Identifying Characteristics of Successful Overseas Assignments at a Global Fortune 500:

An Exploratory Quality Improvement Capstone Project

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About the Author

Elizabeth Kumbhari Over the past 15 years, Elizabeth Kumbhari has worked in immigration law, global mobility, and international education. Elizabeth holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies and a minor in German from Capital University. She holds a J.D. from Chase College of Law at Northern Kentucky University where she graduated within the top 10 of her class. She has led international offices at both Northern Kentucky University and Long Island University and was General Counsel and Vice President of Professional Exchanges at an international exchange nonprofit, Cultural Vistas. She currently serves as U.S. Immigration Manager for Amazon. She has written and spoken on the topic of immigration for Forbes and numerous international conferences.

Dedication

Completion of this degree is the culmination of a lifelong goal. I dedicate this project to my family who supported me on this adventure. To Dr. Quinn Trank, I am grateful for your guidance, patience, and support through the years required to complete this research. To my daughters, who were just one and two years old when I began this journey, who listened to many virtual classes/lectures, cheering me on: I hope you always remain curious. To my husband, the other Dr. Dr. in the house, thank you for always pushing me to achieve my dreams and ensuring that I have a cup of coffee nearby. To my mom, who taught me to be curious, and to my sister who taught me to see obstacles as exciting challenges, thank you for instilling in me the belief that I can always accomplish anything I set my mind to. Finally, [redacted] without whom this project could not have occurred: Thank you for the countless calls, responses to urgent emails, and faith in my project. Thank you for trusting and supporting me, [redacted].

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Executive Summary

In the modern global world, companies are no longer contained by national borders. Multinational corporations utilize global mobility to transfer knowledge within their organization, strengthen relationships across business units, and expand streamlined processes and best practices. Due to technological limitations for collaboration and the need for human-to-human contact, companies often look to overseas assignments as an alternative method to achieve business goals. Global mobility and the expatriate experience are not a new phenomenon. What is new in this field is the complexity around international travel, immigration regulations, the unique obstacles an employee may face during an overseas assignment, and the profile of the employee who is interested in participating.

In an effort to improve the success rates of overseas assignments, companies study both internal and external trends for purposes of strategic employee selection and support. My partner organization, a Global Fortune 500, features one of the largest in-house global mobility programs in the world. Operating in more than 86 countries, Company Z , supports more than 2,000 overseas assignments each year. In an effort to support their employees, managers, and business units better, they partnered with me to understand the profile of the employees who have been selected for overseas assignments and the characteristics frequently associated with successful assignments.

Through my quantitative research, I identified characteristics that increased the probability of success for U.S.-based Company Z employees completing overseas assignments. I found that the likelihood of a failed assignment increased by .33% for every day the assignment continued; that married employees have a higher success rate than those who are in a relationship but are unmarried; that men are slightly more likely to complete a successful overseas

assignment than women; and that some sending cities/receiving countries had higher success rates than others.

Organizational Context

Company Z is a Global Fortune 500 international company [redacted]. Featuring a significant presence in the United States, and consisting of six business units [redacted] and four service units [redacted], Company Z boasts an annual revenue of more than [redacted] (Statista Research Department, 2021).

Three business units of Company Z produce and innovate products and services for external audiences in contrast to the service units that support Company Z business needs internally. The corporation's products and interests are very diverse; the organization describes itself as [redacted].

Company Z has more than 200 locations around the globe, featuring offices in more than 88 countries. Employing more than [redacted] individuals worldwide (40,000 of whom reside in the United States), Company Z is considered a major employer throughout the world ([redacted]. With such a large number of employees, located in a multitude of locations, Company Z utilizes its Global Business Services division to support the organization in many ways. The division employs more than 9,500 people within Company Z and has offices

in more than 40 different cities. Offering annual conferences to Company Z employees, providing consulting services, and conducting ongoing research in the field of global mobility, the Global Business Services acts as a vendor to the six main business units of Company Z. Global Business Services provides internal support in areas such as HR, accounting, payment processing, employee lead generation, and global mobility.

Global mobility is a relatively young professional field focusing on the mobility of employees in and out of countries. Prior to the field creation, employees relied on travel agents, human resources, and managers for support during overseas assignments. The first relocation management company, Global Mobility Solutions, was founded in 1987 (History, 2021). While it is common for companies to offer variations of services based on organizational needs and the demographics served, "global mobility" typically refers to the services offered by an employer to an employee (and typically their dependents) that is related to short- or long-term international employment within the company or a subsidiary. Global mobility services typically include immigration law support, tax expertise, housing support, travel accommodations, cultural training, and salary allotment in recognition for the inconveniences incurred during overseas assignments.

Global mobility services are intended to ease the stresses associated with moving to a different country for a work assignment, allowing the employee to focus solely on their work. International companies find international mobility of their employees advantageous and even necessary, because it allows for knowledge sharing and building across units and demographics, strengthening the comprehensive organizational knowledge. When a company frequently utilizes global mobility services for their employees, they often find it beneficial to support these unique

needs in house. The alternative of outsourcing can be costly and inefficient because global mobility experts are most efficient when they have a deep understanding of the business needs.

Approximately 25 years ago, Company Z created their internal Global Mobility Management unit (within the Hire-to-Retire support services) that has successfully relocated more than 320,000 Company Z's employees to more than 205 destinations throughout the world [redacted].

Problem of Practice

With approximately 2,000 Company Z employees on overseas assignments as foreign delegates/expatriates annually, it is imperative that global mobility operations within Company Z run smoothly and effectively. Global mobility is costly for the organization with a "typical package costing 2.5 times an individual's base salary" (Gatto, 2018). A failed assignment can be even costlier, incurring tangible costs such as additional housing expenses, immigration fees, travel, and possible employee replacement, as well as intangible costs such as diminished public relations, employee dissatisfaction, and loss of productivity.

The Global Mobility management team at Company Z currently has a narrow role in selecting and supporting an overseas assignment. The process for an overseas assignment typically begins with a manager determining a need for a department (either their own or within a department abroad). Alternatively, a supervisor or employee could recognize that a specific employee has a need for skill acquisition. The business unit(s) then determines the business logistics for the overseas assignment. These typically include selecting the individual, duration, location, and value proposition of the assignment.

Aside from the business decisions of the departments, the Global Mobility team is tasked with determining the proposed foreign delegate's eligibility for a work visa in the desired

location, the timeline for relocation, specifics about currency conversions, language training, and health insurance options, and—perhaps most important—the budget for the overseas assignment. Depending on the situation, either the sending or receiving business unit would pay the fees determined by the Global Mobility team.

The Global Mobility team collects data on overseas assignments but typically analyzes it to ensure strong customer services, quick response times, and accurate immigration support. As the Global Mobility team does not have a role in the candidate or assignment selection, it does not complete an in-depth analysis on the success rates of the overseas assignments. While individual business units have access to data on success rates of overseas assignments within their unit, they do not have access to organization-wide data. As a result, the analysis in this paper is necessary because even one failed overseas assignment is costly. The Global Mobility team has collected anecdotal data from employees participating in overseas assignments that there is room for improvement and that the return on investment (ROI) can be improved. This specific analysis is necessary to determine the effectiveness of the program offered at Company Z and possible next steps for the corporation to improve the success rate of their overseas assignments.

Literature Review

An individual who participates in a foreign delegation or overseas assignment is sometimes also called an expat, or "a legally working individual who resides in a country of which they are not a citizen in order to accomplish a career-related goal, being relocated abroad either by an organization or by self-initiation, or directly employed within the host country" (McNulty & Brewster, 2017, p. 30). Companies call these work exchanges by different names, such as foreign delegations, expatriations, and international/foreign assignments. While the

different names can be used to identify unique situations, literature often use the terms interchangeably.

