent and outcome and does not require
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53 significant total effects in concluding a mediation (see e.g., James *et al.*, 2006; Zhao, *et al.*,
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55 2010).
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4 Model 1 showed acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2/df=2.55$; RMSEA=0.06; CFI=0.89; TLI=0.86;
5 SRMR=0.08). It revealed no statistically significant impact on exhaustion for the control
6 variables of gender ($\beta=-0.05$, n.s.), age ($\beta=-0.03$, n.s.), the duration of stay ($\beta=-0.06$, n.s.), or
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8 organizational position ($\beta=0.05$, n.s.). However, the model shows that organisational position is
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10 positively associated with both effort demands ($\beta=0.13$, $p<0.05$) and rewards ($\beta=0.23$, $p<0.001$).
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12 In addition, gender was found to be positively related to rewards ($\beta=0.12$, $p<0.05$). Otherwise, no
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14 statistically significant link was found between gender and efforts, nor between any aspect of age
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16 and duration of stay and rewards or effort demands.
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21 Hypotheses 1a, 1b and 1c were tested (model 1 and model 2) and the results showed that, for this
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23 representative sample of Finnish expatriates, 1a was supported, as the ERI ratio was found to be
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25 positively connected to exhaustion ($\beta=0.71$, $p<0.001$), indicating that if effort demands are not
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27 matched by rewards (in terms of esteem, career opportunities and job security), expatriates suffer
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29 higher job exhaustion (model 2). Furthermore, effort demand has a positive relationship to
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31 exhaustion ($\beta=0.89$, $p<0.001$), while rewards have a negative relationship with exhaustion ($\beta=-$
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33 0.14 , $p<0.001$). Thus, support was received also for hypotheses 1b and 1c.
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36 The direct relationship between expatriation type and exhaustion was controlled for but no
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38 significant direct path was found either in model 1 ($\beta=-0.07$, n.s.) or model 2 ($\beta=-0.02$, n.s.).
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41 Next, any direct relationships between expatriation type and effort demand and rewards were
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43 tested. First, hypothesis 2a was tested and the results revealed a positive relationship between
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45 expatriation type and effort demand ($\beta=0.15$, $p<0.01$), showing that assigned expatriates
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47 experience higher demands for effort than self-initiated expatriates, meaning that H2a was
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49 supported. A relationship between expatriation type and rewards was not found ($\beta=-0.05$, n.s.),
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51 indicating that H2b was not supported as our results show that assigned expatriates do not
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53 experience more (non-financial) rewards than self-initiated expatriates. The results of model 2
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55 showed that expatriation type is positively associated with the ERI ratio ($\beta=0.15$, $p<0.01$),
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4 meaning that assigned expatriates have higher ERI ratios than self-initiated expatriates. Thus, our
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6 hypothesis 2c did not gain support as the match between effort demands and rewards is
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8 less favourable for AEs than SIEs.
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11 Finally, indirect effects of effort demands and rewards (model 1) and the ERI ratio (model 2) on
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13 exhaustion were tested. There is an indirect positive effect of expatriation type on exhaustion
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15 through required effort demands ($\beta=0.35$, $p<0.01$) supporting our hypothesis 3a, but not
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17 through rewards. Thus our hypothesis 3b did not gain support. To assess the significance of the
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19 indirect effects of expatriation type on exhaustion, we used a bootstrapping procedure that
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21 created a 95 % confidence interval around the indirect effect estimate (see e.g., Lau and Cheung,
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23 2012; Zhao *et al.*, 2010). This procedure provided evidence that the indirect effect is statistically
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25 significant as the confidence intervals did not include 0 (CI 95 %: 0.01; 0.19). Thus, assigned
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27 expatriates experience higher job effort that leads them to suffer higher levels of exhaustion.
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30 The indirect effect of expatriation type on exhaustion through the ERI ratio was tested (model 2).
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32 Results showed a positive indirect effect of expatriation type on exhaustion ($\beta=0.25$, $p<0.01$),
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34 meaning that assigned expatriates experience higher job effort in relation to gained rewards, and
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36 that leads to them suffering higher level of exhaustion. The bootstrapping procedure provided
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38 further evidence that the indirect effect is statistically significant. Therefore, our hypothesis 4 did
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40 not gain support. The results are summarised in Table 2.
