

All work and no play? Antecedents of the leisure involvement of Taiwan expatriate managers in Mainland China

1. Introduction

Expatriates are employees sent by a parent company to work for a relatively long time (usually six months up to five years) in an international (other country or regional) subsidiary or branch (Silbiger & Pines, 2014; Financial Times, 2017). Expatriate employees from Taiwan are the core managers in Taiwan-invested manufacturing firms in China, and they must adjust to working and living there to be fully productive in factories. However, many have not adjusted well to the social and employment environments, causing inadequate performance and premature departures. A contributing factor is the inability to reduce stress through appropriate leisure activities (Lo, 2005), and to have a healthy work-life balance.

The main research aim was to construct and test an antecedent relationship path model for the leisure involvement of Taiwan expatriate managers working in Mainland China. **The original contribution of this research to the literature on leisure within expatriation is in the development of a new scale for leisure temporal-spatial involvement (LTSI) that specifically applies to expatriates.**

2. Literature review

In **deriving hypotheses and** building this research' conceptual model, **three** distinct streams of literature were considered. First, research on expatriation and international job assignments was consulted, and particularly work on expatriate success and failure. The second focus was on leisure involvement and its antecedents, and perceived freedom in leisure and leisure coping strategies. **Third, literature on expatriate life in Mainland China was reviewed. The research hypotheses are shown within the literature review according to the themes to which they pertain.**

2.1. Expatriate adjustment, failure and burnout

To agree or choose to work as an expatriate is one of the most difficult career decisions

(Cerdin & Le Pargneux, 2010), as well as representing a major expenditure for companies (Scullion & Brewster, 2001; Harvey & Moeller, 2009; Silbiger & Pines, 2014). The research literature suggests that a key to expatriate work success is the multi-level adjustment to fit conditions in the host country (Tung, 1981; Black, 1988; Grinstein & Wathieu, 2012; DeNisi & Sonesh, 2016). When expatriates do not adjust well to the different work and social-cultural environments, expatriate failure can result. Expatriate failure is generally described as the premature return of a staff member to the country of origin (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1988; Causin & Ayoun, 2011; Andresen & Margenfeld, 2015; Kang, Shen, & Benson, 2017; **Andresen, Goldmann, & Volodina, 2018**). **Guttormsen, Francesco, and Chapman (2018) found that the context (overall expatriation environment), duration of stay, and geographic location affected expatriates' self-assessment of failure and success.**

The burnout felt by managers contributes to expatriate failure. Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001, p. 397) define burnout as “a prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job” demonstrated by “exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy” (reduced sense of personal accomplishment). The emotional exhaustion experienced in burnout can result in the loss of job enthusiasm and absenteeism (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996; Ericson-Lidman, Norberg, & Strandberg, 2007). Burnout can occur in all domestic and international work situations; however, expatriation poses unique challenges due to the need to adjust to new environments (Bhanugopan & Fish, 2006; Fischlmayr & Kollinger, 2010; Silbiger & Pines, 2014). Black (1988) defines adjustment as the “psychological comfort” in novel situations and environments. There are three facets to the international adjustment that expatriates must make; work, interaction (with the host population inside and outside of work), and general (or cultural) (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Silbiger & Pines, 2014). Leisure participation falls into the third facet of adjustment.

2.2. Leisure involvement and its antecedents

Haworth and Veal (2004, p. 3) state that “the study of the work-leisure relationship brings together two separate multidisciplinary research traditions: the study of work and the study of

leisure”. Expatriation is a unique work situation and focus for research. Based on the foregoing review of the research on expatriation, it was determined that leisure participation could be an influential variable in facilitating the adjustment of expatriate managers to novel situations and, therefore, it was important to explore the factors impacting leisure involvement.

2.2.1. Leisure involvement theory

Consumer involvement theory originated from social psychology and particularly from the concept of ego-involvement in social judgment theory (Sherif & Cantril, 1947). It was introduced by marketing and consumer behavior scholars in the 1970s and 1980s and then adopted by leisure and tourism researchers in the late 1980s, 1990s and 2000s (Selin & Howard, 1988; Havitz & Dimanche, 1990; Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003; Josiam, Kinley, & Kim, 2005). **General consumer product involvement affects the extent of people’s decision processes and information searches (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985). The linkage between general consumer involvement and leisure involvement is expressed by the level of psychological involvement that influences the scope of people’s overall consumption behaviors, as well as specifically in leisure activity participation. According to Jun et al. (2012) and Cheng and Tsaur (2012), leisure researchers have drawn heavily from consumer behavior research on involvement in conceptualizing and measuring leisure involvement.** Havitz and Dimanche (1997, p. 246) define leisure involvement as “an unobservable state of motivation, arousal or interest toward a recreational activity or associated product.”

