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Social Capital and Career Success of Expatriates

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ABSTRACT

The study has used the social capital perspective in the context of career success of expatriates. With the increasing importance of global mobility, organisations are considering expatriation to send employees abroad on international assignments that help employees gain new knowledge and skills as well as an understanding of global business operations. The international experience expatriates gain from these assignments adds value to the human capital of organizations and also it is substantially important for the careers of employees. However, there are challenges relating to repatriation and it impacts the career success of expatriates. When expatriates return to their home countries, they face challenges of finding suitable roles, and career advancement opportunities, thus it impacts their perceptions of career success. Therefore, the topic of career success of expatriates has gained attention among researchers and practitioners to shed light on the factors that can support and add value to the careers of expatriates.

Concerning this, the social capital perspective has been found as highly valuable and relevant for expatriates' career success. Expatriates have an edge in terms of having diverse social capital due to their boundaryless nature of work as compared to the employees who do not have international experience. Social connections are of great value for one's career success and therefore, the study answers the research question that how social capital impacts career success of expatriates.

The data is collected through semi-structured interviews with seven Finnish managers who have been on expatriate assignments. The findings are analyzed using the content analysis approach. The findings of the study highlight that social capital consisting of internal networks (within an organisation) and external networks (outside the organisation) has an impact on different career success outcomes. These networks include both weak and strong ties. The diverse internal and external networks including weak ties were found to be more relevant to achieving promotions, new job offers, and enhancing expatriates' perceived internal and external marketability. Also, these weak tie networks (professional contacts) provide access to broader information within the organisation as well as career related information outside the organisation. While on the other side, the internal and external networks of strong ties (social contacts) were found more relevant when it comes to describing managers' career satisfaction. Overall, all managers valued social capital and its positive implications in their careers. The findings add to the previous research on the topic that how social capital contributes to the career success of expatriates. The study offers theoretical and practical implications and shows organisations that they should support expatriates in developing and maintaining diverse networks both in the home and host country organisation. This will support repatriation and expatriates' career success, ultimately helping the organisations to retain talent and create value at the organisational level.

KEYWORDS: Expatriation, International Assignments, Expatriates, Repatriation, Social capital, Personal networks, Interpersonal Relationships, Career Success

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Abbreviations

MNC Multinational Corporation

HRM Human Resource Management

HQ   Headquarter

IHRM International human resource management

1 Introduction

In today's global world cross-boundary distances are reducing, and firms have a presence in multiple countries. Multinationals are increasingly relying on global mobility to send expatriates to new countries for handling global assignments and developing international experience. The reason for assigning international assignments is to attain broader organisational goals (Chiang et al., 2018). Expatriates handle global business operations and support in cross-boundary coordination by transferring knowledge and skills across the borders (Reiche, 2012). They become a source of developing global capabilities and new networks beyond the borders, thus facilitating MNCs in multiple ways (Chiang et al., 2018; Oddou et al., 2013; Reiche, 2012; Takeuchi, 2010).

The increasing trend of global mobility has created pressure for human resource management (HRM) in terms of developing competencies and leaders who can work in global markets and handle business critical assignments. This has been a priority for HR, and MNCs are continuously focusing on developing new skills and a global mindset among employees (Caligiuri, 2013; Oddou et al., 2013). Organisations recognise the international experience and this has become significantly important over the past years (Hamori & Koyuncu, 2011). From employees' perspective, if they want to reach senior level positions, the international experience is recommended to broaden their skills and most organisations see it as of benefit (Daily et al., 2000; Magnusson & Boggs, 2006). The global assignments provide employees opportunities for personal growth and therefore impact their careers substantially (Kraimer et al., 2009). It affects both their careers within the organisation and their chances of getting employment in the external market.

On other side, managing expatriation remains a big challenge for organizations and employees face a number of difficulties concerning their personal and professional lives, leading them to withdraw from assignments, and even in some cases, they leave the organization after repatriation (Shaffer et al., 2012). When firms have no systematic plans to utilise expatriates' unique international experience that they gained from these

assignments, it creates frustration and disappointment, leading to behaviours that are not desired (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2001). This all has an impact on their careers. Recognizing the importance of the issue, a growing body of researchers has been working on the career success of expatriates (e.g.,Bonache, 2005; Kraimer et al., 2009; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009; Ramaswami et al., 2016; Ren et al., 2013; Riusala & Suutari, 2000; Suutari et al., 2018). A career is viewed as "the patterns of work-related experiences that span the course of a person's life" (Greenhaus et al., 2010, p. 9).

Despite all expatriation related challenges, it is of surprise that employees consider going on international assignments. The underlying reason is that they have internal career orientation and they follow their own career path instead of considering external aspects (Tung, 1988). These managers are aware that international experience is highly important for their self development and career advancement, therefore they have motivation to seek international careers (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009). They continue their journey of global careers, and shift from one organisation to other for better opportunities (Cappellen & Janssens, 2005). They are of the view that making career advancement is not tied only to moving ahead within a hierarchical structure rather it is more about taking steps for self development and moving from one organisation to another (Parker & Inkson, 1999). Researchers argue that the boundaryless perspective (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) is well suited to describe careers of these individuals because they decide themselves about their career paths. In this case, they are the ones defining career success based on their perspective and what they consider is important for their career (Lazarova & Taylor, 2009). The self-directed career attitude was found strongly impacting an individuals' satisfaction about his/her career and personal life. It positively affects well-being and career success of people (Zhang et al., 2015).

Although the popularity of expatriation is steadily increasing and organizations have made efforts to manage it, still the uncertainty or fear remains attached to the implications of international assignments for career success of expatriates. Expatriates have been expressing concerns about problems of career advancement (e.g.,Shaffer et al.,

2012; Stahl & Cerdin, 2004; Stahl et al., 2002). When they return from assignments to their home countries, they have a challenge of finding suitable roles, and often go through the feelings where they would feel underemployed (Kraimer et al., 2009) and report career derailment (Aldossari & Robertson, 2018; Ren et al., 2013).

It is mentioned that even if assignment is completed successfully by a manager, it does not mean that it has made a positive impact on expatriates' career success (Stahl et al., 2002). They have challenges to face upon return such as leaving the special status that they had working abroad and the failure of organizations to provide sufficient career opportunities in order to capitalize on their newly gained skills (Suutari & Brewster, 2003).

The problems expatriates face in their careers challenged the HR researchers to explore factors that have an impact on career success of expatriates. Different models have been researched to examine factors such as their work-family issues (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2011), human capital perspective (Ramaswami et al., 2016) identity construction (Kohonen, 2008), Stress-related problems (Takeuchi, 2010). However, the important role of inter-personal relationships and social capital in relation to career success has not been high-lighted sufficiently and it remained unanswered for many years (Seibert et al., 2001). Following the competency building perspective of global careers, international business researchers have found that expatriates considering global assignments go through mul-tiple relocations, and it affects the social capital of managers (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009). The social connections that expatriates build over the course of their international ca-reer have proved to be extremely valuable for their career success (Suutari et al., 2018).

It is also mentioned that expatriates accumulates more diverse social capital as com-pared to other managers who have not been on international assignments (Mäkelä, 2007). Similarly, studies following the career capital perspective emphasized "knowing-whom" career capital (external and internal networks) and highlight how important it is for the identity and careers of managers (Suutari & Mäkelä, 2007). Interpersonal

connections and underlying mutual obligations affect career success (Inkson & Arthur, 2001).

Social capital has been conceptualized in many ways but to assess expatriates' social capital at the individual level, it is defined as "the sum of actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit. Social capital thus comprises both the network and the assets that may be mobilized through that network" (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998, p. 243). This definition explains the importance of interpersonal relationships and that individuals can avail different resources through these networks. These network of relationships consist of both bonding and bridging social capital as explained by (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009), former referring to close ties usually existing within one's own group and are characterized by bonding element (e.g., family, friends, mentors), and later consists of those ties which are not of emotional nature and mostly exist across the different and distant groups (e.g., coworkers, acquaintances).

Despite the significant importance of social connections for career success (Seibert et al., 2001), the studies based on the social capital perspective and its implications for career success of expatriates started emerging very late within the field of international human resource management (IHRM). The studies are still scarce within the IHRM literature as reported by (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009). The utilization of benefits associated with the social capital of expatriates, especially at the times when they repatriate is a question to explore (Reiche, 2012). IHRM researchers have called global careers a social paradox, referring to the abundance and diversity of networks that these careers provide. Managers who pursue global careers can develop diverse networks, both consisting of strong and weak interpersonal ties (bonding and bridging social capital). Researchers have shed light on the importance of the topic, and therefore have called for more research in order to verify the findings, and expand on it (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009, p. 1005). The gap in the research is an interesting opportunity to bring new insights on the topic

and that this thesis aims to contribute by exploring impact of social capital on career success of expatriates.

1.1 Purpose of the study and Research Question

The purpose of the study is to fully understand how and what type of interpersonal relationships are crucial for the career success of expatriates. The study focus remains on analyzing the expatriates' perceptions subjectively about their career success and how they perceive the role of social capital (personal networks) that they have developed over the span of their careers. To assess their perceptions subjectively semi-structured interviews are conducted with seven Finnish managers who have been on expatriate assignments and repatriated to home country Finland. In past studies, the issues such as expatriates' adjustment in the host country remained a focus of attention but when they return back after completing assignments, challenges of finding a new role equal to their newly gained competencies, career advancement, and career success are the major issues that need to be explored. In this scenario, assessing the utilisation of expatriate's diverse social capital and how these personal networks could be of support for their career is highly valuable in terms of theoretical and practical implications. Therefore, the study focuses on the following research question:

Research Question: How social capital impacts the career success of expatriates?

1.2 Definitions of key concepts

1.2.1 Expatriates

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

1.2.2 Social Capital

Social capital refers to "the sum of actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit" (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998, p. 243).

This includes both bonding and bridging social capital. Adler and Kwon (2002) highlight two forms of social capital. Bonding social capital consists of ties that are strong and are present within a group. These ties are found to be adding cohesiveness within a group (Coleman, 1988). On other side, bridging social capital is based on the external linkages, and the weak ties existing between distant groups. For example, the ties an individual has with indirect contacts (Granovetter, 1973).

1.2.3 Career success

Career success is defined as "the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in time in a person's work experiences over time" (Arthur et al., 2005, p. 179). It can be measured in terms of objective and subjective career outcomes.

Objective career success is based on factors that can be assessed and verified objectively. For example salarly, promotions and job level (Heslin, 2005). Following previous research on expatriates' career success (e.g., Hamori & Koyuncu, 2011; Suutari et al., 2018), in this study promotions and job offers are considered objective indicators. It means number of promotions one has received after international assignment. It presents both cases, either being promoted within the same organization or moving to a new organization. Job offer means getting a new job after their expatriate assignment. This offer could be from the same organization or from employers in the external market.

On other side, subjective career success means "an individual's reactions to his or her unfolding career experiences" (Heslin, 2005, p. 114). It is based on people's own assessments of their career lives. Following previous studies on the career success of

expatriates (e.g.,Suutari et al., 2018), it is viewed in terms of career satisfaction and expatriates' perceived marketability. This includes both their marketability within the organization (Internal market) and their chances of getting employment outside the organization (external market). The opportunities could be in the home country, host country or a third country. In addition to all these measures, their overall perceptions about career success are considered important in the study to have new insights.

1.3 Structure of the study

The study is structured in the following way. The first chapter presents introduction of the study including justification of the study, research problem, purpose and research question. In the second chapter, literature is reviewed, and relevant theoretical concepts are discussed. The literature review is divided into following sections. (1) expatriation and its implications, advantages of expatriation for organizations and individuals, the individual motivations to accept international assignments, repatriation and challenges for organization and individuals (2) career success, subjective and objective career success, impact of international assignments on expatriates' career success (3) social capital, categories of social capital of expatriates, and how social capital impact career success of expatriates.

The third chapter presents the research methodology of the study. It describes research philosophy, research design, and research methods including how data is collected and analyzed. In fourth chapter, the findings of the study are analyzed. After this, in the fifth chapter, findings are discussed in view of previous relevant studies. In the last chapter, study is concluded, and theoretical and managerial implications are provided. Also, the limitations of the study are discussed for future research.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Expatriation

Expatriation is a process through which employees are assigned international work assignments in subsidiaries established in different countries. They work abroad for a specific period as agreed with the employer. The traditional time span of expatriation ranges between 3 to 5 years. However, it is mentioned that assignment could even last for a shorter period (Baruch et al., 2013). In most cases, people who are considered for these assignments are the home country employees, and sometimes employees belonging to a third country are also given the chance. They are commonly referred to as "third country nationals" (Baruch et al., 2013).

Why home country employees are mostly selected for expatriate assignments is because these individuals have been working with the organisations for many years and have internalised organisational values, therefore they are perceived to be trusted candidates for these roles. They can strongly identify themselves with culture of the home country organisation, and therefore are able to transfer values to foreign subsidiaries.

It has been highlighted that when it comes to selecting an employee for an international assignment, mostly it is the one who is known to the manager and also who has relevant skills. The discussions are arranged between employee and manager and based on employee decision, then the process moves to next steps where more formal evaluations are performed. Researchers have used the term "Coffee machine" that these are the discussions that happen around office coffee chats, meaning these are informal in the beginning (Pucik et al., 2017, p. 270).

However, it is emphasized that a comprehensive selection process should be consider in order to choose a suitable individual who is going to take an expatriate assignment. There are different factors that can be paid attention while selecting managers for international assignments. There are skills that are considered important for expatriates.

For example, technical and professional skills upto a certain extent are mandatory. Secondly, communication skills are important because these will help managers to develop new interpersonal relationships in the host unit, learn from others, and adjust to a new workplace. Third, employees who are more flexible in terms of accepting new cultures and respecting the differences are able to adjust quickly. Fourth, personal traits are also important. Individuals who are high on confidence, and have tolerance for ambiguity adjust to a new place more effectively. Moreover, importantly, personal life and family support have a major role in expatriates' decision to complete the international assignments (Pucik et al., 2017, p. 271). However, the type of skills and their weightage vary as per the tasks expatriate will perform. For example, when assignments are learning-oriented, cultural understanding, and interpersonal skills become more prominent.

