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Loneliness in a Globalized Workplace: Rethinking Expatriate Support Strategies

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Master in Human Resource Management and Organizational
Consulting

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Resumo

Os expatriados desempenham um papel fundamental nas organizações globais, mas muitos enfrentam a solidão, o que prejudica tanto o bem-estar pessoal quanto os resultados organizacionais. Este estudo examina como as práticas de comunidade de Mintzberg influenciam a solidão percebida pelos expatriados e como essa relação é moderada pela ambiversão, um traço de personalidade que reflete a adaptabilidade entre introversão e extroversão.

Os dados de um inquérito a 186 expatriados de vários setores e continentes foram analisados utilizando uma path análise com a macro PROCESS no SPSS. As práticas de comunidade foram operacionalizadas em três dimensões: coesão social, gestão e networking vertical, enquanto a solidão foi medida nos domínios do trabalho e da família.

Os resultados mostram que apenas a coesão social, a interação informal, pertencer à comunidade, os objetivos partilhados e a partilha de conhecimento reduziram significativamente a solidão relacionada com o trabalho. Nem a gestão responsável nem o networking vertical mostraram ter efeitos. Em acréscimo, a ambiversão amplificou o papel protetor da coesão social, sugerindo que personalidades adaptáveis beneficiam mais de ambientes coesos.

O estudo contribui para a teoria ao introduzir empiricamente o conceito de comunidade e destacar a sua medição como sendo instrumental para a gestão de expatriados e central para a gestão de recursos humanos. Também integra a Teoria da Autodeterminação, mostrando como fatores individuais, como a ambiversão, modulam a eficácia das iniciativas focadas nos recursos humanos. Na prática, as conclusões enfatizam a necessidade das organizações darem prioridade às práticas de coesão social e integrarem a avaliação da personalidade no apoio aos expatriados.

Palavras-chave: Comunitariedade, Expatriados, Ambiversão, Solidão

Código JEL: M12 (Gestão de pessoas), M16 (Gestão de Negócios Internacional)

Abstract

Expatriates play a critical role in global organizations, yet many face loneliness that undermines both personal well-being and organizational outcomes. This study examines how Mintzberg's communityship practices influence expatriates' perceived loneliness and how this relationship is moderated by ambiversion, a personality trait reflecting adaptability between introversion and extraversion.

Survey data from 186 expatriates across industries and continents were analysed using path analysis with the PROCESS macro in SPSS. Communityship practices were operationalized into three dimensions: social cohesion, stewardship, and vertical networking, while loneliness was measured in both work and family domains.

Findings show that only social cohesion, informal interaction, community belonging, shared goals, and knowledge sharing, significantly reduced work-related loneliness. Neither stewardship nor vertical networking showed effects. Furthermore, ambiversion amplified the protective role of social cohesion, suggesting that adaptable personalities benefit most from cohesive environments.

The study contributes to theory by empirically introducing the construct of communityship and highlighting its measurement as instrumental for expatriate management and central to HRM. It also integrates Self-Determination Theory, showing how individual triggers, such as ambiversion, modulate the effectiveness of HR-focused initiatives. Practically, the findings emphasize the need for organizations to prioritize social cohesion practices and integrate personality assessment into expatriate support.

Keywords: Communityship, Expatriates, Ambiversion, Loneliness

JEL Code: M12 (Personnel Management), M16 (International Business Administration)

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1. Introduction

The movement of professionals across borders has become so common that it is almost taken-for-granted in the labour market as multinational companies rely heavily on expatriate employees to bridge operational gaps, transfer knowledge, and maintain consistency across international branches.

While the benefits of expatriation for organizations are clear, the personal and social challenges faced by expatriates are often overlooked or underestimated. Understanding the human side of international assignments is therefore crucial, not only for individual well-being but also for organizational and career success (Bolino, 2007).

Expats programs have been associated with high failure rates and organizations are well aware of this (Haile & White, 2019). The reasons for such failures have been discussed in literature and, among these, the most obvious relate to cultural contrasts, language barriers, inadequate preparation for both the individual and their family, but also the lack of a welcoming community that goes beyond work-related motivations and satisfies the need for a sense of belonging (Erogul & Rahman, 2017; Hail & White, 2019; Qi & Lange, 2006). The need for belongingness is considered a basic need in the self-determination theory (SDT, Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000) alongside the need for competence and need for autonomy. To develop a high intrinsic motivation (the highest quality motivation) the three basic needs must be satisfied. Within an expat context, where individuals are mostly highly educated and taking leading positions, competence and autonomy are somehow filtered. However, the social context changes and uprooting may make the need for belongingness the most uncertain in such contexts.

In line with this reasoning, loneliness is a common and widespread feeling amongst expats, but it has merited scholarly attention only recently (Fan et al., 2025). Although being alone does not necessarily translate into the feeling of loneliness, loneliness is known to lead to negative outcomes for both the individual, and consequently, for their team (Fan et al., 2025).

Facing this threat, HR should set team building and communityship (Mintzberg, 2009) as critical goals to prevent the feeling of loneliness. Expats should be provided with resources and activities that are intended to foster their sense of belonging and therefore, to prevent or mitigate such feeling (Morrish et al., 2023).

Literature has been indicating some organizational initiatives that can be taken, motivated by such goals, however their relative effectiveness remains unclear when one considers that each expatriate has their own motivations and varying degree of social need. Personality traits, for example, have been researched within expatriation, and Harari et al. (2018) found, in a meta-analysis, that the big five

personality traits accounted for 20% of variance in expat adjustment with extraversion playing the most significant role in this matter. This means that organizational policy making and strategies to prevent loneliness based on communityship will not be fully understood without considering expats' idiosyncrasies, such as personality traits. Namely, said traits, introversion, extraversion, and the midrange type "ambiversion" could be predictors for the possibility of feelings of loneliness, as ambiverts are individuals that can easily move from introvert to extravert according to circumstances, and are, therefore, the most adaptable.

Considering the above, this research is designed to ascertain the effectiveness of communityship practices in preventing feelings of loneliness in interaction with expats' specific personality traits, namely ambiversion.

Placing a focus upon the interaction effects between organizational practices and personality traits preventing negative psychological experiences from the expatriation is a closer-to-reality approach that will most likely benefit the true effects and requirements of an effective HR policy for expats. This also contributes to theory by introducing individual triggers that modulate the effectiveness of expats HR-focused initiatives under the focus of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000) while empirically introducing the construct of communityship. The highlight given to communityship and, mostly, its measurement is instrumental in expat management and central for Human Resources Management (HRM).

This study will start by reviewing relevant literature, namely examining the rise of expatriation as an organizational phenomenon, its associated risk, among which the feeling of loneliness. This will be detailed and bridged with communityship, a novel construct that addresses the building of a sense-of-community as a key tenet of effective modern management. Based on this, a conceptual model is proposed, and the methodological apparatus explained. Findings and their respective implications for theory and practice are examined, while limitations and suggestions for future research proposed at the end.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The rise of expatriation

In recent decades, expatriation has become a central theme in discussions of global mobility and international HRM. Originally, the term "expatriate" referred broadly to any individual residing outside their country of origin, often permanently (McNulty & Brewster, 2017). Today, however, the concept has evolved significantly. In a modern context, expatriates are generally seen as individuals who temporarily

live and work abroad, either through corporate assignments or personal initiative. This broader understanding highlights that expatriates are not only company-sent assignees but also those who independently choose to pursue careers in foreign countries, often termed "self-initiated expatriates" (Andresen et al., 2014).

The expansion of international business, the globalization of markets, and the increasing interdependence of national economies have driven a sharp rise in expatriation (Suutari & Brewster, 2000). Despite deglobalization seeming to have a comeback in the recent years (Witt, 2019), the international business networks and the supply-chain dependencies may remain due to an inertial momentum that was established for a long time. As organizations expand or preserve their operations across borders, the need for a globally mobile workforce has grown. Expatriates are crucial in transferring knowledge, implementing corporate strategies, and maintaining consistency across geographically dispersed units (Collings et al., 2007). Their role extends beyond technical expertise; expatriates also serve as cultural ambassadors, helping to bridge the differences between home and host country practices.

From an organizational standpoint, deploying employees abroad is a strategic investment. Expatriates often possess specialized skills or critical organizational knowledge that cannot easily be sourced locally. Their international experience allows companies to standardize processes, enforce corporate values, and develop leadership talent capable of operating effectively across cultures (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011). Organizations see value not only in the immediate task expatriates fulfil but also in the long-term leadership potential they cultivate through international exposure (Bird & Mendenhall, 2016).

On the individual level, expatriation offers professionals opportunities for career advancement, personal growth, and the acquisition of cross-cultural competencies that have been long recognized as being highly valued in labour market (Dickmann & Doherty, 2008). Living and working in a foreign environment challenges individuals to develop adaptability, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving skills, all of which contribute significantly to career capital (Baruch et al., 2016). Research indicates that international assignments often lead to faster career progression and greater employability both within the current organization and externally (Dickmann & Baruch, 2011).

The increase of people proactively seeking to move to work in countries other than their own, self-initiated expatriates (SIEs), is an indication of changes on a wider scale throughout society. In Suutari and Brewster's (2000) study it was found that workers actively sought out an international experience themselves, rather than it occurring through the request of their workplace, with aspirations for adventure or to experience integration into a diverse culture. On the contrary to those who have been sent to work in another country, SIEs put themselves on the line as they do not always have a job to go

to, alongside a sense of self-sufficiency, and dynamic and self-directed actions with regards to their careers (Andresen et al., 2014). Institutions are increasingly acknowledging the benefits provided by this hitherto unexplored group whilst conceding that incorporating SIEs into traditional expatriate frameworks still presents some hurdles.

Expatriation brings obvious benefits; however, it is also accompanied by such difficulties as expense, cultural acclimatization and high rates of failure, in terms of premature repatriation or underperformance (Haile & White, 2019). According to these authors, implementing adequate and appropriate support networks, such as mentoring, training prior to departure, structures to promote emotional well-being and family support, are essential. Lack of such measures could cause organizations significant economic costs relative to international postings, minimizing the importance of providing for the whole person, rather than just the worker.

Furthermore, arguments persist regarding the etymology and terminology of the term “expatriates” among scholarly authors. As Kunz (2019) underlines, the term “expatriate” often seems superior when compared to terms like “migrant”, which carries assumed biases, particularly regarding social class, race, and privilege. The significance of critically analysing who is classified as an expatriate and whose international mobility is praised versus marginalized is highlighted by this sociocultural dimension.

In conclusion, the growth of expatriation is significantly connected to economic globalization, long-term planning and designation of resources and activities, and opportunities for career growth. Although it presents a fount of possibilities for both organizations and individuals, at the same time it requires managerial skill and perception regarding the personal and professional convolutions involved. Critical to this is understanding the evolution of expatriation and its ongoing ramifications whilst determining what role institutions need to take in order to nurture their international pool of workers most effectively.

Notwithstanding the strategic significance of expatriation, as stated it does have pitfalls: moving to another country brings many challenges which can include culture shock, adapting to new ways of perceiving and carrying out ‘everyday’ tasks, disruptions to professional growth and the toll it can play on emotional well-being (Erogul & Rahman, 2017; Hail & White, 2019; Qi & Lange, 2006). In order to strengthen and improve expatriation practices it cannot be emphasized strongly enough that these risks need to be seriously taken into consideration to avoid diminishing the potential rewards of such a global mobility.

