17 Future research on self-initiated expatriation: Emerging topics
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INTRODUCTION

Recent decades have witnessed the growth of research on self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) in the field of management literature. Further, the aspects researched on SIEs have been continuously expanded. Even though valuable insights have been gained, several areas require further scrutiny (Andresen et al., 2021b). Emerging issues, for example, are human trafficking from the perspective of management research, seasonal flows of SIEs linked to certain business activities (e.g. tourism, agriculture), digital transformation, overlooked destination and home countries of SIEs, specific groups of international workers (e.g., international volunteers, musicians, athletes, etc.), refugees and asylum seekers, self-initiated expatriation in extreme or risky situations and crises, the role of emotions, and identity. These ideas originated from the participants of the second Conference on Self-Initiated Expatriation, organized by the GLOMO project at the University of Bamberg, Germany, from April 11–12, 2022. In this paper, we take the directions discussed at this conference as inspiration and explore four significant areas: digital transformation, emotions, overlooked destination and home countries in the current research, and identity. These future research avenues have recently attracted the attention of various scholars, demonstrating their value to enrich our knowledge of SIEs, especially in today's world (Andresen et al., 2021b; Bucher & Deller, 2021; Cooke et al., 2021; McNulty & Brewster, 2020; Moulaï et al., 2021).

We proceed as follows. First, we provide an overview of the topics, including a definition and a short literature review. Second, we explore and elaborate on various directions for future research on each topic. We then conclude the chapter by summarizing the key insights. Table 21 gives an overview of the state-of-the-art in research and future research avenues.

Topics	Definitions	Brief overview of the state-of-the-art	Future research avenues
Digital transformation	The incorporation of digital technology and data in all aspects of organizations' operations to promote business, refine/change the business processes, and increase revenue.	- SIEs' use of social media to receive social support - Digital applications specialized in supporting global mobility challenges - Virtual working	- The role of host country's digitalization levels - Impacts and future of virtual collaboration/working - Impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on global mobility
Emotions	- A complex whole of various components, including appraisals, facial and body expressions, physiological and nervous system activities, and instrumental behaviors. - Can be conceived as a linear combination of two dimensions. The first dimension is whether the emotional states are pleasant or unpleasant (i.e., valence), and the other is whether the emotions trigger activation or deactivation (i.e., arousal or alertness).	- Role of emotions (primarily unpleasant) in SIEs' work outcomes and adjustment - Emotional intelligence	- Emotional acculturation - Examination of diverse emotions (especially pleasant and emotions at different arousal levels)
Under-researched countries of destination and origin	Countries where SIEs come from and relocate to that are underrepresented in current research on SIEs.	- Limited studies employing samples coming from a specific country, often concentrated on developed, wealthy, high-status nations - Insufficient insights into destination countries with a low proportion of foreigners/SIEs	- Motivations to relocate to hostile countries and countries with a low proportion of SIEs (e.g., Africa, Middle East, except Gulf countries, and South America). - SIEs' adjustment, embeddedness, retention, and career outcomes in these countries / a specific country among them
Identity	Diverse approaches: - Perceived belongingness to a cultural group (i.e., cultural identity) - Definition of self in the work context (i.e., career identity) - Gender - An open approach adaptable to global lifestyles that pertain across countries (i.e., expatriate cosmopolitan identity)	- Several ways SIEs define themselves and implications for their outcomes	- Systematic reviews of SIEs' identity that take all current approaches into account - Antecedents of identity structure - Self-fulfilling prophecy among SIEs in terms of identity

Table 21: *Summary of emerging topics and future research avenues*

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND ITS IMPACT ON GLOBAL MOBILITY OF SIES

The technological revolution has become an essential feature of our times. Especially in the last few years following the COVID-19 pandemic, we have witnessed a remarkable acceleration in digitalization, which has reformed not only the way individuals work, the infrastructure and operation of various organizations, but also national economies (Kraus et al., 2022). Digital transformation refers to the incorporation of digital technologies and data into all aspects of organizations' operations to drive business, refine/change business processes, and increase revenue (Kraus et al., 2022). However, literature on the impact of digital transformation on SIEs is clearly underdeveloped (Bucher & Deller, 2021).

