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# **Do Global Talent Management Programs Help To Retain Talents?**

## **A Career-Related Framework**

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## **Do Global Talent Management Programs Help To Retain Talent?**

### **A Career-Related Framework**

#### **Abstract**

Global talent management is a key success factor for multinational corporations, as investments made to attract and retain talent are enormous. However, the link between talent management practices and retention is under-researched. In this paper, we fill this research gap by proposing a conceptual framework linking global talent management practices and talent retention in multinational corporations, by exploring the role of individual careers through knowing-whom career capital and career success. We conducted a survey among talent and a control group within a multinational company, to test our framework through structural equation modeling. The main results show that talent management practices have a positive effect on talent's intention to stay and that career-related aspects are key factors in retaining this talent on a global scale. Thus, our contribution is threefold: a conceptual framework, empirical evidence, and a new literature-based TM index, which makes the perceived intensity of TM programs measurable.

**Keywords:** global talent management, career success, knowing-whom career capital, retention

## Introduction

Attracting and retaining the right talent in the right places is one of the key success factors for companies in the competitive landscape of a global economy (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). However, qualified talent is scarce, and so many employers have to cope with the so-called ‘war for talent’, a term initially coined by a group of McKinsey consultants (Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin, & Michaels, 1998; Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001). Consequently, talent management (TM) has been identified as one of the major challenges for companies and economies in many parts of the world (BCG & WFPMA, 2012).

Talent management investment, made by companies looking to attract and retain talent, is enormous. This is especially important for multinational corporations (MNCs) faced simultaneously with strong global competition and local labor market challenges when filling their key strategic positions with future leaders (Minbaeva & Collings, 2013). Economic expectations with respect to TM activities are high; for example, the Boston Consulting Group and WFPMA (2015) state that firms with strong TM are characterized by faster revenue and profit growth. However, research on the question of return on investment in the context of MNCs’ TM activities is scarce (Bethke-Langenegger, Mahler, & Staffelbach, 2011). In this present study, we attempt to assess the impact of TM programs on retention by focusing on individual talent, therefore contributing to filling the gap in the literature studying this level of analysis (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016).

We look at the retention of talent in MNCs, because this has been stated as being one of the most important aims of TM programs (Dries & Pepermans, 2008). However, even after having participated in TM programs, some talent do not feel particularly attached to their companies

(Dries, Forrier, De Vos, & Pepermans, 2014), meaning that firms might not achieve their retention goals. This raises the question as to *how* participation in a TM program in an MNC influences retention. Career practices have been studied in previous research (see, for example, Baruch & Peiperl, 2000), albeit very little within the frame of TM. While the boundaryless career (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994) and protean career (Hall, 1976) paradigms give employees their first role in their careers, recent research highlights the important part played by organizational career management practices on career success (e.g. Bolino, 2007; De Vos & Cambré, 2016). In the context of TM, career management is crucial, as individual careers have significant potential to serve the strategic purposes of organizations, because investment in organizational career management is beneficial not only for the individual, but also for organizational performance (De Vos & Cambré, 2016). Therefore, as career-related practices are at the heart of TM (Dries & Pepermans, 2008; Stahl et al., 2007), we suggest a career perspective as a primary explanation of the relationship between participation in a TM program and retention. In particular, due to the focus on the outcome variable ‘retention’, we concentrate on intra-organizational careers, which implies that talent’s interests remain in career development *within* the same organization.

The contribution of this paper is threefold. First, we suggest a conceptual framework explaining the complex relationship between TM programs and talent retention as a key performance indicator from a career perspective. Taking this approach, we investigate the outcomes of TM on the individual level. Second, we provide empirical evidence based on several sources of information, including 141 questionnaires completed by talent and a comparable control group within one MNC, as well as insights taken from several interviews with HR managers and written material. The third contribution is especially important for future quantitative TM research, because it includes a newly

developed, literature-based TM index, which makes the perceived intensity of TM programs measurable.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. First, based on a literature review, we suggest hypotheses that lead to our conceptual framework, explaining from a career perspective the relationship between TM programs and talent's intention to stay. Then we describe the methodology of our empirical investigation, present our findings and discuss them, again in light of the limitations and theoretical and managerial implications of the study. A conclusion finalizes the paper.

### **Literature review**

To investigate the impact of a TM program on the retention of its participants in an MNC, and the underlying mechanisms linking these variables, we suggest a conceptual framework by using explanatory variables from career research. These have often been related to employee retention (Ito & Brotheridge, 2005), and in the introduction we pointed out the strategic importance of career-related practices for TM. More precisely, we review the literature concerning the concepts of and relationships between global TM practices, knowing-whom career capital, career success and retention (Dries & Pepermans, 2008). A summarizing presentation of our conceptual framework concludes the theoretical part of the paper.

#### ***Global Talent Management—Definition and Practices***

As outlined above, TM is a key contributor to a firm's competitive advantage (Collings & Mellahi, 2009), and on a national as well as a global scale in the case of MNCs. The inclusive view of TM considers that all employees are talent, and therefore "TM equals HRM" (Thunnissen, Boselie, & Fruytier, 2013, p. 1749). On the contrary, the dominant, exclusive view (Beechler & Woodward,

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2009) focuses on talent as a particular segment of the workforce, namely high-performance and/or high-potential employees, who are seen as the firm's future leaders (Björkman, Ehrnrooth, Mäkelä, Smale, & Sumelius, 2013; Mäkelä, Björkman, & Ehrnrooth, 2010). Companies segment their workforce (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005) and build different talent pools according to the career stages of the individuals they identify as talent (Mäkelä, Björkman, & Ehrnrooth, 2010). These talent pools may be devoted, for example, to "early career high potential," "specialists," or "senior executives" (Stahl et al., 2007). Furthermore, employees identified as talent are valuable, as they contribute to the company's performance. Indeed, it has been shown that the upper percentile of employees contributes to 10% of the organization's productivity, and the top 5% contribute to 26% of output (O'Boyle Jr. & Aguinis, 2012).

In this paper we investigate the exclusive view of TM by focusing on a TM program established specifically for the development of young graduates (i.e. young professionals who have just started their career after graduating from their studies (see Muratbekova-Touron, Kabalina, & Festing, 2018)). The meaning of the word 'talent' is debated vividly in the literature (Gallardo-Gallardo, Dries, & González-Cruz, 2013), but following Tansley et al. (2007), we define it as those newly recruited employees expected to make a difference to organizational performance through their immediate contribution or long-term expectation of performance.

Following the strategic view on HRM (Macduffie, 1995), authors highlight the fact that TM is linked closely to contingency factors such as firms' strategies (Meyers & van Woerkom, 2014). Consequently, they may organize their TM practices based on the differential management of employees (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2106), which may lead to a competitive advantage (Stahl et al., 2007). We follow herein the definition posited by Vaiman, Scullion & Collings (2012, p. 926), characterizing global TM as "all organizational activities for the purpose of attracting,

selecting, developing, and retaining the best employees in the most strategic roles [...] on a global scale". As a consequence, for the purpose of this study, global TM is defined as a set of HR practices intended to support the building of a company's pipeline for key and strategic roles on a global scale (Al Ariss, Cascio, & Paauwe, 2014).

There is no exhaustive list of global TM practices in the literature. However, Stahl et al. (2007) propose an extensive inventory of TM best practices, used by top-performing MNCs and based on data collected in 37 companies. They are listed in three different categories. The first category, recruitment and staffing, includes, for instance, highly selective hiring and focuses on values and cultural fit. The second, training and development, among others, encompasses promotion-from-within, continuous assessment of training needs, and other career-management practices. Finally, the last category focuses on retention management and includes, for example, senior management attention and work-life balance practices. These best practices are found in many multinational companies, as they tend to standardize their TM practices globally; however, the TM system needs to be aligned and consistent internally (Stahl et al., 2012). Whereas some TM practices may be offered to all employees, since they may overlap with regular HR practices, special attention is given to those identified as talent (Thunnissen, Boselie, & Fruytier, 2013b), who will be more exposed to TM practices than other employees of the MNC.