Antecedents are the factors influencing the level of involvement and there have been many differing articulations of these factors. Laurent and Kapferer (1985, p. 43) suggested a set of involvement antecedents as perceived product importance (personal meaning), perceived risk associated with purchase, symbolic or sign value, and hedonic value. Zaichkowsky (1986, p. 6) identified antecedents as personal (inherent), object or stimulus, and situational factors in her research on advertising. Lehto, O’Leary and Morrison (2004) pointed out that measuring leisure and tourism involvement had mainly focused on its antecedents or behavioral consequences. For example, Iwasaki and Havitz (1998, p. 259)

recommended personal (or individual) and social-situational antecedents of involvement. The personal antecedents included values, attitudes, motivation, skills, and intrapersonal constraints; the social-situational antecedents comprised social support, social norms, and structural support. Other researchers found the type of activity to be an important antecedent of leisure involvement (Kim, Scott, & Crompton, 1989; Schrader & Wann, 1999; Josiam et al., 2005; Cheng & Tsaur, 2012).

There is a rich stream of research on personal antecedents of leisure involvement, mainly concerning individual characteristics (demographic and socio-economic), motivation, attitudes, values, needs and preferences. Included are studies on gender (Schrader & Wann, 1999; Wiley, Shaw, & Havitz, 2000); age groups (Kelly & Ross, 1989; Safvenbom & Samdahl, 1998; Mukai, 2009); family and friends (Madrigal, Havitz, & Howard, 1992; Kyle & Chick, 2002); personality (Lu & Hu, 2005); and motivation (Kyle et al., 2006; Prebensen, Woo, Chen, & Uysal, 2012; Chen, Li, & Chen, 2013).

Situational antecedents concern the environments surrounding people and how these environments stimulate or inhibit leisure involvement. Topics that have been analyzed here encompass the serious leisure concept (Cheng & Tsaur, 2012); enduring involvement (Schuett, 1993; Havitz & Mannell, 2005); service quality (Alexandris, Douka, & Balaska, 2012). The activity antecedents are factors such as technical capabilities, equipment, contents, physical requirements, image and attractiveness, e.g., technical capability (Safvenbom & Samdahl, 1998); and skill level (Schuett, 1993).

2.2.2. Perceived freedom in leisure

According to Iso-Ahola (1979), freedom is one of three factors influencing leisure (along with motivation and goals). Samdahl (1988) **and Carr (2017) suggest that freedom is central to leisure; however, scholars do not agree on the definition of freedom in the leisure context.** Harper (1986) urged colleagues not to narrowly define freedom as “free choice”. The freedom to participate in leisure activities is limited by obligations (e.g., work, family, etc.) and constraints (e.g., finances, skills, equipment ownership, availability and opportunity, etc.). Perceived freedom is a person’s assessment of the degree of opportunity

and flexibility to participate in leisure and in particular leisure activities (Kelly, 1972; Iso-Ahola, 1980; Neulinger, 1981; Ellis & Witt, 1987; Hurd & Anderson, 2010).

More recent research has investigated the factors affecting perceived freedom in leisure and has questioned its stability over lifespans. Janke et al. (2011) found that life structure (sociocultural world, personal aspects and experiences) predicted adult perceived freedom in leisure. These researchers argued that life experiences and circumstances change and affect people's perceptions of freedom in leisure. Carr (2017) even suggests that such "freedom is a myth and consumption rules" and societal pressures constrain an individual's freedom of choice in leisure.

The first research hypothesis (H₁) concerned the relationship between job burnout in expatriation and perceived freedom in leisure and was as follows:

H₁: There is a negative and significant association relationship between job burnout and perceived freedom in leisure.

The second hypothesis (H₂) concerned the relationship of involvement and perceived freedom in leisure and was specified as follows:

H₂: There is a positive and significant association between leisure involvement and perceived freedom in leisure.

2.2.3. Leisure as a stress-coping strategy

Leisure can help people deal with work- and family-related stress (Iwasaki, 2003a) and this has generated a considerable leisure coping research literature (for example, Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000; Iwasaki, Mannell, & Butcher, 2002; Iwasaki, 2003a, 2003b; Iwasaki, Mackay, & Mactavish, 2005). One central idea here is that leisure participation plays the role of a "buffer" in handling stress and thus reduces associated physical and mental problems and illnesses (Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993). Iwasaki and Mannell (2000, p. 163) identified four dimensions of leisure stress coping as self-determination disposition (free choice and autonomy), leisure empowerment (perceived entitlement), leisure companionship (shared leisure), and leisure palliative coping (keeping mind and body busy). They suggest that when

people face stress, they use leisure for companionship, palliative coping, and/or mood enhancement (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000, p. 177).

