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# **Status and Success: Do Lower Status Expatriates in Multinational Corporations Experience Different Types of Success?**

## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – The aim of this study is to examine how low status expatriates (lower position, younger, female) are positioned differently compared to high status expatriates (higher position, older, male) in terms of experiencing various types of success.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Based on 424 responses from business expatriates working within multinational corporations operating in Asia, the study tests whether low status expatriates experience higher personal success while high status expatriates see more organization-related success.

**Findings** – The results demonstrate that expatriates with different status-related characteristics might experience success during an international assignment differently. Additionally, our results reveal the relevance of avoiding treating success as a single variable and of investigating the actual experiences acquired while working abroad to better appreciate how expatriates experience success differently.

**Originality/value** – The extant literature offers a limited understanding of expatriate success as the phenomenon has often been conceptualized in relatively simple terms, i.e., the completion of the international assignment contract. Our study offers an alternative view. Measuring success using a single outcome variable does not fully capture the experience. Success can be perceived in different ways, and different types of success are associated with different types of characteristics.

## **Keywords**

Expatriate success; status; position; age; gender; Asia; MNC.

## **Introduction**

The successful management of expatriates remains a critical aspect for multinational corporations (MNCs) (Cerdin and Brewster, 2014). Intensified globalization and the acknowledgment that global mobility is a strategic necessity has led to increased pressure on MNCs to reduce mobility costs (McNulty, De Cieri, and Hutchings, 2009). Underperforming expatriates represent potential financial risks to the company (Gregersen and Black, 1992; Takeuchi, 2010), and underperformance may even lead to what has traditionally been considered a failed assignment - when the expatriate returns prematurely (Bhaskar-Shrinivas *et al.*, 2005) with a subsequent negative impact on corporate performance (McNulty, De Cieri, and Hutchings, 2013). There is no doubt that expatriate success is important to companies, but it is also important to the expatriates themselves, and the way they measure their own success may be different (Guttormsen, Francesco, and Chapman, 2018). While it has been indicated that expatriates can experience different types of success (Zhao, Liu, and Zhou, 2016) – for example, at different levels within the organization – little effort has been directed toward exploring which types of individuals will experience what types of success. Hence, the main aim of this article is to assess if there is a link between individual characteristics and the type of success one experiences as an expatriate.

The definition of expatriate success in the global mobility and expatriate management literature is not very clear. Holopainen and Björkman (2005) and Canhilal, Shemueli, and Dolan (2015) point out that success has been assumed to be the opposite of what the existing literature has defined as failure. Thus, success has been taken as *not* having prematurely returned before the international assignment contract has ended (Dowling, Festing, and Engle, 2017), i.e., a non-failure. This provides little insight into what expatriate success is or how it might be achieved. Some previous studies that focused on what success is considered expatriate success as a relationship between cross-cultural adjustment and performance (Black and

Mendenhall, 1990; Tung, 1982). Another study by Zhao *et al.* (2016) divided expatriate success into two categories: stress and psychological well-being during the assignment and the motivation to pursue effective international assignments.

Experiences acquired from living and working abroad have been much neglected, especially in terms of what expatriates are doing and their perceptions of work and social lives while actually living in the host environment (see Luring, Guttormsen, and McNulty, 2019). In consequence, the challenges faced by expatriates during their assignments have been largely unstudied. This oversight is accentuated as most expatriate research has focused on investigating relationships between antecedent and outcome variables, hence leaving the actual stay abroad (in between) overlooked. This is ironic as practitioners and international managers are asking mostly about how to manage these experiences. Furthermore, expatriate success research has traditionally been overly focused on relationships with other singular variables that might be predictive of success (Malek, Budhwar, and Reiche, 2015) such as personal characteristics (Caligiuri and Bonache, 2016); cross-cultural adjustment (Firth, Chen, Kirkman, and Kim, 2014; Takeuchi, 2010); organizational support (van der Laken *et al.*, 2016); and family (Arthur and Bennett, 1995). An increasing number of recently published studies have called for more focus to be put on the personal experience of being an expatriate (e.g., Guttormsen, 2018a; McNulty and Brewster, 2016; Takeuchi and Chen, 2013). Our study addresses this call by exploring how expatriates experience different types of success and how their individual characteristics relate to the type of success they experience.