The process to select individuals for these assignments vary across the organisations. Some organisations first identify the people suitable for these roles, and then conduct formal evaluations, while other employers use formal assessments for all employees to decide who are the most suitable ones. Interviews are conducted to have a discussion with the employee so that he/she can reflect or evaluate if it is a good option to take assignment and move abroad for work purposes. Family support matters in the success of expatriates' assignments, therefore it is important to involve family in the discussion. Some organisations send employees on orientation visits, in this case, they can visit working location in the host country and assess if this would be a good place to stay. This all facilitates expatriation process (Pucik et al., 2017, p. 272).

Expatriation is a mutual commitment and serves as a psychological contract between the assignee and the employer (Ren et al., 2013). The organisation is responsible for initiating and managing the entire process of expatriation for assignees. The expatriates stay in the host country for a defined period and go through a comprehensive process in which they meet local people both for work-related matters and other daily life issues (Baruch et al., 2013). There are three important stages in the process of expatriation

and all of these are interrelated. The first stage is choosing the right person and arranging preparations before assignment starts. Second is the stage when expatriate is working in the host country unit. The third stage refers to when assignment is finished and expatriate returns back to the home country. They are then called repatriates (Bossard & Peterson, 2005).

Global mobility and employees transfer across the regions have implications for both employers and individuals. Expatriation has become essential work practice for the organisations which are operating globally. The organisations are putting efforts to develop leaders who can work in complex business environments, and have cultural agility (Caligiuri, 2013). For MNCs the concept of headquarter (HQ) has become blurred as the business operations are equally spread across the different regions of the world. The practice of expatriation is widely used by these organisations to develop global mindset among employees as in this way they interact with different cultures and meet new people. They learn new skills and share global knowledge across the organisation and beyond borders (Mäkelä, 2007). Meanwhile, they also manage business critical tasks in the assigned subsidiary units (Baruch & Altman, 2002).

In the situation when there is a large distance between the headquarter and subsidiary, expatriates are assigned tasks in subsidiaries to minimise the risk of cultural misunderstandings. They stay in local conditions and learn about the host country environment. They bridge the distance between the home country organisation and subsidiary, and play the role of an interpreter between different units of an organisation ultimately ensuring the communication (Bonache et al., 2001). Moreover, in global organisations business activities are integrated and therefore effective coordination is a problem. Expatriates support coordination between different entities and meanwhile develop global competencies, gain knowledge about local business and build diverse networks to connect across the different units of an organisation (Chiang et al., 2018).

The international work assignments are the major source of transferring knowledge across business units or boundaries. The local industry dynamics, best practices and business models vary across regions. These could be different from the home country organisation. Expatriates work on novel ideas and support transferring best practices to other parts of organisation. As a result it all influences performance of the organisation and level of innovation (Bonache et al., 2001).

2.2 Advantages of expatriation

2.2.1 Advantages for organizations

Organisations see expatriation as a process through which they can transfer the shared values, culture and best practices across the organisational units. It is effective for organisational control and coordinating the activities throughout the organisation (Dickmann & Doherty, 2010). The process of expatriation provide opportunities to diverse informal networks across the different units and these networks carry valuable information (Harzing & Van Ruysseveldt, 2004). Knowledge sharing and new information affect organisational development and ways of working, and help businesses to improve their processes in order to meet organisational challenges. These international assignments are source of competitive advantage for the companies (Chiang et al., 2018).

Moreover, expatriation helps in developing global mindset among employees and allows them to see broader business perspective. Different competencies are required to work in a new environment. It is said that experiential opportunities such as staying abroad for short time are useful to develop individuals' ability to interact with a new environment. On other side, the intense cultural experiences are gained through long-term assignments as in the case of expatriation. Therefore, it helps organizations in developing global competencies among employees and a broader understanding of the business (Doherty & Dickmann, 2013). Expatriation practice is based on "experiential learning" which has a strong impact on people's development. Therefore, it is effective practice to use for developing global leaders (Dickmann & Doherty, 2010).

After the development of new skills, it is equally important for organizations to plan how to retain these people upon their return from assignments. The career progression of a repatriate should be managed effectively to sustain global knowledge and newly gained competencies within the organization. When the focus of international assignment is to develop the employees, accumulating human capital is priority of organizations (Breitenmoser et al., 2018). Expatriates receive sufficient career capital while working abroad and their career advancement and success rely on effective use of newly gained skills upon return (Dickmann & Doherty, 2010).

Researchers are of the view that international assignments support employees to develop "three intangible assets: concepts, competence and connections" (Bossard & Peterson, 2005, p. 9). All of these assets are critical when working for a global organization.

Expatriation support MNCs in developing global leaders who have the ability to manage complex business processes. In this way, they have the possibility to create a talent pipeline of internal talent. People who have diverse expertise can work effectively to run a global organization (Dickmann & Harris, 2005). Organizations admit that they have the challenge to develop global competencies among senior managers. This is the case for both established and new global organizations. Global competencies are scarce and to manage operations across the regions, they need global leaders especially for regions like Asia pacific. Therefore, expatriation is a method to provide personal growth opportunities to employees as well as meet organizational goals.

Expatriation builds and improves integration and coordination across the organization. These people are knowledge transfer agents for MNCs not only during the period of their expatriation but also when they return to the home units. The knowledge they gain at the host unit organization is a source of advantage for the MNCs to improve ways of working and bring best practices from one context to another (Reiche, 2012). The

knowledge transfer advantages can also be recognized at the individual level when expatriates starts applying their new knowledge and learnings at the jobs upon repatriation (Furuya et al., 2009).

Studies have highlighted that assignee develop social capital at the host organization that supports them in adjusting to a new environment (Farh et al., 2010), and also these connections facilitate them in streamlining the resources and information across the organization. It has been emphasized that knowledge creation at a new location and its utilization is also dependent on assignees' ability to develop social ties in the host unit. They are motivated to accumulate knowledge resources, and then they share it upon repatriation if they perceive sufficient organisational support is provided (Reiche, 2012).

2.2.2   Advantages for individuals

Expatriation offers several advantages to individuals. The researchers highlight that motivation is embedded in different factors, for example, people perceive this would be a great opportunity to gain management skills, and improve their abilities to work in different contexts (Mendenhall, 2001). International experience is highly valued by expatriates as they know the skills learned through these work assignments are something they cannot attain in their home country staying within the same work environment. Therefore, they see expatriation as a crucial step to take for their career progression and advancement (Shaffer et al., 2012; Stahl & Cerdin, 2004). Career enhancement and future career goals remain one of the most important concerns for people when they are accepting international assignments (Dickmann et al., 2008).

These assignments are demanding and involve high physical mobility and cognitive flexibility (Shaffer et al., 2012) as expatriates need to stay in a new country for a long period, and adjust to new working environment in order to complete the assignments. The overall enriching experience affects people's perception of their future career possibilities. Though there is fear attached to repatriation, employees who are committed to taking senior level roles in the future are not hesitant to take these assignments, and are

inspired to do so (Daily et al., 2000). It has been also found that when there are intense developmental activities planned for the assignment, and managers consider many assignments, it will have a greater impact on one's development and career outcomes (Ramaswami et al., 2016). The more assignments they take, the more are the learning outcomes.

Stahl et al., (2002) mention reporting the finding of a survey of German Expatriates that many expatriates view these assignments as great opportunities for professional and career development even though there are gaps relating to career planning by organisations. They are of the view that international assignments add to their intercultural skills, improve general management skills, and they have better chances to develop diverse networks. The perceptions of career development has been viewed as strongly linked to one's career success perceptions (Shen et al., 2015).

From the career capital perspective, employees who are career focused view that international assignments add to their career capital. It includes career capital of "knowing how, knowing why, and knowing whom". Knowing whom career capital consists of personal networks of both professional and social ties existing within the organization and in external markets (Jokinen, 2010). Expatriates are aware of the importance of personal networks (Knowing-whom career capital) that it is crucial for their professional and personal development. They know that international assignments provide chance to meet new people and develop career capital. Domestic employees do not have this opportunity.   Therefore, the development of social capital, and expanding one's social connections is also an advantage for people and a reason to pursue these assignments (Cappellen & Janssens, 2005). These social networks provide a different kinds of support to managers such as access to information across the organization, and emotional support (Farh et al., 2010).

The social capital expatriates possess is valuable for them as well as for the MNCs as they can leverage expatriates' broader network of ties to extend business activities in

new locations. In today's fast-changing business world, organizations are looking for market- related advantages, such as first mover. The importance of developing networks at the firm level and gaining recognition across the borders has immense value for the companies. Expatriates are the people who bridge the gap between local partners and MNCs. They work in an international environment, interact with local people, and therefore develop skills to establish social networks along with having broader networks, and both aspects are beneficial for their future careers, and also for the organizations.

2.2.3   Individual motives to accept an international assignment

When it comes to studying the motives of accepting an international assignment comprehensively, the study by (Dickmann et al., 2008) is groundbreaking in which they have mentioned around 28 factors that are important to understand what matters for expatriates when they are accepting the international assignments. The study founds empirical evidence that career development opportunities accumulating through international work experience is the main motivation for expatriates and financial motives are not of priority. Employees consider international assignments effective and impactful for their personal and professional development and that it creates new career opportunities for them.

Moreover, a study conducted by Stahl et al., (2002) reports that intrinsic motivation was highly valued in a survey conducted on German Expatriates when they were asked about accepting these assignments. The factor of "personal challenge" associated with these assignments is highly important.

Then family concerns are also important for individuals when they are accepting an international assignment. For example, issues of children's education and elderly care. Also, the support of a partner in moving abroad is one of the influential factors that have an impact on their motivation, and they are concerned about work-family balance (Dickmann et al., 2008). When moving abroad, the adjustment of the family is what decides and impacts if expatriate will complete the assignment. Considering the overall

importance of family support for expatriate's motivation, the organizations are responsible to arrange support mechanisms during the process. For example, before leaving for assignment, during their stay in the host organization, and after the assignment is completed and they are coming back to their home country (Sparrow et al., 2004).

In addition to these factors, personal preferences also play a role and influence the decision to accept these assignments. Individuals who have a personal goal or wish to travel to new countries would be happy to take these assignments because they can travel along with work. In such a situation, it becomes a part of their life, and they will be able to meet new friends, discover cultures, learn new languages, and build diverse social networks with locals. The whole experience leaves a positive impression on their personalities and they develop skills to make new social connections.

The assignment length, and clarity about career path also impact the decision of accepting assignment. At the offer stage, employees are not only concerned about the compensation rather they want to know about their future role in the organization upon returning back from the assignment (Dickmann et al., 2008).

The external factors may also affect sometimes people's decision to go abroad for work-related assignments. For example, not having sufficient opportunities in the home country or unstable economic or political situation. In this case, usually it is known as an escape from the current situation.

Overall, it is kind of a compatibility test that employees do. They will compare their goals, aspirations, and what these assignments offer to them. How well do these fit into their long-term goals. They reflect and evaluate if it is worth pursuing? According to Cerdin and Pargneux (2009) individuals have pre-set views about different aspects of their lives and that is based on their own perceptions. For example, it includes their perceptions about work life, how they would like to spend free time, religious beliefs, friends and , family (Cerdin & Pargneux, 2009). Depending on these perceptions, and predetermined understanding, they would evaluate if expatriation decisions fit into their lives or not.

2.3   Repatriation and challenges for individuals and organizations

Expatriation related challenges have been a widely discussed topic within international business research. MNCs face difficulties in finding the right people who have skills and are also willing to take these roles (Dickmann et al., 2008). Going forward, it does not end here. Ensuring smooth and effective repatriation is very challenging and repatriation related problems are of major concern (Chiang et al., 2018; Shaffer et al., 2012; Stahl & Cerdin, 2004; Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Repatriation is a stage when expatriate returns to their home country after completing the assignment, and it is when they are called repatriates (Kraimer et al., 2009). The repatriation related problems have implications for organizations and employees.

There is a growing body of research that is comprehensively exploring expatriates' experiences and different kinds of problems that they face upon repatriation (e.g., Chiang et al., 2018; Kraimer et al., 2009; Kraimer et al., 2012; Reiche et al., 2011; Suutari & Brewster, 2003; Takeuchi, 2010). After expatriation, the issue of high turnover among repatriates has serious consequences for the organisations, and impacts negatively (Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007; Reiche et al., 2011). The failure to retain repatriates cost organisations in many ways, they would lose talented people in a short time, and these are people for whom they have made an investment. Moreover, based on negative outcomes of repatriation, an inability starts developing among other employees of the organisation and they hesitate considering international assignments in the future (Kraimer et al., 2012; Pinto et al., 2012).

Why expatriates leave the organisations is a result of disappointment that they face upon return and then they start looking for their careers in new organisations (Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Similarly other studies such as Vermond (2001) mentions that they gain new skills through international experience, and upon return when expectations about the promotion are not met, they feel undervalued, and this all impacts their careers.

One of the major problems in this aspect is the ineffective repatriation planning by organisations and expatriates report dissatisfaction with HR in terms of not properly planning the repatriation phase (Stahl et al., 2002). There is a common perception that repatriating to the home country is easy process as compared to moving abroad and this is a false perception. These expat agreements are also kind of psychological contracts and when there is a lack of support practices, they perceive the situation as breach of a psychological contract (Chiang et al., 2018). As a result, these perceptions would reduce their motivation and commitment to work in the organisation.