Dewe and Trenberth's (2005) point out that "the impact of stress influences the way in which leisure is used" (p. 101) and their research highlights the role of leisure in coping with work-related stress. The same authors (Trenberth and Dewe, 2002) found that leisure was important in coping with work-related stress for two reasons; the active and challenging nature of leisure activities, and leisure's passive and recuperative features.

The following research hypotheses involve the relationships of leisure coping strategies and other previously reviewed variables:

H3: There is a positive and significant association between job burnout and leisure coping strategies.

H4: There is a positive and significant association between leisure involvement and leisure coping strategies.

H5: There is a positive and significant association between perceived freedom in leisure and leisure coping strategies.

H6: Perceived freedom in leisure has a significant mediating effect on the relationship between job burnout and leisure coping strategies.

H7: Leisure coping strategies have a significant mediating effect on the relationship between perceived freedom in leisure and leisure involvement.

2.3 Expatriate managers in Mainland China

Living and working in Mainland China presents unique challenges and opportunities for expatriates (Lund & Degen, 2010; **Britton, 2012; Nylander, 2016; Guo et al., 2018**). The *2016 Global Mobility Trends Survey* found that companies rated China the most challenging in family-related assignment issues (Brookfield, 2016). China was rated 49th among 67 countries by expatriates on quality of life, and 53rd on leisure options in the *2016 Expat Insider Survey Report* (InterNations GmbH, 2016). The *HSBC Expat Explorer Survey* for 2016 had China in 44th place among 45 countries for quality of life and in 42nd place for work-life balance (HSBC, 2017). There is also evidence that Mainland China has one of the highest rates of expatriate failure in the world (Lund & Degen, 2010; Ang & Tan, 2016).

Nevertheless, China was the second most popular destination for international assignments (after the USA) and the top emerging destination for international assignments in 2016 (Brookfield, 2016). Although the estimates vary widely, the number of expatriates living in China in 2010 was around 600,000, excluding people from Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, and the expatriate population is continuing to grow despite China's economic slowdown (Kaplan, 2016).

In one of the earlier studies on Western expatriate managers working in Mainland China, Selmer (1999) found that they experienced "culture shock" in their new Chinese environments. She used Oberg's (1960) definition of culture shock as "the distress experienced by the sojourner as a result of losing all the familiar signs and symbols of social interaction." In a later study by Selmer (2006), it was concluded that expatriates take longer in Mainland China and Hong Kong than in Singapore to reach acceptable performance levels.

China's reform and opening-up began more than 40 years ago in 1978. Concurrently, due to Taiwan's rising industrial labor costs, many manufacturing companies moved their production bases to Mainland China to reduce operating costs and enhance profitability. As cross-strait exchange restrictions were gradually relaxed and with China's investment environment constantly improving, the number of Taiwan enterprises investing in Mainland increased. It might be assumed, based upon shared Chinese cultural values (CCVs) (Fan, 2000) and common use of Mandarin, that Taiwan expatriate managers should adjust more rapidly and smoothly to working in Mainland China than their Western counterparts.

However, several previous studies have found maladjustment in Mainland China among expatriates with Chinese ethnicity and language skills (e.g., Selmer & Shiu, 1999; Selmer, 2002; Lo, 2005; Shih, Chiang, & Hsu, 2010). Chan, Leung, and Liang (2018), in a study of Hong Kong construction professionals posted to Mainland China, found that all of them had experienced work-related stress in the Mainland. They identified 18 stress symptoms classified into work stress, emotional stress, and physical stress. Moreover, some researchers, including Vromans, van Engen, and Mol (2013), highlight a "presumed cultural similarity paradox", suggesting that expatriates from similar cultural backgrounds to host nationals also experience difficulties with adjustment in their destination countries. For Taiwan expatriates specifically, many resigned or failed

to perform their duties before assignment expiration as they found it difficult to adapt to the social environment and job status at their residences and workplaces. One of the main reasons for resignations was the difficulty in engaging in appropriate leisure activities to cope with the pressures of various kinds in their places of residence (Lo, 2005).

