

Generation Z's Willingness to Accept International Assignments After Covid-19

—A Quantitative Study among British, Chinese and Indian Students

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Abstract: Influenced by COVID-19 and many other factors, multinational companies worldwide are facing the expatriation dilemma and a shrinking talent pool. This study investigates Generation Z's willingness to take an international assignment and how international exposure, global mindset, and the pandemic impact their attitudes towards such jobs. By analysing online self-administrated survey data from 216 respondents, 71 from the UK, 73 from China, and 72 from India, results show that Gen Z generally has an interest in international assignments. Their willingness is positively affected by two main factors, international exposure and global mindset. However, Covid-19 does not significantly influence Gen Z's intention to work abroad. Although Gen Z from different countries' attitudes regarding international assignments tends to be similar, social philosophy, norms, and values that lie in the cultural background still impact their actual decision. Therefore, companies could consider selecting more Gen Z for positions in the host country, but they should make sure the assignment length meets their preferences, provide adequate compensation and supports, and motivate them according to cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: international assignment, Generation Z, expatriation willingness, international human resources management

1. Introduction

With globalisation, multinational companies are placing more weight on international assignments and considering sending more employees to work abroad [1], as one part of their international operation strategies. However, [2-4] found that people are less willing to accept an international assignment because of potential negative impacts or family concerns. Despite challenging circumstances, multinational companies still rely on physical expatriates [5], which brings a clear need to extend the expatriate talent pool by understanding the attitudes and willingness of potential candidates.

In all generations, Generation Z, people born in and after 1997, could be the best match for such assignments because of their openness to variety and previous international experiences. Born and growing with the Internet and social media, their tolerance of differences is far greater than other generations and they can integrate into new environments faster [6]. While it may seem too forward

to research Generation Z, who are mostly aged 18-26, [2] augured that companies also send young employees who started their careers 2-3 years ago, whose intentions in overseas careers are mostly maintaining the same as their student period. Therefore, it is reasonable to study the expatriate willingness of Gen Z students as it could help the company understand their needs and select candidates with higher intention from the recruitment period.

Although there is a need for insights into Gen Z's willingness and motivations to take international assignments, the author's review of literature revealed that such study is inadequate. Current academic research on Gen Z focuses on general personality traits and attitudes in the workplace, leaving little discussion on their willingness to expatriate and how to encourage them to take on assignments. The closest literature still rests on studies of millennials' willingness to expatriate (e.g. [7]).

Furthermore, even though research on expatriation has been conducted for over 50 years, little has been known about the influence of Eastern and Western cultures on one's willingness and motivation. Most studies have focused on traditionally developed Western countries such as the US, UK, and Germany, with little coverage of emerging Eastern economies such as China and India. In addition, this paper is based on a particular period in which society was influenced by Covid-19 largely. How and to what extent the epidemic affects the willingness of potential candidates to expatriate is also a topic worth exploring but not yet widely discussed.

Regarding practical significance, this study aims to find out Generation Z's overall willingness level in international assignments and what factors could impact their decision. It is essential for multinational companies who intend to assign expatriates soon, especially those who consider sending young employees as Gen Z employees, will soon largely enter the workforce and replace Millennials become the enormous working population [8]. Additionally, this paper aims to explore the expatriate willingness of Generation Z and the factors that influence their attitude, which fills the research gap in this topic. Moreover, by examining and comparing the UK (traditional western developed country), China and India (representatives of eastern developing countries), the cultural differences in willingness could be investigated.

Given the scarcity of literature on Generation Z and international assignments, this paper will primarily draw on findings from studies of millennials and the general student population when discussing willingness to accept overseas assignments and the factors that influence it. This is because, first, both millennials and the general student population show a high interest in overseas experiences ([3], [7], [9], [10]), which is similar to Gen Z student group. Second, while [11] stated that Generation Z employees think and work considerably differently from prior generations, recent research mentioned that their intrinsic work values, such as the pursuit of accomplishment and career progress, are similar to millennials [12].