2.2. Expatriation risks

Notwithstanding the numerous benefits for both personal and organizational development by transferring to another country, automatic success is not ensured, on the contrary in fact. The global mobile workforce becomes steadily more complex with all the implications that conveys on the management of tasks and undertakings on an international level. Integrating into a diverse environment can bring numerous challenges in various spheres; psychological, legal, cultural and social (Molinsky, 2007).

Without proper attention being paid to said challenges, the results could be far reaching, non-completion of tasks, damage to careers and family dynamics, and lack of constructive communication (Fan et al., 2025). According to these authors, this only serves to emphasize the necessity for HR personnel to proactively provide structures that nurture SIEs and comprehends the diversity and unpredictability of individual experiences. One of the most debilitating challenges faced by SIEs is loneliness which can colour the whole expatriate experience leading to burn out, inability to flourish at the job and precocious re-entry to the home country.

The meaning of expatriate has changed and evolved as it started by being interpreted as a short-term transfer abroad to a subsidiary company, to move into the idea that it includes individuals who wish to grow professionally, or seek general employment, who autonomously relocate to another country by themselves (Suutari & Brewster, 2000). The challenges SIEs face are not dissimilar to those faced by the more traditional expatriates and may be exacerbated due to the non-existence of support from a company or institution. In any case, whether the move was made autonomously or not, the challenges are real and present on a fundamental level. The main risks must be acknowledged before they are addressed. These include career stagnation, legal risks, discrimination, work life balance, family issues and psychological negative states such as loneliness, which has been less researched and deserves special attention in this literature review.

2.2.1. Career stagnation

Although snaring an international posting can be promoted as career enhancing, this can however have quite the opposite effect which is not always immediately apparent. The remoteness of the location from the home office may limit visibility to those in key positions of power, alternatively the position may have ambiguous connotations for career amelioration. Jokinen et al. (2008) indicated that career enhancement can develop abroad, but how that enhancement is incorporated when repatriation occurs remains

challenging, which can lead to skills not being fully utilized and vexation and lack of satisfaction on the part of the employee.

Again, Suutari and Brewster (2000) point out that the above concerns affect both assigned and self-initiated expatriates in both similar and slightly different ways. Those who were posted abroad by their organization may presume that promotion will follow the same conduit as before, however, when administrative changes occur within the home office, they may be disregarded due to their very lack of presence. On the other hand, SIEs may not have an organizational career structure in place and have to grapple for acknowledgement of their abilities and qualification at a local level. Furthermore, expatriates whose career advancement expectations are not satisfied may experience a loss of motivation and struggles with identity.

According to Lazarova and Caligiuri (2001), to alleviate this risk, HR needs to have set in place a transparent career advancement structure crafted for expatriates that takes into account the whole placement, before, during and after completion of the job. This structure needs to clearly outline quantifiable measurements to evaluate progress, have easily accessible mentoring programmes which consequentially enable repatriation to become part of the whole cycle of mobility. This with the aim of addressing loneliness that expatriates may experience when they are not directly involved or even excluded from networks of support within the organization at the home base, leading to the perception of career stagnation. This underscores the necessity for HR to implement practices ensuring consistent engagement and inclusion.

2.2.2. Legal risks (visa, immigration, tax, legal disputes)

Oftentimes diverse countries have diverse legal structures, which can cause complications for expatriate workers. These can present themselves in a myriad of forms; right from regulations regarding visas, work permits and immigration regulations, which can vary widely depending on country of provenance, to questions of taxation, labour laws and may involve legal litigations. Lack of knowledge pertaining to these issues can have potentially major repercussions, ranging from fines to actual deportation, to loss of reputation for the organizations and tasks being put on hold. These issues can be particularly relevant for SIEs who do not have access to legal guidance or the support frequently provided by multinational organizations.

Andresen et al. (2015) found that workers who had been assigned international roles were not unsusceptible to the above complications either. Many countries employ protracted times with the

issuance of work permits and stay visas, which can mean that people are not in compliance with the law and are not covered by health insurance, which can cause feelings of insecurity. The question of taxes can also be a major concern, if there is not an accord between countries, causing expatriates to find themselves having to pay taxes in both countries.

The role of HR is essential in attenuating these dangers and needs. Personnel should have comprehensive knowledge of immigration procedures, or to coordinate with professional teams that do, thereby ascertaining that expatriates have; the necessary documentation, been registered with the requisite authorities, and are given an understanding of how they stand legally. Collins et al. (2007) discuss the importance of evolving outlines, understanding they may alter due to changes of government for example, which include requisites for visa and work permits, contracts of employment and social security policies with the aim of legal transparency. With reference to SIEs, agencies who are adept with international placements or HR consultants with similar expertise, could be an answer to helping expatriates whose knowledge of said risks is ambiguous or not present at all.

Furthermore, the cost of emotional stress and its consequences both on capacity to carry out tasks and psychological toll due to such questions as taxation, personal rights or just simply knowing how things work needs to be addressed. Not having a network of people that can offer support on these topics, can aggravate anxiety and insecurity (Tahvanainen et al., 2005). Engle et al. (2024) further support the above mentioned, by going on to say that if these questions, both legal and otherwise, are not addressed it can exacerbate expatriates feeling both vulnerable and alone.

If they do not speak the language fluently or at all, or do not have knowledge of how to access the necessary legal information and whether or not this is reliable, underlines how crucial it is that HR have the requisite tools at hand by such means as; translators, available resources, mentoring and so on. Thus, ensuring expatriates that they have a community to turn to and they know how to get the support they need thus diminishing the sense of loneliness.

2.2.3. Discrimination

One of the major concerns which hinders a smooth inclusion and easy adjustment into the new workplace continues to be discrimination (Cole & Nesbeth, 2014). Both kinds of expatriates, SIEs or organization-assigned can find themselves confronted by both overt and more subtle kinds of discrimination, which can be based on a myriad of subjects; gender, religion, sexual-orientation, language fluency, clothing, or race. Encounters with discrimination can seriously impact emotional well-being, performance on assigned tasks and length of employment. Discrimination may also affect the opportunity to grow professionally,

particularly for expatriates working in places with countercultural or unconventional organizational norms (Froese, et al., 2016).

Discrimination within the workplace can take many forms and SIEs who do not have support from a company may be even more susceptible. Discrimination may occur by exclusion from informal networks, decreased access to roles of responsibility and leadership, or prejudiced performance analyses. Not forgetting that regions with pronounced racial or cultural tensions may influence domestic feelings towards foreigners leading to greater feelings of exclusion (Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013).

Discrimination has a considerable ripple effect and when it is combined with the lack of a support network, it can lead to an escalation in feelings of loneliness. If expatriates feel excluded socially it may hinder them in forming relationships both within the workplace and the local community, thus exacerbating their ability to adapt to the new culture and diminishing their psychological wellbeing (Selmer & Luring, 2011). For expatriates to achieve success, psychological well-being and feeling part of both work and local communities are fundamental elements for this to occur.

Morley et al. (2006) strongly underline the intrinsic role that HR plays in dealing with these dilemmas. Structures need to be already in place for communicating discriminatory acts with clearly defined policies and protocols to follow. There should also be an ongoing professional training at all levels, and the enablement of workshops for raising awareness of what discrimination actually means. With regards to emotional well-being, HR can provide such things as language classes, mentoring programmes that take into account both the expatriates' needs and the abilities of the mentors to meet said needs, thereby ensuring that transition is smooth and that individuals feel safe and valued. To build a sense of community, such things as inclusive activities and opportunities to share experiences and questions, can not only lead to diminished discrimination, but also to a decrease in feelings of loneliness.

Doherty et al. (2011) explore the necessity for creating environments, where both corporate assigned and self-initiated expatriates benefit from spaces that respect diversity, where inclusion is key and that foster a sense of belonging. With these spaces in place, companies and local communities are more likely to maximize the advantages that this globally mobile group of people can convey.

2.2.4. *Work-life conflict*

Tahir (2024) and Thilagavathy and Geetha (2023) all explore one of the largest challenges that expatriates face, which is 'work-life balance'. Adapting to a new country, culture, workplace, and gender attitudes, is affected by a myriad of variables, which can impinge upon both an individual's general well-being and

their ability to perform assigned tasks. These stressors can cause individuals to augment their workloads which then decreases their time for relaxation and rest. These challenges are applicable to both SIEs and corporate-assigned expatriates although there may be substantial differences between the groups with regards to access to systems of support and protocols in place.

Expatriates who have been assigned abroad by their organization may feel pressured to justify the investment that has been made in this posting, pushing themselves to perform at higher levels, at the cost of personal time and time for relationships. SIEs, on the other hand, can find themselves having to deal with fulfilling numerous roles, insecure work conditions or situations of innovative risk taking, again taking toll on having equilibrium between work and personal life (Tharenou, 2015). Both of these instances demonstrate that the absence of a support network in the country of employment can further obfuscate the confines between the work-life balance.

A key influence on the perception of loneliness can be a low or absent social integration into the host country, which leads to the diminished sense of pleasure during leisure time. If expatriates are away from family and intimate friends, they may find it problematic to wind down or ask for emotional support. This isolation in turn can worsen stressors, leading to emotional exhaustion and the risk of succumbing to burnout (Takeuchi et al., 2005).

Proficient HR staff should understand the necessity for healthy life-work balances. Clearly structured parameters that begin at the moment of (or even before in the case of assigned expatriates) employment and should include; resources for emotional well-being, defined work hours, and community building activities. The aim being to reduce avoidable stress and promote a healthful lifestyle. In the cases where individuals are remote working or working with a hybrid structure, flexibility is key with regards to working hours, thus enabling the requisite time needed for social integration and providing greater autonomy. When access to HR is not easily available, such as for SIEs, this can be remedied by external HR consultants or local expat groups which can furnish similar advice and materials (Andresen et al., 2015).

Initiatives to develop and facilitate community support and involvement have a knock-on effect by helping to decrease loneliness (Karunaratne, 2024). These initiatives could incorporate language exchange opportunities, organized social activities (both at corporate and community levels), and access to personal interest pursuits outside the workplace, all of which allow expatriates opportunities to make vital connections. In the long run, a strong supportive HR network, which takes into account the many variables faced by expatriates both on an emotional and professional level, can only serve to promote flexibility in the face of challenges and a more satisfying experience abroad.

2.2.5. Divorce / Family issues

When individuals work abroad this also places stress on families and other close relationships. If the decision is made to transfer the whole family, this can result in many challenges, including such things as difficulties for the children adapting, spouses putting their own careers on hold, strained relationships due to adjustment issues leading to conflict and even, in some cases, divorce. When vital social networks become unavailable or difficult to access and adjustment difficulties are added to this, all challenges become amplified. This in turn serves to promote a sense of loneliness and isolation (Dang et al., 2022). Although some assigned expatriates may have opportunities to reach out through their organization, by means of specific relocation services or programmes that help spouses integrate into the new community, SIEs may find they have to face these issues by themselves.