### ***Talent Retention as an Outcome Variable***

There is consensus on the importance of talent retention because of the valuable and rare competencies of talent addressed in the exclusive approach to TM (Björkman et al., 2013). Employee retention involves preventing the voluntary turnover of employees (Sheridan, 1992). One of the strongest predictors of actual turnover is turnover intention (Bluedorn, 1982; Griffeth,



Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Michaels & Spector, 1982), so by taking measures to avoid turnover intention and, eventually, turnover as a whole, companies aim at a return on investment (Cerdin & Brewster, 2014) for costly TM programs (Dries, 2013).

First, career development is at the heart of TM activities (Dries & Pepermans, 2008), and previous research has shown that career development activities negatively influence an individual's intention to leave (Ito & Brotheridge, 2005). If they are identified as talent, they are likely to be rewarded adequately, but as they cannot be certain they will be identified as such in another company, they are supposed to demonstrate a lower intention to quit their employer, in order to leverage this asset (Dries et al., 2014). Of course, this may also depend on the willingness to take risks—one characterization of someone's personality—, as personality traits are an important factor influencing any intention to resign (Zimmerman, 2008). However, the study by Björkman et al. (2013) confirms that employees who think they have been identified as talent by their company indeed have a lower intention of leaving than those who think they have not been identified accordingly. In line with the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), employees may reciprocate their companies' investment in them through attitudes or behaviors (Gelens, Dries, Hofmans, & Pepermans, 2013) such as the intention to stay (Björkman, Ehrnrooth, Mäkelä, Smale, & Sumelius, 2013). Indeed, the “talent deal” rests on the psychological contract between companies, and talents can enjoy retention as a consequence, in the form of a reciprocal exchange (King, 2016). In the case of a fulfilled psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989), talents may have a lower intention to quit (Festing & Schäfer, 2014). Therefore, by identifying and developing employees as talent, organizations may increase their chances of retaining these high-profile employees (De Boeck, Meyers, & Dries, 2018). In this case, following the social exchange and psychological contract theories, the actual perceptions of TM practices are key to generating employees' attitudes and

behaviors. We conclude that employees who have been identified as talent, are aware of this recognition, and will demonstrate high intentions to stay in their organization:

*Hypothesis H1: The perceived intensity of global TM practices has a positive influence on employees' intention to stay.*

### ***The Role of Career Success in Talent Management and Retention***

The concept of career success can be defined as positive psychological and work-related outcomes accumulated as a result of one's work experiences (Seibert & Kraimer, 2001), or "the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person's work experiences over time" (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005, p. 179). Career success is usually measured through its two sub-concepts, namely objective career success and subjective career success (Khapova, Arthur, Wilderom, Gunz, & Peiperl, 2007).

Objective career success is composed of various elements that can be objectively assessed and measured (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995), such as "publicly observable positions, situations and status" (Arthur et al., 2005). Common examples are salary progression or numbers of promotions (Heslin, 2005). Subjective career success relates to the personal perception of one's career (Arthur et al., 2005), i.e. to one's own reflections and assessment dimensions (Cao, Hirschi, & Deller, 2012). It is often measured through career satisfaction (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005) or job satisfaction (Heslin, 2005). These own-referent perspectives may be complemented by other referent criteria, for example the comparison of one's own achievements with those of peers (Heslin, 2003).

Career success may be influenced by career management practices (Ng et al., 2005), which are core to TM (Dries & Pepermans, 2008; Stahl et al., 2007). Indeed, previous research has shown that

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employees identified as talent benefit from more career-management practices than those who have not been identified as such (Dries & Pepermans, 2008), while high-potential employees have greater job security, advance their careers more quickly than their peers, and enjoy a more successful career in terms of pay and promotions than other employees (Dries & Pepermans, 2008). Further research shows that talent still values traditional intra-organizational careers (Dries, Van Acker, & Verbruggen, 2012), including increases in hierarchical status or salary. There is a trend toward the individualization of career management, with particular practices aligned with given employee segments (De Vos & Cambré, 2016). Talent management often entails career sponsorship, which has been proven to be related to career success (Mäkelä et al., 2010). The experience that talent pick up in terms of practices such as performance management enhances their career success (Tymon, Stumpf, & Doh, 2010), and research on talent management and careers shows that these employees experience more successful careers, even when attributed to the Pygmalion effect (Swales & Blackburn, 2016) and not only to adequate talent identification and development (Stahl et al., 2007). Therefore, we expect that employees who benefit from TM practices will be satisfied with their careers within the organization and achieve higher objective career success. This hypothesis may have some exceptions, especially if talented employees' expectations are not met, or if they perceive a psychological contract breach (Festing & Schäfer, 2014). Talents often expect career support when they are identified as such by their organization, and they may be disappointed and dissatisfied if this is not the case, such as in the example of poor communication regarding TM programs (Dries & De Gieter, 2014). As subjective career success relies on career satisfaction, in some cases being designated as a talent may entail raised expectations (Feild & Harris, 1991) and result in career dissatisfaction in the case of incongruence between the perception of TM practices and the intention of the organization (Sonnenberg, van

Zijderveld, & Brinks, 2014). Following the two lines of argument with respect to subjective and objective career success, we propose the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis H2a: The perceived intensity of global TM practices has a positive influence on objective career success.*

*Hypothesis H2b: The perceived intensity of global TM practices has a positive influence on subjective career success.*

While it is hypothesized that global TM practices have a positive impact on career success, we also assume that—objectively as well as subjectively—it is related to talent retention. For example, a study among public school teachers revealed that satisfaction with pay is negatively related to the intention to quit (Curall, Towler, Judge & Kohn, 2005); furthermore, salary satisfaction has been found to be negatively related to turnover intention (Luna-Arocas & Camps, 2007). More specifically, Bolino (2007) proposes that, in the case of expatriates, greater intra-organizational objective career success leads to lower turnover. A quantitative study among expatriates shows that career advancement (measured through promotions) does actually lead to a lower intention to quit the company (Kraimer, Shaffer and Bolino, 2009). Similarly, Hausknecht et al. (2009) found that, relative to low performers, high performers are more likely to stay with a company, because of promotion opportunities. As high performance is one of the most widespread factors in talent identification (Mäkelä et al., 2010), and promotions represent a main feature of objective career success (Heslin, 2005), we propose that:

*Hypothesis H3a: Objective career success has a positive influence on employees' intention to stay.*

Measuring subjective career success usually takes into account job satisfaction (Heslin, 2005). Therefore, in our argumentation we draw on the evidence that job satisfaction influences employee turnover intention (Griffeth et al., 2000; Lambert, Hogan, & Barton, 2001; Tett & Meyer, 1993). More specifically, employees who leave a company demonstrate lower job satisfaction levels than those who stay (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974), and job satisfaction has been found to influence negatively the turnover intention/withdrawal cognition of employees (Tett & Meyer, 1993). The higher the job level, the more job satisfaction plays a role in an employee's intention to stay with a company (Hausknecht et al., 2009). As a consequence, we propose the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis H3b: Subjective career success has a positive influence on employees' intention to stay.*

### ***Talent management, knowing-whom career capital, and career success***

The theory of career capital (DeFillippi & Arthur, 1994) has been particularly helpful in analyzing careers, in that it views the employee as a career capitalist, who accumulates three kinds of capital: knowing-why, knowing-how, and knowing-whom. As Nijs et al. (2014) point out, the relational aspects of TM deserve further attention. Previous qualitative research has shown that out of the three types of career capital, knowing-whom accumulation occurring through TM programs is especially crucial to encouraging employees to pursue an intra-organizational career (Bonneton, 2019; Bozionelos, 2003). This notion is in line with the results of studies investigating the relationship between TM and networks. According to Mäkelä et al. (2010), employees working at a headquarters or on global projects enjoy more visibility and are therefore more likely to be selected as talent. Thus, centrality in the company's network is associated with a higher probability

of being identified in this regard (Mäkelä et al., 2010). Other research recommends taking network positions into account explicitly when identifying key talent (Whelan, 2011), because being well-connected within an organization is valuable for the organization itself. This discussion is reflected in the call to build global talent pools in MNCs, in order to develop and maintain networks, and to promote the exchange of knowledge on the global scale (Farndale, Scullion, & Sparrow, 2010).