Regarding youth's general willingness to international assignments and why and why not they accept such assignments, [7]'s work about millennial students is the most updated and related to the writer's research topic. Two scholars demonstrated that millennial students, in general, are interested in international assignments, yet not at any prices. This generation's strong ties to their home countries and the need for work-life balance make them more prone to short-term assignments.

However, the main weakness of their study is that they failed to take family issues, particularly the influence of parents, into account. As a group that remains under parental guardianship to some extent, there is a clear positive relationship between parents' opinions and students' career decisions [10]. In addition, they merely attempted to compare persons from diverse cultural backgrounds. Most of their respondents are from Europe, with 617 Europeans but just 261 Asians. It does compare student motivation across regions, but the imbalance of original data may lead to relatively inaccurate results.

As for factors that influence expatriate willingness, [3] found that international exposure has a direct effect on overseas career willingness and cosmopolitanism (openness to diversity or global

mindset) is a solid predictor of willingness to become an assignee. This research compared German and Korean students, illustrating some insights into willingness and cultural differences. Nevertheless, whether the results of Korea can well represent most Asian groups is doubtful. Given the inadequate evidence on how factors affect Gen Z's willingness, the following hypothesis could be generated:

Hypothesis 1: International exposure is positively related to Generation Z's willingness to take international assignments.

Hypothesis 2: Global mindset positively relates to Generation Z's expatriate willingness.

Besides, as mentioned above, Covid-19 has a massive influence on all populations, particularly Gen Z. Such an event affecting social security and stability was anticipated to impact one's attitude towards international missions [13]. Since there is a lack of previous literature discussing the relationship between epidemic and willingness, another hypothesis could be tested:

Hypothesis 3: Covid-19 brings negative effects to Generation Z's international assignments intentions.

2. Methodology

The author designed a four-section survey on demographics, interests in international assignments, international exposure, and global mindset, based on the studies of [3] and [7].

The first section contains basic information such as year of birth, gender, nationality, level of education, and field of study. The following section asks participants to rank the types of international assignments they are most interested in, (de)motivate factors for accepting assignments and scale their willingness to accept expatriate assignments. In addition, the impact of Covid-19 on Gen Z students is also measured in this section as scaling. For instance, "To what extent does Covid-19 affect your willingness to work abroad?"

The third part of the survey measured three indicators of international exposure, overseas experience, international contacts, and language skills in six questions. Respondents were asked to identify the number of foreign countries they had travelled to, the length of time they had lived abroad and the number of foreign languages they knew. Moreover, they were asked to assess their level of English and international contact through items such as "I am confident in my English proficiency.", "I have many foreign friends."

Lastly, to measure one's global mindset, the author draws on [14] to assess participants' three types of capital using nine Likert scale questions, including "I follow up-to-date news around the world.", "I find interest in exploring other parts of the world.", "I am able to work well with people from different backgrounds."

Since the main purpose of this research is to evaluate Generation Z's willingness to accept international assignments and examine cultural differences on such topic, the sample should be considered as Generation Z who was born in and after 1997. Then the sample was further categorised into three subsample groups: British, Chinese, and Indian students. Derived from 252 completed surveys, 216 responses met the criteria and were used for the analysis, which includes 71 (32.9%) British, 73 (33.8%) Chinese, and 72 (33.3%) Indian with a majority of female respondents (55.6%, n=120).

The writer first used convenience sampling and posted the Microsoft form online survey link in student groups on Facebook and personal social media accounts. Some students the writer knows and meet the essential criteria mentioned above were asked to participate. Those students then forwarded the online survey to their connections who also qualified. After forwarding data to Excel for data cleaning, the complete and qualified data was exported to SPSS for further analysis.