Overseas assignments are not a new phenomenon as they have been occurring for as long as companies have been doing business (Hipsher, 2008). In fact, "for the past four decades, international assignments have been and continue to be growing trends in multinational corporations" (Kraimer et al., 2016, p. 84). However, what has changed over the years is the purpose of the overseas assignment as defined by both the employee and company (Bonache et al., 2018). The purpose of foreign assignments is shifting from a primary focus on knowledge transfer to "protagonists of change"(Fee & Michailova, 2019, p. 330). Now, foreign delegates are often armed with agendas or strategic visions to be utilized during their time abroad to effect change for the organization. This shift in the foreign delegate's agenda creates the necessity for change within the global mobility field. It impacts the selection, preparation and necessary support for the foreign delegate. Global mobility experts who arrange the logistics of the overseas assignments can no longer only rely on their operational skills to produce successful assignments. Their role has expanded from a transactional one to strategic support leadership.

Considering Success Rates

In the 1980s, Rosalie Tung studied the selection of overseas assignees and found that 7% of the executives she surveyed reported that the failure rate of their expatriates was between 20–40%, and 69% believed their failure rate to be between 10–20% (Tung, 1981). Companies measure success of an overseas assignment in different ways, ranging from completion of expected travel to evaluation of the amount of knowledge exchanged during the assignment.

Historically, an assignment was considered successful if the foreign delegate completed the duration of his/her assignment (Tung, 1987). Further, an overseas assignment was judged as

a failure when the employee was "recalled or dismissed because of the inability to function effectively in a foreign assignment" (Tung, 1981, p. 77). Another way success can be measured is through the company's return on investment. It is estimated that the cost of an overseas assignment is approximately three to five times an assignee's annual home salary (Selmer, 2007). However, perhaps due to the rising costs (Collings et al., 2007) and complexities of overseas assignments, companies are broadening their definition of success to include an evaluation of the assignment's impact. International corporations now include metrics, such as the foreign delegate's tenure at the organization after their time abroad or specific behaviors (task expertise, helping of colleagues, relationship management, and knowledge transfer) in relation to the resources the company provided before, during, and after the international assignment (van der Laken et al., 2019).

Trends in Overseas Assignments

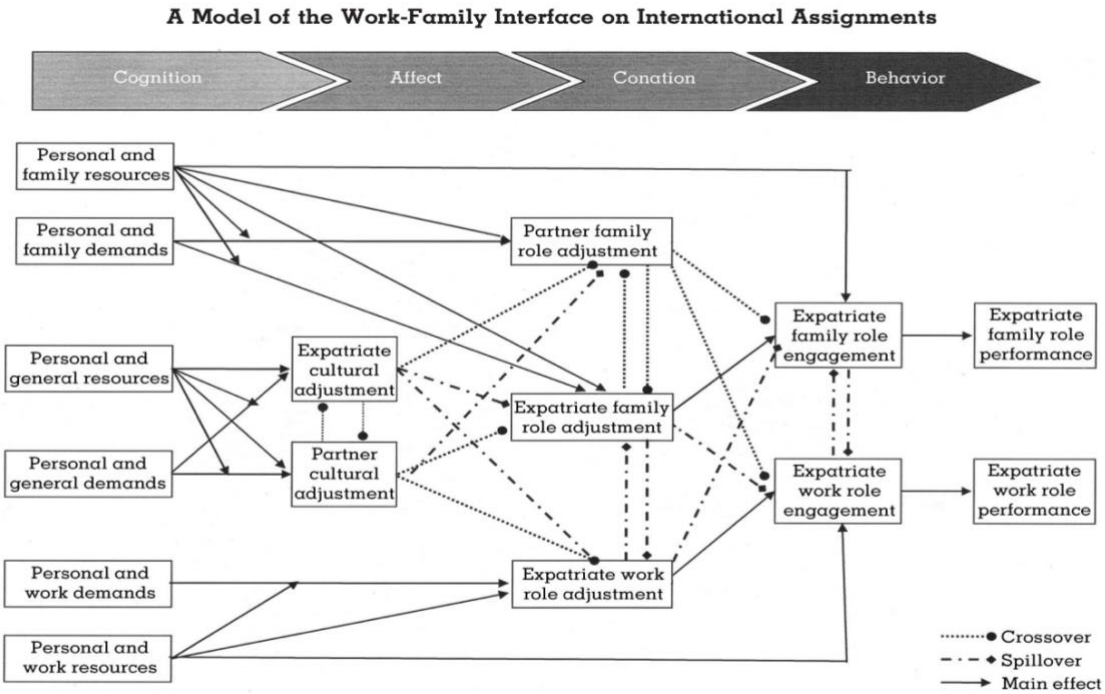
Research on predictors of success rates or trends of overseas assignments tends to focus on one of three areas: 1) demographics of the expatriate, 2) skills of the expatriate, or 3) support offered to the expatriate before, during, and after the assignment (Kraimer et al., 2016).

Historically, women are significantly underrepresented in overseas assignments, even though women and men show an equal desire to participate (Adler, 1984). Through her research, Adler identified three beliefs limiting the number of women: 1) women are restricted due to family obligations, 2) managers believe host companies will be less welcoming to women, and 3) managers believe women will not be effective in other countries (Adler 1984). However, after a woman returned from an overseas assignment, most firms sent another female for an assignment (Jelinek & Adler, 1989).

A positive correlation has been found between married employees and success rate of overseas assignments (Selmer, 2011). Undoubtedly, when an employee is being considered for an overseas assignment, their family must also be considered because approximately 34% of assignment refusals are caused by family concerns,17% of failures are due to a spouse's or partner's career, and another 11% are attributed to other family concerns (Global Relocation Trends Survey Report, 2012). Schaffer et al. (2001) found that family conflict during an overseas assignment correlated to job performance and, frequently, to expats quitting assignments. Similar to the employee, the family must be prepared for the cultural acclimation and adjustments necessary for an overseas assignment (Erogul & Rahman, 2017).

In 2013, Lazarova et. Al. recognized that the family relationship plays a large, complicated role in the employee's decision to participate in an overseas assignment and in their ability to be successful. This chart was depicted in their research and is reprinted here in Table 1.

Table 1



Note. From Lazarova, M., Westman, M., & Shaffer, M. (2013). Elucidating the positive side of the work-family interface on international assignments: A model of expatriate work and family performance. *Expanding the Boundaries of Work-Family Research*, 297–332. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137006004_14

"Historically, U.S. companies selected expatriates based on their competence and technical skills" (Tung, 1981). In the mid-1980s, after companies recognized the high number of failed assignments, researchers studied trends in successful assignments and suggested new selection criteria. Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) found important correlations between successful overseas assignments and self-orientation, others' orientation, and perceptual orientation. Self-orientation in this context is composed of the expatriates' "self-esteem, self-confidence and mental hygiene. It is composed of three subfactors: 1) reinforcement substitution, 2) stress reduction, and 3) technical competence (Mendenhall, 1985, p. 40). Reinforcement substitution focuses on the ways and the ease with which an expatriate is able to find enjoyment in their new culture. For example, if the expatriate enjoys a particular food or type of music, are they able to find a comparable option in their new culture? Stress reduction looks to whether the expatriate has identified a location or methodology to reduce stress incurred as a result of being on overseas assignment. Finally, technical competence is based on the knowledge and ability the expatriate has in the specific field in which they are working overseas (Mendenhall, 1985). Gertsen (1990) focused on the importance of intercultural competence and emphasized it as a necessity to improve success rates of overseas assignments.

