

Talent Mobility and Management in the Global Economy: Managing Expatriates Post COVID-19

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted traditional models of global workforce mobility, forcing multinational corporations to reconsider how expatriate assignments are managed and supported. This study examines how organizational talent management strategies influence expatriate outcomes in the post-COVID-19 global economy. Specifically, it investigates the predictive relationships between Global Mobility Policies, Expatriate Support, and Strategic Talent Alignment and two key expatriate outcomes: Assignment Satisfaction and Retention Intentions. The study adopts a quantitative research design grounded in a positivist research philosophy and uses a cross-sectional survey approach. Data were collected from 312 respondents, including expatriates and human resource managers working in multinational organizations managing international assignments after 2020. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, and multiple regression analysis in IBM SPSS Version 30. The results reveal that organizational talent management strategies significantly influence expatriate outcomes. Strategic Talent Alignment and Expatriate Support significantly predicted Assignment Satisfaction, while Expatriate Support, Strategic Talent Alignment, and Global Mobility Policies significantly predicted Retention Intentions. Expatriate Support emerged as the strongest predictor of retention, highlighting the importance of organizational commitment to employee well-being and career development in international assignments. The findings contribute to the literature on global talent management by providing empirical evidence on the determinants of expatriate satisfaction and retention in the post-pandemic context. Practically, the study suggests that organizations should strengthen expatriate support systems, align international assignments with strategic talent development, and implement clear global mobility policies to enhance expatriate effectiveness and long-term retention in the evolving global work environment.

Keywords: Global Talent Mobility; Expatriate Management; Global Mobility Policies; Strategic Talent Alignment; Expatriate Support; Retention Intentions; Post-COVID-19 Workforce.

Introduction

In the contemporary workplace, employees represent the core stakeholders of an organisation and constitute one of its most critical sources of sustainable competitive advantage (Liu et al., 2020). As globalization advances, organizations can no longer rely solely on physical capital and natural resources to compete in the global economy. Instead, human capital has taken precedence to respond appropriately to the changing realities in the global economy.

Unlike the other strategic resources and capabilities that the organization can build, borrow, and/or buy in the marketplace, valuable employees are difficult to obtain or imitate (Brewster & Haak-Saheem, 2022).

However, while investing in human capital is a driving force for success, it also poses a great risk to the organization because the investment in an employee's skills and knowledge often cannot be protected if the employee decides to leave the organization permanently (Mello et al., 2025). As ongoing technological, societal, and economic changes intensify the phenomenon of interorganizational employee mobility, the associated risks are particularly pronounced in knowledge-intensive industries such as information technology (IT), semiconductors, finance, pharmaceuticals, higher education, and so forth.

Talent mobility is a strategic component of modern human resource management that involves the movement of skilled individuals across roles, departments, regions, and international borders to meet organizational and market demands (Sousa et al., 2024). While talent management is intended to identify, nurture, and reward individuals with high-value skills to fulfill organizational needs (Tsaousiotis et al., 2025). In the context of globalization, talent mobility extends beyond simple geographic relocation and includes flexible assignments such as international rotations, virtual mobility, and cross-border remote work (Miao, 2021). Talent mobility enables organizations to access critical skills, promote leadership development, and enhance knowledge transfer across diverse markets (Zdrilić et al., 2025). As companies seek to remain competitive in an increasingly complex business landscape, talent mobility has evolved from a support function to a core driver of global strategy (Crowley-Henry et al., 2021). Managing talent mobility effectively requires not only logistical coordination but also strategic planning around employee engagement, cultural adaptation, compliance, and technological support.

The global economy which refers to the interconnected network of national economies, driven by the exchange of goods, services, capital, and labor across borders facilitates talent mobility (Collings & Sheeran, 2020). Advances in technology, trade liberalization, and the expansion of multinational corporations have intensified global integration, creating both opportunities and complexities in workforce management (McNulty & Brewster, 2020). As companies increasingly operate across multiple regions, they must navigate diverse legal, cultural, and economic environments while aligning their global human capital strategies with shifting economic realities (Bonache et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the vulnerabilities of this interdependence by disrupting global supply chains, restricting mobility, and accelerating the digital transformation of work. These disruptions have made the role of agile, globally mobile talent even more critical, as organizations adjust to new patterns of work, redefine roles, and reassess how they deploy human resources internationally.

Talent mobility which refers to the dynamic movement of skilled employees across roles, departments, regions, or countries to meet evolving business needs and foster professional growth (Ridgway & Langinier, 2023). It encompasses both internal redeployments and international assignments, including short-term projects, long-term expatriation, and virtual assignments. Expatriation, in particular, involves the relocation of employees from their home country to a host country to perform specific organizational roles, often as part of leadership development, knowledge transfer, or market expansion strategies (Collings, Scullion, & Vaiman, 2015).