According to Bossard & Peterson (2005) referring to past literature, they highlight that only a few American MNCs were found to be implementing appropriate repatriation policies. Moreover, rarely expatriates were assigned mentors when they were working abroad which impacts their connection with the home country organisation and how well they are informed about what is happening in the home country unit and also the support they receive upon return to find a suitable role. Most organisations are unwilling to invest for arranging repatriate support and without it retaining repatriates is difficult (Bossard & Peterson, 2005).

Organizations need to make sure that upon repatriation managers' motivation is considered important and their career path is well planned. The HR practices such as career planning, assigning a mentor, improving the communication with the home country, salary and promotions should be well planned when they return (Chiang et al., 2018). The purpose is to support repatriation in the best possible way so that goals of global mobility are met. These goals include both employees and organizational goals (Ramaswami et al., 2016). The negative outcomes such as premature return and leaving the jobs in a short time after repatriation have serious implications for MNCs that impacts performance and capability development at organizational level.

It has been raised in the studies that career-related problems are of major concern for expatriates upon returning back (Kraimer et al., 2009; Ramaswami et al., 2016; Riusala & Suutari, 2000). Upon returning back to their home country organisation, they struggle to find challenging roles that could motivate them as compared to the ones they had abroad. As a result they decide to leave the organisation, and in case when they stay they are dissatisfied (Stahl & Cerdin, 2004). Moreover, when they view that their job offers less opportunities and their income or status is not equal to the other colleagues who are working in the home country organisation and do not possess international experience, they start feeling that their employer does not recognise their international experience (Kraimer et al., 2012). The perceptions about pay, career derailment, and perceived underemployment affect career satisfaction of repatriates (Ren et al., 2013) and thus have an impact on their career success.

If expatriates are able to clearly relate their international assignment with future career, and know that they will be supported by their organisations, they have high satisfaction (Shaffer et al., 2012). The newly gained skills should match the new role that they start upon repatriation, and it enhances their overall satisfaction (Eugenia Sánchez Vidal et al., 2007).

Studies have highlighted that in addition to dissatisfaction, the main reason to quit working in the organisations is the lack of career advancement opportunities (Doherty & Dickmann, 2012; Kraimer et al., 2009). In such a scenario, searching career related opportunities outside the organisation becomes a suitable option and they are valuable individuals for the human capital of any organisation, therefore active employers approach them (Chiang et al., 2018).

In light of the above discussion, it is clear that managing careers and ensuring career success of expatriates is a broader and extremely important topic in the context of global mobility both from employees and organisational perspectives.

2.4 Career success of expatriates

2.4.1 Defining Career success

Career success refers to "the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in time in a person's work experiences over time" (Arthur et al., 2005, p. 179). Concerning expatriates' career success, it is the long term achievements and meaningful outcomes that they have gained as a result of international assignments (Suutari et al., 2018).

Two theoretical concepts are used in the past studies to measure career success. (1) Objective career success (2) Subjective career success. Both measures are equally important to define success and the concepts are broader that they cover many aspects of career related outcomes.

2.4.2 The objective career success

The conceptualisation of objective and subjective career success indicators can be traced back to Hughes (1937). Objective career success is defined as ''verifiable attainments, such as pay, promotions, and occupational status" (Heslin, 2005, P. 114). When it comes to studying career success, most of the studies have relied on using these objective indicators. Spurk et al., (2018) mention that these are the indicators that can be easily observed and measured by others. It includes objective indicators such as an individual's income, promotions and how many job offers one has received. The objective career success outcomes are based on verifiable evidence. The data can be traced from the record of organisations and then it is used for the analysis. In most cases, as there would be many people analysing the data it reduces the chances of self-serving biases and enhances the objectivity of the findings.

Heslin (2005) sheds light on different aspects that should be considered carefully when using these objective measures in different organizational contexts. For example, in the situations when there are outsourcing practices widely used by organisations, getting a

promotion to move ahead in a hierarchical structure is not of much relevance concerning career success. Similarly, more and more employees are now considering external consultant roles, therefore it is difficult to assess their promotions as they are not following a traditional hierarchical structure. The title of jobs are different as compared to if they were promoted within an organization (Heslin, 2005).

Moreover, in some occupations changing market conditions impact all of these measures. In addition to it, people define success differently and not everyone value pay and promotions as only indicators of their career success. If only objective measures are used to assess career success such as associating promotions to success, it can cause estrangement among people and they might feel disconnected to reality.

Perceptions about career success vary. For example, in the context of teaching, students' achievements and how much they have learned from a teacher could be a teacher's career success view as compared to associating it to income or promotions (Heslin, 2005). People may value less tangible outcomes concerning their career success. For example, work-life balance, well-being and personal growth. Therefore, it originates a curiosity to explore subjective career outcomes and their overall connection to objective measures (Heslin, 2005). It has been suggested that to minimize the shortcomings associated with the use of objective measures, the sound approach is to utilise both objective and subjective career success indicators (Heslin, 2005).

In addition to it, contextual aspects in which expatriate takes new assignment is important to consider. For example, there could be a situation where internal labor markets offer fewer career advancement opportunities at the times when expatriates return. The managers who have broader international experience and are suitable for the senior level positions such as CEO are often employed by the external organizations. Their skills and experience are highly valued in the external market. Therefore, contextual aspects should be considered while assessing career success of expatriates.

Furthermore, the timing of evaluation is critical, in most cases assessments are made soon after when expatriates return from the assignment which may not give accurate results. It is recommended that long-term evaluations should be considered so that expatriates get sufficient time to advance their career in the organization and also starts adjusting in the external market (Suutari et al., 2018).

In line with previous studies on expatriates' career success (e.g., Suutari et al., 2018), In present study promotion and job offer both are considered to discuss objective career success. It includes both cases, getting a promotion or job offer from within the organization (internal market) or from a new employer (external market).

2.4.2.1   Promotion as an indicator of objective career success

The issue of turnover is widely reported among expatriates and it has become a challenge for HR practitioners (Ren et al., 2013). It has been suggested that those individuals who receive promotional opportunities after return, stay motivated, and continue working within the same organization (Suutari et al., 2018). Promotions are perceived as a strong indicator of career progression and advancement (Kraimer et al., 2009). Repatriates expect promotional opportunities as they evaluate their newly gained skills and international experience as valuable and believe that these should be recognized by their employers in terms of income and promotions.

Firstly, there is a possibility that expatriate is promoted within the same organization upon return especially when he/she continues working for a long time, and their new competencies are recognized by the employer. Secondly, they could be contacted by other external employers from the market who appreciate their international experience and then they are promoted to a role in a new organization. This is interesting to explore from an expatriation perspective that how international experience affects their opportunities for promotions in both cases (Suutari et al., 2018).

Shaffer et al., (2012) interestingly discuss why few expatriates receive promotions after return while others do not. There are different factors that are important concerning this. Most importantly, timing is relevant. For example, when an expatriate returned, there might be already open positions that were suitable for the individual to consider. Other way, studies indicate that assignment and individual-related aspects might also impact promotion chances and salary upon returning.

It can be based on the degree up to which one's expatriate role includes boundary-spanning characteristics (Shaffer et al., 2012., 1307). The role where they are working as "boundary spanner" provides them an edge to be a focal person within an organization and they get many opportunities for networking and developing social capital across the organization which supports them in career advancement and finding suitable roles upon their repatriation to home country unit. These people are less impacted by "out of sight - out of mind" phenomenon. They are connected with the home country organization and possess diverse "Knowing-whom" social capital.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that personal factors also contribute to career success. Expatriates who possess strong cultural intelligence skills and are flexible receives more successful outcomes after the assignment completion as compared to others (Shaffer et al., 2012). Managers who are "proactive" in terms of developing their careers more often engage in building wide array of social connections and they receive career related information both from within the organization and outside, therefore they are in a good position to find new jobs in the external markets (Cerdin & Pargneux, 2009).

2.4.2.2   Job offers

Expatriates after returning from assignments receive promotions that are more of advancements in the organizational hierarchical structure, on other side they can also receive job offers leading to a new job. These job offers could be from the same organization (internal market), or outside organisation (external market). The job offers that help

them to have a new role after international assignment are another indicator to measure their career success objectively (Suutari et al., 2018).

It is highlighted that expatriates are assigned the assignments by their organizations, therefore they are sufficiently embedded within the career structures of the organization. Also due to their boundary spanning role they develop diverse social and professional networks both at their home and host country which provides them an edge concerning getting job offers from their employers (Suutari et al., 2018).

In such situations, they do not have to put much efforts to find a new job in external markets and they can start their new role upon repatriation with the same employer. However, if they are looking for job outside the current employer, they are also highly valued in external markets due to their international experience and diverse skill set. They are approached by active employers or headhunters for job offers.

2.4.3   The subjective career success

Subjective career success relates to people's perceptions and assessments that how well they have progressed in their career trajectories (Shockley et al., 2016). It is linked to many intrinsic factors (Shaffer et al., 2012). The perceptions will vary from person to person based on what is important for them concerning career related goals. In the past years the concept of subjective career success has gained attention (Ng & Feldman, 2014) and it is emphasized that success is more than the attainment of objective career goals. Career success is socially constructed and depending on people's changing situation and views the perceptions about career success keep evolving in a continuous manner (Lazarova et al., 2021).

Subjective career success has been assessed in terms of job satisfaction and career satisfaction, however, it is argued that this relates to an individual's "reactions to actual and anticipated career-related attainments across a broader time frame than one's immediate job satisfaction" (Heslin, 2005, p. 117). Several intrinsic factors are used to

measure subjective career success, including career satisfaction, meaningful work, growth and development and personal life (Shockley et al., 2016). The personal life aspects relate to one's life outside the work and it has an impact on individuals' career lives.

Defining and assessing subjective career success is challenging as it covers broad factors and depends on subjective evaluations. As reported by Heslin (2005) to improve the research on subjective career success, three important aspects should be considered. First, the focus of studies should be on people's expectations, what they aim to achieve. Second, an individual's career success perceptions should be analyzed across different contexts to build in-depth insights. Third, assessing subjective perceptions requires the use of qualitative research method in the studies.

Following the previous studies on expatriates' career success (Biemann & Braakmann, 2013; Suutari et al., 2018) to discuss subjective perceptions, career satisfaction, and perceived marketability are considered. Also managers' overall career success perceptions are considered important.

2.4.3.1 Career satisfaction

Studies have used "career satisfaction" as one of the measures of the career success (Ren et al., 2013; Seibert et al., 2013; Suutari et al., 2018). It is one of the most used indicators and career satisfaction perceptions provide strong and diverse evidence about subjective career success (Heslin, 2005). It can be defined as an individual's satisfaction about his/her career life concerning how well one has progressed and made advancements in their career (Greenhaus et al., 1990).

Career satisfaction has long-term impacts on individuals' well-being and also helps reducing withdrawal actions among employees (Spurk et al., 2018). When expatriates are able to evaluate how the international assignment is linked to their personal career goals, and perceive the career management system as transparent, they show high career satisfaction. The transparency and procedural justice in assigning the assignments, and

career planning determine how satisfied are the expatriates and also their commitment to the organization (Lazarova et al., 2021).

It is highlighted that assigned expatriates have more career satisfaction as compared to self-initiated expatriates as assigned managers possess diverse networks across the organization and are well embedded within the organizations. Therefore, they receive more organizational support upon repatriation (Suutari et al., 2018). Career satisfaction relates to expatriates' own perceptions, therefore factors that are valuable and important for one's satisfaction may differ among employees. Therefore, expatriates' views about career satisfaction are worth exploring to build a broader insight on the topic and how it is linked to career success.

2.4.3.2   Perceived marketability

Perceived marketability is also one of the measures that have been used to assess the subjective career success. It refers to "a person's belief that he or she is valuable to employers" (Suutari et al., 2018, p. 5). These are individuals' subjective perceptions about the chances of finding new employment upon returning from the assignment (Andresen, 2021). It covers both the expatriates' perceptions about getting new employment within the same organization (internal market) or moving to a new employer (external market). Also, it includes both their opportunities for employment in the home country, or in the international markets.

Expatriates perform a boundary-spanning role when they are working abroad, therefore they develop extensive networks and meet new people across the organization and in the external market, it all affects their marketability. The skills and experience they have gained are critical for global organizations. The recruiters will contact them directly and it impacts their marketability perceptions about getting job in the external market, as a result, they become more positive about their careers (Benson & Pattie, 2008).

The managers who are active and continue engaging themselves in exploring new roles when they are working abroad are the high potential candidates for the external recruiters and headhunters as their international expertise adds value to the human capital of any organization (McNulty et al., 2013; Suutari et al., 2018). In situations when their expertise is not valued in internal or domestic markets, the international job markets have new opportunities for them. MNCs are always in search of talented people who have abilities to manage complex global business operations and know how to work in multi-cultural environment.

In the case of corporate expatriates, employees working at the home country organization are the source of connection between repatriates and organization. In the majority of cases expatriates return and start working at the home country organization at a suitable role. Corporate expatriates have broader personal networks that they create in home country, host country and even in third countries. Therefore, they often have an advantage to utilize diverse networks, and home country organization also supports them in their career advancement, therefore their internal marketability is usually strong (Suutari et al., 2018).

The skills and expertise they gained abroad add weightage to their marketability.
The more valuable skills they gain, the more is their marketability. The interpersonal connections they develop throughout their international assignments are something that affects their career success both at the expatriation and repatriation stages (Cerdin & Pargneux, 2009).

2.4.4   Impact of international assignments on expatriates' career success

It is suggested that when it comes to measuring the success of an expatriate assignment, both stages are equally important expatriation and repatriation. On one side, selection and training arrangements are critical for expatriation success, and on other side, success is linked to career advancement opportunities that are offered for repatriates after their assignments are completed. When they return from assignments, what matters is

not only the smooth repatriation rather how much their overall expectations are considered by the organization (Cerdin & Pargneux, 2009). Among other issues of repatriation, career related challenges are of major concern (Chiang et al., 2018; Ren et al., 2013; Shaffer et al., 2012; Suutari & Brewster, 2003; Suutari et al., 2018) and therefore, it has gained more attention in recent years within international business research.