Family harmony is crucial for successful expatriation, and many studies have found this to be the case (Cole & Nesbeth, 2014; Shaffer et al., 2001). When this is not present it can result in premature repatriation and assignments not being completed. Partners or spouses who may have put their own career into limbo and left habitual social and emotional networks to accompany their partner, oftentimes can find it hard to find a job or a new self-identity. This price can produce emotional torment and feelings of resentment, which in turn leads to greater feelings of loneliness on both sides of the relationship (Cole & Nesbeth, 2014). These feelings can be exacerbated if the children too are finding it hard to cope with the changes they are facing; language proficiency, different teaching and learning methods, making new friends, all elements which can weigh heavily on family dynamics.

The whole experience of expatriation, in itself, requires a lot of energy and time, by placing duress in many different areas of life; intellectually, culturally, professionally, socially and emotionally. This can cause a depletion in both time and energy for addressing adaptation challenges faced by the rest of the family resulting in less time together, strained family ties, spouse/partner frustration, which is then reflected in dissatisfaction all round and can result in worsening feelings of loneliness. Van der Zee et al. (2007) report that when integration into the local community is difficult, both expatriates and their families frequently report a sense of isolation. This isolation can become self-repeating as negative feelings intensify leading to even more isolation and the augmentation of dissatisfaction within the family. HR has to take almost a holistic role, not just limited to the professional life of expatriates. Providing sustenance for potential challenges the families may face in seemingly time and having a list of providers should the need arise, such as counselling; help with educational placements, translators, spousal support networks for both emotional and career requisites, and expat activities if possible. This immediately

activates a sense of belonging and worth which facilitates integration and adjustment (Shah et. al, 2022). This may differ to some extent for SIEs. However, differences can be addressed by external consultants or expatriate groups with expertise in the requisite areas, while understanding that proactivity on the part of the SIEs may have to be higher and they may need to demonstrate higher levels of autonomy.

It may well be that HR and expatriate families need to coordinate before the actual placement in order to assess the appropriateness of the transfer. Families who are resilient and flexible have higher possibilities of success. Readiness evaluations, non-invasive psychological assessments and open communication between HR services and families can serve to ameliorate better expatriate outcomes. Consistent programmed checking-in on families, which can increase if and when needed, can alleviate emotional difficulties. These practices are not merely for retention of expatriates but a basic tenet for ethical practice in the face of global mobility (Cole & Nesbeth, 2014; Shah et. al, 2022).

2.2.6. Loneliness and Expat Life

Loneliness is increasingly recognised as a challenge in modern life. Being in a crowd does not necessarily prevent it, it stems less from physical isolation and more from the sense that one's connections lack depth or meaning. Perlman and Peplau (1981) described it as the discomfort that arises when there is a gap between the relationships we want and the ones we actually have. In today's fast-paced and often fragmented world, this feeling is more widespread than many people realise.

Lately, shifts in both how we live and the technology we use have played into this. The support systems people once counted on just are not as strong anymore. Families are often smaller now, and relatives might be spread across huge distances, sometimes living in different countries, or even on opposite sides of the planet. Fewer individuals are raised near extended family or within close-knit communities. As enduring neighbourhood connections also diminish, it becomes easier to understand why emotional isolation is so common (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018).

Loneliness is often talked about in connection with older adults, partly because retirement, losing loved ones, or health problems can make it harder to stay connected. But it is not just an issue for that age group, as many young adults say they feel lonely just as often, and sometimes even more. A major factor is the rise of digital communication. While we are more "connected" than ever, real, face-to-face interaction has dropped dramatically. As Turkle (2015) notes, we are constantly messaging, posting, and scrolling, but often without the deeper connection that comes from vis a vis conversation.

Working from home, or splitting time between home and the office, has really changed how people connect. It became normal during COVID, and sure, it is nice having more say in one's day, but it also means people miss those quick, throwaway moments with others, e.g. the random chat while waiting for the coffee machine; seeing someone in the hallway and sharing a joke or even just sitting near people. They seem small, but they add up (Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). Take them away, and that empty feeling starts to show up.

Research keeps showing how common this is. In a global BBC survey, about one in three people said they often feel lonely. UK government figures (ONS, 2021) also point to higher rates among young adults and those who live alone. And it is not only about feeling down, loneliness has been tied to depression, anxiety, trouble sleeping, and even heart problems (WHO, 2021).

Living abroad brings its own set of loneliness challenges as mentioned. While moving to a new country can be exciting and full of opportunities, it often means leaving behind close relationships, familiar cultures, and a sense of belonging, which even with financial stability and a successful career, involves a real emotional toll for expats (Van der Zee et al., 2007).

Making friends abroad is not easy. Language, culture, and social habits often get in the way of real connections. Many expats live in places where people come and go a lot, so close friendships do not happen easily (Haslberger & Brewster, 2008). This constant change can leave people feeling cut off, not just socially but even at work.

Whether expats are working remotely or in small, isolated teams, they may have few chances to interact socially with colleagues, another contributor to loneliness (Shaffer et al., 2012). While the digital age has made international work easier in some ways, it also means that much of our communication is done through screens, which does not always help build strong bonds.

According to the 2020 Expat Insider Survey (InterNations, 2020) almost half of expats said they had trouble making local friends, and over 60% felt emotionally disconnected from their surroundings. The psychological toll is significant, affecting not just wellbeing but also job satisfaction and performance (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005).

Given everything we know, HR has a key role to play in addressing loneliness, particularly for expats. While the traditional focus was on logistics, flights, housing, and contracts, it has become undeniable that emotional and social support are equally, if not more, critical. From a broader perspective, HR teams should prioritize emotional wellbeing as much as performance metrics. Loneliness affects productivity, engagement, retention, and even creativity, so it is not just a personal issue, but a business one too

(Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). Supporting expats socially and emotionally is a smart move for both people and organizations.

All in all, loneliness is a transnational issue, spanning borders, ages, and job ranks, with significant individual and professional consequences, with a heightened risk for expatriates. Being separated from one's known people, cultures, and support networks can be particularly likely to magnify loneliness. Coupled with this is the trend toward remote and hybrid work, which brings a new challenge for even those who have already found their place in the new country they are living in.

2.3. Communityship

As Mintzberg (2009) so succinctly points out, there needs to be a volte face of the corporate paradigm which places CEOs in positions of supreme power and wealth, which has resulted in a world economic disaster by 2008. According to this influential scholar, leadership has been unilateral with short-termed decisions being made hastily and with little foresight in consideration of long-term consequences. Moreover, the digital hyperconnected world implies that individualism and lack of true personal networking at all levels can only bring further hardship and risk current civilizational advancements especially when global major threats occur (e.g. ecological breakdown).

Mintzberg (2009) uses the word “communityship” and explains how this has to be addressed and its practical implications. He advocates nine organizational practices will foster communityship, namely, networking through middle-management, a thoughtful leadership, informal social gathering, mindful practices, decentralized decision-making, shared goals, mutual help and knowledge sharing, a shared sense of social responsibility, and building a sense of belonging. These will be further detailed below.

2.4. Communityship practices

In both the corporate and business worlds, Mintzberg (2009) highlights the importance of Middle Managers in constructing **networks**, which is a crucial skill, enabling both personal goals, of all parties involved, and organizational goals to be achieved. This is corroborated by De Klerk (2010) who posits networking as a “strategic competitive advantage” for both the individual and the organization (p. 37). Networking allows people to feel a sense of belonging, reducing loneliness and alienation, and subsequently to feel valued, thus reinforcing both extrinsic and intrinsic connections. This is also discussed by Zani and Cicognani (2012), mentioning how workers feeling valued and integral to the organization, enhances commitment which in turn makes personal objectives orient towards those of the organization.

Banks et al. (2014) also mention that team members sharing information through networking, reinforce a sense of belonging and a shared desire to achieve common goals. Networking also enables sharing of resources, reducing the need to buy multiple purchases of items and cutting down on needless expenditure.

Networking must be built on trust in order to function well, it is a holistic process and can be scaffolded by thoughtful leaders (Banks et. al., 2014). Thoughtful leaders are those who can deal with uncertainty and ambivalence through patience and tolerance.

As pointed out by Mintzberg (2009), a thoughtful leader is an important communityship practice. Because thoughtful leaders can refrain from their impulses, such leaders are able to manage and handle moments of distress, by breaking down the situation and finding solutions to problems, instead of spreading chaos among the workplace. As French and Simpson (2005) mention, “thoughtful leaders need to be able to contain the tendency to disperse energy into inappropriate emotion and activity.” (p. 285). This allows leaders to keep equilibrium within their team and themselves, bringing about more concise and thought through decisions that are more influenced by their own reasoning rather than by external pressures. By allowing themselves and their team to create a mental space where they can reflect on their work and warranting their team to contribute to the organizational task, thoughtful leaders are able to then foster critical thinking, thus leading to innovative and creative methods/solutions (French & Simpson, 2005). These authors place particular importance on what they define as “negative capability”, which is the leader’s ability in allowing themselves to be “overcome” by uncertainty in order to properly grasp the situation and find the correct solutions to solve it, rather than making a rash decision. This is what really makes a leader “thoughtful”, promoting a greater sense of communityship among the workforce. Another feature of a thoughtful leader is their paradox mindset (shifting from an either/or way of thinking to a both/and one) which expresses their ability to deal with and embrace ambivalence (Rothman & Melwani, 2017). Ambivalence in leaders can lead to greater cognitive flexibility, making them more open to diverse perspectives and open the floor for participative and more creative decisions and ideas. A common reaction is to rush to make decisions, or to avoid uncertainty and turn away from anxiety and negative feelings as this gives people a sense of control, which is an innate desire for humans, and can be difficult to change (Barrett, 2020). Conversely, thoughtful leaders will rather move towards acceptance and acknowledgment of negative feelings and uncertainty in order to have a broader perspective and greater creativity. As Rothman et al. (2017) point out there is an increasing number of studies investigating how ambivalence can have positive consequences.

Banks et al. (2014) and Rothman and Melwani (2017) underline the need for patience and tolerance, drawing on other information and collaborations through networking, in order to achieve a considerate response rather than an impulsive reaction. This also supports and alleviates the stress that comes with proposed changes within an organization and enhances a feeling that the decisions are being made carefully with all stakeholders' interests in mind. This is essential in present workplaces, which are subject to constant updating and instability.

The need for trust is consistent throughout all literature and is the key element for the proposed kind of work environment to flourish. Wolf and Troxler (2016) discuss that as trust grows, members of the organization find greater enjoyment in repeated positive collaborative interaction and an exponential growth in altruism occurs. This therefore increases the social capital of the company, which in turn promotes the length of stay within an organization as members are invested in shared, rather than just individual success (Wolf & Troxler, 2016). This is also discussed by Zani and Cicognani (2012) who underline how members who identify closely with the community within the workplace, help orient their goals towards those of the company, stimulating a collaborative environment and increasing levels of trust.

