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What Money Cannot Buy: Experience of International Academics in Universities in Taiwan

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What Money Cannot Buy: Experience of International Academics in Universities in Taiwan

Dawn Chen

A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Business Administration in Higher Education Management

University of Bath

School of Management

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Dawn Chen

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Abstract

This qualitative, interview-based research sets to understand the experience of internationally mobile academics working in the higher education institutions in Taiwan, with a focus on their motivation, local adjustment, and perceived success. Driven by Taiwan's own university excellence initiatives, the actions taken by the country's universities to recruit international talent, with financial support from the government, have become increasingly prevailing since early 2000s. However, despite Taiwan's focus on internationalising the higher education sector through engaging foreign academics, the experiences of those recruited to work in Taiwan's universities are rarely discussed and their voice often unheard.

Twenty-four international academics working at universities in Taiwan took part in the in-depth interviews to provide their first-hand experience of managing the journey from pre-departure to post-arrival of working and living in Taiwan. Consistency was found in the research findings with prior study around career motivation and aspiration; however, feedback from interviewees showed that international academics working in Taiwan typically reported the lack of systemic, institutionalised facilitation to help them adapt and perform.

Findings of this research also showed that social capital, which is often observed in the form of guanxi in Taiwan, serve to mitigate the negative impact of the lack of social capital and positively drive the individuals towards objective and subjective success. Connecting international work mobility, adjustment success, and social capital, this study offers an explanatory framework to journey of international academics working in Taiwan. Furthermore, this study reflected on the missing efforts from Taiwan and its universities in understanding its target talent and urged improvements to be made to help internationally mobile academics flourish in Taiwan.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Motivation

The internationalisation of the higher education sector in Taiwan has become an area of priority for the country following its first university excellence initiative in 2005 (Hou, Ince and Chiang, 2012). In this context and with increasing national and institutional investment, recruitment of foreign talent has been growing (Ministry of Education, 2013, 2018, 2021). This thesis focuses on the international academics in Taiwan's universities engaged to contribute to the country's internationalisation goals but rarely featured in the existing research. The study sets to understand their lived experience at work, how they see their local adaptation, and their personal assessment towards successful performance.

Academics at universities in Taiwan have traditionally been homogenous in terms of nationality mix. Most academic positions were and still are held by local Taiwanese, and academic staff recruitment has typically been an inward-looking process. Due to government requirements, academic jobs at universities in Taiwan tended to be advertised through domestic channels owned by the National Science and Technology Council, Ministry of Education, and the Executive Yuan (Li, 2023). The use of international media has not been as prevailing as other recruiting countries in Asia. A web search performed by the author in May 2024 showed that on the major non-disciplinary specific online platform, such as THE Unijobs, Academic Positions, and Higher Ed Jobs, posts from Taiwan constituted only one per cent of all vacancy announcements by institutions in Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and China, indicating Taiwan's relative lack of presence in terms of the career opportunities it offers as a destination for work. On top of that, Mandarin Chinese being the primary language for instruction in most subject areas means that individuals without Chinese language have been linked to areas of foreign language studies only (Chin and Ching, 2009). It is not until the 2000s that the situations started to change when Taiwan became influenced by the global competition that intensified across higher education sectors worldwide. With the introduction of university excellence initiatives in 2005, Taiwan adjusted its recruitment practice and opened up for, if not actively engaged, a wider pool of candidates from different countries applying for the academic positions at local universities. In doing so it followed the route taken by countries across the Middle East and Asia to internationalise their university campuses by employing foreign academics (Forese, 2012; Austin et al., 2014; Cai and Hall, 2016). Taiwan's Ministry of Education also started recording foreign staff numbers in 2006 when the number of international academics accounted for 2.1% of the total number of academics, and the same figure grew to 2.7% in 2023 (Ministry of Education, 2006; 2023), indicating that there is still much to be done to achieve the country's ambition. However, while Taiwan's focus on internationalising the higher education sector through engaging foreign academics continues to draw arguments about the effectiveness of the special recruitment initiatives (Ministry of Education, 2016; Hsu, 2018; 2020; Lin and Wu, 2021), the experiences of those working in Taiwan's universities are rarely included in the rhetoric and their voice often unheard. This missing discussion about international academics in Taiwan presents researchers the opportunities for this study to add perspectives to the existing debates with potentials to inform Taiwan' future investment in the development of the higher education sector.

1.2 Context of recruitment of international academics

The statistics published by the Ministry of Education show that recruitment of international academics has not seen significant growth over the past decade. However, there are reasons for the country's universities to keep making efforts. Influences driving their recruitment of international academics include university excellence initiatives, world university rankings, and English Medium Instruction (EMI) (Hou, Ince and Chiang, 2012; Lai, 2018; National Taiwan Normal University, 2024). These three factors, individually and combined, pushed Taiwanese universities to strengthen their efforts to hire international academics from around the world, as they intend to internationalise the campus through the acquisition of talent with experience in managing international research collaboration and ability to teach their subjects in English.

A mandate by Taiwan's university excellence initiatives

In response to the government guidance over the past decade, Taiwan's universities have become increasingly active in enhancing their organisational competitiveness. On the policy side, their ambitions were supported by the Ministry of Education with a series of higher education excellence initiatives, which modelled similar efforts of other countries, including Germany's Excellence Initiative in early 2000s (Fallon, 2015; Civera et al., 2020), Japan's 'Twenty-first Century Center of Excellence Project' in 2002 (Yonezawa, 2003; Deem, Mok and Lucas, 2008), Korea's Brain Korea 21 in 1999 (Lee, 2000; Wei, 2013), and China's Project 985 in 1998 (Salmi, 2009; Zhang, Patton and Kenney, 2013) and the subsequent Project 211 (Zhang, 2014).

Taiwan's Ministry of Education announced the Aim for the Top University Project (the ATU

Project) – the country's first higher education excellence policy – in 2005 (Hou, Ince and Chiang, 2012), which officially marked the commencement of internationalisation journey for the Taiwan's higher education sector. Close to twenty years later, Taiwan's universities nowadays have experienced a handful more government initiatives to drive internationalisation, seeking to improve global research competitiveness, elevate capacity for teaching excellence by world standards, and increase faculty and student diversity on campus (Salmi, 2016; Fu, Baker, and Zhang, 2020). A common feature of these policies and special funding schemes is the comparatively greater level of financial flexibility that allows Taiwanese universities to invest on equipment, facilities, systems, as well as people to strengthen their academic performance (Chen and Chuang, 2017; Fu, Baker, and Zhang, 2020). Before the relaxation of regulations, the rigid financial regime has always been a challenge for Taiwanese universities when looking at engaging talent worldwide, as the non-negotiable pay and benefits that were strictly defined by a set of act and enforcement rules often came as a hurdle to attract foreign academics when many of them were much accustomed to the comparatively better financial rewards offered by countries such as Singapore, Korea and China (Liu et al., 2012). Now with these special funding policies and greater financial autonomy, the search of high-calibre international academics is made much more feasible as Taiwanese universities tried to cultivate their competitive edges through the strengthening of their human resources. For example, the Yushan Scholar Programme, introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2017, offers qualified individuals, on top of their standard package, an additional annual bonus of up to five million New Taiwan Dollar (Hsu, 2018), which is equivalent to USD 154K in June 2024. Ministry of Science and Technology (now National Science and Technology Council) – Taiwan's key research funding body – also provides financial support that enables Taiwanese universities to recruit foreign professional with special expertise in science and technology with enhanced remuneration package (Ministry of Science and Technology, 2020).

These special funding, however, are subject to a set of rigid rules that impeded the universities' ability to attract top international academics (Salmi, 2016), leading to the questions raised by the public about the actual impact these international academics would be able to create on campus due to the limited size of cohort (Hsu, 2018; Lin, 2018; Wu, 2018). Despite these discussions, the importance of attracting global talent remains a priority for the government. For instance, it made the number of foreign nationals recruited for academic positions one of the key performance indicators under Higher Education Sprout Project (HESP), the latest iteration of

Taiwan's university excellence initiative (Ministry of Education, 2018). Recruitment of international academics, to this day, becomes both a means to internationalisation of higher education institutions and an end that the institutions set out to reach, driving Taiwan's universities to rise to the global competition in the academic employment market and strengthen their act to recruit foreign academics willing to come and work in Taiwan.

A response to world university rankings

National initiatives driving higher education excellence embed the aim to build world-class universities, if not explicitly express it, in the policy rhetoric (Byun and Kim, 2012; Chang et al., 2009). The definition of world-class universities is highly contested in research into higher education. In the beginning of the twenty-first century when global competition in the higher education sector had not yet materialised, Altbach (2004) explained that the universities' world-class status manifested itself in research excellence, academic freedom and intellectually stimulating environment, robust and fit-for-purpose internal self-governance, adequate facilities for staff and students, and sufficient funding. Mohrman et al. (2008) posited that top-performing research-intensive universities would possess special features including strong commitment on global mission and international dimension for their identity, highly concentrated production of research and knowledge, diverse sources of funding, global recruitment of talent including senior administrators and academics, and investment on cross-border collaborations. In the model developed by Salmi (2009, p.32), a world-class university is characterised as the achievement derived from the interaction of 'concentration of talent' embracing internationalisation, 'abundant resources' supporting stimulating learning and research, and 'favourable governance' enabling visionary and innovative leadership with academic autonomy. As global competition intensified, measure of world-class universities is often reduced to a set of quantitative indicators in world university rankings, used by students, parents, and school counsellors to inform their understanding of university quality and choice of institution for education (Altbach, 2012; Johnes, 2018).

The prevalence of these rankings also caught the attention of the government sector that is eager to find tools to inform their funding allocation decisions, supported by evidence indicating the level of performance of their universities (Dill, 2009; Altback, 2012; Hou, Ince, and Chiang, 2012; Salmi, 2016). Countries implementing university excellence initiatives started referring to several key university rankings to drive improvement in quantifiable measure and demonstrate the effectiveness of their policies (Chang et al., 2009; Deem, Mok and Lucas, 2008). Taiwan is no exception. The Ministry of Education (2013, 2021) has been very consistent with its goal to maintain the overall positioning of Taiwan's universities in the global higher education landscape, which subsequently promoted Taiwanese universities' chase in world rankings (Shreeve, 2020; Wang and Shih, 2023). In these rankings, internationalisation has often been steadily featured in the evaluation metrics. Arguably, the significance of internationalisation in rankings is yet to be agreed. Examining the limitations of three major world university rankings, i.e., QS, Times Higher Education, and ARWU, Chen (2017) concluded that 'internationalisation' related indicators across all three rankings, collectively, accounted for only less than six percent of the total weighting, the second least weighted item in all six assessment criteria categories that range from forty-eight percent to four percent. A further breakdown of these indicators shows that these world rankings' assessment of a university's level of internationalisation focuses mainly on a) international academic staff, b) international student, and c) international co-authorship (QS, 2020; Times Higher Education, 2020).

Recruitment of outstanding international talent is often encouraged by national policies, and for many universities, recruitment of international academics also has the potential to not only fulfil the ranking requirements but also enhance their institutional performance in the overall internationalisation assessment in world rankings as international academics bring in skills required to 'fill the gap in teaching and research' (Altbach and Yudkevich, 2016, p.2) to attract international students and international research collaborations. Specifically, for Taiwanese universities, as lectures have traditionally been delivered in Mandarin Chinese, many academics were never required nor trained to teach in English. Bringing in international academics who can teach their subjects in English therefore helps Taiwanese universities strengthen their preparedness to attract international students wishing to pursue an overseas education, another highly contested area for universities around the world to be discussed later. Finally, as Taiwan's universities seek to increase their performance in international co-authorship, recruitment of foreign academics was also seen as shortcut to reach the goals as international academics often bring with them their established links and collaboration, hence strengthening the competitive edge in collaborative research of their new host institutions (Da Wan and Morshidi, 2018).

A means to improve English Medium Instruction (EMI) provision

Relevant to the competition of attracting international students mentioned above is the language of instruction in the classrooms. For non-English speaking universities, the need to enhance English language proficiency at the institutional level is imperative in competing for the attention of prospective students worldwide (Lai, 2018; Sin, Tavares and Cardoso, 2019). It was believed that recruiting international students has both symbolic and material value (Gao and Liu, 2020). On one hand, success in international student recruitment is often regarded as a reflection of the reputation and competitiveness of the higher education institutions (Falcone, 2017; Dang, Bonar and Yao, 2023). On the other hand, inflow of international students brings with it prominent additional fee income to their host institutions, as well as economic activities at the local communities, incentivising many countries and their higher education institutions to compete for that financial reward (Cantwell, 2019).

In the context of Taiwan, EMI provision, featuring in government rhetoric through university excellence initiatives (Ministry of Education, 2013, 2018), was however not a prioritised area of public funding. It was until 2021 when the country officially introduced its first Bilingual Policy for Higher Education that Taiwan's universities were encouraged to systematically revamp their curriculum and learning activities with public funding support (Ministry of Education, 2021). Taiwan's EMI initiative has layered connotation. From the outset, the policy has a strong focus on equipping students at the tertiary education level with international communications competence. With enhanced national investment in providing English-taught content on university campuses, the Ministry of Education aimed to improve graduate employability and has set challenging targets, such as the percentage of students meeting CEFR B2 level in English and the proportion of English-taught courses taken by students by the time of graduation, for the universities to achieve by 2030. Such narratives were positively received by the higher education institutions in Taiwan, especially those eager to prove their institutional competitiveness and seeing the policy as opportunities for growth of international student recruitment (Chen, 2022; Liu et al., 2022).

Tuition income for Taiwan's universities is also a plausible force behind their endeavour for international student recruitment. However, it is to be noted that the real monetary benefit would be insignificant by the global standard, as tuition fees are capped by the Ministry of Education with the highest being USD 15,000 a year (Study in Taiwan, 2024). For Taiwan's universities, using EMI programme provision to attract international students has perhaps even more prominent benefits than financial return. As the country heads towards an aging society, the population of high school graduates has significantly reduced on a yearly basis to the extent that continuing relying on the recruitment of domestic students is no longer sustainable for the higher education sector in Taiwan (Chen and Tsai, 2021; He, 2024). At this point in time, the search for other sources of students has become imperative and changes to the higher education sector are inevitable. Continued recruitment of international students with high academic rigor and strong research appetite was therefore deemed to be a logical pursuit for some of the research-intensive universities in Taiwan (Chou, 2019). Meanwhile, for teaching-oriented universities, international students represent a solution to their long-term worry about empty student seats in classrooms due to Taiwan's aging population (Tsao, 2020), making international student recruitment an active response to existential crisis faced with universities in Taiwan.

All the above links back to universities' readiness, or lack thereof, to provide quality education and research supervision through the medium of English language by their existing academic staff cohort. In Taiwan, many local academics earned their degrees in major English-speaking countries such as the US and the UK. Others with local qualifications quite often also have the experience of undertaking research training or attachment overseas. With a strong publishing culture across the sector, a significant proportion of academics in Taiwan are proficient in using English to publish their work in international journals. When it comes to teaching, however, Mandarin is still the predominant language even though textbooks may sometimes be in English. For local academics, while English is not unfamiliar, using it in classrooms for teaching has not been prevailing to the extent required by Taiwan's new bilingual education policy, aiming that more than 40 universities in Taiwan will have over 80 per cent of its teaching delivered in English by 2030 (Ministry of Education, 2021). To fulfil such policy goals, recruitment of foreign talent capable of teaching in English became a common measure taken by the local universities to fill the gap.

To conclude, Taiwan's universities are now actively recruiting academic staff internationally to advance the level of internationalisation on campus. There has not been shortage of media attention and scholarly research on progress and results of these public policies and the subsequent institutional performance around funding effectiveness, research productivity, student achievements, university ranking positions, and so on (Chang, 2013; Chou and Chan, 2016; Fu, Baker and Zhang, 2020; Hsu, 2018, 2020). However, as a cohort that featured heavily in both government rhetoric and university action planning, the international academics recruited to work in Taiwanese universities, as well as their lived experience is an almost untold story.

1.3 Aims of the study

Universities in Taiwan are faced with and challenged by globalisation and competition. While many of them actively seek expansion of their international faculty body and have indeed successfully engaged talent worldwide, there has not been much attention given to understand how those arriving on these local university campuses are coping, nor to examine their experience and sentiments to inform future improvement. This study argues that to claim Taiwan government's investment in internationalising higher education sector through buying foreign brains a success, it is critical to directly hear from the international academics working in Taiwan's universities to examine if their expectations have been met.

With this in mind, the essential aims of this study are manifold. First, it intends to answer the key research question: ***"how do international academics navigate their adjustment in Taiwan to pursue success and satisfaction?"***

This key research question is divided into the following three sub research questions, each addressing a different aspect of the overseas work mobility taken by the internationally mobile professionals:

1. What motivates the international academics to work overseas and particularly in Taiwan?
2. How do the international academics manage adjustment and performance?
3. How do the international academics leverage support throughout the process?

The above questions are set to focus on the lived experience of those directly involved in the phenomenon of international talent engagement and to help understand these individuals' management of interactions at the workplace and in life to reach their goals while in Taiwan.

Secondly, this study aims to construct an explanatory framework to depict these foreign academics' experience of working and living in Taiwan. Referring to the literature on the individuals' motivation for international work mobility, this study examines the reasons driving the international academics to pursue their career in Taiwan. Review of literature on intercultural adjustments and social capital theories help understand how the internationally mobile academics interact with their surroundings and the different groups of people while in Taiwan to enable success and achievements in their subjective perspectives. To ensure the above aims are met, this study adopts the constructivism lens to conduct qualitative, empirical research which is believed to grant researchers with their own voice in discussing the data collected from the study (Duberley, Johnson, and Cassell, 2012). Therefore, the methodological aim of this study is to gather first hand anecdotes from international academics working in Taiwan's universities through in-depth interviews consisting of questions informed by the literature review. To address the concerns of rigour which are commonly raised for qualitative research, data analysis of this study is informed by the Gioia Method (Langley and Abdallah, 2011), developed based on grounded theory, to arrive at a systematic presentation of findings in the concept-theme-dimension structure (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2012). This approach also allows a detailed exploration of existing constructs and newly identified concepts derived from the research process. Finally, this study aims to provide practical and actionable advice to guide the improvement of internationalisation of Taiwan's universities based on the firsthand observations of the international academics.

1.4 Structure of the study

This thesis consists of six chapters, starting with this current and first chapter to provide an overall introduction of the study. Chapter Two provides a review on the existing literature on motivation for international work mobility and cross-cultural adjustments of the internationally mobile professionals to identify areas of common conversations across research into the phenomenon of highly skilled individuals pursuing careers overseas in different national and industrial context including the academia. Focus is also given to the construct of social capital. Looking at the dimensions of social capital, externality and internality of social ties, and interactional with human capital, I discuss social capital and its capacity in preparing the individuals to develop a career trajectory that enables the experience of overseas work mobility to take place. Prior studies on women's experience in the spheres of international work mobility and social capital theories are also examined to provide a foundation for discussions with that of the female academics in Taiwan when presenting findings at a later stage.

In Chapter Three, details on the methodology applied to this thesis are provided, including epistemological considerations, the choice of methodology and research methods, and reflection on research validity and limitations. Starting with a constructivist epistemological stance, I explain the decisions pertaining to research design and the logic behind such decision-making. The execution of data collection (involving in-depth interviews with twenty-four international academics working in Taiwan's universities) and data analysis (of transcripts exceeding 200,000 words) is also detailed in this chapter, with references to data analytical software (NVivo) and coding technique (the Gioia Method). The chapter completes with reflections from the researcher on quality review, ethical considerations, and the overall implementation of the research project.

Chapter Four reports findings and results derived from the data collection process, following a structure of concept-theme-dimension to provide an easily comprehensible presentation of anecdotes from the interviewees that support prior research or entice emerging concepts relevant to this study. These include the interviewees' career pathway into academia, how they took employment in Taiwan, and their subjective account of their experiences in and outside workplace. The construct of guanxi, briefly introduced in Chapter Two for its relevance to social capital, is featured in this chapter as the interviews reveal the significant role of guanxi in influencing the interviewees' management of tasks and situations encountered in their entire mobility experience in Taiwan. This additional but important construct serves to guide the development of the next chapter on discussions and implications.

In Chapter Five, I discuss the results outlined in the previous chapter with references to the interviewees' comments and literature review. Recognising the important role of social capital in international academics' work mobility journey, I provide an explanatory framework that depicts the experience of the interviewees and deciphers the relations amongst key elements throughout the process. The individuals' active involvement in ensuring their well-managed local adjustment is featured heavily to explain how support and resources are mobilised to facilitate successful performance. Factors that have special influence on the internationally mobile academics' experience in the context of Taiwan are also included in the explanatory framework to help build a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of international talent engagement.

Chapter Six presents conclusions of the study by drawing together the key research question and the discussions of findings and results to examine if the aims of the study have been materialised and questions answered via this research project. Areas where Taiwan's experiences differ from those of other countries are also summarised to contribute to the existing literature on inward mobility of international academic staff where Taiwan has not been featured heavily. This concluding chapter also reflects on the limitation of the study while pointing out potential areas for future research to further develop empirical investigation of staff mobility and internationalisation in the context of higher education in Taiwan.

Having a detailed examination of existing literature of given interest helps develop a thorough understanding of the phenomenon being studied, hence informing the researcher's decision on research design and execution. The forthcoming chapter explores existing knowledge and prior research to lay the theoretical background for the investigation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provides context for this study, which sets to understand that, given the efforts of the higher education sector in Taiwan to engage internationally mobile talent, *"How do international academics navigate their adjustment in Taiwan to pursue success and satisfaction?"*, as well as the associated sub questions pertaining to motivation (sub research question 1), management of adjustment and performance (sub research question 2) and the academics' leverage for support (sub research question 3).

To answer these questions, I will review existing literature in the areas of international work mobility, which in research into management is often referred to as expatriation (including corporate-assigned and self-initiated), to help develop a comprehensive understanding of issues around living and working overseas. A point of clarification worth making here is that, considering the nature of the object of this research, i.e. internationally mobile academics (who are mostly individuals with doctoral level qualifications), I intend to focus on literature pertaining to highly skilled mobile professionals. In addition to motivation, prior research on cross-cultural adjustments required to facilitate the success of mobile individuals will also be covered (see Section 2.2).

Following the discussion on motivation for and adjustment of overseas employment, I review the construct of social capital to understand how such intangible assets help prepare individuals embarking on career development overseas for the entire journey, possibly far in advance of cross-border travel begins. The characteristics of social capital and its functions in creating, expanding, and consolidating the individuals' social networks to provide access to resources were discussed in particular to build an understanding of how social capital facilitates career progress of internationally mobile academics and to inform my research decision in defining a clear scope for interpretations in the data analysis stage as shown in Chapter Four.

2.2 Working overseas: motivation and adjustment

2.2.1 Motivations for working overseas

In this research the terms 'expatriation' and 'international work mobility' are both used to refer to the individuals' action of taking employment outside of their home country (Edström and Galbraith, 1977), usually for a limited period of time. Such behaviour differs from immigration, which generally indicates permanent resettling, and the flow of migration usually takes place from developing countries to more developed ones. Expatriation, or international work mobility, in many cases are not of a definite time frame, and the place of origin and destination involved in such activities are of a wide variety. As Cangià and Zittoun (2018) aptly conclude, individuals undertaking employment overseas could be coming from and going to all different kinds of locations, and the number of moves between countries made by these internationally mobile individuals is not of conformed patterns, either. In the business world, expatriation may be a result of corporate assignments (many of which on a fixed term basis) or the individuals' self-initiation (Inkson et al., 1997; Bonache, Brewster, and Suutari, 2001), whereas in the context of higher education, international work mobility, also widely observed, is usually driven by the academics' own course of actions and there is little institutional coordination.

Since the introduction of universities in the Middle Ages, academics travelled from places around the world to countries that had established higher education institutions with infrastructure and facilities to fulfil their scholarly ambition (Kim, 2009). Following this pattern, countries with well-established higher education sectors, such as Australia, the U.K., and the U.S., continue to attract individuals wishing to pursue a career in academia to travel across the continents. For decades, the influx of talent from countries with less developed higher education system to the ones with more developed higher education system appeared to be a norm (van der Wende, 2015; Demeter, 2019). However, as competition amongst higher education systems intensifies, countries with an emerging higher education system, such as United Arab Emirates and Kazakhstan, are also opening up to recruit faculty internationally to satisfy their goals to grow English-taught programmes or to improve scientific publication (Austin et al., 2014; Lee and Kuzhabekova, 2018). To understand how these mobility journeys of different directions are undertaken by the academics, it is imperative to firstly understand these individuals' motivations.

In the existing research into motivation to work overseas, attention has traditionally been given to corporate-assigned overseas employment and how such arrangement contributes to corporate success such as business expansion efficiency, cross-border knowledge transfer, and corporate talent development (Ashamalla, 1998; Selmer, 1998; Minbaeva and Michailova, 2004). As globalisation intensifies and international travel prevails, many markets are open to international talents with eased regulatory or administrative threshold. Individuals wishing to work overseas no longer need to depend on organisational arrangements and many of them start embarking on finding employment in other countries on their own accord (Howe-Walsh and Schyns, 2010). In academia, the individuals travelling abroad for employment do so mostly out of their own will and not necessarily with institutional aid (Kim, 2009; Haslberger and Vaiman, 2013). These internationally mobile academics can be categorised as self-initiated expatriates. Therefore, issues and challenges pertaining to those trying to make it in another country in the absence of organisational support are also applicable to academics working overseas. For example, internationally mobile academics tend to receive little systemic, institutional facilitation from their hiring institutions (Wilkins and Neri, 2019), opposed to corporate expatriates who may rely on well-designed organisational pre-departure and post-arrival support from their employers (Inkson et al., 1997). For the higher education institutions as the employers of internationally mobile academics, understanding the individuals' motivations to work and live overseas, as well as the issues derived from their lived experience, is critical to facilitate not only the success of these individuals but also that of their own institutions.

Prior studies reveal that the act of expatriation is driven by a range of motivation factors (Inkson et al., 1997; Suutari and Brewster, 2000). For example, Jackson et al. (2005) conduct a survey amongst a group of New Zealanders to examine motivations to relocate, which include attractive job opportunities overseas and better financial incentives. They also identify reasons not to migrate, such as strong family connection and preferable lifestyle back home. Despite its relatively narrow applications to contexts outside of New Zealand, the research findings provide useful insights to expatriates' decision-making. Other studies also show that the motivations to work overseas are a combination of professional, personal, familial, and financial considerations (Richardson and Mallon, 2005; Doherty et al., 2011; Froese, 2012; Lee and Kuzhabekova, 2018). Many of these motivations are equally applicable in both business and academia, as one sees compatibility between a professional seeking overseas employment with greater career potentials and better financial rewards (Dickmann et al., 2008) and an academic working in overseas universities pursuing academic aspiration and research funding support (Fernando and Cohen, 2016).

2.2.1.1 The Pull-Push Divide

In this study, motivations are broadly defined as elements that would contribute to the individuals' final decision to undertake expatriation. These motivations could function as 'pull' or 'push' factors as indicated by prior research (Tharenou and Caulfield, 2010; Doherty, Dickmann, and Mills, 2011), and how they function could differ from case to case. By 'pull', it means that individuals, when considering such a factor, would find the future host country more attractive compared with their current destination and therefore be drawn to relocate to the new destination. As for ‘push’, it means that the expatriates might be driven away from their current home country because of the better conditions offered in the future host country. Some of the motivations that will be discussed in this study can be both pull and push factors, and how expatriates react to these motivations is often individual and situational. For example, ‘career’ is seen as a pull factor where it results from natural career progression (Dickmann et al., 2008), whereas it can be seen as a push factor for those going overseas because of lack of opportunities at home (Jackson et al., 2005). In other cases, ‘family’ can also trigger two types of evaluation – those having strong family connections in certain destinations may be drawn to employment in those countries (Richardson and Mallon, 2005), whereas having no strong family obligations at home whatsoever may push the individuals to find employment overseas (Lee and Kuzhabekova, 2018). And of course, the push and pull consideration does not necessarily only occur in the expatriation stage, but also during repatriation (Dickmann et al., 2008; Tharenou and Caulfield, 2010). Individuals working and living overseas may be ‘pulled by their home country’ (such as family ties and preferred way of life) or ‘pushed away by their host country’ (due to a lack of employment prospects) (Tharenou and Caulfield, 2010, p.1010) in their repatriation decision-making.

In academia, the pull and push factors are contextualised by the development of tertiary education around the world. As a result of expansion of higher education sectors in many developing countries, the need for qualified individuals to fill up faculty positions becomes a key pulling force for the academics to travel overseas (Napier et al., 1997), and the fact that English is widely adopted as the lingua franca in academia has also increased the likelihood of English speakers seeking employment in the higher education sector overseas (Richardson and Zikic, 2007). On the other hand, development of the sector at home could be pushing some individuals away. For example, the prevalence of precarious work and the outcome of Brexit referendum that consequently projected a less favourable image of UK as a work destination is seen to have led an outflow of academics (both home and international) to find opportunities elsewhere (Jepsen et al., 2014; Marini, 2018; University and College Union, 2019; Times Higher Education, 2023), whereas poor financial rewards, a lack of funding at home, and disappointing political development are also identified to be factors pushing academics to work in other countries (Richardson and Zikic, 2007; Fernando and Cohen, 2016; Times Higher Education, 2023). This once again confirms that the determination of these pull and push factors depends on the external context and the individuals' relations to the environment that they are in.

So far, several factors, such as career, family, and lifestyle, have been pointed out in this study to be drivers of one's decision to embark on international mobility. In the following sections, in addition to the above-mentioned drivers, various other types of motivations will also be covered to provide insights to working and living overseas.

2.2.1.2 Types of motivations

Career development

Findings from previous research show that career plays an important role in the individuals' decision to seek employment overseas (Suutari and Brewster, 2000; Cao, Hirschi and Deller, 2011; Netz and Jakszat, 2016). On corporate-assigned expatriation, as previously mentioned, companies engaging in sending staff members overseas do so as part of their international strategy to 'exert control and achieve global integration' (Minbaeva and Michailova, 2004, p.664). The screening of staff members undertaking such assignments is understandably key to the companies' successful management. The need for the corporation to manage, however, gradually shifted to become the requirement to sustain talents who can then forge reliable international leadership to drive the corporates' longer-term success, hence the emerging focus on career development through expatriation (Selmer, 1999; Riusala and Suutari, 2000). From the individuals' perspective, the selection of individuals to be expatriated usually involves a wide range of considerations pertaining to personality, skills, and experience (Ashamalla, 1998). To be chosen for expatriation assignments is therefore seen as a form of recognition of one's managerial skills, adaptability, diplomacy, positive attitude, or maturity (Minbaeva and Michailova, 2004) that is desired by many individuals, not to mention that these expatriation assignments present not only opportunities for professional development but also tickets for future career progression. While research into business and management also shows both corporate-assigned or self-initiated expatriation may be triggered by personal or financial considerations, better career prospect and employment opportunities remain key motivations for the individuals to move to other countries (Suutari and Brewster, 2000; Doherty, Dickmann, and Mills, 2011). While career development takes high priority for those engaging in expatriation, be it corporate-assigned or self-initiated, what these individuals pursue may, however, be different from one another. Prior research notes that for the corporate-assigned expatriates, objective success can include promotion and renumeration; while objective career success also holds for self-initiated expatriates, studies reveal that they have stronger intrinsic motivation to gain career satisfaction, an operationalised term for subjective success (Cao, Hirschi and Deller, 2011; Duckworth et al., 2012).

In academia, career development also stands as a primary driver for academics to take employment overseas (Fernando and Cohen, 2016), although what an academic career should entail may largely differ from what individuals working in corporates might assume. For example, in their review of international mobility of faculty, Rumbley and De Wit (2019, p.35) point out that academics having decided to work overseas 'are often motivated by attractive employment opportunities or a sense of duty or desire to contribute to a "larger agenda" that they believe in'; as opposed to the chase of career progression and monetary rewards of the professionals working in the corporate setting, the essentials for an academic career, in comparison, seems to be more about long-term aspiration and less about instant gratification that comes with monthly pay slip. For some of the other academics, international mobility is seen as a prerequisite for professional development as working experiences overseas and access to international scholarly networks are desirable features of a successful academic career, for their potentials to bring in diverse perspectives, identify cultural biases, and facilitate cross-cultural understanding (Melville, Barrow and Morgan, 2020); overseas employment, therefore, often becomes a steppingstone for early-career scientists to establish their place in academia (Khattab and Fenton, 2016).

As career development is widely considered a motivation for individuals to work overseas, what is also worth noting is that for some of them, international work mobility also presents the opportunity to leave an unsatisfactory workplace (Lee and Kuzhabekova, 2018), making career development both a pull and push factor for expatriation, which also stands true in academia. When studying Indian academics working in UK institutions, Fernando and Cohen (2016) acknowledge that Indian institutions' inability to present attractive job offers, both in terms of career development potentials and monetary rewards, directly contributes to the outflow of its academics seeking employment overseas. In their work looking at the 'reverse international mobility' where academics travel from countries labelled as research powerhouse to work in universities in the developing world, Kuzhabekova and Lee (2018) find that working overseas allows the academics to 'escape the traditional academe' (Kuzhabekova and Lee, 2018, p.426), demonstrate their adaptability in new environment, and creativity in setting new programmes, etc. In short, their seeking employment overseas is again pushed by the lack of opportunities (or operational space for desired activities for research and teaching in this case) at their original host countries.

Family

While family is considered ‘secondary’ in expatriate decisions (Thorn, 2009), research shows that poor adjustment of family members to the host country environment may be a key reason for expatriate failure (Ashamalla, 1998). For anyone undertaking expatriation, their individual willingness and drive for such an activity undoubtedly is key. In general, those who do not have family obligation tend to be more internationally mobile, as their decision-making process involves less elements to consider (Shortland, 2014; Lee and Kuzhabekova, 2018). As for those taking their family overseas on corporate assignment, because of the extra tangible and intangible benefits that come with the arrangement (e.g. housing allowance, tuition subsidies, and healthcare), the expatriates and their accompanying family members are often seen as privileged individuals leading glamourous lives, and the constant (re)negotiation that members of such family have to go through is likely to pass unnoticed (Riusala and Suutari, 2000; Kanstrén and Suutari, 2021). Now, more people have access to opportunities overseas but do not enjoy the pre-arranged corporate perks and benefits. In situation as such, accompanying family members play a more important role in the decision-making process of those contemplating working and living overseas (Cangià and Zittoun, 2018). In either case (corporate-assigned or self-initiated), research shows that for those who have established their own family, their decision to relocate is heavily influenced by their spouse’s willingness and readiness for so doing (Dickmann et al., 2008). Research also shows that factors affecting the spouse’s willingness to relocate are mostly related to their understanding of and preference over the culture and lifestyle of the host countries (Tharenou and Caulfield, 2010), and the potential interruption in the trailing spouse’s career caused by the expatriation tends to be a much lower-ranked concern for the expatriates (Dickmann et al., 2008). However, for self-initiated expatriation, the likelihood of their spouse getting employment in the host countries (for both financial and personal fulfilment reasons) may affect the individuals’ intention, or lack thereof, to undertake working overseas (Shortland, 2014).

While discussions about family are often focusing on the spouse of the mobile individuals, factors pertaining to their other family members also play important roles (Ashamalla, 1998; Dickmann et al., 2008). For example, access to overseas education of children, in some cases, could enhance the individuals’ motivation to accept overseas assignment. This type of consideration for expatriation is often seen amongst those moving to countries that have more mature, well-established schooling or higher education systems. While English is the lingua franca for international schools (which usually are attended by many children of expatriate families), the possibility of having children exposed to other widely spoken foreign languages of the host countries, such as Chinese and Spanish, is often regarded a plus. Other family-related consideration includes local connection. Jackson et al. (2005) point out having relatives living in the host countries also helps reinforce the individuals' decision to relocate.