Only recently has serious questioning regarding the success term begun, following the commendable scholarship by Harzing (1995) who highlighted the inaccuracy in reporting failure rates and later pointed out the need to look at other meanings of the success term (Harzing and Christensen, 2004). Hemmasi, Downes, and Varner (2010), for example, argue that lack of a premature return is insufficient to validly measure expatriate success. The authors

suggest that such an assessment needs to incorporate the nature of the actual assignment and the personal views of the expatriate whose success is being gauged. McNulty and Brewster (2016) also highlight the importance of incorporating expatriates' own experiences within organizations during their international assignments when studying expatriate success. A qualitative study of Scandinavian expatriates by Guttormsen and colleagues (2018) identified multiple definitions of success from the expatriates themselves, and these rarely included completion of their contracts. Following these ideas, we suggest here that there might be various types of success which can be differentially perceived by the expatriates due to salient individual characteristics.

One pertinent characteristic may be the status positions experienced by expatriates themselves within organizations. Status relates to the relative social position which an individual holds within an organization that subsequently leads to the amount of respect others have for that person. On this basis, other people expect particular behaviors and assume a higher status individual has the potential to create beneficial opportunities for him or herself as well as others (Magee and Galinski, 2008). Studying status in relation to expatriates is highly relevant as status often exercises a large impact on the organization of work-life within and beyond an organization's boundaries (Piazza and Castellucci, 2013; Sauder, Lynn, and Podolny, 2012). Furthermore, when individuals experience uncertainties, which are often exacerbated during expatriates' encounters with cultures different from their own (Guttormsen, 2018b), people tend to resort to status as a means of compensating for these feelings of insecurity (Podolny, 1994).

According to Skvoretz and Fararo (1996), status relates to hierarchical relationships among individuals which create differences in deference or influence. These hierarchies matter as, according to Gould's (2002) theoretical model, social hierarchies are reproduced based on collective attribution. Status is a particularly important aspect in discussing expatriate success

as ascribed status involves a person being positioned or ranked in the organization and society primarily based on his or her characteristics (Linton, 1936). Thus, an expatriate's ability to achieve success often depends on his or her status which may either facilitate or restrict action. As these characteristics are often inherited or fixed, individual mobility to a higher status position is often more difficult in organizations and societies which emphasize ascribed characteristics over what an individual achieves. This difficulty is often a result of group boundaries not being permeable due to society's perceptions of status, age, and gender that have been formulated over centuries (Ellemers, van Knippenberg, and Wilke, 1990).

Individuals in higher status positions are more likely to be able to influence organizational arrangements at the institutional level and often have the ability and willingness to create organizational change (Battilana, 2006). The ability to influence organizational outcomes is more limited for individuals at lower status positions due to lack of social capital and perhaps fewer social ties (Lin, 1999).

Additionally, there is support for the idea that expatriates who are seen as holding high status positions feel more connected to the success of the organization they work for, whereas those perceived to possess lower status positions are more likely to only view success that involves themselves as individuals. This could be a result of the level of status being equated to a degree of quality (Cundiff and Matthews, 2017; Loignon and Woehr, 2018; Podolny, 1993).

Most expatriate management research has focused on expatriates in high status positions (Tung, 1998). Here we are concerned with low and high status expatriates, joining a trend of distinguishing between higher and lower status categories of working expatriates (see Luring, Selmer, and Kubovcikova, 2017; McNulty and Brewster, 2017). As mentioned earlier, the level of status of a position holder might relate to being ascribed (e.g., skin color, nationality, age) or achieved (e.g., performance, rank) (see Linton, 1936).

Both age and gender have been found in empirical studies to serve as key characteristics

determining an individual's status position within an organization. Such personal characteristics often become an intangible asset providing positional advantages (Duguid, Loyd, and Tolbert, 2012; O'Brien and Dietz, 2011). Cohen and Zhou (1991) studied interaction patterns of R and D teams in large corporations. After controlling for past performance, having male team members was shown to have an independent effect on the status of the team, and the male members of the team were ascribed higher status compared to the female team members. Thus, the perceived status of a particular team was not only based on competence and past performance but also on the gender composition of the members.

Individuals in high status positions are known to have more ability to change their surroundings (Jost *et al.*, 2004), and this would explain why higher status expatriates could experience more success relating to the organization (Anderson and Brion, 2014).