Greater trust leads to a reduction in turnover and at the same time positively influences emotional well-being which consequently serves to cushion workload pressures. Stroeback (2013) also refers to psychological well-being improving among individuals through informal community activities of coffee breaks, noting however, that as new caseworkers came into the organization, it was hard for them to join in already well-established groups. Therefore, formal meetings of a casual nature were organized involving cake, which functioned in a similar way and helped alleviate work stress. This is further supported by Persson et al. (2021), who highlight the importance of both formal and informal meetings in building strong workplace relationships, especially in healthcare settings. They emphasize that informal gatherings, such as joint breaks, allow staff to share their thoughts and feelings, which is crucial for fostering trust and support among colleagues. Persson et al. (2021) also argue that managers who can effectively communicate and relate to their staff, are better positioned to foster an environment that encourages open dialogue and collaboration. By prioritizing these interactions, organizations can cultivate a supportive atmosphere that alleviates work stress and promotes a sense of community among employees. Methot et al. (2021) further support this idea, by underlining how even small talk, though often seen as unimportant, plays a key role in creating positive social connections, fostering a sense of belonging, and boosting job satisfaction. The authors conclude that these casual conversations can act as much-needed breaks, helping to relieve work stress and build a more supportive workplace culture.

Moreover, encouraging these interactions can strengthen employee engagement and help reduce feelings of isolation, especially in today's work environments, where in-person communication is often limited.

These findings overall can be conceived under the umbrella of the construct of soft skills, defined as the skills with which one is able to effectively communicate and relate to others. All in all, findings underline the need for managers who have the soft skills necessary to promote and facilitate these kinds of encounters (Mintzberg, 2009).

The introduction of **mindfulness** in the workplace, could be an example of developing said soft skills. According to Kabat-Zinn (2015, pg. 1481) "Mindfulness can be thought of as moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness, cultivated by paying attention in a specific way, that is, in the present moment, and as non-reactively, as non-judgmentally, and as open heartedly as possible". Kumprang and Suriyankietkaew (2024) found that the consistent practice of mindfulness was successful in helping support psychological well-being, improved members sense of connection and belonging from individual to group and to the company, whilst also strengthening performance outcomes, which has notable implications in the field of Human Resource Management. The adoption of mindfulness has increased dramatically in the last two decades within education and the workplace to alleviate stress and foster a sense of belonging and consequently improve both physical and psychological well-being. Although, as Stuart-Edwards et al. (2023) point out, further research needs to be conducted in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of mindfulness in the workplace.

We cannot ignore however, diversity in the workforce and diversity in the cultures where that workforce is employed. Different countries have different regulations regarding safety and conditions, social habits and norms, codes of accepted behaviour and so on. When expats are placed in such situations difficulties arise on many levels, notwithstanding the diverse character traits and mindsets of the expats themselves. Fostering a sense of collaboration, building networks, and fostering trust becomes onerous.

This is therefore why Mintzberg (2009) underlines the importance for leaders to implement a Team Member-Exchange (TMX) approach in organizations, in order to further enhance the sense of communityship in the workplace. As Mintzberg (2009) states, "communityship requires a more modest form of leadership that might be called engaged and distributed management" (p.2) which can translate into **decentralized decision-making**. As stated by Banks et al. (2014), the definition of team (based on Kozlowski et al., 1996) implies shared goals, which are implicitly required to build a sense of communityship. These authors delve deeper into this paradigm, by really looking at the differences between LMX (leader-member exchange) and TMX (team-member exchange), providing details regarding

the “incremental validity” (Banks et al., 2014, p. 274) that TMX has over LMX, as well as various aspects of employee job perception. Their meta-analysis showed that TMX adds explanatory power over LMX in accounting for organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Wang and Hollenbeck (2019) found that high-quality TMX was able to offset negative effects from low-quality LMX as both interact. As mentioned, in order for TMX to flourish, trust is essential. Once an organization is able to achieve high levels of trust amongst their employees, employees are able to work with that trust by showing interest in their colleagues’ work, and anticipate each other’s needs, leading to high levels of job performance, where individuals have the resources and willingness to share information with each other without hesitation (Banks et al., 2014). Furthermore, this exchange not only strengthens the singular and general organizational performance but further enhances feelings of satisfaction and belongingness among workers, increasing feelings of organizational commitment, and decreasing turnover levels (Banks et al., 2014). Tabak et al. (2024) expand on this, stating that TMX is a valuable resource that helps reduce employees’ intentions to leave, with engagement playing a key role in this connection. They emphasize that trust is crucial for TMX to flourish, highlighting how strong LMX relationships create mutual understanding and commitment, ultimately boosting employee effort and dedication. Additionally, the study shows that when employees feel a strong sense of connection within their teams, their job satisfaction and sense of belonging improve, making them less likely to leave.

This aspect of trust is further supported by Kuo (2013), who looks at its importance in another communityship practice suggested by Mintzberg (2009): **knowledge sharing**. Kuo (2013) explains how trust plays a mediating role in interactions with other colleagues, both from a personal gain perspective and the impact it may have on their career. Being able to feel a sense of comfort and security, being able to share information about one’s duties with other colleagues, allows employees to consequently avoid feelings of dissatisfaction at work, especially when they know that what they are sharing will not sabotage them. This is further explained by Dirks and de Jong (2022) underlining trust as a key factor in open communication, collaboration, and innovation at work. The authors found how when employees trust their colleagues, they feel safe sharing knowledge, leading to greater creativity and problem-solving. Trust has both cognitive and emotional aspects, rational assessments of reliability and interpersonal connections, both of which influence knowledge exchange. Strong team trust encourages sharing expertise, improving overall performance. Drawing on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964, Cropanzano & Mitchel, 2005), Dirks and de Jong (2022) suggest that trust enhances workplace interactions, fostering a culture of reciprocal knowledge sharing where employees contribute insights in return for valuable information. As Kuo (2013) further explains, workers are also looking at personal advancement when

sharing knowledge, taking into account more extrinsic rewards, like career developments and/or monetary benefits, but also intrinsic rewards, like gaining pleasure from helping your colleagues move ahead with their work. As Mintzberg (2009) explains, this all comes together to not only help individuals avoid a sense of loneliness and improve feelings of belongingness but also will in one way or another lead to improved job performance in the organization as a whole.

Finally, as Mintzberg (2009) states: “An organization knows that communityship is firmly established when its members reach out in socially active, responsible, and mutually beneficial ways to the broader community... healthy organizations take **corporate social responsibility** seriously and gain significant benefits in return.” (p.4). Hence, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is another communityship practice the author mentions, which could be of great importance, when trying to incorporate and ease the transition of expats into an organization. As Kang (2024) underlines, a company that is active and putting effort towards improving not only the goals of the business itself, but also the society and culture surrounding it, allows it to enhance its public legitimacy. It is also to be noted that companies using sustainable energy sources in the long run do save money quite dramatically on their utility bills. It allows the organization to improve its employer branding, potentially leading to expats finding greater meaning and connection to the company, even before stepping foot inside of it. Albeit with the provisos that both micro and macro improvements of the community are at the basis of these initiatives rather than just economic goals or playing along with legislation, as these would seriously undermine the social capital accrued (Zhivkova, 2022).

The “global village” which is a term that came into being in 1962 from Marshall McLuhan a Canadian who researched the effects of mass media on society theorizing that as the use of technology became more widespread the world in fact became smaller. With this in mind, CSR becomes vital in order to reconnect and redistribute resources in sustainable ways that benefits the global community, building that trust and those values that all can relate to and identify with (Carrera, 2022) and adhering to Mintzberg’s ideas of communityship.

Overall, these nine practices can be fused into seven high-level practices as regards fostering communityship: valuing networkers within the organization, fostering trust-based interactions, promoting a purpose-driven culture, enhancing TMX as a culture, fostering thoughtful leadership, promoting knowledge sharing, and putting CSR at the centre.

2.5. Building Communityship to Combat Loneliness in Expat Life

Loneliness is a quiet yet widespread challenge in our increasingly globalized world. While it is often associated with being physically alone, loneliness is more about the absence of meaningful social connection (Perlman & Peplau, 1981). Expatriates, despite often living exciting lives abroad, are particularly vulnerable to this emotional disconnection. As they move away from their familiar social networks, cultural norms, and support systems, many find it hard to form deep bonds in new environments, especially in transient or culturally different communities (Van der Zee et al., 2007; Haslberger & Brewster, 2008).

Within the workplace, these feelings of isolation are often amplified. The rise of remote and hybrid work has reduced casual, in-person interactions, those small moments of connection that used to buffer against emotional strain (Ozcelik & Barsade, 2018). While HR departments have traditionally focused on logistical aspects of international assignments, today there is a growing recognition that emotional and social support must become a strategic priority. Loneliness is not only a personal issue, it is one that directly impacts productivity, engagement, and retention (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018; WHO, 2021).

This is where communityship, as proposed by Mintzberg (2009), becomes particularly relevant. Instead of placing leadership solely at the top, communityship promotes shared responsibility and connection across all levels of an organization. It is a leadership philosophy grounded in empathy, trust, and collaboration, and it offers practical solutions for addressing loneliness among expatriates. Taking this into account, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: Communityship practices will be negatively associated with perceived loneliness.

As stated, one of the cornerstones of communityship is **networking**, not as a transactional act, but as a relational tool that fosters belonging and emotional wellbeing. As De Klerk (2010) notes, networking adds strategic competitive advantage to organizations, not only because it facilitates achieving organizational goals but also because it reinforces a sense of value and inclusion among employees. This is particularly vital for expats who may feel disconnected from their teams due to language barriers, cultural differences, or remote work arrangements. Structured efforts to build both formal and informal networks, such as mentorship programs, shared breaks, or team-building activities, can provide the kind of relational scaffolding that helps mitigate loneliness (Zani & Cicognani, 2012; Stroebaek, 2013; Persson et al., 2021).

H1a: Valuing Network builders will be negatively associated with perceived loneliness.

For communityship to thrive, **trust** must be at its core. As noticeable in the above text, trust is a recurrent topic that emerges when explaining what the practices require as a foundation to be effective. Trust enables open communication, emotional safety, and a willingness to collaborate (Banks et al., 2014; Dirks & de Jong, 2022). In a multicultural workforce, trust is not automatic it must be cultivated intentionally. This includes recognizing diverse work cultures, promoting inclusive dialogue, and allowing space for vulnerability and ambiguity. Instating casual gatherings and building places that are favourable to such sharing moments is instrumental to build interpersonal relationships and trust (Schilke & Huang, 2018).

H1b: Fostering Trust Based Interactions will be negatively associated with perceived loneliness.

Additionally, purpose is at the centre of human motivation (Pincus, 2023). Some of the practices Mintzberg (2009) recommended seem to highlight purpose building as a driving force that makes individuals' effort converge. Mindfulness in the workplace is one of such practices, as it promotes present-moment awareness and emotional regulation, helping employees better manage stress and connect authentically with colleagues (Kabat-Zinn, 2015; Kumprang & Suriyankietkaew, 2024). This can be especially helpful in international contexts where cultural misinterpretations or work-related uncertainty might otherwise increase anxiety and isolation and helps in understanding what purposes can be shared.

H1c: Promoting a Purpose-Driven Culture will be negatively associated with perceived loneliness.

Practices like TMX further reinforce the benefits of communityship. High-quality TMX relationships foster mutual respect, shared effort, and the anticipation of each other's needs, building the type of social environment where expats are more likely to feel seen, supported, and engaged (Banks et al., 2014; Tabak et al., 2024). By definition, a team implies shared goals, and interdependencies (Kozlowski et al., 1996) that ultimately translate into decentralized decision-making. These networks do not just improve performance; they cultivate psychological safety and lower turnover.