For internationally mobile scholars, family is also a frequently nominated factors for relocation as marriage amongst academics is not unusual. In her study of dual career couples in academia, Tzanakou (2017) reports that around one in three faculty members in the USA and Europe has a partner who is also an academic. The same research points out that in general, female academics are more likely than male academics to have an academic partner (40% vs 34% in USA and 45% vs 32% in Switzerland). As previously mentioned, the access to job opportunities of the trailing spouses is very often a crucial factor for consideration when the individuals contemplate working overseas. When there are two academics in the family who share more or less similar access to the job market (compared to other self-initiated expatriates in other occupations), the negotiation amongst the family members also affects their relocation decision (Tzanakou, 2016; Bilecen and Van Mol, 2017; Netz and Jaksztat, 2017; Cohen et al., 2020).

Financial consideration

Monetary reward is believed to be an important motivation for those pursuing working and living overseas (Suutari and Brewster, 2000; Thorn, 2009; Shortland, 2016). At the national level, the gloomy economic outlook in one's country of origin could push the individuals to seek employment elsewhere. In the work by Dobson et al. (2009), economic downturn and rising unemployment are identified as main drivers for migration across European countries since the 1970s. Thorn (2009) notes that for New Zealanders, the country's traditionally agriculture-led economy triggers a desire to work overseas, as they see that other larger, knowledge-based economies offer more opportunities for the highly educated, skilled individuals to gain financial reward. Studies also show that the focus on renumeration is universal across gender and the individuals' country of origin when they consider relocation (Zikic, 2015; Lee and Kuzhabekova, 2018). Shortland's (2016) research into women in international work assignment reveals that money appears to be the most referenced reasons, after 'career' and 'asset profile' (i.e. the profile of project to be managed) to accept such assignments for 'the opportunity to accumulate wealth'

(Shortland, 2016, p.669).

While some individuals take financial rewards as imperatives when pursuing working overseas, monetary benefits may not be seen as an added bonus but ‘more of a hygiene factor’ for some individuals (Dickmann et al., 2008, p.742). Similarly, in their study focusing on a group of Indian academics in the UK, Fernando and Cohen (2016) report that while striving for career success is a unilateral career goal for the cohort of their study, the capacity to provide financial support for children and family is identified a much-welcomed return in exchange of their devotion to work.

When it comes to financial considerations, it is worth noting that many individuals undertaking working overseas also use it to evaluate their decision to relocate, or more specifically, to repatriate (i.e. to return to their home country). Tharenou and Caulfield (2010) study near 550 Australians intending to repatriate and confirm that having a clear confirmation about the financial gain associated with repatriation (arguably connected to prospects for employment back home) plays an important role in positively influencing their decision to return to their homeland.

Lifestyle

When exploring one’s motivations for expatriations or international work mobility, it was noted that a change in lifestyle is also a driver in one’s decision-making process. Prior research shows that, for some people, the act of moving overseas heavily connects to the access and resources promised by their new host countries, including opportunities to travel, potentials to experience a foreign culture, increased likelihood to materialise their pursuit of individual growth, avoidance of personal difficulties, or even fulfilment of lifelong quest (Suutari and Brewster, 2000; Lee and Kuzhabekova, 2018). Research into migration classifies such behaviour as ‘lifestyle migration’ or ‘leisure migration’, often referring to the relocation of people from more developed countries to other parts of the world in search of ‘a better way of life’ (Benson and O’Reilly, 2009, p.608). For such a cause, lifestyle migrants tend to choose destinations that are known for tourism features such as slower pace of life, attractive places for leisure, cultural or spiritual inspiration, and mild climate (Stone and Stubbs, 2007; O’Reilly and Benson, 2009; Jaisuekun and Sunanta, 2016), and their pursuit of a lifestyle different from what they have back home also largely affects their career choice in the host countries.

Moving overseas to pursue lifestyle changes seems to have attracted much less attention from researchers who tend to focus on international mobility driven by work in the professional context, as understandably, the notion of seeking better work-life-balance fundamentally contradicts to the pursuit of career success. Lifestyle migrants, in general, are less likely to be seeking jobs that compromise their work-and-life balance, and therefore, corporate-initiated international work assignments, which has been widely studied in expatriation literature (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009), would not be a popular option for this group of people. For this group, ways to finance their new life in the host country do not always involve taking a job in the traditional sense (Holland and Martin, 201). Some of the lifestyle migrants engage in entrepreneurship and self-employment (Stone and Stubbs, 2007; Carson, Carson, and Eimermann, 2018). With the increasing popularity of social media stars across the world (Pereira, Moura, and Fillol, 2018), it has become a trend to see lifestyle migrants running their own YouTube channel to share their life in the host countries while monetising on the video record (Cheng, 2022). Essentially for the lifestyle migrants, it is the overall experience that counts for their pursuit of a better way of life abroad (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009; Holland and Martin, 2015).

2.2.2 Overseas adjustment

The importance of one's ability to adjust in making a successful international career has been widely discussed by research into expatriation across industries and academia (Richardson and Zikic, 2007; Bhatti, Battour, and Ismail, 2013). Prior studies also show that the ability of the internationally mobile individuals to blend in could have an impact on their daily life in the host country, the quality of their interaction with others, and perhaps most directly, their performance at work (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Froese, 2012). It is generally agreed that for those working overseas, the likelihood of their career success is often linked to their level of adjustments in the foreign environment, as well as their ability to adhere to the local workplace practices that tend to be filled with norms and perspectives different from what they are used to (Cao et al., 2011). When discussing expatriation adjustment, Selmer (1998) points out the necessity to differentiate psychological adjustment and socio-cultural adjustment. According to her explanation, psychological adjustment refers to the individuals' perceived well-being and sentiments, such as depression, anxiety, and tension, which reflects the individuals' experience in the adjustment process in the subjective sense, whereas socio-cultural adjustment refers to the individuals' behavioural changes resulted from the changes to their attitude when interacting with the local society and its cultural norms, projecting the individuals' ability to adapt. A more prevailing classification of expatriate adjustment was presented by Black and his co-authors (Black and Stephens, 1989; Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou, 1991), who looked at how internationally mobile professionals navigate in a foreign country and categorised cross-cultural adjustment into three types. **General or cultural adjustment** refers to the individuals' approach with adapting to living in a foreign environment; **interaction adjustment** focuses on how the individuals develop relationships with the local people whom they encounter in the surroundings, and **work adjustment** addresses the individuals' performance at the workplace of a different national context. These three types of cross-cultural adjustment helped define the space where the individuals' action to adjust take place, providing useful guidance for this study which has a strong focus on adjustment at work.

2.2.2.1 Overseas adjustment and career success

While having an open mindset is key to cross-cultural adjustment in a foreign country, understanding of the host country's established norms and practices also helps internationally mobile individuals quickly fit into their new communities and flourish in the host country (Selmer, 2006). Researchers explain that cultural sensitivity manifests itself in the individuals' ability to positively understand and appreciate cultural differences and demonstrate effective behaviour in intercultural communications (Chen and Starosta, 2000). With such cultural sensitivity, individuals working overseas appear to function more effectively across different aspects (i.e. general, work, and interaction adjustments) as they tend to respond to cultural differences with a constructive attitude and achieve better performance when facing problems at work (Bhatti, Battour, and Ismail, 2013). And for many internationally mobile professionals, a pragmatic approach to expand their understanding of the local culture is through their acquaintances in the host country, which gives them access to local knowledge, insights, and support required to enhance their overall experiences at and outside the workplace (Schuster and Bader, 2017).

In addition to cultural understanding, command of host country language is believed to be another important tool to facilitate the individuals' adjustment overseas (Takeuchi, Yun and Russell, 2002). It is believed that the level of their local language proficiency has a direct impact not only on how they are received by the people of the host country, but also on how the internationally mobile individuals perceive their roles and identities in the community, which subsequently affects how these internationally mobile professionals are perceived by their peers at work and by the people they encounter in the host country (Zhang, Harzing and Fan, 2017). In Taiwan, Standard Chinese, as the official language, is widely used in the day-to-day communications. And according to Hall (1976), Chinese culture is categorised as a high-context culture in which ‘people are deeply involved with each other...a structure of social hierarchy exists, individual inner feelings are kept…information is widely shared through simple messages with deep meaning’ (Kim, Pan, and Park, 1998, p.509). Such a norm of interpreting messages has rooted deeply in the way native Chinese speakers communicate, which, to those coming from a low-context culture, could bring challenges in taking root in Taiwan. Spoken communication of the native Chinese speakers, in particular, is heavily influenced by established practices including implicit communication, listening-centeredness, politeness, focus on insiders, and face-directed communication strategies (Gao, 1998), which adds an extra layer of complexity to foreigners' verbal communication with the native speakers of Standard Chinese. Therefore, when studying international academics' adjustment in Taiwan, it would be reasonable to also explore the role of cultural awareness and their proficiency of local language. Such discussion helps illustrate their life outside the university campus where prevalence of English language is usually much reduced, contributing to the development of a holistic understanding of their day-to-day experience.

Recognising the importance of inter-cultural literacy and foreign language proficiency in helping internationally mobile professionals to adjust, many organisations introduced pre-departure or in-post training for their employees taking assignment overseas (Selmer, 2006). Such initiatives are believed to positively contribute to the internationally mobile professionals' general adjustment, interaction adjustments, work adjustment, and even job satisfaction (Takeuchi, Yun, and Russell, 2002; Peltokorpi, 2008; Zhang and Peltokorpi, 2016). For self-initiated international work mobility, as organisational support is often absent, tackling overseas adjustment becomes the individuals' responsibility to build their own understanding of the host country culture and equip themselves with the necessary language skills. In academia, individuals pursuing an international career often face similar challenges, especially those moving from established higher education systems to those still in development with very different cultural practices in-between (Lee and Kuzhabekova, 2018). These academics may very well have had relatively little exposure to the host country's culture and language, and there was no university-initiated pre-departure preparation which they can rely on (Forese, 2012; Chapman et al., 2014). Without institutional facilitation, individuals taking on self-initiated international work mobility were required to proactively engage in interactions with the locals to quickly integrate (Tharenou and Caulfield, 2010). As a result, this group sometimes report greater cultural adjustment, better ability to adapt to the host country, and stronger confidence in their capacity to live and work abroad than corporate-assigned expatriates (Doherty et al., 2008; Peltokorpi and Froese, 2009).

Researchers also find that cross-cultural adjustment difficulties can still be observed even if the cultural distance between the host country and one's country of origin appears to be objectively close (Richardson and McKenna, 2002). As the higher education sector rapidly internationalised, the use of English language as lingua franca in academia has also increased significantly. Therefore, one might expect language to be less of a barrier to international academics in their workplace. However, many internationally mobile academics from non-English speaking countries still find themselves struggling to master both second (English) and third (host country) language (Pudelko and Tenzer, 2016). Such finding suggests the need to discuss the role of language when the individuals attempt to truly establish their career across national borders.

2.2.2.2 Overseas adjustment failure

Badly experienced cross-culture adjustment often leads to individuals' premature departure from the host country or return to their home country (Selmer, 1998). Prior research shows that when the individuals working overseas do not get themselves accustomed to the local culture and blend in the host country, fail to observe benefits brought by such experience to their career and/or personal life, or even encounter shocks during their interactions with local people in the host destination, a sense of dissatisfaction appears, which may prompt the prospect of repatriation and push these individuals to relocate or return prior to the previously agreed timeline – commonly defined as expatriate failure (Martinko and Douglas, 1999; Gupta, Banerjee and Gaur, 2012)[1]. Factors causing expatriate failure are manifold, such as the internationally mobile professionals' inability to adjust and adapt to the new environment, the inability of their spouse and children to adjust to the environment of the host country, the individuals' personality or emotional incompetence, and their lack of capabilities to deliver up to the standard at work (Tung, 1987; Lee, 2007). Other researchers argue that, in addition to premature departure (caused by work and non-work reasons), the so-called expatriate failure should also take into account how the under-performing individuals manage to stay in post despite their subjective dissatisfaction at work, whether or not they will be faced with problems upon repatriating to their home country, and the likelihood of them finding new opportunities for employment after that particular international mobility experience (Harzing and Christensen, 2004; Lee, 2007). In other words, the success or failure of an overseas work assignment is not defined until the individuals' completion of the specific journey and their following steps afterwards.

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[1] Some researchers, however, point out that using a single premature departure as an indicator of unsuccessful international mobility experience is narrow and inadequate (Harzing, 1995; Forster, 1997).

Prior studies focusing on expatriation failure of internationally mobile academics also tend to use premature departure as barometers with recommendations for higher education institutions to increase investment in international academic staff adjustment and retention (Schoepp and Forstenlechner, 2010; Schoepp, 2011; Alshammari, 2013; Richardson and Wong, 2018). Research also shows that while the lack of familial adjustment often leads to premature departure of those working overseas, the presence of well-adjusted family members may very well act as motivations for the international academics to remain in the host country (Schoepp and Forstenlechner, 2010).

With that premise, Harzing and Christensen (2004) further challenge the necessity of expatriate failure as a concept and urge that focuses be placed on essential elements contributing to the individuals' performance and turnover. Researchers also argue that the binary divide of success and failure in international work mobility may be inappropriate due to the lack of unilateral definition of expatriation failure and the mismatch with the lived experiences of those individuals working overseas (Brewster et al., 2014). For example, a study on Scandinavian internationally mobile professionals finds that only 10% of those interviewed associate early departure with expatriate failure, whereas more than half of them consider the absence of exposure to a multicultural environment failing in their time overseas (Guttormsen, Francesco, and Chapman, 2018). These findings show that what constitutes failure in international mobility experience can be a highly subjective matter and the formula for success or failure may vary from one individual to another.

2.2.3 Women and international work mobility

Due to women's later entry to workforce, their career development traditionally has not received as much attention as that of men. Looking at expatriation as a type of career development activities, Selmer and Leung (2003) point out that while there has been improvement over the past decades, women's participation in international work mobility generally is far less than that of men. Prior research also examines the causes of the lack of women's undertaking of such activities, mainly a) inaccurate presumptions of women's fit of the job role; b) the individuals' intention to work overseas and the considerations around host destinations; c) women's career disadvantages embedded in the social structure; and d) the organisations' willingness to select female employees for work assignment overseas (Altman and Shortland, 2008; Shortland, 2016).

As self-initiated international work mobility prevails, organisational assignment plays less of a role in women's undertaking of working overseas. Research focusing on gender and expatriation also affirms that in terms of skills and competences, women perform no less, if not better, than their male peers (Liu and Wilson, 2001; Tung, 2004; Shortland, 2016). However, issues facing women in international work mobility remain. In her influential study looking at women's undertaking of overseas assignments (and lack thereof), Adler (1984) shows that location is recognised by the interviewed female participants as a key factor for consideration, and the concerns are mostly around safety and general reception of women in the local culture. On one hand, there is the misperception that women have less appetite for an international career than men (Tung, 1998; Wang and Bu, 2004). On the other hand, for those women who did undertake work assignment overseas, especially the married ones, their decision for so doing was usually overarched by familial considerations, sometimes much more so than by career considerations (Corby and Stanworth, 2009). For example, Adler (1984) finds that women are more likely to reject work opportunities overseas if employment cannot be arranged for their spouse in the host countries, or if their children do not have access to suitable education. Prior research also shows that familial elements continue to challenge women involved in international work mobility, both corporate-assigned and self-initiated; even if they manage to lead a dual career life with their spouse, balancing between an international career and family care duty at home persists an issue for women (Linehan and Walsh, 1999; Liu and Wilson, 2001).

Similar discussions around gender and mobility are also observed in academia. Women's relatively limited access (as opposed to men's) to career opportunities in academia has drawn much debate (Dubois-Shaik, and Fusulier, 2017; Angervall, Gustafsson, and Silfver, 2018), and just as witnessed in the corporate world, women's role as caregivers of their family is an issue for those working in academia (Jöns, 2011). Overseas employment opportunities tend to prevail at lecturer, assistant professor, and associate professor levels as universities expect the recruited individuals to fulfil the need for English-taught courses while producing sizable, quality research (Lee and Kuzhabekova, 2018; Chang, 2021). These requirements made early-career female academics less competitive in such job competition, as they are in the life stage where attention is required to care for their children and spouse (Tzanakou, 2017). Based on that premise, fewer female academics take employment overseas than their male peers. For example, female academics comprise around 20% of the total international faculty in Taiwan (Chang, 2021).

Other studies focusing on other Asian countries have also shown similar results. Japan sees that slightly more than one in four of its international academics are female (Huang, 2021). In China, the male and female ratio amongst international academics is close to 7:1 (Wu and Huang, 2021). These findings will guide the examination of the experience of those female academics working and living in Taiwan, with an attempt to understand the enablers and constraints of their pursuit of an academic career overseas.

2.3 Social capital and international work mobility

The above review on motivations for international work mobility show that the ability to understand and connect with the host country surroundings plays a key role in the internationally mobile professionals' local adjustment. These discussions prompt the necessity to examine the individuals' social capital, which allows access to resources and the social support to help with their achievement in both work and personal domain (Mäkelä and Suutari, 2009; Bauder, 2020; Xu et al., 2022). In this section, I will review the construct of social capital and how it facilitates the development of an international academic career and a fulfilling international work mobility experience.

2.3.1 Social capital theory

Since the 1980's, much attention has been given to the concept of social capital, following Bourdieu's analysis of the varied forms of capital (1986). Bourdieu states that it would not be possible to understand how the social world is organised and run 'unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognised by economy theory' (Bourdieu, 1986, p.242). He categorises assets embedded in relationships into a) economic capital, which equates to monetary value through the form of property rights, b) cultural capital, which, with certain conditions, could convert into economic capital and manifests itself in the form of education and qualifications, and c) social capital, which, similarly, could also generate economic value in some conditions and 'may be institutionalised in the form of a title of nobility' (Bourdieu, 1986, p.243), meaning that social capital can exist in the form of reputation or social status derived from restricted memberships in specific networks (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Elaborating on social capital, Bourdieu defined it as 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and mutual recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word' (Bourdieu, 1986, p.248).

Building on Bourdieu’s work, Coleman (1988) examines the role of social capital in the formation of human capital. In this highly cited work, social capital is defined as ‘a particular kind of resource available to an actor’ (Coleman, 1988, p.98) that exists in relations amongst persons and enables certain achievements of individuals. He further explains the various forms in which social capital is available to individuals; when social capital functions as obligation, expectations, and trustworthiness of structures, it enables individuals to accumulate credits amongst their circle, which can be used to entice exchange of action towards their desired outcomes. Social capital also manifests itself as information channels through which the individuals’ social relations provide them with access to information that is of value to these individuals. Lastly, Coleman points out that social capital can also be seen in the norms and sanctions that dictates individuals’ behaviour in accordance with collective interest or the public good, such as prohibiting crime to enable a safe environment for people to walk around or rewarding behaviours that contribute to the community’s development.

Source and dimensions of social capital

Prior research seeing social capital inherent in the networks of mutual acquaintance recognise the strength of ‘weak ties’ (Granovetter, 1973) for their capacity to provide network members access to information and opportunities through the contacts and connections existing in those networks (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Researchers focusing on the function of social capital (Burt, 1992; Putman, 2000; Levin and Cross, 2004) indicate that weak ties (i.e. bridging social capital) serve to bridge subgroups that would be otherwise disconnected, facilitate the flow and exchange of knowledge and perspectives, and expand one’s networks of key individuals such as mentors and collaborators. At their best, weak ties function to enhance one’s social capital with its provision of resources, influence, and support that may in turn contribute to the growth of partnerships, knowledge transfer, and organisational performance (Granovetter, 1973, 1983; Levin and Cross, 2004). Moreover, as opposed to strong ties (i.e. bonding social capital) that infer the closedness of networks with little potential to diversify and difficult to maintain (Putman, 2000; Norris, 2002; Claridge, 2018a), weak ties that bridge different social groups or communities have much greater flexibility and adaptability to allow formation of networks that support dissemination of information, broadening of perspectives, and creation of opportunities, leading to one’s enhanced development of social capital (Granovetter, 1973; Burt, 1992). Researchers studying social capital based on social structure, relations and networks amongst individual actors also attempt to understand the essence and properties of social capital, and how social capital may be strengthened (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Robison, Schmid, and Siles, 2002; Barthauer, Spurk, and Kauffeld, 2016). Pointing out that social capital may be leveraged to fit one's purpose, Adler and Kwon (2002, p.32) refer to this utilitarian value as the 'task contingencies' of social capital. Acknowledging social network as a source of social capital, Burt (2004, 2017) further argues this structural social capital may help individuals mobilise resources required to deal with complex tasks.

The widely cited work on the different dimensions of social capital by Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) provides a framework for understanding social capital and usefully informs the analysis of social capital in its various manifestations and forms. Each of the dimensions – structural, cognitive, and relational – represents distinct characteristics in social capital, and collectively, these different dimensions help unpack the complexity involved in the function of social capital. To elaborate, structural social capital, referring to the existence of network and ties, illustrates the pattern or configuration of connections and linkages between people or units, which are tangible and can be observed in the form of roles, rules, and procedures (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Claridge, 2018b). Cognitive social capital, indicating the subjective interpretations of common understandings, manifests in the individuals' adaptation of a set of 'shared language, codes, and narratives' (Lee, et al., 2019, p.10) that serves to be the foundation for communications. Through the shared values, paradigms and common understandings that it conveys, cognitive social capital also provides a set of norms of acceptable behaviour (Anderson and Jack, 2002). Relational social capital, meanwhile, relays the nature and quality of the relationships developed through a series of interaction and shows in behavioural traits such as trustworthiness, shared group norms, obligations and identification (Davenport and Daellenbach 2011). Relational social capital, representing trust, reciprocity, obligations, expectations and even friendship (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Gooderham 2007), encourages normative behaviours based on these qualities. In summary, social capital can be understood in three distinctive dimensions: structural (relating to connections amongst actors), cognitive (relating to shared goals and values amongst actors, and relational (relating to trust amongst actors) (Claridge, 2018b). Structural social capital tends to be tangible and can be observed through the presence of networks of connections. Cognitive and relational social capital, both intangible and emerging from observation, perception, and opinion, manifest in varying forms subject to different individuals and contexts (see Table 1). The framework of dimensions of social capital benefits this study for it helps understand when social capital becomes available to the internationally mobile academics and how it functions in a range of settings including development of international careers and adaptation to local life.

Table 1. Dimensions of Social Capital

Dimension	**Structural**	**Cognitive**	**Relational**
Characteristics	Social structure	Shared understanding	Nature and quality of relationships
Manifestation	• Network ties and configuration • Roles, rules, precedents, and procedures	• Shared language, codes, and narratives • Shared values, attitudes, and beliefs	• Trust and trustworthiness • Norms and sanctions • Obligations and expectations • Identity and identification
Form	Tangible	Intangible	Intangible

Source: author's adaptation from Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) and Claridge (2018b)

External social capital vs. internal social capital

Relations and networks are important in the formation of social capital also leads to debates around the externality and internality of these ties and how external social capital and internal social capital function respectively (Mäkelä and Suutari, 2009; Cuevas-Rodríguez, Cabello-Medina, and Carmona-Lavado, 2014; Chen et al., 2016). External social capital functions to bridge an actor to other actors through the social network and helps examine the interaction between and the position of individuals and/or organisations in the context of competition. Internal social capital, however, focuses on the substance from within a collectivity that serves to bond the individuals of the collectivity to act towards a shared purpose (Adler and Kwon, 2002).

Applied at the individual level, the concept of external and internal social capital helps build the understanding of how individuals utilise social capital, based on the scope and directions of the relationships they possess, to benefit their goals. For example, in his widely cited work, Granovetter (1973) points out that weak ties in one's social network (i.e. external social capital) performs more effectively for individuals in job finding and career advancement, as the external social capital provides access to new opportunities, ideas and knowledge, and presence and influence. Similarly, the discussions on social structure and structural holes by Burt (1992, 2004, 2007) reveal that individuals who can act as intermediaries to connect different groups or individuals have better access to opportunity, which consequently granting them greater external social capital to gain information and career advantages. Internal social capital at the individual level, meanwhile, manifests in strong, trust-based relationships in one's close social circle in the form of trust and norms (Adler and Kwon, 2002). Focusing on the individuals' immediate environment, internal social capital refers to resources and benefits available within one's organisation or from their family, friends, and colleagues, which provide access to information, knowledge, insights, support, and mentorship to enhance their growth and performance (Tsai and Ghoshal, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Yu et al., 2013; Choi, 2019). This focus on individuals' connections within their close circle brings out the related concept of 'guanxi', which in the Chinese cultural setting refers to a mixture of personal relations individuals possess that are regarded as essential assets for its capacity to offer valuable social resources to the actor (Ip, 2008; Zhai, 2009). In research into guanxi, Chang (2010) examines what keeps the social support network working in the Chinese cultural context and concludes that the concept of 'li shang wang lai' (禮尚往來), which translates to 'reciprocity' in English, is essential in the functioning of guanxi in Chinese-speaking societies. With this linkage, guanxi can be seen as a form of internal social capital for its reciprocal nature and its capacity to positively influence knowledge sharing when trust is the prerequisite of the act of sharing (Yen, Tseng, and Wang, 2015). While the concept of guanxi has been applied to research into corporate behaviour and business operation in China and Taiwan (Jo, 2006; Hwang et al., 2009; Bien and Zhang 2013; Yong, 2015), its relevance to internal social capital in particular is of interest to this study as it has the potential to help understand how internationally mobile academics adjust to working and living in Taiwan through relationship building to acquire knowledge, resources, and opportunities.

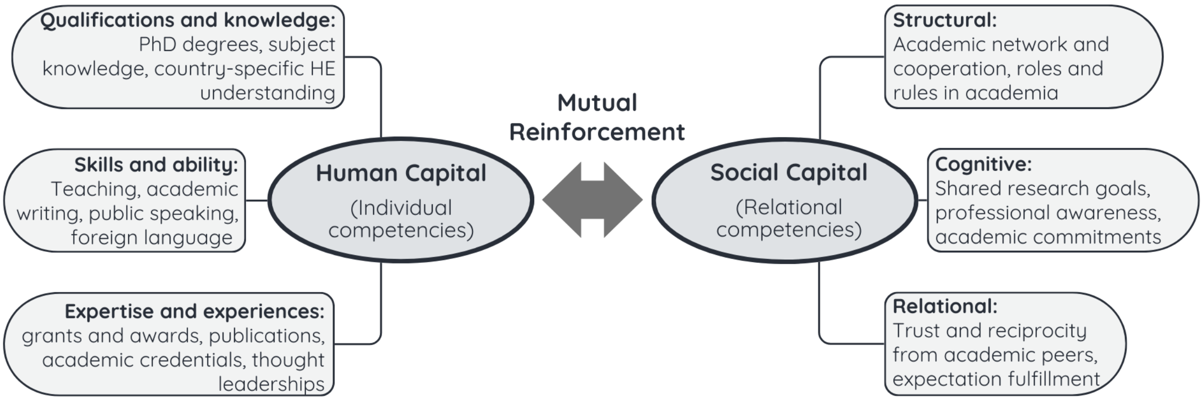
Research shows that external social capital and internal social capital are not cleanly divided and can work simultaneously. The combined function of external and internal social capital plays a significant role to help individuals perform positively in settings ranging from competing for leadership positions (Kim and Cannella, 2008), driving organisational innovation (Chen et al., 2016), improving product development (Cuevas-Rodríguez, Cabello-Medina, and Carmona-Lavado, 2014), and securing financial support from the general public (Liao, Zhu, and Liao, 2015). When discussing career success in general, Seibert, Kraimer and Lidenv (2001) argue that individuals integrating external and internal social capital benefit from the enhanced access to information, resources, and career mentorship that are essential to one's financial reward, promotions, and satisfaction throughout their careers. Therefore, this study will not distinguish between external and internal social capital and instead will address both forms of social capital as a collectivity.

2.3.2 Social capital and human capital

Prior research recognises the value of social capital but also notes that social capital is not always self-sufficient. The presence of other complementary resources, such as other preconditions, can either increase or impede the value of social capital (Schuller, 2001; 2007). This dependency on other forms of capital, such as economic capital and human capital, is referred to as the 'complementary contingencies' of social capital (Adler and Kwon, 2002). For example, while there may be much social capital (e.g. opportunities and resources) embedded in one's social networks, it takes the individuals' skills and/or capabilities, which some considered as human capital (McCallum and O'Connell, 2009; Melkers and Kiopa, 2010) to make use of those opportunities and resources. These studies echo Coleman's (1998) statement that social capital facilitates the formation of human capital, suggesting a need to further explore the relationships between social and human capital.

This study examines internationally mobile academics' social capital. An important area of discussion is the relationship between individuals' social capital and their human capital, guided by prior studies that have used social capital to facilitate the investigation of human capital. According to Coleman (1988), human capital is created when there are changes allowing individuals to acquire new skills and capabilities to enable different actions, and social capital materialises via changes in the relations amongst individuals that facilitate new actions. McCallum and O'Connell (2009) refer to human capital as individual competencies, which include experience, education, skills, etc. Meanwhile, they describe social capital as relational competencies, which manifests in the form of social awareness, self-management, building network, trust, and goodwill, etc. In academia, human capital is seen as the aggregation of qualifications and knowledge, skills and ability, expertise and experiences that the individuals deploy to ensure their productive and effective performance in activities such as research, teaching, and other academic service (García-Carbonell et al., 2021; Ballesteros-Rodríguez, et al, 2022). Involving both tangible (e.g. qualifications and skills) and intangible (e.g. understanding and experiences) features that may increase the individuals' ability to create and distribute knowledge, human capital is also seen as playing a pivotal role in movement of scientists involved in these activities (Cañibano, Otamendi, and Andújar, 2008; Cañibano and Woolley, 2015). As academics accumulate human capital through education, competencies, and credential, the various dimensions of their social capital are observed in various manifestations including academic network and cooperation (structural), awareness and shared understanding of an international academic career (cognitive), and establishment of trust and reciprocal expectations to benefit international work mobility (relational) (Claridge, 2018b; Bauder, 2020; Momeni et al., 2022). Informed by prior research (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; McCallum and O'Connell, 2009; Claridge, 2018b; García-Carbonell et al., 2021), Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between human and social capital and their key manifestations in the academic context.

Figure 1. Relationship between Human Capital and Social Capital in academia


Qualifications and knowledge:
PhD degrees, subject knowledge, country-specific HE understanding
Skills and ability:
Teaching, academic writing, public speaking, foreign language
Expertise and experiences:
grants and awards, publications, academic credentials, thought leaderships
Human Capital
(Individual competencies)
Mutual Reinforcement
Social Capital
(Relational competencies)
Structural:
Academic network and cooperation, roles and rules in academia
Cognitive:
Shared research goals, professional awareness, academic commitments
Relational:
Trust and reciprocity from academic peers, expectation fulfillment

Source: the author

While human capital, compared to physical capital (such as money and property), is intangible and embedded in one's knowledge and skills, social capital appears to be even more intangible as it sits in the relations between individuals. Schuller (2001) pointed out a key distinction between human and social capital is their focuses on different entities. While human capital places strong emphasis on the individual agents, social capital sees the importance of relationships between these individual agents and the networks they form. Crane and Hartwell (2019) recognise the lack of consideration of relational dimensions as existing studies tend to focus by large on individuals' human capital and point out that individuals' social capital can decide how their human capital is suppressed, compensated, enhanced, or multiplied.

Despite their different focuses, human and social capital function in complementarity. Echoing Coleman (1988) that social capital can be employed to create human capital, McCallum and O'Connell (2009) state that the improved human capital capability, such as communication skills, may lead to enhanced social capital, whereas increased social capital, such as trust within the workplace, may strengthen one's human capital (see Figure 1), showing that between social capital and human capital, it forms a life cycle which means that human capital and social capital mutually feeds to the growth of the other (Flap, 2002; Crane and Hartwell, 2019).

The relationship between human capital and social capital was also examined in research into career mobility and organisational performance (Lin and Huang, 2005; Cabello-Medina, López-Cabrales and Valle-Cabrera, 2011; Felício, Couto, and Caiado, 2014). Studying performance of three financial companies, Lin and Huang (2005) find that stronger social capital (which refers to the individuals' centrality in social networks) are seen to have a positive influence over one's career development potentials, which reinforces their human capital and leads to better career outcomes. Exploring the role of human and social capital in corporate performance in innovation, Cabello-Medina and her co-authors point out that social capital has an indirect influence on innovation through the individuals' human capital including learning potential, interpersonal skills, and decision-making involvement. Felício, Couto, and Caiado (2014), focusing on performance of corporate managers, confirm the existence of positive mutual reinforcement between these managers' human capital (e.g. knowledge, experience, professional proficiency and cognitive ability) and social capital (including status, interlinking and family support, personal and social relations), positively affecting companies' performance in business growth and profitability.

These prior studies show that organisations can be benefactors of their employees' collective social capital and human capital, leading to proactive initiatives taken by organisations to cultivate the growth of employees' human and social capital (Cabello-Medina, López-Cabrales and Valle-Cabrera, 2011). Informed by the prior research, this study set to understand how the internationally mobile academics' social capital, aided by human capital, functions in the context of higher education sector in Taiwan.

2.3.3 Applying social capital in empirical research

As widely as social capital is applied to a variety of research topics to help develop understanding of social phenomenon, it also draws criticism. Some economists have reservations regarding the value of social capital as they consider capital to be something that can be transferred, but it appears to be difficult for the ownership of social capital to be passed from one to another (Andriani and Christoforou, 2016). Some researchers are concerned with it being used to envelop an unnecessarily wide range of discussions due to its ''elastic' (Lappe and Du Bois, 1997, p.119) nature. Robison, Schmid, and Siles (2002) therefore recommend that when using social capital as an analytical construct, precision of its definition should be in place. This means that researchers should only use the term ‘social capital’ to describe interpersonal relationships and resources that are associated with such relationships so that social capital does not become ‘the ether that fills the universe’ (Robison, Schmid, and Siles, 2002, p.1).

The application of social capital, as well as how social capital functions in a range of contexts, has drawn the attention of researchers in various fields. In political science and economics, researchers notice that social capital is often labelled as norms, values, and attitudes, whereas in sociology and other applied social sciences including management, social capital is used to explore understanding of social structures and their derivations (Foley and Edwards, 1999; Payne et al., 2011). Building on the established interpretation of social capital as networks and interpersonal relations, a wide variety of research has been conducted through the social capital lens to examine social phenomena at individual, team, and organisational levels. The extended use of social capital as a form of property that collective actors (such as communities or nations) can mobilise to drive performance has, however, raised debates (Portes, 1998; Portes and Landolt, 2000; Schuller, 2007), especially around the effectiveness and appropriateness of applying social capital to inform social policy making. Noting social capital as ‘an ambiguous emergence’, Schuller (2007, p.11) reiterates the importance of considering the social and economic dynamics of the context to ensure the best utility of social capital as a framework for analysis. That is to say, the application of social capital as a tool for analysis may not be standardised in the same way across context, and therefore it takes extra scrutiny when applying social capital to the analysis of issues of national scale.

Based on the above, this study sees social capital as a resource (i.e., matter, energy, or information converted into specific forms for attaining goals) embedded in relationships amongst people, be it externally with professional communities or internally within family circles, upon which they can draw to provide information or other resources or to facilitate activity of social or personal benefit (Bubolz, 2001). With this knowledge, this research project intends to conduct an empirical study to understand the role of social capital in international academics’ mobility experience in the higher education sector in Taiwan, which can be seen as part of the knowledge industries, to facilitate the individuals’ adjustment and achievement. In this study that focuses on academic career and mobility experience, the discussion of how social capital functions in generation of knowledge and innovation is of relevance and will be further explored in the next section.