### **The Asian context**

Throughout the countries in which our expatriate sample worked, culture is strongly influenced by the ideas of Confucianism. The Confucian tradition sets out behavioral rules for interpersonal relationships based on a hierarchy of life roles (Child and Warner, 2003; Redding, 2002; Warner, 2003, 2010). There are five basic social relationships: father and son, ruler and ruled, husband and wife, elder and younger brother, and friend and friend. The first four of these designate the superior role in the relationship (father, ruler, husband, elder brother), and based upon this unequal standing, prescribe that the one in the lower status position must respect the authority of the other who is placed in a higher position and social rank. The inferior is always expected to be dutiful towards the superior (Chuah, Hoffmann, and Larner, 2014; Faure and Fang, 2008; Tu, 1998; Yan and Sorensen, 2004).

Thus, expatriates with higher status in the Asian context (i.e., male, older, in higher level positions) are seen as having the acquired authority to direct behavior that can create

success at the organizational level (Chen, 2001; Olesen and Martins 2009; Witt and Redding, 2007; Yang, 2016), and they would therefore be able to achieve not only individual success but success relating to the organization as well. Because of the strongly hierarchical nature of Confucian societies, the impact of status differences may be even more significant than in Western organizations (Chen, 2004; Redding and Witt, 2007).

## **Hypotheses**

### *Low status expatriates*

There is little research on low status expatriates (Olsen and Martins, 2009; Washika Haak-Saheem, and Brewster, 2017), but research on lower status individuals suggests they would perceive more success at the individual level rather than at the organizational level. This could be because low status employees are not as trusted within organizations compared to those occupying high status positions (Blau, 1964), and these employees would be less likely to be able to impact on organizational success. This could be due to a perceived lack of connections (Podolny and Philips, 1996) or constraints in deploying successful strategies to influence other group members (Cheng *et al.*, 2012). Also, since lower status individuals in organizations have been found to have smaller and more constrained networks to draw upon, compared to those in higher status positions, during job threats, this reduces their ability to strategize at an organizational level beyond their own personal realm (Smith *et al.*, 2011). Such constraints are often associated with a lower power base, and, thus, lower status individuals are perceived as being weaker in terms of sociocultural, economic, and legal perspectives (Ellemers *et al.*, 1992).

A study of American male and female managers and non-managers demonstrated that women in non-managerial positions emphasized more personal fulfillment in terms of their perceptions of success (Parker and Chusmir, 1992). As female representation in top



management and on boards is significantly lower than for males (Fitzsimmons and Callan, 2016; Sojo *et al.*, 2016), it should not be surprising if attaining the status position needed to influence organization-related success, would also generally be lower for women.

Female employees have been found in cross-cultural work contexts to face more prejudice, biases, and negative stereotypes impeding their career advancement as a result of workplaces being less accepting of women (Bader *et al.*, 2018; Burke, 2001; Rosette *et al.*, 2016). Okimoto and Brescoll (2010) found power-seeking females risked facing penalties when their behavior was considered to deviate from how women were expected to behave. The risk for females was much higher than for male employees who exhibited the same power-seeking behavior. Indeed, the males were judged more leniently.

Women have also been found to be generally afforded less power in organizations compared to men: male employees often enjoy being part of various networks or groups which provide them with more frequent privileged access to resources and political decision making (Henley and LaFrance, 1984). For example, Parboteeah, Hoegl, and Cullen (2008) demonstrated how managers in societies which feature the combination of high power distance and low gender egalitarianism (which characterizes many Asian countries) have a high likelihood of exercising conventional expectations as far as gender roles are concerned. Similarly, Cooke (2010) elucidates how macro-political and structural obstacles make Asian work life more difficult for women, for example, gender wage gaps arising from maternity leave or the lower employment status of married women due to an expectation that they will leave the work force for family related reasons. In addition, women in Asia are generally expected to assume low status positions with little career progression and responsibility, reflecting general perceptions of women in society (Kang and Rowley, 2005).

Also, younger employees and those in lower status job positions have fewer chances to be involved with decision making relating to the company as a whole. Individuals in lower

positions are also expected not to attempt decision making and to refrain from giving their opinions (Bales *et al.*, 1951; Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson, 2003).