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42 **[Table 2 Results of structural equation modeling about here]**
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45 46 47 48 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS** 49

50 We explored whether expatriation type (assigned expatriation versus self-initiated expatriation)
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52 is linked to job exhaustion via possible differences in the efforts expatriates are required to put
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54 into their job or the, non-financial, rewards they gain from it. We also wanted to test whether the
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4 effort demand-reward imbalance (ERI) model works in this specific context. The present study is
5 the first to test both JD-R and ERI theory for expatriates. Our results include some expected and
6 some unexpected findings. Although international careers have specific features that
7 differentiate them from domestic careers (Shaffer *et al.*, 2012; Froese and Peltokorpi, 2011), the
8 results of the present study indicate that the hypotheses built on the ERI-model developed for
9 domestic work were supported: imbalance between effort demands and rewards was linked to
10 stronger job exhaustion. In addition, JD-R gained support too; higher levels of required effort
11 were related to higher levels of job exhaustion, while rewards have a negative relationship with
12 job exhaustion, ameliorating it. The findings thus support the relevance of ERI and JD-R-theory
13 in the context of international work, although expatriation-specific job demands (e.g. difference
14 in work culture) and resources (e.g. developmental tasks) should be included in addition these
15 more general ones in future studies.
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28 As a theoretical contribution, we suggest that although JD-R and ERI theories typically represent
29 different lines of stress studies in the work psychology literature, together they seem to give
30 more nuanced understanding of the antecedents for work well-being than either approach alone.
31 Thus, studying the effects of job demands (i.e. efforts), resources (i.e. rewards), and the balance
32 between them should be considered in future. Both theories also focus only on the link from job
33 characteristics to work well-being and possible outcomes from that. We suggest that contextual
34 diversity, e.g. different types of employee groups (here AEs and SIEs as sub-groups of
35 expatriates) should be taken into account in work stress theories.
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45 When the indirect effects of effort demands and rewards on exhaustion were tested, the results
46 indicated an indirect positive effect of expatriation type on exhaustion through effort demands
47 and through an imbalance between effort demands and rewards. However, indirect effects of
48 expatriation type on exhaustion through (non-financial) rewards were not found. This reveals the
49 underlying mechanism linking expatriation type and job exhaustion, even though a direct
50 link between expatriation type and job exhaustion was not found. Thus, our study contributes to
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4 current knowledge about expatriates' work well-being in the form of job exhaustion (core
5 component of burnout). Future studies should widen the scope and study different indicators of
6 work well-being, for example, work engagement or flourishing (Demerouti, *et al.*, 2015) and
7 potentially explore antecedents (including those that are psychosocial and context specific in
8 nature, and those that are factual, such as financial rewards). It would also be valuable to study
9 the mechanisms linking work well-being to organisational or individual outcomes, such as
10 expatriate performance or career success.
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18 Our study opens a novel avenue to understanding the diversity of the globally mobile workforce.
19 Future studies should go a step beyond comparison of certain groups, such as AEs and SIEs
20 (although even that is relatively rare). Studies could check whether the relationships between
21 studied variables are different for the two groups (moderation/ interaction effect: here that
22 approach was not relevant as we did not have any reason to expect that the relationships between
23 efforts/ rewards/ ERI ratio and job exhaustion are different for AEs and SIEs). We suggest that
24 future studies should explore the paths that may explain why, for instance, work well-being
25 differs among different groups of globally mobile employees and, if possible, also include a
26 variety of antecedents and outcomes.
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37 Our sample of assigned expatriates experience higher pressure for effort than self-initiated
38 expatriates, in line with earlier findings that AEs are often in more senior jobs and work longer
39 hours than SIEs (Froese and Peltokorpi, 2013; Ballesteros *et al.*, 2018; Ballesteros *et al.*, 2017).