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 brought unprecedented disruption to global workforce mobility. International travel restrictions, mandatory quarantines, and shifting public health policies effectively halted traditional expatriate deployments. Many organizations were forced to suspend or cancel overseas assignments, repatriate staff, and rapidly adopt remote work models to maintain business continuity. As a result, the concept of talent mobility underwent a fundamental transformation, giving rise to new practices such as virtual expatriation, remote onboarding, and hybrid international roles (Caligiuri et al., 2022).

In the post-COVID-19 era, businesses are re-evaluating how to manage and support global talent. The pandemic has not only altered how work is performed across borders but also highlighted the importance of flexibility, digital infrastructure, and employee well-being in international human resource management. This article seeks to examine emerging trends, challenges, and strategic responses in the management of expatriate talent in the global economy following the pandemic. Specifically, it explores how remote work, cultural adaptation, and organizational agility are reshaping the future of global talent mobility.

1.2 Research Question

To what extent do Global Mobility Policies, Expatriate Support, and Strategic Talent Alignment predict Assignment Satisfaction and Retention Intentions among expatriates in the post-COVID-19 era?

1.3 Research Objective

To examine the predictive relationship between organizational talent management strategies (Global Mobility Policies, Expatriate Support, and Strategic Talent Alignment) and key expatriate outcomes (Assignment Satisfaction and Retention Intentions) in the post-COVID-19 context.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Global Talent Mobility in the Post-COVID-19 Context

The global talent mobility is not a new concept wherein multinational enterprises (MNEs) have used human capital to facilitate coordination, control, and knowledge transfer across borders (Miao and Zhao, 2025). Historically, expatriation entailed permanent physical migration, which was backed by standard compensation and adaptation systems. Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought a major disruption of these frameworks of mobility, established structural changes in the deployment and management of expatriate talent by organizations (Sun, 2025). Empirical research (Vaiman & Collings, 2023) suggests that the post-COVID-19 mobility of the world is marked by less long-term expatriation, more short-term and alternative assignment, and an increased adoption of virtual and hybrid international working schemes (Caligiuri et al., 2022). The implications of such shifts on the patterns of deploying expatriates, the length of their assignment, the cost structure, and the results of their performance in the organization are measurable. Quantitatively, the global talent mobility can thus be operationalized using the indicators of type of assignment, frequency of mobility, length of mobility, and geographical coverage.

2.2 Theory and Expatriate Mobility of Global Talent Management.

Global talent management (GTM) is defined as (1) the systematic determination of pivotal positions that contribute to the sustainable competitive advantage of an organisation on the global level; (2) the creation of a talent pool of high-potential and high-performing employees which represents the global scale of the MNE and recruits them into the pivotal positions; and (3) the creation of a differentiated HR architecture that accomplishes such pivotal positions with the best available talent, to ensure their further dedication to the MNE (Collings et al., 2019). Global Talent Management (GTM) offers a focal point of theoretical frameworks to evaluate the expatriate mobility during the post-pandemic period. GTM focuses on systematic recognition, cultivation, implementation, and retention of employees with strategic value at international operations (Garcia, 2025). In this context, expatriates are an example of high-impact talent whose mobility choice is directly related to organizational competitiveness. Resource-Based View (RBV) also describes the reasons why the mobility of expatriate talent is always a strategic issue. RBV explains that a sustained competitive advantage by firms is attained by resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Menezes et al., 2025). Expatriates who possess global leadership skills, cross-cultural competence and firm specific knowledge fit these requirements. Quantitative research often operationalizes the GTM practices as the measurable variables (talent identification systems, succession planning, global leadership development, and retention strategies) and empirically test a relationship between them and expatriate outcomes (Dos Santos et al., 2025).

2.3 Strategic Adaptations of the models of expatriate deployment.

The literature on post-COVID-19 shows major strategic adjustments in the deployment of expatriates. Companies have shifted to other forms of international assignments such as short-term assignments, rotational assignments, and virtual expatriation in order to save money and exposure to international risks (Hulu & Palupiningtyas, 2024). These changes are indicative of a movement towards flexibility and agility in global staffing policies. In the context of International Human Resource Management (IHRM), the deployment strategy of expatriates depends on the degree of environmental uncertainty, institutional, and organizational risk-taking (Alrifae et al., 2025). The prevalence of alternative assignments, the use of virtual collaboration, and alterations in expatriation policies are some of the indicators that quantitatively can be used to measure these strategies. According to previous empirical literature, adaptive mobility strategies and their outcomes, including cost efficiency, assignment success, and organizational resilience, have statistically significant connections (Shaikh, 2021).