Evidence shows that technology also plays an essential role in the lives and work of expatriates. Many expatriate newcomers and their families use social media as a tool to obtain social support, seek information, learn about the host culture, and for comfort before and after their relocation (Nardon et al., 2015; Sahakiants & Dorner, 2021). We identified several digital applications developed with the sole purpose of assisting expatriates with specific issues (e.g., tax consultation, cultural training), partially replacing the conventional roles of global mobility service providers (Sahakiants & Dorner, 2021). Virtual working became particularly common during the pandemic, during which also SIEs worked primarily from home (Arslan et al., 2021) and many others repatriated prematurely due to health and security concerns (Koveshnikov et al., 2022). However, working remotely via an online platform faced obstacles such as Internet availability and stability, data protection, information overload, and psychological well-being (Sahakiants & Dorner, 2021).

Given the emerging trends of digital transformation in the context of SIEs, certain aspects need further exploration. First, the impact of digital transformation on SIEs may vary depending on the level of digitalization of the host nations. For instance, in some countries, digitalization has reached a level of stability and prevalence that has created a digital society that allows people to interact virtually and benefits many stakeholders, including organizations and workers (i.e., smart cities, digital nations) (Kraus et al., 2022). Expatriates residing in these nations are more likely to perceive the impact of digital transformation on their daily and working lives than those living in less-digitalized locations.

Second, virtual collaboration often raises questions about trust issues, its applicability in specific occupations or contexts, and its impacts on group cohesion and organizational commitment. Digital means have shown, particularly during the pandemic, to improve communication and team spirit among virtual workers, thereby mitigating problems of physical isolation (Rudolph et al., 2021). Similarly, trust can be built by creating transparency around shared goals and

encouraging unofficial communication via a common secure and reliable communication platform (Hertel et al., 2005). Literature reviews propose that some types of teams nevertheless require certain face-to-face interactions, such as highly interdependent groups (Hertel et al., 2005). Thus, the frequency of business travel and short- or long-term assignments can be expected to decrease, but the global mobility of employees is likely to remain, especially for SIEs.

The swift and constant advancement of technology requires continuous observation and examination by researchers. For instance, recent research indicates that the use of artificial intelligence (AI) for traditional leadership tasks (e.g., disciplinary and mentoring tasks) offers some advantages (e.g., transparency, integrity) compared to human agents (Höddinghaus et al., 2021). Further, the literature also suggests the integration of AI into various other HRM functions as well, such as recruitment and decision support, for instance, by providing employees with comprehensive organizational information, thereby reducing the burden on managers and experts alike (Gil et al., 2020). Thus, the global mobility situation could change depending on the expansion of AI in management. Implications may include, for instance, reduced demand for unskilled and even skilled SIEs in digitalized nations, as well as for short- or long-term expatriate assignments in smart companies.

EMOTIONS – A BLIND SPOT IN CURRENT RESEARCH ON SIES

In research, emotions are generally considered for their complexity, including appraisals, facial and body expressions, physiological and nervous system activities, and instrumental behaviours (Fischer et al., 1990; Hatfield et al., 2014). According to the circumplex model of affect, all emotional states can be conceptualized as a linear combination of two dimensions: first, whether the emotional states are pleasant or unpleasant (i.e., valence), and second, whether the emotions trigger activation or deactivation (i.e., arousal or alertness) (Posner et al., 2005; Russell, 1980). For instance, amusement is a state comprising moderately pleasant feelings and strong activation of the nervous system. In this respect, amusement differs from other emotions such as serenity, which are characterized by the same pleasant valence but lower alertness (Posner et al., 2005).