Therefore, in this paper, we focus on knowing-whom career capital, which includes the “attachments, relationships, reputation, sources of information and mutual obligations that we gather as we pursue our careers” (Inkson & Arthur, 2001, p. 51). These links may come from a professional life inside the organization (e.g. colleagues, bosses, peers, mentors) or outside (e.g. suppliers, customers, consultants). In the case of talent retention, intra-organizational knowing-whom is particularly relevant (Dickmann et al., 2016).

TM can contribute to the development of knowing-whom career capital, for example through job rotation, frequent job changes, expatriation, as well as middle-management involvement and senior attention (Stahl et al., 2007). Expatriation, for example, has been found to enable the building of strong ties within the organization (Mäkelä, 2007). Therefore, we propose that employees identified as talent and exposed to these practices will be better prepared to build a strong internal network and thus reinforce their knowing-whom career capital:

*Hypothesis H4: Global TM practices have a positive influence on knowing-whom career capital.*

Mellahi and Collings (2010) call for a stronger focus on the role of elites’ networks in their careers. Indeed, there is already some evidence on the impact of networks, or in our conceptualization of knowing-whom career capital, on careers and career success. For example, Arthur, Claman, and

DeFillippi (1995) find that the accumulation of knowing-whom enables career progression through internal contacts and sponsors. Moreover, network structures have an impact on social resources, which in turn have a positive effect on both objective and subjective career success through access to information, resources, and career sponsorship (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). Claussen et al. (2014) propose that a manager's network size will have a positive effect on the odds of being promoted, in that large information networks promote an employee's upward mobility within an organization (Podolny & Baron, 1997). Moreover, internal network development related to mentoring, such as sponsorship, exposure, visibility, coaching, and protection, has a positive effect on objective career success (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004), and there is evidence that career-related mentoring also has a positive effect on subjective career success (Allen et al., 2004). Consequently, we propose the two following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis H5a: Knowing-whom career capital has a positive influence on objective career success.*

*Hypothesis H5b: Knowing-whom career capital has a positive influence on subjective career success.*

### ***Conceptual Framework***

Based on the previous literature review, and to sum up our hypotheses, we propose the following conceptual framework (Figure 1) for investigating the relationships between global TM practices, knowing-whom career capital, career success, and employees' intention to stay.

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 Insert Figure 1 about here  
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## Method

### *Sample and procedure*

Our study represents a single case study of a global TM program run by a multinational company headquartered in North America. The program was aimed at graduates (around 28 to 30 people per year), hired through a very selective recruitment process. During this interdisciplinary and international 18-month program, participants experienced three job rotations across three different countries and in three different departments, whilst they also benefited from intensive training seminars and coaching. It is important to mention at this juncture that the organization was in crisis at the time of data collection, an issue which will be elaborated on further in the discussion section.

This study is based on several sources of information, through which we achieve data triangulation. First, we received detailed written information on the talent management program and its implications directly from the manager of the program. Second, we conducted four informal interviews with the program manager and another HR manager, in order to gain more in-depth knowledge and details on specificities inside the organization. We used this information to develop an online questionnaire presented in the English language. Participation was voluntary and confidential, and even though English was not the native language for most participants, all of them had a good command thereof. Whilst the selected target group of the investigation was informed about the study by the employing organization, invitations to complete the questionnaire were sent out directly by the research team. The sample is split into two groups: Talent and a control group. Those individuals in the talent group were all former participants of the aforementioned global TM program, whilst the control group was composed of individuals of a similar age and with a similar



educational background. Employees from the control group had not participated in the global TM program.

Those identified and invited to participate in this research as talent were aware of the fact that they were being considered as such (they were all alumni of the TM program). Individuals in the control group, although highly qualified as well, did not undergo the same highly selective recruitment process as the program's participants. By adopting this approach, we were able to look at the actual effects of the global TM program rather than rely on self-reporting or perceptual measures to gauge to whether or not somebody was a talent (Gelens, Dries, Hofmans, & Pepermans, 2015).

The questionnaire was mainly identical for both groups; however, a few additional questions, specifically about the global TM program, were aimed exclusively at the talent group. We invited 270 individuals to participate in our study, and we achieved an overall response rate of 52.59% during the nine-week data collection period in summer 2016. 142 employees responded: 101 respondents were from the talent group, yielding a response rate of 53.43%, and 41 individuals from our control group responded, achieving a response rate of 50.62%. Following the rationale of our theoretical framework, the focus of this study was on individuals who were still working for the organization when the data were collected. Therefore, we excluded 14 completed questionnaires from employees who had left the organization. These were not included in the statistical analysis of the model but enabled data triangulation and further analysis regarding actual retention. After excluding one case of the talent group due to extreme values only, our final sample size consisted of 127 completed questionnaires from employees still working in the company. Values were missing completely at random, and the majority of missing values per item remained under 5%, with none exceeding 10%. All missing values were substituted with the expectation

maximization method, using the SPSS statistical software package. The exception was gender, which was substituted using the hot deck procedure (Andridge & Little, 2010).

In total, 30.70% (31.03% talent group, 30.00% control group) of the participants in the final sample were female. The respondents had an average age of 30.54 (28.85 talent group, 34.22 control group), and on average they represented 1.11 (1.12 talent group, 1.10 control group) of nationalities, spoke 2.66 (2.83 talent group, 2.30 control group) languages fluently, and were on foreign assignments in 1.50 (1.89 talent group, 0.67 control group) countries. They were located in 15 different countries in which the company has subsidiaries.

## ***Measures***

### *Global Talent Management*

To date, global TM has not been measured quantitatively. Inspired by the strategic HRM literature, we therefore developed a new index and generated 16 items based on the study by Stahl et al. (2007), as the authors propose an inventory of the best practices found in 37 MNCs. Each item represents a selected TM practice (Stahl et al., 2007), focusing on talent attraction, development, and retention. The items were measured on a rating scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (to a very high extent).

Practice bundles, or high-performance work systems, are usually assessed by wording the item neutrally (e.g. “Selection involves screening many job candidates” (Takeuchi, Lepak, Wang & Takeuchi, 2007: 1037) or “Very extensive efforts are made in selection” (Sun, Aryee & Law, 2007:576)), and they are thus knowledge-based. Since talent is “at the heart of the TM system” (King, 2015, p.279), we decided to measure *the perceived intensity of TM practices* and worded the items accordingly (see the appendix for the full set of items). This resulted in variations in the

levels on which we measured the practices (e.g. knowledge-based and behavioral). However, this does not interfere with the decision to combine these practices into an index, because by capturing the individuals' subjective perceptions of TM practices, we avoid possible gaps if practices are offered by the organization but not used or known about by talent (Piening, Baluch, & Ridder, 2014). Additionally, we assume that an organization's TM practices are driven by HR strategy (King, 2015) and are therefore aligned with its unique values and manner of leadership (Stahl et al., 2007). This should result in internal consistency, in which practices reinforce each other (Kooj et al., 2014), even though they may not be equally as important (Monks & Loughnane, 2006).

In accordance with the methodological procedure combining HR practices into bundles, we collected these practices into an additive index (Macduffie, 1995; Wright, Gardner, & Moynihan, 2003; Youndt, Snell, Dean, & Lepak, 1996) rather than a multiplicative index, which is the second option for creating a bundle or system of practices. We decided to take this approach because not all TM practices may be present at the same time in a company (Stahl et al., 2012). The additive approach, which is "conceptually and empirically better than a multiplicative approach to creating HR systems because it does not reduce the index value to zero if a single HR practice is absent from a system" (Youndt et al., 1996, p. 849), takes this point into consideration. Moreover, the additive approach, which is the conventional slant in the literature on HR bundles (Ng & Dastmalchian, 2011), does not interfere with the distribution properties (MacDuffie, 1995).

In order to validate the bundle of TM practices, we performed a reliability analysis (MacDuffie, 1995), which resulted in a satisfactory Cronbach's alpha of .81, thereby reinforcing the decision to form an index with the TM practices. For this purpose, we followed the methodology (Macduffie, 1995; Wright et al., 2003) and dummy-coded the items so that a rating from 1 to 3 was substituted by a 0, meaning the respondent did not enjoy this practice. A rating from 4 to 7 was substituted by a 1, meaning the respondent did enjoy this practice. Thereafter, the mean was calculated, which

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resulted in an index ranging from 0 to 1. The closer one is to 0, the less that person enjoyed the practices, and vice versa. Therefore, the index represents the intensity with which one is exposed to TM practices, and as these may overlap with HR practices, this index can be used for both the talent and the control groups. In the questionnaire, these practices were declared as “HR practices” to the respondents, in order to keep the wording identical across both groups.