40 One unexpected finding concerned the direct relationships between expatriation type and
41 rewards. We did not gather information on financial rewards, although there is evidence in
42 expatriation research to suggest that equally qualified AEs and SIEs may not be so different in
43 this respect (Biemann and Andresen, 2010). In this study we focused on non-financial rewards
44 that are essential elements of companies' rewarding systems (De Gieter and Hofmans,
45 2015) and we expected, given the higher positions of AEs in general, that they would have
46 measurably more non-financial rewards than SIEs. In fact, this was not the case. Looking further
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4 into the three dimensions of rewards (career opportunities, esteem, and job security) in additional
5 tests, expatriation type was not statistically significantly related to any of them.
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8 Different interpretations of our finding here are possible. From the career success
9 perspective, the typical starting point in career discussion and research is what happens to
10 expatriates when they return to their home countries. However, many expatriates do not return
11 home, they continue their international career either by staying on in the host country or by
12 moving to assignments in other countries. Recent research (Suutari, *et al.*, 2018) reinforces that
13 point and in addition shows that in the long run the careers of SIEs and AEs were equally
14 successful. Expatriation is, in general, good for your career – at least in the long run. Hence,
15 perhaps, the finding that job security and career opportunities seem to be not so different
16 between AEs and SIEs. Esteem may come from different sources. Thus, AEs may be more
17 recognised and supported as agents of headquarters, but SIEs greater knowledge of the country
18 and its language may bring them some credit – indeed SIEs may be used as boundary
19 spanners (Furusawa and Brewster, 2018). SIEs may also be highly valued in local organisations,
20 for example in less developed countries, when they may be able to bring in new knowledge and
21 competencies through their experience elsewhere. Since both AEs and SIEs may have successful
22 careers, even though their careers may end up being to some extent different by nature, their
23 equal rewards may not be such a surprise though, clearly, we need more research be able to
24 conclude whether and how the rewards of SIEs and AEs may differ.
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43 Opposite to our expectations, we found that AEs balance between effort demands and rewards
44 was worse than SIEs, with the required efforts being too high compared to the non-financial
45 rewards received. Our hypotheses 2c and 4 suggested that there is no difference in balance
46 between effort demands and rewards and thus no mediation effect on job exhaustion was
47 expected. Both of these hypothesis were left without support. It is likely that the reason for this is
48 that the earlier expatriate literature has mainly compared jobs and careers of AEs and SIEs with
49 objective measures (such as organisational position or job offers) whereas our study was based
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4 on their subjective evaluations concerning their work life. It is possible that this has affected our
5 findings and we suggest that both subjective and objective measures are needed in future
6 research. However, it is important to acknowledge that they may tell a different story about the
7 AEs and SIEs experiences and it is likely that subjective experiences are closer to each other than
8 the objective measures would make us to assume. In addition, it is possible that overall, for AEs,
9 balance may be more challenging to achieve as they have less control over their assignment than
10 SIEs. This all is likely to effect on well-being outcomes too. Furthermore, in addition to the need
11 to study different types of job-related effort demands and rewards (or interaction between them),
12 it is also important to consider whether they are in balance.
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23 In summary, the theoretical contribution of this study is threefold. First, our contribution to the
24 current expatriation literature is that we use JD-R and ERI to compare the work well-being of
25 two types of expatriates and reveal the underlying mechanisms explaining why these two types
26 of expatriates may differ from each other in job exhaustion. Second, this study contributes to
27 work stress theories, JD-R and ERI, by testing them in the same study and in a novel context,
28 international relocations. Based on our findings we suggest that incorporating both perspectives
29 is needed and especially relying on the idea of imbalance only may leave the holistic
30 understanding of the phenomena incomplete. Third, this study contributes to work stress theories
31 by highlighting the value of taking account of the diversity of employee groups (here two types
32 of expatriates) when mechanisms from antecedents to work well-being outcomes are being
33 studied.
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45 In addition to these theoretical contributions, several practical implications can be drawn from
46 the present study. The results indicate that required job effort had a significant impact on the job
47 exhaustion of expatriates. In order to avoid overload, in particular among AEs who often have
48 higher level of responsibility and workload than SIEs, organisations employing expatriates
49 should consider providing them with further support. The main focus in expatriate training has
50 been on cross-cultural issues in order to support expatriate adjustment (Wurtz, 2014).