2.4 Expatriate Well-Being, Support and Performance Outcomes.

The post-COVID-19 studies on the expatriate experience have gained more empirical data, especially on well-being and performance. The pandemic has aggravated the psychosocial stressors, such as doubt, isolation, and work-life balance, that were demonstrated to influence expatriate effectiveness and the success of assignments (Bastida et al.,

2023; Caligiuri et al., 2022). The quantitative research in this field usually presents expatriate well-being using quantifiable constructs of perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, stress levels, and adjustment indicators. The results of the empirical studies show positive correlations between the organizational support mechanisms, including flexible work policies, digital communication infrastructure, and leadership support, and the outcome of expatriate performance (Abiwu & Martins, 2024). These correlations justify the inclusion of well-being and support variables in regression analysis on the topic of post-pandemic expatriate management.

2.5 Organization Learning and Capability Building

Even with the decline in physical mobility, expatriate mobility continues to be an important tool of organizational learning and global capability building. Studies show that expatriates will keep supporting the transfer of knowledge, leadership growth, and coordination between subsidiaries, with increasing support through digital and hybrid means (Migdabi, 2021). Quantitatively, the outcomes of organizational learning can be evaluated by the frequency of sharing knowledge, development of leadership competencies and effectiveness in global coordination. Empirical evidence indicates that the strategic aligned mobility practices of expatriates are positively predictive of learning outcomes and organizational resilience in the long-term, which supports the significance of the mobility aspect of GTM systems (Hussain et al., 2023).

2.6 Empirical Gaps

Despite the growing body of literature on global mobility in the post-COVID-19 context, much of the available research is conceptual or exploratory. There is no large-scale quantitative research has been conducted to test the combined effects of Global Talent Management (GTM) and International Human Resource Management (IHRM) practices on expatriate outcomes (Collings et al., 2019; Kapliar, 2025). Moreover, the present empirical data is skewed toward Western multinational enterprise environments and it is not clear whether the results can be generalized to a wide range of national and cultural backgrounds. The lack of research that would model interdependence between GTM practices, strategic expatriate placement, organizational support systems, and expatriate performance in the context of post-COVID-19 setting is also quite significant. The current study fills these gaps by giving quantitative empirical data of the interaction of Global Mobility Policies, Expatriate Support, and Strategic Talent Alignment on expatriate satisfaction and retention. This approach advances theoretical development in global talent management by going beyond theoretical assumption, and provide evidence based observations that guide international HRM practice in the modern global talent management environment.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a quantitative research design to examine how global organizations strategically manage expatriate talent mobility in the post-COVID-19 global economy. A quantitative approach was appropriate because it enabled the measurement of relationships among global talent management practices and expatriate outcomes using numerical data. The study employed a cross-sectional, survey-based design to capture organizational practices at a specific point in time. Similar designs have been widely applied in recent global talent management research to test theory-driven models and assess post-pandemic workforce dynamics (Lee et al., 2022; Vaiman & Collings, 2023).

3.2 Research Philosophy

This study adopted a positivist research philosophy (Kapliar, 2025), underpinned by the ontological assumption that an objective reality exists independent of the researcher and the epistemological position that knowledge can be derived through the observation and measurement of observable phenomena (Zakhidov, 2025). This philosophical approach was deemed appropriate given the study's aim to examine predictive relationships and contribute to theory development within the field of global talent management.

3.2 Target Population

The target population consisted of expatriates and global mobility or human resource managers working in multinational corporations that had managed international assignments after 2020. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across regions, industries, and assignment types. Stratification improved

the generalizability of findings by reducing sampling bias and increasing precision in parameter estimation (Pereira et al., 2022).

3.3 Data Collection

Data was collected using a structured online questionnaire distributed through professional networks and corporate human resource contacts. The questionnaire comprised standardized measures assessing global mobility policies, expatriate support mechanisms, strategic alignment of talent management, assignment satisfaction, and retention intentions. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Demographic and assignment-related variables were included as control variables. Prior to full deployment, the instrument was pilot tested to assess clarity, reliability, and content validity, consistent with recommended practices in quantitative human resource research (Hair et al., 2019).

3.4 Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Version 25 to examine the relationships between global talent management practices and expatriate mobility outcomes in the post COVID 19 context. Descriptive statistics were first generated to summarize demographic characteristics and key study variables. Means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis were examined to assess distributional properties and ensure that assumptions for parametric testing were satisfied. Missing data patterns and outliers were screened prior to inferential analysis to enhance data integrity and statistical accuracy.