2.3.4 Social capital, knowledge creation, and career development in academia

Prior studies confirm that individuals' social capital, through the interaction with human capital, facilitates positive performance. Ample discussions show that social capital residing in social networks and interactions with key stakeholders, such suppliers, customers, and other actors in the environment, help the generation of collaborative knowledge that is of great value in enhancing business proactiveness or community advancement (Sheng and Hartono, 2015; Zhao Ha, and Widdows, 2016; Al-Omoush, Simón-Moya, and Sendra-García, 2020). In knowledge creation, social capital also plays an essential role for its capacity to enable collaboration, exchange knowledge, and foster innovation. As illustrated in Figure 1, structural social capital operates in the form of the academics' network ties that connect them with other fellow academics and research organisations to enable collaboration. Cognitive social capital serves to form shared research goals and academic commitments to allow efficient communications of ideas. Relational social capital, meanwhile, functions to build trust, norms, and mutual respect that facilitate behaviours for knowledge creation and innovation (Claridge, 2018b; Bauder, 2020; Momeni et al., 2022). The way social capital is utilised to contribute to the advancement of knowledge or scientific development is also therefore observed by researchers (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Reagans and McEvily, 2003; Burt, 2004). Reagans and McEvily (2003) point out the level of embeddedness in social networks and the range of the social networks facilitates individuals' participation in knowledge transfer activities. Examining the role of social capital and creativity expressed by members of the organisation, Burt (2004) defines individuals occupying structural holes and connecting different groups within the organisation as a form of social capital for their unique position to access a wider set of thinking and behaviour across these different groups and concludes that people possessing such social capital, owing to their exposure to 'diverse, often contradictory, information and interpretations,' (Burt, 2004, p.388) are more likely to be rated highly on creativity for the good ideas they present, affirming the importance of structural holes in social capital theory.

In academia, positive performance is often linked to the knowledge creation activities including academics' research productivity, involvement in interdisciplinary collaboration, and access to intellectual resources (Moody, 2004; Lee and Bozeman, 2005). Research has also explored the role of social capital in the academics' performance and career development. Haeussler (2011) believes that cognitive social capital encourages one-on-one sharing of information amongst scientists as they work towards common research goals, and relational social capital facilitates the advancement of open science in the research community as the researchers respond to meet peer expectation or create reciprocity to fellow researchers. Recognising social capital's much-desired feature to benefit research performance, Benbow and Lee (2019) point out that academics who effectively mobilise social capital to enhance their own performance often experience better career development. Moreover, the forms of social capital utilised by academics vary on a case-by-case basis. Gonzalez-Brambila (2014) points out that social capital best contributes to the generation of new knowledge when it is centred in a loose yet extensive academic network consisting of wide-ranging area experts. Studying academics of ethnic minority, Williams and Williams (2006) suggest that proactive action-taking in building academic community helps access the social capital that benefits the individuals' pursuit of promotion and tenure. Focusing on countries with centralised academic systems, Pezzoni, Sterzi and Lissoni (2012) indicate that the academics' social capital at institutional level (i.e. connections with key research organisations) and individual level (i.e. close collaborations with established senior researchers) is essential to career progression.

The influence of social capital on the development of an academic career is evident even before individuals formally begin their professional careers. Melkers and Kiopa (2010) point out that an individual's journey of becoming a scientist plays a decisive factor in one's future career development in academia. Previous experiences individuals gathered throughout their education and training help strengthen their social capital to attract other members of the professional community and enable interactions with others. Therefore, 'scientists with international experiences will be more likely to have collaborative networks of international scope' (Melkers and Kiopa, 2010, p.391). In this narrative, social capital assumes a pivotal role as enabler of the academics' international career development. As their international networks expand, the academics' access to more opportunities and resources, i.e. social capital residing in those networks, increase, which subsequently strengthens their willingness to and preparedness for engaging in international mobility that was thought to have a positive influence on the development of a career in academia. For example, the empirical study by Gonzalez-Brambila (2014) observes that researchers who have a more open, interdisciplinary academic network and higher mobility tend to have better research development. Similarly, Netz, Hampel, and Aman (2020) conclude in their systematic review that academics with international mobility experiences were found to have more extensive international networks that contribute to better career development.

The discussions above often focus on how international mobility strengthens academics' social capital, which in turn benefits their career development. In some cases, social capital acts as the catalyst to international mobility which then helps development of international careers of academics. Xu and her co-authors (2022) confirm that social capital in the form of personal connections, special status attached to their foreignness, and pre-existing social networks, enable the academics' pursuit of career progression through international work mobility. Research also shows that international academics' social capital, such as conformity to social context and appreciation of social norms, facilitates better adaptation to established practices at the workplace (Pherali, 2012), contributing to more confidence in career development in the host country. These prior studies help unpack the role of social capital in international mobility and career development in academia. As Bauder (2020) states, social capital drives international mobility which in turn creates more international social capital, increases academic performance, and leads to career advancement. This mobility is viewed as the academics' human capital, manifested through experiences, which then reinforces their social capital. With this study, Bauder (2020) presents yet another example of the mutually facilitating relationship between human capital and social capital and confirms the positive influence of social capital on international work mobility.

2.3.5 Social capital and gender in academia

Social capital is used to link the individuals' connections and their professional performance in academia (Melkers and Kiopa, 2010; Gonzalez-Brambila, 2014; Bauder, 2020). Similar to the findings from research focusing on industry and business (Burt, 2004; Bartsch, Ebers, and Maurer, 2013), those who possess strong capital through social networks are better equipped to create more knowledge (Gonzalez-Brambila, 2014). Amongst factors believed to affect an individual's formation of social capital, gender is one that draws attention from the literature (Timberlake, 2005; Abramo, D'Angelo, and Caprasecca, 2009). In general, women face more challenges when pursuing career progression in the workplace due to their relatively poorer access to social capital. This is said to be a result of the traditional gender segregation in organisations, meaning that women are less central in male dominated networks that provide opportunities and resources. Women are therefore disadvantaged in accumulating and mobilising social capital essential to career development (Timberlake, 2005), which may help explain why there are differential outcomes in the career progression and involvement in career progression and international work mobility of male and female professionals.

In academia, gender differences in the creation of social capital are also observed (van Emmerik, 2006; Abramo, D'Angelo, and Di Costa, 2009; Barthauer, Spurk, and Kauffeld, 2016; Angervall, Gustafsson, and Silfver, 2018). van Emmerik (2006) finds that male academics perform better at creating hard social capital and their ability to create soft social capital is as effective as that of their female colleagues. Gersick, Dutton, and Bartunek (2000, p.1028) define hard social capital as 'advice, contacts, coaching, protection, and advocacy' that provides instrumental career help, soft social capital as 'counselling, friendship, and role modelling' that offers emotional support. Findings by van Emmerik (2006) challenge the gender stereotypes where women are thought to be emotional specialists with better ability to accumulate social capital in various forms compared with their male colleagues in the professional context. Šandl (2009) explains that such understanding may be counteracted by 'old boy's networks.' Consisting of groups of individuals with decision making power over other's rank, status, position and access to opportunities, this type of networks present structural disadvantage and drive differences between genders in social capital at work (Šandl, 2009; McDonald, 2011). Casad and her co-authors (2021) note that female academics in STEM (i.e. science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) subjects tend to have lower social capital due to limited exposure to networks and elimination from professional, influential circle. This gender disparity in social capital subsequently affects women's chance to secure tenure and fundings.

Despite the above discussions on gender equity and social capital, gender-specific knowledge that could further inform the understanding of social capital and career development through international mobility is generally rare across the academic community (Barthauer, Spurk and Kauffeld, 2016). Focusing on hiring decisions by universities, Schröder, Lutter and Habicht, (2021, p.3) indicate that women may suffer from their lack of 'access to predominantly male academic networks' which are comprised of members with critical insider knowledge about the jobs. The disadvantageous position of female academics in employment leads to the observation that women also face greater challenges in forming social capital to benefit career development through international mobility. Seeing international work mobility as a form of academic career success, Kholis (2018), point out that women's involvement in building network to accumulate social capital tends to be less effective. Owing to the organisational constraints (related to male dominated networks) and family duties, the effort of social capital on career success is moderated by gender. These prior studies provide guidance on what this study may focus on to understand the gender differences, if any, when exploring how social capital helps the internationally academics in Taiwan manage their mobility experience both at the workplace and in daily life.

2.4 Concluding remarks

In this literature review, I looked at the motivation and adjustment of individuals working and living overseas. Mirroring prior research into work mobility in general, academics are often committed to working overseas for reasons including career development prospects, family considerations, financial rewards, and preferred way of life (Richardson and Mallon, 2005; Doherty et al., 2011; Froese, 2012; Lee and Kuzhabekova, 2018). Overseas adjustment at the workplace, in daily interaction, and in cultural setting in general, is seen crucial to the international academics' career success (Forese, 2012; Chapman et al., 2014; Lee and Kuzhabekova, 2018). The construct of social capital in the context of academia was also examined in this Chapter, focusing on how social capital facilitates career development and mobility experience in academia. Focusing on the three dimensions – structural, cognitive, and relational – of social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Claridge, 2018b), as well as the externality and internality of social ties, I discussed how the academics' human capital (i.e. individual competencies) functions to facilitate international academic mobility and knowledge distribution (McCallum and O'Connell, 2009; Cañibano, Otamendi, and Andújar, 2008; Cañibano and Woolley, 2015). Linking human capital and social capital (see Figure 1), I provided a summary of key manifestations of two forms of capital in the academic context, leading to the discussion of the role of social capital in encouraging positive performance and career development in academia.

This Chapter provided a theoretical preparation for this research, informs a research design well suited to gather data required for analysis to understand the phenomenon of internationally mobile academics working in universities in Taiwan, and identified the under-researched areas in research into international work mobility of academics. In the next Chapter, I will present the rationale of research methodology and methodological decisions made for the implementation of this research project.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to understand the phenomenon of international academics working in Taiwan, with a focus on these academics' motivation to work overseas, overseas adjustment and perceived success, and acquisition of support, and theorise how their access to social capital played out in the mobility journey. In this chapter, I will provide details on design of research and the logic behind the methodological decisions made. This Chapter argues the suitability of taking a constructivist epistemological approach for this qualitative research to conduct an empirical study through in-depth interviews. To achieve the aims of the study, I follow Robinson's (2014) sampling framework for data collection and the Gioia Method (rooted from grounded theory) (Langley and Abdallah, 2011; Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2012) for data analysis. To demonstrate rigor, I incorporate actions recommended by prior research (Houghton et al., 2013; Anney, 2014) to address credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to ensure the aspects of quality, or trustworthiness, of this study are addressed.

3.2 Research philosophy

An understanding of different research philosophies in management research provides researchers with valuable insights to the options for one's research design and methodological approach, and the implications of these choices. Karami, Rowley, and Analoui (2006), having reviewed over a hundred articles published in major journals of business and management studies, noted that since the latter half of the last century, there has been a changing dominance of positivism and constructivism in the generation of management knowledge, so has the researchers' choice of research methods. Positivists believe that, despite the human perception or belief, there exists a single reality which could only be measured and described by objective evaluation of knowledge (Alkove and McCarty, 1992; Mackenzie, 2011). Constructivists, on the other hand, see the reality as being subjective with multiple perspectives and constructed by the individuals through their interactions with themselves, the others, and the environment (Alkove and McCarty, 1992; Mackenzie, 2011). In the field of management research, scholars assuming positivist perspectives are often inspired by natural sciences and their objectivity and demonstration of causal relations among variables. The attempt to produce generalisable knowledge often results in researchers adopting hypothetico-deductive approach to test management theories with facts obtained from the external world with a neutral perspective, leading to their choice of quantitative methods, such as surveys and statistical analysis (Duberley, Johnson, and Cassell, 2012). Scholars with constructivist perspectives, in order to understand how the individuals that are being studied construct meaning in the specific given contexts, are inclined to adopt qualitative methods, such as interviews and case studies, to address the subjective nature of human beings as agents in the management phenomena that are being investigated by the researchers (Creswell and Poth, 2016). Constructivism also allows researchers to demonstrate their subjectivity and relativity in the research process. Accompanied by the qualitative approaches, constructivism gives the researchers the voice to reflect on the perspectives and discourses involved through their personal lens based on the context where they situate (Duberley, Johnson, and Cassell, 2012). What is often linked to constructivism is social constructionism. While the former recognises that the construction of meaning is through the individuals' cognition, the latter asserts that meaning making is a social process through interactions amongst social groups (Young and Collin, 2004). Both constructivism and social constructionism disagree that there is a single truth independent from the human being's perceptions, however, there are nuanced differences in their views of how knowledge is created based on the individual experiences (constructivism) or social interactions (social constructionism) (Raskin, 2002; Young and Collin, 2004).

Linking the above findings to the context of and questions asked by this study, the perspective adopted here is that of constructivism. With the constructivist lens, I acknowledge the diversity and individuality of international academics and understands the risk of trying to conclude generalized statements in the absence of a dialectical process with this cohort. To achieve the intended purpose of this study, it is important to capture the experiences of the international academics in Taiwan and their personal observations to understand how they assess their own adjustment and performance. The voice of those who have lived the experiences therefore becomes vital, and this very importance and necessity of registering the subjective views of the cohort of study, i.e. the international academics in Taiwan, suggests the appropriateness of employing qualitative methods. As I seek to understand how this group of academics make sense of their surroundings through analysing their own words, the adoption of qualitative methods like in-depth interviews not only supports this research's constructivist epistemological stance (Creswell and Poth, 2016; Bogna, Raineri and Dell, 2020) but also fosters an environment where the interviewees may extensively express their ideas and meanings to help the researchers form a deeper understanding of the phenomenon which they investigate (Mojtahed et al., 2014).

Prior researchers argue that combining quantitative and qualitative methods serves to avoid the weaknesses of each (Kelle, 2006). For example, statistical analyses may be performed to a set of quantitative data several times before the researchers discover supporting evidence (Malina, Nørreklit and Selto, 2011). Considering the nature and the scope of this study, I intend to apply a single method approach to this research project and use interviews to collect data, reasons being manifold. First, mixed methods are most beneficial when researchers intend to undertake comparative analysis and at the same time develop aspects of the study (Almeida, 2018). This research project, however, focuses on building the understanding of internationally mobile academics in Taiwan that currently has not been thoroughly studied, qualitative single method approach, therefore, appears to be more suitable. Combined with other advantages including access to the object of this study (i.e. the international academics in Taiwan) and practicality around the implementation of data collection (i.e. interviews with a smaller group of individuals versus surveys or questionnaires with a larger group), the application of qualitative single method approach serves to strike the balance between fitness to purpose and resource implications.

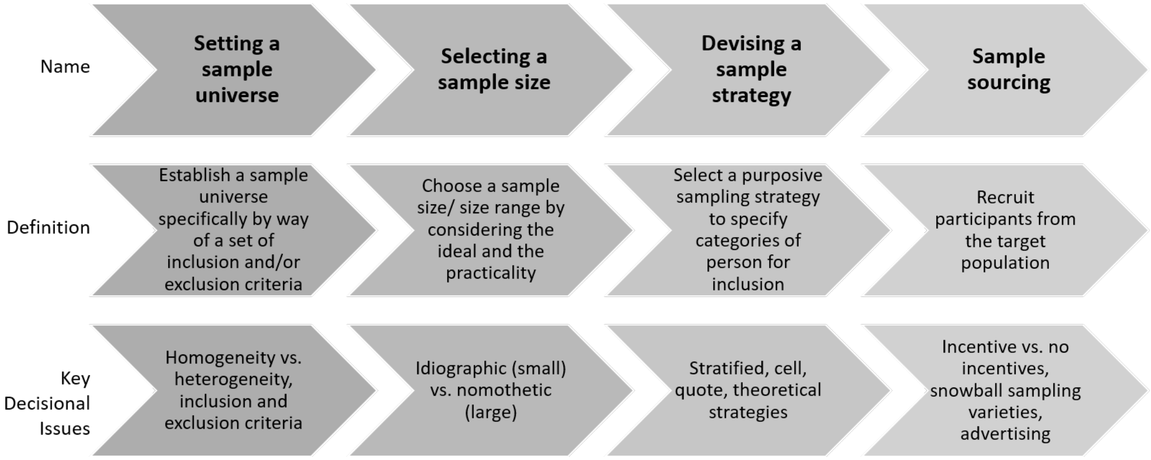
The benefit of using interviews in social science research has been widely discussed in the past. Interviews allow the interviewees to express extensively their views in their own words, which is essential for constructivists who assert the individuals' perception being the key to knowledge formation (Young and Collin, 2004). In-depth interviews, in particular, help researchers to keep their interviewees focused and narrow down their sharing to aspects that are relevant to researchers' interests, which then subsequently enhance the quality and integrity of data and reduce the level of challenges one may encounter in the stage of data coding and analysis (Rabionet, 2011; Doody and Noonan, 2013). The use of in-depth interviews is especially effective in helping researchers to understand phenomena that are emerging or have not been widely researched upon, as in-depth interviews serve to explore subjective perceptions of the individuals, allow the researchers to adapt to emerging data and themes to build theories, and capture the nuances in contexts and individual experiences (Rivas and Gibson-Light, 2016; Osborne and Grant-Smith, 2021). In their research into insurance accounting and reporting policies in the UK and Europe, Horton, Macve and Struyven (2004) pointed out that as such discussion was considered a novelty at the time of the study, using interviews to collect the initial thoughts from key individuals allowed them to establish what questions to be asked to understand the policy changes. Similarly, in the study discussing how staff members perceived their input and reward at the workplace in the increasingly commercialised higher education setting, Bathmaker (1999) acknowledged the emerging role of managerialism in university operation which many still found alien. The research recognises the need to capture academics' personal reflection and observation of the environment they situated, which led to the choice of interviews as research method for the benefit of 'go[ing] way beyond a mere exchange of information' as the discussions 'give insights into an interpretative understanding of human activities…to better understand the meaning an individual attributes to his or her social world through an examination of a person's belief and value system' (Bathmaker, 1999, p. 271). In previous research into international academics, interviews also appeared to have been widely applied to help researchers to not only depict the experience of international academics in different higher education systems through the voice of international academics themselves but also identify areas that both the interviewees and the researchers wish to explore in-depth during the conversations (Richardson and McKenna, 2002; Froese, 2012; Austin et al., 2014; Clarke, 2015). Given that research into international academics in Taiwan is still in its relatively early stage and expected to further develop in the future, I adopt in-depth interviews for this research to firstly focus on establishing fundamental understanding of the cohort of international academics in-country before theorising a framework to represent the phenomenon.

To keep the in-depth interviews in certain structure in terms of the topics covered and actual questions asked, I took actions to ensure comprehensive research preparation and careful management of data collection. On the one hand, interviews that encourage openness from both the interviewer and the interviewees have great potentials in supporting the generation of unexpected materials for analysis as the conversations proceed in an environment with rapport between both sides. On the other hand, there are risks to be borne in mind for interviews to take place without any specifications and focuses. Devising an interview guide therefore helps the exploration of specific topics that the researchers set out to study, benefits the consideration of flows and aspects of these interview interactions, pre-empts issues that may occur in the process, and informs the researchers' coping strategy to respond to unexpected circumstances, if any, during the interviews (Dick, 2004), and subsequently minimises potential disruption to the research project due to poor management of practicalities. In the case of this research project, I did encounter a couple of 'over-communicative interviewees' (King, 2004, p.19) who tended to engage in sharing of lengthy stories before providing information relevant to the discussions. By having the interview guides, I was able to allow some level of digression while keeping the conversations loosely structured around the topics concerning the research project.

3.3 Data collection

Collection of data involves two important elements: who to be recruited for the study and what questions to be asked. To ensure the integrity of interviewee selection, I followed a sampling framework aptly developed by Robinson (2014) that recommends a four-stage approach for data collection (see Figure 2). Actions taken in each of the stages are explained as follows.

Figure 2. Robinson's Framework for Sampling for Qualitative Research


Name
Setting a sample universe
Selecting a sample size
Devising a sample strategy
Sample sourcing
Definition
Establish a sample universe specifically by way of a set of inclusion and/or exclusion criteria
Choose a sample size/ size range by considering the ideal and the practicality
Select a purposive sampling strategy to specify categories of person for inclusion
Recruit participants from the target population
Key Decisional Issues
Homogeneity vs. heterogeneity, inclusion and exclusion criteria
Idiographic (small) vs. nomothetic (large)
Stratified, cell, quote, theoretical strategies
Incentive vs. no incentives, snowball sampling varieties, advertising

Source: author's adaptation from Robinson (2014).

3.3.1 Setting a sample universe

It is imperative for researchers intending to engage in interview-based qualitative research to define the study population with specifications on the other selection principles that may affect an individual's eligibility to take part in the research. Applying inclusion and exclusion criteria to define the totality of sample has an immediate impact on the sample universe homogeneity in aspects such as demography, geographical spread, physical description, psychological status or one's life history (Robinson, 2014). The argument of keeping the sample universe a homogenous one or a heterogeneous one depends on the context of the intended research, the phenomenon that is being studied, as well as whether generality is desired as research findings (Reynolds, Simintiras, and Diamantopoulos, 2003). Based on the above principles and the cross-cultural nature of this research project, I believe that having a diverse, heterogeneous sample universe would allow accesses to insights of the international academics working in Taiwan from wide ranging background, hence enabling this study to contrast and compare these academics' experience of working and living in Taiwan without ruling out the possibility of finding commonalities in their journeys and getting guidance for improvement that may be applicable to the wider higher education sector in Taiwan.

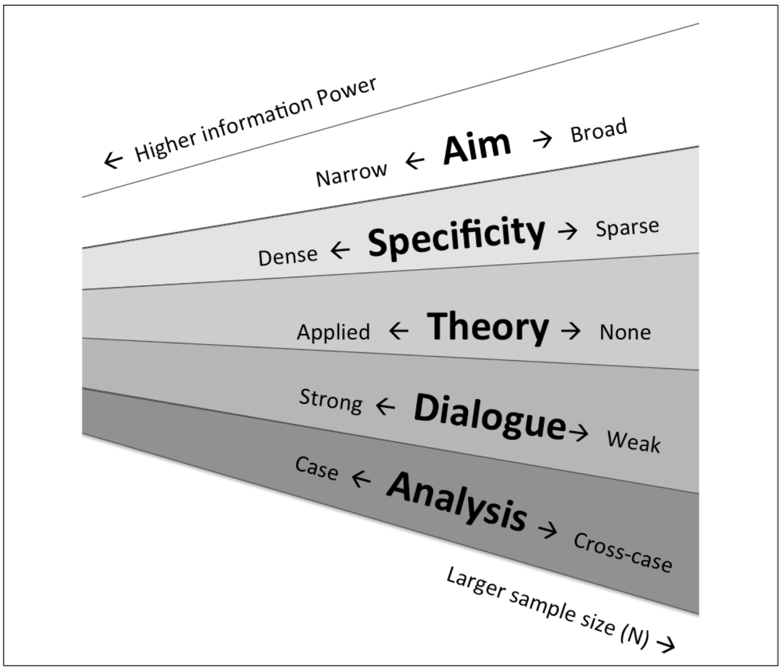
The sample universe of this study is therefore defined as full-time faculty members working in local universities at the time of interview who are of foreign nationalities and not originally from Taiwan. To establish a holistic understanding of work adjustment of international academics in Taiwan, those who are engaged solely by the foreign language teaching operations in universities are not seen as eligible participants for the interviews. The reason is that as research is now an increasingly important, if not standard, type of duties embedded in academia, it would only be logical to study those who have had experience with the 'total package' - covering teaching and research, if not more - of academic life in Taiwan. As many of those engaged as foreign language teachers are not required to contribute to the universities' research performance that could have substantial impact on the individuals' overall evaluation of their experience overseas (Pudelko and Tenzer, 2016), the decision to not include foreign language teachers who do not cover research was therefore made to maintain a certain level of generality in the professional experience across the participant cohort.

3.3.2 Selecting a sample size

Robinson (2014) indicates that the decision on the size of samples would be influenced by the theoretical considerations and research practicalities. While a larger sample size helps the researchers to arrive at generalizable conclusions that objectively characterise the phenomenon, studies that intend to understand the meaning, sentiments, and ambience a phenomenon brings to the individuals concerned, in contrast, may require a smaller sample size to allow a detailed representation of the individuals' voices in the research. How many interviews are necessary in social research has drawn constant debate, including in qualitative work. While some researchers suggested the number of interviews to be as many as 50 to 60 (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Creswell, 2003; Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007), a comparatively smaller sample size between 20 and 30 was also often recommended (Morse, 2000; Creswell, 2003; Marshall et al., 2013) to strike a balance of depth and width of data. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) acknowledge the concept of data 'saturation' and its useful role in determining the sample size; based on their experimental research, they recommend that 12 interviews would likely be sufficient 'to enable development of meaningful themes and useful interpretations' (Guest, Bunce, and Johnson, 2006, p.78). Meanwhile, with a focus on researchers' choice of research method, Morse (2000) compares the different use of one-time semi-structured interviews with a larger cohort and several unstructured in-depth interviews with a smaller number of participants and concluded that the number of samples required for a research project could range from six to sixty.

In a contrasting approach, Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora (2016) introduce 'information power' to guide fellow researchers' decision on sample size. Malterud and her co-authors present five parameters that have an impact on the information power of the sample. A study with narrower aims may require smaller sample size than that with broader aims. It also takes smaller sample size when participants of the study meeting criteria that are highly specific for the study aim. Studies applying specific theories usually require fewer participants than those with limited theoretical lens. Strong quality of the conversations between the participants and researchers requires smaller sample size, whereas studies intending to perform cross-case analysis tend to require larger number of participants to secure sufficient information power (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Information power: items and dimensions



Source: Malterud, Siersma, and Guassora (2016, p. 1756)

This study is subject to certain constraints around time and operational space. Referring to their model, I conclude that a large sample size would not constitute a necessity for this study, given its strong dialogical nature, connection to established theories in work mobility and social capital, as well as the focus on the individuals' unique journey rather than the unilateral collectiveness embedded across the cohort. Having consulted the above literature on qualitative research methods and thesis of previous DBA graduates (Mores, 2000; Marshall et al., 2013; Leblanc, 2014; Murphy, 2014; Clarke, 2015), a sample size between 20 and 25 was set as initial goals for the data collection as this study size was judged likely to provide sufficient data to develop new understandings of international academics working in the Taiwanese context. During data collection it became apparent that this sample size did provide sufficient data, as the last few interviews that were conducted did not generate large amount of new information, indicating that the study had reached its 'saturation point' (Morse, 1995) with sufficient inclusion of diverse perspectives from the object of study.

3.3.3 Devising a sample strategy

According to Robinson's (2014) sampling framework (see Figure 2), sample strategies, which help researchers to decide how to select cases for inclusion, are commonly categorised into (1) random and convenience sampling strategies and (2) purposive sampling strategies. While the former sampling strategies are widely adopted in quantitative studies such as opinion poll or social survey, purposive sampling, on the other hand, serves better to ensure appropriate representation of the different sub-groups within the sample universe. Based on the existing research on international academics working overseas, I believe that certain level of sub-grouping would help a clearer illustration of their individual experience. For example, prior studies on international employment show that significantly smaller number of female professionals take employment overseas across different country and business settings (Harvey, 1997; Chapman et al., 2014; Zhang and Peltokorpi, 2016). Such findings necessitate purposeful sampling of female international academics in Taiwan to ensure that their views are also included in the data. Career development, meanwhile, is also an important factor for considerations in research into motives to work overseas (Rousseau, 1990; Bonache, Brewster, and Suutari, 2001; Froese, 2012). Bearing in mind the relationship of one's social capital and their prior education, culture and upbringing, I decided that it is important to secure a diversified sample cohort in helping create a holistic reflection of the lived experience of these international academics. I therefore considered factors such as academic rank, gender, place of origin, and subject expertise – used as 'sub-group' labels – to arrive at a more balanced sample. The advantage of such sampling strategy is that it allows flexibility during the research project, which echoes the strength of using grounded theory for data analysis at a later stage, for its potential of exploring concepts or theories emerging from the data (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2012). Due to the absence of publicly available information on the total number of international academics working in universities in Taiwan, it was not possible to devise a perfectly stratified sampling; I therefore constantly check the above mentioned 'sub-group' labels attached to each of the interviewee while recruiting research participants to help ensure the best possible balanced representation within the interviewee cohort.

3.3.4 Recruiting participants

Participants were recruited through a mixture of convenient/ opportunistic sampling, snowballing and cold call. I arranged the first few interviews with contacts whom I had known from work, who then helped recruit more participants for this study via snowballing through their professional networks. Many of the participants were recruited by cold call. Based on my years of experience in the higher education sector in Taiwan, I understand that international academics are more likely to be employed by universities that are a) receivers of the special university excellence grant awarded by the Ministry of Education, b) other research-intensive universities, c) universities offering international programmes that use English as language of instruction, and d) universities specialised in language, culture, history, and regional studies. To identify those eligible to take part in this research project, I browsed the websites of 22 universities in Taiwan that fit the above criteria. Considering the ethnic homogeneity in Taiwan, the search of these international academics was guided by an imperfect but pragmatic heuristic – identifying individuals whose name did not appear to be Chinese and checking their curriculum vitae available from the university website for information on their education and prior employment to confirm their eligibility for participation. A potential downside of such sample selection method is the likely omission of individuals of Chinese ethnicity who were raised in other countries. This is a deliberate choice with pragmatic considerations based on my professional experience. Such individuals typically possess certain command of Mandarin Chinese. This gives them much more leverage when dealing with unfamiliar situations as compared with their international peers with limited or no Chinese language ability, making their experience of less relevance in the context of this study. Although this group of individuals were not initially included in the invitee roster, a couple of them were eventually included through snowballing, which means that the views of such individuals was reflected while not misrepresenting the cohort.

This web search exercise proved useful to increase diversity in the samples. As the data collection process proceeded, I referred to the list of possible interviewees and sent out invitation, together with a research brief, to those who were less represented in the interviewee cohort. All invitees were sent an interview invite that introduced the purpose of the research, explained the interview format, and ensured interested participants their anonymity. I obtain the interviewees' permission to use the materials collected through the interviews via a signed informed consent form. The consent form provided details about the research project including the working title and supervision information and had been sent to the Department Research Ethics Officer at the School of Management at the University of Bath for approval before it was used. The approved consent form template is included in this thesis as Appendix A.

3.3.5 Designing interview questions

Informed by the literature review, the interview questions were proposed in relation to concepts pertaining to mobility motivation, overseas adjustment, and social capital. A list of question sets for the interviews, with references to prior research on topics and theoretical concepts that I intend to investigate, is tabulated in Table 2. Questions dealing with the same combination of concepts are grouped into one set, though, they were not necessarily raised to the interviewees in that exact order. The questions went through some minor adaptations during each interview but were rooted around the same topics.

Table 2. Question sets and topics for investigation

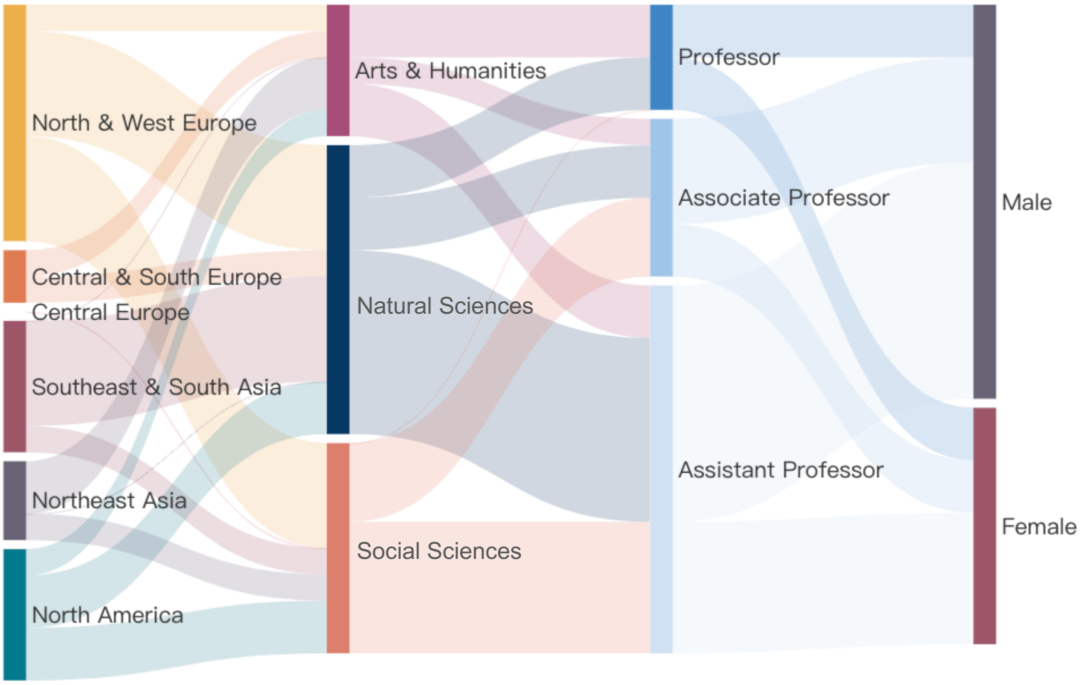
Question set	Motivation to work overseas	Overseas adjustment	Social capital (SC)
- When people ask you what your job is, what would you usually tell them? - How did you become an academic in the first place, and what brought you to come and work in Taiwan?	Expatriation motivation (Ashamalla, 1998; Suutari and Brewster, 2000)		Formation of human capital (Coleman, 1988; MaCallum and O'Connell, 2009); SC and mobility (Bauder, 2020)
- What is your observation of the work culture in Taiwan? How does it differ from the type of work culture that you are used to? - How do you feel about the support offered by your university for you to do your job? - Work wise, where does your stress come from? How do you cope with it? - How do you manage your social life while in Taiwan?		Work/ cultural/ interaction adjustment (Black, et al., 1989, 1991); Psychological/ socio-cultural adjustment (Selmer, 1998)	SC facilitating knowledge sharing (Haeussker, 2011); SC and academic career development (Melkers and Kiopa, 2010); Family capital as a form of SC (Bubolz, 2001)
- How has your experience been in getting resources for research since you joined your current university? - What are the other challenges you face at work? And how were they resolved? - What aspects of your current job give you satisfaction? - Having worked overseas, how do you feel about being an international academic? And what success would you like from this experience? - What advice would you give to other academics who are considering working overseas/in Taiwan?	Organisational facilitation to expatriates (Inkson, et al., 1997); Institutional support to international academics (Welkins and Neri, 2019)	Objective/ subjective career success (Cao, Hirschi and Deller, 2011; Duckworth et al., 2012); International faculty mobility experience (Kuzhabekova and Lee, 2018)	Social network as source of SC (Burt, 2004, 2017); Utilisation of SC (Adler and Kwon, 2002); Guanxi as assets (Ip, 2008; Zhai, 2009); Guanxi to mitigate lack of SC (Lu and Reve, 2011, Liu and Zhu, 2021)
- Career wise, what is the next milestone you would like to achieve?	Career mobility in academia (Fernando and Cohen, 2016); Repatriation (Dickmann et al., 2008; Tharenou and Caulfield, 2010)	Objective/ subjective career success (Cao, Hirschi and Deller, 2011; Duckworth et al., 2012)	

3.3.6 Starting data collection

The initial two interviews with acquaintances I knew from work helped me to develop my style and working pattern as an interviewer. Those two interviews also allowed me to identify adjustments as appropriate and expedite the pace of the following interviews. For example, after the first few interviews, it became apparent that interviewees required little prompting to share their experience. Some questions designed to serve as ice breakers were therefore removed from the interviews so that I was able to quickly move onto the topics that I wanted to focus on, without much elaboration. As I went along with the interviews one after another, I gained more confidence as the interviewer and was able to introduce changes that enabled me to keep the interviewees focused on the interview questions and improved the efficiency of the data collection process.