3. Results

Cronbach's coefficient alpha was first analysed to evaluate variables' reliability and internal consistency. As shown in table 1, the values of covid-19 influence, foreign contacts (under international exposure), and global mindset were above 0.7, showing good reliability. In table 2, a KMO (0.732>0.7) and Bartlett's test ($p<0.001$) indicated a high validity of survey questions, and the collected data is middle adequate for factor analyses based on [15]'s criteria. With the factor loading results all higher than 0.67 (i.e., six items were above 0.7, 3 items were above 0.8, and 2 items were over 0.9), none of the factors need to be deleted. High consistency and validity between factors and their variables were illustrated.

Table 1: Reliability and validity analyses.

Variables	Factors	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha
Covid-19 Influence	To what extent that Covid-19 affect your willingness in working aboard?	0.734	0.753
	I concern more about health issues of myself and my family after Covid-19 outbreak.	0.792	
	I feel less happy, anxious, or depression because of pandemic.	0.817	
	I would consider more about working abroad when the pandemic ends.	0.688	
Foreign Contacts	I have many foreign friends.	0.905	0.778
	I have many friends live aboard.	0.905	
Global Mindset			0.727
	I have certain knowledge of cultures in different parts of the world (about their history, values, etc.).	0.778	
	I follow up-to-date news around the world.	0.864	
	I have certain understandings in legal, policy or business issues of other countries.	0.737	
	Diversity and variety attract me.	0.718	
	I find interests in exploring other parts of the world.	0.794	
	I willing to test myself with new challenges.	0.678	
	I am able to work well with people from different backgrounds.	0.834	
	I am able to integrate diverse perspectives.	0.832	
	I would like to build a network with people from other cultures.	0.699	

Table 2: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test.

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		0.732
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1227.479
	df	171
	Sig.	<.001

Talking about overall willingness, the results indicate that out of 216 respondents, 61.6% have shown a positive attitude towards international assignments, with 27.3% (n=59) students stating a solid willingness to accept. 79.1% were confident in an international career, and 71.8% stated that they might become a self-initiated expatriate in the future. In terms of nationality (see table 3), there was no difference in willingness between students from the three countries($p=0.15>0.05$). In contrast, students had significant differences in the attitudes and cognitions of expatriate capability and self-initiated expatriate willingness($p=0.002<0.01$). Further post hoc test in table 4, to be precise, the Dunnett T3 multiple comparison tests were conducted to find which and how it varies.

Based on the results, Indian students were more confident in their overseas career capability (Mean=4.89), which was significantly different from both British (Mean=4.27) and Chinese (Mean=4.16) students. Moreover, rarer Chinese students indicated they would actively seek opportunities abroad in the future compared to Indian students (3.75 vs. 4.6).

Table 3: ANOVA Analyses: Gen Z's expatriate willingness, confidence in capability and self-initiated intention on nationality.

ANOVA Analysis					
Items	Groups	n	Mean	F	p
willingness	British	71	3.87	1.984	0.14
	Chinese	73	4.4		
	Indian	72	4.11		
	Total	216	4.13		
Capability in expatriate	British	71	4.27	6.466	0.002**
	Chinese	73	4.16		
	Indian	72	4.89		
	Total	216	4.44		
Self-initiated expatriate	British	71	4.08	6.632	0.002**
	Chinese	73	3.75		
	Indian	72	4.6		
	Total	216	4.14		

* $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$ *** $p<0.001$

Table 4: Dunnett T3 multiple comparison test between nationalities.

Multiple Comparisons Table				
Items	Test	Mean Difference (I-J)	p	Significant?
Capability in expatriate	British vs. Chinese	0.1	0.959	No
	British vs. Indian	-.62	0.019*	Yes
	Chinese vs. Indian	-.72	0.001**	Yes
Self-initiated expatriate	British vs. Chinese	0.33	0.413	No
	British vs. Indian	-0.51	0.093	No
	Chinese vs. Indian	-.84	<.001***	Yes

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

Gen Zs in this research were more attracted by short assignments such as short-term transfer that takes no longer than a year and international business travel that holds a maximum of three weeks. Unlike British and Indian, Gen Zs from China was most interested in long-term expatriation, following by short-term transfer. Furthermore, Indians favoured permanent residence in a foreign country the least, whereas British and Chinese revealed a relatively high preference in this assignment.