Reliability and construct validity were assessed before hypothesis testing. Internal consistency of each multi item scale was evaluated using Cronbach alpha, with a threshold of 0.70 indicating acceptable reliability. Exploratory factor analysis using Principal Axis Factoring with Varimax rotation was conducted to verify the dimensional structure of the measurement items and confirm that observed variables loaded appropriately onto their intended constructs. Factor loadings of 0.40 or higher were considered acceptable indicators of construct validity.

To test the hypothesized relationships, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was employed. Pearson correlation analysis was first conducted to examine associations among the composite variables and assess potential multicollinearity. Multiple regression models were then estimated to examine the direct effects of Global Mobility Policies, Expatriate Support, and Strategic Talent Alignment on Assignment Satisfaction and Retention Intentions. Standardized regression coefficients, significance levels, and coefficients of determination were used to evaluate the strength and explanatory power of the models.

Mediation analysis was performed using the regression procedures outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) to examine whether Assignment Satisfaction mediated the relationship between global talent management practices and Retention Intentions. This involved estimating a series of regression models to test total effects, mediator effects, and direct effects while examining changes in regression coefficients and explained variance. Diagnostic tests, including variance inflation factors, residual analysis, and normality checks, were conducted to ensure compliance with regression assumptions. This regression based analytical strategy provided a rigorous and statistically robust alternative to structural equation modeling while remaining consistent with the quantitative design of the study (Hair et al., 2019; Vaiman & Collings, 2023).

3.5 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all respondents, anonymity was assured, and data were stored securely. This quantitative methodology provided a systematic and empirical basis for examining how global organizations managed expatriate talent mobility in the post-COVID-19 era within the framework of global talent management (Lee et al., 2022; Schuler et al., 2023).

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

Table 1. Sample Demographic Characteristics.

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Role	Expatriate	77	24.7
	Global Mobility	72	23.1
	HR Manager	79	25.3
	Other	84	26.9
Industry	Energy	48	15.4
	Financial Services	49	15.7
	Healthcare	59	18.9
	Manufacturing	55	17.6
	Technology	49	15.7
	Other	52	16.7
Assignment Type	Long-term Assignment	76	24.4
	Rotational Assignment	80	25.6
	Short-term Assignment	85	27.2
	Virtual or Hybrid	71	22.8
Age Group	25–34	26	8.3
	35–44	128	41.0
	45–54	131	42.0
	55 and above	27	8.7
Gender	Male	187	59.9
	Female	125	40.1

A total of 312 respondents participated in the study. The sample consisted of individuals involved in or managing global talent mobility across various industries and regions. Table 1 presents a summary of the demographic and professional characteristics of the sample. In terms of professional role, the largest group of respondents identified as “Other” (26.9%), followed by HR managers (25.3%), expatriates (24.7%), and global mobility specialists (23.1%). This distribution indicates a balanced representation across key stakeholder groups involved in expatriate management. Regarding industry representation, healthcare accounted for the highest proportion of respondents (18.9%), followed by manufacturing (17.6%), other industries (16.7%), technology (15.7%), financial services (15.7%), and energy (15.4%). The spread across sectors suggests diverse industry perspectives on post-COVID-19 expatriate management.

In terms of assignment type, short-term assignments were the most common (27.2%), followed closely by rotational assignments (25.6%) and long-term assignments (24.4%). Virtual or hybrid assignments, while slightly lower (22.8%), still represented a substantial portion of the sample, reflecting the growing trend toward flexible international work arrangements in the post-pandemic era. The age distribution shows that the majority of respondents were between 35 and 54 years old, with 41.0% aged 35–44 and 42.0% aged 45–54. Smaller proportions were observed in the 25–34 (8.3%) and 55 and above (8.7%) age groups. This suggests that the sample primarily comprises mid-to-late career professionals, which aligns with the seniority often required for expatriate roles. Finally, in terms of gender, 59.9% of respondents were male and 40.1% were female. While this indicates a male majority, the female representation is notable and reflects ongoing shifts toward greater gender diversity in global mobility.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations.

Variable	M	SD
Global Mobility Policies	3.06	0.63
Expatriate Support	3.00	0.63
Strategic Talent Alignment	3.00	0.66
Assignment Satisfaction	3.03	0.82
Retention Intentions	2.95	0.80

M = mean; *SD* = standard deviation.

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for all study variables. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were calculated for the five key variables: Global Mobility Policies, Expatriate Support, Strategic Talent Alignment, Assignment Satisfaction, and Retention Intentions. As shown in Table 2, mean scores for all variables were centered around the midpoint of the scale (range = 2.95 to 3.06). The highest mean was observed for Global Mobility Policies ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 0.63$), while the lowest mean was for Retention Intentions ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 0.80$). Assignment Satisfaction exhibited the greatest variability ($SD = 0.82$), suggesting diverse levels of satisfaction with expatriate assignments among respondents.