In total, 24 interviews were conducted between March 2020 and May 2021. Key factors included in the sampling strategy, including place of origin, subject expertise, academic rank, and gender indeed enhanced the diversity of participant cohort. Close to half of the research participants are from European countries, and around 50% of them have a background in the natural sciences. Assistant professors, accounting for 58%, comprise the majority in terms of academic rank, while the female/male ratio is 1:1.67. The distribution of the interviewee cohort amongst the four key categories is depicted by a Sankey diagram as shown in Figure 4. The figure also usefully shows the flows from one subgroup to another within the cohort. For example, despite the differences in number, individuals coming from different parts of the world are represented in all three subject areas. However, within each of the academic ranks, one sees varied coverage in different expertise, and professor in the social sciences appears to be a rarity. There is little discrepancy in the relation between academic rank and gender. The same distribution pattern of ranks is observed for both male and female participants of this research.

Figure 4. Key subcategories of interviewees in Sankey diagram



The interviews normally took 70 to 100 minutes, totalling over 2,200 minutes of recording which were converted into transcript of more than 200,000 words. Two of the interviews took much longer than expected to complete (one in 135 minutes, the other in 218 minutes), as the interviewees shared with me their life stories in great detail and some of their personal reflections deviated from the questions that were asked. With these two interviews, I let the interviewees take the time they needed to talk through these experiences and to make sense of them. During those conversations, I came to realise that some of these international academics rarely had the opportunity to speak about their experiences as academics living in Taiwan. As the person who provided space to examine those reflections, I felt obliged to maintain the space for my interviewees, and I was appreciative that they were willing to take the time and share those stories with me. As a researcher, I also found it demanding to keep the flow of the conversations proceeding as planned while allowing the interviewees to be true to what they felt like disclosing. As I began to reflect on and analyse the data from these longer, sometimes more emotive interviews, they tended to leave strong impression on me. When examining the data, I needed to ask myself to give them equal attention while acknowledging the diversity in their experiences.

The interviews were digitally recorded and fully transcribed by me. Audio recordings are stored as MP3 files; the transcripts are saved as Word documents, and the signed consent forms were scanned and saved in PDF format. The primary copy of these files is saved at the University of

Bath's secured cloud computing service. The other set of files, stripped off identifiers and anonymised, were kept in another enterprise-grade cloud storage through my work account with a passcode that is known to me only. Out of the 24 interviews, 22 were conducted in English. While only nine were native English speakers, all the other 13 interviewees were competent users of English language; although occasionally due to their varying accents and use of terminology, I did need to seek clarifications to ensure correct understanding of their accounts, including with the native speakers. For example, the interchanging use of 'school' and 'university' of North American interviewees to refer to higher education institutions could at times create confusion as it was not clear whether that specific account pertained to the overarching institution or the subsidiary college/school/department. I was therefore required to practice careful listening or probing skills to ensure that I understood correctly the context and surroundings that the interviewees were faced with as described. This is of significance when interpreting data at a later stage. Two interviews were conducted in Standard Chinese with international academics who used Chinese instead of English as working language at their university.

To ensure anonymity of the research participants, some of the identifying information has been removed, modified, or is not revealed in full. Table 2 presents the demographic details of the sample.

Table 3. Demographic information details of interviewees

Sub-Group Label	*Category*	*Number*
Places of Origin	North America	5
	Northeast Asia	3
	Southeast and South Asia	5
	Central Europe	2
	North and West Europe	9
Subject Areas	Arts & Humanities	5
	Natural Sciences	11
	Social Sciences	8
Academic Rank	Professor	4
	Associate Professor	6
	Assistant Professor	14
Gender	Female	9

	Male	15
Language of Interview	English	22
	Standard Chinese	2
Form of Interview	In-person	7
	Online	17
Location	Taipei	12
	Outside Taipei	12
Organisational Types	Public	15
	Private	9

Rather than the source of expert views on a given topic, participants of this research are instead the object of this study. In this case, the researcher's ability to observe the interviewees in close proximity is especially valued. Initially, I intended to gather data through face-to-face interviews to benefit from the ‘synchronous communication in time and place’ and the ‘advantages of social cues such as voice, intonation, and body language’ (Opdenakker, 2006). However, by the time data collection started in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic constrained face-to-face access to interview participants. Although only a second choice, online interview became a useful alternative. Many interviewees had quickly grown very comfortable with online communication as a result of the pandemic and seemed very open to sharing their life stories with a researcher (but also a stranger) online, both sides appreciated the relatively easy and straightforward set up of these online interviews.

Collecting data through online interviews also allowed comparatively easy access to potential interviewees located outside of Taipei, the capital of Taiwan that is considered the most popular and well-resourced destination city. To secure balanced views from the internationally mobile academics in Taiwan, it is imperative to include those who chose not to work in Taipei, which eventually made half of the interviewee cohort. Finally, seven interviews took place face-to-face, and 17 interviews were conducted online. Although the format of interview deviated from the initial plan, I found that, in retrospective, the transition from face-to-face interviews to online interviews did not hinder the progression of interviews as prior studies suggested. Research shows that due to the lack of face-to-face interaction, remote interviews were often believed to work less well because of speaker overlap or miss of non-verbal cues such as nods or smiles (Irvine, 2010; Johnson, Scheitle, and Ecklund, 2021). However, based on my experience with the 24 interviews, virtual interviews tended to be more efficient than the face-to-face ones, as icebreaking seemed to play less of a role when the conversation took place in digital channels, which allowed the interviews to quickly get into the subject and stayed focused on the matters being discussed, with comparatively less time taken. With the assistance of video technology, I was also able to capture subtleties in the interviewees' facial expression or the nuances embedded in their tone of voice, which effectively addressed the typical shortcomings of non-face-to-face interviews without compromising the quality of data.

3.4 Data analysis

The decision about what approach to take for analysing data obtained from interviews often takes not only a pragmatic but also epistemological consideration, as the researchers are required to examine their research goals and the desired final delivery, which may predetermine the suitability of a given data analysis method (Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007; Harper, 2011). Qualitative data analytical approaches seen in research into management and studies focusing on individuals with specific experiences include narrative analysis, phenomenology, and grounded theory (Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007; Petty, Thomson, and Stew, 2012; Leblanc, 2014), each appropriate for different research purposes and designs. Having considered the aim of this research project, I selected Gioia Method, a data analytical approach rooted from the grounded theory, to guide the analysis of data for its strong focus on being true to the individuals' experience, discovering emerging concepts and themes, while maintaining rigor of qualitative, inductive research (Gioia, Corely and Hamilton, 2012).

3.4.1 Data analysis approach

Grounded theory, developed as a response to the over application of positivism in social research in the 1960s (Heath and Cowley, 2004; Suddaby, 2006), is often considered a practical approach for conducting qualitative research. Applying an approach involving coding and labelling of data against events and actions that link to conceptual categories, grounded theory is also known for its capability to explore concepts 'grounded' in the data (Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007; Petty, Thomson, and Stew, 2012). With focuses on the contrast between what actually happened on the ground and how the individuals involved interpret those incidents, grounded theory is recommended for its effectiveness in generating theories based on data collected from empirical studies rather than testing the existing theories (Heath and Cowley, 2004). Gioia and his colleagues (2004, 2012) further refine grounded theory by providing a template with recommended steps, coined as the Gioia Method (Langley and Abdallah, 2011), to guide the conduct of research. Given these features, grounded theory approach is well suited for this study that aims to understand the process by which the internationally mobile academics in Taiwan see their worlds. In order to enhance the orderliness of coding structure, I took advantage of the Gioia Method during the examination of data to help generate a tidy coding structure that benefits the development of explanatory framework of the phenomenon of international academics working in Taiwan.

3.4.2 Data analysis process

Following the analytical techniques developed by Gioia, Corely and Hamilton (2012) and Schmidt (2004), data analysis actions I took are as follows:

Stage I: Material-oriented formation of analytical categories

I transcribed the interviews to generate 24 sets of word documents — in total over 200,000 words — and read through the full texts to identify the topics, including those that were expected, pre-assumed, emerged, and repeated, which were derived from the responses of the interviewed international academics. I then developed the materials into categories under the themes of motivation to work overseas, adjustment in Taiwan, career development, challenges, and aspiration.

Stage II: Assembly of the analytical categories into a set of principles for coding

I referred to the analytical categories and developed a set of principles with variants under each of the categories to be used for coding. For example, when an anecdote appeared to be intersecting with more than one category, the text would be further broken down to smaller segments to be paired with the most appropriate code that fit its meaning, or, in some cases, the underlying implications that it represented. The coding principles were then tested on a couple of the pilot interviews to refine the categorising and coding process. Doing line by line coding in NVivo allowed detailed adjustments to coding as and when required, which helped constant improvement of categorising of materials for analysis as the project progressed. A quick initial categorisation of codes, which contains top-level categories such as ‘career’, ‘language’, ‘living in Taiwan’, ‘teaching’, ‘research’, ‘reward’, ‘university administration’, and ‘workplace observation’, is included as Appendix B. These categories of codes were then used to inform the development of concepts and theme, as explained in Stage III in the next section.

Stage III: Coding of the material

I followed the coding principles to extract relevant data from all the transcripts and identified the more dominant tendencies in the materials. During this coding exercise, the need for adjustments in codes became apparent. On the one hand, some codes would seem redundant or duplicated as the coding process proceeded and could be reduced or combined to avoid unnecessary triviality in the presentation of results. On the other hand, some transcripts contained unique information or references which other interviews did not cover, which led to the need for new codes. In either case, I would then assess the justification for restructuring codes or even analytical categories to ensure that the coding exercise covered the materials as extensively as possible to benefit the analysis at the later stage. Using NVivo as a coding tool made the restructuring relatively straightforward to manage. The software allows the re-arrangement of codes in a way that complies with Gioia's recommendation to group information into 'concepts' and 'themes' (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2012), which proved to be a useful feature to inform the theorising stage of the research project after coding exercise was completed. Resulting from this method, the data collected from the interviews was coded into 39 'first order concepts', organised into 17 'second order themes', and finally formed 4 'aggregate dimensions,' with full details explained in Figure 5 in Chapter Four.

Stage IV: Quantifying surveys of materials

Once all transcripts had been coded, I checked the frequency of each code to arrive at an overall summary of the materials, including the commonalities and anomalies observed from the interviews, which would then inform the exploration of data, as well as the structure of findings and results. One of the benefits that come with NVivo is that its function of 'case classification' allowed me to quickly identify the demographic features of each 'case' (in this case, each individual interviewee), according to their personal information such as gender, country of origin, subject expertise, type of affiliation, etc. This step helped examine the relations between certain anecdotes and specific demographic cohorts, if any, to understand the prevalence (or the absence) of a given phenomenon.

Stage V: Detailed case interpretations

After examination of the coded data and classification of all the interviewees, I proceeded to interpret the meaning embedded in the materials and took note of my findings across cases and codes to develop theoretical explanations for the lived experience of the interviewed international academics in Taiwan. In this final stage, I also tried to distinguish the enablers and disablers of the individuals' perceived success only to realise that the same factors could play out very differently across different cases. In the process, the ability to analyse the coded materials while referring to the original questions that brought out the interviewees' response became crucial, as the interviewees may at times give account of anecdotes that could seem unrelated at the surface. Situations like these usually would be managed during the interview by probing or seeking clarifications, but occasionally these would be addressed during the data analysis process when I took a closer look at the whole transcript and put the interviewee's response into context to arrive at an accurate interpretation. This also helped avoid stereotyping the interviewed international academics with the same demographic identification as the focus remained on their individual trajectory rather than their commonality, which allowed the development of a profound understanding of the phenomenon being studied, both at the individual and collective level.

3.5 Research quality

The robustness of research manifests itself differently in qualitative and quantitative research. Quantitative research often assesses research quality based on the criteria of validity and reliability of the research, whereas qualitative research uses 'terminology that encompasses both [validity and reliability], such as credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness' to describe qualitative researchers' pursuit in research quality (Golafshani, 2003, p.600). Many other researchers also advocate for the use of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, in replacement of reliability and validity, to assess the quality of qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Houghton et al., 2013; Anney, 2014). With these premises in mind, I took actions to ensure research quality throughout the different stages of the project from data collection (including sampling and interviewing) to data analysis (such as coding and interpreting), which will be detailed in this section.

As opposed to quantitative research in which concerns with validity prompt researchers to explore the binary (e.g. yes/no) or numerical (e.g. scales or ratings) questions (Collingridge and Gantt, 2008), the quality of a piece of qualitative research is validated by how the research was implemented to answer the intended question 'in a coherent, justifiable, and rigorous manner' (Collingridge and Gantt, 2008, p.391). Robinson (2014) comments that a well-designed sampling process helps reduce bias in the data and therefore serves to strengthen the research quality in aspects such as 'sensitivity to context', 'commitment and rigour', 'transparency and coherence', and 'impact and importance' (Yardley, 2000).

With the purposive sampling exercise, this research project benefited from having a clearly defined, contextualized sample universe that consisted of only those international academics in

Taiwan with both teaching and research duties. These sampling criteria are set to ensure comprehensive representation of views across different demographic groups of the international academics in Taiwan and help to ensure that the understanding of research context is closely tied to and reflected in the research process. Through the constant exploration of data, grounded theory approach helped obtain data diversity while reaching saturation in the materials (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2012), feeding into the comprehensive interrogation and comparison during the theorising stage to form an integral part of rigour in the overall research project (Yardley, 2000).

A well-defined and executed sampling process also helped reach transparency of the research (Robinson, 2014). As described in section 3.4, I took on a comprehensive search of potential research participants based on public information available on university websites, which provided high clarity to the source of data for the purpose of cold call to supplement convenient sampling and snowballing. The introduction of online interviews also allowed the sampling exercise to extend to other parts of the country to include individuals residing in cities other than the metropolitan Taipei area, giving the much-improved coverage and representation of the data both in the terms of geography and demography. Meanwhile, much like the understanding of context, coherence is enhanced when the sampling process matches with the requirements that come with research aims, research questions, and data collection and analysis. To meet this coherence criterion, I made efforts to ensure that the interviews were conducted smoothly in different settings and straying conversations were skilfully linked back to research questions. I noticed the shifting dynamics or emerging topics in the short span of the interview (or sometimes between interviews) to allow best possible coverage of data collection. I also gave additional attention to the data analysis process to ensure consistency of analytical categorising and unbiased coding that facilitate generation of insightful, quality interpretation across data (Orwin and Vevea, 2009; Morse, 2015).

The clearly specified sampling strategy used for this project helped demonstrate to whom this research project is targeted at and useful for, hence showing its importance to and impact on a given space to which the research (including the knowledge or applications that it generates) is of relevance. Meanwhile, how a piece of qualitative research contributes to a theory or practice in the domain being studied is also believed to be a way of demonstrating research quality (Yardley, 2000; Robinson, 2014), which heavily depends on the data analysis approach.

By adopting the Gioia Method that is known for its capabilities to ensure research robustness (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2012), this study provided transparent information on context setting, data collection and analysis, and the final report to help the readers unpack the entire research process. Meanwhile, application of the Gioia Method also helped me as the researcher to, on top of presenting phenomenological results, develop an explanatory framework based on the findings that allows the reader to a) see both the homogeneity and the heterogeneity in data and b) understand the various factors that come into play in the satisfaction (or lack thereof) of the international academics in Taiwan, and c) understand how they mobilise support and resources to reach their goals.

Prior studies discuss the aspects, such as truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality, which are deployed to determine quality, or trustworthiness, across different research methodologies and explain the corresponding strategies to enhance quality (Houghton et al., 2013; Anney, 2014). In qualitative research, terminology including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability is used to describe these various aspects for researchers' attention (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Houghton et al., 2013; Anney, 2014). The use of grounded theory served to enhance the overall quality of this study as strategies to address research quality are embedded in the research procedure to help achieve the desired rigour under well-managed implementation of the research process (Shah and Corley, 2006; Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, 2012). With such considerations, I endeavoured to adopt the five strategies they suggested to further improve the trustworthiness in this qualitative research project, and the key actions which I took are as follows.

Prolonged engagement in field or research site

Qualitative research demonstrates its credibility through the prolonged engagement and persistent observation of researchers to enhance the rigour in research (Houghton et al., 2013). To achieve this goal, qualitative researchers are expected to spend sufficient amount of time on the site where the phenomenon that is being investigated takes place (Bitsch, 2005). As a professional staff member covering a Taiwan university's internationalisation agenda, I have developed a solid understanding of the local higher education sector with years of experience witnessing the lives of international academics as a cohort. I was able to leverage my observation in close proximity over years to benefit my research preparation. And this 'living-in-the-space', which keeps me in the abreast of the latest developments around the local higher education sector, helps build my image as an 'insider researcher', which in some cases made it easier for the international academics to accept my interview invitation. That said, I also needed to remind myself of my limitation being one individual and there could still be phenomena that I had not come across before throughout my professional life. This acknowledgement helps me keep the standpoint as an experienced practitioner but also a novice researcher so that I demonstrate both confidence and tentativeness when handling this research project.

Peer debriefing

The purpose of introducing peer debriefing to qualitative research is to inject external views, feedback, and guidance from academic peers to a research project to help the researchers self-reflect on their acquired expert understanding of their pursued inquiry (Anney, 2014). In some projects when the situation permits, researchers are even encouraged to invite other fellow researchers not engaged in the studies to run their own coding on the materials to support the credibility of the research findings (Houghton et al., 2013). During this research, I regularly met with my supervisors for their advice on my research implementation to inform my follow-up actions. I also had the opportunity to discuss my research project, as it proceeded, in a couple of research training workshops that I attended to invite feedback from research methodology experts and fellow doctoral students.

Thick description

To enhance the transferability in qualitative research, it is the researchers' responsibility to ensure that detailed, 'thick' descriptions (Houghton et al., 2013, p.16) are provided. Lincoln and Guba (1985) emphasise that creating the detailed and appropriate descriptions encompassing the various stages of the research, including explaining research context and procedures, collecting raw data, summarising findings, and arriving at conclusions and recommendations, serves to give the reader a 'vicarious experience' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.22) which helps them form informed decisions about the applicability of the findings to their specific contexts. To reach this goal, I made conscious efforts throughout this study to ensure that I illustrated every step of the research process and provided clear rationale behind the decisions that I made alone the way. This strategy will be carried on in the sections that follow, as thick descriptions should also be applied to ensure that this study, supported with focused narratives and rich quotations, provides sufficient information for the readers to decide how much of this research on international academics in Taiwan will be transferable to another context.

Audit trail

In qualitative research an audit trail helps enhance the overall trustworthiness of the research by strengthening the research dependability and confirmability (Bitsch,2005; Houghton et al., 2013; Anney, 2014). Through keeping a clear set of record of how data can be traced back to the original sources and what rationale behind the decisions is, researchers demonstrate to the readers how they arrived at their interpretations of the data (Bitsch,2005; Anney, 2014). In case where the readers do not necessarily agree with the researchers' interpretation, they could still understand the steps taken by the researchers to reach their conclusion (Houghton et al., 2013). Adopting data analysing software like NVivo is therefore believed to be an efficient technique to increase rigour in qualitative research as the software allows comprehensive documentations of materials and thinking process via its functions such as data keeping, coding, query running, notes, and annotation (Houghton et al., 2013), which together forms the final audit trail, in which reflexivity plays an essential role.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity plays an important part in qualitative research as it helps researchers to demonstrate the critical examination of their own prior experience, understanding of the research context, built assumptions, and personal biases and the potential effect these pre-existent factors could have on the implementation of research project and the generation of findings (Mauthner, and Doucet, 2003; Berger, 2015). It is therefore recommended to qualitative researchers that the dependability and confirmability of their research should be manifested in their final report by keeping reflexive journals to include personal contribution and personal reflections of the researchers (Houghton et al., 2013; Anney, 2014). The practice of keeping reflexive journals helps the researchers to reflect on their own decision-making history, personal and professional beliefs, backgrounds, and observation of the subject of study, which consequently influences these decisions during the research project. Stored in digital forms such as NVivo, Word and MS Teams, the reflexive journals I kept included temporary conclusions and personal reflection from the literature review, interviews, onsite observation, and peer debriefing, as well as the challenges, assumptions, and epiphany that I perceived during the research process. In some cases, keeping such reflexivity throughout the research procedure serves to add valuable insights to the untold stories of the interviewees. For example, some of the interviewees reflected situations they encountered while failing to understand the root cause of their experience, partly caused by their lack of local language and partly due to the nuances between cultures that are bound to be difficult for foreigners to detect. The onsite observation which I accumulated during the research project, some even earlier than the project commencement, then came in to unpack the hidden meaning buried under the anecdotes. And these notes were then used to inform the writing of this and the next chapters to demonstrate the complete process of how I implemented this research project.

Table 4 summarises the approach outlined in Section 3.5 to address quality of this research project, using the work by Houghton et al. (2013) and Anney (2014) as a framework, it shows the corresponding strategies to enhance rigour under each of the aspect with brief description of actions I took across the research process. To conclude, considerations and actions to ensure quality of this research manifest themselves across data collection and data analysis. While the process of sampling and coding followed a well-designed process and a template that help address clarity and transparency, keeping reflexivity, along with prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, and audit trail, also played significant role in improving the trustworthiness of this study.

Table 4. Aspects of trustworthiness of the study and quality assurance actions

Aspect	Qualitative term	Corresponding strategies	Actions taken by author
Truth value	**Credibility**	- Prolonged engagement in field or research site (research-centred) - Peer briefing (peer-centred)	- The researcher's years of professional experience in the field - Inclusion of external views, feedback, and guidance from academic peers to help researcher's self-reflection
Applicability	**Transferability**	- Thick description	- With detailed and appropriate illustration of the research process with clear rationale for each decision, allowing readers to decide how this research may be transferable to another context
Consistency	**Dependability**	- Audit trail - Reflexivity	- Strengthen the research dependability and confirmability through keeping a clear set of record about ow data can be traced back to the original sources, supported by NVivo functions (coding, query running, notes, annotation, etc.) - Helps researcher demonstrate critical examination of own experience, understanding of research context, existing assumptions, personal bias, etc.
Neutrality	**Confirmability**		

Source: author's adaptation and actions based on work by Houghton et al. (2013) and Anney (2014)

3.6 Ethical considerations

Both quantitative and qualitative research approaches take ethical issues seriously in their research implementations, and for research that 'intrudes [the] participant's lives' (Khan, 2014, p.231) ethical considerations are especially important. For qualitative research, ethical considerations should a) avoid creating private gain towards the researcher through taking advantage of research participants or by leveraging institutional resources, b) not conduct activities that may be deceiving or not aligning with research purpose, c) engage with participants with their informed consent, d) offer anonymity toward participants, colleagues and individuals involving in the research project as appropriate, and e) not cause unnecessary or irreversible harm to participants (Khan, 2014; Chong and Yeo, 2015; Creswell and Poth, 2016).

In addition to the above prior work, I also referred to Hopf (2004) who discusses ethics in qualitative research and advises that researchers should address the normative and legal considerations of how the research is conducted. While normative consideration refers to a collection of commonly agreed principles, as outline above, guiding the management of relations of and interactions between the researchers and the interviewees, legal requirements precede the researchers' handling of personal data, individuals' rights and privacy, and other regulatory compliance the researchers are subject to.

On the practical level, this study is part of a doctoral research leading to the conferral of the DBA degree at the University of Bath; the University's Codes of Ethics therefore governs the execution of this research project. Key actions that I took, following principles developed by Hopf (2004), to address ethical considerations of this research project are summarised as follows:

The principle of informed consent

In this research project, full revelation of research aims and methodology is not considered a potential detriment to the generation of genuine findings; I therefore followed the recommended protocol when recruiting research participants. When approaching potential participants of this research project through e-mail invitation, I also attached a research brief and a consent form to ensure that the invitees had the opportunity to raise their questions about and concerns with the interviews, as well as the follow-up research work planned against the data they will have provided, before they accepted the interview invitation. Clarifications on how their data would be handled were provided as and when required, and the participants were made aware of their rights to withdraw from the research project at any stage. The individuals' written agreement was obtained as the sample recruitment process went along, which supported an important ethics principle that all participants must join the research on voluntary basis and that they have a clear understanding of their role in the research.

Another key issue that arose from this specific research project was around conflict of interest. I currently work in an HEI in Taiwan with responsibilities of managing the institution's internationalisation portfolio, which in some universities includes improving engagement with international faculty body. While this study is not a work-related project endorsed by the institution that I work for, my professional identity may work in favour or against the participants' willingness to take part. Full disclosure is therefore particularly important in this case to minimise potential disruption or withdrawal of interviewees during research execution.

The principle of damage avoidance

Under this principle, strong emphasis is placed on the protection of the privacy of individuals participating in the research project, which is of particular concern if the research is conducted through undercover observation when identity exposure could associate with risks. For this research project, I recognised that concerns over possible exposure of identity would be a crucial factor in the participants' decision to take part. Confidentiality therefore plays an essential role and was exercised throughout the implementation of the proposed research. In the process of data collection and analysis, interviewees were guaranteed with anonymity in the presentation of materials and discussion of findings. Data collected from the international academics went through the process of de-personalization to ensure that any accidental (though unlikely) access to the data by unauthorized users will not result in that the identify of those interviewed becomes compromised. Storage of research data was handled with care using the University's infrastructure which provides secured access and heightened security measure to prevent data leaking.

Another issue that I would like to address, rather specific and individualised, is on the obtainment of approval to conduct research project from my hiring institution. Due to a change to employment contract type at the time when the research project was about to commence, I became subject to the organisational requirements which asked employees to formally report to the institution my pursuit of the DBA degree, even though such undertaking took place outside of my work hours and did not ask for institutional support. To ensure full compliance and remove any possible obstacles that might prevent completion of my study, I filed an official request for approval with my hiring institution and waited for the organisational permission before officially engaging any field work.

3.7 Concluding remarks

This chapter has provided detailed explanation on my decisions on research approach, research design, as well as how the research project was executed. As this study sets out to understand the lived experiences and personal observation of internationally mobile academics working in universities in Taiwan, I adopted qualitative research approach with constructivist lens to understand the international academics' journey starting from the decision to work overseas (and specifically in Taiwan), making social and work adjustment, and thriving in their professional capacity, hence identifying determinants contributing to their perceived success or failure, if any. Guided by the grounded theory which covers the research process from reviewing literature, collecting data, analysing materials, to theorising emerging constructs, I conducted interviews with 24 international academics who have gone through the journey of moving to conduct teaching and research in universities in Taiwan. These interviews generated large amount of rich data for analysis and interpretation, and findings from the data are useful in informing the development of explanatory framework of the mobility phenomenon. In this chapter I also reflected on how grounded theory approach helped enhance the robustness of this research project as the structured research process has had trustworthiness embedded.

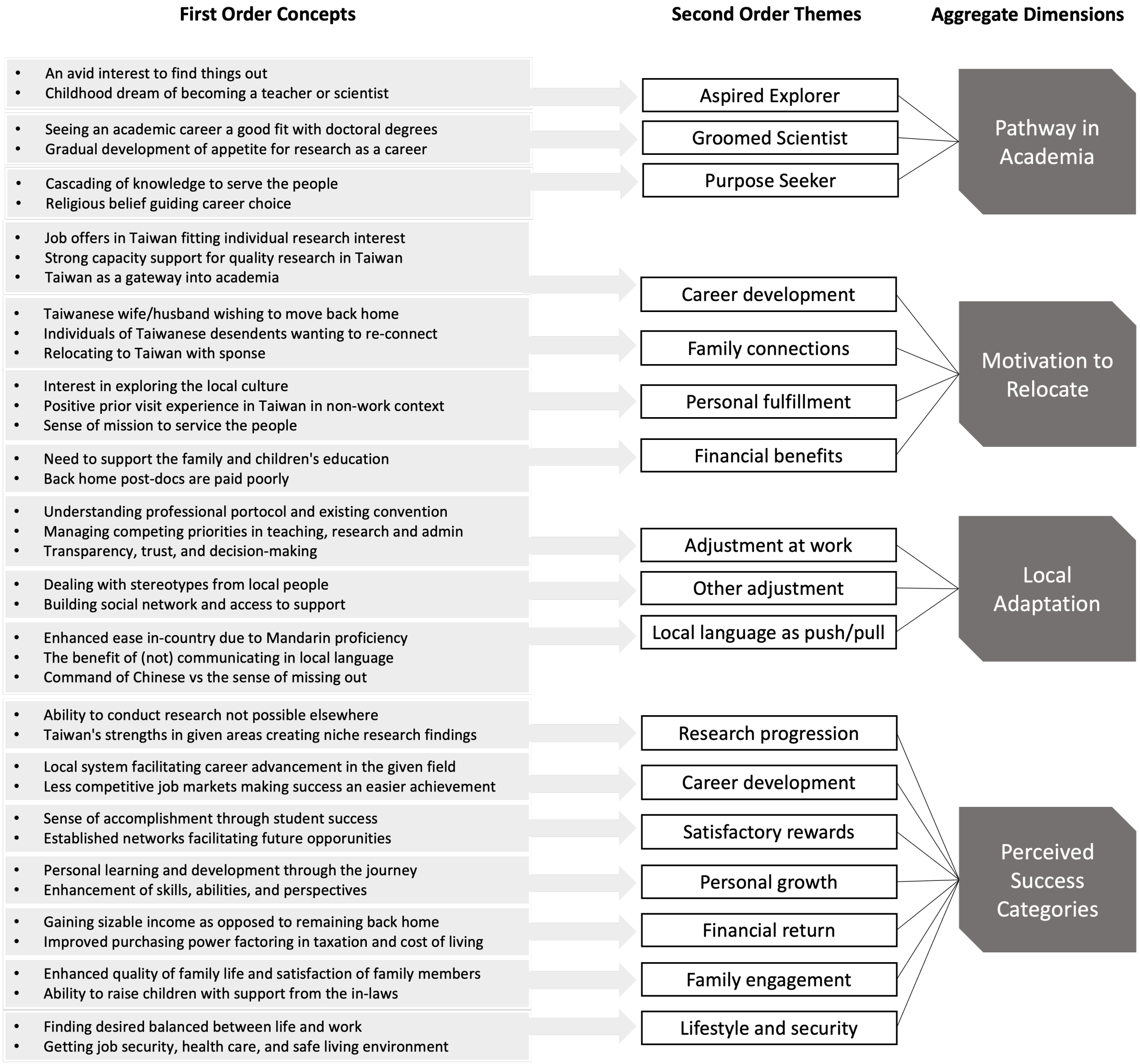
Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the results of data analysis. Themes reported included the participants' pathway into academia, their motivation to relocate to Taiwan, adjustment at the workplace and in daily life, and personal assessment of performance. Linking to literature review on mobility motivation (Richardson, 2005; Richardson and Mallon, 2005; Doherty et al., 2011; Froese, 2012; Lee and Kuzhabekova, 2018), overseas adjustment (Black and Stephens, 1989; Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou, 1991) social capital (Adler and Kwon, 2002; McCallum and O'Connel, 2009; Haeussler, 2011), this chapter also illustrates the use of language and the cultivation of local connections and the impact they have on the internationally mobile academics' overall experience while in Taiwan. The comments of female international academics were also presented in the Chapter to examine how gender impacted on their experience.

The information collected from interviewees was initially coded into 'first order concepts' (39), then organised into 'second order themes' (17), and finally formed 'aggregate dimensions' (4) (shown as Figure 5), following the data presentation structure suggested by Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2012). This data structure helps inform the presentation of findings which addresses key aspects of the interviewees' journey, i.e. the motivation to be in Taiwan, the essential elements in their adaptation to working and living in Taiwan, and their own assessment of the overall experience in Taiwan.

Figure 5. Structure of data collected from the interviews


First Order Concepts
Second Order Themes
Aggregate Dimensions
An avid interest to find things out
Childhood dream of becoming a teacher or scientist
Seeing an academic career a good fit with doctoral degrees
Gradual development of appetite for research as a career
Cascading of knowledge to serve the people
Religious belief guiding career choice
Job offers in Taiwan fitting individual research interest
Strong capacity support for quality research in Taiwan
Taiwan as a gateway into academia
Taiwanese wife/husband wishing to move back home
Individuals of Taiwanese desendents wanting to re-connect
Relocating to Taiwan with sponse
Interest in exploring the local culture
Positive prior visit experience in Taiwan in non-work context
Sense of mission to service the people
Need to support the family and children's education
Back home post-docs are paid poorly
Understanding professional portocol and existing convention
Managing competing priorities in teaching, research and admin
Transparency, trust, and decision-making
Dealing with stereotypes from local people
Building social network and access to support
Enhanced ease in-country due to Mandarin proficiency
The benefit of (not) communicating in local language
Command of Chinese vs the sense of missing out
Ability to conduct research not possible elsewhere
Taiwan's strengths in given areas creating niche research findings
Local system facilitating career advancement in the given field
Less competitive job markets making success an easier achievement
Sense of accomplishment through student success
Established networks facilitating future opporunities
Personal learning and development through the journey
Enhancement of skills, abilities, and perspectives
Gaining sizable income as opposed to remaining back home
Improved purchasing power factoring in taxation and cost of living
Enhanced quality of family life and satisfaction of family members
Ability to raise children with support from the in-laws
Finding desired balanced between life and work
Getting job security, health care, and safe living environment
Aspired Explorer
Groomed Scientist
Purpose Seeker
Pathway in Academia
Career development
Family connections
Personal fulfillment
Financial benefits
Motivation to Relocate
Adjustment at work
Other adjustment
Local language as push/pull
Local Adaptation
Research progression
Career development
Satisfactory rewards
Personal growth
Financial return
Family engagement
Lifestyle and security
Perceived Success Categories

Note: The structure follows the framework consisting of 1st order concept, 2nd theme, and aggregate dimension developed by Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2012)

4.2 Becoming academics

An individual's journey of becoming a scientist plays a decisive role in one's career development at a later stage (Melkers and Kiopa, 2010). Understanding how these international academics decided to pursue a career in academia helped establish the starting point of their life journey. When asked about how they began their academic career, almost all the interviewees recalled an avid interest in learning and creating new knowledge when growing up, which nicely prepared them for the training required to accumulate sufficient credentials that are expected from any individuals pursuing an academic career.

Despite their common interest in knowledge, the journeys into academia undertaken by the interviewed international academics, however, could be largely categorised into three types: aspired explorers, groomed scientists, and purpose seekers. The first group, whom I refer to as the aspired explorers, were amongst those with a strong inclination at the young age to becoming a scientist or a teacher. They were driven to pursue their goals during their study and the intention of joining the knowledge community manifested itself early in the process:

> *"Growing up I was a studious kid, like a nerd ... I decided when I was 10 that I wanted to teach, and I wanted to do a teaching course after I did my bachelor's... [and later] I got into research with my master's ... And now, I am doing both teaching and research, so this job allowed me to fulfil both things that I wanted to do." (Unita)*

> *"...the academic career for me was just a necessity to be able to pursue [what]I was interested in." (Gabriel)*

The above anecdotes show that this group of interviewees appeared to have, relatively early in their life, found what they were passionate about, be it a strong appetite for learning, an intense desire to pass on knowledge, and an avid interest in conducting research. For these individuals, choosing a career in academia was their vehicle to deeply explore their childhood dreams, as well to fulfil their lifelong calling. Essentially this group of interviewees helped illustrate how the individuals gradually accumulate their own human capital by gaining the education, skills, abilities, and experience, i.e. the individual competencies, which would then contribute to the enhancement of social capital (McCallum and O'Connell, 2009).