Ways in Which an Expat Can Be Supported

One of the factors most studied in the field of global mobility is the impact that social support has on the success of an overseas assignment. Social support can come through many

sources, including (but not limited to) colleagues, family, friends, religious entities, and neighbors. In a meta-analysis study of literature in the field, researchers found that there is a positive correlation between the existence of social support for a foreign delegate and their completion of the program (van der Laken et al., 2019). In the same study, they hypothesized—but were unable to confirm—that social support from the work domain (as opposed to other social domains) correlated with higher success rates of overseas assignments (van der Laken et al., 2019). However, social support found in closer proximity to the foreign delegate was a crucial factor to the success of an overseas assignment (van der Laken et al., 2019).

A recent study conducted in Vietnam shows that successful overseas assignments typically featured five characteristics: 1) the host organization carefully prepared for the foreign delegate prior to their arrival, 2) the foreign delegate experienced substantial adjustments during the assignment, 3) mutual trust was formed between the foreign delegate and the hosting department, 4) the majority of the hosting department's learning occurred informally through observation, and 5) the host department actively managed the foreign delegate (Fee & Michailova, 2019, p. 333).

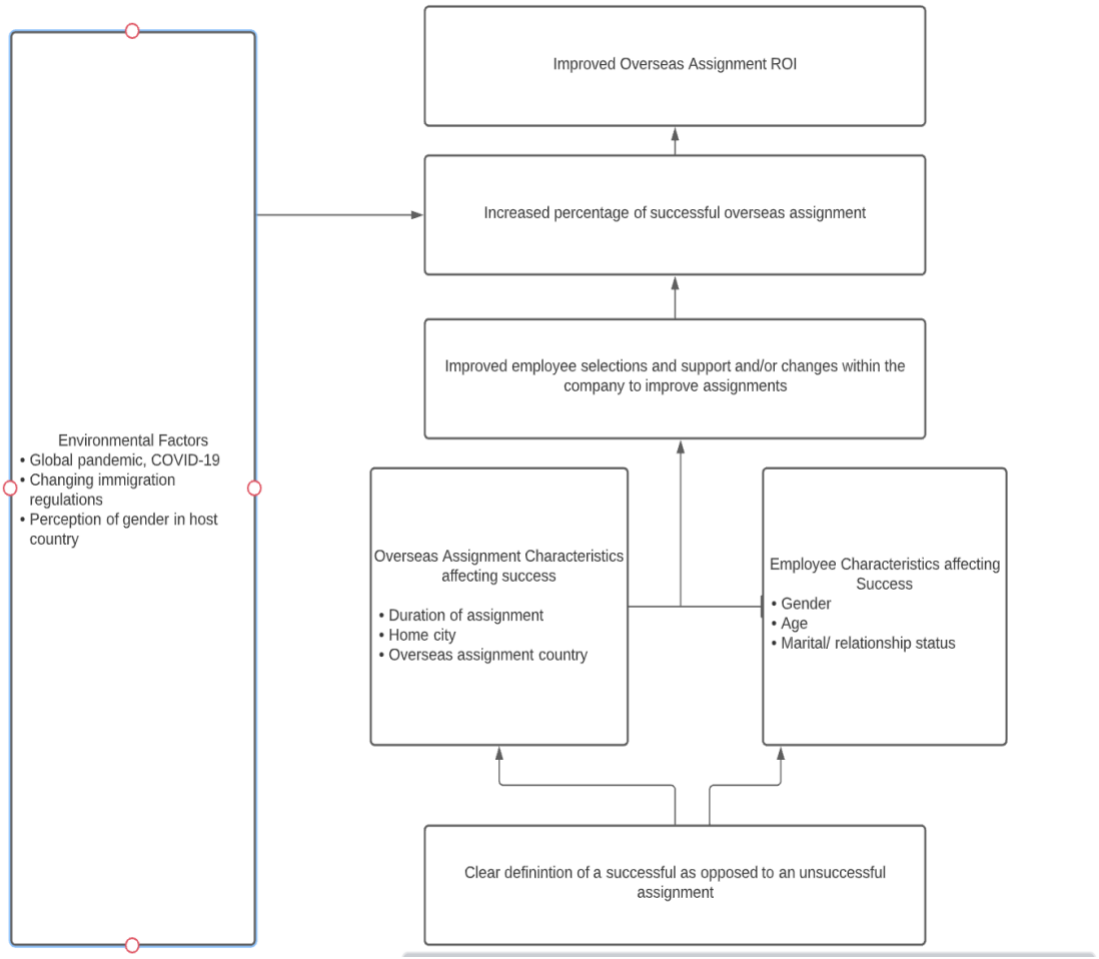
Every assignment, company and expatriate is different and requires unique support to be successful in their overseas assignment. The published literature provides areas in which companies can predict potential problems and work to provide unique support to their employees. The research also shows us that particular trends, such as the high success rates of women in overseas assignments, are contrary to what many managers might have assumed.

Conceptual Framework

This paper develops a conceptual framework (Table 2) to assist in identifying characteristics of both an employee and an overseas assignment that positively correlate with a

successful assignment. Through the research gleaned from several studies, I introduce new suggestions to Company Z that will allow them to predict the success rates of future overseas assignments, ultimately improving their employee selection, experience, and support, as well as the organization's return on investment. This conceptual framework adopts a multidimensional structure composed of two main components, assignment characteristics and employee characteristics, as well as a third minor component, environmental factors. The bow and arrow framework utilized has been widely used in this research field (e.g., Boehe, 2010; Lazarova et al., 2010; Holtbrügge & Mohr, 2011; McNulty & De Cieri, 2011).

Table 2



With my partner organization's end goal of improving the ROI of overseas assignments front of mind, I was heavily influenced by the literature in determining measurable characteristics that could impact the probability of success for an overseas assignment. Frequently cited research in the field of expatriates and overseas assignments originated with very binomial data, i.e., gender and marital status (Adler, 1984; Tung, 1981; Tung, 1987). Over decades, additional characteristics (such as age, employment level, skill level, and experience overseas) were evaluated to determine if any correlated with the probability of success (Caligiuri, 1997; Lazarova et al., 2013). Very little research has been completed to identify the best way to determine the measure of success for an overseas assignment. It was important for me to specify a measure for success in this paper, as the research questions pertain to the probability of success given specific characteristics. Defining success was a struggle because stakeholders offered different opinions—historical research-based success off of requirements or definitions provided by specific companies in a specific context—and arguably, it is possible for an overseas assignment to be a success in some respects while failing in others. For example, if the assignment ended early but the knowledge transfer occurred, or if the assignment was a success based on the metrics but the employee quit two days after returning, should these assignments be classified as a success? Ultimately, my framework for this paper is based on my partner organization's definition of success (i.e., success occurred when the scheduled travel was completed).

Through conversations with my partner organization and work in the field, I became aware that the evaluation for every assignment had to be put into context. When viewing data from 2019 to 2020, one may be alerted to significant changes in assignment success rates and duration. However, when reminded that COVID-19 occurred during this time frame, it is

completely understandable that many start dates were moved or that specific countries were less successful in hosting assignments and thus, assignments were shortened. Further, trends can be observed and expected as a result of immigration law/policy changes, civil unrest, and other environmental factors.

This context was created to highlight the needs of the business: improving the return of investment on overseas assignments while attempting to balance the need for support to improve the employee's experience. When creating the context, I focused on quantitative characteristics of assignments and employees that could be analyzed, recognizing that qualitative data would be useful at a later date to create a more complete story.

Problem Statement

The Global Mobility Team at my partner organization is interested in increasing the number of successful overseas assignment which occur annually. They are trying to understand if there are attributes of an assignment that will predict its success rate. To that end, this project will analyze the data on 7,208 overseas assignments, Company Z's entire contingent between the years 2019–2021.