The repatriates have challenges of not finding sufficient opportunities for promotion upon returning back, and they experience the feelings as if they are left outside the corporate advancement (Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007). They have authority and status when they are working abroad that they miss upon return, and sometimes there is a problem of underemployment (Shaffer et al., 2012). When the opportunities for career advancement are not sufficient, it affects their career satisfaction (Ng et al., 2005). Moreover, in case when they continue working in such a situation they lose motivation, and performance is impacted negatively (Vidal et al., 2010). All of these career related challenges have an impact on their overall perceptions of career advancement and career success, and further influences their intention to stay within an organisation.

Riusala and Suutari (2000) shared the finding of a study in which Finnish expatriates were surveyed. It was found that one of the major concerns expatriates raised was not having a clear direction about the next job role that they would have after the assignment is completed. Expatriates emphasized career related issues and mentioned that if they know well in advance about their future roles and agree with the employer, this will have a large impact on their repatriation and careers. Moreover, the new role should match their newly gained skills and international experience. While upon reviewing the expatriation agreements as part of the study, it was found that 61% were referring that expatriate will have the possibility to join the same level job that they were doing before going on expatriate assignment. Only a few of the participants were clear about their future job roles upon repatriation.

Further, career related support was not very commonly offered by participant organizations. For example, only a few participants had discussions with their employer about the international assignment and how it is linked to their career development. Similarly, organisations lacked in terms of offering family support programes. Only 27% of participants were offered the support of a contact person. Few of them reported that there was good communication between expatriates and contacts in home organization. In addition to it, participants mentioned their concerns that company representatives were not aware of their performance abroad, and they were not communicated about the activities happening in the home country unit. However, individuals who reported to have the support of a contact person were more satisfied about these aspects and mentioned that it helped them to stay connected with their home country unit. These challenges seek attention of the researchers and practitioners to explore ways how to improve expatriate's experiences upon returning back and precisely their career related problems (Riusala & Suutari, 2000).

While on other side, a stream of research highlights (e.g.,Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009; Shaffer et al., 2012) that despite broader challenges, these assignments have a positive impact on expatriates' careers. For example, when viewing from a boundaryless career perspective, the international experience, and competencies they gained are highly valuable to make advancements in their careers. Moreover, expatriates perceive that getting international experience adds to their profiles, and has a positive impact on their jobs (Riusala & Suutari, 2000). The global assignments that they perform in host countries are demanding and therefore, it enhances expatriates' perceptions about their expertise level and overall careers (Dowling et al., 2013).

How expatriates' assignments impact career success of individuals very much relate to what value these assignments add to one's career. (Spurk et al., 2018) mention that to explore objective and subjective career success different theoretical lenses have been applied in past studies. It may include "theoretical approaches that focus on proximal environmental resources (e.g., networks, social support, sponsored mobility),

contextual macro resources (e.g., national culture, labor market), and resource accumulation and dynamics (e.g., career transitions, person–environment fit)" (Spurk et al., 2018, p. 8).

Considering human capital perspectives, MNCs appreciate global leadership skills, and one's ability to work across the culture and these competencies are gained by working abroad on these international assignments. The international assignments are also key to enhancing strategic thinking which is an essential skill for senior level executives and highly valued by the organisations. In order to build human capital, organisations have included these assignments as part of work practices, and these are linked to one's career development path (Dragoni et al., 2014). The assignments serve as human capital investments (Oddou et al., 2013). Therefore, from a human capital perspective, these assignments add to the knowledge, skills and abilities of people, and managers who have been on expatriate assignments are in a better position in internal and external markets (Kraimer et al., 2009). Their marketability has an impact on their career success.

In order to resolve career related challenges, the basic need is to utilise the newly gained competencies and experience that expatriates gain abroad by offering an appropriate position upon return. The organisational support practices facilitate the repatriates in finding appropriate roles upon returning to a home unit (Ng et al., 2005). It is suggested that organisations should consider repatriation agreements in which it is agreed that what type of role expatriates will have upon return (Pattie et al., 2010).

Organisations should have sophisticated career development practices in place to manage expatriates experience when they are back from assignments. In addition to career progression opportunities, a culture and overall environment that recognises international experience will have positive impact on their careers. Moreover, to ensure career success of expatriates organisations should clearly include talent management as essential part of HR strategy (Ramaswami et al., 2016), meaning it needs to be planned and aligned at different levels of the organisation.

According to the conservation of resources theory (COR) individuals are "motivated to protect their current resources and acquire new resources" (Halbesleben et al., 2014, p. 1335). Concerning career success, when individuals perceive that they have resources available to utilise, and those can protect them from loss, it enhances their career satisfaction. Therefore, a sophisticated career management structure could be perceived as a resource that provides additional benefits and enhances an individual's career satisfaction (Lazarova et al., 2021). It is another explanation to shed light on how resource accumulation impact expatriates' perceptions of career success.

Similarly, the social capital perspective provides another explanation of the advantages of international assignments for career success of expatriates. It proposes that individuals can mobilize different kinds of resources from one's network. In this case, the focal actor is expatriates. These individuals accumulate diverse networks during their careers working abroad and across the different units of an organization (Mäkelä, 2007). Personal connections affect their career success in many ways. The social connections offer various benefits that support their career development, for example access to information, mentoring, career sponsorship, visibility, promotions and increased reputation. The support received from the social networks becomes the source of career success for the actor (Seibert et al., 2001).

The interpersonal relationships based on trust that is developed during working abroad are also a source of knowledge accumulation for both managers and organizations. The social connections ensure that managers continue accessing information in the host unit even after repatriating so that knowledge is transferred from one part of the organization to another (Reiche, 2012). Expatriates are at advantage in terms of having broader networks both in the home and host country. Importantly, organizations should facilitate them in maintaining ties with their home country unit when they are abroad by offering the support of mentors and active communication. They also should be

supported in developing new connections at the host unit by organizing social activities in the company.

The social capital perspective within the context of career success of expatriates is an evolving area that needs further exploration that how different types of networks impact career success of expatriates and therefore, it is the focus of the present study.

2.5 Social Capital

Social capital has been conceptualized in different ways in the studies, it is a broad concept and therefore it is important to discuss some of the main streams of literature. Also, how international HRM researchers conceptualized social capital construct is the part of discussion. In the beginning, following concepts were introduced. As mentioned by Mäkelä & Suutari (2013), it was conceptualized as "private good of an individual or a group" (p.259). On other side, it was also viewed as "a public asset of a social entity" (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p.259). The former conceptualization of "private good" is supported by the following proponents (Burt 1992; Lin et al., 2001) and later supports the notion of "Public asset" with following line of research (e.g., Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995).

Coleman (1990) mentions "social capital inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors" (p. 98). In all of its forms, social capital is a valuable resource for individuals. Relationships continuous change and evolve into different forms to support actions and activities of the members of a network. The proponents supporting the view that social capital is a public asset describe that it is an asset that is of advantage for all members who belong to a social unit (e.g.,Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995). In comparison to this public asset characterization of social capital, others view it as a personal resource that one's has in the form of network and can drive different benefits from it for personal use (e.g., Burt, 1992).

Putnam defined social capital as "features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam, 1995, p. 67). Here putnam refers it to mutual benefit.

Granovetter (1973) in relation to social capital introduced the concept of weak tie theory. It is argued that interpersonal ties offer different advantages to individuals in terms of finding employment opportunities and access to information, and interpersonal ties differ in "strength". The strong ties are the ones that exist within one's social group, these ties have an emotional element, and are frequent in interaction. For example, ties between close friends, family and mentee- mentor. On other hand, there are weak ties that are spread between different groups or indirect contacts. These ties exist outside one's social group. These ties are linked to less frequent interactions and the emotional element is not of relevance here. For example, ties among acquaintances, colleagues, distant friends. Granovetter (1973) argued that weak ties serve as "Bridging ties" which are of immense importance in terms of finding new employment opportunities and accessing diverse information because these networks of relationships bridge the gap between distant groups and connects the indirect contacts.

The other important conceptualization, burt structural hole perspective(1992) defines social capital as "friends, colleagues, and more general contacts through whom you receive opportunities to use your financial and human capital" (1992, p. 9). Burt's concept of "structural hole" extends implications of social capital. It refers to personal level social capital. It is argued that networks that have structural holes are found to be more useful and valuable for the individuals when they want to receive new information, gain resources and other benefits such as job opportunities.

As evident from definition, these are contacts who support an individual to utilise their human capital. What is this structural hole? In a social network, there are people who are disconnected, or what we say there exists a structural hole between them and they are distant members. When an individual builds ties with the disconnected member of

the network that is present across that structural hole, it gives an edge to receive wider information, access to resources, and career related opportunities.

Social capital has been widely conceptualised in international business research based on the nature of ties as defined by (Adler & Kwon, 2002). The two forms of social capital depending on the nature of ties are known as "bonding or bridging". These are found to be an important approach to studying individual level social capital. Bonding social capital relates to ties that exist within one's group. The bonding ties are strong, create strong linkage among members of the group and usually are characterized by the feelings of obligation and trust between group members. As a result, individuals can mobilize advantages and social support from a network of bonding ties. As explained by Adler and Kwon (2002), these ties unite members and provide various advantages, ultimately helping them to achieve collective aims. Bonding ties are a source of trust but on other side networks based on strong bonding ties bring rigidness that has an impact on handling complex tasks.

On other side, bridging social capital is based on ties that connect distant groups, and the advantages that are derived through the linkage of distant members. This serve as bridging support (Mäkelä, 2007). Proponents of bridging social capital argue that members who are disconnected in a network when get connected add value and individuals can utilize various benefits from these networks. Individuals get access to information across the groups, new career opportunities and career related support similar to what Burt (1992) explained while describing advantages that can be derived through structural hole in a network.

According to Lin (2001) social capital is a resource. With this conceptualisation, it is argued that people stay in networks, and in this way they add valuable resources to a network that can be utilised in meaningful ways. Therefore, according to Lin (2001) "these structurally embedded resources are social capital for the actors of the network" (p. 75). Viewing the definition closely, it is easy to say that there are three important

aspects relating to one's social capital. First, networks posseses resources, secondly people would like to have those resources, and third, people will utilise benefits derived from these networks for personal use. Lin and social resource theory proponents are of the view that it is not the tie strength or structural holes rather it all depends on the characteristics of the resources. An individual seeks resources that are of benefit for career related support and attainment of goals.

The most used conceptualisation of social capital in the international business research is how Nahapiet and Goshal (1998) defined it. Social capital is defined as "the sum of actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998, p. 243). They also further add on three dimensions of social capital which are cognitive, relational and structural. Structural aspects are associated with physical linkages, for example where network is located, and how people are connected. The relational aspect refers to the relationship and mutual respect that exists between people in a network. When there are relational resources embedded in a network, people are committed to work towards collective goals (Lazarova & Taylor, 2009, p. 124). The cognitive dimension relates to those resources in a network that help individuals to form a shared understanding of the processes and activities of the group (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998)

The conceptualisation of social capital explained by Nahapiet and Goshal (1998) gained attention of many theorists across the fields. Within the field of international HRM it is widely used to study expatriates' individual level social capital, therefore following previous studies on expatriates (e.g.,Mäkelä, 2007; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013), this definition is applied in the study. It includes both bonding (strong ties) and bridging (weak ties) elements of social capital. The study focuses on analysing expatriate networks or social connections at the personal level.

2.5.1 Social capital of expatriates

Expatriates take different assignments in foreign countries, and their work based stay gives them opportunity to meet many new people from within the organisation and also they interact with the external community in the host country. These people are from different cultures, backgrounds and occupations. As a result of international experience, expatriates develop a diverse network of social connections which enhances their capabilities as a boundary spanners (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013).

The social capital they possess includes both formal and informal networks that they develop abroad and when they return to the home country, these interpersonal ties last. Interestingly, the networks have multiplying effects, for instance, expatriates meet new colleagues at the work in host unit, after the assignment is finished, they repatriate to their home country and their other expatriate colleagues move to third countries, therefore the networks are spread across the countries (Mäkelä, 2007).

The international work assignments remain purposeful in different ways. These are effective in developing leadership skills and global mindset among managers and on other side, it provides them with many opportunities to meet new people outside their own social network and develop diverse social capital (Mäkelä, 2007). The networks of relationships help them in adjusting in the host country and provide them resources such as informational and emotional support which ultimately play an important role in their adjustment to a new role and completion of assignments.

The information related support provides them ease to do their job effectively in the host country and the emotional support that they receive from social connections is instrumental in overcoming the stressful situation. The emotional support serves as a cushion and they are able to cope with the new challenging environment. Expatriates who have social connections and receive emotional support are well adjusted (Farh et al., 2010).

The personal networks help expatriates to smoothly communicate with new people in the organization and facilitate access to information across the different units that is needed to perform the role and this all helps in adjusting to a new country. It is high-lighted that even host country nationals rate relational skills as of high value for the expatriate's adjustment in a new country. It is linked to their success and completion of assignments (Johnson et al., 2003). The reason is that relational skills help in developing ties with employees in the host country unit, and outside the organization including business partners and local community. The development of social capital during the assignment impacts their career success.

When viewing social capital as individual capital, it means how the focal actor harness advantages for personal use from the resources that are embedded in a network to which he belongs (Adler & Kwon, 2002). In this case the focal actor is expatriates. From social capital perspective, there are different factors to consider when describing these networks. It includes analysing how dense is the network, the strength of a tie (strong or weak), and how frequent is the interaction between contacts (Lazarova & Taylor, 2009, p. 124). The individual level networks have been analysed with both perspectives "bonding and bridging" (Suutari & Mäkelä, 2007).

In case of expatriates both bonding (strong ties) and bridging (weak ties) social capital is important and provides an ease to researchers to differentiate and categorize various types of relationships that expatriates build over their international careers. Their social capital is described as a social paradox and categorizing the social capital helps in under-standing different types of ties and associated career benefits.