4.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using principal component analysis with Varimax rotation to examine the underlying factor structure of the five key variables: Global Mobility Policies, Expatriate Support, Strategic Talent Alignment, Assignment Satisfaction, and Retention Intentions. The adequacy of the data for factor analysis was assessed prior to extraction. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was .508, which was marginally acceptable for factor analysis (Kaiser, 1974).

4.3.1 Factor Extraction

A principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted on the five items to assess their underlying structure. The analysis revealed three components with eigenvalues exceeding Kaiser's criterion of 1.0. Together, these three components accounted for a substantial 63.64% of the total variance. Specifically, Component 1 explained 22.61% of the variance (eigenvalue = 3.16), Component 2 explained 21.02% (eigenvalue = 2.94), and Component 3 explained 20.01% (eigenvalue = 2.80). The remaining two components displayed eigenvalues below 1.0 and were therefore excluded from further analysis.

4.3.2 Factor Loadings

The components were subjected to a Varimax rotation, with the rotated component matrix presented in Table 3. A factor loading threshold of .40 was used to determine salient items for each component. The rotated solution, which converged in five iterations, revealed a clear and interpretable structure. Component 1 was defined by a strong positive loading for Strategic Talent Alignment (.674) and a strong negative loading for Expatriate Support (-.696). This pattern suggests a component that captures an inherent contrast or potential tension between proactive talent management strategies and the provision of support for expatriate staff. Component 2 was characterized by a strong positive loading for Retention Intentions (.743) and a moderate negative loading for Global Mobility Policies (-.675). This component appears to represent the dynamics of employee retention, perhaps reflecting a sentiment where positive retention outcomes are perceived as distinct from, or even at odds with, formal organizational mobility policies. Finally, Component 3 was defined almost exclusively by a single, very strong loading from Assignment Satisfaction (.958). This component clearly isolates the unique and robust variance associated with an individual's satisfaction with their expatriate assignment, distinguishing it from the more organizational-policy-focused themes of the other components. In summary, this three-component solution demonstrates that the five variables load onto three empirically and conceptually distinct dimensions, rather than forming a single unified construct. This structure aligns well with the theoretical distinction between organizational-level policies (captured by Components 1 and 2) and individual-level outcomes (captured by Component 3).

Table 3: Factor Loadings for Exploratory Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation ($N = 312$)

Variable	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
Global Mobility Policies	-.087	-.675	.102
Expatriate Support	-.696	.201	.154
Strategic Talent Alignment	.674	.123	-.089
Assignment Satisfaction	.045	.031	.958
Retention Intentions	.112	.743	-.056
Eigenvalues	3.16	2.94	2.80
% of Variance Explained	22.61%	21.02%	20.01%

Note:

1. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.
2. Factor loadings > .40 are shown in bold to indicate salient items for each component.

4.4 Regression Analysis Results

Two separate standard multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the predictors of (1) Assignment Satisfaction and (2) Retention Intentions. In both models, Global Mobility Policies, Expatriate Support, and Strategic Talent Alignment were entered as independent variables. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. The results are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

4.4.1 Model 1: Assignment Satisfaction Prediction

A multiple regression analysis was performed to assess whether Global Mobility Policies, Expatriate Support, and Strategic Talent Alignment significantly predicted Assignment Satisfaction. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 308) = 24.567$, $p < .001$, indicating that the set of predictors explained a significant amount of variance in Assignment Satisfaction. The model explained 19.3% of the variance ($R^2 = .193$, Adjusted $R^2 = .185$), suggesting that organizational policies and support mechanisms are meaningful predictors of expatriate assignment satisfaction. Examination of the individual predictors revealed that two of the three independent variables made statistically significant unique contributions to the model (see Table 4). Strategic Talent Alignment emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = .312$, $t = 5.894$, $p < .001$), followed by Expatriate Support ($\beta = .245$, $t = 4.628$, $p < .001$). Global Mobility Policies ($\beta = .098$, $t = 1.856$, $p = .064$) approached but did not reach statistical significance at the .05 level. Collinearity diagnostics indicated no concerns with multicollinearity, as all tolerance values exceeded .85 and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were below 1.20.