My research seeks to identify answers to the following questions:

1. How, if at all, does age impact the probability of success for an overseas assignment?
2. How, if at all, does the duration or length of an overseas assignment impact the probability of success?
3. How, if at all, does gender impact the probability of success for an overseas assignment?
4. How, if at all, does marital status impact the probability of success for an overseas assignment?

5. How, if at all, does the assignment home city impact the probability of success? Is the probability the same for both men and women?
6. How, if at all, does the assignment country impact the probability of success? Is the probability the same for both men and women?

Project Design

This study will rely on quantitative data to accomplish its research goals. The quantitative data has been collected by the Global Mobility Team through electronic surveys during the years 2017–2021. When an individual is selected for an overseas assignment, they complete a demographic survey. Upon completion or end of their assignment, they complete an additional survey. The Global Mobility Team receives the surveys through an internal system with an employee ID number. I received data in an anonymized form.

Data Analysis and Findings

There are two types of relevant data to be considered for this paper. First, it is important to analyze the trends of those selected for overseas assignments (including cancelled, successful, and unsuccessful). With this data, I hope to identify the characteristics found in Company Z's successful overseas assignments.

Employee selection for overseas assignments

The employee data pool contained information on 7,046 employees in one of six statuses:

- Closed: Overseas assignments that that did not occur
- Active: Overseas assignments that are currently in progress
- Preliminary: Overseas assignments that are scheduled to occur in the future and are currently under review
- Cancelled: Overseas assignment that was planned but did not occur

- Pending: Overseas assignment that is scheduled to occur in the future
- Inactive: Overseas assignment occurred and was successful

For purposes of this paper, analysis was conducted only on assignments in cancelled, closed, and inactive statuses. Cancelled and closed were considered "unsuccessful." Inactive is considered a "successful" overseas assignment.

"Closed" was removed because many of these accounts were created before an employee accepted the assignment; "active" and "pending" were excluded because it is unknown if the overseas assignment will be successful as they are either occurring now or will in the future.

Table 3 is a bar graph showing the statuses of all of the overseas assignments during the study years. Three employees were in "Closed" status.

Table 3

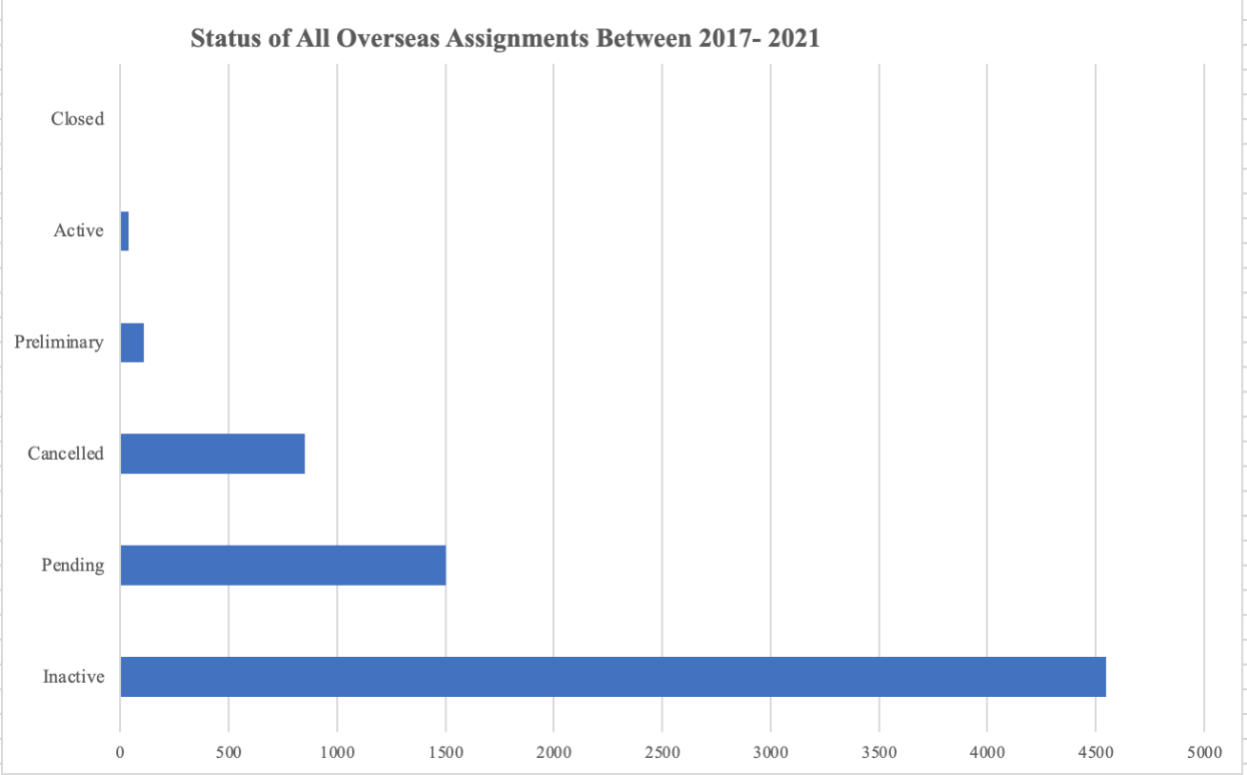


Table 4 shows the marital statuses of the employees selected for overseas assignments during the study years.

Table 4

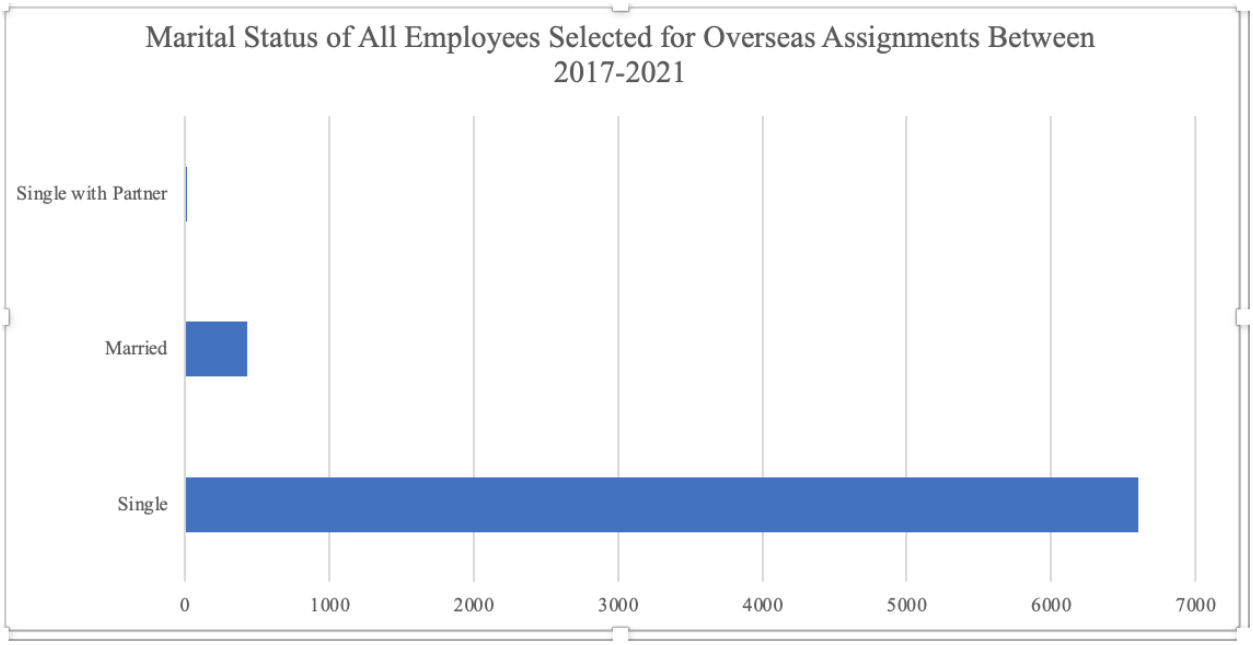


Table 5 shows the primary nationality of the employees selected for the overseas assignment. In cases of dual or multiple nationalities, the employee selected their primary nationality for purposes of this data set.