It was important in conceptualizing this research to establish a linkage between expatriation and leisure and especially between leisure and expatriate success or failure. Several studies (e.g., Bhanugopan & Fish, 2006; Shortland & Cummins, 2007; Fischlmayr & Kollinger, 2010; Silbiger & Pines, 2014; Silbiger et al., 2016) have determined that expatriates particularly struggle with work-life balance. The *2016 Global Mobility Trends Survey* found that the leading reason for international assignment failures among expatriates was “family related issues” (Brookfield, 2016). Caligiuri (1997, p. 126), in measuring cross-cultural adjustment, included adapting to the “entertainment and leisure opportunities” in the country. Bhanugopan and Fish (2006) noted that expatriate failure is a persistent problem and specifically cite “available leisure activities” (p. 449) as one of the potential reasons that expatriates return early from international assignments. McGinley (2008, p. 63) found the lowest adjustment levels reported by expatriates in Russia were for health care facilities, living costs, and entertainment and recreation facilities and opportunities.

In summary, the expatriation research literature suggests that job burnout (emotional exhaustion) is a major cause of expatriate failure and that maladjustment to local environments may accompany this lack of success in the international assignment destination. Problems with work-life balance and family-related issues, including leisure activity availability and participation, may also be associated with expatriate failure and a contributor to inadequate adjustment to local conditions.

2.4 Conceptual model

The review of the expatriation and leisure research literatures demonstrated scant consideration of expatriate leisure in international assignment destinations. Inadequate attention has been paid to expatriates' intentions to participate in leisure activities to cope with job burnout and stress and their perceptions of freedom to participate. In this research,

leisure involvement was adopted as the theoretical framework to explore expatriates' levels of leisure involvement and its antecedents. Without a strong consensus on leisure involvement antecedents, a new scale of temporal-spatial involvement (LTSI) was developed and tested to fit the unique situation of expatriation. Expatriate job burnout, perceived freedom in leisure, and leisure coping strategies were used to explore the expatriates' leisure involvement (Figure 1).

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

3. Methodology

3.1. Survey questionnaire and measurement scale development

The questionnaire gathered information on the characteristics of respondents, including demographic/socio-economic details, expatriate profile, and leisure activity participation. Four scales were used for job burnout, perceived freedom in leisure, leisure coping strategies, and leisure temporal-spatial involvement (LTSI), as shown in Table 1. The job burnout scale was developed based on the work of Maslach and her colleagues (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), resulting in the *Maslach Burnout Inventory*. It had four dimensions (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, lack of personal accomplishment, and intention to leave), and consisted of 16 items. The perceived freedom in leisure scale was adapted from Iwasaki & Mannell's (2000) research on the hierarchical dimensions of leisure coping; having four dimensions (perceived competence, perceived control, needs, and depth of involvement) and 16 items. The leisure coping strategy scale was derived from Ellis & Witt (1987) in their *Leisure Diagnostic Battery*. It had three dimensions (palliative, companionship, and mood enhancement coping) and 11 items.

Until now, the concept of leisure temporal-spatial involvement has not been clearly articulated in the research literature. This study defines leisure temporal-spatial involvement (LTSI) as the ego-relevant, psychological recognition status of an individual under specific temporal-spatial conditions. LTSI is affected by external situational

factors and individual characteristics including needs and wants, values, personality, and leisure experience under specific temporal (time) and spatial (space) circumstances. The degree of leisure participation is manifested through an individual's behavior and is aroused by the psychological recognition situation. The time dimension of LTSI refers to the extent to which the individual pays attention to their leisure time and utilizes that leisure time. The spatial dimension of LTSI is the degree to which the individual takes advantage of the availability and location of leisure activity spaces.

The formulation of LTSI scale was based on the concept of behavioral involvement, and the design of questionnaire items reflected the extent of participation in and use of leisure time and spaces by Taiwanese expatriates. In-depth interviews and meetings were conducted with members of the Taiwan Enterprise Association in Guangzhou and other Taiwanese expatriates to discuss the formulation of the LTSI scale. Additionally, one of the authors worked in Taiwan-capital enterprises for more than 10 years and had a good, practical understanding of the work and lifestyles of Taiwan expatriate managers of these companies. The LTSI scale was designed specifically for the situation of this research involving expatriates, consisting of two dimensions (temporal and spatial) and comprising of 14 items.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

All 57 items for the four scale variables were measured on five-point Likert scales, with 5 as “strongly agree” and 1 as “strongly disagree.”