The second group — the groomed scientists — includes most of the other participants. This group of interviewees stepped into academia, as unexpected as it might seem, due to a series of developmental activities that eventually led to an academic career. Many of the interviewed had enjoyed the process of doing research in areas of their own interest during their postgraduate studies. And over that period, they very often had the opportunities to teach undergraduate students or supervise lab work, hence being exposed to the professional life in academia. From the perspective of many interviewees, following their doctoral studies, a research career in the academic setting seemed 'a good fit' compared with other options they had, as one of the interviewees put it. It also appeared that a fair number of interviewees regarded their career as an academic more of a natural progression upon completing their PhDs:

> *"[Upon getting my PhD] I still wasn't sure if I would work in a company, or I would go to [work for] a university. But at that time, as an international student, it was not easy to get a job in the industry. It's very hard. So, the easier path for me was just to find a postdoc position. And so that's what I did." (Lyn)*

The comments above reveals a sense of pragmatism prevailing in this group of interviewees. While the ease of access to opportunities conceivably played a large role in their career choice, the prospect of leading a life that they have built familiarisation with also drew them into a career in academia. It is also with this group of interviewees that I observe the most utilisation and/or development of social capital throughout their journey, which will be detailed in the following sections.

The third group — the purpose seekers — consisting of two of those interviewed, was driven into their academic career by a religious calling. One of them came to work in a catholic university in Taiwan as per the arrangement by his church, as it was considered a more appropriate way for him, as a PhD degree holder, 'to serve the local people' via cascading of knowledge. The other referenced his strong desire to make contribution to the society through the power of education:

> *"It's because of my religious background ...when I was an undergrad student, I went on to a mission trip to the upper part of China ... [and] was able to see North Korean defectors there ... I wanted to do something for the people ... that gave me the motivations to become an educator because I believe in the power of learning, it empowers individuals' life ... So [going to grad school is] pretty much mission oriented." (Chris)*

For this group of interviewees, a career in academia can be seen as a prerequisite for their spiritual pursuit. And the decision of where they provide their service was then based on the opportunities identified through religious and personal network once they were in the position to serve. Similarly, for the other two groups of academics, it was when they have stepped foot into academia they were exposed with the opportunities for international work mobility. Therefore, from this paragraph onward, I will continue focusing on the internationally mobile academics as a collective cohort and present their responses and comments about their experiences of working and living in Taiwan.

4.3 The role of social capital

In Chapter Two of this study, prior research was discussed to help understand the manifestations and mutual reinforcement of human capital and social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; McCallum and O'Connell, 2009; Claridge, 2018b; García-Carbonell et al., 2021). While the former focuses on one's individual competencies (i.e., qualifications and knowledge, skills and ability, and expertise and experience), the latter functions in structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions, allowing the internationally mobile academics to tap on the benefits generated from the interaction of the two. The participants' feedback revealed the importance of social capital throughout the international academics' mobility experience in Taiwan. Owing to their varied level of network ties (structural social capital), command of shared language and beliefs (cognitive social capital), and response to obligations and expectations (relational social capital), the interviewed international academics reflected rather differently in topics relating to their motivation to relocate to Taiwan, adjustment to working and living in Taiwan, and their own assessment of success. In the form of a set of relationships with locals and key individuals, social capital has proven to be prevailing force in helping international academics to establish themselves in Taiwan, which will be further discussed in the following sections. The following sections of the Chapter will examine the interviewees' experiences resulted from their varied curation and deployment of social capital before and during their work mobility journey in Taiwan, leading to an overall assessment of objective and subjective success assisted by their own social capital reservoir.

Of the various manifestations of social capital, family capital registered strongly in the interviewees' feedback. From why the individuals chose Taiwan as a mobility destination (quite often despite unattractive renumerations) to how family members (usually their Taiwanese spouse), featured prominently in some, if not all, aspects of their adaptation to working and living in Taiwan. Findings of this study show that internationally mobile academics working in Taiwan, compared with those working in other countries, often rely more heavily on family members as a source of support and resources to pursue career advancement in the local academic community or even just to maintain a basic level of household operation. In the following sections, family capital will be a repeating theme from the interviewees' feedback, reinforcing its unique position in the phenomenon of international work mobility amongst academics in Taiwan.

4.3.1 Guanxi and its function

While the role of social capital was widely observed in the participants' feedback, guanxi emerges as a unique form of social capital that occupies a nuanced space in the interviewees' narratives. In a society with a high-context culture like Taiwan, language as a communication medium is often loaded with intangible, deep meaning where the interviewees are required to find the real message with the aids of a solid understanding of social structure and inherited practice (Kim, Pan, and Park, 1998). Therefore, guanxi, which has shared essence with internal social capital (Yen, Tseng and Wang, 2015) and is seen as a form of relational social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Gooderham 2007), therefore assumes a pivotal role in the local adjustment of internationally mobile academics, as it offers resources and support they can mobilise to help them break that invisible wall and be 'part of the game', as described by one of the participants (see page 107).

For some of the interviewed international academics, guanxi appeared to have played a definitive role in the development of their academic career transition in Taiwan. For example, one interviewee's career transition from industry into academia was triggered by an invitation from a local university where he was initially engaged as a professional advisor. The invitation for him to step in and teach a whole module instead of a few classes came when the original instructor himself was leaving the university:

> *"I thought, okay, why not, I can continue his class, and I did that. Apparently, I did quite okay so within a few months, there was an opportunity opening for a full-time faculty position, and that's how it started." (Wallace)*

There are a few other examples demonstrating the importance of having the right social connections when searching for employment.

> *"Because my wife is Taiwanese and did her master's degree in [my current] university ... she still knew a lot of professors [here] and it turned out that the university was looking for people [of our fields] so we applied and both of us got accepted." (Ethan)*

> *"...the job my wife took was at this university, so she had some information about these job postings; that's how I found out about the job." (Ian)*

The importance of 'having the connections to the right people' also manifested itself throughout the interviewees' career, according to a couple of the interviewees. Based on their years of experiences in Taiwan, guanxi serves to increase one's possibility of blending in.

> *"As a foreigner I think it's really missing for me, not being part of the community. You need to be somewhat introduced to the members of your field in Taiwan and they need to embrace you. Once you're considered part of them, then it's going normally. But this transition is very, very difficult, if you don't have anybody who takes you by the hand and introduces you to all the important or relevant people." (Graham)*

> *"In my case, all the problems can be solved as long as you know the right person to contact. Like for me, when I really need to do something, I can get my husband or my student to make a phone call to the person in charge and deal with the problem directly. I think pretty much most of the time I can get away with any potential issues, but I can imagine that it could be hard for some foreigners to do this. (Lyn)*

The above quotes show not only how important it is to have the right connections, but also how those connections were perceived by the others. In Graham's case, breaking into the circle of one's field of expertise through the endorsement from key persons in that given field implies that the individual is recognised for their strength in research. Such recognition also means expanded access to opportunities and funding, a much-desired trait of potential collaborator in the research community in Taiwan, as resources are highly concentrated in the hand of those regarded academically reputable and well-connected (Lin, 2017; Tsai, 2024). Lyn, through her marriage, gained a wealth of social connections and support from her husband's family who are known for their extensive networks in academia. She described how she was able to handle challenging issues by just making a few phone calls to the individuals referred to her by her in-laws. In these incidents, one sees the powerful role of guanxi in influencing the development of a given matter. Clearly, the strong guanxi possessed by her family brought relational benefits and triggered the individuals, who acted as gatekeepers in this case, to be in her aids as a favour. This provision of relational benefits through guanxi, however, is two-way and not timebound (Hwang et al., 2009). A favour may be expected to be returned as and when required, which will be unpacked in the following section.

4.3.2 Reciprocity

Prior research into social capital finds that one of the key features in social capital is the expectation of 'giving it back', be it short-term or long-term, to members in a group who had previously provided favour or allowed access to resources (Adler and Kwon, 2002; McCallum and O'Connell, 2009; Haeussler, 2011). As described by a traditional Chinese saying, 'one good turn deserves another[2],' reciprocity has been an important guidance of actions in Chinese culture. As part of the reciprocity process, individuals or groups provide each other with 'material resources, financial resources, labour, consultation, technical skills, emotional support, and other resources' (Chang, 2010, p.21). Chang indicates that it is through their network of guanxi, the individuals can gain the social support required to satisfy their need for security or other social requirements.

This emphasis on reciprocity also emerged in several of the interviews with international academics working in Taiwan, especially around their working environment. Some interviewees, when talking about their heavier workload compared to their colleagues, deployed very similar logic to help themselves rationalise the situation they faced.

> *"...other faculty they do other kinds of services that I can't do. For example, there are faculty responsible for lab equipment, lab space and safety. I can't do that because I don't know the rules and regulations because it's all in Chinese. So I have to rely on them to do that service, and they rely on me to do the international service. (Tom)*

> *"...if you think from the other faculty members' perspectives, I don't involve in much of the local administrative things. So, somehow, if this is an area that I can contribute for the institution, I feel satisfied with it." (Chris)*

The above interviewees demonstrated a strong reflection upon 'usefulness to others' when they tried to rationalise inequality at work. In the other interviewees' sharing on why they decided to get involved in projects that were not clearly defined as part of their work, the reciprocity consideration continues to show.

> *"...you played with it; you comply...everybody's doing something, regardless of foreigner or not ... if you say you're not gonna do it because it's not in the contract, 'that's not part of my teaching, my research responsibility,' then you're stupid ... People remember what you do and what you don't do. They remember ... that's the way that you deal with it and how to perceive yourself as a foreigner here, and how you can help them out ... by doing some proofreading, checking out what they write ... it is a little guanxi going on." (Sam)*

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[2] The original Chinese saying is 禮尚往來 (li shang wang lai), meaning 'to return good with good.'

> *"I think I've got tremendous support from the guys in the International Office ... If there was something that I could help with, I'd do it. Like last year I went to a conference. I was not there to present the work of my university, but just to participate and see how I could learn something to help with the university [to] identify possible approaches with its internationalisation agenda. But it's not contracted work for me. If I was asked, and that I could provide some help, then yes." (Wallace)*

While understanding the role of guanxi, some of the interviewed international academics commented that they found it challenging to follow suit, both at the workplace and in daily life. According to these interviewees, the challenges included the absence of rewards that they found worthwhile, their lack of capacity to reciprocate, and their inability to develop full membership of a group.

> *"I assume that the university administrators kind of understand me now. I agree to some [of their requests], but some of those I'd say no ... I think when I first came here, some people were asking if I could help out with English translations and stuff. I'd tell them to go online and find someone and pay money for it because it's too much work for me. Or I can do that, but you have to pay me money. And eventually they figured out, 'okay, we are not gonna ask anymore because he's not helping us'". (Dan)*

> *"...what I find difficult is ... the different student-teacher relations here. The students are being asked to run errands, but then, when the students graduate, the professors are responsible for helping them find work ... There is this reciprocity, but I cannot give that reciprocity because I don't have these guanxi that is deeply rooted in the society ... And you cannot be much involved in the local society because you can't create the reciprocity, the win-win relation, with others. 'I help you now, and one day I will come to you to ask for help.'" (Irene)*

Based on the above quotes, it is apparent that social capital, ranging from one's ability to orchestrate a network that allows access to resources and opportunities to their capabilities to bond with individuals who help to 'get the goals achieved', plays a vital role in international academics' management of life in both professional and private domains. The worry of not being able to return the favour – a key tribute of guanxi – has likely had a certain level of impact on how the interviewees perceived their overall experiences. Having said that, their existing guanxi (or lack thereof) makes only part of the puzzle in their holistic review of working and living in

Taiwan. In many cases, with or without the possession of guanxi, other forms of social capital continue to function in facilitating the positive development of mobility experiences of the international academics.

4.4 Motivations for relocation to Taiwan

The participants of the study were in a range of different career stages when they made the decisions to work overseas. As I proceeded to seek understanding about how those decisions were made, the individuals' social capital, in relation to their prior experience or social connections, continued to be observed in the story of many interviewees. Of the interviewee cohort, 63 per cent of them had undertaken mobility activities while studying and 58 per cent of them worked or studied away from their home countries more than twice before arriving at Taiwan. When invited to share how they arrived at their job in Taiwan, the interviewed international academics offered a variety of reasons. For most interviewees, coming to work and live in Taiwan was based on career development prospects. Other drivers included family connection, personal development, and financial considerations.

4.4.1 Relocation driven by career considerations

Career development was identified the primary drive that brought interviewees to Taiwan. Many of the interviewees, when applying for jobs in Taiwan, were in their early stage of career and wanted to further improve their career prospect or strengthen their professional development. Countries with strong academic performance and designated initiatives to attract international academics seem to have provided better opportunities:

> *"So, I was looking for a job and applying everywhere in the world and also in the US... The [Taiwanese] university accepted my application and then they asked for my whole portfolio ... they really wanted me, and I needed a job. And I thought 'well, I can go to Taiwan.' I have to confess that I wasn't even sure about the difference between Taiwan and Thailand at that point. But I thought I can go anywhere for a year, if it's terrible I'll leave." (Tracy)*

One of the interviewees, who was given the opportunity to move to Taiwan for his areas of expertise by an HEI in Taiwan that found his profile desirable, took the opportunity to discontinue an unrewarding employment:

> *"During my postdoc I was sent from [the country where I studied] to China, which didn't go well. While I was in China, the University got in touch and asked if I wanted to apply for this*

> *job because of my [academic] background ... I guess I was lucky." (Eric)*

While some of the interviewees received recognition from universities in Taiwan based on their individual competencies, some took advantage of the relational benefits that they developed in their prior training and education. For example, for those wishing to enhance their professional development in areas where Taiwan demonstrated top-tier research capacity, taking a proactive approach to find opportunities has also proven to be effective in accomplish their goals:

> *"I was holding an assistant professor position in my home country and looking for universities where I can improve my own research career ... I know some professors in Taiwan specialized in data security, and I have been following their work to help me constantly improve my research, which was a very interesting journey ... just fortunately there was an opening in the university, so I applied for the position ... and I eventually landed myself with a job here." (Banke)*

> *"During the third year of my PhD in [my home country], I was looking for postdoctoral positions ... and they have a Research Centre [of my research area] here, so I sent them an email because I know there were some people in collaboration with my own university where there was also a [research] centre ... They replied to me saying that if I want, I could come for their postdoctoral fellowship ... so I started my postdoc and just a few months after there was a position opened ... so I applied, and there was the interview process, and I got it." (Will)*

In the above comments, one sees the power of the interaction of one's human capital and social capital. The typical story told by the interviewees started from their PhD education – a form of human capital that consequently strengthens the individual's structural, cognitive, and relational social capital with a space within the academic network, commitment to academic research, and capacity to respond to trust and expectation from academics peers, which in many cases of the interviewed international academics, gave them access to resources and opportunities that they would not have had if it were not for their PhD studies (Mosey and Wright, 2007; Headworth and Freese, 2016; Mountford, et al., 2020), including the prospects of working overseas that commonly comprised part of their postdoctoral development.

4.4.2 Family connections with Taiwan leading to relocation

For many international academics interviewed, another important factor that brought them to

Taiwan was family ties, which were either formed by marriage or by heritage. For example, out of all 24 interviewed international academics, 11 are married to citizens of Taiwan, a striking commonality in life experience across this cohort. Having a Taiwanese spouse subsequently made Taiwan a natural candidate when the international academics started weighing up their options to find full-time employment:

> *"When I was a postdoc, I met my wife, who grew up here in Taipei. She was also a postdoctoral fellow. So we met as postdocs and got married. She had done her PhD and postdoc in the US and she had a long-term goal coming back to Taiwan where she's the only child and her parents were getting older. And she wanted to try and be closer to home. For me, that was fine." (Tom)*

> *"My wife is Taiwanese and also an academic in my field so the thinking back then was whether we should stay in the US, go to Taiwan, or perhaps go back to my home country, which we decided against pretty early because I think science back home is not as well-developed and well-funded as in the United States or Taiwan... And if we would rather settle for not-so-good university in the United States, why not come to Taiwan where we can probably find jobs in a fairly good university." (Ethan)*

Meanwhile, one interviewee shared how the Taiwanese heritage in family influenced her decision to accept the job in a Taiwanese HEI when the opportunity presented itself:

> *"My parents immigrated to the US from Taiwan fifty years ago, and of course that played a role in my wanting to come here ... I was just like 'Oh, Taiwan, of course, I'll go.' and I have a relative who lives in the same city ... I don't even have to think about that, like that was natural to me." (Michelle)*

Two interviewees developed their own career in academia after moving to Taiwan with their spouse. As their core family currently resides in Taiwan, working in local universities was more a natural progression rather than an active career choice:

> *"My husband is a PhD holder and he came for a collaboration project with a Taiwanese HEI so I came with him ... [After] spending a few years at home taking care of my daughter and my son ... I discussed with my husband about the possibility of doing a master's degree. It was logical to do it in Taiwan at my husband's university, as I was living in Taiwan and my*

> *husband worked there ... [After I graduated] I thought maybe a job at the academia would be better ... as it gives me more flexibility to manage my time." (Tisha)*

The insights from these interviewees add to prior studies that show the role of social capital, focusing on ties with key academic institutions and prestigious researchers, in career progression in academia (e.g. Pezzon, Sterzi, and Lissoni, 2012). My analysis demonstrates how one's professional network and personal ties, in combination, influenced career formation. The interviewees' decision to include family ties in their thinking process when identifying possible work destinations reflects that family bonding, as well as the social connections attached to such bonding (i.e. the access to resources through their social capital), is valuable. For interviewees who moved to Taiwan, the opportunity to be close to family, on top of what Taiwan has to offer as a work destination, justified the act of relocation.

4.4.3 Relocation to Taiwan for personal development

The cultural and life experiences attached to working in Taiwan also played a role in relocation decisions. Several interviewees stated that, coming to Taiwan gave them not only access to employment opportunities or career development but also first-hand exposure to a different culture:

> *"So back then I had several opportunities, and one of them was Taiwan. I could go to Canada, stay in France, and couple of other [offers]. I also wanted to discover new culture; staying in France or going to Canada wouldn't give me that change of culture, to my perspective ... I thought I was from the Western world, and I wanted to see the East. So, I thought 'okay let's go to Taiwan.'" (Will).*

> *"When I was a doctoral student, I went to Taiwan for a joint program ... While I was here, I loved the local Taiwanese people, they were extremely nice and very humble. At the same time, they're very bright individuals. That experience made me interested in this culture ... So I always wanted to come back." (Chris)*

For this group of interviewees, moving and living overseas equates to the possibilities of gaining personal enhancement or lifelong fulfilment (Suutari and Brewster, 2000; Lee and Kuzhabekova, 2018). For Chris, who was quoted above and entered into academia with a strong intention to do good for society, the prospect of working with good-natured, intelligent local students served as a pull factor. The act of relocation primarily based on the pursuit of cultural experience, adventure, life change and personal development, also categorised as lifestyle migration (Benson and O'Reilly, 2009), is arguably far less common in academia. Rather it can be labelled a secondary factor (career development being the predominant drive), or a welcomed and conveniently fitting added benefit, in the interviewees' decision-making.

4.4.4 Financial considerations to drive relocation

Some interviewees further cited financial stability as the key factor that triggered their decision to take employment in universities outside their home country. As one female interviewee explained:

> *"In my case, I needed it. I had to do it for my family's financial position ... I was searching for a job [back home], but the problems is that you need to have foreign exposure to get jobs. It became a mandatory thing ... when I started interviewing for jobs, they would tell me that everything looked fine except that they're prioritising people with overseas experience. That's when I realised that it's actually a requirement that I had to fulfil. So it was a necessity financially and professionally." (Unita)*

Financial considerations are not limited to interviewees who moved to Taiwan from developing countries. One interviewee reflected on his early days in academia in Japan, and his improved financial status after coming to work in Taiwan:

> *"...the academic environment was much better-established in Taiwan, especially in humanities. In Japan, postdoctoral researcher positions are scarce and often without pay. You might have a library card and keys to the office, possibly not even a desk of your own. But when I came to Taiwan to do a postdoc, not only that I got paid, but there's also lots of support for research development ... it's great to have that financial stability as I was almost running out of savings before moving to Taiwan." (Umi)*

While monetary rewards were highlighted as a drive for relocation by a small number of the interviewees, it is worth noting that the higher education sector in Taiwan is not known for its capacity to provide competitive remuneration package to attract international academics. An online search in June 2023 showed that the average annual salary of a professor in the UK is 2.8 times higher than what their counterparts could expect to be paid in Taiwan. In Australia, it is 3.2 times, in Hong Kong and Singapore as much as 4 times, and 4.5 times in the US (Glassdoor, 2023; Herbert, Knibbs and Naz Hassan, 2023; Hsu, 2023; Indeed, 2023). Considering the monthly salaries of academic jobs and the cost of living in different locations (RankingRoyals, 2023), Table 4 shows the significant differences in the annual remuneration schemes in the higher education sector. Combined with figures on average cost of living, Table 5 helps explain how Taiwan fares as a host destination for international academics in terms of financial return. While Taiwan has the lowest average income and the lowest cost of living, over 36% of the income is taken up to cover living expenses, which is the highest amongst the 6 destinations listed. Arguably this comparison does not factor in the different taxation systems, however it serves to provide an initial understanding of the lack of competitiveness of Taiwan in the international job market in financial term.

Table 5. Comparison of annual salary and cost of living across destinations

Destination	Academics' Annual Salary (NTD)	Salary Index[Note 1]	Cost of Living (NTD)	Cost of Living Index[Note 2]	Cost of Living / Annual Salary (%)
Taiwan	1,000,000	1	367,908	1	36.79%
UK	2,800,000	2.8	676,296	1.84	24.15%
Australia	3,200,000	3.2	782,688	2.13	24.46%
Hong Kong	4,000,000	4	1,072,848	2.92	26.82%
Singapore	4,000,000	4	1,220,160	3.32	30.50%
USA	4,500,000	4.5	823,236	2.24	18.29%

Note1: The average annual salary of academic jobs in Taiwan serves as the base to arrive at the index figures of other destinations.

Note 2: The annual cost of living in Taiwan is used as the base to calculate the index figures of other destinations.

Interviewees also highlighted that their employment contract does not include any international premium or relocation package as opposed to what is often observed in the private sector:

> *"The society in general doesn't understand. They all think I get paid twice as much money. No, I'm on local contract so you can even go to the website and check, this is my salary. There's a big misunderstanding within the society that all foreign academics get paid more than the locals. It exists in the private English language schools, but at the universities, it does not exist." (Irene)*

> *"A lot of academics would want really good wage and salary so they've gone to like Hong Kong and China. And that's okay if you want to do that. But don't come to Taiwan expecting high wage. Most schools here don't even offer airplane tickets back. They don't offer these things that are standard in most other countries." (Dan)*

When reflecting on their remuneration, some of the interviewees clearly explained that monetary reward was an important point for consideration when deciding to move to work in Taiwan:

> *"I did have an opportunity elsewhere, and the salary here was much lower than what was offered in Canada or France, but there wasn't that Asian culture." (Will)*

> *"...with the academics, if they think they want to be in Taiwan for whatever reasons, they want to be here with opportunities, then look beyond the salary. Taiwan has many things to offer but it can never be perfect." (Wallace)*

From the responses above, we can conclude that while the financial benefit attached to working in Taiwan may serve as a drive to certain individuals, the relocation decision tends to be a highly personal one, as Taiwan does not offer competitive remunerations by international standards. Some interviewees, such as Will and Wallace, mentioned that one could expect a range of intangible benefits from working in Taiwan, including opportunities and cultural exposure, which in many cases are considered more prominently than financial return.

4.5 Adjusting to working and living in Taiwan

Once the interviewed academics moved to Taiwan, they were faced with a culture and people they may not necessarily understand. Their ability to find their feet inevitably played a role in their experiences at the workplace and in daily life. The interviewed international academics were invited to talk about their own experience of trying to fit in, a question that was met with varying levels of positivity and negativity. Other than the people they would encounter daily, such as colleagues, neighbours, friends, and also strangers, they need to understand local culture and languages, with the latter being particularly difficult for most international academics. Work adjustment, along with general or cultural adjustment and interaction adjustment, constitutes the three types of cross-cultural adjustments widely studied by researchers (Black and Stephens, 1989; Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou, 1991). The following sections focus on the interviewees' experience of responding to various requirements and situations in different contexts in Taiwan.

4.5.1 Adjustments at the workplace

The majority of interviewed international academics agreed that the need to adjust at work occupied, and perhaps is still occupying, significant amount of their endeavour. Work adjustment is an area where the responses from the interviewees presented most mixed and diverse views. Participants' comments show that this is also an area in which the influence of one's original cultural heritage or prior experiences have greatly influenced their adjustments. The most frequently mentioned aspects of work adjustments by the interviewees include organisational norms and conventions, roles and responsibilities of their job, and the intangible, inherited philosophy and mentality that is prevailing around them. All the above affected these international academics' perception of the work environment in Taiwan, as well as their subsequent response to those challenges.

Understanding rules and norms

Individuals' ability to understand rules and norms is seen as a form of structural social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Many of the interviewees acknowledged the challenges arising from the lack of understanding of the established protocol and existing convention in Taiwan. Especially for those from western countries, the expected norms and behaviours in Taiwan were never explicitly spelled out, which created problems:

> *"In terms of my experience, and also in what I observed in the students' experience, related to 'what behaviours are acceptable?' For example, in terms of 'asking questions', through graduate school in the US, I think part of that training is really to push people to ask questions, and kind of push back. From day one, I felt like that's maybe an issue here. Maybe that's not so acceptable. And of course, going on with that, it's the hierarchy." (Michelle)*

> *"There's very little encouragement to do things in the proper way. And of course it's the system, and I think that's a lot to do with Taiwan's authoritarian past. This Confucianism is so deeply embedded here that nobody could really question how things are working, because the moment you question it, although you are right, you're in trouble because you're not supposed to question the system. I have a lot of experiences with that." (Sam)*

These observations serve as a reverse illustration of Coleman's (1988) emphasis on social capital for its value of building norms and sanctions to protect collective interest. Individuals failing to understand and settle with what is deemed acceptable behaviour, in this case, the interviewees who did not manage to negotiate a ground in which they can operate with deference, would suffer.

Some experienced a sense of frustration; others felt their plans or intentions thwarted by a community that stayed stagnate. While some interviewees struggled with the organisations or systems as in Michelle's and Sam's quotes above, others were more relaxed or pragmatic:

> *"Well, if I want to get things done I'd have to follow the procedure. And after doing it many times, now I kind of accept that it's something that needs to be done ... if it's part of the way that makes Taiwanese people feel more comfortable doing business then [I'd comply]." (Ethan)*

> *"...you'll just have to adapt. If you are required to [do something], you'll somehow find a way to do it." (Wallace)*

The above anecdotes show that a more accommodating mindset and greater willingness to adapt helped interviewees to achieve the goals they wanted. It is worth noting that while one's cultural background could play a role in facilitating or deterring one's acquired understanding of certain social norms, it is not always the case. Some well-adjusted interviewees were of western cultural heritage. The ability to decipher the codes embedded in various social situations is seen a form of human capital (McCallum and O'Connell, 2009). By leveraging such ability to benefit adjustment at work, the interviewees not only drove satisfactory performance but also enjoyed an increase the structural and cognitive dimensions of their social capital (Claridge, 2018b; Crane and Hartwell 2019), hence contributing to the enhanced management of overseas adjustment.

Responding to job expectations

Amongst all aspects of adjustments required of international academics, 'doing the job' is perhaps the easiest to manage as most of the work would be things they have done or seen others perform in their previous capacity. The most mentioned job requirements are research and teaching. With support from their institutions or departments, most of the interviewees reflected rather positively on their own management of work at the universities in Taiwan.

> *"I think the support provided by the university is pretty good. We have internal funding, which was made a little bit difficult [to get] over the time that I've been here, but I feel like the institutional support, in one way, generally, for any professors the support is good." (Graham)*

> *"My job is more or less what I expected, teaching, research, and some academic services.*

> *So it's pretty standard, compared with what I expected. I know there are people whose experience is less positive. They arrived at the lab, and there're unexpected incidents and all that. I'm lucky and glad that I'm not one of them." (Ian)*

On top of the international academics' ability to understand the requirements of the post, and access to institutional support, the global norms of science made it an easier task for international academics to quickly set up their own ways of working after relocating to Taiwan:

> *"Biological research science is Biological research science. It's all the same everywhere in the world. The language is different, the cultures would be different, the people might look different, but it's the same. Is research in Taiwan different from anywhere else in the world? Not really. Research is research." (Tom)*

> *"I'm lucky as for my research around MRI I can download data from the Internet for free. My community is full of people who share their data enough to support my entire career. I could sit in my office alone by myself and still produce results." (Eric)*

While research into the natural sciences tends to be relatively standardised in different higher education contexts, there are research practices, mostly in social sciences and humanities which, according to the interviewees, could present challenges to international academics working in Taiwan.

> *"That's the thing that they really force on. You really need to get the MOST grant and you really need to get SSCI category papers. And very often I think this is so stupid, because in the UK for instance, you can do book chapters, you can write a book, which is a lot more value than journal articles...and very often there are very good journals, which have got very good impact factor, and they're not included in this SSCI. So there's a stupidity in the Taiwanese system about research and how they evaluate your real research as an academic." (Sam)*

> *"...things are very different in terms of getting promoted or published here in Taiwan...the fast-paced requirement for publishing new articles gives me a lot of stress. In Japan we were encouraged to do series research that allowed continuity, which I think is really important in humanities. But here, I feel like my publications are just like toilet papers. Once they've been published, the are no use anymore." (Bianka)*

Comparing comments from interviewees of natural science backgrounds and those from social science, it suggests that the level of transferability of their prior education and experiences into the new workplace (i.e. Taiwan) affects their overall satisfaction at work. This is another example of how one's human capital reinforces or hinders one's development of social capital. In this study, it would be fair to conclude that individuals in the natural science, despite their different training trajectories, seem to possess a higher level of social capital as a group, as opposed to their counterparts in the social science, which could help them predict and conform expectations in their immediate academic community.

Interviewee comments pertaining to management of work were not always positive. The above comments echoed experiences of other interviewees who were asked to complete work and/or tasks they considered to be outside their role. Those tasks might include contributing to the universities' international activities not directly related to their own areas of expertise, or to help with issues relating to English language. Though some interviewees remain relatively open-minded about such assignments, there are also reflections and premises to be taken note of, as described by the interviewees below:

> *"I teach English, and there's frequently the case where if somebody at the university has some kind of emergency English translation, they'd contact our centre, me or one of the other faculty to help with the translations. So, yes, that is one of the things that I have experienced." (Ian)*

> *"When it comes to helping with building international activities or conferences, that's something I'd be happy to help with my university. I feel that is something easy for me to do, that is a way that I can contribute so I don't mind that, but not when we feel we're used just for our face or just with a very superficial purpose." (Helena)*

Being helpful, if not useful, to their employers and colleagues was a commonly shared sentiment across the interviewed international academics. While this may be due to their good-natured personality, it could also reflect the reciprocity requirement of social capital, echoing the discussion previously outlined in Section 4.3.2.

The interviewees collectively gave a diverse reflection of their experiences with working in Taiwan, but overall, those starting in Taiwan in the relatively earlier stage of their career found their overall adjustment at work easier to manage than late starters.

> *"I think for many international academics who find it tough here in Taiwan, they probably had experience being a faculty elsewhere. For me, as I became a faculty here, I didn't have to readapt to different systems." (Will)*

> *"I didn't have any experience [running a lab] in the United States so I think I would have been through a pretty big adjustment no matter in the United States, Taiwan or any other countries. So I guess I was here with an open mind, and I didn't really have prior experience to compare with. So I think I kinda adjust to what was available here." (Ethan)*

In summary, beyond their pre-existing knowledge, skills, and experiences, it takes all dimensions of the individuals' social capital to generate satisfactory performance of their job. While structural social capital helps the interviewees establish academic networks and collaboration, the cognitive and relational dimensions of their social capital occupy a central space in building their capacity to meet job expectations through engaging peer support and helping others.

Navigating bureaucracy

Comments on workplace collected from the international academics covered not just work assignments and tasks; there were also contested observations around the intangible, unspoken culture that had been heavily embedded in the environment where the participants operated and which deeply influenced their work life. Some of the quotes above already touched upon the topic of culture. In this section, I will focus on the interviewees' views on trust, transparency, and decision-making flows that attracted somewhat mixed responses from interviewees.

One interviewee described the frustration she had, through several different incidents, when finding her local Taiwanese colleagues did not carry on with their collaborative projects as promised. While she graciously attributed her colleagues' behaviour to their overloading of work, her experience reflected the challenges facing international academics coming from a different cultural background:

> *"...everyone in the academia in Taiwan ...is actually overworked. Their administrative burdens are much higher [than] anywhere else... you're just working hard to survive, and that has [an] impact on collaboration...[with which] I've been most frustrated ... I come from a very collaborative culture, a very high trust culture. We don't necessarily take a lot of measures to check progress. We just trust people that when they say they'll do it, they'll do it ... For me, collaboration is really not easy in Taiwan...there's just too much pressure in the*

> *work environment, which very easily affects the collaborative [spirit]." (Helena)*

Another interviewee instead, believed that as a foreigner it was more important to 'find a way' to bring people on side:

> *"[Being a foreigner] You'll never, never be fully integrated into the system ... That's a matter of trust ... I got about one or two friends that will explain things and give me [advice on] how to do certain things, but that just takes time. It's trust in a way. But I suppose other people just haven't got that privilege." (Sam)*

Sam's reflection on 'having people explain things for him' was echoed by the anecdotes of other interviewees. Although their comments were drawn from different incidents, the underlying reasons for their experiences tended to be similar and related to a lack of transparency in university operation. Another interviewed international academic talked about his attempt to solicit advice from colleagues on getting space released from the university to set up his own lab, but the different versions of stories that he received from different colleagues only created hindrance, instead of aids, to his plan:

> *"So what can I do? I have to take what people tell me at face value. I can't challenge what they say except that every person I talked to give me a different explanation." (Gabriel)*

When applying for her sabbatical, one interviewee went through a lengthy journey of investigating how things work, in the university where she had worked for over a decade:

> *"...there were rules and there're secret rules about this sabbatical. And fortunately, I have some colleagues who would tell me what the secret rules were ... I don't feel like the university is against me or trying to prevent me. It's just the way, the culture of the university that you have to know the ins and outs. It's not the rules but everyone expects you to do this thing. If you're not part of the culture, you don't know what those expectations are." (Tracy)*

The above comments highlight the power of a well-developed social network that helps one to function properly at a workplace in which knowing people with access to information and insights is essential. In this case, the different dimensions of social capital come into play again. While a well-developed network (structural) serves as a starting point to facilitate the progression of their given event, both Sam and Tracy confirmed that having access to willing individuals (relational) to offer useful information relevant to their need (cognitive) was pivotal in 'reaching the desired goals', a key tribute to social capital as Coleman (1988) mentioned. Gabriel would not have been able to set up his lab if it were not for a colleague, who he engaged as a part-time assistant, and her knowledge about all the spare spaces and infrastructure after years of working with the institution. In the case of Helena, having an advisor in her network who could prompt her to deploy useful practices to manage project progress instead of relying on her default trust in colleagues might have made a difference.

While it seems comparatively more challenging for international academics to deal with the vagueness and lack of transparency with university regulations, some of the interviewed international academics felt that there were opportunities for them to be more involved in decision-making procedure, especially those pertaining to internationalisation of the university, although language remains a hurdle.

> *"I am on some school committees. Even though my Chinese is not as good I actually care about the meetings, so I like to prepare ahead of time. Even though my Chinese isn't good I participated in a lot more than most of the people there." (Michelle)*
>
> *"I feel that I do have the freedom to express my opinions in the department meetings. Even though sometimes because of the language barriers I didn't quite understand the discussion fully. And if I didn't say anything about issues that were important, the department chair would come and seek my views just to confirm." (Umi)*

Section 4.5.3 will take a closer look at language and discuss its varying level of impact on international academics' management of interactions in professional and social contexts.