Table 5

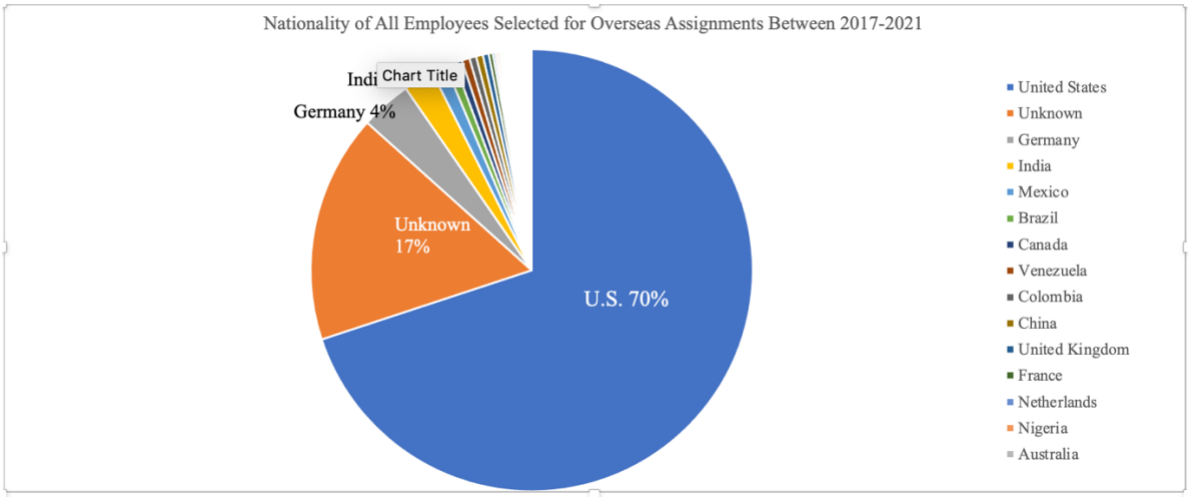
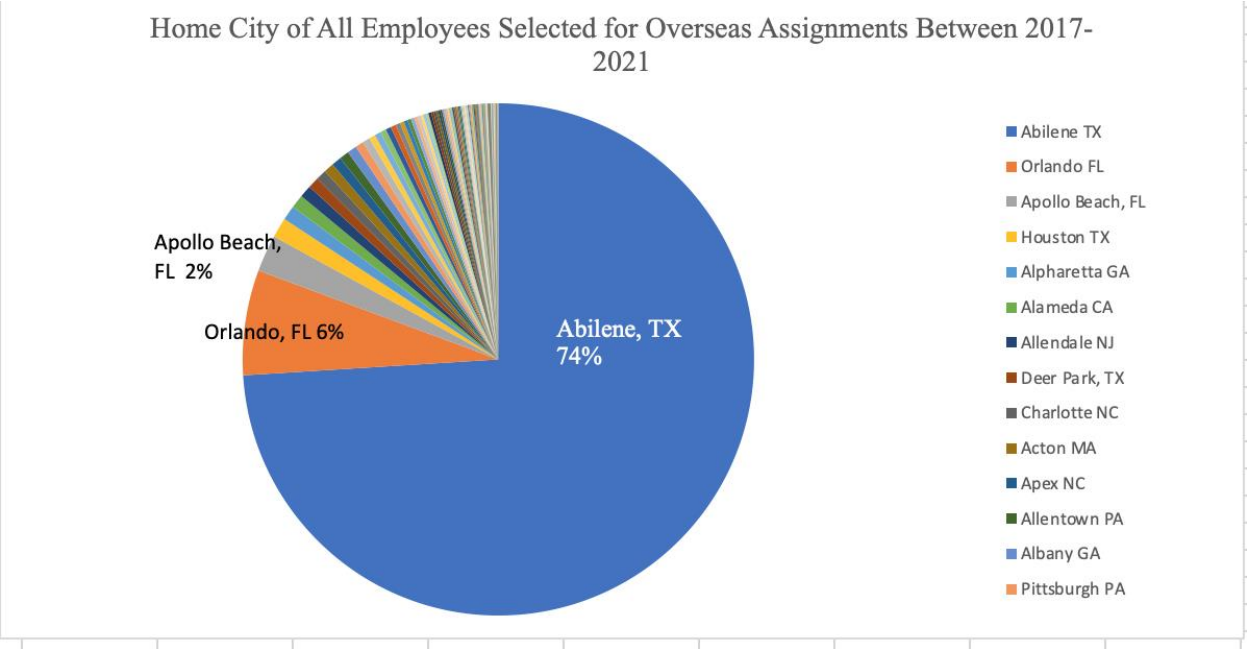


Table 6 shows the home city sending the employees for overseas assignments.

Table 6



Statistical Probabilities of Success

Second, I will provide statistical analysis of the data to understand correlations between employee/assignment characteristics and successful overseas assignments.

Results of Multivariate regression:

glm(formula = assignmentstatus ~ employeeage + duration + employeegender + employeemaritalstatus, family = binomial, data = data)

Table 7

Coefficients	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)
Intercept	-1.6310	0.2514	-6.489	8.67e-11
Employee age	-0.0022	0.0036	-0.626	0.5313
Duration	0.0034	0.0005	6.216	5.09e-10
Employee Gender Male	-0.1587	0.1031	-1.540	0.1237
Employee Marital Status Single	0.1242	0.1657	0.750	0.4533
Employee Marital Status Single with Partner	1.1405	0.6865	1.661	0.0967

Table 8

Coefficients	Predictor	Odds ratio	Std. Error	CI Lower	CI Upper
Employee age	-0.0022	0.9978	0.0036	0.991	1.005
Duration	0.0034	1.0034	0.0005	1.002	1.004
Employee Gender Male	-0.1587	0.8533	0.1031	0.697	1.044
Employee Marital Status Single	0.1242	1.1323	0.1657	0.818	1.567
Employee Marital Status Single with Partner	1.1405	3.1283	0.6865	0.815	12.014

1. How, if at all, does age impact the probability of success for an overseas assignment?

Logistic regression was used to analyze the relationship between employee age, duration of the assignment, employee gender, and employee marital status on the probability of an assignment being successful (Table 8).

It was found that, holding duration, employee gender, and marital status constant, the odds of the assignment being unsuccessful decreased by 0.22% (95% CI [.009, [0.99, .005]) for each additional year of employee age.

2. How, if at all, does the duration or length of an overseas assignment impact the probability of success?

Logistic regression was used to analyze the relationship between employee age, duration of the assignment, employee gender, and employee marital status on the probability of an assignment being successful. It was found that, holding employee age, employee gender, and marital status constant, the odds of the assignment being unsuccessful increased by 0.34% (95% CI [0.002, 0.004]) for each additional day of assignment duration.

3. How, if at all, does gender impact the probability of success for an overseas assignment?

Logistic regression was used to analyze the relationship between employee age, duration of the assignment, employee gender, and employee marital status on the probability of an

assignment being successful. It was found that, holding employee age, assignment duration, and marital status constant, the odds of the assignment being unsuccessful decreased by 14.7% (95% CI [0.303,-0.044]) if the employee was male compared to being female.

4. How, if at all, does marital status impact the probability of success for an overseas assignment?

Logistic regression was used to analyze the relationship between employee age, duration of the assignment, employee gender, and employee marital status on the probability of an assignment being successful. It was found that, holding employee gender, employee age, and assignment duration constant, the odds of the assignment being unsuccessful increased by 13.2% (95% CI [0.182, -0.567]) if the employee was single compared to being married and increased by 212.8% (95% CI[-.185, 11.014]) if the employee was single with a partner, as compared to being married.