Emotions play a significant role in SIEs' work outcomes. Most studies on emotions scrutinize them in terms of their valence. The focus is often on unpleasant emotional states (e.g., anger, hopelessness, stress) and their effects on work outcomes, such as work adjustment, performance, effectiveness, and career optimism (Lauring & Selmer, 2018; McNulty & Moeller, 2018; Selmer & Lauring, 2013b; Stoermer et al., 2020; Wurtz, 2018). In contrast, evidence of pleasant affect (e.g., hope) is scarce, with limited studies such as those by Selmer and Lauring

(2013b) or Harvey et al. (2009). The literature has also explored the role of emotions in the adjustment process of SIEs, with the regulation of emotional expression seen as one dimension of adjustment (Gullekson & Dumaisnil, 2016; Haslberger et al., 2013; Selmer & Lauring, 2013a). Many scholars have shown similar interests in emotional intelligence, which appears to facilitate cross-cultural adjustment (Arokiasamy & Kim, 2020; Koveshnikov et al., 2014). Nonetheless, the current literature is clearly insufficient to capture the various aspects of SIEs' emotional experiences and their consequences.

An example of an overlooked area is emotional acculturation, or the process of regulating emotional patterns to fit in the host country's culture (Leersnyder, 2017). Similar to cultural distance, people from different countries feel different sets of emotions (i.e., patterns) that are congruent with their cultural values and contexts of interaction (Leersnyder et al., 2013). For instance, emotions related to social detachment (e.g., pride, frustration, anger) are more common and powerful in the European/American culture, whereas socially engaging emotions (e.g., shame, guilt, gratitude) are more prevalent in the East Asian culture (Leersnyder et al., 2013). These patterns related to the type of emotions are consistent with the cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism that characterize these two cultures (Leersnyder et al., 2013). When SIEs come into contact with a new culture, their emotional patterns tend to alter over time to fit in the patterns of the natives in that context (Leersnyder, 2017). The difference between emotional acculturation (Leersnyder, 2017) and emotional adjustment (Haslberger et al., 2013) is that the former entails actual change in the experienced emotions (or more accurately, sets of emotions) (i.e., deep acting), whereas the latter primarily encompasses control of emotional expression (i.e., surface acting) (Haslberger et al., 2013; Leersnyder, 2017). While surface acting has potentially negative consequences, for example, for well-being (Diener et al., 2020; Sanz-Vergel et al., 2012), emotional acculturation seems to facilitate long-term mental and somatic health (Diener et al., 2020; Leersnyder, 2017). Thus, improved person–environment fit could result from both processes but sustains longer and produces superior outcomes in the case of emotional acculturation (cf. Diener et al., 2020). This leads to further questions about the antecedents of emotional acculturation and the moderation effects of context (e.g., work versus private life).

Another area that requires researchers' attention is the study of a broader range of emotions, considering both their valence and arousal dimensions. Pleasant emotions are an interesting direction for future research on self-initiated expatriation, particularly concerning work outcomes (Diener et al., 2020) and the well-being (Fredrickson, 2000) of SIEs. Emotions can lead to different outcomes depending on the level of alertness. For instance, pride, interest, and gratitude have the same pleasant valence, but they have divergent underlying functions,

goals, and focus, resulting in different work attitudes and performance; pride, but not interest or gratitude, has been shown to promote psychological empowerment (Hu & Kaplan, 2015). In the case of SIEs, high arousal emotions, such as amusement, might improve work outcomes that require persistence and initiative (Cheng & Wang, 2015), while deactivated, pleasant emotions, such as calm or relaxation, might help SIEs cope with demands and stress. It is further valuable to discuss the functional aspects of emotions. Here, the judgement of positivity and negativity should consider the actual functioning of emotions in a specific context. For instance, anger, which is an unpleasant emotion, can be positive when it serves prosocial motives, for instance, to address injustice (Diener et al., 2020). Against this background, SIEs' unpleasant emotions might lead to certain positive outcomes, provided they are congruent with the emotional patterns of the host country's culture (Leersnyder, 2017) and effectively support the achievement of goals (Tamir & Ford, 2012).