### *Knowing-whom*

We used the three-item scale proffered by Eby, Butts, and Lockwood (2003) to measure the intra-organizational network of the participants, an example item of which was “I am well connected within the organization.” Respondents provided their answers using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The factor structure in the exploratory factor analysis confirmed the unidimensionality of the construct, and the scale proved to be reliable with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of .90.

### *Subjective career success*

We operationalized this construct using the career satisfaction scale provided by Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley (1990). This five-item scale was measured using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). An example item was “I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my goals for income.” In addition, we completed the scale with one item from Abele & Wiese (2008), which captures the “other-referent career success,” as suggested by Heslin (2005): “Compared to your colleagues, how successful do you think your career development has been so far?” Respondents could answer on a seven-point rating scale ranging from 1 (less successful) to 7 (more successful). The factor structure in the exploratory factor analysis was unidimensional, and the scale yielded an alpha coefficient of .92.

### *Objective career success*

This variable was measured through the respondents' salary increase percentage since starting their career with the organization. This measure helps compare data from several countries. Other common items such as number of promotions or managerial level (Dries, Pepermans, Hofmans, & Rypens, 2009) did not enable international comparisons, as countries may differ substantially "in terms of power structures, taxation systems, economic and social stratification, markers of status, and norms of saving" (Heslin, 2005, p. 115). This single-item measurement is still deemed effective, since predictive validity does not suffer compared to multi-item constructs (Bergkvist & Rossiter, 2007).

### *Employees' intention to stay*

Intention to stay was measured with the three-item turnover intention scale devised by Björkman et al. (2013). An example item was "I intend to remain with the organization for the near future," and respondents could answer on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). We reverse-coded the results to decipher the intention to stay. The scale measuring was unidimensional in the exploratory factor analysis and yielded an alpha coefficient of .86.

### *Control variables*

We included several control variables in our analysis, namely gender, age, whether or not the respondents have children, educational level, the number of months of international experience, and affective commitment.

Indeed, in earlier research, gender has been found to have an influence on career success (Abele & Wiese, 2008), and this may go hand in hand with family responsibilities (whether or not the

respondents have children) (Kirchmeyer, 2006; Valcour & Ladge, 2008). Age is also likely to affect career success, which may also be affected by international experience (Biemann & Braakmann, 2013; Schworm et al., 2015). Furthermore, educational level was found to influence career success in a study by Ng et al. (2005), so we controlled for that variable as well. Further research showed that education, children, and age are antecedents of turnover intention, which is why we controlled for these relationships, too (Griffeth et al., 2000). Moreover, we considered gender- and age-relevant control paths for knowing-whom, since experience in networking comes with age, and men may have better networking capabilities than women.

Lastly, we controlled for affective organizational commitment, because the lack thereof is found to be a predictor of either the intention to leave an organization or retention (Amato & Herzfeldt, 2008; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Loi, Hang-Yue, & Foley, 2006; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991). Moreover, affective commitment is one of three components of organizational commitment, and it is defined as an “emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization” (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p. 67). The focus shall rest on this kind of commitment, because it includes the willingness of the employee to remain with a company (Allen & Meyer, 1990). We measured this construct using an eight-item scale from Allen & Meyer (1990), whereby respondents could answer on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). An example item was “The organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.” In order to ensure the minimum of discriminant validity, we included items in the exploratory factor analysis together with the main study variables. We had to exclude two items, due to severe cross-loadings.

In addition, we controlled for one path in our model, due to its previous appearance in research, namely the influence of knowing-whom on employee retention (Friedman & Holtom, 2002; Moynihan & Pandey, 2007).

### *Analysis*

In a first step, we ran exploratory factor analyses (EFAs) using principal axis factoring with Kaiser normalization and promax rotation for the multi-item constructs used in our study. Additionally, we tested the study variables with regards to multicollinearity, but we could not identify any variance inflation factors above the threshold of 3 (Zuur, Ieno, & Elphick, 2010). Second, the resulting constructs were checked for reliability and validity in a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS. To ensure identifiability of the measurement model, the error variance of the single-indicator latent variables 'TM' and 'Objective Career Success' were fixed to 0. Even though the data were not perfectly normally distributed in a multi-variety manner, we deployed maximum likelihood estimation, since it is highly robust against non-normally distributed data (Reinartz, Haenlein, & Henseler, 2009).

Although we used several sources of information for collecting data, we employed two statistical approaches in order to evaluate the possibility of common method variance in our data. In the CFA, we first employed Harman's single-factor test (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), but the model fit was extremely weak (CMIN/DF= 9.63, CFI= .29, IFI= .29; RMSEA= .32; SRMR= .27), indicating that there was no severe common method bias present. Second, we used a common latent factor technique in the confirmatory factor analysis (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Whilst including this common latent factor, paths from this factor to the study items were restrained, whereby their unstandardized regression weights equaled .04. Squaring this value, we found that

there was a common method variance of just 0.18% (Eichhorn, 2014). In addition, we compared the factor loadings of the respective construct items, with and without the unrestricted common latent factor. The difference between factor loadings did not exceed .14. Altogether, this confirmed that there was no severe common method bias present. In addition, we reduced social desirability bias by ensuring strict respondent confidentiality (Richman, Kiesler, Weisband, & Drasgow, 1999).

As a second step in the CFA, we divided the sample into two groups (a talent and a control), whereby the error terms of two items were co-varied, since they were conceptually quite similar to each other and showed high modification indices. We restrained all paths in both groups, in order to check how the model fitted with these identity restrictions compared to the CFA without these restrictions. The model fit across these models did not worsen by more than .01. Therefore, the measurement model proved to be invariant on a configural, metric, and scalar level (Weiber & Mühlhaus, 2014), thereby allowing us to compare the talent and control groups.

Third, we used structural equation modeling to test our conceptual framework, since it has the advantage of testing all hypothesized paths simultaneously, whilst it also controls for measurement errors (Weiber & Mühlhaus, 2014).

## Results

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations of and between the study variables. Although it is noteworthy that there are a few correlations higher than 0.60, these do not jeopardize further analysis, since (a) the correlations are still considered moderate (Weiber & Mühlhaus, 2014, p.15) and (b) the discriminant validity of the constructs is given.



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Insert Table 1 about here  
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### ***Exploratory factor analysis***

As reported for each measure, the unidimensionality of the constructs was ensured, and a common EFA revealed that all items were loading on their respective factor without severe cross-loadings.

### ***Confirmatory factor analysis***

In the confirmatory factor analysis, all factor loadings significantly differed from zero and were above .58, while composite reliabilities were clearly above the threshold of .60. Convergent validity is given, with the average variances extracted besitting above the threshold of .50, and by fulfilling the Fornell-Larcker criterion, discriminant validity is also provided. The model fit of this measurement model was satisfactory (see Table 3), and thus the hypothesized factor structure resulting from the EFA is supported. The factor loadings, average variances extracted, and composite reliabilities of each multi-item construct are documented in Table 2.

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Insert Table 2 about here  
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Whilst splitting the sample into two groups, the composite reliabilities, and convergent and discriminant validities, remained above the thresholds across both groups. The model fit slightly decreased in comparison to the CFA across the full sample (see Table 3).

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Insert Table 3 about here  
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### ***Hypothesized model***

Figures 2 and 3 show the conceptual model, including the standardized regression coefficients and their significance, for each hypothesized path across both the talent and the control group. By doing a chi square difference test in AMOS, we found that the model was significantly different across both groups ( $\chi^2 = 83.69$ ;  $df = 48$ ;  $p = 0.00$ ), which means that we may compare the hypotheses across them. The model fit of the structural model was satisfactory (Table 3).