5. How, if at all, does the assignment home city impact the probability of success? Is the probability the same for both men and women?

To analyze the data for this research question, I ran a logistic regression and found that a series of cities are less successful at preparing/selecting employees for overseas assignments.

```
output<-glm(formula = assignmentstatus ~ employeeage + duration + employeegen
der + employeemaritalstatus +assignmenthostcountry+assignmenthomecity, family
=binomial, data=data)
```

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)	Odds ratio	2.5%	97.5%
assignmenthomecityAlameda CA	1.4268	0.317	4.5004	0	4.1654	2.2376	7.754
assignmenthomecityApex NC	1.369	0.3583	3.8213	0.0001	3.9314	1.9481	7.9341

assignmenthomecityCharlotte NC	0.7963	0.3606	2.2083	0.0272	2.2173	1.0937	4.4953
assignmenthomecityChattanooga TN	1.3795	0.5958	2.3153	0.0206	3.973	1.2358	12.7727
assignmenthomecityOrlando FL	0.4018	0.1531	2.6248	0.0087	1.4946	1.1071	2.0176
assignmenthomecityPittsburgh PA	1.0711	0.3861	2.7746	0.0055	2.9187	1.3695	6.22

Logistic regression was used to analyze the relationship between employee age, duration of the assignment, employee gender, and employee marital status on the probability of an assignment being successful from Alameda, California. It was found that, holding duration, employee age, and marital status constant, the odds of the assignment being unsuccessful increased by 316% (95% CI [1.237, 6.754]) if the assigned employee was from Alameda, California.

Logistic regression was used to analyze the relationship between employee age, duration of the assignment, employee gender, and employee marital status on the probability of an assignment being successful from Apex, North Carolina. It was found that, holding duration, employee age, and marital status constant, the odds of the assignment being unsuccessful increased by 293% (95% CI [.948, 6.934]) if the assigned employee was from Apex, North Carolina.

Logistic regression was used to analyze the relationship between employee age, duration of the assignment, employee gender, and employee marital status on the probability of an assignment being successful from Charlotte, North Carolina. It was found that, holding duration, employee age, and marital status constant, the odds of the assignment being unsuccessful increased by 121% (95% CI [.094, 3.495]) if the assigned employee was from Charlotte, North Carolina.

Logistic regression was used to analyze the relationship between employee age, duration of the assignment, employee gender, and employee marital status on the probability of an assignment being successful from Chattanooga, Tennessee. It was found that, holding duration, employee age, and marital status constant, the odds of the assignment being unsuccessful increased by 297% (95% CI [.236, 11.773]) if the assigned employee was from Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Logistic regression was used to analyze the relationship between employee age, duration of the assignment, employee gender, and employee marital status on the probability of an assignment being successful from Orlando, Florida. It was found that, holding duration, employee age, and marital status constant, the odds of the assignment being unsuccessful increased by 49.4% (95% CI [.107,1.018]) if the assigned employee was from Orlando, Florida.

Logistic regression was used to analyze the relationship between employee age, duration of the assignment, employee gender, and employee marital status on the probability of an assignment being successful from Pittsburgh. Pennsylvania. It was found that, holding duration, employee age, and marital status constant, the odds of the assignment being unsuccessful increased by 192% (95% CI [.37, 5.220]) if the assigned employee was from Pittsburgh. Pennsylvania.

After identifying that employees coming from Chattanooga, Tennessee had the lowest probability of completing a successful overseas delegation, I analyzed how gender impacted success rates from all of the home cities.

```
outputcity<-glm(formula = assignmentstatus ~ assignmenthomecity + emplo
yeegender*assignmenthomecity, family=binomial, data=data)
thestatscity<-summary(outputcity)
kable(thestatscity$coefficients, "simple", digits=4)
```

Table 9

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)
assignmenthomecityAddison IL:employeegender	1.6640	0.8605	1.9338	0.0531
assignmenthomecityAlpharetta GA:employeegender	1.7106	0.9222	1.8548	0.0636
assignmenthomecityApollo Beach, FL:employeegender	1.6751	0.4123	4.0632	0.0000

Apollo Beach, FL

employeegender	**mean(assignmentstatus)**
0	0.2288136
1	0.6428571

Alpharetta, GA

employeegender	**mean(assignmentstatus)**
0	0.1372549
1	0.5000000

Addison, IL

employeegender	**mean(assignmentstatus)**
0	0.1428571
1	0.5000000

I then generated a multivariate regression for each home city:

Apollo Beach, FL

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)	Odds ratio	CI 2.5%	CI 97.5%
(Intercept)	1.2378	1.1392	1.0866	0.2772	3.4481	0.3698	32.1539
employeeage	-0.0464	0.0176	-2.6387	0.0083	0.9547	0.9223	0.9881
duration	-0.0055	0.0073	-0.7612	0.4466	0.9945	0.9804	1.0088
employeegender	1.5267	0.4071	3.7497	0.0002	4.6028	2.0724	10.2231
employeemaritalstatusSingle	-0.1880	0.7131	-0.2636	0.7921	0.8286	0.2048	3.3521

Alpharetta, GA

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)	Odds ratio	CI 2.5%	CI 97.5%
(Intercept)	-15.4722	1696.6362	-0.0091	0.9927	0.0000	n/a	n/a
employeeage	-0.0225	0.0382	-0.5892	0.5557	0.9777	0.9071	1.0538
duration	-0.0028	0.0081	-0.3467	0.7288	0.9972	0.9815	1.0131
employeegender	1.9969	1.0003	1.9963	0.0459	7.3658	1.037	52.3181
employeemaritalstatusSingle	14.7476	1696.6353	0.0087	0.9931	n/a	n/a	n/a

Addison, IL

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)	Odds ratio	CI 2.5%	CI 97.5%
(Intercept)	-1.3248	3.0258	-0.4378	0.6615	0.26585	0.0007	100.051

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)	Odds ratio	CI 2.5%	CI 97.5%
employeeage	-0.0166	0.0568	-0.2916	0.7706	0.98357	0.8799	1.0994
duration	0.0376	0.0608	0.6186	0.5362	1.03833	0.9217	1.1697
employeegender	1.6104	1.0247	1.5716	0.1161	5.00458	0.6717	37.2891
employeemaritalstatusSingle	-1.3248	3.0258	-0.4378	0.6615	0.26585	0.0007	100.051

Note. All employees sent on assignment here are single, so marital status is omitted. Gender is not significant at the 95% level for Addison, IL.

Logistic regression was used to analyze the relationship between employee age, duration of the assignment, employee gender, and employee marital status on the probability of an assignment being successful from Apollo Beach, Florida. It was found that, holding duration, employee age, and marital status constant, the odds of the assignment being unsuccessful increased by 360% (95% CI [1.072, 9.223]) if the assigned employee was female.

Logistic regression was used to analyze the relationship between employee age, duration of the assignment, employee gender, and employee marital status on the probability of an assignment being successful from Alpharetta, Georgia. It was found that, holding duration, employee age, and marital status constant, the odds of the assignment being unsuccessful increased by 636% (95% CI [.037, 51.318]) if the assigned employee was female.

6. How, if at all, does the assignment country impact the probability of success? Is the probability the same for both men and women?

To determine if there is a statistically significant relationship between the assignment country and probability of success and gender differences, I ran a logistic regression by host country.

```
outputcountry<-glm(formula = assignmentstatus ~ assignmenthostcountry + employeegender*assignmenthostcountry, family=binomial, data=data)

thestatscountry<-summary(outputcountry)

kable(thestatscountry$coefficients, "simple", digits=4)
```

Then, I determined the statistically significant gender results and analyzed the distribution of outcomes for each identified host country.