3.2 Selection of respondents, sample size and response rate

Taiwan expatriate managers in Taiwan-invested manufacturing companies in Guangzhou were the respondents and were selected through a combination of stratified and convenience sampling. According to an estimate from a Taiwan industry association, there are approximately 12,000 Taiwanese working in manufacturing companies in Guangzhou (Guangzhou Taiwan-Invested Enterprises Association, 2012). A total of 800 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents from January 2 to 31, 2013, with 400 being placed

respectively in the high-tech and traditional Taiwan-capital enterprises. The valid self-administered questionnaires were 394 (98.5%) and 387 (96.75%) respectively, for a total of 781 and a combined response rate of 97.63%.

3.3. Data analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) were used in this research to measure the relationships among the four scale variables (job burnout, perceived freedom in leisure, leisure coping strategies, and leisure involvement). Scale reliability was verified with Cronbach α coefficients, with values over 0.70 representing the minimum acceptable level. The higher is a Cronbach α value, the greater is the reliability of the scale and the higher is the level of internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951).

The model construction method and confirmatory factors put forward by Doll, Xia, and Torkzadeh (1994), Doll, Raghunathan, Lim, and Gupta (1995), and Jöreskog and Sörbom (1992) were applied to verify the construction of the research measurement model. Five indexes, including χ^2/df , *GFI*, *AGFI*, *RMSEA* and *CFI*, were used to evaluate the fit of the research measurement model (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996). Eight indexes, including χ^2/df , *GFI*, *AGFI*, *RMSEA*, *NFI*, *NNFI*, *CFI* and *PNFI*, were used to verify the fit of the research structural model (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Bentler, 1990, 1992; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996; Hwang, 2014).

4. Results

4.1. Characteristics of respondents

SPSS 20.0 was used for the frequency analysis of respondent characteristics. Some 88.5% were male and 88.4% were 31-50 years of age. The education levels were relatively high, with 73.8% having an academic diploma from junior colleges and above. While a majority (71.3%) were married, only 17.6% were living together with their spouses in Mainland China. This indicated that most of the married respondents were separated from their spouses for extended periods of time. Monthly incomes were mostly in the range of TWD 45,001-90,000 (78.5%). Some 37.78% were from the north of Taiwan including Taipei

City, New Taipei City, Keelung City, Taoyuan County, Hsinchu City, Hsinchu County, and Yilan County,

Some 48.3% were vice managers or managers, who were mainly at the middle or senior managerial levels of the companies. Respondents' posts were dominated by administration, marketing, manufacturing, and technology. A majority (64.4%) had 6-15 subordinates. For 79.5%, there were from 6-20 Taiwan expatriates, including themselves, in their places of work in Guangzhou. Some 27.7% had accumulated one to three years in their Guangzhou assignments, while 44.6% were in Mainland China for less than one year. These statistics indicated a relatively high turnover of Taiwan expatriate managers in Guangzhou.

Almost half (49.8%) of these managers returned to Taiwan for vacation 3-4 times per year, and 47.5% spent 21-40 days annually in Taiwan for vacation. Participation in leisure vacations (20.2%) and outdoor leisure activities (19.7%) were at relatively low levels.

4.2. Mean scores for scale variables

4.2.1. Job burnout

The mean scores for emotional exhaustion ranged from 3.6 to 4.09 (Table 2), indicating that the Taiwan expatriate managers were generally experiencing this form of burnout. The highest score was for "*Busy work makes me nervous, mentally and physically exhausted.*" The depersonalization scores were not as high, tending to be around the mid-point of the scale, at 2.92 to 3.11. Two of the four items for lack of personal accomplishment had relatively high mean scores; "*I never get positive support from supervisors in my job performance*" (4.1) and "*I cannot see any future and development in my current job*" (3.97). Again some of the mean scores for intention to leave were relatively high, and suggested disillusionment with current jobs and work-family life imbalance.

4.2.2. Perceived freedom in leisure

The mean scores for perceived leisure competence were relatively high, being in the range of 3.48 to 4.03. There were some lower scores for perceived control and especially for

“I can usually decide on the time, place and type of leisure activities” at 2.97. Leisure needs item scores ranged from 3.79 to 4.12, indicating that the expatriate managers recognized the benefits of leisure. The respondents ranked the depth of leisure involvement items positively in the range of 3.52 to 3.82.

4.2.3. *Leisure coping strategies*

The expatriate managers had scores from 3.51 to 4.24 for the 11 leisure coping strategy items, with *“I participate in leisure activities with Taiwan expatriates to cope with stress”* having the highest mean value. Generally, this showed that the respondents appreciated the stress-relieving qualities of leisure participation.

4.2.4. *Leisure involvement*

With two exceptions, the mean scores for both the temporal and spatial involvement scales were from 3.67 to 4.39. The exceptions were *“I prefer to participate in leisure activities at places where there are less Taiwan expatriates”* (3.21) and *“During my vacation allowance time, I prefer to stay here to participate in leisure activities rather than returning to Taiwan on vacation”* (2.81).