Characteristics associated with holding a lower power position can be said to limit an expatriate's maneuverability to influence the organization and its success as a whole. Low status expatriates need to rely on political games and/or crafting creative strategies to obtain influence beyond just the individual level (Bouquet and Birkinshaw, 2008). However, as such strategic choices are limited among those with lower status positions, Carpenter and Golden (1997) highlight it is therefore more attainable to achieve success closer to the realm of the individual person. It becomes even more challenging for individuals from lower status positions to operate in a higher power position in the company if local society in general finds the placement of such a person in this position (and/or the behavior required to achieve such a position) socially unacceptable, e.g., females should not act in an aggressive manner (Cooke, 2010).

Accordingly, we present the first hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1:* Lower status expatriates (females, younger age, and lower position) experience a higher degree of individual success than higher status expatriates.

#### *High status expatriates*

Previous research suggests that high status individuals can experience more organization-related success as they have superior ability to influence their surroundings because they hold those higher status positions within the organization (Jost, Banaji, and Nosek, 2004). This enables these individuals to take and influence actions which may have ramifications beyond the individual level (Anderson and Brion, 2014). For example, high status individuals have been found to be more successful in setting agendas and establishing issues to be discussed

within organizations (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962). Such individuals are also equipped to respond to job threats by activating their networks to seek assistance from all levels within the organization (Smith, Menon, and Thompson, 2011), and increased control over resources, supported by the higher status position, enables such individuals to strongly influence both the economic and social environments – beyond the level of personal success (Boyer and Ortiz-Molina, 2008). These options are strengthened when taking into account that individuals with connections to other high status people are viewed more positively (Podolny, 1993). Indeed, in two longitudinal studies by Bendersky and Shah (2013), middle managers with higher status were able to achieve higher performance. Furthermore, an expatriate’s high status position also attracts high levels of support from the host community and host country nationals (Olsen and Martins, 2009; see Haak-Saheem, Festing, and Darwish, 2017).

As a result of higher status expatriates’ greater capacity to influence organizational outcomes, we hypothesize that

*Hypothesis 2:* Higher status expatriates (male, older, and higher position) experience a higher degree of organization related success than lower status expatriates.

In our study, we will consider gender, age, and position as three elements of status and examine how each of these relates to success.

## **Methods**

### *Sample and Procedure*

In this study, we chose to focus on business expatriates who had relocated to Asia. We follow McNulty and Brewster’s (2017: 46) approach to defining business expatriates – as “legally working individuals who reside temporarily 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, by self-

initiation or directly employed within the host-country.” Thus, there is support for combining expatriates assigned by an organization and those who moved on their own initiative. Accordingly, we built a list consisting of names and e-mail addresses acquired from embassies, various websites, social media, and online communities of foreign workers predominantly in China, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. The expatriates were contacted via a personalized email sent to their work and/or non-work email addresses. In the email, the expatriates were invited to take part in an online survey about expatriate success in Asia, which they could access by clicking on a link. A total of 2,007 expatriates were invited to participate in our survey, and 455 responses were received (a response rate of 22.7 percent). Of these, 424 respondents passed all screening questions indicating that they belonged to the target group, i.e., business expatriates working in Asia. Subjects included 350 (83%) males and 73 (17%) females, 348 (82%) were married and 75 (18%) were single, with an average age of 51.38 years (SD=10.52) and 43.41 years (SD=11.02) for male and female respondents respectively. One subject did not indicate gender or marital status. Of the 421 subjects that indicated their positions, 192 (46%) held CEO or general manager positions; 96 (23%) were top managers; 52 (12%) were middle managers; 14 (3%) were team leaders; 20 (5%) were non-management staff; and 47 (11%) were in “other” positions. The predominantly male sample is representative of the global expatriate population (Hechanova, Beehr, and Christiansen, 2003).

## **Measures**

### *Demographics*

Age was measured by the question: “How old were you on your last birthday? Gender was assessed by the question: “Are you male or female?”. Position was ascertained by the question: “What is your current position?”. Response categories were 1 = CEO/GM, 2 = Top manager, 3 = Middle manager, 4 = Team leader, 5 = Non-managerial staff, and 6 = Other.