Argentina

employeegender	mean(assignmentstatus)
0	0.333
1	0.625
N/A	0.167

Germany

employeegender	mean(assignmentstatus)
0	0.080
1	0.206
N/A	0.221

India

employeegender	mean(assignmentstatus)
0	0.124
1	0.267
N/A	0.121

Puerto Rico

employeegender	mean(assignmentstatus)
0	0.0426
1	0.143

Slovakia

employeegender	mean(assignmentstatus)
0	0.050
1	0.429

Spain

employeegender	mean(assignmentstatus)
0	0.073
1	0.217

Thailand

employeegender	mean(assignmentstatus)
0	0.029
1	0.200

Finally, I ran a multivariate regression for each identified host country:

Argentina

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)	Odds ratio	CI 2.5%	CI 97.5%
(Intercept)	-16.113	1696.73	-0.0095	0.9924	0	N/A	N/A
employeeage	-0.0111	0.0258	-0.4316	0.6661	0.9889	0.9401	1.0402
duration	0.0398	0.0235	1.6913	0.0908	1.0406	0.9937	1.0897
employeegender	1.1542	0.7989	1.4447	0.1485	3.1716	0.6626	15.1815
employeemaritalstatusSingle	15.4615	1696.73	0.0091	0.9927	N/A	N/A	N/A

Germany

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)	Odds ratio	CI 2.5%	CI 97.5%
(Intercept)	-2.2943	0.5949	-3.8568	0.0001	0.1008	0.0314	0.3236
employeeage	-0.0001	0.0097	-0.0093	0.9925	0.9999	0.9811	1.0191
duration	0.006	0.0012	4.7974	0	1.006	1.0035	1.0084
employeegender	1.0767	0.2249	4.7864	0	2.9349	1.8885	4.561
employeemaritalstatusSingle	-0.3671	0.3782	-0.9707	0.3317	0.6927	0.3301	1.4538

India

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)	Odds ratio	CI 2.5%	CI 97.5%
(Intercept)	-1.3434	1.7519	-0.7668	0.4432	0.2609	0.0084	8.0868
employeeage	-0.028	0.0312	-0.8991	0.3686	0.9723	0.9147	1.0336
duration	0.0019	0.0055	0.3537	0.7236	1.0019	0.9912	1.0128
employeegender	0.8608	0.6824	1.2614	0.2072	2.3651	0.6208	9.0105
employeemaritalstatusSingle	0.6854	1.0981	0.6242	0.5325	1.9846	0.2307	17.0756

Puerto Rico

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)	Odds ratio	CI 2.5%	CI 97.5%
(Intercept)	-4.5731	2.8464	-1.6066	0.1081	0.0103	0	2.7342
employeeage	0.0278	0.0538	0.516	0.6059	1.0282	0.9253	1.1425
duration	0.012	0.0359	0.3338	0.7385	1.012	0.9434	1.0857
employeegender	1.1558	0.9432	1.2254	0.2204	3.1767	0.5001	20.1769

Note. All employees sent on assignment here are single, so marital status is omitted.

Slovakia

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)	Odds ratio	CI 2.5%	CI 97.5%
(Intercept)	-8.5016	7.6735	-1.1079	0.2679	0.0002	0	691.016

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)	Odds ratio	CI 2.5%	CI 97.5%
employeeage	-0.0368	0.1146	-0.3215	0.7479	0.9638	0.77	1.2065
duration	1.2619	0.9691	1.3021	0.1929	3.5321	0.5286	23.6013
employeegender	1.4467	1.4023	1.0317	0.3022	4.249	0.2721	66.3601

Note. All employees sent on assignment here are single, so marital status is omitted.

Spain

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)	Odds ratio	CI 2.5%	CI 97.5%
(Intercept)	-19.493	2399.55	-0.0081	0.9935	N/A	N/A	N/A
employeeage	0.0025	0.0375	0.0678	0.946	1.0025	0.9314	1.0791
duration	0.1077	0.0303	3.559	0.0004	1.1137	1.0496	1.1818
employeegender	1.7228	1.1433	1.5068	0.1319	5.6003	0.5956	52.6534
employeemaritalstatusSingle	14.4035	2399.54	0.006	0.9952	N/A	N/A	N/A

Thailand

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(>|z|)	Odds ratio	CI 2.5%	CI 97.5%
(Intercept)	-24.752	4650.4	-0.0053	0.9958	N/A	N/A	N/A
employeeage	0.0739	0.0994	0.7437	0.4571	1.08	0.8862	1.3082
duration	0.0131	0.0277	0.4709	0.6377	1.01	0.9595	1.0698
employeegender	2.2111	1.6363	1.3513	0.1766	9.13	0.3693	225.46
employeemaritalstatusSingle	17.8209	4650.4	0.0038	0.9969	N/A	N/A	N/A

Logistic regression was used to analyze the relationship between employee age, duration of the assignment, employee gender, and employee marital status on the probability of an assignment being successful to Germany.

It was found that, holding duration, employee gender, and marital status constant, the odds of the assignment being unsuccessful increased by 193% (95% CI [0.890, 3.561]) if the assigned employee was female.

I did not find a statistically significant relationship between assignment country, gender, and the probability of success in the other countries. I also did not find a statistically significant relationship between assignment country when not considering gender.

Summary of Findings

When analyzing the selection data, I found that 67.66% of the employees selected for overseas assignments were men. Only 6% of those selected for assignments were married, and the average age of a selected employee was 46—the most frequently occurring age was 55. Almost 74% of the employees selected were from the Abilene, Texas office, 6% were from Orlando, Florida, and 2.3% were from the Apollo Beach, Florida office.

Age

I found that the probability of success increased by .22% by each additional year of age, but this finding is weak due to the confidence interval.

Duration

The probability of success declined by .34% for each additional day of duration for the overseas assignment.

Gender

Men are 14% more likely to complete successful overseas assignments than women when controlling for other factors (but again, the confidence interval suggests that this is a weak finding).

Marital Status

Employees who are married have the highest probability of success for an overseas assignment. An employee who is single is 13% more likely to fail than a married colleague, and an employee who is unmarried but in a relationship is 212% more likely to be unsuccessful on an overseas assignment. However, these findings are weak due to the confidence interval.

Home City

When removing home cities who send small numbers of employees or who have a large amount of incomplete data, women coming from Alpharetta, Georgia are 636% more likely to be unsuccessful in an overseas assignment as compared to men. In Apollo, Florida women are 360% more likely to be unsuccessful than men.

Employees coming from Chattanooga, Tennessee are 56% more likely to be unsuccessful when participating in an overseas assignment.

Host Country

When holding constant for the other variables, the odds of the assignment being unsuccessful increased by 193% (95% CI [0.89, 3.56]) if the assigned employee sent to Germany was female.

Study Limitations

There are limitations to the research findings in this study. First, while Company Z is a very large, Global Fortune 500, multinational corporation, it has unique hiring, promotion, and selection practices which are not representative off all multinationals, or even of all U.S. corporations. Second, the data set was limited to include only Company Z employees coming from the United States. As a result, the vast majority of the employees participating in the assignments are American citizens and speak English as their first language. Therefore, the findings are unique to a particular (and, arguably, homogenous) demographic of Company Z

employees. For example, the research for this paper indicates that women sent to overseas assignments in Germany have a higher probability for failure than men, but because of the scope of the data set, the research really indicates that women being sent from the United States to Germany have a higher probability of failure than men for overseas assignments.

The data set only includes information for Company Z employees who participated in overseas assignments between the years 2019–2021. This is particularly relevant because the COVID-19 pandemic began in December 2019 and spread to the United States in the spring of 2020. Therefore, it is likely (if not probable) that overseas assignments were cancelled or ended early as a result of travel warnings and health risks associated with COVID-19.