[Insert Table 2 about here]

4.3. *Scale reliability*

The Cronbach α values of the total scale and the scales for job burnout, perceived freedom in leisure, leisure coping strategies, and leisure involvement were 0.93, 0.92, 0.89, 0.9 and 0.89 respectively, demonstrating high internal consistency in the questionnaire scales.

4.4. *Verification and construction of research model*

4.4.1. *Fitting and confirmatory factor analysis of research measurement model*

The χ^2/df values of the model 4H (4 first-order factors, 1 second-order factor) were 3.6, 3.09, 2.42, and 4.58 respectively for job burnout, perceived freedom in leisure, leisure coping

strategies, and leisure involvement, which were all acceptable (Chin & Todd, 1995; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996; Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). The values of *GFI*, *AGFI*, *RMSEA* and *CFI* were >0.8 , >0.8 , <0.1 and >0.9 respectively, which all indicated good fit (MacCallum et al., 1994). In addition, all the T coefficient values, which are equal to the χ^2 value of model 3H (3 first-order factors, 1 second-order factor) divided by χ^2 value of model 4H, were 1 or very close to 1 (0.932 to 1), and this implied model 3H could be completely replaced by model 4H, making the measurement model more concise (Marsh & Hocevar, 1985). Therefore, this research used model 4H to construct the measurement models of questionnaire scales and to estimate parameters, and then to test the convergent and discriminant validity.

Convergent validity verifies the degree to which the observed variables of the measurement model belong to the same conceptual field; the better level of convergent validity, the higher are the correlations among the observed variables and the higher are the factor loading values. Square multiple correlations (SMC), composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 1998) were combined with factor loading values to evaluate the convergent validity of the measurement model. The factor loading values of first-order factors of the scales were in the range of 0.519 to 0.926, and the factor loading values of second-order factors were between 0.642 and 0.874. These results all met the threshold value for factor loading ranging from 0.50 to 0.95 suggested by Hair et al. (1998). The SMC minimum value for first-order factors of all questionnaire scales to explain second-order factors was 0.505, reaching the threshold standard, which showed their ability to explain the latent variables was acceptable on the whole (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The CR minimum value of first-order factors of all questionnaire scales was 0.655 and that of second-order factors was 0.700 (both higher than the threshold value of 0.60 according to Fornell & Larcker, 1981), which showed the observed variables had the ability of measuring latent variables and there was high internal consistency among scale attributes. The AVE minimum value of first-order factors of all questionnaire scales was 0.509 and for second-order factors was 0.544 (both higher than the threshold value of 0.50 according to Fornell & Larcker, 1981), which means the attribute concepts of questionnaire scales were represented by the questionnaire items, and the

observed variables accurately reflected the latent variables. The results of these tests showed that the measurement models of various questionnaire scales had good convergent validity.

The purpose of discriminatory validity test is to verify the degree which each of two attributes of the measurement model belong to different conceptual fields from each other. When the measurement model has high discriminatory validity, there is low correlation between attributes. According to Fornell & Larcker (1981), the determination criteria for discriminant validity is that the AVE value of any attribute must be greater than the squared value of the correlated coefficient value between paired attributes, and account for more than 50% of the comparison between AVE value and squared value. The results of the discriminant validity tests showed that the correlation coefficient values between all paired attributes were less than the rooted values of AVE, and thus the measurement models of various scales had good levels of discriminant validity.

4.4.2. Fitting analysis, construction and path parameters estimation of research structural model

The fitting values of χ^2/df , *GFI*, *AGFI*, *RMSEA*, *NFI*, *NNFI*, *CFI* and *PNFI* of the structural model were 2.762, 0.972, 0.948, 0.077, 0.934, 0.940, 0.951 and 0.759 respectively, all of them conforming to the relatively strict threshold values of $\chi^2/df < 3$ (Chin & Todd, 1995; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996; Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998), *GFI* > 0.80, *AGFI* > 0.80, *RMSEA* < 0.08 (MacCallum, Roznowski, Mar & Reith, 1994), *NFI* > 0.90, *NNFI* > 0.90 (Bentler, 1990; 1992), *CFI* > 0.90 (MacCallum, Roznowski, Mar & Reith, 1994) and *PNFI* > 0.50 (Hwang, 2014). This showed the structural model had a good fit on the whole, and further the path analysis method could be used to estimate the parameters of cause-effect relationship paths between latent variables of the structural model and explain the meanings of cause-effect relationships between latent variables.