### *Expatriate Success*

The Expatriate Success Scale was developed for this and future studies with the goal of measuring expatriate success from the view of the expatriates themselves. The scale development is described in the next section. Personal Development Related Success was measured with four items; a sample item is “During expatriation, I have matured personally.” (Cronbach  $\alpha=.82$ ). Career Related Success had three items, and a sample is: “Expatriation will surely benefit my career related success.” ( $\alpha=.74$ ). Organization Related Success was assessed with three items; a sample item is “My expatriation has been a success for my current organization.” ( $\alpha=.80$ ). All three measures used the same seven-point response scale ranging from 1 = “Strongly disagree” to 7 = “Strongly agree.” The full set of items is shown in Table 1.

### *Development of the Expatriate Success Scale*

The first phase of the development of the Expatriate Success Scale was a qualitative study of 47 expatriates located in 11 different countries/locations (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States). The subjects were interviewed about their experiences regarding what might constitute success and failure in their lives as individual expatriates living and working abroad. The 47 interviewees were accessed through two modes (see Fjellström and Guttormsen, 2016). Twenty-six interviews were conducted face-to-face in Hong Kong and South Korea, and the remaining 21 were conducted via email (see Bampton, Cowton, and Downs, 2013). The respondents were identified through snowball and convenience sampling strategies (Ghauri, 2004; Welch and Piekkari, 2006). The study identified a wide range of socially constructed reasons for failure defined by the expatriates. Subsequently, a broader range of reasons could then be tested – as opposed to relying on a single variable. The responses to interview questions

(such as “What would need to happen if you were to consider your stay here as failed?”) were analyzed in accordance with the principles of interpretive content analysis (Thomas, 2004): comments reflecting similar meanings were grouped together as a thematic category, and each category was later represented as an item in the survey.

To identify the theorized underlying dimensions of the constructs (personal development related success, career related success, and organization related success), an exploratory factor analysis was performed. Since interest was in the underlying dimensions, the principal axis factoring method was used for extraction of factors as this is an appropriate method for creating multi-dimensional scales that should have a meaningful structure. Using principal axis factoring further implies that only the common variance among the variables was taken account of in the analysis (Costello and Osborne, 2005; Fabrigar *et al.*, 1999). Oblique oblimin rotation was utilized to infer meaning from the factor loadings and achieve parsimony, as this allows for correlations between the factors. The choice of the number of factors to be retained was based on the three usual criteria: eigenvalue above 1, scree plot inspection, and more than 60% cumulative variance explained (Brown, 2015). Hence, the purpose of the analysis was to find out whether the expected dimensionality emerged.

Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed that the matrix was factorable, i.e., there was substantial correlation between the success related items. The Kaiser measure of sampling adequacy was above the minimum level of 0.6, and Bartlett’s test of sphericity turned out highly significant. In other words, the sample was suitable for factor analysis. Three factors with eigenvalues higher than 1 emerged in the sample, and the scree plot confirmed this. Moreover, the cumulative variance explained reached more than 60% only after the third factor. Thus, all three criteria pointed to the three-factor structure shown in Table 1. Moreover, all factor loadings were above 0.5, which is necessary for practical significance. Therefore, based on the exploratory factor analysis, a three-dimensional expatriate success scale was identified.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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In order to validate the three identified dimensions above, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the full measurement model was conducted using maximum likelihood estimation. In evaluating model fit, five different goodness-of-fit indices were applied: These were applied against the saturated model with  $p \geq 0.05$  indicating a good model fit. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) were assessed with values less than 0.06 and 0.08, respectively, also indicating good model fit. Finally, the comparative fit index (CFI) and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) were assessed as adequate with values around or above 0.95 (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

Initially, a CFA on the full model was conducted. All fit indices indicated a good model fit of the latent variable construct. Moreover, in the measurement model, all standardized loadings were salient (with the smallest being 0.58) and highly statistically significant, meaning all latent factors explained the observable indicators with high statistical significance. This further supports the model specification. Additionally, in the full measurement model, discriminant validity was demonstrated as the largest factor correlation was 0.55. Finally, the validity of the measurement model was tested by comparing the full measurement model to a range of nested models. As shown in Table 2, results of the difference test and the goodness-of-fit indices indicated that the full measurement model exhibited significantly better fit than all other nested measurement models. Based on this, all variables were distinct and appropriate for inclusion in the scale.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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*Analyses*

To test the hypotheses in this study, between-group differences in the status-related variables of gender, age, and position were examined through three 3 x 2 Multivariate Analyses of Covariance (MANCOVA). To create the two groups for the three MANCOVAs, the sample was divided into two relevant groups for each of the three status-related demographic variables, gender, age, and position. Characteristics of each group are given in Table 3.