COUNTRIES OF DESTINATION AND ORIGIN IN SIE RESEARCH

Notably, space has emerged as a prominent subject for future research on SIEs (Andresen et al., 2021a). The influence of home and host country has rarely been addressed in the literature. Studies employing samples from a specific country are limited and often refer to countries with large proportions of people seeking international life or experiences, such as Australia (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010), Finland (Mäkelä et al., 2016; Suutari & Brewster, 2003), Lebanon (Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2010), and New Zealand (Carr et al., 2005). Literature reviews demonstrate a clear preference for individuals from wealthy and high-ranking nations with high global mobility of workers (Lazarova & Ipek, 2021). In contrast, professionals from less-developed countries who initiate their relocation and also pursue international careers are researched significantly less often or are labeled differently (e.g., migrants) by management scholars (Lazarova & Ipek, 2021).

Likewise, there is substantial research focusing on destinations attracting a large number of international talent, such as Gulf countries (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates) (Bealer & Bhanugopan, 2014), East Asia (e.g., China, Japan, Korean, Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore) (Froese, 2012; Lo et al., 2012; Peltokorpi, 2008; Stoermer et al., 2020), and Western Europe (Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2010; Cao et al., 2014; Varma et al., 2021). The proportion of foreigners in the host country might have implications for SIEs' adjustment and work outcomes. For instance, moving to a country with a low proportion of foreigners might create specific challenges (Andresen et al., 2021a). Research suggests that the motivation to relocate to a specific location is related to its characteristics (Froese, 2012). Nonetheless, we have obtained few insights into the pull factors (e.g., career norms) of countries where the number of SIEs is low.

In this light, further research is needed on 'overlooked' countries of destination and origin, which can reveal the impact of the home or host country—as well as their specific combination, for instance, the special relationship between Germany and Israel—on various outcomes of SIEs. Some countries of destination and origin that are notably rare in SIE research are Africa, the Middle East (except Gulf countries), and South America. So far, studies on expatriates in these destination regions have mostly been limited to samples of assigned expatriates, most of whom worked as senior managers or experts in large organizations (Ado et al., 2021; Dickmann & Watson, 2017; Faeth & Kittler, 2017). These destinations often show comparatively high levels of terrorism, crime, corruption, and discrimination (Dickmann & Watson, 2017; Faeth & Kittler, 2017; Greppin et al., 2017). While the literature has explored assigned expatriates' motivations for moving to hostile countries (e.g., career development) (Dickmann & Watson, 2017), we have generated little knowledge on the group of SIEs. There is a research backlog given the growth in the SIE population along with new Emerging Market Multinational Enterprises (EMMNEs) in these regions, such as Chinese SIEs and EMMNEs in African countries (Jackson & Horwitz, 2018). SIEs, who typically do not receive organizational support similar to that provided to assigned expatriates, may face more hostility in these contexts, leading to more negative experiences (Harry et al., 2019). They further face difficulties in communication, gender equity, and knowledge transfer with local people (Harry et al., 2019; Jackson & Horwitz, 2018), raising questions about their adjustment, embeddedness, retention, and career outcomes there. SIEs' experiences are expected to differ given different levels of socio-economic development, immigration friendliness, and hostility in each country. For example, SIEs' adjustment, settlement, and career success in Mexico may be easier to manage than that in South Africa due to the comparatively harsher conditions (e.g., xenophobia) in the latter (Harry et al., 2019; Mendoza & Guitart, 2008). Studies that focus on the specific country characteristics can therefore be insightful.

Regarding countries of origin, there is insufficient research on SIEs from different developing countries. On the one hand, individuals in this case often face challenges at the macro level, such as immigration policies and the recognition of their qualifications and work experience (Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2010). On the other hand, studies also show that home country-related positive stereotypes promote SIEs' career resources in the host countries (Bozionelos, 2019). Thus, it is beneficial to explore the impact of home countries while also considering the diversity of these developing nations. In particular, the positive impact of developing country backgrounds on SIEs' careers is a promising direction for further research.