4.5.2 Cultural adjustment and interaction adjustment

The investigation of how international academics navigate living in Taiwan helps build an understanding of the adjustment other than work adjustment, namely cultural adjustment and interaction adjustment, which according to Black and his co-authors (Black and Stephens, 1989; Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou, 1991) are essential to the individuals' adaptation to their life overseas. We already know that a significant proportion of interviewees had local connections prior to moving to Taiwan. While their experience of living in Taiwan appears to be positive, nuance exists in their connections to Taiwan (and lack thereof), as well as the types of those connections. In many cases, these connections have implications for social capital they possess, such as access to resources and aids, to support their pursuit of intended goals in the daily life.

Interaction with locals in daily life

Despite the challenges that international academics face at their workplace, interviews highlighted that their day-to-day life and interactions with people in Taiwan was unproblematic or positive. Positive experiences concern the convenience of living in Taiwan, as well as the way local Taiwanese people extend their hand to help foreigners.

> *"So I was nervous about adjusting to these very different habits, communicating with the locals, that kind of things ... But after coming here I realized that not all the things that I worried about would happen, and it's actually not that bad. Like the food that I was worried about was not so much of an issue, and it's very tasty. And I actually start loving the culture here as people are very nice ... whenever I asked for help or clarifications...they would always be happy to give you a hand...I feel very much at ease here." (Banke)*

> *"People would tell me 'oh you never seemed to have any culture shock.' and I don't. I don't have any culture shock." (Tracy)*

Some of the interviewed international academics used their prior experiences in China as reference to manage their own expectations of interaction with local people in Taiwan, only to find out that, despite commonalities in language and culture, Taiwan was perceived as positively different from China. Interviewees who had been in both places reflected on this difference between Taiwan and China:

> *"...it was different, but in a positive way. I expected Taiwan to be like China. Because my friends in China told me that there's not much difference, the language is the same, the culture is almost the same ... but when I came here, it was different. People are more open. I see people are more free, they have freedom of word, and the government is democratic, which is really good. I feel Taiwan is more civilized. And Taiwanese people are more approachable." (Unita)*

> *"I was in HangZhou, which was not a nice place to be, not just the pushiness, but also the unhealthy atmosphere. There's a tension, everything is tense all the time. It doesn't suit me. And then when I came here, people smiled. They looked almost happy. I walked about a lot, and I liked it." (Eric)*

Based on the above anecdotes, it appears that establishing one's life in Taiwan does not require many social connections initially. Interviewees with different levels of understanding and preparedness for interactions with people in Taiwan had a rather positive experience. This is partially a reflection of Taiwanese society and how norms and sanctions are followed within the community, and people from different walks of life collectively demonstrate kindness and generosity to international visitors. To some extent, being foreigner in itself can be understood as a form of social capital, and it invites welcoming behaviour from local Taiwanese.

Building social network and securing support

The ability to build a network of social support to manage day-to-day life is an essential factor in the adjustment of individuals living overseas. For the interviewed international academics, access to support very often manifests in their connections, as well as the type of connections, with local Taiwanese. As mentioned above, 11 of the 24 interviewed international academics are married to Taiwanese citizen and able to mobilise support from their extended family members in Taiwan especially with regard to childcare. This is when family capital stands out as an important form of social capital to help international academics navigate working and living in Taiwan. Interestingly, this group of people also acknowledge that their social life tends to centre around their Taiwanese spouse with little prospect to expand.

> *"We do have my husband's parents ... to babysit our daughter one afternoon a week. [On managing social life] Maybe I have to say I don't really have one ... I don't really have any friends." (Lyn)*

> *"I guess my main social circle is probably like my wife and her close friends and family in Taiwan ... On the one hand, it would be kinda nice to have a wider social circle here. But on the other hand, I haven't really felt the motivation to actually make that happen." (Ian)*

The above comments present several issues. While these interviewees may enjoy strong and solid support through their Taiwanese spouse's local connections, the structure of such network is weak and stagnant – an unwanted trait in the development of one's social capital (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe, 2006; Cook, 2014). At the same time, the nature of these connections (i.e. family ties and close friends), is time costly to maintain, which leaves individuals little room to invest in the development of other networks. This impedes their opportunities to access wider support to deal with situations in which the collective social capital of their (relatively) small social circle has no usage.

In contrast, interviewees who are in Taiwan with their foreign spouse are more proactive in growing their social capital by developing their own circle of support via both the international and local communities in Taiwan:

> *"...I came here because of the friends of mine ... and as it goes my friends also developed new social groups and I was always part of those ... we get to know a little bit about how to keep in contact with the Taiwanese society, at least with certain circle of people. We struggle sometimes with increasing the amount of people we are in contact with, but we enjoy doing it ... Both my wife and I we are from the same field ... she joined my social event, and I joined hers. So being two also helps. You can support each other." (Nico)*

> *"...we have lots of really good friends, people that I appreciate and love, some of my friends here are closer than the friends I have back home ... I was fortunate in the sense that before I joined the university I was here for a year working on my own research so I actually have a very big contact network, I have a lot of friends here. So I don't feel lonely or isolated in that regard." (Helena)*

With those having their spouse in Taiwan, it is understandable that they appear to rely more on their familial social capital (a form of internal social capital) than others for the easy access to immediate benefits attached to the network ties possessed by their wife or husband. The management of local networks and support of those who live in Taiwan without a spouse (around one-fourth of the interviewees), however, sits at both ends of the spectrum. Without existing personal connections with Taiwan when they first started work there, or a partner to help expand their circle of contact, building one's own support network is a much more difficult task. While some interviewees of this group were very content with the scale of their local network, be it large or small, others found it challenging:

> *"I have a completely international social scene. It's people from all over the world." (Irene)*

> *"I have a small number of good friends here. That's okay for me." (Eric)*

> *"I do hope to build more local networks here, but I am not sure how to." (Chris)*

Quite often those without strong family capital look to grow their (external) social capital by engaging a diverse and vibrant social network to build connections, forge commitments, and establish trust required for various tasks and purposes. While some of them appear to have taken deliberate actions to nurture an active social network, others seem more passive in increasing their social capital reservoir. Overall, there is room for development for the international academics working in Taiwan to demonstrate more social capital building behaviour, regardless of their country of origin and cultural heritage. Given the prevailing nature of such need, it takes the individuals' conscious efforts and the intended measure, on the part of institutions and employing organisation, to equip the international academics with sufficient level of support.

4.5.3 Use of local language and adjustment in general

Shared language, figuratively, is identified as a form of social capital (Zhao et al., 2016). For individuals working and living overseas, challenges are rooted in their ability to speak the language at all. Language skills, forming part of the individuals' human capital or individual competencies (McCallum and O'Connell, 2009), therefore are also argued to play an important role in the internationally mobile professionals' general adjustment overseas. It impacts on their strategies to adapt (Black and Stephens, 1989; Black, Mendenhall, Oddou, 1991, and Selmer, 2006) and is another good example of how one's development of human capital reinforces social capital. In Taiwan, the official language is Standard Chinese, but many people also use other dialects, such as Taiwanese, Hakka or even Atayal, which was spoken by one of the interviewees in daily conversations. Increasingly English is understood by the younger generation or those having attended higher education. However, it is commonly agreed that the use of English is still uncommon even within the workplace of the international academics in Taiwan. This sets Taiwan apart from some of the other major destinations for international academics, such as the US, UK, Australia, and Singapore, where English is widely used. The internationally mobile academics, while in Taiwan, may be required to operate in different modes at work and outside their workplace.

The previous sections (4.5.1 and 4.5.2) on adjustments of the interviewed international academics in their working and daily living environments already suggested that proficiency of local language could play a role in how they assessed their own adaptation in Taiwan. Although one may assume that the lack of command of the local language may lead to dissatisfaction, the interviewees' experiences did not tell a universal story. In this section, I will share the interviewees' response on their (generally insufficient) level of Standard Chinese proficiency and how they felt their local language skills affected their experience of living and working in Taiwan.

Standard Chinese proficiency (not) as an issue

Only around one-fourth of interviewees are able to handle daily conversations in Standard Chinese. An even smaller share is able to use Standard Chinese as their working language, mostly owing to their area of expertise in culture-related studies.

> *"I lived in Taiwan for a few years when I was a child, so my Chinese is okay ... Sometimes the university would send the international faculty some announcements in English, but for me I would much rather that they simply send me the original Chinese version ... I have been using Chinese to teach my classes for a decade and now I mostly publish in Chinese, it seems a lot easier to work in Chinese, increasingly so." (Bianka)*

> *"Those of us who speak Chinese, in general, manage much better. I'm at the same level with my colleagues, I don't feel disenfranchised ... But I cannot honestly imagine for somebody who does not speak any Chinese, especially in the environment like [her university] where they barely get the website translated into English. I don't understand how they manage." (Irene)*

One interviewee came to Taiwan as a missionary while teaching at a church-supported university. He commented that across the diverse nationality mix of his missionary fellows, Standard Chinese somehow became the common language:

> *"...when I first came in the community [in Taiwan], we had Spanish, Austrian, Canadian, American, mainland Chinese, and Taiwanese...We basically use Mandarin (Standard) Chinese the whole time." (Stanley)*

One interviewee reflected that her Standard Chinese proficiency grew with the length of her stay in Taiwan. She found this very beneficial as her increased command of Standard Chinese helped her mentor students who need guidance and personal advice:

> *"...for those moments to happen, my Chinese proficiency helped a great deal. Because when the kids knock on the door and came crying about their life, I talk to them in Chinese so that they can express themselves freely. So, I am thankful for that. Maybe, if I didn't speak Chinese so fluently, those intimate, close moments may not happen." (Wila)*

Apart from the minority who speak Standard Chinese fluently, the majority of interviewees does not possess good command of the local language. A common reflection on their relatively low level of Standard Chinese proficiency is the lack of necessity to learn. Although English proficiency amongst the local people varies, Taiwanese are generally very accommodating and helpful to foreigners in the day-to-day life. Many of the interviewees therefore did not feel inconvenienced by their limited ability to use Standard Chinese.

> *"I never really had to learn Chinese because I don't need to." (Tracy)*

That said, comments from interviewees revealed that many had tried, some still intending, to improve their Standard Chinese skills. Interviewees who hold positive views towards their learning journey believed that they needed to make more efforts:

> *"It would actually be more beneficial to spend maybe another three months, or even another six months studying Chinese, and you'll have a better basis at that point, and that would be good.'" (Ian)*

Some interviewees who considered their attempts of learning Standard Chinese less rewarding even developed a sense of frustration:

> *"...I get criticized a lot for not being able to speak much Chinese. And I do know it's a fault. It's not a lack of trying. I have tried. And I'm still somehow, somewhere trying ... And to some extent it's probably better for me not to understand everything. Because when I try to understand it, I get it wrong. If it's something that's a little bit more complicated, I get it wrong." (Wallace)*

Language skills also feature prominently in prior study pertaining to individuals' cultural adjustment (Takeuchi, Yun and Russell, 2002; Zhang, Harzing and Fan, 2017). As Standard Chinese is known for its implicit, high-context nature with subtle nuances in verbal communications (Gao, 1998; Kim, Pan, and Park, 1998), it is challenging for non-native speakers to discern actual meaning (just as Wallace's confession of 'getting it wrong'), hence creating hurdles for the foreigners in their cross-cultural adjustment.

From a social capital perspective, it has been reiterated that one's individual competencies help strengthen one's relational competencies (McCallum and O'Connell, 2009). Thus, it is difficult to effectively build one's social capital without being able to speak Standard Chinese. This also explains why interviewees, despite their belief that inability to speak Standard Chinese was not an issue, they still felt that they were not getting the full experience working in Taiwan.

The sense of 'missing out'

Challenges associating with local language proficiency, understandably, were observed in a range of different situations including teaching activities, fulfilling administrative requirements, and accessing opportunities and resources.

> *"A challenging experience I had is when I first came here, my very first grant submission failed because I didn't understand the Chinese website [of the funding body]. It was really unfortunate." (Tom)*

> *"I feel that I'm missing a lot of stuff that's in Chinese. The information may go through the system or go into my mailbox, but it's full of Chinese ... I'm missing out on possible opportunities of getting research grants, or different programs that I might not know of." (Dan)*

In other cases, language was identified as a key hindrance to building a sense of community. Some interviewees showed a good understanding of this situation, some expressed a desire to be included, and others showed appreciation of the efforts made by locals to close the communicational gap:

> *"...although I'm in social gatherings, there's a public isolation. I think language can be one issue. Another aspect is that, even if I understand their language, if they speak something that has cultural embedded concept, it's very hard for me to follow." (Chris)*

> *"I still can't communicate in local language, but they would try to accommodate me. I think it's very difficult to maintain such good relationship with the local people while we can't understand each other fully as I'm unable to communicate in Chinese. But even with that gap, we are making such a relationship, which I must appreciate." (Banke)*

Even for those whose Standard Chinese proficiency was high enough to be assigned administrative responsibilities, hurdles were still observed. For example, when referring to her short-lived experience managing a small-scale academic unit, an interviewee recalled her anxiety attending regular official meetings together with other academic managers across the university:

> *"...everything was run in Chinese, and I felt my Chinese was not enough to deal with that kind of super formal situation. It was already a struggle for me to read whatever I had to report on ... [not to mention] all the social linguistic competences that were required of me*

> *to be able to function fully in that given circumstance, to understand the hidden messages of what was said, [and] the underlying meaning ... you have to be able to be part of the game to understand what's going on. So, I felt quite incapable of doing that." (Wila)*

Even in less formal settings, it somehow remained a challenge for already fluent Standard Chinese speakers to feel included.

> *"No matter how good you speak Chinese. You always miss out. There really is a cultural difference." (Irene)*

One interviewee concluded that the feeling of alienation would persist, irrespective of how good their command of the local language is and how well-versed they are with cultural understanding.

> *"...being a foreigner, you'll always be a foreigner, always. You'll never, never be fully integrated into the system." (Sam)*

The above sentiments from interviewees show that language proficiency plays a significant role in their development of local connections and embedment in local society. Therefore, failing to take part in an interaction in the commonly used language of a given society jeopardises one's ability to engage and leads to a feeling of missing out, which can be linked to isolation, or frustration due to a lack of full integration (Lewthwaite, 1996; Takeuchi, Yun, and Tesluk, 2002).

As mentioned previously, a shared or common language, in a figurative sense, can also refer to a set of understandings and behaviours that are accepted by a group of people as norms and sanctions (Coleman, 1988; Zhao et al., 2016). This reiterates the importance of the individuals' capabilities to create relational benefits through guanxi, a form of highly valued commodity that is not explicitly spoken about, to serve as their social capital and a medium for communication in the interviewees' management of interactions at work and in life in Taiwan.

4.6 Family capital and the experiences of female academics

In research into international work mobility, the experience of women is widely featured and discussed with focus on challenges and inaccurate perceptions women face in taking employment overseas (Adler, 1984; Altman and Shortland, 2008; Corby and Stanworth, 2009; Shortland, 2016). Interviews with female international academics did not reveal any issues for women to seek employment in Taiwan. The presumptions including women's unfitness of the job and organisation's inclination to hire male employees (Selmer and Leung, 2003) were also not observed in this study. In research into social capital more generally, studies show that in comparison women occupy a significantly disadvantageous position in developing the social capital required to generate benefits to career advancement (Timberlake, 2005; Abramo, D'Angelo, and Caprasecca, 2009). But, taking a contrasting approach, Gersick, Dutton, and Bartunek (2000, p.1028) point out that female academics performed equally effectively in creating 'soft social capital' to provide emotional support to their peers. The role of family capital was previously discussed for its prevailing impact on various aspects at workplace and in daily life of the international academics. The 24 interviews conducted for this study showed that the prominence of family capital is even more so for those nine female international academics. Linking to prior research on mobility and social capital, this study helps identify commonality and differences with prior studies, providing insights to the experience of female international academics in Taiwan,

4.6.1 The balancing between professional and familial domain

The number of married female interviewees (5) is only half of their male counterparts (10). However, these female interviewees, especially those having children, reported greater challenges in having balance between work and family than married male interviewees. For some of the female interviewees, family care duties determined their career choice early on.

> *"After I graduated, I had some industrial internship opportunities, which I found not easy for me to manage as I have two kids. I wanted to have better work life balance as I don't have my in-laws or my parents here to help take care of my family. So I thought maybe a job at the academia would be better than working in the industries as it gives me more flexibility to manage my time." (Tisha)*

Reflecting on the hurdles as a young mother when she experienced difficulties in finding employment in her home country, one of the interviewees realised that taking a job overseas seemed the only feasible solution, even though the decision brought some complexity to family arrangements.

> *"[My husband]suggested that, when our kid is older, I start looking for postdoctoral researcher outside ... so [later] I got a position in China ... At that time, we didn't really have a proper family with that closedness. My kid was with my parents, and I was not having proper relationship with my daughter; I wanted to see her, but I can't ... so there's a lot of gaps in the family." (Unita)*

The interviewees' comments affirmed prior research that the wife and mother plays the role of caregiver of their family, also amongst women in academia (Jöns, 2011). Some of the female interviewees believed that the advantages and benefits that their family members may enjoy while living in Taiwan made these efforts in balancing work and family worthwhile. This is supported by Corby and Stanworth (2009) who point out that for married female professionals, the need of their family easily overtakes their own considerations when taking employment overseas. For example, although despite the obvious inconvenience of having to manage both work and family in the absence of their parents or the wider support network that is available back home, all 3 female interviewees with children of school age agreed that the fact that their children are able to benefit from quality schooling and exposure to Standard Chinese remained a key driver for them to continue working in Taiwan and they did not foresee any changes in where the family reside in the near future.

4.6.2 The role of spousal support

Spousal support is very important to interviewees with family responsibilities, both male and female. As mentioned earlier, of the 10 male interviewees with spouses, eight are married to local Taiwanese whose network and social capital is crucial to their management of work and life in Taiwan. All 10 agreed that the contribution of their spouse and wider family have been pivotal to their local adjustment and career development, and they were confident about long-terms plans in Taiwan. However, anecdotes from some female interviewees demonstrated that the plans of their spouse could impact their international work mobility experience.

> *"I came to Taiwan with my husband ... [my daughter] said that she felt like Taiwan was her hometown ... she was brought up here and she felt really safe here ... My husband is slightly different. He always said that after the [work] assignment he wanted to go back to [our home country] and contribute to our home country ... [when] I leave and go back to [home county] in the future, I think I will try to build some collaboration with Taiwan so that I get to visit." (Tisha)*

For Tisha, despite the strong inclination of her daughter to stay in Taiwan, she was prepared to follow her husband to move back to their home country while already making alternative plans for her research development that fits her personal preference.

For Wila, who's husband is not an academic and does not understand the slower pace of career progression for a social scientist, confesses that she is '*in the prison of marriage and motherhood*' and believes that she would have been more successful if she '*didn't have this husband and children to deal with*' because:

> *"I don't have my natal family with me in Taiwan. So I don't really have any support around, which is the most difficult thing ... as a foreign teacher here whose Chinese was not that perfect, can you imagine, I had to book my own session with the confinement recovery services provider. I had to go and visit several different facilities with my pregnant tummy, go around, look into the room, sign contracts ... I struggled their babyhood. I had to pay for nannies, kindergarten, everything, just these services because I didn't have any support network from my own family." (Wila)*

Bubolz (2001) point out that family capital is also a form of social capital, as family functions as source and builder of social capital that enables its members to access resources required to attain their goals. This is supported by the interviewees' anecdotes above, which show that in addition to the moral and financial support that spouses are able to offer, the accessibility of support or resources possessed by in-laws is also a form of social capital that facilitate their pursuit of positive experience in Taiwan.

Overall, insights from the interviewees confirmed that family capital plays a 'make-or-break' role for female international academics in Taiwan. While objective success such as career advancement remains crucial for female academics, familial considerations appear to be more important factors for women than men, as comments relating to family and spouse were brought up much more frequently by female academics than their male peers. In general, the female interviewees reporting higher level of overall satisfaction with their time in Taiwan also tend to also be those able to mobilise a range of resources and support across different circumstances. While supporting prior research that a well-covered social capital portfolio facilitates internationally mobile professionals to perform successfully both at the workplace and in life (Mäkelä and Suutari, 2009; Bauder, 2020), findings of this study established family capital as a key form of social capital to encourage success of both men and women during the mobility journey in Taiwan.

4.7 Perceived success through mobility in Taiwan

In general, all interviewed international academics rated their mobility experience in Taiwan positively, despite some initial turbulence experienced shortly after their arrival that was derived from the lack of understanding of local practice. As previously mentioned, many praised Taiwan for the convenience it provides to its inhabitants and over the years have grown accustomed to their surroundings. Out of the 24 interviewees, two, while acknowledging satisfaction with their day-to-day life, considered their experiences at the workplace a source of frustration and confirmed their plans to leave their job when the interview took place. The other 22 interviewees were generally content with their working and living status in Taiwan and did not see themselves actively looking for opportunities to relocate to other countries soon; five interviewees even expressed their intention to continue in their current role till retirement. Such decisions could be seen as the manifestation of the interviewees' successful adaptation to working and living in Taiwan.

As defined by prior studies (Cao, Hirschi and Deller, 2011), success can be viewed in objective and subjective lens. Objective success relates to the individuals' promotion, income, or wealth, whereas subjective success includes their life satisfaction, positive affect, and lack of negative affect (Duckworth et al., 2021). Following this categorisation, comments from interviewees showing satisfaction about their experience in Taiwan also help understanding how interviewees reflect their own success in the work mobility. Interestingly, one sees some recurring elements across motivations, adjustment and success (which is specified in greater detail as follows), suggesting an alignment of goals and achievements from the perspectives of internationally mobile academics in Taiwan.

4.7.1 Perceived objective success

Career advancement in supportive environment

It is widely known that the competition in the academia worldwide is getting increasingly intensified (Haeussler, 2011; Altbach, 2012). For academics, the competition manifests itself in the form of job application, grant application, and promotion assessment. Some interviewees attribute their success in career advancement to Taiwan's friendly environment, at both national and institutional levels, to facilitate research development.

> *"I do think that as opposed to [my home country], Taiwan scores a lot better in the level of funding support, as well as the research environment; it's like in heaven by comparison ... I feel that the Taiwanese government places much stronger emphasis [in humanities] than my government." (Umi)*

> *"What I feel really good is that as the university is very supportive to the faculty members in*

> *terms of equipment, moral or mental support, then the faculty member should keep their best in such university, so as everyone." (Banke)*

Other interviewees, referring to their very own experiences, believed that the key to success lies with the individuals' ability to make use of the system and find the way to set themselves up for quality performance.

> *"I think the scientific enterprise here [in Taiwan] is pretty well-established and solid ... One of the thinking behind coming to Taiwan was that United States [as a big country] ... have many excellent scientists [there]. If I do not go there, no one is going to notice ... In Taiwan, because it's a smaller country, it's more likely to actually make a difference." (Ethan)*

> *"...when you come to Taiwan everything goes so fast compared to [my home country]. You really accumulate much more research outcome ... Anyone who comes to Taiwan and sticks to that pace, in my field of research, can become a full professor ... [at the age of] 35, 36 ... It's not about the persons, it's just the place. If you adapt to the place here and to the system, then they give you everything." (Will)*

Despite the rich diversity of the interviewees' prior work histories and areas of expertise, several mentioned that Taiwan allowed career achievements that some of them would find difficult to achieve in other higher education system. Echoing research focusing on overseas adjustment, work adjustment, along with the individuals' interaction adjustment and cultural adjustment, contribute to the level of their perceived success about their life overseas (Black and Stephens, 1989; Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou, 1991), and for many international academics working in Taiwan, the ongoing (or completed in some cases) attainment of career progression inferred that they performed successfully in adjusting to the local system and only few saw career development as a reason for their potential plan to relocate in the near future.

All 9 female interviewees cited career advancement as the primary reason for them to pursue employment overseas, regardless of family status. This is in line with Shortland's (2016) that reported career as the top reason for female professionals to work overseas. For example, two interviewees chose Taiwan as it was the most promising option when they were seeking employment:

> *"I sent out applications to institutions both at home and abroad, and one of the institutions*

> *in Taiwan was the first that responded to me ... eventually I got the offer and accepted it ... I feel that the past ten years have given me a lot of freedom with my work. I get to decide what courses I teach and what areas I want to focus on my research. It's been just great." (Bianka)*

> *"The [Taiwanese] university accepted my application ... they really wanted me, and I needed a job. And I thought 'well, I can go to Taiwan.'" (Tracy)*

For some of the female interviewees, Taiwan was the place that enabled their work. When Irene, who is specialised in a niche area pertaining to Taiwan, took the employment in a Taiwanese university, she already had considerable amount of work and professional network accumulated that made her ideal candidate for the position:

> *"So I was actually in the field since mid 1990's doing research and getting that network, which expanded into [other region] ... so you get to know more people. It's when the position became available at [my current university], [a senior colleague] asked me if I would apply. So I did, and I was given the position. So it's a journey of over 20 years. Winding, but everything is connected, through the research field, through actually establishing the field [in Taiwan]." (Irene)*

> *"...I received a message from [a senior colleague at my current university saying] ... that if I still consider working abroad, his offer stood ... So I came here to Taiwan ... This job is really good. I really love my job. Here I have to do my research, and I am the principal investigator of projects funded by the Ministry of Science and Technology. I have Taiwanese master's students working under my guidance. I ask them to design reactors, providing new ideas, and they give me data, I write papers for them. After I got here, I've published 25 papers and 2 book chapters." (Unita)*

Although two interviewees showed frustration with work and expressed their intention to leave their position, their decisions were based on a lack of professional respect at the workplace.

> *"...I do my best as much as I can ... [but] I feel very dismissed that way... it's the work that snagged ... I think I can find a workplace where I am treated as an equal." (Michelle)*

In general, female interviewees rated their experience at work very positively, many stating that their initial goal of coming to Taiwan to develop their careers became reality. This is the case regardless of family status, highlighting Taiwan's capacity to support female scientists in their professional advancement in a wide range of areas of expertise.

Financial stability

For a few of the interviewees with poor financial condition before seeking international work mobility, improving their financial situation is considered a form of success gained from their work mobility in Taiwan which they would not have had in their home country.

> *"After I came to Taiwan, everything went well, mainly because my income was stable ... I had spent a lot of money on moving around [in my home country] and didn't really have savings so I came to Taiwan with my own body and that's it...Now I wouldn't want to leave Taiwan ... There was indeed a pay gap [compared with other countries] ... but everything considered, I feel that, in terms of salary level and life stress and everything, Taiwan offers the best choice." (Umi)*

Arguably not all the interviewees were satisfied with the remuneration attached to their academic positions in the Taiwanese universities, especially for those coming from western countries or established higher education systems where the average income levels tend to be much higher than that of Taiwan (Glassdoor, 2023; Herbert, Knibbs and Naz Hassan, 2023; Hsu, 2023; Indeed, 2023). Many interviewees pointed out that when the standard cost of living and the purchasing power of their salaries are taken into account, they found the financial return from their employment in Taiwan acceptable.

4.7.2 Perceived subjective success

Improved professional development with the 'Taiwan premium'

According to some of the international academics, they have significantly improved their professional standing and enhanced their academic credential over their time in Taiwan. This advantageous stance may be based on the field of their unique expertise or attached to Taiwan's strong position to generate quality work in certain areas of science. Such career premium made it strong pull (Dickmann et al., 2008) to make these interviewees stay.

> *"I focused on [a subject area] ... I began my career here...and it's kind of professionalised here much stronger than before." (Irene)*

> *"...the main advantage ... [is] its geographical location ... Because we are in Kaohsiung ... [with] a very interesting marine system ... which has the potential to have the excessive*

> *carbon emission buried deep on the ocean floor ... and I thought why not take advantage of that ... this can have a potential global significance." (Gabriel)*

These interviewees saw growth of research profile as a confirmation of professional development. This supports Cao, Hirschi and Deller (2011) who argue that career success can be defined subjectively by the perceived fulfilment of individuals' intrinsic motivations, instead of purely relying on the objective barometers such as rank and salaries.

Receipt of a sense of reward

For some of the interviewees, getting the sense of accomplishment plays a key role in how they view their own performance, which does not have to be the outcomes of their own work and can be defined as a form of subjective success (Duckworth et al., 2012.). Many mentioned the rewarding experience of working with their students, facilitating student development, and sending them off to better opportunities in academia or industries. For others, the sense of satisfaction comes from the pure joy of getting to do what they enjoy doing.

> *"I always wanted to thank the students for their hard work, and for their investment and their time and energy, so that we can have those victories that benefit all of us ... That's a real privilege for me as a teacher to be able to try and make a small contribution to helping them become better people, better thinkers, better scientist or whatever it is they wanted to be." (Tom)*

> *"I get to do cool stuff. I think a lot of the researchers remain fundamentally children, to some extent. I get to play with all these things, I put electrics in people. I very much enjoy the process of engaging in my experiments. Doing these experiments is great. Teaching students how to do these experiments is also great." (Eric)*

Some interviewees enjoyed leveraging their own foreignness and connections and used that to bridge different systems in Taiwan and their home country, a role in which they took pride.

> *"I have knowledge and perspectives on many local topics that not so many people have. I mean there are not so many Europeans [in Taiwan] who know the architecture environment like I do ... I can talk, with a European perspective, about Taiwanese architecture, which is something you would not find [from other people]." (Nico)*

> *"I feel that I can play the role in channelling [my home country's] expertise in Chinese*

> *cultural studies to my fellow researchers in Taiwan. There are so much to learn from each other, but it seems that even the researchers themselves are not aware of it, as we all tend to look at China when in fact there is much more value exchanging ideas amongst ourselves ... I believe I can advocate for peer learning between the academic communities in [my home country] and Taiwan." (Bianka)*

The above quotes indicated that the interviewees obtained a sense of accomplishment both within and outside the work context. The very sense of reward comes from multiple sources. It is deeply rooted in their interaction with their surroundings and the feedback they received from those interaction. The role of utilisation they play in given situations also brought them a sense of accomplishment as they make a positive impact on others. In these interviewees, one sees the trait of prosociality, e.g. the act to benefit others by sharing, caring, and comforting (Caprara, Alessandri and Eisenberg, 2012). For this group, perceived success does not have to associate with that of their own. What is also worth noting is that the individuals' perceived sense of reward may not necessarily link to their decision to continue or end their job. For example, one of the interviewees, despite showing strong commitment to promoting cultural understanding, confirmed her plan to leave her position because of the perceived lack of trust and collaboration at her workplace.

Personal growth

Some interviewees report the enriched life experience through working and living in Taiwan an element of success in their view. One participant described the handling of cultural differences as a group lesson as the local people involved were also taken through the process in which they learned together. Despite the varying rating that the interviewees gave to themselves, in terms of work and general adjustment, the interviewed international academics stated that it was the personal growth that they gained from this experience that made it gratifying.

> *"I would say that since the beginning it's been very successful ... It's been a great experience and also there's always this feeling of being in an exotic place, so there's always something new to discover. It's a positive contribution to my life." (Nico)*

> *"...being here allows me to enjoy very generous research environment, meeting with excellent students, that's definitely a positive side. Another positive side is that, as I am being exposed to a different culture, I am starting to learn Chinese, as well as Chinese/Taiwanese culture. That can be another asset in my life in the future." (Chris)*

Others felt that being able to expand their existing understanding of certain practice, to challenge their established ways of working, and to enhance their skills and perspectives was the most valuable learning in Taiwan.

> *"...it's challenging, but it's an experience that I learnt from ... I feel like it's very humbling ... I think there are also many good aspects of how things are done here so just having those different perspective can be valuable as well ... makes me value certain parts of the work culture that I may not have thought about before or be more aware. Maybe if I was just in one culture, I would just take a lot of things for granted, like 'this is just the way to do things; everyone does it this way.'" (Michelle)*

While personal development in terms of improved cross-cultural literacy and expanded reservoir of skills, perspectives, and life experiences is highly valued by many interviewees, it does not appear to play a definite role in the individuals' decision to stay or not. One interviewee acknowledged her learning from the experience in Taiwan as 'very humbling' but such learning unfortunately did not cancel the frustration accumulated at work, which led to her decision to depart from her job.

Anecdotes presented in this and the previous subsections show that successful establishment of life overseas can be only half-completed without well-rounded adaptation encompassing cultural, interactional, and professional context (Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou, 1991). Although the sense of reward and the personal development contribute to the individuals' overall socio-cultural adjustment, the presence of psychological adjustment where the individuals are free from feeling anxiety and tension (Selmer, 1998) would be essential to the so-called success in international work mobility.

Family bonding

Interviewees who reside with their family members reported the strengthened family bonding a form of success in the personal domain. They tributed this to Taiwan's great capacity to accommodate a wide range of different needs of members of their family. For those who have their extended family members around them, the ease of managing family life increases significantly and many see it a great advantage of living in Taiwan.

> *"[My husband and I] had our two kids born here. We all love to stay in Taiwan... It feels a lot more comfortable around here, compared to [my home country] ... [My daughter] felt like*

> *Taiwan is her hometown." (Tisha)*

> *"When we need help for the kids, my in-laws are there whenever we need them really. Otherwise, I can't do this. (Graham)*

As Richardson and Mallon (2005) point out, having strong family connections may be a pull factor for relocation in some cases. And in this research project, interviewees reported that because of the support they received from their extended family in Taiwan, they were able to focus on work knowing that the children were under good care. This supports Ashamalla (1998) that positive cross-cultural adjustment as a family plays an essential role in the individuals' successful management of working and living overseas. As for those interviewees whose families are entirely foreign without prior local connections before moving to Taiwan, their experience shows that the more their spouses or family members are tied in with the local society, the less likely they are to consider relocation, which echoes the findings from previous research that look into factors contributing to the individuals and their spouses' positive experience in handling life overseas (Dickmann et al., 2008; Tharenou and Caulfield, 2010).

> *"My wife is also a foreigner and currently employed with an architecture firm. She's got a stable job with good experience. She had a lot of opportunities being here ... she also has her own interest and her own activities locally. She's also part of the local community; somehow, we have become embedded in the society, which means that if we were to move, if I find an opportunity for myself, I also need to consider my wife because if she moves, she would probably lose something." (Nico)*

> *"My family, they really like being in Taiwan. My daughter spent only the first three years in her life in [my home country], she doesn't really remember much about that time ... by heart, she is Taiwanese..." (Unita)*

Of all 15 interviewees who were living with their core family members in Taiwan at the time of interview, 14 of them reported positive experience of their spouse and children in terms managing their daily interaction as individuals or as a family, which led to a generally affirmative attitude towards their long-term commitment to Taiwan as a working and living destination. One of the interviewees stated that as her family has grown so accustomed to life Taiwan and had applied for the citizenship of Taiwan, which testified their successful adaptation to life in Taiwan as a family.

Autonomy and contentedness

Based on the insights from the interviewed international academics, successful mobility experience is also defined by a much wider range of considerations. Some interviewees understood that the higher education sector in Taiwan was not necessarily seen as the most attractive employer in terms of institutional academic reputation and impressive financial offer. However, many of them places greater emphasis on life satisfaction and lack of negative affect (Duckworth et al., 2012). Many interviewees considered staying in Taiwan long term as they perceive the state of being content with work and life, as well as autonomy and safety, important elements to success in mobility experience.

> *"I like my job. I love what I do. So, I had a lot of fun doing it ... I love the food. I love the people. I even love the National Healthcare ... I like Taiwan. It's a good place. So, I'm not really interested in changing job just for the sake of changing job. I have a good job, and if I want to see those other countries, I can travel there." (Tracy)*

> *"...because of the National Health Insurance, the safety, and the politics back home – your politics are much easier to understand and less dirty and cruel – it's come to the extent that this is now my home." (Wila)*

Taiwan also seemed to have accommodated a wide range of considerations of the interviewees. Often, it was not purely the career advancement that they were looking for; being able to have their life the way they want it was also commonly mentioned, and this perceived serenity in life is not to be underestimated.