One-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were used to detect any inter-group differences among the background variables for male vs female, younger vs. older, and higher vs. lower position level respondents. For males vs. females, differences existed in age, current position, how the job was acquired, time in current job, and time as an expatriate. For younger vs. older expatriates, there were differences in the number of different jobs, time in host location, time as an expatriate, and time in current job. Finally, for the analysis of lower vs. higher position, we found variation in turnover, time in host location, time as an expatriate, and time in current job. For each MANCOVA, the identified background variables were included as co-variates.

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Insert Table 3 about here

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We also conducted a preliminary cluster analysis to explore how the data were grouped using the different characteristics in relation to low and high status positions. However, the analysis did not yield significantly different findings than those explicated below. The cluster analysis strengthens the validity of our results as it also tested the relevance of the chosen characteristics against a broader range of variables including various cultural dimensions, country GDP and reputation, and self-rated performance.

## **Results**

Pearson correlations, means, standard deviations, and reliability coefficients for all variables



are presented in Table 4. The one-way ANOVAs indicated that there were significant intergroup differences in position, age, and gender. Thus, to test the hypotheses, between-group differences were examined with the three 3 x 2 MANCOVAs. There was a significant multivariate effect for males vs. females ( $F = 5.39$ ;  $p < .01$ ). (See Table 5.) Uni-variate  $F$ -tests indicated a significant between-group difference for Organization related success ( $F = 9.53$ ;  $p < .01$ ) with male expatriates having a higher mean score in support of H2. No significant between-group difference was found for Career related success ( $F = 0.23$ ;  $ns$ ), or Personal development related success ( $F = 3.59$ ;  $p < .1$ ), but the result for Personal development related success was close to significance, and consistent with H1 as female expatriates had a higher mean score than their male counterparts.

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Insert Table 4 about here

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There was also a significant overall effect for age ( $F = 6.73$ ;  $p < .001$ ) (See Table 6.). Uni-variate  $F$ -tests indicated a significant between-group difference for Personal development related success ( $F = 12.10$ ;  $p < .01$ ) and Career related success ( $F = 13.81$ ;  $p < .001$ ) but not for Organization related success ( $F = .19$ ;  $ns$ ). In both significant cases, the younger expatriates had a higher mean score which was consistent with H1.

Finally, there was a significant multivariate effect for position ( $F = 6.02$ ;  $p < .01$ ) (See Table 7.). Uni-variate  $F$ -tests indicated a significant between-group difference only in the case of Organization related success ( $F = 13.67$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Here it was found that those in higher positions (CEOs) had a higher mean score than those in lower positions (managers) which supported H2.

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Insert Tables 5-7 about here

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## **Discussion**

Our study's findings with respect to status and experienced success have provided some support for our two hypotheses that lower and higher status expatriates experience different types of success. This has led to greater insight into expatriates' own perceptions of a successful assignment and pushes beyond the traditional "non-definition" that success is not returning from the assignment prematurely. Furthermore, our findings also contribute to the emerging trend of conducting studies with a particular focus on lower status expatriates (see Guttormsen, 2017).

Looking at the three status variables, lower status expatriates (female, younger, lower position), were associated with a lower degree of organization related success compared to higher status expatriates as represented by male, older, and higher position. Individuals in high status positions are known to have more ability to change their surroundings (Jost *et al.*, 2004), and this would explain why the higher status expatriates experienced more success relating to the organization (Anderson and Brion, 2014). The finding which assign female and male to the lower and higher status positions respectively are also consistent with the cultures of the societies where these expatriates worked as these societies are not only hierarchical, but widely recognized as strongly traditional with respect to gender egalitarianism as well.

The failure to find differences with the younger vs. older groups may be a result of the elevated importance of the male gender in Asian organizations. Hence, as a male, age might be considered as of secondary importance because men are already considered as of high status due to gender. Especially in an Asian context, gender and position level are frequently associated with higher status due to the prominence of hierarchies in these societies and the weight of these factors in determining status (Chuah *et al.*, 2014; Faure and Fang, 2008; Tu, 1998; Yan and Sorensen, 2004).