2.5.2 Categories - social capital of expatriates

Mäkelä and Suutari (2009) expanded on the social capital of expatriates and tried to ex-plore different types of networks expatriates develop during working abroad and overall over the period of their global careers. The findings revealed that managers who have been staying abroad for work purposes have broader and more diverse kind of network

ties. It includes both internal – (within the firm) and external (outside the firm) networks of relationships.

Moreover, the networks of relationships are present in the host country and home country and extend to third countries in the case when other expatriate colleagues move back from assignments to their home country. Moreover, importantly, these personal networks differ based on strong or weak ties which they described as social and professional ties respectively. Mainly the social capital of expatriates consists of the following three categories of networks.

(1) "Internal contact networks of weak ties

(2) Internal support networks of strong ties

(3) External networks of both strong and weak ties" (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009, p. 1004).

The first type of social capital relates to the weak ties that managers develop within the organisation. These are characterised as professional ties. According to Granovetter (1973) weak tie theory, these are the interpersonal ties that are present between distant or disconnected groups and usually are outside one's own social network. These ties are a result of less frequent interactions between people and emotional element is not associated with these relationships. The managers meet people within the organization across different functions and they are working in different business locations, therefore it offers a chance to develop a network of weak ties. Their nature of work involves broader general management tasks and that connects them with many people within the organization. The relationships based on weak ties are useful when it comes to accessing information from different departments and therefore people who have such social capital are at advantage to receive information quickly as compared to others (Burt, 1992; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009).

The second category relates to the strong ties existing within the company. These ties are of social nature and are characterised by the emotional element, therefore adding to bonding social capital. These are the interpersonal ties that expatriates develop working within organisation. For example the close relationship with a manager, close friends, mentor-mentee relationship. The internal strong ties offer support to managers in terms of getting advice, and emotional support, thus are of high value for their careers.

Importantly, it is also highlighted that even though these ties serve as a support system for expatriates but when they are working abroad on international assignments, these connections might not be of much help if the person from whom they are seeking support has never been exposed to international work environment. The local conditions of the host country is important to understand. When support contact do not know about local market dynamics, it does not help even if the support contact is working at senior level position within the organisation (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009).

The third category refers to the external networks that expatriates develop outside the working organization. It consists of both strong and weak ties external ties. The managers are involved in business-oriented interactions with people outside the organization due to the work-related matters and therefore, they develop professional ties outside the company. The external weak ties bridge the distance between business and external partners and are present beyond borders.

Similarly, expatriates also develop strong ties in external markets. The external strong ties are those relationships that are of social nature and share a bonding element. These networks enable individuals to get various benefits such as adjusting to the host country and joining expatriate groups. The help received from these networks adds value to both professional and personal lives. External networks are instrumental in terms of career related benefits. Managers receive career related information outside one's organization, and also these external ties facilitates managers to connect with third parties in a way serving as referral system (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009).

In order to build an in-depth understanding of the topic that how social capital impact career success of expatriates, the data received from interviews is analyzed in accordance with these previously defined categories of social capital.

2.5.3   Impact of social capital on career success of expatriates

Social capital is valuable for an expatriate's career success in many ways. The development of diverse networks during their boundary spanning roles as working abroad they meet new people within organization and in the external market adds value to their careers. These social connections are dispersed in multiple countries. The colleagues' expatriates met at the host unit when move back to their home countries, or other countries connect them to new contacts.

Seibert et al., (2001) comprehensively elaborate that how social capital is related to career success outcomes. It is through the underlying benefits these resources bring such as quick access to information, availability of resources, and career sponsorship. Through social connection individuals avail information that they need to perform jobs, opportunities and resources that are of advantage for their careers, and it all impacts their performance at the job. The access to information across other functions and beyond borders is of great support and without having the contacts, it takes much more time to get critical information across different units. It helps managers to do their job successfully. Borgatti and Cross (2003) highlight social networks at the individual level make it easy for employees to learn from each other, and harness benefits such as getting new knowledge from other colleagues. It is valuable for finding new information and performing the jobs.

The accessibility of information and resources through social connections impact an employee's performance at the job. It is emphasized that one's position in a network impacts performance and also brings value to the organization. Moreover, the importance of advice networks cannot be ignored, and one's position in such networks also impacts

the organizational performance. All of these benefits have an impact on objective career success outcomes and influence career success (Seibert et al., 2001).

Importantly, it has been suggested that with an increased number of network ties, the access to information becomes broader (Reagans & McEvily, 2003). People having access to different social groups can utilize diversified resources. These resources improve their creativity level (Reiche, 2012). The direct contacts are members with whom people have direct connection and they can then link an individual to indirect contacts and therefore one can derive additional benefits and resources from those indirect contacts (Nebus, 2006).

Moreover, having access to wider information and resources increases an individual's social power within an organization and therefore, they have more visibility and enhanced reputation. Their influence and social power gradually start becoming more vivid, and these perceptions support them in achieving better career opportunities such as promotions. Also, access to these resources enhances an employee's perceptions about his/her competencies and thus impacts their performance at the job. When an employee has control over work, they feel psychological empowerment. When people are psychologically empowered at work, they are more satisfied with their performance, and progress well in their careers (Seibert et al., 2001).

Similarly, support networks such as having multiple mentors at work are influential for career success. These people have strong influence and could provide various kinds of support. For example, one mentor can support an individual in coping with stressful situation arising due to a change in work. While other may provide informational resources and support employees in a way that improves their job performance and enhances competencies. It has been highlighted that individuals who have strong support from mentors have better chances of promotions and they demonstrate more satisfaction with what they are paid by their organizations (Seibert et al., 2001). This support

improves work related performance and well-being of individuals ultimately impact career satisfaction, and chances of promotions.

It is recommended for expatriates to find such networks of support who can help them in the development of competencies, and overall advancement in the career. The mentoring (support system) is one of the best HR practices through which skills and competencies are transferred. For instance, mentoring helps in development of leadership skills and relational skills. Mentoring enhances skills and thus opportunities of career advancement (Holtbrügge & Ambrosius, 2015). Expatriates build strong network ties with mentors who can guide them, these people could be from the home country organization or host country who enable them to learn new skills that would create opportunities for career advancement.

It is also mentioned that contacts who are working at higher level positions offer benefits such as career related support and career sponsorship. When it comes to receiving information, these people are of indirect support as they can connect employees to the relevant people for the needed support (Seibert et al., 2001).

Similarly, Mäkelä and Suutari (2009) discussing expatriates' diverse network of relationships argue that these social connections provide managers information, connect them with new career opportunities available in different work locations, and they have advantage to gain new knowledge. This all results in positive improvements in the job performance, and impacts chances of career progression. The social capital expatriates develop opens the doors of communication and knowledge flow across the boundaries, therefore it also adds to the social capital accumulating at the organizational level.

The connection with the external community and local business partners enhances expatriates' awareness of new job opportunities in the external market. Moreover, as corporate expatriates are sent by the organization, they are at advantage to have broader networks both in the home country and the host country organization (Farh et al., 2010).

The access to organisational knowledge, social capital and understanding of global business operations improves their chances of promotions and career advancement.

Kim (2002) studied how social capital impacts the chances of promotions in case of managers who are working at senior level positions. It was found that these managers interact with various business partners outside the firm and are involved in broader business activities, therefore they develop a diverse network of external ties. Their external contacts enhance their reputation, and they have more chances of promotions within an organization, therefore external networks have an impact on career success. Moreover, interestingly it was found that a relationship with CEOs is highly important for managers who are working at senior level positions, and it improves their chances of promotions.

The social connections expatriates develop are also of support in adjusting to a new environment. The contact with new colleagues at the host country unit helps in reducing stress and frustration arising from a change. The different characteristics of networks, such as how frequent are the interactions, how big is the network and what is the strength of tie all have an impact on the support expatriates received. The work-related networks at all levels, and quality of relationships such as with peers and supervisor impacts performance. Expatriates receive multiple resources through these networks (Farh et al., 2010). The improved job performance ultimately improves career satisfaction and other career related outcome such as career advancement.

2.6   Summary and framework of the study

The social capital perspectives are viewed within the context of career success of expatriates. Since in the literature social capital is conceptualized in many ways. It is defined as a public asset (e.g., Putnam 1995) and also viewed as a private asset (e.g., Burt 1992). These assets (networks) provide various benefits that can be mobilized and utilized at the group or individual level. The purpose of study is to assess implications of social capital for the career success of expatriates, therefore individual level social capital is assessed. As discussed in previous chapter, different social capital perspectives offer

explanation how social resources are of value for one's career and what type of resources one can avail through these networks for personal advantage. For example, Burt (1992) structure hole concept discusses the value of disconnected connections that exist across a structural hole in a network and that these distant connections provide advantages relevant for one's career success. Similarly, Granovetter (1973) weak tie theory is discussed which highlights the importance of strength of ties that networks based on weak tie are of more advantage in terms of availing career related opportunities and thus are highly linked to one's career success.

The present study has applied social capital conceptualization given by (Nahapiet and Goshal, 1998). According to it, social capital is an accumulation of resources that one possess in the form of networks. The resources are derived from networks by the individuals and it has an impact on career success outcomes. Further, the associated concept of bonding and bridging social capital depending on nature of ties is also considered important (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Bonding social capital is what consists of strong ties and bridging social capital includes distant and weak ties.

In line with these theoretical concepts and to provide a direction to the study, the different typologies of social capital as reported in a study by (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009) are used to analyse the findings and develop a comprehensive discussion in the following chapters. According to these categories social capital of expatriates consists of internal and external networks of strong and weak ties. Both of these networks provide multiple benefits to expatriates. In the present study, it is analysed that how advantages gained from these networks impact career success of expatriates.

3   Methodology of the study

This chapter discusses the methodology of the study. The selected method aims to answer the research question of the study. First, research philosophy, paradigm and research design are discussed. Then research method is discussed including sampling, and how data is collected and analyzed. Also, the ethical issues and trustworthiness of the study are discussed.

3.1   Research philosophy and paradigm

The study considers subjectivist research philosophy to explore the research question. According to Saunders et al., (2019) subjectivism is a view that says "social reality is made from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors (people)" (p. 137). Further, extending on it, the social constructionism view says that "reality is constructed through social interaction in which social actors create partially shared meanings and realities, in other words reality is constructed intersubjectively" (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 137). These views highlight that social actor interact in a continuous way and therefore the studied phenomenon required an in-depth understanding and exploration considering different contexts, and associated explanations. Subjectivist researchers focus on exploring the reality in the form of varying narratives that social actors share about a reality. It means how people view and perceive a specific phenomenon is important to consider as compared to objectivist researchers who focus more on investigating the objective facts.

In this study, the experience of expatriation, perceptions of career success, and accumulation of social capital is mainly viewed from the perspective of expatriates how they define it, what is their narrative on the topic and associated explanations. Their opinion about career success is also assessed very subjectively because people define success differently and it is important to understand what career success means for them, and how social capital affects their career success perceptions. The subjective approach provides study a broader perspective in a way that different measures of career success are

discussed, and the opinion of participants is considered. The experience might vary between managers, but the process of expatriation is same for all, therefore there is possibility of similar experiences and shared narratives. With subjectivist approach, therefore the focus of the study is to understand expatriates' shared perceptions about expatriation experience, the development of social capital in the form of different networks of relationships and how these networks are important for their career success.

The research paradigm of the study is interpretivism which is defined as to "create new, richer understandings and interpretations of social worlds and contexts" (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 149). Interpretivist researchers try to discover realities by being inside the participant world, knowing and interpreting their opinion about a social reality followed by meaning making. They are of the view that people belong to different cultural settings, their situations could vary according to the time, and they interpret a social event according to their own understanding and experience. The focus remains on building rich and deep insights on a topic by collecting different views. In this study participants who are expatriates is the center of attention, how they view expatriation and what they say matters the most.

The chosen research approach of study is "abductive". It is a flexible approach and suitable to study the research question of the study. The abductive approach is a combination of both deductive and inductive approach (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). According to this approach, both new concepts originating from the data and pre-defined theoretical concepts are used to build a narrative on the topic. As a result of using an abductive approach a rich explanation on the topic is provided because in this way new concepts that are found in data are considered as well as theoretical themes are included. This provides support to previous theoretical concepts and expands on the topic by considering new information from the data.

The interview guide of the study was prepared based on theoretical concepts to give a direction to the study. For example, questions were incorporated about expatriation

experience, utilization of social capital and the objective and subjective career success. All questions were open ended and informal approach was followed to generate discussion and capture new ideas and information arising from the discussion with interviewees. When data is analyzed both factors are considered important, the theoretical concepts from theory as well as new information from the data to develop a deep insight on the topic.

3.2 Research design

The qualitative research design is used in the study. According to it, participants are the informants and intention is to capture their subjective and broader understanding on the topic. The data is collected using semi-structured interview method which is also described as "guided interviews". In this type of interviews, mostly pre-defined set of questions based on theoretical concepts of the study are developed and asked, but there is a margin that questions can vary according to discussion and new information should be considered (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015).

According to Eriksson & Kovalainen (2015), when the research questions of a study include "what and how", the semi-structured interviews are good way to explore and answer these research questions. Therefore, based on explorative nature of the study and research question "How social capital impact career success of expatriates" semi-structured interviews are conducted. In guided interviews, a systematic process is followed making sure all important ideas and themes of the study are disscussed and on other side discussion is kept informal so that new ideas and information is captured from the interviewees. However, these interviews are not without challenge. It requires practice for an interviewer to learn how in a short time all questions based on theoretical concepts should be covered as well as allowing sufficient time to explore new concepts from the discussion. After developing the interview guide, all questions were analysed and reviewed. The time management was practiced and the most important questions were sorted out and then based on those secondary questions were considered for digging deeper into the topic.