H1d: TMX will be negatively associated with perceived loneliness.

Leaders who can practice thoughtful leadership, those who approach complexity with patience and emotional intelligence, are especially valuable here (French & Simpson, 2005; Rothman & Melwani, 2017). Thoughtful leaders help maintain balance within themselves and their team, leading to clearer and more deliberate decisions guided by their own judgment instead of outside pressures. By creating space for reflection and encouraging the team to engage with the organization's goals, thoughtful leaders promote critical thinking, which in turn opens the door to innovative and creative solutions (French & Simpson, 2005). A thoughtful leader must take into consideration the multiple implications of their decisions, as regards e.g. as to the work and life conditions of a given expatriation assignment. This is in line with thoughtful leaders showing stronger empathy towards their subordinates (Muss et al., 2025) and suggests that they will be more aware of the expatriate likely feelings and needs.

H1e: "Thoughtful Leadership" will be negatively associated with perceived loneliness

Trust is above all supportive and requires transparency and mutual respect. The role of trust acts as an unseen but essential mediator in interactions with colleagues from both a personal gain perspective and with regards to the impact it may have on their career. Trust provides a springboard for knowledge sharing, which leads to greater creativity and more efficient problem solving. It has both cognitive and psychological aspects and plays a major role in developing a sense of community both on a social level and with respect to shared common goals. It promotes diversity and inclusion and decreases dissatisfaction and feelings of loneliness. Trust leads to improved job performance, both individually and from the organization as a whole (Kuo, 2013; Dirks & de Jong, 2022).

H1f: "Knowledge Sharing" will be negatively associated with perceived loneliness

Lastly, CSR also becomes part of the equation. When organizations engage in socially responsible behaviour, internally and externally, they foster a sense of moral duty. For expats, this can be a powerful signal that their values align with those of their employer, further reinforcing feelings of belonging (Mintzberg, 2009; Kang, 2024).

H1g: "CSR" will be negatively associated with perceived loneliness

In conclusion, loneliness among expatriates is a significant but often overlooked issue. However, by adopting the principles of communityship, practiced through trust-building, thoughtful leadership, TMX, and inclusive practices, among others, organizations can create supportive environments where all employees, regardless of origin or location, feel truly connected. In today's globalized and frequently remote workplace, this shift is not only humane but can arguably lead to long-term organizational success.

2.6. Ambiversion

Ambiversion, a blend of introversion and extroversion, has been recognized as a valuable personality trait for HR to consider when selecting individuals for international roles (Grant, 2013). Traditionally, extroverts were viewed as ideal expatriates due to their sociability and ease in forming connections. However, recent studies suggest that ambiverts, individuals who can adapt their behaviour based on situational demands, may be more effective in global assignments (Caligiuri, 2000).

This adaptability is crucial in international assignments, where expatriates frequently encounter new social norms, cultural shifts, and unfamiliar work environments. Unlike extroverts, who may experience burnout from constant interaction, or introverts, who might feel drained by the pressure to socialize, ambiverts strike a balance. They know when to engage and when to retreat, facilitating smoother cultural adaptation (Grant, 2013).

Moreover, ambiverts are often better equipped to handle one of the most significant challenges faced by expatriates: loneliness. Many expatriates struggle with isolation due to cultural differences, lack of close social ties, or homesickness (Caligiuri et al., 2001). Ambiverts can seek social interaction when needed but are also comfortable spending time alone without feeling overwhelmed, aiding in emotional stability and adjustment.

Research supports this notion, indicating that ambiverts often perform better in multicultural teams and global roles, especially those requiring complex interpersonal dynamics. They excel at building trust, making others feel included, and picking up on subtle cultural cues, all vital for long-term expatriate success (Chang, 2022).

HR departments have an opportunity to enhance their selection processes by moving beyond the traditional focus on extroversion. Based on findings reported (Kai Liao et al., 2021; Han et al., 2022), HR decision makers may benefit from assessing candidates' adaptability, emotional intelligence, and cultural

sensitivity. Utilizing personality assessments like the Big Five can help identify ambiverts who are better prepared for the psychological demands of global work.

However, ambiverts may not be suitable for every role. Positions requiring constant negotiation or highly focused individual work might still favour more extreme personality types. This underscores the importance of tailored HR strategies that match personality traits to specific roles and locations, ensuring optimal expatriate success (Caligiuri et al., 2001).

In conclusion, incorporating ambiversion into expatriate selection processes can be a game-changer. Ambiverts offer a valuable mix of adaptability, social awareness, and emotional balance, making them well-suited for overcoming the challenges of international assignments. For HR teams aiming to build a more effective global workforce, this personality trait warrants serious consideration. We therefore hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2: Communityship practices will interact with ambiversion in explaining perceived loneliness in such a way that when ambiversion is high, the negative effect of communityship practices on loneliness will be stronger.

Considering the possibility that each of these communityship practices can exert specific effects, the following sub-hypotheses are put forward:

H2a: “Valuing Network builders” will interact with ambiversion in explaining perceived loneliness in such a way that when ambiversion is high, the negative effect of communityship practices on loneliness will be stronger.

H2b: “Fostering Trust Based Interactions” will interact with ambiversion in explaining perceived loneliness in such a way that when ambiversion is high, the negative effect of communityship practices on loneliness will be stronger.

H2c: “Promoting a Purpose-Driven Culture” will interact with ambiversion in explaining perceived loneliness in such a way that when ambiversion is high, the negative effect of communityship practices on loneliness will be stronger.

H2d: “TMX” will interact with ambiversion in explaining perceived loneliness in such a way that when ambiversion is high, the negative effect of communityship practices on loneliness will be stronger.

H2e: “Thoughtful Leadership” will interact with ambiversion in explaining perceived loneliness in such a way that when ambiversion is high, the negative effect of communityship practices on loneliness will be stronger.

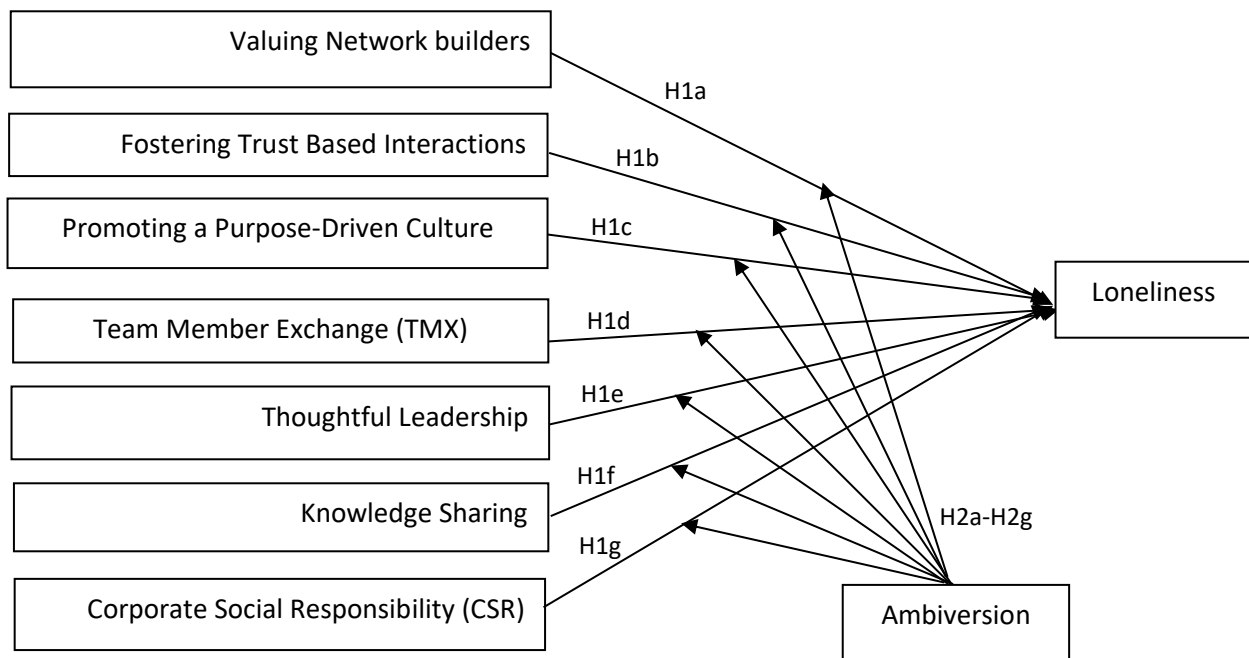
H2f: “Knowledge Sharing” will interact with ambiversion in explaining perceived loneliness in such a way that when ambiversion is high, the negative effect of communityship practices on loneliness will be stronger.

H2g: “CSR” will interact with ambiversion in explaining perceived loneliness in such a way that when ambiversion is high, the negative effect of communityship practices on loneliness will be stronger.

2.7. Conceptual model

By integrating all the hypotheses, this study will empirically test a conceptual model that includes direct and conditional direct effects as shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 – Conceptual Model



3. Method

3.1. Procedure

Contacts were deployed via personal network and LinkedIn to reach the most possible expatriates asking for a snowball sampling. This is an advisable data collection strategy to reach the most possible individuals that are not commonly accessible (Parker et al., 2020). To guarantee diversity in sample, the first contacts were made across different industries and continents. The contacts with direct links in the personal network were done via messaging using social networks or email with a presentation of the study, the full disclosure of information as requested by informed consent guidelines (Iscte, 2022) and a link to the online questionnaire. This questionnaire was made available online using Qualtrics software, which is a suitable outlet and commonly used in academic research. The questionnaire began with informed consent, without which the questionnaire could not proceed. After consenting, the questionnaire showed the scales that measure the constructs in the conceptual model. All the questions were written in English.

3.2. Sample

The sample is mostly comprised of female expatriates (61.8%) where a small percentage identified as non-binary (1.6%) or opted not to specify (1.1%). The average age is 41.9 years-old ($sd=16.2$) ranging from 19 to 81 years old and the most frequent are either single (38%) or married (36.4%) followed by common-law spouses (18.5%), divorced (6%) and widowed (1.1%).

Most participants hold a master's degree (59.1%) followed by high-school diploma (18.3%) and bachelor's degree (17.2%). The least represented are PhDs (5.4%).

Participants have been living as expatriates in average 12.15 years ($SD=13.9$) ranging from 1 year up to 57 years and their current organizations mostly employ more than 250 individuals (41.1%), followed by those that are classified as medium sized company (between 51 and 250 employees, 24.9%), small sized company (23.8%) or micro company (10 or less employees, 10.3%).

The participants originate from 26 countries covering most of the world's continents. As detailed in Table 3.1, the most represented nationalities are Italian (19.9%), British (15.6%), and the USA (15.1%). Among European countries there are participants from Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, The Netherlands, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, and Spain. In the American continent there are participants from Canada and the USA. From middle east Israel and Turkey.

From Africa there are participants from Nigeria and Cameroon, and from Asia, there are from India, and Indonesia. Finally, from Oceania there are participants from both Australia and New Zealand.