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 Insert Figures 2 and 3 about here  
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First, we hypothesized a positive influence of the perceived intensity of global TM practices on employees' intention to stay. This hypothesis was supported for the talent group ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $p = .07$ ) but not for the control group ( $\beta = -.27$ ,  $p = .25$ ). Given that the path was significant on a 90% confidence level in the talent group, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Hypothesis 2a predicted a positive relationship between the perceived intensity of global TM practices and objective career success, which the significant coefficient ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $p = .02$ ) confirms. Contrasting this to the control group, it became apparent that this relationship was not significant ( $\beta = .24$ ,  $p = .11$ ), which strengthens the confirmation of Hypothesis 2a.

Next, we hypothesized in Hypothesis 2b the positive influence of the perceived intensity of global TM practices on subjective career success. With a coefficient of  $\beta = .55$  ( $p = .00$ ) in the talent group, this hypothesis is supported. In the control group, this path is also significant ( $p = .00$ ), and a coefficient of  $\beta = .74$  evenly supports this hypothesis in the control group.

Next, we anticipated that objective career success, on the one hand, and subjective career success on the other are related positively to employees' intention to stay (Hypotheses 3a and 3b, respectively). Contrary to our expectations, we found a significant negative relationship between objective career success and employees' intention to stay in the talent group ( $\beta = -.19, p = .05$ ), which disproves hypothesis 3a. In the control group, we did not find a significant relationship ( $\beta = .00, p = .99$ ). As theorized, the positive relationship between subjective career success and employees' intention to stay held true in the talent group ( $\beta = .38, p = .00$ ) but not in the control group ( $\beta = .29, p = .25$ ). Hypothesis 3b was therefore supported.

The positive influence of TM on knowing-whom, theorized in Hypothesis 4, was supported in the talent group ( $\beta = .32, p = .00$ ). In the control group, on the other hand, this relationship was not supported ( $\beta = .21, p = .19$ ), which provides additional strength to the validity of Hypothesis 4.

We posit a positive impact of knowing-whom on objective career success in Hypothesis 5a, and subjective career success in Hypothesis 5b. Hypothesis 5a was supported neither in the talent group ( $\beta = .15, p = .14$ ) nor in the control group ( $\beta = .11, p = .48$ ). With a coefficient of  $\beta = .32$  and a significance level of  $p = .000$ , Hypothesis 5b, on the other hand, could be confirmed in the talent group. However, unexpectedly, the control group also showed significant results ( $\beta = .23, p = .04$ ), whereby it could be observed that the effect was stronger in the talent group. This strengthens the support for Hypothesis 5b.

In the model, several of the included control variables had a significant effect: Age on salary (talent group:  $\beta = .41, p = .00$ ; control group:  $\beta = .38, p = .06$ ), affective commitment on retention (talent group:  $\beta = .41, p = .00$ ; control group:  $\beta = .63, p = .00$ ), educational level on subjective career success (talent group:  $\beta = .18, p = .02$ ), gender on knowing-whom (control group:  $\beta = -.31, p =$

.07), gender on subjective career success (control group:  $\beta = -.22$ ,  $p = .05$ ), and the path between knowing-whom and retention (talent group:  $\beta = -.23$ ,  $p = .02$ ).

### Discussion

Acknowledging the importance of retention as a performance indicator of TM (Dries & Pepermans, 2008), we investigated the effects of participation in an MNC's TM program on the retention of its participants and the role of other factors from a career perspective. Our results confirm that the perceived intensity of TM practices has a direct positive effect on talent's (but not on the control group's employees') intention to stay. These results are in line with previous findings by Björkman et al. (2013), in that those who have been identified as talent have lower intentions to quit than those employees who have not been identified in this manner. In line with Lee and Bruvold (2003), we argue that talent feels an obligation to 'pay back' their employer for providing them with development opportunities to boost their careers, in line with the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the psychological contract theory (Rousseau, 1989). Employees designated as talents reciprocate their perception of the company's investment in them by demonstrating a higher intention to stay (Björkman et al., 2013; Festing & Schäfer, 2014; King, 2016).

We measured statistically the intention to stay of the talent and the control groups, which is not an exact equivalent of retention but an antecedent (Bluedorn, 1982). However, intention to stay is indispensable for measuring the actual link between TM practices and a particular individual behavioral intention that might lead to retention (Steel & Ovalle, 1984). Interestingly, the company, which was the subject of our case study, provided us with access to employees who had quit after having participated in the talent management program, thus enabling us to address actual retention next to intention to stay. As explained, we could not include the responses of these persons in the

SEM model, as the focus of our main quantitative study was on organizational career management, and therefore we needed to measure the intentions of employees still working in the company. However, in addition to our conceptual framework, investigating this target group provided us with interesting insights with respect to the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of actual turnover (as compared to the intention to stay, measured in the group of talent still working in the company). First, with respect to the quantitative dimension, we observed an overall turnover rate in the group of talent: around 24% of the participants in the program left the company at some stage thereafter (started in 2008). Looking at the cumulative turnover rate over the years of the program, there seems to be a rather low to average turnover. Since the first cohort completed the program in 2010, the annual turnover rate was on average between two and five individuals from the total talent group, consisting of annually cumulating cohorts of around 30 talents (yearly overall talent turnover rate according to information provided by the program manager: Approximately 3.5-13.5%). This number increased in line with the intensity of the company crisis by up to 10-15 individuals (approximately 8-9.50%). Although actual turnover rates are highly dependent on various factors, not only in the internal, but also in the external environment of the company (Griffeth, Hom, and Gaertner, 2000), this seems to be below average turnover rates, which are estimated at around 13% per year in 2014, for example, for the European Union, where most of the talent worked. This was measured by identifying the percentage of newly established employment relationships (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2016). In addition, it has to be considered that the employing company had been experiencing financial difficulties since 2015, and as the talents knew they were highly valued—by being selected as such (Lewis & Heckman, 2006)—they may have decided in these uncertain times to join a competitor. This might also be the reason for the higher number of individuals leaving compared to those employed by a more prosperous company.

Moreover, these financial difficulties led to restructuring the organization, which cost a small  
Bonneton, D., Schworm, S. K., Festing, M., & Muratbekova-Touron, M. (2022). Do global talent management programs help to retain talent? A career-related framework. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 33(2), 203-238.

amount of program alumni their jobs. Second, concerning the qualitative dimension of actual turnover, we were interested in the reasons why the designated talent quit the company, which we measured using the 17-item scale provided by Maertz & Kmitta (2012). We received 15 complete responses as well as further comments: “Wanted better opportunity for advancement/growth” was the first reason for quitting (53% of responses), whereas “Management problems/issues,” “Wanted life or career change,” and “Wanted different/better job tasks at company” scored second ex-aequo (40% of responses). Moreover, better job offers from other organizations acted as a pull factor for talent. Although these data come from a small sample and cannot be interpreted by sophisticated statistical methods, they nevertheless add to our insights and point to the fact that career and development issues are key in talent management and that there are crucial expectations among talent on which organizations should focus, in order to retain this valuable resource.

More specifically, as expected, our findings show that global TM practices have a positive impact on both objective and subjective career success of talent. Interestingly, though, the perceived intensity of TM practices also had a positive effect herein on the subjective (but not objective) career success of the control group. We explain this fact by drawing a parallel with organizational sponsorship factors, detailed in the study by Ng et al. (2005), which predict career success, represent the extent to which organizations offer special support to employees to ease their career success, and comprise career sponsorship (senior-level managers’ attention), supervisor support, and training and skill development opportunities. The TM practices proposed in the TM program of the investigated MNC include more practices than those that are included in the organizational sponsorship concept. Thus, the extent to which talent benefit from TM practices is greater than for the control group. While the encompassing approach in the investigated TM program does indeed increase the career success (objective and subjective) of talent, the narrower scope of practices that

are still applied to all employees in our sample is not enough to increase objective career success, though it is sufficient enough to raise the subjective career success of the control group employees. This effect may also be associated with employees feeling a certain amount of obligation to an employer for providing them with career development practices, even if not participating in the investigated TM program (Lee & Bruvold, 2003). This could be explained by the fact that the psychological contract may be stronger regarding development practices (whatever the employee status), as recent research has shown that employees place a stronger emphasis on intrinsic rewards (including career development) than on extrinsic rewards (including salary) (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). This confirms the salient role of intrinsic rewards as key elements in talent retention (Tymon et al., 2010). Moreover, subjective career success measures how employees experience their success subjectively (Abele & Spurk, 2009), and consequently it seems logical that the more they perceive that they are benefitting from TM practices, the more they feel appreciated—and thus the more satisfied they feel about their career success, regardless of whether or not they may be considered as talent. We also observed that the relationship between the perceived intensity of global TM practices and subjective career success is stronger in the control group than it is in the talent group. This may seem a surprising finding; however, since talent are aware of the distinctiveness of their status and receive a lot of support from their organization in terms of TM practices for career development, their expectations regarding career success may be much higher (Feild & Harris, 1991), and so career satisfaction starts at a higher level. Hence, they may not feel satisfied as quickly as employees who do not receive this special attention (Dries et al., 2014) and may be more tempted to quit (Trank, Rynes, & Bretz Jr., 2002). This may be strengthened by the fact that negative perceptions of practices by employees have a greater impact on attitudes and behaviors than positive perceptions do (Ng & Feldman, 2014).