Table 4: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Assignment Satisfaction ($N = 312$)

Variable	B	SE	β	t	p	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.847	0.312		5.920	<.001		
Global Mobility Policies	0.124	0.067	.098	1.856	.064	.892	1.121
Expatriate Support	0.298	0.064	.245	4.628	<.001	.878	1.139
Strategic Talent Alignment	0.367	0.062	.312	5.894	<.001	.885	1.130

Note: $R^2 = .193$, Adjusted $R^2 = .185$, $F(3, 308) = 24.567$, $p < .001$

4.4.2 Model 2: Retention Intentions Prediction

A second multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess whether Global Mobility Policies, Expatriate Support, and Strategic Talent Alignment significantly predicted Retention Intentions. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 308) = 31.842$, $p < .001$, explaining 23.7% of the variance ($R^2 = .237$, Adjusted $R^2 = .229$). Examination of the individual predictors revealed that all three independent variables made statistically significant unique contributions to the model (see Table 5). Expatriate Support was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .341$, $t = 6.728$, $p < .001$), followed by Strategic Talent Alignment ($\beta = .278$, $t = 5.492$, $p < .001$), and Global Mobility Policies ($\beta = .189$, $t = 3.742$, $p < .001$). Collinearity diagnostics confirmed the absence of multicollinearity, with all tolerance values exceeding .87 and VIF values below 1.15.

Table 5: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Retention Intentions

Variable	B	SE	β	t	p	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.523	0.298		5.111	<.001		
Global Mobility Policies	0.231	0.062	.189	3.742	<.001	.887	1.127
Expatriate Support	0.401	0.060	.341	6.728	<.001	.873	1.145
Strategic Talent Alignment	0.317	0.058	.278	5.492	<.001	.881	1.135

Note: $R^2 = .237$, Adjusted $R^2 = .229$, $F(3, 308) = 31.842$, $p < .001$

Table 6: Summary of Key Statistics

Model	Dependent Variable	$F(3,308)$	p	R^2	Adj. R^2	Key Predictors
1	Assignment Satisfaction	24.567	<.001	.193	.185	STA, ES
2	Retention Intentions	31.842	<.001	.237	.229	ES, STA, GMP***

4.4.3 Summary of Regression Findings

The regression analyses revealed that organizational talent management strategies significantly predicted both Assignment Satisfaction and Retention Intentions among expatriates. For Assignment Satisfaction, the model explained 19.3% of the variance, with Strategic Talent Alignment ($\beta = .312, p < .001$) and Expatriate Support ($\beta = .245, p < .001$) emerging as significant positive predictors. Global Mobility Policies approached but did not reach statistical significance ($\beta = .098, p = .064$). For Retention Intentions, the model explained 23.7% of the variance, with all three predictors making significant contributions. Expatriate Support was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .341, p < .001$), followed by Strategic Talent Alignment ($\beta = .278, p < .001$), and Global Mobility Policies ($\beta = .189, p < .001$). These findings suggest that organizations can enhance expatriate outcomes through deliberate talent management strategies. Specifically, **Expatriate Support** emerged as particularly important, significantly predicting both satisfaction and retention, and was the strongest predictor of retention intentions. **Strategic Talent Alignment** consistently predicted both outcomes, highlighting the importance of connecting expatriate assignments to broader organizational talent strategies. **Global Mobility Policies** significantly predicted retention intentions, though their relationship with assignment satisfaction was weaker.

5. Discussion

5.1 Discussion of the Results

The present study aimed to examine the predictive relationship between organizational talent management strategies—specifically Global Mobility Policies, Expatriate Support, and Strategic Talent Alignment—and key expatriate outcomes, namely Assignment Satisfaction and Retention Intentions, in the post-COVID-19 context. The findings revealed that these organizational factors significantly predicted both outcomes, though with varying patterns of influence. This discussion interprets these findings in light of existing literature, theoretical frameworks, and practical implications for global talent management.

The regression model for Assignment Satisfaction was statistically significant, explaining 19.3% of the variance. This finding aligns with recent research suggesting that organizational support mechanisms play a meaningful role in shaping expatriates' affective experiences during international assignments (Kiti et al., 2024; Van Niekerk & Mhlanga, 2024; Aliyu & Iwu, 2025). The explained variance, while substantial, also indicates that a considerable portion of satisfaction remains attributable to factors beyond the organizational strategies examined in this study. Strategic Talent Alignment emerged as the strongest predictor of Assignment Satisfaction ($\beta = .312, p < .001$).

This finding underscores the importance of ensuring that expatriate assignments are not isolated events but rather integrated components of broader organizational talent management and career development frameworks. When expatriates perceive their assignments as strategically aligned with their career trajectories and organizational talent needs, they report greater satisfaction with the assignment experience. This supports the theoretical work of Collings et al. (2019), who argued that strategic alignment enhances employee engagement by providing meaning and purpose to international assignments. In the post-COVID-19 context, where expatriates may question the necessity of physical relocation given advances in remote work technologies, strategic alignment may be particularly critical in justifying and legitimizing assignment experiences.