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4 However, since expatriates are often required to handle tasks that are more demanding and have
5 jobs where task variety is higher, attention should be given also to job-related training and
6 initiation into the new work situation. Furthermore, since AEs particularly often take up higher
7 level positions than the ones they had back at home, there may be a need for further management
8 training. As ERI-theory suggests, it is also important to examine the reward side of expatriation
9 since an effort-reward imbalance impacts the well-being of expatriates. Multinational employers
10 tend to provide generous financial rewards to their assigned expatriates but the non-financial
11 rewards (esteem in the form of respect and support, career opportunities and job security) are
12 also important to balance the high levels of required effort during expatriation. In addition, it has
13 been found that SIEs rely on emotional social support more than AEs when coping with stress
14 (Wurtz, 2022). Increasing expatriates' own knowledge and understanding about different ways in
15 which they can take care of their own work well-being would be beneficial too.

26 27 28 ***Further research***

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31 Like all research, this project was limited by resources. Our data is cross-sectional and the
32 response rate could be higher (25.3 %) – although this is higher than many less representative
33 studies and not far from some more opportunistic expatriate studies (e.g. 30.7 % in Ynlu *et al.*,
34 2018; 21.5 % Maharjan, *et al.*, 2021). Our data was taken from a carefully constructed sample
35 from Finland and is representative of qualified people (business graduates and architects and
36 engineers) in a small but highly international country. However, exploration of the effort
37 demands, rewards and well-being, and the effort demand-reward imbalance, of assigned and self-
38 initiated expatriates with longitudinal data and in other countries, perhaps especially larger and
39 less internationally minded ones, would be beneficial and help to generalise our results. Further
40 studies amongst less well qualified expatriates would also be valuable.

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43 Our study has used data from the expatriates themselves and has, therefore, recorded their
44 perceptions. In terms of required effort demands, rewards and well-being it is difficult to see who
45 would be in a better position to understand these issues, and hence the perceptual data is the most
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4 appropriate data possible. However, carefully constructed studies using data from their superiors,
5 and their co-workers, in particular their local co-workers, could add useful nuance to the
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7 picture.
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10 We did not collect data on financial rewards as it is not included in the ERI model. Given the
11 large range of countries, the huge differences in organisational type and sector, occupations and
12 job levels amongst our respondents, evaluating and comparing financial data would have
13 amounted to an additional, or an alternative, research project. Non-financial rewards are the ones
14 that have been measured in previous studies using ERI theory and our assumptions were that
15 non-financial rewards would 'mirror' financial rewards and that rewards would go with the type
16 of expatriate, replicating the data in other studies. This was not confirmed, so it may not have
17 been material to the use of ERI theory, but future studies could incorporate financial rewards
18 too. Furthermore, it could be seen as a limitation that our study has a tight focus on assignment
19 type as an independent variable and on wellbeing as an outcome variable while there are many
20 other predictors of wellbeing as well as possible outcome variables.
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33 Finally, here, future studies should explore other possible mediators which may shed light on
34 how and why the experiences of AEs and SIEs may differ. In addition, a wider approach to
35 expatriates' well-being, taking account, for instance, of general life satisfaction as well as
36 positive indicators of work well-being such as work engagement (Akkermans and Kubasch,
37 2017), would give us a more holistic understanding. Paying attention to the role of effort
38 demands and rewards originating from the personal life sphere would be a valuable addition to
39 research, as family has been shown to play an essential role in the context of international careers
40 (Lysova *et al.*, 2015) and expatriates' lives (Mäkelä and Suutari, 2013) and thus likely to affect
41 their well-being too.
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52 In conclusion, this study contributes to the literature on international careers by revealing
53 underlying mechanisms related to the effort demands-reward imbalance relationship
54 of expatriates' and their well-being at work as revealed, in particular, by exhaustion, and shows
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4 how some of these effects are mediated by the type of expatriation being undertaken. Although
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6 expatriation type was not found to have any direct effect on job exhaustion, our results revealed
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8 that being an assigned expatriate significantly increased job effort, which in turn predicted job
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10 exhaustion.