3.3   Research Methods

3.3.1   Sampling

The data was collected from Finnish expatriates who have been living abroad for assigned expatriation and later repatriated to Finland. The non-probability sampling technique was used to select the sample. It is defined as when "the probability of each case being selected from the target population is not known" (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 296).

From the non-probability sample technique group, volunteer "self-selection" method is applied. According to this method participants agree to participate in the study on their own preference (Saunders et al., 2019).   In this case, expatriates were contacted by emails, and they all were informed about the purpose of the study, their right to consent and confidentiality. Those who agreed to participate in the study were further contacted for arranging the interviews. According to Saunders et al., (2019) self-selection technique is useful in case when it is difficult to reach out to participants of the study and usually that is the case with the explorative study. In this case focus of the study was to contact corporate expatriates and those who have already repatriated to Finland, therefore specifically these participants were approached by email, and it remained an effective approach.

Table 1: Participant information

Participant Code	Age	Gender	No. of international assignment	Repatriate year	Work field	Countries of expatriation
A	32	Female	1	2018	Legal	Switzerland
S	48	Female	1	2002	Sales	Sweden
K	50	Female	2	2017	Sales	France
T	38	Male	1	2016	Sales	Sweden
J1	38	Female	1	2017	Financial management/finance	USA
M	54	Male	3	2021	Sales	Sweden (2), Germany (1)
J2	40	Male	1	2018	Banking	Singapore

The total participants who participated in the study are seven Finnish expats who have been on assigned international assignments in different countries and repatriated to Finland. All participants of the study are working on mid-senior level positions.

3.3.2 Data collection

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews as the purpose of the research was to explore the perceptions of participants subjectively on how they view expatriation experience and role of social networks in their overall career success. In the interview guide, most of the questions were open ended to keep the conversation informal and generate a good discussion. According to Eriksson & Kovalainen (2015) open ended questions should be used in the interview guide when aim of the research is to get in-depth insights from the participants on a topic. Moreover, the discussion followed a series of primary and secondary questions. For example, asking one question on a topic and then extending with secondary questions instead of moving to a new topic. This allowed interviewer and interviewees to reflect on questions and discuss all themes more deeply.

Moreover, difficult theoretical concepts and terms were avoided in the interview questions. When questions based on theoretical concepts were asked, it was made sure participant understand the question clearly and the discussion is relevant. According to Saunders et al., (2019), it is very effective to develop questions around the real life experiences of interviewees so they can reflect, share their story and provide in-depth answers that are of high value for the study. Moreover, questions should be simple and not complex, avoiding the use of difficult theoretical terminologies. Therefore, most of the discussion consisted of knowing and listening participants' experiences and their subjective perceptions about the role of social capital in their career success rather than solely following theoretical questions. However, theoretical concepts guided the discussion and helped to focus on main ideas of the study.

Due to Covid restrictions, all interviews were conducted online via Zoom and Teams. The interviews were recorded with permission from the participants. The length of an interview remained between 40 minutes to 1 hour. All interviews were conducted in the English language and expatriates were asked to share their experience, learnings, and perceptions about social connections and how it is relevant to their career success.

3.3.3   Data Analysis

The aim of the data analysis is to provide a broader picture of shared interpretations of the participants' views on the topic. How they define career success, and role of the social capital in their career lives is the focus of attention. Therefore, the method used to analyze the data is "qualitative content analysis". According to Eriksson & Kovalainen (2015) "this type of analysis focuses on the 'content' of the data with an emphasis on 'what is said' and 'what is done' in the data" (p. 119).   Importantly, here qualitative means understanding the topic subjectively with more focus on the associated meanings and context that provides a comprehensive picture of the topic studied.

As described by Eriksson and Kovalainen (2015) with this approach data analysis should start with systematic coding as it helps the beginner researchers. The recorded interviews were transcribed. The interview transcripts were read out carefully, and multiple times. Then important words and phrases were labeled based on understanding what is important for the study. Initial codes were formed. Initially labeling of data was done more openly based on what seemed to be important for the study (highlighting and commenting on the important information) and also theoretical concepts were followed to stay focused on the topic. As a next step, after descriptive coding, broader categories were formed using the theoretical concepts of the study considering internal and external networks (strong or weak ties) and different career success outcomes. The relevant coded data was summed up in the refined categories. The use of theoretical concepts during the coding made it easy to keep findings relevant but also reading the transcripts and labeling new information added depth to the study in terms of additional insights on the topic.

3.4   Ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the study

Concerning ethical considerations in qualitative research, there are several important factors that should be taken care, for example informed consent of the participants, participant right to withdraw from the study, confidentiality and respecting the professional integrity (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2015). A consent form was send to the participants to sign before the interview. All participants were informed about the purpose of research, why they are selected for this study and about their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Any kind of data that could lead to participant identification is not collected or presented. All information is treated in a confidential manner and with anonymity.

Concerning the trustworthiness of the qualitative study, researchers have proposed alternative criteria that it can be traced with the concepts of dependability, credibility and transferability (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 217). Credibility means making sure the right information is collected based on understanding what participants actually wanted to say (Saunders et al., 2019). Therefore during the interview all questions were asked in simple way and open discussion was conducted as long as both parties fully answered a question. The main focus remained on recording the interviewees subjective opinions, and associated interpretations rather than following strictly the pre-set goals of the research. It provided credibility to the study in terms of understanding participant views.

Moreover, transferability means that all steps of the study are described sufficiently so future researchers can easily follow the study. Therefore, in this chapter research process is explained thoroughly including how research is conducted, how data is collected and what method is used to analyse the data. Therefore, the study can be replicated in a new context by the researchers. All of these measures are evidence that the trustworthiness of the study is considered.

4   Findings

As discussed in the literature and following the study conducted by (Mäkelä and Suutari, 2009), managers who have been staying abroad for work purposes develop social capital consisting of both internal and external networks. These external and internal networks are found to include both strong and weak ties. To analyze the findings of the study discussion is divided into two sections following internal networks (weak and strong ties) and external networks (weak and strong ties) and in both sections' relevance of networks for career success of expatriates is discussed.

4.1   Internal networks (weak and strong ties) and career success of expatriates

The internal networks are the connections that expatriates develop within the organization. These vary between diverse broader networks including weak ties that are usually present across the different functions or between distant groups and then internal networks that includes strong ties or close social connections. The networks of strong ties are developed with time and consist of relationships that share emotional element. For example, personal friendships, and mentoring ties. The strong ties share a bonding element and are described as support networks.

In the following section, it is reported that how different internal networks that expatriates develop within the company working at different locations are valuable for their career success both in terms of objective and subjective outcomes.

Overall, almost all the participants mentioned that internal networks provide many benefits and add value to their career lives. However, their views are diverse in terms of discussing the relevance of networks for different career outcomes.

First, it was found that the broader internal networks consisting of weak ties that expatriates develop across the different functions of an organisation are very useful in terms of finding new career opportunities and making advancements in their careers. These are the contacts that could help in getting a new job offer. For example, one participant shared her experience of how she got a job offer from her internal network within a different unit in the same organisation when she wanted to relocate back. She met one of the executives who was working in the home country organization and discussed suitable role for her to move back to the home country. Through this discussion, she got a role to repatriate. The following quote elaborates her views:

"It was the [XXX] company within the [XXX]. It was kind of that I just met [name of executive] in Stockholm office [host country location] and I said like if you have some roles in your organization in Finland that I could relocate back to Finland? So that's the way actually"

Further, the same interviewee emphasized how important it is to stay connected with contacts in the home country organisation to make sure that repatriation remains successful and one can easily relocate back. The following quote illustrates it:

"When you are expat, you should keep on kind of, keeping your contacts alive in your home base. If you don't do that, it's gonna be so much harder to relocate back. So basic learning is like never cut your bridges. Never burn your bridges because you never know like, what are you gonna find and who you're gonna need basically in that?' "

Similarly, another participant shared these views, and emphasized the importance of frequent interaction with contacts in the home country organisation. It was mentioned that due to the nature of work, he was able to stay in touch with his boss and colleagues in his home country's organization and it has been impactful in terms of returning back smoothly. On other side, he mentioned that colleagues who did not actively stay in touch with contacts in their home country organisation faced difficulties in getting a suitable role upon relocation.

The following quote sheds light on it:

"Actually, my role required me to be in touch with my boss constantly and regularly and that was really I think important and whenever I came to Finland, I met some of the local colleagues, and I think that was really, in a way important to be prepared for the return. Well in advance. Because that's something that you basically know that will happen someday and I had colleagues who didn't necessarily do that as actively and I think they had quite a challenge to find a suitable position when they were returning''

This shows that the frequent interaction with internal networks in the home country is relevant for the expatriates' career success as finding a suitable role upon return is extremely important in terms of their perceptions of career success. The majority of the case managers in the study shared similar views about importance of staying in touch with the networks in the home country organisation and it was perceived as important in bridging the distance, ensuring their smooth relocation, finding suitable positions upon return and continiuing their careers in the organisation. Thus internal networks are relevant for their career success.

Second, these internal professional contacts were found to be largely affecting expatriates' perceived internal marketability both in the home country and in the host country. In order to find new jobs within the company, they prefer relying on these contacts. Also, when utilisation of these contacts was compared with applying through formal channels for the new jobs, these contacts were perceived to be more reliable and effective than formal application processes.

The underlying reason is that expatriates perceive that these are the people who know them well as they have worked together. Therefore, they are highly valuable for expatriates' careers. For example, one of the participant view that the interpersonal ties with the partners of the company are very important and relevant to finding the next role in the company. It was also found that through her internal network she got a new role in the host country organisation when she was expatriated, and also she was promoted there. The following quote explains it comprehensively:

"If I wanna move for job within the network. Then it's through the partners of the company in Finland. Then this also applies to when I wanted to go to the US so you can always formally, you know, apply to some channel to get a position in another country, right? And we have you know, processes to do that. But then you are just name among others. How you really get there is for senior manager to call their fellow senior manager in that country where you want to go and say, hey? I have this amazing person who just you know, for family reasons, wants to now live in the US or wants to live in Germany. And do you have any openings for her? This is her background. She's done this kind of client. This is where I see her strengths and then things start happening. That's really what makes a difference and that's how I got to the US as well.... ".

This shows the importance of internal networks and how it relates to expatriates' perceived internal marketability. Through these contacts they can get new roles in the organisation. Therefore these are relevant for their careers and more effective as compared to applying through formal channels.

Third, these internal network of weak ties are dispersed both in the the home country and the host country organisation. Therefore, these contacts serve as bridging the distance and are instrumental in creating new career opportunities for the expatriates in the host country. For example, they receive job offers through these ties. The following quote by one of the participants highlights that after repatriating to the home country, she is still being contacted for new job offers in the host country organisation through her internal ties. She mentioned:

"You know, when I did return to work [home country Finland], I did reach out to my network in US [host country] just letting them know that I'm back in the business......Then there was actually one manager who I worked with. It's just one engagement and she's working for [same company], but in a very different industry than I was, and then she was actually very interested in getting me back there. So she was like, hey, you're back, you know you're back working........You know I have something for you In the US?... So it's just good to know that you know if there was a will, there would be a way. So if I wanted to move back, I think it would not be a problem at all to get and relocated back to there".

The above quote elaborates how wide internal networks based on weak ties impact one's career advancement. It shows that developing ties with people from different

industries and units within one organisation can create new career opportunities for managers both in the home and the host country. This seems to be enhancing managers' perceptions of employability within the organisation since if they want to move back to the host country unit, it will not be a problem and they will find a suitable role through internal contacts.

Fourth, the internal networks are consisting of people with whom expatriates have worked over a long period. They are thus perceived as sponsors for future jobs. Some of the participants clearly mentioned that these internal professional contacts are source of their career sponsorship, the ones who would speak for them in getting new career opportunities. It is also one of the reasons why they would like to stay within the same organisation. The following quote is a good example.

"It's really the network, and it's the people that I've worked with who really know me and know what I can bring to the table that they can be the sponsors".

The same participant further elaborated:

"I always say to my colleagues....I said hey, it's like I will never ever go to a competitor to do this job because the grass is not greener and then you know if you change to a competitor you don't have the network. Right? That you built for 10 years. You know who is going to help you, you go there you're in "zero". You don't know who to turn into. You don't know who to go to if you have problems. You don't have anyone to be a Sponsor for you. I know that I have those in our firm now who you know without asking me will say, hey, I have worked with her. I know she knows what she's doing. She will deliver what she promises and I think those for your career are the most important people. The people that you know will speak up for you when you're not there''.

The above quote also shows that in addition to perceiving these contacts as reliable sponsors for new career opportunities, these internal networks are of advantage in terms of getting general support whenever needed. Thus these networks support managers to perform their jobs. The advantages of receiving general support, and having people in one's network who can be the sponsors for career opportunities are valuable for career success.

Another case manager shared about the same potential benefits that having contacts within the organisation including both who are working at the same level and below were found to be helpful in terms of seeking help and information required to perform their jobs. The following quote describes one's experience upon repatriation and how wide internal networks have been of advantage.

"And then I have quite wide network within the firm, just at my own level and you know, peers below me as well. So I was just, you know, wildly reaching out to whoever I thought who could help me. And that's what I actually really like in our firm that if you don't know the answer, someone does so u just need to find the right person. It's good that people help "

Furthermore, when discussed about chances of getting promoted within the company, most of the expatriates highlight that the internal networks in the home country where currently they are working are useful if they want to find the next role within the home country organisation. However, internal networks in host country are of advantage if they want to move back to host country organisation.

In addition to it, interestingly it was found that who they know in the host country organisation impacts their promotional opportunities even in the home country organisation. The internal host country networks add value to their reputation and enhances status within the organisation. Therefore, these diverse internal networks are highly relevant for expatriates' perceptions of employability within the organisation and important for their career success. The following quote explains it well:

"If I think of you know my next step as becoming a partner in company [talking about promotion]......... It's not only you know how you succeed in your job, it's also who you know and then how they perceive you......The more important for now is the contacts in Finland and who I know in Finland. But then when I'm having those discussions here with the partners of company [senior management] and discussing you know my next career steps or my next jobs. Of course it is an item to consider when you say, well, I do have contacts in the US [host country base]. If I need to find out this or that, I do have contacts that I can reach out for that........... I've actually done it even when I needed some information on how they're doing some things''.