The research structural model (the antecedent relationship path model of leisure involvement) constructed in this research and path parameter estimation results are shown in Figure 2. The parameter estimation values of cause-effect relationship paths are the standardized parameter values.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

4.5. Research hypothesis validation

According to the path analysis results of the structural model (Figure 2), research hypotheses H₁, H₂, H₃, H₅ and H₆ were verified, while H₄ and H₇ were not. The results indicate that:

- Job burnout has a significant negative correlation with perceived freedom in leisure (H₁) and a significant positive correlation with leisure coping strategies (H₃).
- Perceived freedom in leisure has a significant positive correlation with coping strategies (H₅) and leisure involvement (H₂).
- Perceived freedom in leisure negatively mediates the influence of job burnout on leisure coping strategies (H₆).
- Leisure coping strategies have no significant cause-effect relationship with leisure involvement (H₄).
- Leisure coping strategies do not have a positive and significant mediated effect on the relationship between perceived freedom in leisure and leisure involvement (H₇).

For the Taiwan expatriate managers, the total effect value of the cause-effect relationship path of the perceived freedom in the leisure antecedent factor was 0.387 (burnout → perceived freedom in leisure → leisure involvement: $0.387 = 0.714 \times (0.523 + 0.186 \times 0.103)$) reaching a significant level. The total effect value of the cause-effect relationship path of the leisure coping strategies antecedent factor was 0.053 (burnout → leisure coping strategies → leisure involvement: $0.053 = (0.645 - 0.714 \times 0.186) \times 0.103$), which was not significant. These results indicated that the influence of the cause-effect relationship through perceived freedom as a leisure involvement antecedent factor was more sensitive than through leisure coping strategies. When Taiwan expatriates were at the same level of burnout, the total effect through the influence of perceived freedom in leisure on leisure involvement was greater.

4.6. Influence analysis of cause-effect relationships

Figure 3 shows that “*I never get positive support from supervisors in my job performance*” and “*Busy work makes me nervous, mentally and physically exhausted*” were the main items influencing the cause-effect relationships between job burnout and perceived freedom in leisure and leisure coping strategies. “*Participating in leisure activities alleviates my nervous feelings*” and “*Participating in leisure activities makes me physically comfortable and relaxed*” were the most influential in the cause-effect relationships between perceived freedom in leisure and leisure coping strategies and leisure involvement. “*I participate in leisure activities with Taiwan expatriates to cope with stress*” and “*Participating in social leisure activities is the main way to cope with my stress*” had the most influence on the cause-effect relationship between leisure coping strategies and leisure involvement.

It was found that the Taiwanese expatriates were generally unwilling to engage in leisure activities within Mainland Chinese as a means of easing pressure from work. On the one hand, these expatriates regarded themselves and their Taiwan compatriots as a type of clique. On the other hand, the Mainland Chinese tend to have a perception that the Taiwanese have healthier lifestyles and leisure behavior than they do. These two opposing viewpoints may exacerbate the obstacles to interaction between the Mainland Chinese and Taiwanese expatriates. Thus, although the expatriates may perceive freedom in leisure and desire to be involved, participation in leisure activities with Chinese workmates and most of the surrounding population is not considered as a viable coping strategy.

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

5. Conclusions and implications

The main conclusion of this research is that, for Taiwan expatriate managers in Mainland China, the level of leisure involvement was mainly influenced by perceived freedom in leisure. This implies that even if Taiwan expatriates have strong intentions to cope with stress and job burnout, their actual levels of leisure involvement are low. Taiwan expatriates generally have high levels of job burnout in their Chinese assignments and it is the norm for them to work overtime. Additionally, in Guangzhou they treat the company as their homes

and are continuously on standby. These circumstances cause most Taiwan expatriate managers to be physically exhausted and emotionally distraught, and it is difficult for them to devote more time to participate in leisure activities. Only by reducing job burnout, while enhancing perceptions of freedom in leisure, will Taiwan expatriate managers in Mainland China pay more attention to leisure time and its effective use in reducing stress.