The results of this study also add to our knowledge on the predictors of career success, proposing two additional predictors: The perceived intensity of TM practices and knowing-whom career capital. The meta-analysis by Ng et al. (2005) showed that the predictors of the two distinct constructs, namely objective and subjective career success, are different for each construct—a notion which is confirmed by our study. While TM practices have a positive impact on both constructs, knowing-whom has a positive impact on subjective but not objective career success. The positive impact of knowing-whom on subjective career success was also found in the control group. This may be surprising at first, but knowing-whom career capital is not only developed through the perceived intensity of TM practices; it is built through meeting people who may be useful enhancers of their career (Haslberger & Brewster, 2009). Building social capital through networking takes place on the individual level (Dickman & Doherty, 2010; Eby, Butts & Lockwood, 2003), and the organizational facilitation of such through TM practices, for instance, is not a necessary condition to acquiring knowing-whom. Therefore, its positive effects can be enjoyed by every individual who invests into this kind of career capital.

Furthermore, both constructs—objective and subjective career success—may also have a different impact on the retention of employees. Our findings show that while subjective career success has a positive effect on talent's intention to stay (but not for control group employees), surprisingly, objective career success has a negative relationship in this regard (i.e. there is no significant relationship in the control group). This is contrary to previous findings in the literature (see e.g. Hausknecht et al., 2009). We explain this surprising result by the fact that the higher the salaries of the talent, the lower the room for further raises within their organization. This feeling of having reached the limit, paired with the crisis of the company at the time of data collection, may have stimulate talent to look for higher paid opportunities in other companies, to increase their success.



This also highlights the importance of organizational factors, which may influence the impact of TM programs on employees' attitudes and behaviors and interact with factors at other levels (Muratbekova-Touron et al., 2018; Vaiman, Scullion, & Collings, 2012). Furthermore, great objective career success may also make those talented individuals more attractive to competing firms, as talent management programs aiming specifically at development enhance employees' employability (Dries & Pepermans, 2008). Moreover, the perceived signal of their value boosts their self-perception and leads them to look more for opportunities than employees who were not designated as such (Swales & Blackburn, 2016). This may seem to be a discouraging reason for companies to invest in TM programs; however, salary is not the only or the most important feature of career success, which is reflected in the higher importance of subjective over objective career success, stated in both the academic (Aryee, Chay, & Tan, 1994) and the practitioner literature (Strack, Von Der Linden, Booker, & Strohmayer, 2014). Indeed, the results of the global talent survey by "BCG" and "The Network" indicate that intrinsic rewards contributing to job satisfaction, and hence to subjective career success, are valued more than extrinsic rewards such as salary (Strack et al., 2014), especially for higher positions within the organization (Hausknecht et al., 2009).

The earlier elaboration on the real turnover of the program in the discussion section supports this assumption, in that the desire to gain objective career success did not act as a primary trigger to leave the company; rather, talent left due to the company crisis, which is reflected in the qualitative data. We recall that the main reasons provided for turnover were "Wanted better opportunity for advancement/growth," "Management problems/issues," "Wanted life or career change," and "Wanted different/better job tasks at company." Better job offers from other organizations did act as a pull-factor for the talent, but they were one of the minor reasons why talent left.

Our results are evidence that the link between TM practices and employees' attitudes and behaviors is fragile. Explicitly communicating talent status within companies raises the expectations of those employees and may also entail greater disappointments (Dries & De Gieter, 2014; Sonnenberg et al., 2014). Although the psychological contract between talent and the organization may have positive consequences (Höglund, 2012), any breach thereof may have a negative impact and possibly damage the organization's effort to attract, develop, and retain their talented employees (King, 2016). This points toward a need for organizations to take a consistent and multilevel approach to TM (Thunnissen et al., 2013b), aligning the practices with macro, organizational, and individual factors of contingency (Muratbekova-Touron et al., 2018). This is even more crucial in a dynamic and complex environment (Harsch & Festing, 2019).

### *Limitations and avenues for future research*

First, we conducted the study based on one TM program run by a single MNC only. While we looked at a quite typical TM program for young graduates, which may also be found in other MNCs, it has to be noted that when investigating the TM program we only looked at a select part of TM and its effects on talent retention. Thus, the main limitation of our study relates to the generalizability of the findings. Applying the suggested framework to other TM elements and in other companies therefore represents an interesting avenue for future research.

Another limitation is that our analysis relied mainly on self-reporting and on subjective measures, although we ensured data triangulation through our interviews with the HR managers. While our further analysis has not shown any evidence for common method bias—a typical risk that this approach bears—obtaining data from other sources and taking a longitudinal perspective would certainly be helpful in future studies. Moreover, in our case study, employees were partly aware of

their participation in the TM program, and they also knew that their employer considered them as talent. Some companies still foster a culture of secrecy, and so any results with respect to retention may differ from ours when employees suspect that they are a talent but do not know for sure, or if they do not know at all. Moreover, the fact that employees know they have been selected as a talent may influence their subjective career success and therefore create a self-fulfilling prophecy (Björkman et al., 2013). Further research could investigate these types of contexts as well.

Finally, the small sample size of our data is also a limitation, due mainly to the difficulty in gathering data about talent management, which by definition is aimed at a very small proportion of employees (Dries, 2013), thus making impossible a large sample collection in one single company. We decided to use SEM, as according to some authors “SEM models can perform well, even with small samples (e.g. 50 to 100). The vague, folklore rule of thumb considering requisite sample size, e.g. ‘ $n > 200$ ’’, can be conservative, and is surely simplistic” (Iacobucci, 2010, p. 92). We are convinced that, even with a small sample, our results contribute to the TM literature by providing empirical results about the mechanisms between TM and retention from a career perspective. Further research could test our model with larger samples.

The most important avenue for future research in TM lies in advancing the basis for empirical investigations. With the suggested TM index we go one step towards enabling more quantitative research on the subject, and while in our study we link TM intensity via career-related influences to talent retention, we contribute to the call to link the organizational and individual levels in this field (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016). However, the link to many other individual level outcomes is still under-researched and deserves attention in future endeavors.

### ***Managerial implications***

The results of our study lead us to propose the following recommendations for TM programs in MNCs. First, we suggest the development of talent both ‘on the job’, by creating international job assignments and providing the opportunity for talent to work in different subsidiaries and different countries, and ‘off the job’, through practices such as training modules, where all participants create and strengthen their internal talent network. Second, personal mentoring, coaching, shadowing senior managers, job rotation, objective assessments, and other developmental practices should contribute to rapid talent growth. Our study shows the crucial role of individual career success for talent retention, and so companies should continue to invest in career-related TM practices. Through our study we contribute to emphasizing the strategic roles of both career management and TM in relation to an organization’s performance. This result is in line with other research (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005; De Vos & Cambré, 2016) and the need for organizations to focus on both aspects.

Our third recommendation concerns the ‘after-TM program’ period. According to some comments in our survey, talent who appreciated greatly participating in the TM program were disappointed by the lack of career planning and development after they had finished. This was also clearly mentioned by a talent who had quit the company. It is important to keep promises; otherwise, as stated by one talent, the talent pipeline that took years to build may be destroyed within only a few months. Therefore, it is important to monitor career progression, job changes, and promotions, and investment in talent development should be continuous.