This also reverts our attention to the previously discussed advantages that these wide internal networks consisting of weak ties are a source of receiving diverse information across the functions of an organisation and beyond borders. Therefore, having these contacts in one's network provide resources, adds to reputation and enhances career success.

On other side, the internal networks that are of strong ties are found to be connected and relevant for expatriates' satisfaction. These networks of strong ties are perceived to be a source of career support and are influential concerning expatriates' satisfaction and intentions to stay with an employer.

These networks include strong ties, for example, close colleagues, and also relationship with mentors or supervisors with whom they have close ties and share bonding element. The following quote by one participant sheds light on how having close colleagues in internal networks impacts one's career satisfaction.

''When we went back to Sweden [host country], there I knew my closest colleagues already from the previous time and also I had met most of the other people with whom I worked the almost 20 years ago. So there were a lot of familiar faces and it was very nice. The same of course, every time we've returned to Finland, I have Known my colleagues and It's been nice to sort of a return to the same group of people and so forth. At this time, maybe there's been a bit more changes. Well, well, actually come to think of it, quite a lot of changes. There are not many of my closest colleagues left anymore, so some are still there, but not that many. So also that then impacts my satisfaction''.

This shows having close colleagues in one's network who know each other from many years and have worked in one organization are perceived to be relevant for one's career satisfaction. Expatriates change work locations more often and therefore, maintaining these strong internal ties are important for their career success.

In addition to this, nearly all of the participants highly regarded their relationships with their managers as one aspect that have been really valuable for their careers in general. When asked who has been most influential in their career, most of them mentioned

names of their managers who have supported them in their career at different times and also created career opportunities for them.

The internal close ties with the manager were found to be linked to career satisfaction and also indirectly relate to their perceptions of internal marketability and chances of finding a role of their choice in the company. For example, one of the participants mentioned his long-term strong tie with an executive and how that one person has been offering him interesting roles every time he returned from expatriate assignment. Now after his recent repatriation, the executive with whom he shares strong ties is not having the same influence due to organisational change. This is affecting his satisfaction and future decision to stay within the company. The following quote explains it all:

"When I came back, somehow I have a feeling that the current Managing director of [company name] Finnish entity, he was involved in giving the job that I got when I returned to Finland from the 1st secondment. He has been also my direct superior for long periods of time and I told to him then at some point that well, we would be prepared to go again and he said that, OK, well there's an opening in [XXX] country. We came back from there. He was sort of the one person organising the new tasks for me still and so forth.......So he has been the one who has been sort of orchestrating the things. He has been taking care of my career so far and every now and then I got a new interesting job to take care of. Now that we have been back and there's new ownership. It is bit unclear to me how much of his influence is still left and what's his position? So that also makes me question a bit whether there's any future in this company?, or whether I should be looking for something else. But definitely he's being the one who has sort of influenced- how my career has been shaped."

This highlights how internal networks of strong ties impact the career advancement of expatriates and through this support network, they are able to find new and interesting roles upon repatriation. These ties are said to be shaping their careers and are seems to be highly relevant for their career satisfaction and advancement.

Moreover, the internal networks of strong ties serve as support system that expatriates can always rely on and seek advice. The following quote from one participant explains that for this kind of network one does not need to put effort or be active all the time. These are the mentor contacts from whom they will get support whenever needed.

Participant said:

"After my return [home country], I think it's been great to have that kind of a network that it doesn't necessarily require to be active or being in touch actively, but you always know that you have a kind of network that if you need something or you always know that? OK, I want to know more about this, I will contact that person and he or she will probably help me to get forward".

Therefore, these are the networks of support and the ties are strong because managers perceive that they donot need to be active to maintain these networks. This is their very own network that provides a sounding board. Therefore, these contacts are important for their career success.

4.2 External networks (weak and strong ties) and career success of expatriates

External networks of weak and strong ties are the connections that expatriates develop outside the organisation. The boundaryless nature of their work provides them sufficient chances to develop diverse ties with people outside the organisation. The external connections consisting of weak ties are the professional contacts that they develop usually through different business oriented interactions with people outside the company as part of their work as well as by engaging in networking or career related events. The external connections based on strong ties are the contacts with whom expatriates share close relationships. For example, it includes personal friendships, family and social ties.

It was discovered that external networks of weak ties have been helpful for the participants' career success in different ways. These external networks are instrumental in getting new career opportunities outside one's organisation. The following quote from one participant sheds light on how she got a new job offer after repatriating to the home country and working some time for the same employer. It was through external contact that she met at a career fair.

"When I moved out of [company name] to [new company name], I met the [name of executive] who was Vice president of [company name], Finland. Two years back in some fair I discussed with him for half an hour or something and then yeah, but also because they happen to have the need for my skill. So it was kind of right timing for me to move and they were really needing my skill set there''.

This shows that having an external network of professional ties adds value to career success of these managers when they are able to receive new job offers in external market through these contacts. In case they want to change employer after repatriation, these external contacts could be of advantage.

In addition to this, most of the participants discussed about their former colleagues that were part of the internal network once but then moved to new companies. They are now part of external network. It gradually becomes a big network when expatriates work at different locations. These connections were perceived as of major benefit in terms of their career success and found to be influencing expatriates' perceptions about getting employment opportunities in the external market. The following quote says it all:

"I think contacts are very helpful because at [company name] we are sort of like especially the salespeople, they come in very young so they usually come in from straight from university and then even if they progress to a certain level, they still probably want to change before they retire. So there are a lot of people who I've learned to know during my time in Switzerland [previous host country] as well as, as part of the job in general. And those people are usually located in different countries. So anything from South Africa to Middle East to India. Sure in Europe and US as well.......... When you connect with those people in your job and you made an impression and they changed to a new company, then if I would be interested in a position in that company, I would reach out to them. So I think that's definitely a huge benefit to sort of have been able to build the network, even though majority of it originates from [current company], but because those people have left this company. But it's started to look like a quite a big network"

This shows how diverse are the external networks expatriates' possess and these networks are spread across different countries. Managers perceive these external contacts as of ''huge benefit'' in terms of finding new jobs in external markets. These would be the people to reach out to find jobs in external or international markets.

Similarly, adding to these views, another participant discussed that the mixed base of connections that he has developed around the world is beneficial to finding a job in international markets. Following quote says it all:

"If I am looking for a new job here [Finland] then it would be definitely that local connections………But if I want to go abroad again for job then I think that I have pretty mixed base of Connections all over the world and that could help me"

Another manager emphasized the importance of relationship with former colleagues who are located in different countries and that these would be the contacts to reach out if he wants to find a job and move abroad again. He mentioned:

"Well if I have to find a job. If I wanted to live in Sweden for example, then I would definitely first contact that guy [talking about a former colleague] that I mentioned before because he works in the area of people, job hunting and head hunting..........I have friends who are in other fields, basically so engineers, doctors and you know gyms. So I have very little like in my own group of network. I have maybe a couple who are in the same similar field where I could actually benefit so, but I would mainly use my former colleagues or ex colleagues that I am still in touch with"

All of these quotes clearly highlight that diverse external networks of weak ties are perceived highly valuable in terms of finding new jobs in international markets and therefore, relevant for expatriates' perceptions of external marketability.

On other side, the external network of strong ties were also found to be affecting expatriates' satisfaction and decision where they want to reside for work. Majority of them mentioned that the decision to stay in Finland (home country) is because of family reasons and social connections they have in the home country. Also, the friends they have in external circle affect their overall satisfaction.

Following quote from one participant illustrates these perceptions:

"But because all the connections and social network I had in Finland, I wanted to return, it was never my intention to permanently relocate….......Friends, friends ! That's almost

mostly, that if I could have imported all my friends there at the time. Then I wouldn't have any reason to go back, I would say".

Therefore, external networks of strong ties are the social connections that they value the most in personal lives. Therefore, this impacts their careers in a way that they feel satisfied having these people in their lives. Therefore, it affects where they want to be based in terms of their work location and spend most of their time.

To summarise, all of the participants viewed internal and external networks beneficial for their career success, and utilisation of the diverse networks consisting of weak and strong ties vary as per individuals' own choice. They have viewed these networks as source of getting promotions and new job offers. Most of them mentioned about getting information through these ties, and the general support at work. Their contacts abroad are found to be impacting their external marketability. If they want to move abroad again, the networks they have made in different countries would be of importance. Moreover, the strong ties within the company were found to be linked to their satisfaction. These networks also affect their perceptions of future career within a company.

Lastly, importantly, some case managers emphasized that they were active in networking activities to develop diverse networks, while others did not mention about networking. It was obvious that they have developed these networks as part of their work without being active in networking. The following quote from one participant highlights overall importance of networks for career and that active networking could be of advantage.

"After I graduated that was the only time I was actually sending applications only time and then after that it's only been by networking. Networks are extremely important for your career and how I build the network I just meet different people and I chit chat with different people and I always tell what I'm doing out of what I want to do in the future, so it's kind of you never know. When the right time comes".

5 Discussion

This chapter discussess findings of the study in view of previous research. The discussion is structured in following way, first findings about the impact of internal networks (weak and strong ties) on career success is discussed in view of previous studies and following it, impact of external networks (weak and strong ties) on career success is discussed.

The findings of the study provide evidence and answer the research question "how social capital impact career success of expatriates''. The findings about internal networks of weak ties provide support to the assumptions based on social capital theory that wide networks including weak ties are of great support for individuals' careers (Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1973). The case managers of the study reported about getting job offers through these diverse internal networks both existing in the home country and the host country organisation. They also mentioned about the networks that were based in different units and industries than their own work unit, and reported that they have been asked for new roles through these contacts which confirms how valuable are these ties for the expatriates' career success.

These networks were found to be influencing manager's perceptions about internal marketability, chances of getting new jobs offers, and that if they need to be promoted within the organisation, these professional ties are of great importance. The foundational studies by Granovetter (1973), and Burt (1992) focuses precisely on advantages of diverse weak ties and mentioned that these ties provide access to broader networks outside an individuals' own social group and therefore, create new opportunities for career advancement. Granovetter (1973) reported that these weak ties were found highly impactful in terms of providing new information about the jobs to the participants he studied. It has been emphasized that building on these diverse ties can help individuals land new jobs and promotions (Monica & Dougherty, 2004). Therefore, the findings of the study corroborate with these previous studies highlighting the importance of weak ties in terms of getting job offers, promotions and making advancements in the careers.

Moreover, it was also obvious in the findings that relationship with contacts who are higher in a hierarchy are highly influential when it comes to receiving promotions within the company. As one of the senior manager mentioned that his relationship with company partners is important when it comes to being promoted. These findings are consistent with previous study conducted by Kim (2002) in which the social capital perspective is used, and it was reported that the relationship of executives with CEO is linked to the promotions. Hence it can be inferred that contact ties with people working at the higher organizational level are important for the managers career success, and provide promotional opportunities in the organization.

Further, these wide internal weak ties were found to be providing other benefits such as access to information as reported by many case managers. The access to information is of high value for these managers as they need information to perform their jobs, and especially when it is about getting the information across functions and beyond borders. These findings are also in line with previous studies (e.g., Burt, 1992; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009) where similar information related advantages are discussed in relation to these ties. Accessing information across the different units of an organisation could be challenging in a short time, therefore these networks facilitate the exchange of information and as a result supports managers' work as well as the whole organisation.

Interestingly, In addition to this, findings show that benefit of accessing information across the borders that these internal diverse weak ties provide to the managers enhances their overall reputation and status in the company that gives them an edge when they are having promotion discussions with their executives. These weak tie contacts and associated benefits are seen as providing additional value. This is in line with previous studies (burt, 1992) where it is mentioned that the easy access to information improves one's bargaining power and they are then more prominent within the company. This improves their career enhancement possibilities. In line with this, Seibert et al., (2001) also state that having benefits like access to information improves

one's social power and their status is more visible in terms of getting promotions. Therefore, findings of present study corroborate with these previous studies.

The findings of the study indicate that access to resources and information also gave control over work and managers feel psychologically empowered and satisfied (Seibert et al., 2001). For example, a case manager mentioned that going to a competitor is not an option because in the current company she has a network from whom she can ask for information, and general support. Therefore, access to resources through these networks impacts one's satisfaction, and intentions to stay with the same employer.

Furthermore, it was also found that these internal ties of professional nature, especially the people with whom they have worked for a long time are the sponsors who can speak for them for new career opportunities, and thus are relevant for their career sponsorship. This finding also corroborates with the previous study (Seibert et al., 2001) in which networks are considered one major source of career sponsorship.

Importantly, findings show that participants emphasized the importance of staying connected with contacts in the home country office and that this is of high importance for successful repatriation, and for finding suitable role upon returning back, thus these ties are relevant for their career success. This issue has also been raised in the past studies, and that the frequent interaction with home country contacts helps to minimise the "out of sight- out of mind" phenomenon which creates challenges for expatriates to find a suitable role upon return. These findings are in line with previous studies in which expatriates raised the issue of weakening ties with home country organisation and resulting repatriation challenges (e.g., Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009; Stahl & Cerdin, 2004).

The findings about internal networks of strong ties are also in line with previous studies (e.g.,Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009; Seibert et al., 2001) that through harnessing benefits of social capital people can achieve both objective and subjective career outcomes. Objective career success outcomes include extrinsic benefits such as promotions and salary

increase, whereas subjective career success include intrinsic benefits such as career satisfaction, perceived marketability, and career success perceptions. Mäkelä & Suutari (2009) mentioned that internal strong ties provide a sounding board to the expatriates as they can receive support from these contacts whenever needed. It has also been discussed by participants of the present study that these are the connections that do not need to be actively managed all the time rather they offer unconditional support. Therefore, these are perceived valuable for their career success.