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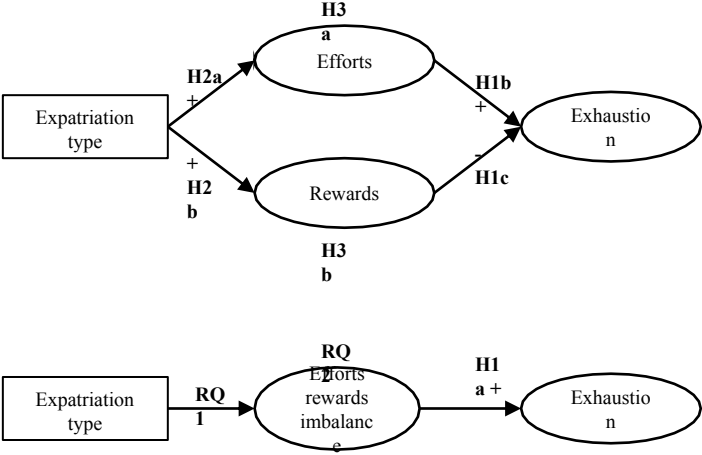
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Variable	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Expatriation type ²⁾												
Eri ratio	0.44	0.30	0.36	0.30	0.12**							
Efforts	2.86	0.63	2.69	0.62	0.13**	1)						
Rewards	3.10	0.48	3.14	0.51	-0.04	1)	-0.01					
Exhaustion	3.26	1.02	3.04	1.12	0.10*	0.65***	0.67***	-0.25***				
Gender ³⁾	1.22	0.41	1.36	0.48	-0.15**	-0.06	0.02	0.09*	-0.02			
Age (years)	43.34	9.50	41.38	9.76	0.10*	0.05	0.05	0.04	-0.02	-0.12**		
Position	7.16	1.81	6.43	1.82	0.19***	0.05	0.18***	0.21***	0.09*	-0.06	0.49***	
The duration of stay	7.47	3.53	10.71	6.84	-0.26***	0.08	0.06	0.02	-0.02	-0.02	0.49***	0.28***
* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, ***p<0.001												
1) Correlations are not reported as ERI ratio is calculated based on efforts and rewards.												
2) 0=SIE; 1=AE 3) 1=male; 2=female												

	Model 1: Rewards & Efforts	Model 2: ERI ratio
Structural paths		
Expatriation type ^{e1} → efforts	0.15**	
Expatriation type ^{e1} → rewards	-0.05	
Expatriation type ^{e1} → ERI ratio		0.15**
Expatriation type ^{e1} → job exhaustion	-0.07	-0.02
Rewards → job exhaustion	-0.14***	
Efforts → job exhaustion	0.89***	
Eri ratio → job exhaustion		0.71***
Control variables		
Age → efforts	-0.07	
Age → rewards	-0.01	
Age → ERI ratio		-0.05
Age → job exhaustion	-0.02	-0.07
Gender ² → efforts	0.1	
Gender ² → rewards	0.13*	
Gender ² → ERI ratio		-0.04
Gender ² → job exhaustion	-0.05	0.03
Organisational position → efforts	0.13*	
Organisational position → rewards	0.23***	
Organisational position → ERI ratio		0
Organisational position → job exhaustion	0.06	0.15***
The duration of stay → efforts	0.12	
The duration of stay → rewards	-0.05	
The duration of stay → ERI ratio		0.15**
The duration of stay → job exhaustion	-0.06	0.04
Indirect effects		
Expatriation type → rewards → job exhaustion	0.01	
Expatriation type → efforts → job exhaustion	0.27*	
Expatriation type → ERI ratio → job exhaustion		0.25**
x ² /df	2.62	2.6
CFI	0.89	0.97
TLI	0.86	0.93
RMSEA	0.06	0.06
*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001		
¹) 0=AE; 1=SIE ²) 1=male; 2=female		