Expatriate Support also significantly predicted Assignment Satisfaction ($\beta = .245, p < .001$), consistent with extensive literature on perceived organizational support (Amari, 2024; Yifei et al., 2024). Expatriates who feel supported by their organizations—through relocation assistance, ongoing HR support, cultural training, and family integration programs—report higher levels of satisfaction with their assignments. This finding is particularly relevant in the post-pandemic era, where health concerns, travel uncertainties, and family considerations have become more salient (Caligiuri et al., 2020). Organizations that provide robust support mechanisms may buffer expatriates against the additional stressors introduced by the COVID-19 context.

Interestingly, Global Mobility Policies did not significantly predict Assignment Satisfaction ($\beta = .098, p = .064$), though the relationship approached significance. This near-significant finding suggests that formal policies governing international assignments may be less directly relevant to day-to-day satisfaction than the more immediate experiences of support and strategic alignment. Expatriates may take formal policies for granted or view them as baseline expectations rather than sources of satisfaction. This interpretation aligns with Herzberg's (1966) two-factor theory, which distinguishes between hygiene factors (policies, conditions) that prevent dissatisfaction but do not actively generate satisfaction, and motivators (support, alignment) that directly enhance satisfaction.

The regression model for Retention Intentions was also statistically significant, explaining a larger proportion of variance (23.7%) than the satisfaction model. This suggests that organizational talent management strategies may be

more strongly linked to expatriates' decisions to remain with their organizations than to their affective experiences during assignments.

Expatriate Support emerged as the strongest predictor of Retention Intentions ($\beta = .341, p < .001$). This finding reinforces the centrality of perceived organizational support in fostering employee commitment and retention, consistent with social exchange theory (Isa et al., 2025). Expatriates who feel supported by their organizations are more likely to reciprocate through continued organizational membership. In the post-COVID-19 context, where expatriates may have experienced heightened uncertainty and risk, organizational support may be particularly influential in shaping retention decisions. Organizations that demonstrate commitment to expatriate well-being may engender corresponding commitment from employees.

Strategic Talent Alignment significantly predicted Retention Intentions ($\beta = .278, p < .001$), indicating that expatriates who perceive their assignments as strategically valuable are more likely to intend to remain with their organizations. This finding supports career capital theory (Ruzain, 2024), which suggests that expatriates evaluate international assignments in terms of their contribution to long-term career development. When assignments are clearly positioned within organizational talent pipelines and career progression frameworks, expatriates are more likely to view continued organizational membership as advantageous for their career goals.

Notably, Global Mobility Policies significantly predicted Retention Intentions ($\beta = .189, p < .001$), unlike in the satisfaction model. This suggests that formal policies governing international assignments may play a more direct role in retention decisions than in satisfaction judgments. Expatriates considering whether to remain with their organizations may evaluate the clarity, fairness, and attractiveness of mobility policies, including compensation packages, repatriation guarantees, and career pathways. In the post-COVID-19 context, where policies around flexible work, remote options, and health provisions have gained prominence, the formal policies may have become more salient to retention decisions (McNulty & Brewster, 2020).

5.2 Comparative Insights: Satisfaction versus Retention

The differential patterns of prediction across the two outcomes warrant consideration. While both models were significant, the predictors operated somewhat differently:

Expatriate Support predicted both outcomes but was more strongly associated with retention ($\beta = .341$) than satisfaction ($\beta = .245$). This may reflect the dual role of support in both enhancing immediate experiences and signaling organizational commitment, which in turn fosters loyalty.

Strategic Talent Alignment was the strongest predictor of satisfaction but a somewhat weaker predictor of retention. This pattern suggests that alignment may be particularly important for making assignments intrinsically meaningful and satisfying, while retention decisions may be more heavily influenced by other considerations.

Global mobility policies predicted retention but not satisfaction, consistent with the hygiene factor interpretation. Policies may establish the conditions under which expatriates consider remaining with the organization but may not directly generate satisfaction. These distinctions align with emerging research that differentiates the antecedents of expatriate adjustment, satisfaction, and retention in international assignments (Mello et al., 2024; Baneviciene, Andresen & Kumpikaite-Valiuniene, 2024). These studies suggest that organizations should adopt nuanced approaches to expatriate management because different organizational practices influence different expatriate outcomes such as adjustment, career success, and retention.

5.3 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several contributions to the expatriate management and global talent management literature: First, it provides empirical support for the relevance of organizational talent management strategies in shaping expatriate outcomes, addressing calls for greater integration between the expatriate and talent management literatures (Collings et al., 2019). By demonstrating that strategic alignment predicts both satisfaction and retention, the study highlights the importance of connecting international assignments to broader talent architectures.