> *"...one nice surprise about Taiwan is that ... in the western countries ... you start your day, you are bombarded with emails, if you are not careful you are in the danger of dealing with those emails all day long. In Taiwan, I receive minimal amount of emails. When I start my day, I could actually get things moving, stuff that matters. I don't have to waste time responding to emails. That's refreshing." (Gabriel)*

> *"What keeps me here is I got used to the job. I've got used to the people that I work with. I got used to the environment. And I settled down. I am content as it is." (Sam)*

Interestingly, many of the interviewees provided comments in this category are living in Taiwan alone. The fulfilled feeling of autonomy and contentedness constituted a desired lifestyle that allowed them ways of operation in which they found ease and comfort, which made the notion of relocation inconceivable and retirement possible.

Overall, objective success, including career advancement and increase of income, plays essential roles in the reflection of mobility experience by the interviewed international academics in Taiwan. The interviews also showed that they had much diverse views when describing satisfaction that does not always entail recognition from others. Subjective success, such as family engagement, personal growth and desired lifestyle, and objectives success, together, had an impact on the internationally mobile academics' overall assessment of their performance in Taiwan.

For female academics, safety, as well as the attitude towards women, at the destination is of major factor for women considering international work mobility (Adler, 1984). Taiwan has been praised for its 'extremely safe' environment for its residents and visitors (Hebenton, Jou and Chang, 2010; Expats Arrivals, 2024) and was listed the third place in Safety Index by Country 2023 (Numbeo, 2023). This could help explain why female interviewees of this study did not appear worried with their own safety and that of their family while in Taiwan. Just as previously quoted, one of the interviewees commented that her daughter '*felt really safe here' (Tisha)* and even started developing a sense of belonging to Taiwan. Moreover, many of the interviewed female academics commented that the safety they enjoyed in Taiwan is more than just having the freedom to move around places without worrying about their personal safety:

> *I value autonomy and I also value fairness and democracy. So I like being in the country where the NHI system makes me feel that the Taiwan government see us as human beings. This meaningfulness of human life, it's not like in [my home country where] people die on the street ... I hate that, and Taiwan doesn't have that ... I feel safe, safety both in terms of healthcare and going out on the street. In [my hometown] ... even when it's not dark, taxi drivers do things to single female passenger. But things like that would never happen in Taiwan. Taiwan is a place where I want to raise my children. (Wila)*

> *"People in [my home country] are suspicious of having the government run the health service, but I'm like, well, it's a great thing for me in Taiwan. I'm glad to have my healthcare in Taiwan. I try to avoid having medical things done [back home] because it's way cheaper in Taiwan." (Tracy)*

Several of the female interviewees also recognised Taiwan's national measures during the global pandemic as a source of security:

> *"The most striking thing is that we feel very safe in Taiwan...We are now going through the disruption and I take it as the reality that we have to adapt, and I'm actually very grateful, so is my husband, that we are currently in Taiwan and we feel very safe compared to other people we know and where they are...the situation [back home] is not as good as Taiwan. (Helena)*

Overall, the sense of security of female interviewees was high as they cited Taiwan's environment that ensures personal safety and government policies that support affordable healthcare as sources of security. In comparison, safety and welfare were much less mentioned by male interviewees. This is in line with prior studies, which may be seen as a stereotype, that women place more emphasis on the safety of the environment when considering overseas employment (Alder, 1984; Bader, Bucher and Sarabi, 2024).

4.8 Concluding remarks

Responses from the 24 interviewees helped establish several key findings of this study, covering their career pathways into academia, their motivation to work in Taiwan, their local adjustment, their perceived success, and equally importantly, how they mobilise resources and support through exercising their relational competencies.

From the interviewees' responses, three types of 'becoming' as of how they stepped into academia include the aspired explorers with a 'studious' nature and an innate passion about knowledge, the groomed scientists who started out in academia as a 'logical progression' following their doctoral education, and the purpose seekers who served as academics with a religious pursuit. Recognising the role of social capital in academic mobility to Taiwan, this Chapter linked guanxi and (internal) social capital (Yen, Tseng and Wang, 2015) with a focus on family capital, which feature prominently in the academics' relocation motivation, local adjustment, gender-specific observations, and assessment of success. Specifically, for the interviewees who saw themselves 'making it' in Taiwan, their curation and accumulation of guanxi – or what I call social capital reservoir – helped them achieve successful performance by both objective and subjective standards (Cao, Hirschi and Deller, 2011) in areas ranging from career development and income growth to family engagement and personal fulfilment.

Starting with different causes, the interviewees' academic career provides the conditions for the undertaking of international work mobility. Although, understandably, these internationally mobile academics embarked on this journey again with different motivations. Principally aligning with prior research, those coming to Taiwan were mostly driven by considerations for career (Suutari and Brewster, 2000; Cao, Hirschi and Deller, 2011; Netz and Jakszat, 2016), family (Ashamalla, 1998; Jackson et al., 2005; Dickmann et al., 2008), finance (Suutari and Brewster, 2000; Thorn, 2009; Shortland, 2016), and lifestyle (Suutari and Brewster, 2000; Benson and O'Reilly, 2009; Lee and Kuzhabekova, 2018). Amongst these drivers, family connections came up significantly in this study to have played a decisive role in bringing the interviewees to work and live in Taiwan. Ties such as family connections and social networks inevitably involve relational competencies, derived from social capital, that can impact on the individuals' ability to acquire support to help them settle and integrate. And indeed, as data analysis progressed, the trace of social capital repeatedly emerged, though implicitly, during the process of data interpretation. The interviewees who reported stronger establishment of social networks, typically, tended to comment more positively on their adaptation to the local environment and the realisation of their aspirations. The discussions about issue around Standard Chinese proficiency helped improve the understanding of how such language skills (or lack thereof) affected the establishment of a sense of inclusivity both at work and generally in life. Although the interviewees generally did not see their insufficient Standard Chinese proficiency of major problems, they also acknowledged the missed opportunity to systematically forge connections and bonding with local people – a type of important actions to strengthen one's social capital.

Echoing prior research, what also came up strongly in this study was the necessity of having spousal support to help the female interviewees with care duties for children to balance between work and family (Linehan and Walsh, 1999; Liu and Wilson, 2001). In this study, family capital – help from the Taiwanese parents-in-law, together with spousal support is understood as a form of social capital (Bubolz, 2001). While family connections were often cited as an important source of insights and local intelligence by those who have them, this study revealed that the presence or absence of family capital, i.e. family and spousal support, is seen as pre-requisite for female academics to perform satisfactorily and achieve their goals.

Taken together, the data from this study has yielded insights into how the interviewees started working as academics and consequently develop their academic career in Taiwan. It reflected on their local adjustment through the utilisation and mobilisation of forms of capital, as well as a summary of their perceived success throughout their mobility journey in Taiwan. The next Chapter will draw together the findings of this study as summarised above with an explanatory depiction of the interviewees' journey and discuss the key and sub research questions of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussions

5.1 Introduction

This study set out to answer the research question:

How do the international academics navigate their adjustment in Taiwan to pursue success and satisfaction?

Findings from the 24 in-depth interviews were reported in Chapter Four, revealing the interviewees' own reflection on their experience of managing work and life in Taiwan. In this chapter, I proceed to discuss these findings and their implications, linking back to the sub research questions of this study covering motivation to work in Taiwan, cross-cultural adjustment, and access to resources, as well as the concepts and theories examined in the literature review in Chapter Two. In Section 5.2, I present an explanatory framework to illustrate the journey of the work mobility undertaken by the internationally mobile academics in Taiwan, featuring social capital and human capital, as well as key aspects of these competencies (McCallum and O'Connell, 2009), throughout the international academics' experience. Sections 5.3 and 5.4 further discuss the interaction of these forms of capital, including economic, human, and social, and their functions in the various stages of the mobility experience, affirming the special role of guanxi for its capacity to facilitate successful achievements perceived by the international academics in Taiwan. These discussions lead to the reflection in Section 5.5 that social capital serves to drive a virtuous circle of the international academics' mobility journey over time when their satisfactory performance at work and in the private domain also has the potential to enhance relational competencies, which may further extend to benefit others. Last but not least, in Section 5.6, I present an overall conclusion, linking prior points and discussions, to offer a complete depiction of the international academics' work mobility experience in Taiwan and reflect on the theoretical contribution made by this study to the existing literature.

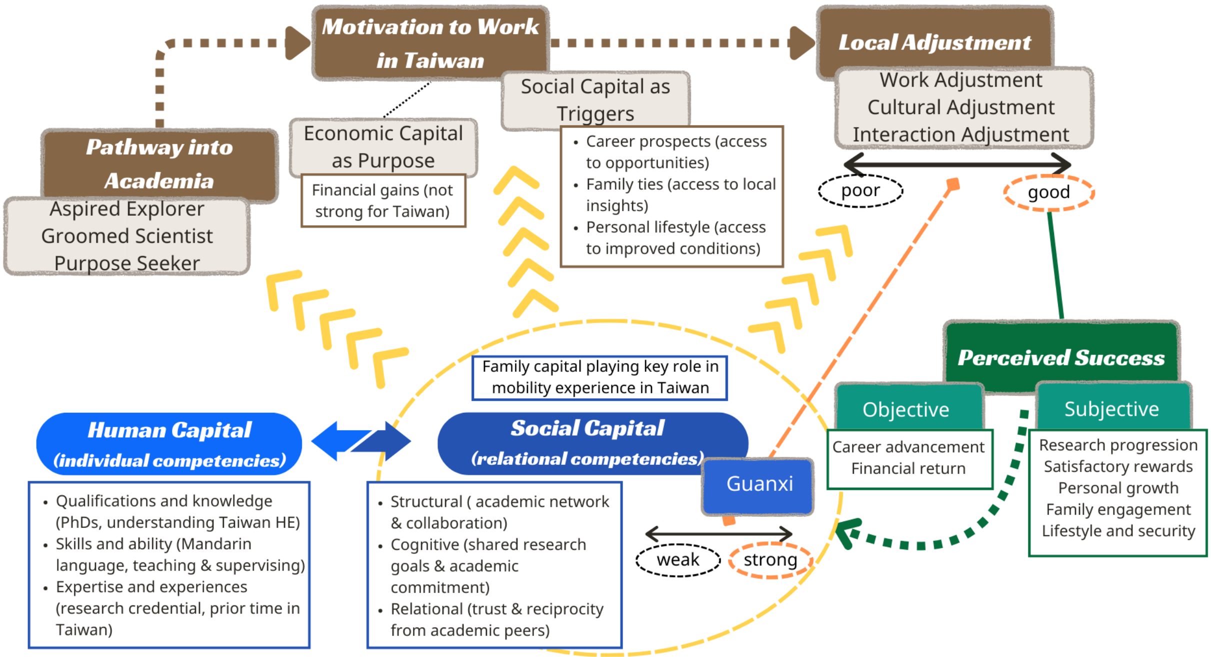
5.2 Proposed framework to explain international faculty mobility experience in Taiwan

The interviews show that social capital plays a pivotal role in the international academics' life journey and professional development. For example, Section 4.3 demonstrated how family ties and social connections heavily influenced the international academics' decision to relocate to Taiwan. Section 4.4 then connected the interviewees' level of local adjustments to the amount of support and resources that are available in their network. In the knowledge industries, doctoral qualifications are often the pre-requisites. Doctoral education can be seen as the threshold for the individuals to accumulate social capital, such as development of cooperation, expansion of network, and establishment of trust, to benefit their future advancement. For individuals aiming at a career in academia, in addition to their own intellectual condition (part of their human capital), their access to resources and opportunities that support their professional development almost pre-decides whether they can flourish in an academic career. The so-called resources and opportunities available in their networks, together with other characteristics including commitment, trust, and reciprocity, collectively referred to as social capital in the context of this research, can therefore be seen as the starting point for them to qualify for the pursuit of an international career.

These findings support the notion of mutual reinforcement of human capital and social capital (see Figure 1 in Chapter Two). As presented in Chapter Four, many of the interviewees recalled that it was years of solid training and network building during their doctoral education that led to their subsequent career progression both at home and abroad. As their career progresses, they continue accumulating more social capital which in turn enhances their human capital in the form of knowledge, skills, and abilities. This mutual enhancement of the individuals' human and social capital, for many of the interviewees, opened up opportunities for future relocation to other countries.

The above discussions around social capital serve as a starting point for the development of an explanatory framework of this study (see Figure 6 below). Covering the different stages of an international work mobility experience, i.e. becoming (Section 4.2), relocating (Section 4.4), adjusting (Section 4.5), and succeeding (Section 4.7), of the interviewed international academics, the framework serves to depict how social capital (combing the effect of family capital and guanxi) occupies a crucial role in the work mobility journey and affects the positive experience (or lack thereof) of the individuals. These different stages presented in the framework are also linked to the sub research questions of this study, which will be discussed in detail in Section 5.3.

Figure 6. Explanatory framework of work mobility experience of international academics in Taiwan


Motivation to Work in Taiwan
Local Adjustment
Social Capital as Triggers
Work Adjustment
Cultural Adjustment
Interaction Adjustment
Economic Capital as Purpose
Pathway into Academia
Aspired Explorer
Groomed Scientist
Purpose Seeker
Financial gains (not strong for Taiwan)
• Career prospects (access to opportunities)
• Family ties (access to local insights)
• Personal lifestyle (access to improved conditions)
poor
good
Perceived Success
Family capital playing key role in mobility experience in Taiwan
Human Capital (individual competencies)
Social Capital (relational competencies)
Objective
Subjective
Guanxi
Career advancement
Financial return
Research progression
Satisfactory rewards
Personal growth
Family engagement
Lifestyle and security
weak
strong
• Qualifications and knowledge (PhDs, understanding Taiwan HE)
• Skills and ability (Mandarin language, teaching & supervising)
• Expertise and experiences (research credential, prior time in Taiwan)
• Structural (academic network & collaboration)
• Cognitive (shared research goals & academic commitment)
• Relational (trust & reciprocity from academic peers)

This framework contains three major parts: interplay of human and social capital (labelled in blue), work mobility journey (labelled in brown), and perceived success (labelled in green), each having subsets of corresponding categories and relations. Key features of the above framework are detailed below:

1. At the lower left corner of the Figure, the blue section, informed by the literature review on social capital in Chapter Two (see Section 2.3), depicts the mutual reinforcement of human and social capital, as marked by the double arrow in lighter and darker blue (↔). Key manifestations of the two types of capital that were most commonly demonstrated by the interviewed international academics working in Taiwan in Chapter Four are also detailed. For example, in terms of the interviewees' individual competencies (i.e. human capital), elements that were widely mentioned include their doctoral education (see Section 4.2), prior study and work experience (see Section 4.4) and command of local language (see Section 4.5.3). On the interviewees' relational competencies (i.e. social capital), the interviewees reflected how the structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions of social capital helped them build network and collaboration, engage professional commitment within academic community, and generate trust and reciprocal behaviours from peers to achieve their goals or adjust to local life in general (see Section 4.5). Family capital sits prominently in the social

capital realm due to its special utility value often through marriage. Also based on the findings of this study, the explanatory framework established a) the special connection between guanxi and social capital, and b) how guanxi functions to facilitate development of positive experience (see Section 4.3) in the context of Taiwan.

2. In the upper half of the Figure, the three stages of an international mobility, linked by the brown dotted arrows (⋯⋯▶), together describe the individuals’ work mobility experience in Taiwan from becoming academics, taking overseas employment, to managing local adjustment. Including the three types of becoming as discussed in Section 4.2, this framework also highlights the differentiation between the pull of sufficient social capital and the push of insufficient economic capital in leading to the act of relocation (see Section 4.4). The type of adjustments in the host country, including work adjustment, cultural adjustment, and interaction adjustment, as discussed in Section 2.2.2 and supported by the interviewees' comments in Section 4.5, were also included.
3. In the lower right corner of the Figure, with elements marked in green, objective success and subjective satisfaction (Cao, Hirschi and Deller, 2011; Duckworth et al., 2012) reported by the interviewees (see Section 4.7) are drawn to show the effect, brought by positive local adjustment as marked by the green line (——), to the interviewees perceived success in both professional and personal domains.
4. Bold arrows in yellow (❯❯❯❯❯) in the background are deployed to show that social capital, combining the contribution of human capital and the embedded relational benefit from guanxi, affect the different stages of the mobility journey, leading to the manifestation of different types of successful performance as reflected by the interviewees. More specifically, this study points out stronger guanxi positively impacts on the internationally mobile academics’ adjustments in Taiwan across workplace and daily life, as marked by the dotted line in orange (◆‑‑‑◆), whereas failing development of guanxi could impede local adjustment to facilitate satisfactory performance as per the individuals’ subjective assessment (also see Section 4.7).
5. This framework also suggests that the perceived success of the internationally mobile academics has the potential to contribute to the ongoing development of social capital, as marked by dotted arrow in green (◀⋯⋯), where the various types of success continue to enhance the internationally mobile academics’ relational competencies as a result of their improved personal and professional growth.

5.3 Social capital as a key facilitator for career initiation

The explanatory framework presented in Section 5.2 reveals that social capital, incorporating its interaction with human capital and the embedding guanxi as discussed throughout Chapter Four, serves the progression of international academics' careers in Taiwan. The framework also helps to address the sub research questions that this study set out to answer pertaining to the interviewees' motivations for mobility to Taiwan, their effective management of local adjustment underlined by their social capital reservoir which then positively influenced their performance (in professional and private domains and objective and subjective terms), and their strategy to secure resources and support.

To begin with, the inquiry into how the interviewees became academics revealed the role of human capital and social capital in the early stage of their (pre-)career development, supporting McCallum and O'Connell's (2009) finding that the strengthening of human capital (such as education, training, skills, and experience) contributes to the growth of social capital (across its structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions) such as the development of cooperation, shared commitment, and trust. For example, qualifications and skills obtained during the interviewees' PhD education in terms of serving as an entry threshold for social network development in academia, helping individuals to improve the scale or structure of their social networks and driving performance (Mosey and Wright, 2007; Headworth and Freese, 2016; Mountford, et al., 2020). In this study, for all three types of 'becoming' amongst the interviewee cohort, namely the aspired explorers, the groomed scientists, and the purpose seekers as discussed in Section 4.2, a career in academia is based on their determination to complete a pursuit, be it development of knowledge, easy transition into profession, or religious calling to serve the community. The interviewees' such pursuit necessitated the completion of a doctorate education and acquisition of advanced knowledge (i.e. enhancement of individual competencies) which in turn equipped them with the trust from others and commitment from their community (i.e. the development of relational competencies) to allow mobilisation of opportunities and resources residing in their social capital. Referring to the framework shown in Figure 6, individuals' social capital, combined with effects from human capital, enabled their formation of pathways into academia that provided opportunities for international careers at a later stage.

The interviewees' responses also echo Burt's (2017, p.32) observation of social capital that serves to be 'contextual complement to human capital', benefit the internationally mobile academics' ongoing development and expansion of career trajectory in Taiwan. To further elaborate on this point, for the first group, the aspired explorers, a career in academia was mostly developed with their deliberate efforts based on their individual competencies (i.e. human capital). For the groomed scientists who entered academia out of convenience and the purpose seekers who chose academia as a medium to channel their spiritual pursuit, the relational benefit (i.e. social capital) embedded in their externalities appeared to have been a much greater driver. In the latter two groups, the individuals exercised the task contingencies (Adler and Kwon, 2002) of their social capital to shape their career that fitted their goals.

What is worth noting from the study is that a career in academia opens up the journey for work mobility but does not necessarily guarantee positive mobility experience, as it heavily depends on the continuous development of human and social capital to sustain the interviewees' successful delivery in each stage.

5.4 Social capital as a key facilitator for positive work mobility experience

With the aids of the explanatory framework, the following discussions will focus on the interviewees' management of mobility experience in Taiwan to answer each of the sub research questions of this study.

5.4.1 Motivations to relocate observed in different forms of capital

Sub research question 1: What motivates the international academics to work overseas and particularly in Taiwan?

As discussed in Chapter Two, the key motivations to seek overseas employments include career (Fernando and Cohen, 2016; Khattab and Fenton, 2016), family (Dickmann et al., 2008; Shortland, 2014), finance (Thorn, 2009; Shortland, 2016), and lifestyle (Suutari and Brewster, 2000; Lee and Kuzhabekova, 2018). Research also shows that international mobility experience that academics acquired earlier during their student life, combined with a series of events in their personal and professional life, played a role in their later decisions about working overseas. Netz and Jaksztat (2017) present their model of international academic mobility with a lens of life course of the individuals and argue that international academic mobility is influenced by the academics' social origin, previous mobility experiences, current research context, current social context, and career orientation. Individuals having taken part in mobility are more likely to seek mobility experience in future (Netz and Jaksztat, 2017). Also, positive mobility experience tends to entice more of future mobility to benefit career development (Rostan and Höhle, 2014). Findings of this study support the above prior research. In Section 4.4 it was pointed out that around 63 per cent of the interviewees had overseas mobility experiences during their student life or in the early years of their career, and over 58 per cent of them have engaged in repeated overseas mobility prior to coming to Taiwan, supporting the findings by prior research that the exposure to international mobility, combined with the experience, skills, and cultural understanding accumulated from that experience, quite often serves to encourage the individuals' wider search for career opportunities and development beyond geographical boundary (Roy et al., 2019; Horta et al., 2021).

On motivation to move and work in Taiwan, both social capital and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) were identified from the responses of the interviewees. A much greater proportion of the interviewees were triggered to work in Taiwan by their all three dimensions of their social capital. This includes the individuals' existing awareness and understanding of their own suitability to work in Taiwan (cognitive), their established professional connections with the local scholarly community (structural), and their insights to the local hiring organisations granted by their family connections or social networks (relational). Findings from this study point out three types of motivations to work in Taiwan that are associated with the individual's possession of social capital, as discussed in Section 4.4 and illustrated in the explanatory framework (see *Motivation to Work in Taiwan* labelled in brown to the upper side of Figure 6). Such motivations include the intention to advance their career, seek preferred ways of living and strengthen (if not maintain) family bonding. The first two types of motivation – career prospects and personal lifestyle – as shown in the framework support Richardson and Mallon's (2005) research on expatriation decision for career opportunities and life changes, as well as the work by Lee and Kuzhabekova (2018) on academics taking international work mobility for better prospects for employment and work conditions, intercultural exposure for family members, and fulfilment of adventure. The third type of motivations associated with one's social capital is family ties. As Taiwan has not built its reputation as a key work destination, many embarking on a work mobility journey in Taiwan did so out of the combined considerations for career development and family ties owing to their marriage with Taiwanese nationals. This group is less reported in prior studies on international academic mobility but forms a common typology (11 out of 24 as reported in Section 4.3.2) in the interviewee cohort. For this group of internationally mobile academics, their spouse often plays the role as a pull factor in their relocating decision, which differs from prior research where spouse may feature as a negative influence in the internationally mobile professional's decision to relocate (Dickmann et al., 2008; Tharenou and Caulfield, 2010).

Interviewees with Taiwanese spouse have readily available access to insider knowledge, both about work practice and local society, through their family and social connections in Taiwan. Many of them would not have chosen Taiwan as a work destination if it were not for their Taiwanese spouse. However, having such local knowledge gives them an advantageous position in securing a desired job when competing with other candidates or gaining the support of influencers once employed. With such findings, it can be concluded that family capital occupies a particularly visible space in work mobility for the international academics, a phenomenon that is less seen in other country.

Referring to the framework shown in Figure 6, one sees that some interviewees, understandably, were motivated by considerations of a more material nature. However, in comparison, financial gains seemed to have been of much lower priority for the international academics working in Taiwan, as opposed to what was commonly seen in expatriation studies (Thorn, 2009; Baruch, Altman and Tung, 2016). Recognising financial stability as an overarching purpose of their international work mobility, these individuals were motivated not necessarily by the possession of (social) capital but the lack of (economic) capital. Comments from this group of interviewees confirmed that by moving to work in Taiwan they were able to afford better conditions for living for themselves and their family. However, as the remuneration package offered by jobs in Taiwan is generally considered less competitive than major research powerhouses (see Table 4 in Chapter Four), financial rewards does not appear to be the primary reason for their relocation to Taiwan, which is yet another phenomenon less seen in prior research on overseas work mobility in which monetary reward is often ranked highly by the internationally mobile professionals (Dobson et al., 2009; Thorn, 2009).

In summary, different forms of capital function differently in driving the individuals' relocation decision. While a smaller proportion of the interviewee cohort began their work mobility journey to Taiwan with an attempt to increase financial reward due to a lack of economic capital, most were driven by a sufficient possession of social capital that subsequently allowed them to pursue career development, family engagement, and personal fulfilment by moving to work in Taiwan's universities. More importantly, some form of prior understanding of Taiwan as a country and that of the higher education sector as a whole proved to be central to the relocation decision of many interviewees. Some of them acquired such knowledge from their academic network, while many more of them learned about Taiwan as a work destination through personal or family connections. A mismatch between the perspectives of the institutions and the individuals was also observed. While the universities intend to engage international talent with enhanced pay (supported by the policy funding), only a small group of interviewees were actually drawn to Taiwan for this reason and most interviewees were motivated by considerations not of material nature and instead pulled to Taiwan by their personal social capital reservoir. While economic capital considerations and social capital considerations are not in competition across the various motivations, it appears that social capital in general serves to be stronger trigger in work mobility to Taiwan amongst international academics.

5.4.2 Recalibration of local adjustment and perceived success

Sub research question 2: How do the international academics manage adjustment and performance?

In Figure 6, the right-hand side of the explanatory framework illustrates the relations of the internationally mobile academics' *Local Adjustment* (labelled in the colour of brown) and their *Perceived Success* (labelled in the colour of green). This study argues that good local adjustments can be categorised into work, cultural, and interaction adjustments (Black and Stephens, 1989; Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou, 1991). On work adjustment, the internationally mobile academics in Taiwan widely regard 'doing the job' as the easiest to manage owing to their years of training and education prior to coming to Taiwan. Meanwhile, the need to understand rules, expectations, and workplace conventions remained a major challenge for the international academics working in Taiwan but could be managed when they made conscious efforts to curate guanxi. On cultural adjustment, the internationally mobile academics saw themselves spending time on building social networks or finding the best possible way to navigate the cultural differences and overcome language barriers as and when required. On interaction adjustment, the internationally mobile academics agreed that the ability to speak local languages and understanding of local culture positively enhanced their management of interactions with the local people in Taiwan. However, these individuals' level of satisfaction with their interaction with the surroundings does not entirely rely on language ability and local knowledge. For example, most interviewees did not have good command of Standard Chinese or other local dialects and acknowledged their own limited capacity to fully understand situations with high cultural context. However, these interviewees rated positively their daily interactions with people in Taiwan for the highly adaptable, hospitable and accommodating nature of locals. In contrast, at the workplace where English is more widely spoken than in daily life, internationally mobile academics seemed less satisfied with their interactions with colleagues, as they had higher expectations of the content and quality of exchanges in a professional setting. Many interviewees reported frustration due to poorly written English communications or ambiguous announcement with unclear instructions at the workplace. Oftentimes they had to depend on the connections they deliberately built with individuals holding key positions or with certain responsibilities to access information and insights. This shows that while local language and knowledge about Taiwan can play a role in facilitating successful local adjustment, in the case of Taiwan, these forms of human capital potentially occupy a smaller role than guanxi, a form of social capital that is essential to the internationally mobile academics' local adaptation.

In this study, social capital emerges as a crucial facilitator to help the internationally mobile academics establish themselves upon arrival in Taiwan. More specifically, guanxi is believed to positively influence the level of local adjustments of the individuals (as linked by the orange dotted line in Figure 6). It is not uncommon for those reporting better adjustment to acknowledge the role of trust and reciprocity in their management of relationship development, which reportedly form a large part of the development of social capital, in the form of guanxi, in the context of Taiwan. Specifically in navigating local norms and sanctions (Coleman, 1988), the international academics who were able to conform tend to view their own achievement in Taiwan more positively. Their endeavour involves making real efforts to understand the rules and expectations prevailing in Taiwan, allowing these local rules to guide their actions (even with some level of disagreement), and, gradually, turning these successful experiences accumulated over years into the assets that they can mobilise in future towards desired purposes, demonstrating the task contingencies and the complementary contingencies of social capital (Adler and Kwon, 2002).

Incorporating the above-mentioned concepts, Figure 6 also, expanding on the mutual reinforcement of human capital and social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; McCallum and O'Connell, 2009; Claridge, 2018b; García-Carbonell et al., 2021) as outlined in Chapter Two, extensively illustrates how social capital helps the individuals gauge support required for work and life in Taiwan. The more social capital the individuals can mobilise, the greater positive impact it has on the development of human capital, creating more leverage for their local adjustment. That is to say, those with strong relational competencies (i.e. structural social capital in the building connections, ability to forge commitment and networks through cognitive social capital, and the capacity of relational social capital to build trust, goodwill and reciprocity) also appear to see themselves achieving more across the professional and personal domains. Typically, the internationally mobile academics link success to work-related attributes including career development (e.g. getting promotion, taking managerial roles) and research progression (e.g. doing research of their real interest, making scientific advancement), but a much wider range of performance reported by the interviewees, such as family engagement, personal growth, and preferable style of living, show that for the internationally mobile academics working in Taiwan, the source of satisfaction encompasses diverse attributes and quite often the evaluation of success or failure of an international work mobility experience does not solely determined by professional achievements or lack thereof.

In summary, findings of this study support prior theoretical studies on the value and function of social capital (Coleman, 1988; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998; Adler and Kwon, 2002; McCallum and O'Connell, 2009), as the interviewees confirmed the benefit of cultivating social capital and the value it brought to the better management of work adjustment, cultural adaptation, and daily interaction with their surroundings. The positive correlation between social capital reservoir and level of local adjustment is evidential in the interviewees' comments. And guanxi, a key element emerging from the interviews, as well as its direct and indirect impact on one's work mobility experience, will be elaborated in the next section.

5.4.3 Guanxi as a critical asset in mobility experience in Taiwan

Sub research question 3: How do the international academics leverage support throughout the process?

We acknowledged the 'contextual complementarity' of social capital to human capital (Burt, 2017, p.32), as well as the mutual reinforcement between social and human capital (McCullum and O'Connell, 2009). As shown in Figure 6, the individuals' social capital reservoir positively regulates their adaptation to the local environment at work and non-work context (as marked by the sets of arrows in the colour of yellow), hence creating an impact on how they reflect on their own sense of satisfaction while recognising that objective achievements are not necessarily the only equation to success. The explanatory framework also shows that social capital directly interacts with the individuals' mobility journey in three stages: a) in the beginning of their career formation regardless of their initial intention to get into academia, b) in enabling the individuals' decision to relocate to Taiwan when they believe that they possess social capital in either the professional or private domain that would give them advantages to do so, and c) in incorporating resources and supports attached to the individuals' social network to ensuring the materialisation of desired goals or completion of intended tasks.

In this process, the mobilisation of social capital is fluid and does not necessarily happen across all three stages. Based on this study, the insufficient stock of social capital in the early years of their career does not mean that the individuals' development of social capital at a later stage will be negatively affected. In fact, those who recognised their inadequate possession of social capital after arriving at Taiwan and made conscious efforts to address this issue proved to be more likely to produce outcomes that they found rewarding. This study finds that actions commonly taken by the interviewees to mitigate the lack of social capital are to expand their social networks or develop guanxi with key individuals as and when appropriate. Their such actions help make up for the absence of access to information, favour, opportunities and resources withheld by others. Such findings support prior research on the position of guanxi as essential assets in the Chinese speaking societies which encompass a mixture of personal relations and social networks (Ip, 2008; Zhai, 2009). The way social capital was deployed by the internationally mobile academics in Taiwan to overcome the missing linkage in their social networks also support Liu and Zhu's (2020) research on guanxi's function to abate the negative implications of structural holes that may impede integration and application of knowledge. This study also finds that, while the level of social capital possessed by the international academics before arriving at Taiwan may largely vary from one to another, the ability to curate guanxi with local people and key individuals from their communities after they start out in Taiwan directly correlates with their overall satisfaction toward work and life in general. What is important about this curation of guanxi is the central idea of reciprocity, which expects the parties involved to be able to offer their help, resources, information, or whatever they possess which is deemed of use or value to the other parties (Chang, 2010). Indeed, it takes the individuals' strong readiness to 'give it back' (Haeussler, 2011) to be able to successfully build guanxi. Supported by the findings, this study concludes that a lack of commitment to paying back or the fear of not being able to return the favour they once received impedes the internationally mobile academics' engagement of personal relations and social networks, even if they understand the opportunity cost of not doing so. This in a sense also reflects the international academics' lack of trust in the people or communities, which, however, is essential to the development of social capital.

This study's findings also showed that guanxi serves to work both outside and within one's community. Once guanxi is built, individuals' ability to strengthen bonds with those they consider members of the same circle increases. These findings support Burt's (2017) research that with the assets of social capital created through structural holes, the individuals involved also benefit from their capacity to trust others, their expectation to support others, as well as their dependency on the exchange with others. The attributes of guanxi also share similarity with the externality and internality of social capital (Mäkelä and Suutari, 2009; Cuevas-Rodríguez, Cabello-Medina, and Carmona-Lavado, 2014; Chen et al., 2016) as described in Chapter Two. For example, several of the interviewees reflected on their relatively successful management of guanxi starting from the deliberate efforts to bridge to others and how, over years of investment (of time and energy), they were accepted as member of a community (be it social or professional) and then able to benefit from this insider position to access opportunities and resources.

To conclude, while there is commonality in social capital and guanxi, the latter acted to fill structural holes to reduce the negative effect associated with the insufficient development of one's social network (Liu, Nandhakumar and Zachariadis, 2018; Liu and Yan, 2022). Guanxi also require more effort from the individuals to attain. Slightly different from McCallum and O'Connell's (2009) model where human capital and social capital serve to mutually reinforce, guanxi does not follow naturally even when the internationally mobile academics continue to accumulate their individual competencies (i.e. human capital) such as work experience, skills and abilities after arriving at Taiwan. It is the individuals' readiness to meet the reciprocity expectation, strive to build relations and connections, and make substantial efforts over a period that their guanxi may sustain long-term to create a positive impact on their achievements while in Taiwan.

5.5 Social capital to drive a virtuous cycle for mobility success

The explanatory framework drawn in Section 5.2 affirms the role of social capital as the facilitator in the international work mobility of the foreign academics in Taiwan. As depicted by the green dotted arrow in the lower right corner of Figure 6 that links *Perceived Success* (labelled in the colour of green) and *Social Capital* (labelled in the colour of blue), the ultimate contribution of social capital throughout the mobility journey manifests in individuals' successful delivery of work or completion of a goal. Findings from this study also show that the individual's perceived success feeds back to the growth of their social capital. For example, the interviewees reporting success in research progression also saw themselves gaining professional credibility that consequently gave them access to more opportunities and resources for more or bigger research projects. Success in one area may then influence success in another. It is also not uncommon to hear the reflection from the interviewees that in the personal domain they enjoy a strong appreciation of security and the increased ties and relations with family; that very sense of content also keeps them free from worrying about family adjustment in Taiwan and helps them focus on managing their professional development, seeking collaboration, and forging trust and support in their scholarly community. These findings of the study support prior research which argues that successful international mobility experience in itself positively shapes the individuals' social capital (Abramo, D'Angelo, and Rosati, 2014; Leišytė, 2016; Bauder, 2020), linking their prior gains from mobility success to the good performance they achieve later in the career.