5.1. Managerial and policy implications

There is evidence that Mainland China is a very challenging expatriation destination and this research has highlighted some of the difficulties experienced there. **It is recognized that there are a variety of actors who can improve upon this undesirable situation. These include the expatriates themselves and their employers, as well as trade associations, workers' groups, government agencies on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, and the host community in Guangzhou. The employing companies need to introduce more holistic human resource management systems that give a higher priority to the physical and psychological welfare of Taiwan expatriate managers. Companies first need a better understanding of the causes of expatriate burnout. Then, careful selection and training are required pre-deployment to enhance expatriate readiness and adjustment capabilities for Mainland China. Companies should also consider providing more physical space for leisure activities and organizing programs for employee recreation and leisure.**

Governmental agencies in charge of Taiwan's affairs with Mainland China such as the Taiwan Compatriots Friendship Associations (TCFAs) and Taiwan Affairs Offices (TAOs) should work with company human resource management departments to establish effective management systems consistent with the relevant labor laws and regulations that safeguard the legal rights and interests of these Taiwan expatriate managers. In addition, Taiwan-invested enterprises must address the causes of job burnout at source and permanently reduce burnout levels to establish stronger feelings of leisure freedom and increased leisure involvement.

Part of the solution to this problem could be for Taiwan-invested companies that are

clustered in Guangzhou to collaborate in developing more diverse and healthier leisure choices and activities for expatriate managers. Urzelaia and Puig (2019) referred to this as the creation of international social capital (ISC), when studying 13 Spanish companies that were co-located in China.

While companies, associations, and government agencies can assist in addressing this issue, responsibility must also be taken by individual expatriates. The Taiwanese managers now tend to limit all their leisure activities to their dormitory areas. In the future, it is suggested that Taiwanese expatriate managers should communicate and interact more with Mainland Chinese people and find common interests and activities to pursue after work. Guo et al.'s (2018) research indicated that responsibility lies with the individual expatriate rather than their organizations in building *guanxi* (a relationship of trust) with Mainlanders. By breaking the invisible shackles of cliques and dispelling misperceptions, expatriates will be more able to establish social relationships and friendships with locals that will help them cope with work-related stress.

5.2. Research and theoretical implications.

This work contributes to the research on leisure and expatriation in several ways. It is one of the first empirical studies to examine prominent leisure concepts (freedom, coping, and involvement) within the milieu of expatriation. Moreover, a new scale for leisure involvement, expressed in temporal and spatial dimensions (LTSI), is developed to fit the specific situations faced by expatriates. The findings provide further support to the notion of the “presumed cultural similarity paradox” (Vromans, van Engen, & Mol, 2013), in that expatriates of Chinese ethnicity still had significant adjustment difficulties in Mainland China. The research again confirms the challenges of Mainland China as an expatriation destination.

6. Limitations and future research

There are limitations to this research and opportunities for further investigation based on its findings. From the conceptual and theoretical perspective, other variables could be

introduced to enhance the predictive capability of the model in terms of leisure involvement. From the individual perspective, for example, a work-life balance scale may have been appropriate since many of these managers were separated from their spouses and families, and this may have contributed to stress and burnout. Expatriates' feelings on subjective well-being (SWB) may also be worthy of inclusion (Newman, Tay, & Diener, 2014). Alienation from work (Seeman, 1967) is another personal factor that could be considered, as this is a concept depicting work that is not intrinsically rewarding. From the corporate perspective, various supportive concepts could be contemplated. For example, Liu (2009) studied Taiwan expatriates working in Mainland China, examining the relationships among perceived organizational support (POS), affective commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Selection procedures, pre-expatriation training, and mentorship are other processes that have an impact on expatriate success (Cheng & Lin, 2009; Nadja, Hansen, & Rasmussen, 2016; van der Laken et al., 2016; **Chen & Chiu, 2018**).

Another limitation of this research may be in treating all expatriates as being alike. In fact, there are several different groupings of expatriates. For example, Kang, Shen, & Benson (2017) studied non-traditional Korean expatriates in Mainland China, and these were individuals on shorter-term and more specialized assignments, whose families did not relocate with them. There are also organization-assigned (the focus of this research) and self-initiated expatriates (Cerdin & Le Pargneux, 2010; **Furusawa & Brewster, 2018; Lauring & Selmer, 2018**).

The results of this research may not be generalizable to other groups of expatriates working in Guangzhou and other parts of Mainland China, or to Taiwan and non-Chinese expatriates working abroad in different countries. This research needs to be replicated with other foreign nationals posted to China to work. **It is also recognized that this research was cross-sectional and not longitudinal, and thus does not account for work performance and leisure involvement over a longer period. Takeuchi, Li, and Wang (2019), in a longitudinal study of expatriate engineers and managers working in China, found four different change patterns in job performance depending on expatriates' prior work**

experiences.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the research findings seem to support the old proverb, “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” The Taiwan expatriate managers in this research are tipping the work-life balance much more towards work and neglecting their leisure time. They are dulling their experiences in China and this may be exacerbating the job burnout that they are feeling.

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