In addition to it, some internal networks of strong ties exist at a higher hierarchical level for example, when participants mentioned about their close relationship with managers and how it impacts their satisfaction and careers. This also corroborates with previous study (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009) in which these ties at high levels were found to be of great benefit for expatriates.

Supervisor support affects significantly subordinates career satisfaction (Ng et al., 2005). It was also reported by participants of the present study. For example, one manager shared his thoughts that one of the senior executives in the home country organisation supported him for many years and offered interesting new roles in the company everytime he came back after completing international assignment. Now the influence of the executive is unknown as the company structure is changed and it is impacting his satisfaction and anticipation of the future career in the company.

The social support gained from one's supervisor and quality of leader-member exchange (LMX) have been discussed previously in the context of expatriates (e.g., Benson & Pattie, 2009; Stroppa & Spieß, 2011). The relationship with supervisor has an impact on how expatriates perceive their career advancement. Moreover, the role of home supervisor has been discussed as more valuable concerning expatriates' perceptions about career development, and how well they can achieve their career goals in the company (Benson & Pattie, 2009). Therefore, findings supported these views discussed in previous studies on expatriate's career.

The findings about utilization of diverse external networks and its relevance for career success of expatriates also corroborate with previous studies (Eby et al., 2003; Kim, 2002; Suutari et al., 2018) in which these external networks are found to be a source of advantage. These networks expose expatriates towards career enhancing opportunities, and they can also find new career related information through these contacts outside the company. The Information they need to advance in their careers. The former colleagues who have moved to new organizations add to expatriates knowledge about the opportunities that they can avail to advance in their careers (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009). Similar findings are reported by participants of the present study as their former colleagues based in different countries are the main source that they will reach out if they want to find jobs in international markets.

Hence these external networks of weak ties are influential for career success of expatriates in terms of enhancing perceived external marketability, and findings job in external markets or more precisely international markets. This is similar to what Eby et al., (2003) mentioned, that external networks might impact perceived external marketability. Moreover, these relationships are characterized as weak ties. Therefore, it also supports the weak tie notion given by Granovetter (1973) that these weak tie contacts offer advantages of getting information that is valuable for one's career.

Further, participants also discussed importance of external networks of strong ties. It was mentioned that the strong ties of social nature, for example, friends and family, are important in terms of their career satisfaction and impact their decision of choosing work location. This adds to the notion that ''personal life'' is an important criterion of career success as mentioned in previous study (Spurk et al., 2018). Expatriates would like to have careers in which they can have work/family life balance.

Therefore, the overall importance of networks in the context of expatriate's career success that has been found in the study supports relevance of the social capital perspectives for career success. These findings support previous studies (e.g., Eby et al., 2003)

as in boundaryless careers, networks are perceived highly valuable for career success for many reasons. The present study highlights different elements and advantages that these networks provide to expatriates and how these impact their career success.

Importantly, the importance of networking activities was highlighted by some participants that active engagement in networking activities helps expatriates to develop diverse networks. This also corroborates with previous studies (e.g.,Baker, 2000; Burt, 1992) in which accumulation of one's social capital is said to be associated with extending networks and for that people should engage themselves in networking activities. Similarly, it is mentioned that to drive the benefits from international work assignments, expatriates should consider personal networking activities to develop diverse local networks in the host country. It will enhance their external marketability. The diverse networks create more job offers from external markets (Cerdin & Pargneux, 2009). The engagement in these networking activities also helps in developing competencies (Jokinen, 2010).

6 Conclusions

This chapter provides summary of the study. Also, the theoretical and practical implications of the study are discussed. In the last section limitations are provided to guide future researchers.

The discussion and findings of the study highlight the implications of the social capital perspective in the context of career success of expatriates. The study added to the insights that expatriates possess both internal and external networks consisting of strong and weak ties. These networks are spread out in-home country, host country and also to third countries especially due to former colleagues moved to new countries. Both types of personal connections hold diverse and unique benefits that they can utilize to gain subjective and objective career success outcomes, and therefore social capital has an impact on career success of expatriates.

In addition to exploring the relationship social capital – career success of expatriates, the study unfolds and expands the discussion on the underlying factors that how internal and external networks influence different career success outcomes. To summarize, the diverse internal networks of weak ties are largely found to be affecting expatriates' perceptions of internal marketability as they can rely on these sources to find promotions and career advancement opportunities within their organizations. These contacts are perceived as reliable sponsors. Few mentioned about receiving new job offers through these diverse internal networks. The internal networks of weak ties also offer them advantages of receiving information and support across the functions in the company that ultimately is important for their work. On other side, the diverse external networks consisting of former colleagues who are based in the host and third countries are perceived to be highly valuable when it comes to finding a job in the international markets.

Furthermore, the internal and external networks of strong ties (e.g., close supervisor-employee relationship, close colleagues, friends, family) are found to be more relevant

when it comes to describe managers' career satisfaction. Overall, all managers valued social capital and view these networks as important and relevant for their career success. In addition to these findings, interestingly majority of the participants expressed satisfaction with their careers and defined the career success in terms of intrinsic factors (e.g., meaningful & challenging jobs, continuous advancement).

6.1 Theoretical implications

The study offers several theoretical implications. First, the study has added to the growing literature on international HRM by viewing the important issue of career success of expatriates through the lens of social capital perspective. Existing research is limited when it comes to exploring the impact of social capital for career success of expatriates at the individual level. The present study added to this area which is still evolving and can be characterised as not *"much researched"*. The study provided new insights and supported previous studies conducted on social capital and its relevance for managers' global careers (e.g., Kim, 2002; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009).

Second, as the global careers have gained immense attention over the past years due to changing nature of work, and organisation becoming more and more international, the present study has raised attention of IHRM researchers to further explore social capital utilisation in view of career success of expatriates. The study has added clarity to the topic by thoroughly presenting the diverse patterns of networks and how these add value to the careers of expatriates in terms of various outcomes.

Third, it also added to the notion of boundaryless careers as "expatriates are often claimed as archetypical boundaryless individuals" (Suutari et al., 2018, p. 8). The importance of social capital is perceived to be increasing for individuals with boundaryless career whose nature of work offers them opportunities to build their personal networks. As a result, it leads to building more diverse networks, and the effects are multiplied in terms of adding more contacts to a network (Lazarova & Taylor, 2009). This has been the case with participant managers as they have developed personal ties with people in

the host country and home country and further extending to third countries. Thus, boundaryless role opens opportunities for expatriates to meet new people as part of their work and social life. Therefore, findings of the study add to the notion of boundaryless careers.

6.2 Managerial implications

The study has provided many implications for the managers. First, findings that social capital is important for the career success of expatriates highlight the value of internal and external networks consisting of strong and weak ties for the managers who embark on their international career journey. They should be aware that these networks provide them an edge to stay connected with the home country organization when they are abroad. The connections serve as a cushion who could be of support in next career moves upon repatriation.

Secondly, due to their boundaryless careers, they are at advantage as compared to domestic employees in terms of developing diverse internal and external networks that they can utilize when it comes to enhancing external and internal marketability and career advancement. Expatriation helps them in extending such networks beyond the borders that are of value in terms of finding career opportunities outside the home country organization. Therefore, they should find ways to build on these ties considering their importance to their careers.

Third, the study has implications for the organizations. The repatriates are highly valuable for the organizations because these individuals possess social capital and have the ability to work across cultures (Andresen, 2021). Repatriates are the future leaders for the MNCs who are well aware about the global business operations and can handle critical business assignments. These managers possess highly valuable human capital and business specific information, and the diverse networks that are spread in different countries are extremely important for the companies (Barry Hocking et al., 2004). The diverse internal and external networks that these boundaryless individuals possess help

in knowledge transfer across the functions of an MNCs and beyond geographical boundaries. The social capital supports managers to do their work but it also helps organizations in bridging the distance between different units of an organization, and facilitating transfer of knowledge and practices (Eby et al., 2003).

Therefore, organizations should find ways to help expatriates in developing both internal and external networks. Importantly, when they are working away from the home organization they should ensure that they do not get lost and stay connected with home base networks. This is impactful for their motivation, career advancement and intentions to stay with the organization. In this way organizations can support these managers in their careers as well as help them in avoiding repatriation related challenges as reported in various studies (e.g.,Kraimer et al., 2009; Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Organizations should do efforts for the managers to stay connected with the home country unit such as using active communication and support of mentors. Also, in host country unit their social capital enhancement should be boosted by organizing social events and activities of networking (Breitenmoser et al., 2018).

The findings raise the attention of organizations that they can keep managers informed when they are working abroad with active communication and thus influencing their commitment to stay with the company and avoid repatriation related problems. These managers having international experience, expertise and diverse social capital bring great value to the human capital of any organization. Thus, they should find ways to maximize their potential and support their career success, ultimately improving organizational performance.

6.3   Limitations of the study and future research

The limitations of the study are important to consider to give new directions to future researchers who are working on expatriates career success from the social capital perspective. First, the study was qualitative and the data is collected using interviews which limits the generalizability of the findings. The findings can be further verified by

using mixed method approach to uncover more comprehensive insights on the topic. Secondly, the number of participants are limited to seven. Thus in future research, large number of participants should be considered to generalise the findings.

Third, all participants were Finnish, this limits the generalizability of the findings. The labor markets of different countries vary and this could be of impact how people perceive their career opportunities upon returning back. The dynamics of personal networks could also be impacted by the effects of cultural values and views. Moreover, in a country like Finland where knowledge and skills gained through international experience are rewarded, it may have an impact on available career opportunities for the expatriates upon return and their perceptions of career success. Considering contextual factors, conducting research in other countries and cultures would be a good choice.

In addition to it, with increasing importance of global mobility, organisations have arranged different types of international assignments Baruch et al., (2013) state that international work assignments can be configured into many forms depending on factors such as intensity, length of assignment and other aspects. These include for example, corporate expatriation, self-initated foreign work, Inpatriation, secondments overseas, short-term assignments, inshoring virtual global employees and many others (Baruch et al., 2013). In this study only one type of international assignment is included and that is "corporate expatriation". This can be seen as another limitation. Self-initiated expatriation is also gaining attention. These are people who on their own finds opportunity to work for a new employer in a new country (Suutari et al., 2018). Assessing the impact of their social capital on career success would open new directions and also comparing the both could be of great importance. Last, concept of social capital has implications to solve the problems at macro and micro levels (Adler & Kwon, 2002). It can also be assessed at organisational level. However, in this study focus is on expatriate's individual level social capital. In future studies,organizational-level social capital can be analyzed in relation to the career success of expatriates.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

Research Topic	Questions
Background	
Expatriation: where, how long, with whom	Where did you work when you last abroad? How long were you there? Did you enjoy it? Why did you decide to work abroad? Did you move there by yourself, or with someone else (family, spouse…)?
More than one IE?	Have you worked abroad more than one time, and where? Did having previous experience affect your repatriation in any way? How?
Repatriation: motive, time, opinion…	Why did you decide to return to Finland? When did you come back? How has the experience been for you so far?
Career Success	
Objective Career Success	
Job situation Job position before return	What is your current job situation and your position? Did you already have a position waiting for you in Finland before you came back?
Job search: when, how	How did you look for jobs: online job boards (LinkedIn), company portal, HR, contacts…?
Job offers and promotions.	Did you already receive any job offers while you were abroad? How did that happen? Since you returned to Finland: • Have you received any promotions? • Any new offers from another company?
Subjective career success	
Perceived marketability	Do you feel that your int. experience matters to receive more offers and promotions? Why?
View of success Career satisfaction	What does "career success" mean to you? Overall, how satisfied are you with your career after repatriating? Why?
Career advancement perception	Comparing your situation after repat. to before you went abroad: has your career progressed, in your opinion? Are you happy with this degree of improvement?
Social capital as an antecedent of Career success (CS)	In our previous literature review, we identified social capital as an antecedent of career success for expatriates…

Link social capital to CS	
Connect social capital to previous topics: income, offers, opportunities, advancement, goals…	Do your contacts at home/abroad matter to receive more offers and promotions? • Is this the case in the Finnish context? Many people find a new job through their social networks. When looking for a promotion, job, raise, information… how likely are to try to do this with the people you know, versus the "formal" channels? Personally, did you find any career opportunities through contacts? • If so, how did you know this person? Are people and your social environment important in how satisfied you feel with your career? In what way? How have your contacts contributed to or blocked your career advancement? Have people and your social networks helped you move closer to your career goals? How so?
Social capital that has been "accessed" (used)	Please think about the people who have helped you most significantly, especially after/during repatriation, and influencing your career success, and any other career decisions after repatriation.
Who, kind of tie, where	• How would you describe your relationship to each of them? Are you close (perception)? How often do you usually keep in touch? • How long have you known each other? • Did you meet them in Finland or abroad, and where are they now?
The "help" (resource)	In which ways exactly did they help you?
Position of contacts	What is the occupation of these people? Do they work at the same organization?
Future plans	
Turnover intention Role of contacts (trust, perception)	Are you considering new roles, or going to work for other organizations? Why? Would you trust some contacts to support you in such a transition, and is that important for you; why? Who comes to mind?
Predisposition to work abroad once again	Do you plan to go abroad again for work, or to stay in Finland? Why? Are your home/international social networks important to consider in this decision? i.e. maintaining or growing them.
Mapping Networks	
Importance assigned to social capital for careers	→ Do you think your social contacts in Finland are important for your career? Why? → Do you think that the contacts you made abroad will impact your career in the long run? Why? Have you always had the same opinion?

Staying in touch: how, how effective, who	When you were abroad, were you proactive to stay in touch? Was it easy/challenging? What people or groups of people do you stay in touch with? How, and how often?
Creating new networks abroad	With whom did you connect? Where did you meet them?
Social behavior in general	Do you engage in networking activities? Why, how, how often…