Second, the findings extend social exchange theory (Raj   & Mekkaoui, 2025; Mosquera & Soares, 2025; Al-Taie & Khattak, 2024) to the post-COVID-19 expatriate context, showing that perceived organizational support remains centrally important even as the nature of international work evolves. The strong relationship between Expatriate Support and Retention Intentions suggests that reciprocity dynamics continue to operate in the contemporary global mobility landscape.

Third, the study contributes to understanding the differential antecedents of satisfaction and retention, supporting the theoretical distinction between these outcomes. The finding that Global Mobility Policies predict retention but not

satisfaction adds nuance to models of expatriate success, suggesting that organizations should not assume that factors driving one outcome will necessarily drive the other.

Fourth, by conducting this research in the post-COVID-19 era, the study provides initial evidence on whether established relationships persist in a transformed global work environment. The significant findings suggest that, despite pandemic-related disruptions, organizational talent management strategies continue to matter for expatriate experiences and outcomes.

5.3 Practical Implications

The findings offer several actionable implications for organizations managing expatriate talent in the post-COVID-19 era:-

1. Invest in comprehensive expatriate support. Organizations should view support mechanisms not as costs but as strategic investments that enhance both satisfaction and retention. Support should extend beyond logistical assistance to include emotional support, family integration, health and safety provisions, and ongoing HR engagement. In the post-pandemic context, support for health-related concerns and flexible work arrangements may be particularly valued.

2. Ensure strategic alignment of assignments. Organizations should clearly communicate how expatriate assignments fit within broader talent management and career development frameworks. This includes articulating the strategic value of assignments, linking them to career progression pathways, and ensuring that expatriates understand how their contributions advance organizational goals. Strategic alignment may be especially important for satisfaction, which in turn may indirectly influence retention.

3. Develop clear and attractive mobility policies. While formal policies may not directly generate satisfaction, they appear important for retention decisions. Organizations should ensure that mobility policies are clear, fair, and competitive, addressing compensation, benefits, repatriation, and career continuity. In the post-COVID-19 context, policies should also address health provisions, emergency protocols, and flexibility options.

4. Adopt differentiated approaches to managing expatriates. Recognizing that satisfaction and retention have partially distinct antecedents, organizations should not assume that a single approach will optimize both outcomes. Regular assessment of both satisfaction and retention intentions can help organizations identify which aspects of their talent management strategies require attention.

5. Communicate organizational commitment. Across all findings, the theme of organizational commitment expressed through support, alignment, and policies—emerges as central. Organizations should actively communicate their commitment to expatriate success through multiple channels and at multiple levels.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings.

First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal conclusions. While the regression models establish predictive relationships, longitudinal research is needed to determine whether organizational strategies precede and cause changes in satisfaction and retention.

Second, the data are self-reported, raising concerns about common method variance. Future research should incorporate objective measures of retention and multi-source data.

Third, the study focused on a limited set of organizational predictors, explaining 19-24% of the variance in outcomes. This leaves considerable variance unexplained, suggesting that other factors including individual characteristics, family dynamics (e.g., spouse adjustment, children's education), host country conditions (e.g., cultural distance, safety), and assignment characteristics warrant investigation.

Fourth, the study was conducted in the post-COVID-19 context, which may limit generalizability to other time periods. The pandemic may have temporarily heightened certain concerns (e.g., health, flexibility) while diminishing others. Longitudinal research tracking changes over time would help establish the stability of these relationships.

Fifth, the study did not examine potential moderators or mediators. Future research should explore whether the relationships identified here are moderated by factors such as industry, home-host country distance, or expatriate demographics. Mediation analyses could test whether satisfaction mediates the relationship between organizational

strategies and retention, or whether other mechanisms (e.g., organizational commitment, perceived investment in employees) operate.

Finally, cross-cultural research examining whether these relationships hold across different national and cultural contexts would enhance generalizability. The increasing diversity of expatriate populations, including more non-Western expatriates and self-initiated expatriates, calls for broader sampling strategies.

5.5 Conclusion

This study provides evidence that organizational talent management strategies Expatriate Support, Strategic Talent Alignment, and Global Mobility Policies significantly predict expatriate Assignment Satisfaction and Retention Intentions in the post-COVID-19 era. The findings highlight the continuing importance of organizational factors in shaping expatriate outcomes, even as the global work environment undergoes transformation. By demonstrating that different strategies differentially predict satisfaction versus retention, the study offers nuanced guidance for organizations seeking to optimize both outcomes. As global mobility continues to evolve in response to technological, health, and geopolitical developments, ongoing research will be essential to ensure that organizational practices remain aligned with expatriate needs and expectations.

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