For the lower status variables, only age (younger) was associated with individual

success relating to personal development and careers. These types of success can be achieved more easily than organization related success for the lower status individuals as they would not be involved in establishing the agenda and defining the issues which the organization needs to tackle (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962). Furthermore, individual successes can be achieved without the support of a broad network across the organization (Smith *et al.*, 2011) or the access to resources which may be controlled by staff in higher status positions within the organization (Boyer and Ortiz-Molina, 2008). These issues often intensify for those younger in age (Bales *et al.*, 1951; Keltner *et al.*, 2003) and may be of even more concern in Asian organizations where specific expectations exist regarding what one is allowed and expected to do based on position (Guttormsen, 2018b; Hofstede, 2001). As a younger person, one may also be more concerned with individual development as both the career and life span ahead are expected to be longer and thus provide more opportunities than for an older individual who is already established.

This study has important implications for theory and practice. In relation to theory, this research shows that expatriates with different characteristics perceive their success to be in different areas. Hence, the debate in expatriate research should not focus too much on single success criteria but include different types of success. Our study also suggests that in order to appreciate why and how expatriates experience success, we should investigate the actual experiences acquired during working abroad as opposed to measuring the concept in relation to a single variable, for instance, remaining in the job for the entirety of a contract. The study also showcases the potential relevance of the cultural context where the expatriates work. Arguably, the Confucian tradition makes the high versus low status roles more prominent (Child and Warner, 2003; Redding, 2002; Warner, 2003, 2010).

From a practical point of view, organizations could help all expatriates to experience all three types of success by better preparing them for their overseas assignments and providing

post-arrival support that would allow them to achieve both personal and organization related success. For example, managers supervising, assessing, coaching, and/or mentoring those in lower positions and/or female expatriates could assign them tasks that would provide feedback allowing them to see the impact their work had on the success of the organization. Similarly, older expatriates could be coached to better appreciate the individual development opportunities that living and working abroad provide.

We also must consider the potential shortcomings of our study. First, the cross-sectional nature of the studies does not allow us to determine causality. Another potential limitation is the subjective assessment of success as we used a self-report design for our survey. However, our concern is with assessing expatriates' perceptions of their own success, and by definition, there would be no other way to access this information. Finally, our study was set in Asia where the power distance is relatively high compared to other parts of the world. Although this area was chosen for good reason, the results may not be generalizable to other regions where status differences might have less impact on job performance.

Future studies could investigate if there are other determining factors for what constitute high and low status positions in other parts of the world and whether such differences had any impact on expatriates' perceptions of their own success. The expatriate success scale can also be further tested and perhaps refined as it represents a more explicit definition of success. Finally, interventions that might broaden the expatriates' view of their own success could be studied.

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<b>Table 1: Exploratory Factor Analysis</b>			
<b>Extraction Method</b>	<b>Principal Axis Factoring</b>		
<b>Rotation</b>	<b>Direct Oblimin</b>		
<b>Items</b>	<b>Per.Dev.</b>	<b>Career</b>	<b>Org.</b>
During expatriation I have developed my professional skills	0.566		
During expatriation I have matured personally	0.799	0.461	
I have become psychologically more resilient	0.773		
I have developed my perspective on life	0.812		
Expatriation will surely benefit my career	0.478	0.906	
Career-wise being expatriated will be a set-back for me		0.652	
After this expatriation I can get a job most places		0.563	
My expatriation has been a success for my current organization			0.762
My current organization has benefitted financially from my expatriation			0.853
My current organization has experienced functional improvement because of my relocation			0.669

Notes: N = 392, KMO = 0.78; all coefficients smaller than 0.45 were suppressed

<b>Table 2: Goodness-of-fit Indices</b>						
Model	Model $\chi^2$ (d.f.)	RMSEA	SRMR	CFI	TLI	$\chi^2$ -diff. (d.f. diff)
Full Measurement Model (3 factors)	79.58 (32)	0.06	0.04	0.97	0.95	-
Model A (2 factors)	255.21 (34)	0.13	0.07	0.84	0.79	175.54 (2)
Model B (2 factors)	435.12 (34)	0.17	0.11	0.72	0.62	355.54 (2)
Model C (2 factors)	452.90 (34)	0.18	0.12	0.70	0.61	373.32 (2)
Model D (1 factor)	617.36 (35)	0.21	0.13	0.59	0.47	537.78 (3)

Notes:  $n = 392$ . All fit indicator difference tests compare to the full measurement model.