In this study, although the individuals reporting the least satisfaction towards their experiences tended to also be those registering an inability to develop mutual trust and reciprocity with their surroundings, it is important to note that, the discussion about social capital is not a dichotomy between those who have succeed and those who have not fail. The explanatory framework shows that social capital can be observed to be in play in different stages of the mobility journey, but the process is not linear. The absence of social capital in the earlier stage does not mean that it cannot be brought in at a later stage, as there are certainly plenty opportunities for the internationally mobile academics to show their endeavours to consolidate their individual competencies along the process. The international academics in this study did so by enhancing professional portfolio (e.g. accumulation of research credentials or teaching reputation) and improving skills and abilities (e.g. command of local language). Gains from these behaviours then catalyse the growth of their overall relational competencies, which can be seen as a means to help the international academics serve to chase their goals.

In the case of Taiwan, the interviewees' experience showed that the individuals' acknowledgement of the importance of guanxi, accompanied by the deliberate efforts in creating and maintaining those guanxi (part of their means), proved to be fruitful in establishing themselves especially at the workplace. These efforts may include voluntarily serving to coordinate collaborative projects amongst colleagues, contributing as a committee member for public service at work, and offering free language assistance to the local staff as and when required. These actions are commonly regarded as 'a waste of time' by the international academics not seeing the benefit of developing guanxi and would much rather focus on their own tasks. However, findings from this study show that it is often those having spent time and efforts on such actions, with or without strong intention to be paid back later, end up with enhanced social capital reservoir which they can mobilise later to generate success as intended.

Based on the above discussions, this study demonstrates that social capital occupies a unique position in the mobility experience, supporting Bauder's (2020) findings that social capital facilitates international mobility of academics. Initially, it serves to trigger the individuals' pursuit of working in Taiwan and contribute to their overall smooth adaptation to enable successful performance across a range of areas. Moreover, it plays a crucial role in transforming that successful performance into sources of continued impetus to further strengthen the individuals' relational competencies. Here, social capital functions as a means but also an end, as Bauder (2020) points out that mobility experiences lead to the increase of social capital. For those continuing to seek improvement of their work mobility experience or intending to be in Taiwan long-term, the strengthened social capital further goes to reinforce their local adjustment to generate more successful performance to be fed back to their social capital assets. This is when social capital completes and starts the circular process of continued adjustment, which has potential to become a form of embedment over years. Such findings again echo the supplementary role of guanxi in enhancing social capital in the Chinese-speaking context, whereas the individuals may endeavour to make connections with those occupying structural holes or to fill the structural holes by becoming the ones holding those valuable connections themselves (Liu, Nandhakumar and Zachariadis, 2018; Liu and Yan, 2022) to maximise the benefits embedded in the network of guanxi. For example, As observed from a handful of the interviewees who have been integrated into their local communities in Taiwan, the solid guanxi they have developed was so strong that they were able to utilise those guanxi to not only serve their own interest but also take care of other newcomers, which showcased their ability to grant access to resources and support to others in need in their social network, indicating their successful achievements in either professional or private domains (or both) and possession of strong level of social capital.

5.6 Concluding remark

Based on the findings presented in the previous Chapter, this Chapter offered an explanatory framework of how internationally mobile academics navigated work mobility in Taiwan, with the continuous development and utilisation of social capital in different stages of their journey playing a decisive role in positively influencing the level of their local adjustment towards objective and subjective success. The mutual reinforcement of human capital and social capital was acknowledged, though depending on the individuals' pathway into academia, social capital may serve to play a relatively bigger role than the other in the initiation of an academic career.

This Chapter carried on discussing social capital extensively to decipher its role in the mobility journey of international academics working in Taiwan. The explanatory framework depicted a wide range of interactions amongst the different elements pertaining to individual and relational competencies to arrive at a dynamic description covering mobility motivation, local adjustment, and mobility success. I also discussed the role of guanxi in counteracting the negative effect due to a lack of social capital in the Chinese-speaking context. By presenting the explanatory framework and the associated discussions, I added theoretical contribution to the existing literature as the explanatory framework affirmed the unique position occupied by social capital in transforming objective and subjective success to further increase one’s social capital reservoir, completing a virtuous, self-reinforcing cycle of capital growth of the internationally mobile academics.

In the next and the final Chapter, I will provide a review of this doctoral research project, as well as conclusions and recommendations based on the findings and discussions presented above, with limitation and potential areas for future studies being reflected upon.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

This thesis has examined the mobility experience of international academics working in Taiwan's universities. In-depth interviews, consisting of questions informed by a prior literature review, were conducted with twenty-four international academics to understand their first-hand experiences in relation to their pathway into academia, motivation for relocation, local adjustments, and perceived success. In this Chapter, I summarise key findings of the empirical study and examine if the aims of this study have been achieved. Implications derived from the research, including advice on actions to be taken by the institutions are also presented to inform better planning and facilitation and prepare internationally mobile academics in Taiwan for success in future. In addition, I discuss the limitation of this study and explore potential areas for future research. In the concluding remark, I provide a brief personal reflection on research journey and its contribution to my professional development.

6.2 The full circle

This study, with a focus on the experience of internationally mobile academics in Taiwan, was conducted primarily to understand how these individuals navigate life in Taiwan to achieve success. Informed by prior research into work mobility and social capital, this study first aimed to answer the key research question:

"How do international academics navigate their adjustment in Taiwan to pursue success and satisfaction?"

Sub research questions of this study include:

1. What motivates the international academics to work overseas and particularly in Taiwan?
2. How do the international academics manage adjustment and performance?
3. How do the international academics leverage support throughout the process?

This study started with an introduction to national policies and prioritised areas for investment by the government to provide a holistic view of the context where international work mobility of foreign academics was staged. Considering the key objective of this study, I took an inductive approach, with a constructivist epistemological stance, to carry out a qualitative investigation through in-depth interviews with twenty-four internationally mobile academics working in

Taiwan's universities. The Gioia Method was employed to analyse data collected from the interviews to examine the interviewees' experiences of becoming academics, taking employment opportunities overseas, making local adjustment and achieving success.

Interviewees' responses serve to crystallise the complex interaction of different forms of capital involved in the initial decision-making process for career development. Some of them stepped into academia because of an avid interest in knowledge (aspired explorer) or a spiritual calling (purpose seeker), the others chose to become academics due to natural progression (groomed scientist). While the act of relocation is triggered by the individuals' accumulation of human capital and social capital, it may well be pushed by the need to chase economic capital, which is a much less common pre-requisite reported by international academics coming to work in Taiwan. More specifically, about half of the interviewees confirmed that the relocation decision was heavily influenced by their Taiwanese spouse with considerations including family ties and preferred lifestyle. These findings set this research apart from prior studies in the topic area, as subjective success is featured no less prominently than objective career success.

As mobility journey proceeds to the post-arrival stage, challenges also emerge. Many interviewees were left to their own devices and had to start using or building relational competencies, or social capital, to access vernacular knowledge, resources, and sometimes merely advice, to get things done. In the case of Taiwan, the development of guanxi is therefore recognised by interviewees as an effective approach to strengthen social capital through expanded social connections. While not all interviewees felt compelled to do so, those who acted upon cultivating guanxi seemed able to gain more leverage from their social capital to smooth out their local adaptation in settings across the workplace and in daily life to drive successful performance. On the other hand, those failing to perform up to their desired standard also appeared to be those with less capabilities to develop the type of social connections needed to fulfil their goals, which proved the special functions of guanxi in the local societies to facilitate positive mobility experience in Taiwan.

Based on the interviewees' responses, this study not only established guanxi as a connected concept to social capital, but it also pointed out their nuanced differences. Prior studies showed that curation of guanxi takes much stronger resolution from the individuals with deliberate long-term efforts to build, and their capacity to meet the requirement of reciprocity embedded in those guanxi was essential (Ip, 2008; Zhai, 2009; Chang, 2010). The combined effect of guanxi and human capital reinforced the growth of social capital. In this study, interviewees were benefited from their increased social capital to respond to situations ranging from getting administrative insights for the completion of tedious but compulsory tasks to securing peer support and public resources for large-scale research projects. This is when the task contingencies and complementary contingencies of social capital (Adler and Kwon, 2002) are most observed, confirming the value of social capital in goal completion and the prerequisite of other forms of capital to be in place for social capital to function. Through the appreciation and engagement of relational competencies by internationally mobile academics, the positive effect of social capital manifests itself in their objective and subjective success.

Findings from this study also informed the development of an explanatory framework to depict the international academics' mobility experience in Taiwan. In addition to describing the mobility process stage by stage and explaining the roles and functions of social capital and other different factors in the journey, the explanatory framework also identified the unique position occupied by social capital for its potential to turn the linear journey progression into a circular progression. As individuals' perceived success strengthens their social capital, it creats a virtuous cycle in which social capital drives continued success in international work mobility. This supports Bauder (2020) who points out that success and satisfaction serve to fuel the growth of relational competencies, creating the continuous impetus for positive mobility experience. With the above findings, this study responds to calls from prior researchers, such as Richardson and McKenna (2002), for further research on the 'voluntary, self-selecting expatriate.' The explanatory framework presented by this study also serves as a theoretical contribution to the existing literature on social capital and international work mobility, bringing this doctoral research project full circle—both figuratively and literally.

6.3 Implications for practice

This study demonstrated that in Taiwan, positive mobility outcomes cannot be achieved through institutional monetary investment alone, without the support of social capital at the individual level. It also examined the local workplace context and attributed the extra premium placed on guanxi to the collective inability of Taiwan and its universities to understand the underlying motivations of those choosing to work in Taiwan. Furthermore, the lack of systematic institutional support to ensure the realisation of these motivations was highlighted as a contributing factor to the importance of guanxi. Acknowledging the insufficient institutionalised provision, findings of this study also have implications, at both national and institutional level, when Taiwan and its universities seek to substantially improve the sector's international competitiveness by better preparing international academics for working and living in Taiwan.

6.3.1 Improving national understanding of international academics

Prior research indicated that internationally mobile professionals continue their overseas employment because of their objective career success (e.g. promotion and renumeration) and/or subjective career satisfaction (Cao, Hirschi and Deller, 2011). Universities in Taiwan often use financial incentives to attract international academics, unaware that few are drawn solely by financial considerations, which are also not the primary reason they remain in Taiwan. In fact, many interviewees knew from the beginning that substantial financial reward was not attainable from their employment with Taiwan's universities. This study showed that subjective career satisfaction proved to be playing a bigger part than the objective career success in interviewees' reflection of their mobility journey in Taiwan. Most interviewees reflected rather positively on their experience, confirming that responding to their job expectations in teaching, research, and service did not constitute any major concerns. They also reported strong sense of achievements from interacting with students and conducting research in their areas of expertise without making any references to how much they earned from performing these tasks, indicating the relatively less focus they placed on economic capital gain while in Taiwan.

This shows a contradiction between the institutions' monetary incentives claimed to be available to international academics and the actual source of satisfaction perceived by the international academics. Therefore, when engaging internationally mobile academics, Taiwan and its universities are advised to shift their focus. Instead of apologetically explaining their constraints in offering more competitive salaries, they should take the time to understand the expectations of these internationally mobile academics. Moreover, it is essential to re-examine their capacity to meet those expectations and to facilitate the success that these academics desire. This proactive engagement could enhance the overall experience for international academics and strengthen Taiwan's position as an attractive destination for global talent. Interviewees' response provided useful thought for action planning. For example, a female interviewee confessed that Taiwan was not necessarily the most ideal place to do research in her subject area in terms of funding and facilities; however, she was very satisfied with the balanced portfolio she got to maintain across work and life with the networks and support she could access from her Taiwanese parents in-law. Also, an early-career male interviewee, while recognising Taiwan's impressive performance in his field of research, appeared to be even more impressed with the sense of fulfilment, accomplishment, and tranquilness he acquired from living in Taiwan which he would not have had from other places. To this end, although meeting the international academics' expectations may not solely be completed by universities alone, obtaining that very understanding of their expectations help inform the deployment of resources to benefit the development of social capital policies, both at national and institutional level, ensuring long-term engagement with internationally mobile academics.

Specifically at the national level, a relaxed administrative requirement for hiring procedure is recommended to make the administration processes as simple as possible for the international academics to navigate. As without existing vernacular knowledge, the paperwork involved in the recruitment process is unanimously considered a challenging task to complete. Even for those with prior understanding of the HE sector in Taiwan, the level of complexity prompted the international academics to reflect on their decision to move to Taiwan, which projects itself poorly on top of the usually unattractive renumeration package. Reduced bureaucracy, coupled with improved bilingual provision, for international talent engagement activities enables the smooth transferring of internationally mobile academics and set themselves off to positive first contacts with Taiwan as a work destination. Moreover, findings and discussions from this study suggest that the Taiwan government, instead of promoting financial benefit alone, should factor in the role of social capital in the decision-making stage and the mobility journey that follows in the perspectives of international talent whom they would like to pursue. Attempting to attract international academics in with seemingly lucrative monetary reward without trying to create an environment that support these individuals, with or without pre-existing social capital, is not likely to support the government's ambition to increase the competitiveness of universities in Taiwan. Instead, the findings of the present study have suggested that highlighting the country's investment in research, support for international collaboration, and democratic beliefs to attract like-minded international talent.

6.3.2 Facilitating social capital development at institutional level

Internationally mobile academics in Taiwan spent considerable amount of effort navigating the bureaucracy, as well as other established norms and protocols at the workplace. Interviewees shared how they gradually learned the value of guanxi and took personal efforts to curate those guanxi required to access vernacular knowledge and insights, helping themselves form a coping strategy for unfamiliar situations in the absence of a structured presentation of guidelines. In the corporate setting, new staff members are often introduced to systematic, organisation-wide orientation programme with essential information and knowledge about organisational culture, established protocols, and internal expectations. This study showed that human resources departments in Taiwanese universities rarely provide any support beyond the absolute necessity related to hiring procedures, such as registration for work permit and national health insurance. Without additional access to official support and prior knowledge about how things work, the development of guanxi with local people became essential for interviewees to navigate the initial months, and in many cases, throughout the entire duration of their employment.

With this understanding, I urge Taiwanese universities to consider why social capital is crucial for international academics' local adjustment and what more they can do to support this process. This aligns with Inkson et al.'s (1997) suggestion that institutions should provide greater support to those working abroad on their own initiative. Findings from this study showed the rules and regulations applicable to the international academics’ problems were often there but not clearly organised and made easily accessible. It was common experience for the international academics to be directed and redirected across several different offices and administrators before they were able to speak to the person in charge for a feasible solution. The unpleasant experience was due to the universities' lack of structured information and policy provision and also linked to the institutions' limited capacity to operate in English. With Taiwan’s ambition to become a fully bilingual country by 2030, many discrepancies were observed between policy narratives and actions taken. All interviewees had the experience when university administrators sent out allegedly important announcements in Chinese only and expected them to follow suit. This mismatch of actions to improve infrastructure and the ambitious outcomes intended by the national policy sent confusing messages to the international academics believing that they were recruited to contribute to Taiwan’s bilingual education agenda. As a result, Taiwan's investment in promoting internationalisation yields limited returns and undermines the country's well-intentioned efforts to advance the higher education sector.

In summary, facilitation to newly arrived international academics at the organisational level has been almost absent across the higher education sector in Taiwan. This supports Wilkins and Neri (2019) that quality provision of induction programme for international academic staff appears to be a rarity in higher education sector worldwide, even for those running overseas branch campus. The absence of institutional support necessitates the individuals' mobilisation of social capital to achieve the work-related objectives of internationally mobile academics in Taiwan. Taiwan's universities must recognise that when these academics do not expect substantial economic capital from their mobility, understanding what they do seek to gain, along with providing institutional support to help them realise those goals, is crucial for the success of both the academics and the universities. The necessity of having institutional provision to encourage growth of social capital is therefore a matter of urgency. Recommended activities include helping individuals perform their specific roles and responsibilities at the institutions to grow structural social capital in academia (with understanding of local ecological system of research collaboration and opportunities for grants), improving a sense of community to form shared awareness and commitment on campus and increase one's cognitive social capital (through confirmed memberships of smaller academic circles with common belief), and facilitating development of guanxi amongst home and international staff to improve relational social capital (via reciprocal behaviour to offer favour or get things done as expected by fellow academics). Enhanced systematic involvement from the universities throughout the pre-departure to the post-arrival of the international academics' work mobility journey are expected to have positive effect, such as eliminating the feeling of missing out and mitigating the disadvantages of those unable to curate guanxi on their own to benefit their local adjustments. What is equally important is the deliberate efforts to reduce language barriers that could impede local adjustments. This can include training of Standard Chinese for the international academics or comprehensive introduction of English as one of the working languages to be matched with the institutions' internationalisation aspiration. With the enhanced, English-friendly provision of institutional facilitation and support mechanism available to internationally mobile academics in all stages of their employment, universities in Taiwan will be in a better position to contribute to the increased inclusivity and improved local adjustment and subjective satisfaction in the eyes of international academics in Taiwan.

6.4 Limitations of the study

While efforts were put in throughout the research process to maximise its quality and academic value of this study, I carefully reflected on the study and identified areas where limitations exist. First, language was recognised as a source of challenges for some interviewees in their management of work and life in Taiwan. In the data collection process, language could also be a factor to consider as not all interviewees are native speakers of English or Standard Chinese. For clarification, only seven of the twenty-four interviewees are native speakers of English. While most interviewees had very high level of English language proficiency, some appeared more conservative with their comments, requiring the interviewer to actively engage and probe further to extract the meaning inferred in their brief response. As the researcher and interviewer, I made every effort to conduct these interviews to the best of my ability. However, it would be overly confident to claim that no nuanced signals were missed or that any misuse of words in the conversations were not undetected.

Secondly, although this study aimed to achieve diversity in sampling to provide a holistic reflection on the experiences of internationally mobile academics in Taiwan, challenges arose during implementation. These included time constraints for data collection and limited access to interviewees. The fluid nature of foreign academics moving to and from Taiwan meant the sample universe was constantly changing, making a truly comprehensive reflection nearly impossible. Even if all eligible individuals were identified, their willingness to participate could not be guaranteed. Therefore, this study cannot claim to provide a fully representative account of internationally mobile academics in Taiwan. It does not take into account the academics' length of stay (settled and newly arrived), culture of origin (high- and low-context), areas of subject interest (domestically-focused and internationally-connected), and prior experience outside of their country of origin (repeated expatriation and first-timer). Instead, a pragmatic sampling approach was employed to monitor these factors as the interviews progressed, while focusing on the interviewees' capacity to offer new perspectives to the study. This approach enabled the study to be completed within the period that fitted with the requirements of a research project for a DBA thesis, while allowing the project to scale up until meeting the point of saturation in the interviewees' responses. A potential downside of this approach is that the omission of international academics with specific expertise or from certain regions, though unintentional, may reduce the diversity of the findings and affect the transferability of this study when applied to a broader population.

Last, this study included only the perspectives of those with lived experience in work mobility in Taiwan but not the views of those working alongside with them to witness their success or challenges in the process. As this study concluded, the development of guanxi and its effect on strengthening the individuals' social capital reservoir was believed to have contributed to the interviewees' successful performance. The inclusion of observations from individuals, such as departmental colleagues, university administrators, and senior academic managers, with whom the international academics sought to build guanxi would have helped examine the level of subjectivity and applicability of the interviewees' perspectives. This understanding may potentially lead to a framework incorporating more factors in the mobility journey, but the implementation will require additional resources and time unattainable for this research project.

6.5 Opportunities for further research

This study was designed to understand the phenomenon of international academics taking work mobility in Taiwan. It confirmed the country's relative lack of presence in the international employment market, as some interviewees confessed that they knew very little about the country before coming. However, there were signs for changes over the past year as Taiwan gained international visibility from two major developments: the increasing geopolitical tension across the Taiwan Strait, and the rapid growth of artificial intelligence and its infrastructure builders including TSMC, NVIDIA and AMD (which are fuelled by expertise and technologies from Taiwan). Future research is therefore recommended to examine Taiwan's reputation as a host country under current global climate to help explore the pull and push factors in the individuals' decision to relocate to Taiwan in the context of international relations and economic development. Insights developed from these future studies serve to inform policy improvement and resources deployment at the national level to benefit internationalisation of the higher education sector. Such understanding will also enable Taiwan's higher education policymakers to objectively assess the country's attractiveness – beyond financial incentives – in the eyes of international talent seeking opportunities.

In addition, two types of further studies may be added to the discussions about social capital and international work mobility based on this research. Firstly, research with similar design may be conducted in other Chinese speaking societies to help understand the prominence of guanxi outside Taiwan. Secondly, a follow-up study is recommended to include qualitative stakeholder interviews and cross-case studies and quantitative evidence such as research influence and output. The mixed-method approach may inform a thorough assessment of success by the internationally mobile academics and how well their success feeds to the organisational performance in global competition. This follow-up study may also validate the theoretical framework presented by this study and offer causal analysis valuable to Taiwan's future investment in international talent engagement.

6.6 Final remarks on personal and professional development

'I wondered how he has been doing since getting here. Has someone taught him those reimbursement regulations?' These questions came across my mind when I bumped into a newly arrived foreign academic outside the university's Human Resource Office a long while ago,

which later became the seeds for this doctoral research project that has brought me significant professional and personal development. Reflecting on my study journey of the taught stage of the DBA in Higher Education Management programme, internationalisation and talent engagement of higher education formed central parts of my learning interest. I dedicated the four research assignments to explore organisational competitiveness, university excellence initiatives, human resource management practices, and international talent recruitment, which served as solid but smooth preparation for the ideation and design of this research project. The actual execution of the research project, however, was less straightforward. The data collection took place during the COVID outbreak, causing interruption to the initial plan for in-person, face-to-face interview, but the slow-down was later made up because of the rapid penetration of virtual meetings. Driven by the need to effectively analyse the huge amount of data – over 2,200 minutes of recording in transcription exceeding 200,000 words – collected from the interviews, I spent time on equipping myself with skills to use NVivo through courses offered by the university and other online learning platforms to complete coding and proceed with data analysis.

During the period of the DBA programme, I went through two changes of roles, both considered pronounced professional recognition and required a shift of focus from my study to my work. These experiences taught me how to effectively manage the developmental activities by getting better with compartmentalising tasks to enable incremental progression, a technique that I also learned to apply to my doctoral thesis research. While my research progressed, international competition in the higher education sector continues to intensify. Specifically in Taiwan, the debate has traditionally been focusing on the national and institutional level, without much attention to individuals. This study gives me the privilege to present an explanatory framework that contributes to the improved understanding of the internationally mobile academics in Taiwan. And I hope, when the implications for policy and practice are taken onboard, this study itself also contributes to the advancement of internationalisation of higher education sector in Taiwan.

Appendix A. Consent Form

Consent Form

Project Working Title	Motivation, Adjustment, and Identity of International Academics in Taiwan
Research Details	Dawn Chen, dawnchen@tmu.edu.tw; p.chen@bath.ac.uk Doctor of Business Administration in Higher Education Management (DBA15)
Supervisor Details	Dr Cornelia Lawson, cornelia.lawson@manchester.ac.uk

1. I have been provided with information explaining what participation in this project involves ☐
2. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this project. ☐
3. I have received satisfactory answers to all questions I have asked. ☐
4. I have received enough information about the project to make a decision about my participation. ☐
5. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent to participate in the project at any time without having to give a reason for withdrawing. ☐
6. I understand the nature and purpose of the procedures involved in this project. These have been communicated to me by the researcher in advance. ☐
7. I understand and acknowledge that the investigation is designed to promote scientific knowledge and that the data will only be used for scholarly publications and reports related to the research project. ☐
8. I understand the data I provide will be stored in password protected device for the period of up to ten years and treated anonymously, and that on completion of the project my name or other identifying information will not be disclosed in any presentation or publication of the research. ☐
9. I understand that my consent to use the data I provide is conditional upon the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act. ☐
10. I hereby fully and freely consent to my participation in this project. ☐

Participant's signature: Date:

Participant name in BLOCK Letters:

Researcher's signature: Date:

Researcher name in BLOCK Letters: Dawn Chen

If you have any concerns or complaints related to your participation in this project please direct them to the Dr. T A Liedong, Department Research Ethics Officer at the School of Management of the University of Bath at tl723@bath.ac.uk.

Appendix B. Codes Categorisation

Top-level category	Sub-category
Academia	
	academic community
	academic freedom
	academic life
Career	
	Academic career
	Administrative role
	Career aspiration
	Career challenges
	Career development
	Career expectation
	Career milestone
	Competition
	Defining success
	Finding this job
	International career
	Job security
	Professional identity
COVID	
	Challenge from COVID
Language	
	English proficiency in Taiwan
	Daily communications in English
	Language barrier at work
	Standard Chinese proficiency
Living in Taiwan	
	Adjustment difficulty
	Adjustment in general
	Adjustment of family members

	Attitudes about staying in Taiwan
	Cultural experience
	Facing stereotype of local people
	Finance
	Healthcare
	Local spouse
	Local support network
	Observation of Taiwan
	Prior local connections
	Social life
	Struggle
	Trigger to move to Taiwan
Personal Reflection	
	Advice to fellow academics
	Attitudes about leaving current position
	Comments on other destinations
	Experience as female
	Personal bio
	Recharge
	Regrets
	Self-protection
	Sentiments
Research	
	Grant application challenges
	Research collaboration
	Research grant
	Research loading
	Research practice
	Support for research
Reward	
	Advantage
	Job satisfaction

  - Monetary reward
  - Personal learning
- Teaching
  - Supervising students
  - Support for teaching
  - Teaching load
  - Teaching practice
- University admin
  - Transparency
  - Bilingual capacity
  - Dealing with admin systems
  - Disappointment
  - Helpful colleagues
  - Involvement in decision making
  - Missing out
  - Onboarding experience
  - Role of HR
  - Vagueness
  - Views & involvement in internationalisation
- Work life balance
  - Work stress
- Workplace observation
  - Benefits of working in Taiwan
  - Challenges at work
  - Comments on local academics
  - Comments on other foreign colleagues
  - Comments on students
  - Comments on workplace culture
  - Criticism
  - Flexibility in system
  - Institutional gains (of hiring internationally)
  - Recommendations

Appendix C. Additional Quotations from Interviewees

Due to the word count limits, some of the quotations from the interviewees that were not included in the main text of this study were summarised as follows to provide additional readings.

4.2 Becoming academics

First group – the aspired explorers who had a strong inclination to becoming a scientist or a teacher at their early age.

> *"As a child I always saw myself as a somewhat scientist. In the abstract, scientist was something I wanted to be...that's the main motivation I have or the main aim I have, to find new stuff." (Eric)*

> *"By my third year [of undergraduate studies] I figured out...I really enjoyed research and learning. I also started teaching a little and I enjoyed that...I made the choice to be a scientist, not necessarily an academic. [After graduation] I worked a year as a research assistant in laboratory, and I did more teaching and more research. By the time I went to graduate school, I was strongly focused on becoming a professor. That's what I wanted to do." (Tom)*

Second group – the groomed scientists whose academic career is the logical consequence resulted from a series of developmental activities.

> *"I was living in Taiwan...teaching English as a lecturer, but I wanted to do something different, something more interesting. I decided to do a PhD program...and then once I got the degree, becoming an academic seems like an easy fit because I already have some teaching experience in different fields so it seemed like being an academic would be easy to slide into. And being in Taiwan, it's a bit hard to find professional jobs as a foreigner outside of teaching or engineering. So, this seemed like a good fit." (Dan)*

> *"[I became an academic] by chance mostly. After finishing up my PhD, I thought ... if I stay on working for German pharmaceutical companies, my life would be a bit boring... So, I decided to go to the US, working there and doing research in a lab there. I really liked it there and I realised that this is what I like to do... I think it's down to the experience I had in the US about how the academic life of a professor is... And that pushed me to [go] this direction." (Graham)*

4.3.2 Reciprocity

The interviewees referring to the concept of reciprocity to understand the seemingly uneven allocation of workload between home and international academic staff:

> *"As for when it comes to the situation when I am asked to do things that my Taiwanese colleagues don't have to do, that's almost like a trade-off. Foreign faculty are invited to business lunch for international visitors, but, the foreign faculty don't have to go to the local secondary schools and promote the programs for student recruitment. It's only a fair trade-off." (Irene)*

4.5.1 Adjustments at the workplace

Understanding rules and norms

Those from the western countries troubled by understanding the expected norms and behaviours in Taiwan which were implicit:

> *"...you have to know the ins and outs. It's not the rules but everyone expects you to do this thing. If you're not part of the culture, you don't know what those expectations are... So, I do feel like sometimes, with the rules and the secret rules, being an international person is a liability." (Tracy)*

> *"People think 'there's regulation so we must follow.' instead of 'is the regulation necessary and suitable?' Their idea is that 'if it's written down, then it's immutable, it cannot ever be changed', rather than 'oh, we can change that now.' ...Also 'oh, we've not done that before. So it can't be done.' You've got to just keep pushing." (Eric)*

The others seemed to be a lot more relaxed when facing similar situations:

> *"I became very accustomed to the ways of working here owing to my previous experiences with two other local organisations in Taiwan. The time spent there taught me how to deliver what's seen appropriate, so things were fine." (Umi)*

Responding to job expectations

Positive reflection on one's overall management and delivery at work:

> *"In teaching, I can choose my topic, type of delivery, syllabus; I'm also free to choose the*

> *teaching mean. I don't need to follow the local staff who use textbooks. I can give my students PowerPoint presentations and ask them to present. By doing so, they learn the subject in depth so that they get to study more, and when they present, their fear of English goes off. So my way of teaching is totally different from the others...In research too...I'm given a lot of freedom. I can decide what to do and with whom I collaborate." (Unita)*

Negative response on research practice and workplace culture observed by the interviewees:

> *"...there is little research mentality. To do research, you have to go to Academia Sinica. And if you talk to the people at the Academia Sinica, you'd realise that they are bogged down by a series of meetings and administrative tasks they have to go through, so in that sense, Taiwan does not have a good climate for research. And that's why...within humanities, Taiwan remains mediocre, in the middle level." (Irene)*

> *"I was the poster child. They would prefer I sit quietly in the office, and whenever they need a foreigner to show, a box to tick, whenever there's a foreign guest, they would like me to sit with for a dinner or lunch, they want me there and say some nice words." (Graham)*

Turning the vagueness of job remit into opportunities for deeper involvement in university operations:

> *"...any policies related to, for example, double degree programmes, anything related to international affairs, a lot of times they would ask for my opinion...As a foreigner I think my perspective also reflects the international students' point of view. So, for example I know how people outside Taiwan might think about Taiwan, so it helps them in a way." (Lyn)*

> *"I'm on international committees, like international graduate program committee, committees for advertising the University internationally, things like that...And it's because I'm international. Or sometimes our department will host faculty from the US, and I'll be responsible or participate in that hosting process." (Tom)*

4.5.2 Cultural adjustment and interaction adjustment

Interaction with local people in daily life

Positive experiences reported by the interviewees:

> *“It’s not difficult at all. Everything’s super convenient. Every time you want something, any time of the day, you can always get it. One must be very picky not to be able to adapt. Honestly, I think it’s so easy.” (Will)*

Building social network and securing support

Interviewees who are married with Taiwanese citizen report more support from their extended family members but constrained scope of social life in Taiwan:

> *“[My in-laws] are all being very generous and helpful in terms of the support we can easily get...they try to help, mostly by trying to explain things to me and provide me with help and guidance, suggestion of how to do or should be done. [As for building social network] I would say this is one of the most challenging things, building a circle of friends. I actually don’t know where this circle of friends really exists.” (Graham)*

> *“I am not a social person, so... I don’t feel I need that many people around me...Most of my social life is gonna be with my wife and her family, dinner with her parents or grandparents, brothers and sisters, and her friends. That’s good enough for me.” (Will)*

Interviewees living in Taiwan with their foreign spouse making proactive efforts to expand social network:

> *“Initially I met some Indians in the neighbourhood, and then through my husband’s colleagues we met some local people. Once my kids started going to kindergarten, the job of making friends became easy. I had a lot of opportunities to meet with my kids’ friends and their family. I do have a good chance to make many Taiwanese friends through my kids and their friends’ moms were just very kind and very friendly.” (Tisha)*

Interviewees living in Taiwan along, meanwhile, had varied experiences in expanding their social networks:

> *“...I live in the village anyway and I work with the indigenous community there in the church so I have the village to go back to; most people don’t have. Also I have friends amongst local Taiwanese people I think certainly when difficulties come these are often the people you can trust.” (Stanley)*

> *“Social life, day by day, frankly speaking, it’s getting very little.” (Banke)*

4.5.3 Use of local language and adjustment in general

Standard Chinese proficiency (not) as an issue

The varying level of self-reflection from the interviewees on their own command of Mandarin Chinese:

> *"I know I have to make efforts to learn Chinese, but it wasn't my goal in the first place coming here. Recently I started to really take classes. After I became a full professor, I decided to really start putting efforts to learn Chinese, because now I've reached my first goal." (Will)*

> *"Well, I tried [to learn Chinese], constantly, but not enough... There are frustrations around work, though I think I've got enough to survive. I don't have particularly huge needs." (Eric)*

The sense of 'missing out'

The observed disadvantage of lacking language and cultural inclusiveness by the interviewees:

> *"I just really can't have good communications with the students. I'll have to learn Chinese as soon as possible. I do know some basic words, so if they talk to me, I'd also try to talk to them in Chinese, and they'd be happy even if I just say some simple words. So, I think the major thing is the language. If I could speak and read Chinese, there wouldn't be any problems." (Tisha)*

> *"I think it's a common experience with immigrant workers. I think in any university there's always a lot of gossip, work gossip, personal gossip. People are people. Here, I'm not part of that at all. I think it's part of my personality, but I think it's, in large part, because of language." (Tom)*

> *"...you still have moments when people say [in meetings], 'oh this one is a bit complicated, it's easier to discuss this in Chinese because it's about the new rules for student recruitment; let's do this in Chinese instead.' So I sit there, and I have thoughts, expertise, and experiences to say about this topic, but I cannot participate. So there's feeling of not being able to participate actively." (Graham)*

> *"I am sure I don't really understand everything that goes on...And maybe I feel that more because I sort of understand what's going on. For some foreign faculty maybe, they just have no idea of what's going on, but I know there's something going on, and they're not involving*

> *me." (Michelle)*

4.7.1 Perceived objective success

Career advancement in supportive environment

Interviewees confirming Taiwan as a place facilitating their professional career development:

> *"...if I stay [in my home country], I won't be able to join such a prestigious institution as the one I'm currently working for." (Chris)*

Financial stability

Interviewees recognising Taiwan's ability to offer financial return and something beyond:

> *"Taiwan has offered us so much to come up in life, both personally and financially. We're really grateful towards this country, and we feel really good." (Unita)*

> *"I think the university provides us with better work environment with some advantageous features, not always in terms of money, because money is not everything." (Banke)*

4.7.2 Perceived subjective success

Receipt of a sense of reward

Interviewees finding the sense of satisfaction comes and facilitating mutual understanding from their time in Taiwan:

> *"I feel that being a professor in Taiwan is like being someone really at the top of the society in a lot of ways and I love that about Chinese culture, that respect for education, so it's very enjoyable to teach in Taiwan because people respect that." (Tracy)*

> *"I guess right now teaching is giving me the most satisfaction. There is frustration involved in teaching indeed...but when it's working, it's really rewarding to see students improving, motivated and contributing to class discussion. I do really like that." (Ian)*

> *"...because China becomes more and more aggressive, you can tell that there's an attitude shift...[I realised] at this point I'm really able to help people for my own culture background to...make them understand better about the culture [of Taiwan]. For people who've had some interaction with Taiwan they are very conscious that there is a big gap...we can work together to close that gap." (Helena)*

Autonomy and contentedness

Being able to ‘live the life the way I want’ keeping some of the interviewees staying long-term in Taiwan without considering leaving:

> *“[Leaving Taiwan] would mean that I am no longer satisfied with what I have now. But I am. So, I don’t see the need of looking into opportunities in the United States, in the UK. I would easily find something that would deter me from doing it. I have stability here...a mode of operation that I'm used to...an environment that I’m used to.” (Irene)*

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