Table 3.1 – Nationality

	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Undeclared	10	5.4	5.4	5.4
Australian	4	2.2	2.2	7.5
Belgian	4	2.2	2.2	9.7
British	29	15.6	15.6	25.3
Bulgarian	2	1.1	1.1	26.3
Cameroonian	1	0.5	0.5	26.9
Canadian	3	1.6	1.6	28.5
Croatian	1	0.5	0.5	29.0
Danish	2	1.1	1.1	30.1
Dutch	12	6.5	6.5	36.6
French	12	6.5	6.5	43.0
German	8	4.3	4.3	47.3
Greek	9	4.8	4.8	52.2
Indian	1	0.5	0.5	52.7
Indonesian	1	0.5	0.5	53.2
Irish	9	4.8	4.8	58.1
Israeli	2	1.1	1.1	59.1
Italian	36	19.4	19.4	78.5
New Zealander	1	0.5	0.5	79.0
Nigerian	1	0.5	0.5	79.6
Polish	1	0.5	0.5	80.1
Portuguese	4	2.2	2.2	82.3
Serbian	1	0.5	0.5	82.8
Slovak	1	0.5	0.5	83.3
Spanish	1	0.5	0.5	83.9
Turkish	2	1.1	1.1	84.9
USA	28	15.1	15.1	100.0
Total	186	100.0	100.0	

Currently, participants work in a variety of industries including education (19.9%), NGO (8.1%), government (6.5%), automotive and healthcare (each with 5.4% of the sample), technology and hospitality (each with 4.8%), consulting (4.3%) and arts (3.8%) and many participants from different industries that do not accumulate more than 3% each of the sample (e.g. IT, HRM, Law, Entertainment, or Public administration).

3.3. Data analysis strategy

Data analysis unfolded in two moments: testing the quality of the measures and testing the hypotheses.

Although measures adopted in this study have been almost all published in peer reviewed outlets and are used in research, the specific context and sample advises testing their psychometric quality. This is especially relevant when a novel measure is proposed such as in the case of communityship. For those measures that comprise multiple items, the psychometric quality was tested for construct validity with principal component analysis which provided the patterns of association between items and how they may express latent constructs (Loewen & Gonulal, 2015). According to these authors, the ability to extract components is judged on KMO and Bartlett's test of sphericity respectively with a .500 threshold and a significant chi-square test that rejects the null hypothesis. Items should have commonalities of at least .500. For interpretation purposes an orthogonal rotation was applied (Varimax) that enables a clear understanding of loadings per component.

Convergent validity is also commonly reported and is judged on the Average Extracted Variance (AVE) that, according to Fornell and Larcker (1981) should attain .500 at least. Cronbach alpha for each factor was tested to ascertain reliability (should be at least .70). If a given measure failed to achieve the thresholds, a corrective procedure was deployed by removing the offending item that either has unacceptable factor loadings ($<.50$), that makes AVE and Cronbach alpha fall below acceptance level.

After guaranteeing the measures have enough validity and reliability, we tested the hypotheses using Path Analysis by means of PROCESS macro available in SPSS (Hayes, 2022). This software enables simultaneous testing of direct, indirect, and conditional effects which match the requirements of the conceptual model. It provides confidence intervals extracted from bootstrapping procedure, that consists of random 5000 subsample extractions and testing coefficients. This offers far more robust estimates that traditionally rely only on p-value. We adopted the conventional 95% confidence interval to judge on the statistical significance of estimates.

3.4. Measures

Ambiversion was measured using Eysenck Personality Questionnaire - Extraversion (EPQ-E Eysenck et al., 1985) short form (Francis et al., 2006), which comprises 12 items (e.g. “Do you enjoy meeting new people?”, “Do you like plenty of bustle and excitement around you?”) in a yes/no response format. No is counted as “zero” and yes as “one”, and the score ranges from 0 to 12. As per convention (e.g. Roberts, 2002; Stough et al., 1996) introverts get a score up to 5 [0-5], ambiverts between 6 and 8 [6-8], and extraverts 9 and above [9-12]. Because this measure is expressed on a binary scale, we have computed the Kuder-Richardson test (KR-20) which was found to be .719, indicating a sufficient level of reliability.

Perceived work-related loneliness was conceived as operating regarding two central focuses in expats life: work plus family and friends. Because the original measure was centred only on work, we will show separately the results from factor analysis and afterwards, if technically possible, test both scales together to judge on their discriminant validity. was measured with Hughes et al. (2004) scale, which comprises three items (i.e. “I feel left out”, “I feel isolated”, “I lack companionship”) after asking the participant to signal “how you have been feeling at work in recent months”. The answer was given on a 5-point scale (1=definitely false; 5=definitely true). A principal component analysis showed a valid factor solution (KMO=.700; Bartlet’s $X^2(3) = 264.706$; $p < .001$), with all commonalities above .500, and accounting for 77.8% total variance, which indicates good construct validity. The measure has also good convergent validity as the average variance extracted is above the .500 cutoff (AVE=.778). Additionally, the scale has good reliability as indicated by a .852 value found for Cronbach’s alpha. Therefore, this measure has acceptable psychometric quality and can be used in further analyses.

Perceived family-related loneliness was measured with Hughes et al. (2004) scale adapted to focus on the personal family-friend relationship, comprising the exact same items but asking the participant to signal “how you have been feeling in recent months, with regards to your personal relationships (family or friends)”. The answer was also given on a 5-point scale (1=definitely false; 5=definitely true). A principal component analysis showed a valid factor solution (KMO=.711; Bartlet’s $X^2(3) = 327.890$; $p < .001$), with all commonalities above .500, accounting for 81.6% total variance, which indicates good construct validity. The measure has also good convergent validity as the average variance extracted is above the .500 cutoff (AVE=.816). Additionally, the scale has good reliability as indicated by a .884 value found for Cronbach’s alpha. Therefore, this measure has acceptable psychometric quality and can be used in further analyses.

Overall perceived loneliness was measured with the couple loneliness measured mentioned above and by putting them together, the factor analysis was found to be valid (KMO=.785; Bartlet’s $X^2(15)$

=691.963; $p < .001$), also with all commonalities above .500, and showing two components that account for 80.3% total variance after rotation (Varimax). Both dimensions incorporate only items that consistently focus on work or family (Table 3.2) and the kept their respective high convergent validity ($AVE_{lonWork} = .749$; $AVE_{lonFam} = .705$). Their reliability was also kept the same as reported as there was no change in their composition.

Table 3.2 – Factor matrix for Loneliness

	Loneliness Family	Loneliness Work
I feel isolated (family)	.892	.257
I lack companionship (family)	.878	.180
I feel left out (family)	.826	.311
I feel left out (work)	.138	.898
I feel isolated (work)	.269	.885
I lack companionship (work)	.410	.725

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Organizational communityship practices were measured with items built from literature review on practices that organizations deploy to promote social integration, and team building which we overall name as communityship practices in line with Mintzberg (2009). Said communityship practices are nine as follows: 1) “Leadership in this organization is thoughtful (i.e. leaders are long-termed focused and are reflective, being able to deal with contradictory issues through a paradox mindset)”; 2) “Decision-making is decentralized (individuals are empowered by the hierarchy to make some decisions on their own)”; 3) “The middle managers are mostly networkers within the organization (connecting people along the hierarchical chain and within and across departments)”; 4) “My colleagues reach out to the external environment motivated by our sense of social responsibility”; 5) “There are plenty of occasions for informal social gatherings and interactions (e.g. shared meals, casual conversations)”; 6) “The organization promotes mindfulness practices (i.e. opportunities and space for people to pay deliberate, non-judgmental attention to the present moment)”; 7) “In this organization people do have a sense of belonging to a community”; 8) “In this organization team members help each other and share knowledge”; 9) “There are shared goals here that motivate people”.

Principal components analysis with all the items showed a valid factor solution (KMO=.879; Bartlett's $X^2(36)=551.493$; $p<.001$) but with unacceptable commonalities concerning two items ("My colleagues reach out to the external environment motivated by our sense of social responsibility", and "The organization promotes mindfulness practices (i.e. opportunities and space for people to pay deliberate, non-judgmental attention to the present moment)"). After removal of these items, the factor solution remains valid (KMO=.844; Bartlett's $X^2(21) =422.507$; $p<.001$) with all items showing commonalities above .500, and accounting for 74.7% after rotation (Varimax). A three-component solution was extracted: Component 1 (4 items, e.g. "There are plenty of occasions for informal social gatherings and interactions") pertaining to social connectedness, component 2 (2 items, "Leadership in this organization is thoughtful", and "Decision-making is decentralized") pertaining to Stewardship. The last component comprises a single item ("The middle managers are mostly networkers within the organization") which expresses the idea of connectors bringing together hierarchical levels. The factor loadings are all above .700 and the first component has strong reliability while the second has mediocre reliability (Table 3.3). The components have good convergent validity ($AVE_{SocCon}=.586$; $AVE_{Stewardship}=.644$).

Table 3.3 – Factor matrix for Communityship

	1	2	3
	Social	Stewardship	Vertical
	Connectedness		Networkers
There are plenty of occasions for informal social gatherings and interactions	.825	-.082	.148
In this organization people do have a sense of belonging to a community	.802	.323	.042
There are shared goals here that motivate people	.724	.414	.081
In this organization team members help each other and share knowledge	.707	.422	.079
Leadership in this organization is thoughtful	.210	.833	-.042
Decision-making is decentralized	.169	.772	.225
The middle managers are mostly networkers within the organization	.137	.112	.970
Alpha Cronbach / r_{SB}	.828	.633	-

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 4 iterations.

Considering the emerging factors, the hypotheses stated before should be adjusted to the following ones:

Hypothesis 1: Communityship practices will be negatively associated with perceived loneliness

H1a: Communityship Social Cohesion practices will be negatively associated with perceived work-related loneliness (H1a') and family-related loneliness (H1a'')

H1b: Communityship Stewardship practices will be negatively associated with perceived work-related loneliness (H1b') and family-related loneliness (H1b'')

H1c: Communityship Vertical Networker practices will be negatively associated with perceived work-related loneliness (H1c') and family-related loneliness (H1c'')

Likewise, for the second hypothesis the revised version is as follows:

Hypothesis 2: Communityship practices will interact with ambiversion in explaining perceived loneliness in such a way that when ambiversion high, the negative effect of communityship practices on loneliness will be stronger.

H2a': Communityship Social Cohesion practices will interact with ambiversion in explaining perceived work-related loneliness in such a way that when ambiversion high, the negative effect of communityship Social Cohesion practices on loneliness will be stronger.

H2a'': Communityship Social Cohesion practices will interact with ambiversion in explaining perceived family-related loneliness in such a way that when ambiversion high, the negative effect of communityship Social Cohesion practices on loneliness will be stronger.

H2b': Communityship Stewardship practices will interact with ambiversion in explaining perceived work-related loneliness in such a way that when ambiversion high, the negative effect of communityship Stewardship practices on loneliness will be stronger.