Another area is the career outcomes of SIEs from developing countries after their return to their home country. The home countries of these individuals often suffer from a 'brain drain,' as SIEs' knowledge and skills are lost if they choose to remain abroad. Their international experience nonetheless becomes valuable when they repatriate, increasing their employability and marketability to employers in their home country. This perhaps distinguishes them from SIEs coming from industrialized and high-status countries, as their international work experiences gained in less-developed regions are not necessarily valued by companies upon their return to their homeland (Andresen, 2021). Similarities or differences in home and host country career norms become intriguing fields of research, as they outline different "ideal" pathways in which SIEs' careers evolve within international relocations (Andresen, 2021).

IDENTITY

The topic of expatriates' identity and belonging has drawn the attention of scholars in recent years. Specifically, research on expatriates has explored identity from diverse perspectives, where expatriates' identity refers to perceived belongingness to a cultural group (i.e., cultural identity) (Li et al., 2021), the definition of self in the work context (i.e., career identity) (Kanstrén, 2021), gender (Yu & Ren, 2021), or an open and adaptive approach to global lifestyles that pertain across countries (i.e., expatriate cosmopolitan identity) (Adams & van de Vijver, 2015). The diversification of approaches to studying expatriate identity is a trend in the recent literature. Researchers have explored the implications of the ways SIEs define themselves on various outcomes, such as mobility patterns (Moulaï et al., 2021; Scurry et al., 2013), adjustment (Selmer & Lauring, 2014), and career capital (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2014). Overall, research on this topic is at an early stage, with scholars attempting to understand how SIEs make sense of the self at multiple contextual layers. This endeavour may be fuzzy from a theoretical perspective, as current studies to date have not built a structured identification and classification of all approaches to the identity of SIEs. Furthermore, it remains unclear under which circumstances these types of identity exist in an individual or a specific group of SIEs. In this light, there are areas that demonstrate promising directions for future research. First, systematic reviews of SIEs' identity that take into account all current approaches will enlighten the self-structure of SIEs and lay an essential groundwork for further research. For example, while multiple identities might coexist within an SIE, their salience and implications for work outcomes differ distinctively (Yu & Ren, 2021).

In addition, certain situations, personalities, occupations, or career orientations might form specific sets of identity. This leads to our second area, which deals with the antecedents of identity structure. To date, there are few studies that

focus on factors that contribute to the identity of SIEs. A few examples, such as Selmer and Lauring (2014), suggest that childhood experiences play an essential role in how SIEs structure their cosmopolitan identity. However, we are not fully aware of the role of other factors, particularly organizational factors (e.g., types of employer companies, industries) or individual antecedents (e.g., personality, educational experiences, cultural intelligence).

Finally, it can be interesting to study identity not only as an intra-perceptual but also as an interpersonal phenomenon, where SIEs might form or alter their identity according to the expectations of others (i.e., self-fulfilling prophecy). In the case of SIEs, the cultural/social norms of the host country might encourage or suppress certain identities. For instance, host country norms or anti-LGBT laws may force SIEs to conceal their identity in terms of sexual orientation or transgender status, impeding their psychological and physical well-being (McPhail & McNulty, 2015). Research into the self-fulfilling prophecy among SIEs, thus, becomes beneficial for some vulnerable groups such as LGBT and females (e.g., in countries with salient traditional gender norms).

CONCLUSION

This chapter outlines four notable areas that recently emerged in research on SIEs, namely digital transformation, emotions, under-researched countries of destination and origin, and identity. Although these research areas are essential to comprehend the life and work of SIEs, especially during the contemporary digital era, we have obtained little evidence on these topics. The brief overview of each area, followed by some promising research questions, aims to indicate directions for future research.

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