### **Conclusion**

The present study’s key point is that career aspects are crucial in TM, especially with the aim of retaining talent. To sum up, the main contributions are as follows. First, we developed a conceptual

framework explaining the link between TM practices and talent's intention to stay, as well as the role of knowing-whom career capital and objective and subjective career success in these relationships. This explanatory framework is the first of its kind to explain the underlying mechanisms that contribute to the influence of the perceived intensity of talent management practices on the intention to stay in an organization. Second, we tested our conceptual framework in a multinational organization and thus provided firsthand empirical evidence on *how* TM actually influences talents' intention to stay, through a quantitative survey and further information. Therefore, we contribute to the literature in several ways. First, we add empirical evidence from Europe to the discussion around TM, which thus far has been driven mainly by the US context (Gallardo-Gallardo, Nijs, Dries, & Gallo, 2015; Thunnissen, Boselie, & Fruytier, 2013a), and we follow the call of Thunissen & Gallardo-Gallardo (2019) to produce more empirical TM research of a higher quality. Second, we reinforce the scarce body of research regarding MNCs' returns on investment in terms of talent management activities (Bethke-Langenegger, Mahler, & Staffelbach, 2011), on the one hand, and talent management research on the individual level (Gallardo-Gallardo & Thunnissen, 2016), on the other hand. Our research presents data from different sources: The talent group, the control group, and information from the HR managers, which is highly valuable to conceptualize talent (Al Ariss et al., 2014). Third, an important contribution of this study is making the perceived intensity of global TM measurable by developing a specific index, which is the first of its kind to provide a value depicting the intensity by which a complex set of TM practices is experienced, and it may be used for future quantitative research to expand knowledge on TM and help in comparing results.

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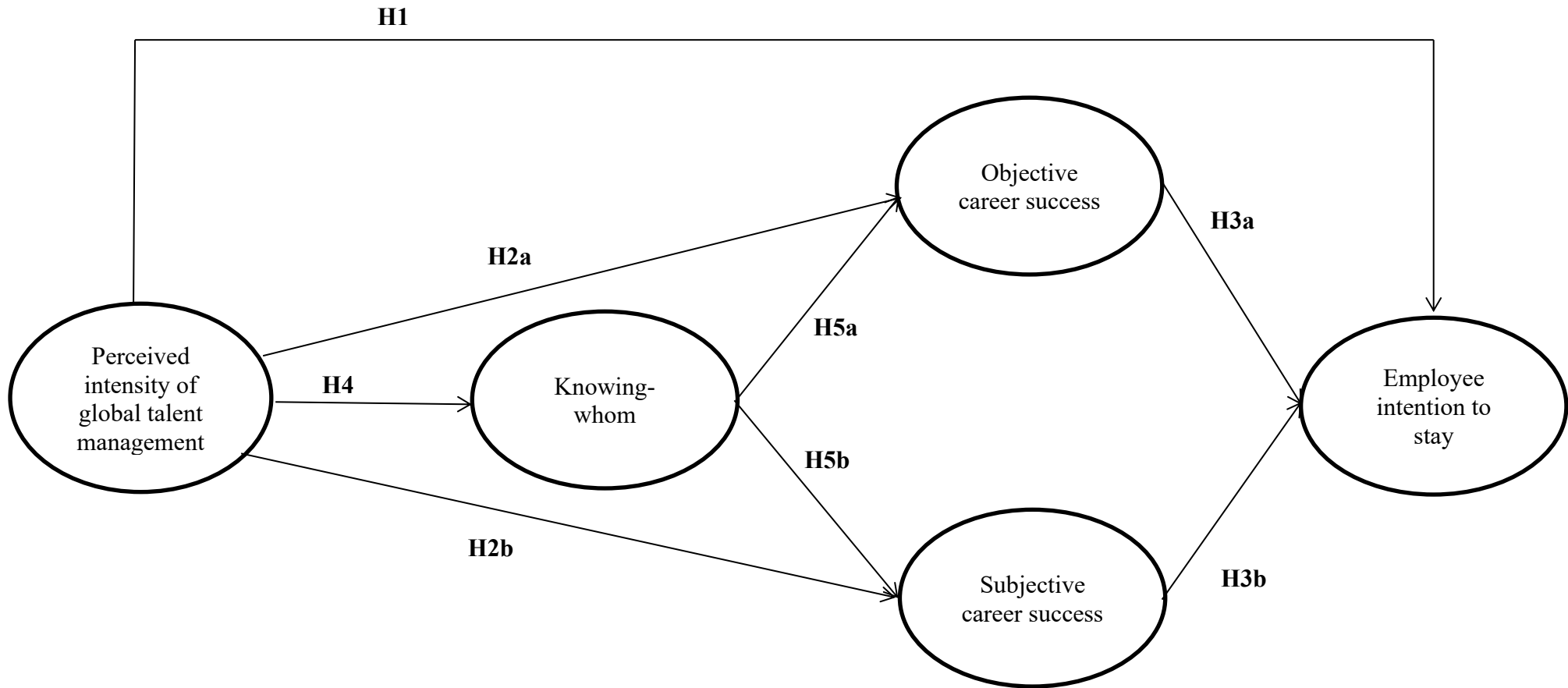
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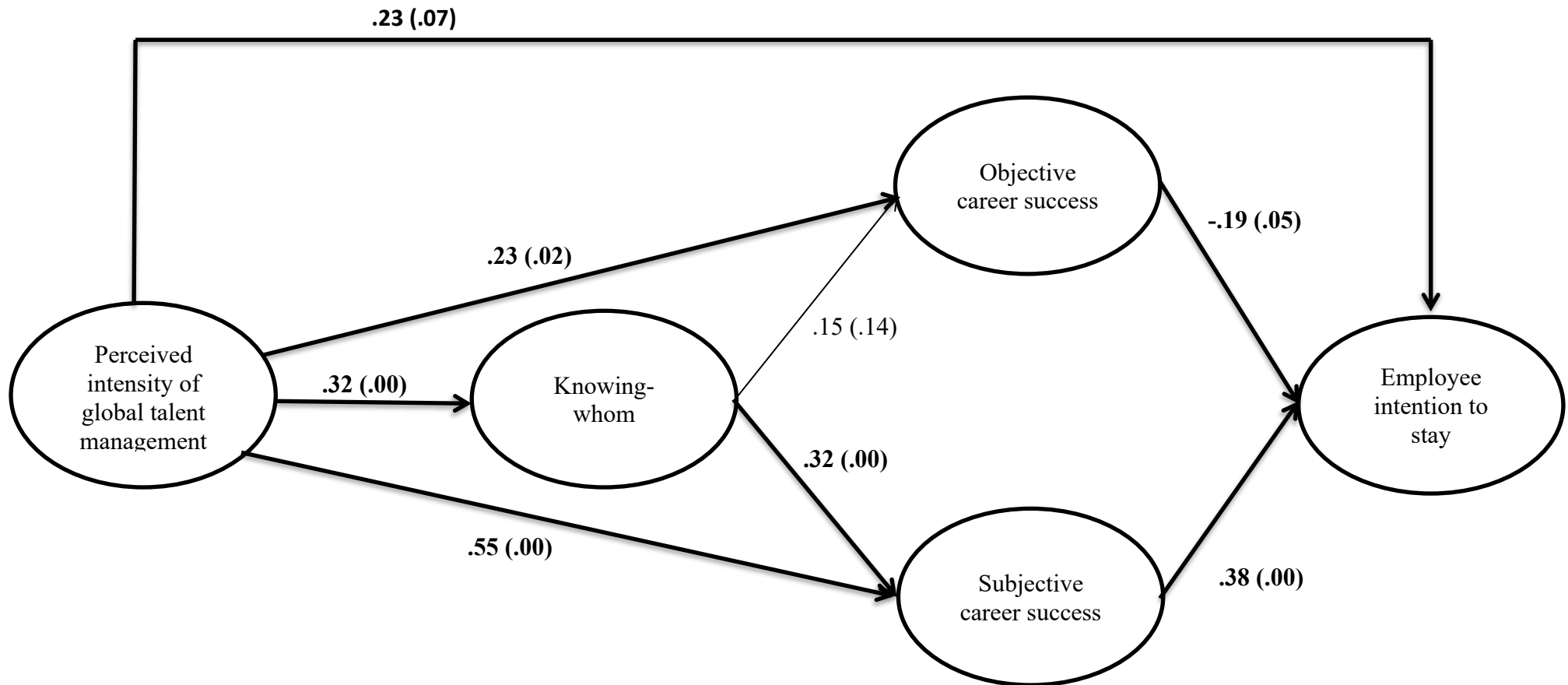
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**FIGURE 1**  
**Career-related framework explaining the impact of global talent management on intention to stay**