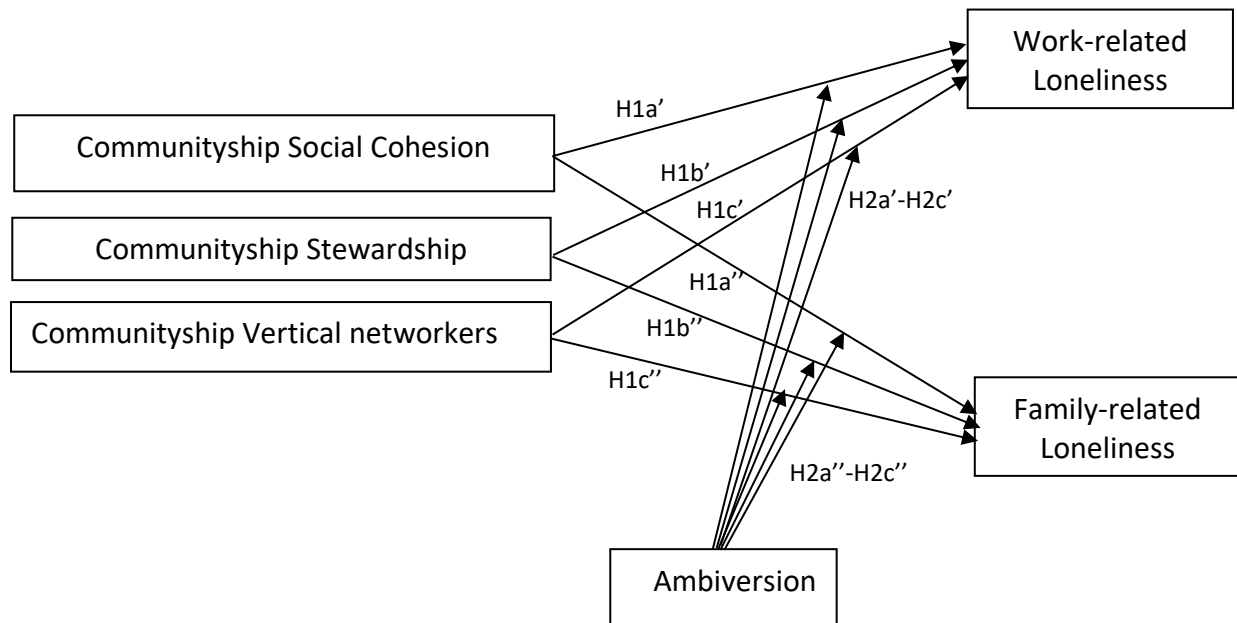
H2b'': Communityship Stewardship practices will interact with ambiversion in explaining perceived family-related loneliness in such a way that when ambiversion high, the negative effect of communityship Stewardship practices on loneliness will be stronger.

H2c': Communityship vertical networker practices will interact with ambiversion in explaining perceived work-related loneliness in such a way that when ambiversion high, the negative effect of communityship vertical networker practices on loneliness will be stronger.

H2c'': Communityship vertical networker practices will interact with ambiversion in explaining perceived family-related loneliness in such a way that when ambiversion high, the negative effect of communityship vertical networker practices on loneliness will be stronger.

The revised conceptual model is showed in Figure 3.1:

Figure 3.1 – Revised conceptual model



4. Results

4.1. Descriptive and bivariate correlations

The descriptives, means and standard deviations show that the sample is mostly comprised on introverts as indicated by ambiversion means ($M=4.00$, $SD=2.59$). Participants averagely reported to experience some loneliness but of a low magnitude as expressed by the mean of family-related loneliness ($M=1.98$, $SD=1.08$), as well as work-related loneliness ($M=2.31$, $SD=1.09$). As regards communityship practices, the highest rated was social cohesion with a mean of 3.57 ($SD=0.93$) clearly falling above the scale's midpoint. Conversely, both stewardship and vertical networkers very closely to the scale's midpoint thus suggesting that participants have a modest perception about its existence in their respective organizations.

Table 4.1 shows that the sociodemographic variables are seldom correlated with those variables that are comprised in the conceptual model. Only age shows significant correlation ($r=-.144$, $p<.05$) with work-related loneliness and with communityship networkers ($r=.174$, $p<.05$), and likewise, length-as-expatriate correlated negatively with communityship social cohesion ($r=-.183$, $p<.05$). Generally, the analysis shows absence of correlations. Communityship practices do show some correlations, namely social cohesion is negatively correlated with both family-related loneliness ($r=-.144$, $p<.05$) and work-related loneliness ($r=-.377$, $p<.01$). Additionally, communityship practices focused on stewardship are negatively correlated with work-related loneliness ($r=-.157$, $p<.05$). This encourages the conceptual model. As regards the moderator variable, ambiversion, there are a couple of significant correlations, namely with work-related loneliness ($r=.168$, $p<.05$) and communityship social cohesion ($r=-.188$, $p<.01$) which are not in line with any of the expectations for a moderator variable but it is also not sufficiently strong to empirically suggest another role for the variable. Therefore, overall, the bivariate patterns, albeit of a modest magnitude, encourage the model.

4.2. Hypotheses testing

Table 4.2 shows all the estimates. The first hypothesis posited a negative relationship between communityship practices and perceived loneliness. Table GG shows findings for the three sub-hypotheses entailed as regards both dependent variables (work-related loneliness and family-related loneliness). Among the six sub-hypotheses, only one, communityship practices focused on social cohesion, is significantly associated with work-related loneliness ($B=-.426$, $t=-5.235$, $p<.001$ 95% CI $[-.5868; -.2655]$) thus supporting H1a'.

Table 4.1 – Descriptive and bivariate correlations

	Scale	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Gender		61.8%F	-	1											
2. Age		41.90	16.21	-.171*	1										
3. Education		2.52	.853	.106	-.205**	1									
4. Marital status		2.05	1.17	-.086	.272**	.007	1								
5. Living		18.5%A	-	.071	-.106	-.081	.025	1							
6. OrgSize		2.97	1.03	.212**	-.181*	.093	-.183*	.001	1						
7. LengthExpat		12.16	13.90	-.163*	.696**	-.299**	.164*	.021	-.123	1					
8. Ambiv01	0-12	4.00	2.59	.100	.055	-.005	.038	.028	.104	.096	1				
9. LoneFam	1-5	1.98	1.08	.056	-.139	.003	-.081	-.022	-.071	-.031	.088	1			
10. LoneWork	1-5	2.31	1.09	.095	-.144*	.048	-.076	-.015	-.009	-.022	.168*	.555**	1		
11. Comm_SC	1-5	3.57	.93	-.065	-.077	.085	.073	-.078	.042	-.183*	-.188**	-.144*	-.377**	1	
12. Comm_Stew	1-5	3.01	1.04	.018	-.120	.013	.092	.123	.026	-.093	-.126	-.032	-.157*	.510**	1
13. Comm_Net	1-5	3.11	1.03	-.047	.174*	.053	.094	-.065	.126	.042	.034	.066	.037	.270**	.217**

Note: A (Living alone); F (Feminine), * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

The remaining estimates do not have enough magnitude to reach statistical significance and therefore both organizational communityship practices focused on stewardship and vertical networking do not associate with loneliness. Thus, H1a'', H1b', H1b'', H1c', and H1c'' are all rejected.

The second hypothesis posited an interaction between ambiversion and organizational communityship practices in explaining loneliness in such a way that when ambiversion high, the negative effect of communityship practices on loneliness will be stronger. In a similar manner as observed in the previous hypothesis, only one sub hypothesis has a significant estimate: organizational communityship social cohesion interaction with ambiversion has a negative estimate of -.062 (t=-2.011, 95% CI [-.1235; -.0012]). Figure HH shows the moderation graph concerning H2a''. The graph (Figure 4.2) shows that when individuals have high ambiversion the slope of the regression is steeper and with stronger negative magnitude than when they are low on ambiversion. So, communityship practices focused on social cohesion will be more effective into lowering feelings of work-related loneliness in individuals that are ambivert. As regards the remaining sub-hypotheses, none reached significance, and therefore, H2a'', H2b', H2b'', H2c', and H1c'' are all rejected.

Figure 4.2 –Ambiversion*Commun.SocCohesion to predict Work-Relat. Loneliness

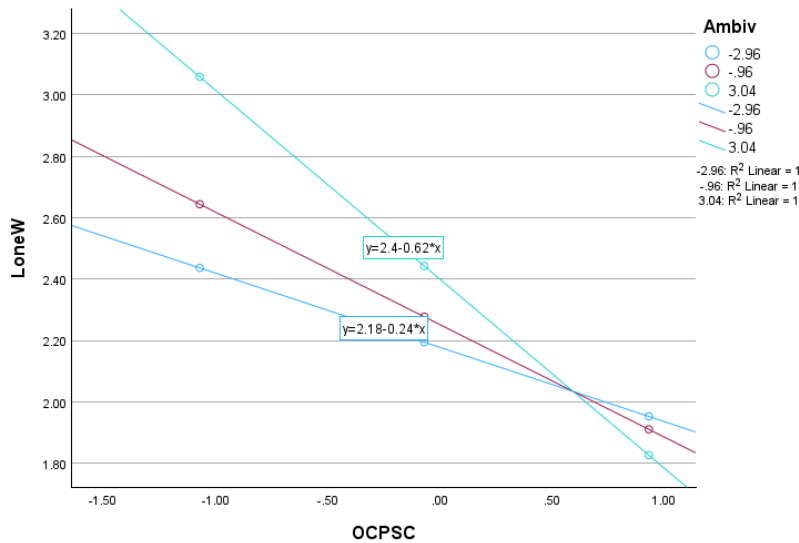


Table 4.2 – Coefficients for direct and interaction effects

	Work-Related Loneliness					Family-Related Loneliness				
	B	t	p	95% CI	HH	B	t	p	95% CI	HH
Constant	3.193	6.668	.000	[2.248; 4.138]		3.463	6.834	.000	[2.463; 4.463]	
Control variables										
Gender	.062	.485	.627	[-.1928; .3186]		.058	.426	.670	[-.2122; .3291]	
Age	-.010	-2.035	.043	[-.0196; -.0003]		-.008	-1.560	.120	[-.0183; .0021]	
Education	.026	.292	.770	[-.1501; .2023]		-.054	-.577	.564	[-.2411; .1319]	
Org. Size	-.048	-.653	.514	[-.1941; .0976]		-.107	-1.375	.170	[-.2619; .0467]	
Cohabitivity	-.326	-2.116	.035	[-.6303; -.0220]		-.505	-3.096	.002	[-.8269; -.1832]	
Direct effects										
Ambiversion	.037	1.260	.209	[-.0209; .0949]		.024	.799	.425	[-.0365; .0861]	
OC_SocCoh	-.426	-5.235	.000	[-.5868; -.2655]	H1a' sup	-.169	-1.962	.051	[-.3391; .0010]	H1a'' n.s.
OC_Steward	-.145	-1.862	.064	[-.2997; .0087]	H1b' n.s.	.002	.029	.976	[-.1505; .1550]	H1b'' n.s.
OC_VertNet	.065	.815	.415	[-.0926; .2231]	H1c' n.s.	.104	1.337	.183	[-.0497; .2583]	H1c'' n.s.
Interaction effects										
Ambiv*OC_SocCoh	-.062	-2.011	.045	[-.1235; -.0012]	H2a' sup.	-.024	-.739	.460	[-.0890; .0405]	H2a'' n.s.
Ambiv*OC_Steward	-.027	-.900	.369	[-.0889; .0332]	H2b' n.s.	-.023	-.767	.443	[-.0840; .0370]	H2b'' n.s.
Ambiv*OC_VertNet	-.007	-.245	.806	[-.0681; .0530]	H2c' n.s.	.014	.495	.620	[-.0442; .0739]	H2c'' n.s.
R ²	10%-22.9%					9.3%-11.5%				

Note: HH= Hypotheses

5. Discussion

5.1. Framing the Study: What Is at Stake

This study was set up to explore how communityship practices within organizations may have an impact on the sense of loneliness experienced by expatriate workers, whilst also examining how the personality trait defined as ambiversion, which combines both introversion and extraversion, may mitigate this loneliness.