Finally, I altered the data set utilized for this research to become binomial. Overseas assignments were considered either successful or unsuccessful, when in reality, there can exist variation in these definitions. For example, overseas assignments that were shortened but completed were considered successful. Further, factors such as knowledge transfer, employee satisfaction, and employee retention are useful factors to consider when determining success of an overseas assignment—but due to limited data, were not included in this study.

Recommendations

1. Improve Selection of Employees

The majority of the employees selected for overseas assignments in this study were single men. While it is possible that Company Z has a disproportionate number of single men employed within the company, it is also possible that there is a perception amongst managers that single men will be most successful within the company.

To recognize unconscious biases or invisible boundaries that may exist around the selection of a candidate, a thorough review of all available demographic characteristics should be

done. I suggest including race, educational background, position levels, tenure at Company Z, performance review ratings, and salary as additional data the organization should collect to get a more complete picture of who is being granted an international assignment. I propose that Company Z takes steps to deter any possible unconscious bias when selecting employees for overseas assignments. Only 11% of HR managers have ever worked abroad (Black & Gregersen, 2016), and as a result, they are not aware of the obstacles that occur during an overseas assignment. I suggest that Company Z creates a selection and recruitment committee that is led by employees who have participated in past assignments and understand the potential difficulties. Further, I suggest Company Z completes analysis on the employees not selected for overseas delegations. This paper only finds trends in those who were selected for an overseas assignment and does not consider characteristics of those who were not selected.

2. Create Shorter, More Frequent Assignments

Historically, overseas assignments lasted a year (Tung, 1987). However, in this study, I found that the length of an assignment lowers the likelihood of success. As a result, I propose that Company Z creates global mobility programs that offer multiple overseas assignments in a stated period of time. A recent PricewaterhouseCoopers study found that 46% of companies believed that employee "commuter" roles would increase in the next few years (PricewaterhouseCoopers, n.d.). An international commuter is "an employee who works in a foreign country but returns home frequently" (Frase, 2021). Often, short-term overseas assignments have tax benefits if they last less than 183 days (Frase, 2021).

Two additional statistical analyses should be conducted to determine the optimal overseas assignment length. First, a simple data analysis should be done on overseas assignments that lasted a different (either shorter or longer) duration than originally planned, and whether the

changes correlated with success. Second, assignments must have a specific focus or objective that can be completed within a specific period of time. To improve success rates, job design and purpose must be strategic and created collectively among the managers of the sending and host countries, as well as the employee (Black & Gregerson, 2016). Matrices to determine the optimal length can be utilized to document the purpose with the necessary duration.

Table 10

International assignment by purpose

Assignment purpose	Primary business drivers	Benefits accrue to the organisation/individual
Short term business needs	• Skills shortage • Rapid deployment	• Over short term
Control and coordination	• Control • Transfer corporate culture • Knowledge/process/ technology transfer • Launch new initiatives	• Tends to be medium to long term
Developmental (strategic)	• Planned career development • Global leadership	• Primarily longer term

Note. From PricewaterhouseCoopers. (n.d.). The New Mobility Landscape for business travelers and commuters. PwC. Retrieved February 27, 2022. https://www.pwc.com/us/en/services/tax/hr-international-assignment-services/business- traveler-commuter-survey.html

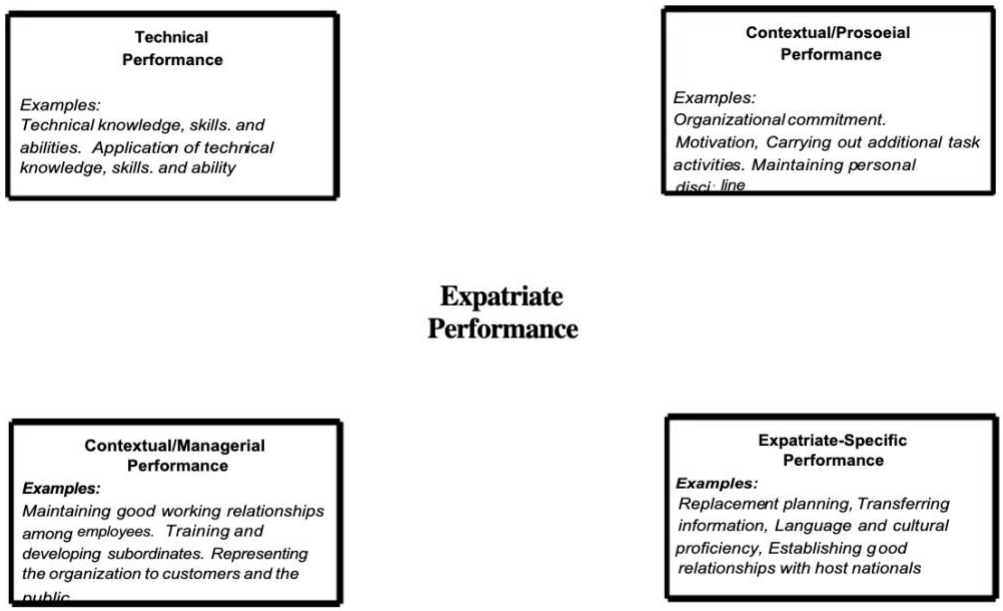
3. Collectively, but Clearly, Define Success Key Performance Indicators

Every business unit should set key performance goals that they wish to achieve through their global mobility efforts. The purpose of each assignment should be clear. Every decision

point for an overseas assignment should be driving towards the key performance indicator goals. Matrices should be used to determine goals.

For example, the selection of the home city should be based on evidence that the home city office can prepare the employee for a successful delegation and repatriation. The goals of the business unit should be transparent to the Global Mobility Team, employee, managers, and colleagues of the employee. Consider incentives for the business unit, local offices, and employee when performance exceeds expectations. Suggested areas of evaluation include technical, prosoeial, managerial and expatriate-specific performance (Caligiuri, 1997).

Table 11



Note. From Caligiuri, P. M. (1997). Assessing expatriate success: Beyond just "being there" In Z. Aycan (Ed.), New approaches to employee management, Vol. 4. Expatriate management: Theory and research (pp. 117–140). Elsevier Science/JAI Press.

Conclusion

The selection trends found in this study are not unlike those of many other multinational corporations. Much of the quantitative research found results that were not statistically significant, so I am unable to provide recommendations on marital status, gender, and age of employees other than to say that significant trends were found in the selection (i.e., a high percentage of single men were selected for overseas assignments as opposed to women and married individuals). I suggest that Company Z conducts more research in their selection models to determine if selection represents the desires of the company. Due to the nature of this research, I was able to compare overseas assignments that were similar in all components by duration (which is unique due to the large number of overseas assignments offered by Company Z) and did find evidence that shorter overseas assignments increase the success rate. This finding should be studied in correlation with other success/failure data. Finally, the research in this paper identified some physical locations that require attention, given that overseas assignments from those locations have a lower likelihood of success. Further, some locations have a significantly higher failure rates of women employees when compared to men. While it is unclear at this time why specific locations have higher success rates, it will be worthwhile for Company Z to collect further data about these specific office environments, management structures, and cultures. Overall, Company Z is in a unique position as they have robust data available that can be examined cross-sectionally to determine company-specific and employee trends.

Three broad recommendations have been made as a result of the findings of the research. They include improving the selection and recruitment method of employees for the goals of lessening unconscious and self-selection bias, creating shorter overseas assignments when possible, and being strategic in the goals and success measurements. An obstacle to all of these

goals is a lack of formalization of the lifecycles of overseas assignments. With a re-design of the workflow, overseas assignments success rates can increase significantly.

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