Model A: Personal development related success and Career related success combined into one factor. Model B: Career related success and Organization related success combined into one factor. Model C: Personal development related success and Organizational related success combined into one factor. Model D: Personal development related success, Career related success and Organizational related success combined into one factor.

<b>Table 3: Background Characteristics of the Sub-samples (N=424*)</b>												
<b>Background Variables</b>	<b>Gender</b>				<b>Age</b>				<b>Position</b>			
	<b>Male</b>		<b>Female</b>		<b>Younger</b>		<b>Older</b>		<b>CEO</b>		<b>Manager</b>	
	<b>n = 350</b>		<b>n = 73</b>		<b>n = 221</b>		<b>n = 203</b>		<b>n = 192</b>		<b>n= 162</b>	
	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender:</b>												
Male	350	100	0	0	169	76.5	181	10.4	175	91.2	133	82.1
Female	0	0	73	100	52	23.5	21	89.6	17	8.9	29	17.9
<b>Marital status:</b>												
Married	297	84.9	51	69.9	174	78.7	174	85.7	167	87.0	130	80.2
Non-married	53	15.1	22	30.1	47	21.3	29	14.3	25	13.0	32	19.8
<b>Position:</b>												
CEO/GM	175	50.3	17	23.3	76	34.4	116	57.7	192	100	0	0
Top manager	85	24.4	11	15.1	58	26.2	38	18.9		0	96	59.3
Middle man.	39	11.2	13	17.8	40	18.1	12	6.0		0	52	32.1
Team leader	9	2.6	5	6.9	10	4.5	4	2.0		0	14	8.6
Non-man.												
Staff	9	2.6	11	15.1	17	7.7	4	2.0				
Other	31	8.9	16	21.9	20	9.0	27	13.4				

\*Frequency (F) totals may be less than the stated n due to missing values

**Table 4: Pearson Correlations, Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliability**

**Coefficients**

	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1</b>	Personal development related success	6.10	.76	<b>.82</b>		
<b>2</b>	Career related success	5.26	1.13	.46***	<b>.74</b>	
<b>3</b>	Organization related success	5.81	.91	.19***	.21***	<b>.80</b>

\*\*\* $p < .001$

*Reliability coefficients are in bold.*

$N = 392$



**Table 5: Mancova and Ancova for Success Variables by Gender**

	Dependent Variables	Male		Female		Multivariate effect	Univariate F Ratios
		n = 321		n = 63			
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1	Personal development related success	6.07	0.78	6.28	0.65	5.39**	3.59
2	Career related success	5.27	1.08	5.33	1.36		0.23
3	Organization related success	5.93	0.83	5.31	1.08		9.53**

Covariates: age, current position, job acquired, time in current job, time as an expatriate

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

**Table 6: Mancova and Ancova for Success Variables by Age**

	Dependent Variables	Younger		Older		Multivariate effect	Univariate F Ratios
		n = 201		n = 181			
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1	Personal development related success	6.17	0.69	6.05	0.78	6.73***	12.10**
2	Career related success	5.28	1.13	5.17	1.16		13.81***
3	Organization related success	5.71	0.94	5.94	0.86		0.19

Covariates: number of different jobs, turnover, time in host location, time as an expatriate, time in current job

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

<b>Table 7: Mancova and Ancova for Success Variables by Position</b>							
	<b>Dependent Variables</b>	<b>CEO</b>		<b>Manager</b>		<b>Multivariate effect</b>	<b>Univariate F Ratios</b>
		<b>n = 177</b>		<b>n = 147</b>			
		<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>		
1	Personal development related success	6.11	0.77	6.15	0.70	6.02**	0.26
2	Career related success	5.27	1.06	5.43	1.01		2.06
3	Organization related success	6.10	0.76	5.68	0.89		13.67***

Covariates: age, turnover, length of stay in host, length of stay as expatriate, length of stay in current job

\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$