The core issue that is implied in this study relates to global mobility and its psychological and emotional costs, loneliness being one that has not been as researched as its negative impacts would suggest. Notwithstanding the numerous benefits of global mobility, for both individuals and institutions, foreign postings bring with them exposure to vulnerability and a breakdown in social and emotional relationships for various reasons, including lack of access to habitual social networks and diverse cultural expectations and beliefs (Caligiuri et al., 2001; Haile & White, 2019).

The provision of the study was to analyse which communityship practices (social cohesion, stewardship, and vertical networking) are successful in ameliorating emotional stressors by means of empirical assessment, whilst at the same time taking into account differences occurring between personality traits with specific reference to the role of ambiversion.

5.2. What Has Been Tested

This investigation considered two fundamental hypotheses and their corresponding sub-hypotheses through empirical validation. The first hypothesis was that perceived loneliness would be associated negatively with communityship practices as outlined by Mintzberg (2009). The second hypothesis expanded this dialectic by introducing the idea that the personality trait of ambiversion would be interacting with communityship practices in a way that it would decrease the sense of loneliness. Namely ambiverts benefit the most from communityship practices.

5.3. Summary of Findings and Their Significance

The results revealed that among the three forms of communityship practices measured, only social cohesion demonstrated a significant negative relationship with perceived work-related loneliness thus supporting H1a'. Neither stewardship nor vertical networking appeared to have a meaningful impact on either type of loneliness.

Psychological research has long shown that we all need to feel we belong, and that is why social cohesion is so key to fighting work-related loneliness (Erogul & Rahman, 2017; Hail & White, 2019; Qi & Lange, 2006). In this study, social cohesion is about a few key things: informal chances to hang out, like coffee breaks, feeling like you really belong, and sharing a common purpose. Together, these help create a place where expats can actually feel included, appreciated, and understood. Social cohesion practices seemingly are capable of fostering an emotional-based social exchange, not necessarily focused on task.

This is particularly relevant when talking about expatriation assignments. Having left their home country for a work-placement abroad, expats lose most of the ties they hold with family and friends from home (Takeuchi et al., 2005). From the beginning of the assignment, a new country, a diverse culture (often very different), the possibility of being able to tap into channels, already in place, that offer emotional mentoring, inclusion and interpersonal connections graduates from being helpful to being crucial. Social cohesion helps people feel safe emotionally and subtly teaches how to engage with others. It builds trust, lowers barriers, and supports the formation of genuine connections, all of which help ease isolation (Banks et al., 2014; Wolf & Troxler, 2016; Zani & Cicognani, 2012).

These findings also match with what Mintzberg (2009) states, that meaningful work life cannot just come from top-down leadership. Instead, building a sense of community happens through everyday interactions that create shared meaning and identity. This study backs that idea but also shows that some parts of community-building matter more emotionally than others.

This study failed to detect notable findings for the efficacy of stewardship or vertical networking. The responsible management and planning of resources was encapsulated through various measures such as decentralized decision making and thoughtful leadership, both being priceless for motivating workers and strengthening organizational flexibility (Banks et al., 2014; Tabak et al., 2024). However, these practices may have the pitfalls of being too scripted or too intellectually oriented in order to have a direct impact on expatriates' feelings of inclusion or being nurtured emotionally on a daily level. Whilst not discounting the importance of vertical networks undertaken by middle management, which may effectively impact efficiency and the communication of knowledge by means of making connections across hierarchical levels. Such networking may not promote social cohesion and positive community feelings which are crucial for the reduction of loneliness. These results suggest that in order for communityship to have a considerable impact at an emotional level, protocols and practices that motivate consistent interpersonal connections need to be firmly in place and regularly monitored.

Moreover, thoughtful leadership and decentralized decision-making may not fully target the social and relatedness human need, but rather the need for autonomy and competence, according to SDT.

Lastly, operating as a vertical networker does not mean that a given middle manager is connecting people outside their professional interest. They may simply operate as a liaison that facilitates the operations, which is different e.g. from networking people into informal social gathering or even just having a meal together. As measured, there is nothing in these two couple factors that suggest they can spillover to outside the organizational frontiers. Moreover, none of the hypotheses placing communityship practices as a protective factor against family-related loneliness were supported. This strongly suggests that communityship is conceived within the boundaries of work organizations as they are inconsequential with regards to loneliness that originates from family circumstances.

Furthermore, the interaction between social cohesion and ambiversion was statistically significant supporting H2a'. This indicates that communityship practices focused on social cohesion are particularly effective in reducing work-related loneliness among expatriates who exhibit higher levels of ambiversion.

These findings hold considerable significance. First, they refine our understanding of which organizational practices are impactful when it comes to the emotional well-being of expatriates, namely loneliness. While much of the literature assumes that decentralized leadership or middle-manager networking naturally fosters inclusivity and support (Banks et al., 2014; French & Simpson, 2005; Rothman & Melwani, 2017), this study shows that it is the emotionally resonant, socially connective practices, those that better build a sense of community and interpersonal trust, that matter most when addressing loneliness.

The research indicates that ambiverts have a greater propensity to interact more readily in environments that are socially cohesive and that it is more probable that they will grow professionally from them. Having the capacity to fully participate in social contexts whilst also being able to withdraw equanimously gives them a psychological steadfastness when facing expatriation's multiple challenges. The findings reinforce previous research that identifies ambiversion as an essential attribute when undertaking international assignments that involve multicultural, high-powered environments (Grant, 2013; Caligiuri, 2000).

This highlights how personality and context work together. Ambiversion stood out as an important factor, showing that the same workplace can affect people differently depending on their personality. This means that managing expats needs to focus more on the individual, since company culture by itself is not enough, how it impacts someone depends on their personality traits.

5.4. Implications for Theory

First and foremost, this study adds to various lines of theory. It hones the idea of communityship, demonstrating that it has numerous facets. In fact, only the facet of social cohesion activities demonstrates a distinct and ongoing connection to the decrease of feelings of loneliness. Thereby indicating that future conjecture should draw a more detailed distinction between the emotional and structural facets of communityship.

Second, this study moves the idea of expatriate adjustment by placing directly under the lens emotional well-being, with a particular emphasis on loneliness. In the past, literature regarding expatriates was more focused on performance outcomes and the ability to adjust and respond to evolving or unexpected demands or events. This extends SDT into expatriation studies by relating the three basic motivational needs to the communityship construct and the practices it entails.

Third, the study highlights the value of ambiversion as a significant mediator in the ethos of an organization, thus subscribing to personality trait psychology, seeing traits as fluid rather than immobile predictors. This therefore supports the hypothesis that both subjective personality traits and social context need to be considered for predicting outcomes.

5.5. Implications for Practice

For HR practitioners and organizational leaders involved in global mobility, the implications are concrete and actionable.

First, corporations ought to make well thought out protocols for activities promoting social cohesion, both formal and informal. Develop both knowledge and expertise sharing opportunities and a sense of shared goals, which are essential for commitment, well-being and retention of expatriates. Second, the expatriate selection process should incorporate personality assessments, particularly with regard to ambiversion. Identifying individuals who can flexibly navigate social contexts can help organizations deploy personnel who are more likely to thrive emotionally and socially in diverse environments. There seems to be an assumption that outgoing, extroverted, individuals will more easily interact with locals or other people within work settings and that they may fare better in such international assignments. However, having the ability to flexibly opt to act as an introverted or extroverted person, will be advantageous as findings suggest. Third, it would be advisable for strategies devised by HR departments to avoid catering solely for efficiency within the organization but give equal ponderance to loneliness, which can be brought about by consistently keeping track of feelings of loneliness and feeling excluded.

Finally, in line with Mintzberg (2009) call for communityship, leadership programs should teach managers more than just strategy and performance skills. They need to learn how to build a sense of community, gathering all tools necessary in order to bring people together, and not just administer directions.

5.6. Limitations and Future Research

As is common to all empirical research this too has its constraints. Firstly, its cross-sectional structure restricts determining the effects of variables upon each other. Although noteworthy correlations were discovered, longitudinal research is required in order to ascertain causality. Secondly, this study was dependent on self-reported data, which can be subject to biases linked to self-selection, or social desirability such as the desire to comply with some implicit theory respondents have. Methods to elevate studies in the future could be to include behavioural data or risks evaluations performed by third parties.

Third, the evaluation of communityship actions depended to an extent on seemingly restricted indicators, for example vertical networking was measured with a single item. This limited the chance to analyse them in full and invites for a future development of a more comprehensive measure of communityship.

To conclude, the majority of participants were females with introverted personality traits which could restrict generalizability. In order to gain a more comprehensive study replicating this one with a more equitable participant pool could be taken into consideration.

Strategic foresight regarding further research should take into account how communityship undertakings differ or match between corporate expatriates and self-initiated ones, appraise the use of cross-cultural facilitators and investigate the function of remote or digital work provisions.

6. Conclusion

The significant discovery of this study is that work-related loneliness decreases when associated with the specific communityship practice of social interrelatedness. The research lays forth an expedient and subtle comprehension of the ways in which expatriates experience loneliness and how companies can be influential in alleviating it, at least the one that is work-related. Thereby emphasizing the absolute importance of workplaces that incorporate diversity, inclusion and a sense of belonging. Moreover, the realization that ambiversion intensifies the aforementioned practice implies that personality traits and communityship practices must be considered as forces which are closely interrelated.

Despite the seeming deglobalization momentum experienced today, the international ties and need for workforce circulation together with the rise of loneliness in modern societies indicates that it is obvious that much more than work related issues, such as training and planning need to be addressed for expatriate workers (Caligiuri et al., 2001; Haile & White, 2019; Qi & Lange, 2006). Social and emotional networks need to be built or kept alive, facilitating integration into the workplace and local communities, and specific personality interventions are equally as important. In order to ensure the full potential of expatriate postings, corporations will need to construct coherent cultures of trust and belonging and have an awareness that the personality trait of ambiversion is more conducive to success in the international workplace. In brief, communityship is significant with the proviso that it addresses the basic human need for connection.

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Appendix 1

Ambiversion

- 3 Are you a talkative person?
- 7 Are you rather lively?
- 11 Do you enjoy meeting new people?
- 15 Can you usually let yourself go and enjoy yourself at a lively party?
- 19 Do you usually take the initiative in making new friends?
- 23 Can you easily get some life into a rather dull party?
- 27 Do you tend to keep in the background on social occasions? (rev)
- 32 Do you like mixing with people?
- 36 Do you like plenty of bustle and excitement around you?
- 41 Are you mostly quiet when you are with other people? (rev)
- 44 Do other people think of you as being very lively?
- 48 Can you get a party going?