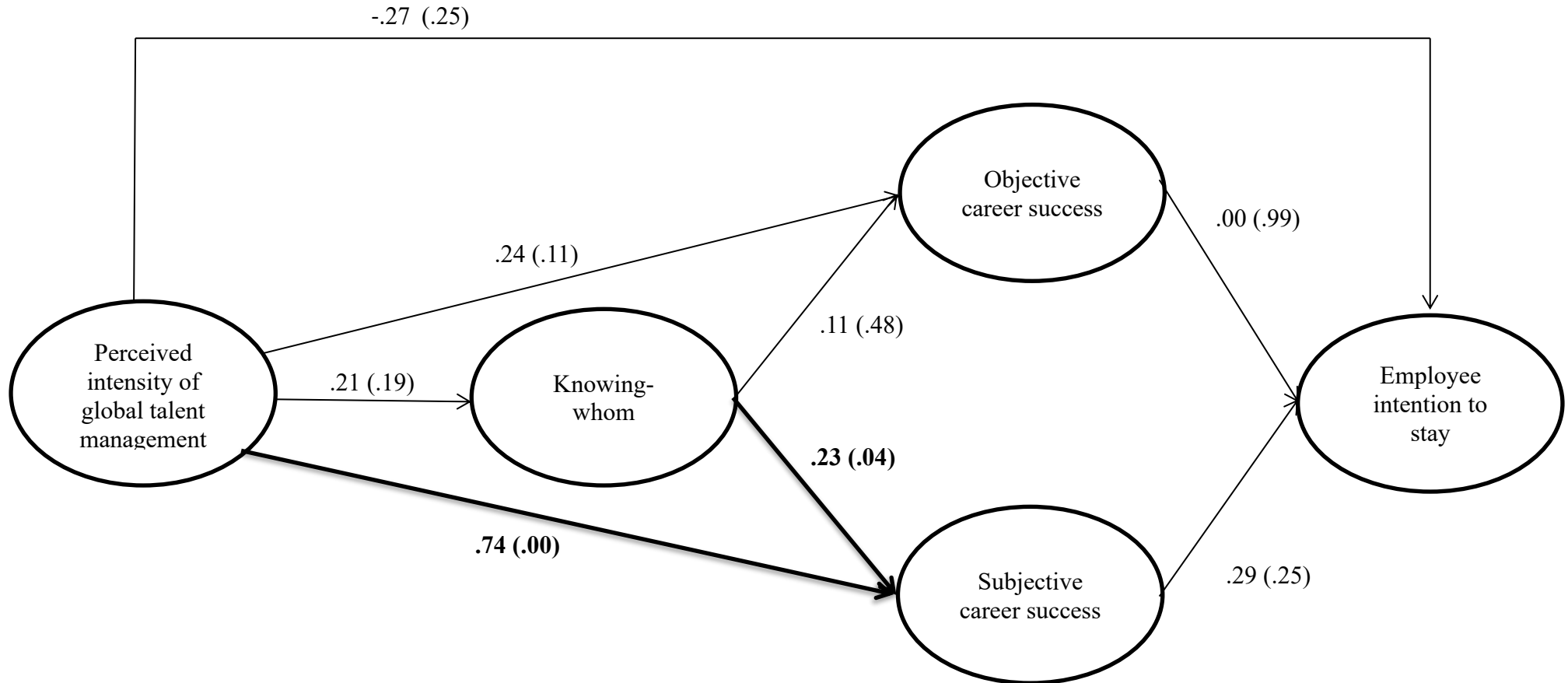


**FIGURE 2**  
Structural model results with standardized regression weights and p-values (in parentheses)—talent group





**FIGURE 3**  
**Structural model results with standardized regression weights and p-values (in parentheses)—control group**



**TABLE 1**  
**Variable means (talent group, control group, overall sample), standard deviations (talent group, control group, overall sample), and correlations (overall sample only)**

Variable	Mean talent	SD talent	Mean control	SD control	Mean overall	SD overall	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Objective career success	27.94	26.58	36.06	23.52	30.49	25.84	1.00										
2 Perc.intens. of global TM	.57	.22	.47	.21	.54	.22	.28**	1.00									
3 Subjective career success	4.38	1.39	4.64	1.16	4.46	1.32	.40**	.64**	1.00								
4 Knowing-whom	5.35	1.23	5.28	1.08	5.33	1.18	.27**	.30**	.44**	1.00							
5 Intention to stay	4.05	1.81	4.72	1.36	4.26	1.71	.19*	.47**	.56**	.20*	1.00						
6 Children	.09	.29	.53	.51	.23	.42	.18*	-.07	.07	.12	.09	1.00					
7 Gender	1.69	.47	1.70	.45	1.69	.46	-.03	.07	-.03	-.05	.00	.20*	1.00				
8 Age	28.85	2.83	34.22	4.08	30.54	4.11	.39**	.00	.12	.11	.20*	.66**	.09	1.00			
9 International experience (months)	28.81	35.20	27.95	37.61	28.13	35.83	-.09	.04	.08	-.03	.09	-.06	.08	-.02	1.00		
10 Educational level	1.97	.18	1.78	.48	1.91	.32	-.12	-.02	.01	-.02	-.1	-.02	.07	-.09	.11	1.00	
11 Affective commitment	3.97	1.50	4.45	1.22	4.12	1.43	.38**	.54**	.61**	.40**	.61**	.14	-.08	.26**	-.01	-.07	1.0

Notes: N= 127; construct values are derived from the mean construct scores: Gender is coded 1 = female and 2 = male; Educational level is coded 1 = Bachelor, 2 = Master, and 3 = PhD; Children is coded 0 = no children and 1 = children.

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

**TABLE 2**  
**Factor loadings, average variance extracted, and composite reliability of the variables**

<b>Constructs and Indicators</b>	<b>Factor loadings</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>CR</b>
<b>Subjective career success</b>		<b>.93</b>	<b>.69</b>
Item 1	.93		
Item 2	.95		
Item 3	.58		
Item 4	.94		
Item 5	.86		
Item 6	.66		
<b>Intention to stay</b>		<b>.89</b>	<b>.74</b>
Item 1	.88		
Item 2	.93		
Item 3	.76		
<b>Knowing-whom</b>		<b>.91</b>	<b>.76</b>
Item 1	.83		
Item 2	.94		
Item 3	.85		

*Notes:* AVE = Average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability.

**TABLE 3**  
**Fit statistics of the structural models**

	<b>Model</b>	<b>CMIN/DF</b>	<b>CFI</b>	<b>IFI</b>	<b>RMSEA</b>	<b>SRMR</b>
CFA	Measurement model	1.29	.98	.98	.06	.06
CFA	Multi-group measurement model	2.00	.90	.91	.09	.06
Structural model	Full model	1.59	.90	.90	.07	.08

**APPENDIX A**  
**Items of the TM Index**

To what extent....

1. ... had the organization close relationships with your university or business/engineering school when you applied?
2. ... did you perceive the organization as a global employer brand when you applied?
3. ... do you feel that you went through a highly selective process when you were recruited?
4. ... do or did you feel recognized as part of a talent pool at your organization?
5. ... were you attracted by the company values when you applied?
6. ... have your potential and performance been continuously assessed (e.g. performance evaluations, assessment centers,...) ?
7. ...have you been participating in in-house leadership development programs?
8. ... were you promoted internally and your application was preferred over external candidates?
9. ... have your training needs been continuously assessed?
10. ... have you received individual and personalized career development plans?
11. ... have you changed job or responsibilities, for example through job rotations, cross-functional assignments, or internal transfers?
12. ... have you developed your career through international assignments?
13. ... have you been working in multicultural teams?
14. ... have you been accompanied in your career by more experienced colleagues (mentoring, coaching, etc...)?
15. ... have you received senior management's attention?
16. ...To what extent does your organization offer work-life balance practices, such as flexible work arrangements?