As for the factors that could motivate Generation Z students to join expatriate assignments, “Personal development,” “Career prospects,” and “Higher salary/compensation” were the top three reasons for accepting. Gen Zs from UK and China were more or less motivated by the same factors, however, those from India focused more on their self-development and financial opportunity. It is also worth mentioning that even though “Improve in future social status” ranked as the least important reason for around 57% of respondents (n=123), it was chosen by 6 Chinese students in higher orders (top 3), which was twice more than British and Indian.

Concerning the factors that will reduce their interest in international assignments, the most frequent demotivating reasons were “Negative impact on future career,” “Family issues,” and “Unattractive location.” Previous unpleasant life oversea, culture or language barriers were no longer the issues that bothered Gen Z students. Similar to motivations, British and Chinese Gen Zs’ reasons for refusal were very alike. They cared the most about task location, whereas Indians valued less whether the assignment location was attractive but had more concerns about health and safety.

Students were also asked to indicate the regions they would like to work in and the support they wish to receive if they accept an international assignment. The most preferred locations were European Union, North America, and other European countries. In terms of supports, Gen Zs wanted allowances the most, which ticked by 50.46% of respondents, and cross-cultural training was also highly and averagely in need with 48.61% of chosen rate.

As for Hypothesis 1, shown in table 5, the result indicated that respondents’ international exposure could predict their willingness to accept international assignments. With $F(6,209) = 19.15$, $p < 0.01$, all 6 factors under study have an impact on willingness. Moreover, the $R^2 = 0.355$ depicts that 35.5% of the variance in willingness can be explained by international exposure.

Out of six factors, Gen Zs’ confidence in English significantly influences expatriate willingness ($\beta = 0.586$, $t = 10.244$, $p < 0.01$), which could be subcategorized into language skills indicators. Hence, further analysis of how three indicators of international exposure, oversea experiences, language skills, and foreign contacts affected expatriate intentions of Gen Z students from different countries was also conducted. As shown in table 6, overseas experiences show no significant influence on all respondents’ willingness. At the same time, language skills tend to be the essential indicator, which their confidence in English could explain 34.4% of British Gen Z’s expatriate intention, 27.8% of Chinese, and 53% for Indian ($R^2 = 0.344$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.278$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.53$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 5: Regression analyses results of hypothesis test for H1.

		Dependent variable: willingness		
Independent variables		<i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>
H1: International exposure	Foreign countries travelled	-0.065	-0.049	-0.819
	Length oversea	0.035	0.027	0.428
	Languages	0.175	0.116	1.86
	Confidence in English proficiency	0.597	0.586	10.244**
	Foreign friends	-0.004	-0.003	-0.045
	Friends live aboard	0.026	0.024	0.33
Adj. R ²		0.355**		
F-value		F (6,209) = 19.15		

**p<0.01

Table 6: International exposure subcategory results.

Indicator	Factors	<i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>	F-value	Adj. R ²
British						
Overseas experiences	Foreign countries travelled	0.151	0.118	0.972	F(2,68)=0.742	0.021
	Length overseas	0.091	0.067	0.554		
	Languages	0.211	0.148	1.504		
Language skills	Confidence in English proficiency	0.518	0.582	5.9***	F(2,68)=17.834	0.344***
Foreign contacts	Foreign friends	0.246	0.21	1.365	F(2.68)=0.943	0.027
	Friends live aboard	-0.161	-0.151	-0.981		
Chinese						
Overseas experiences	Foreign countries travelled	0.061	0.046	0.375	F(2,70)=0.183	0.05
	Length overseas	0.061	0.047	0.385		
	Languages	0.318	1.146	1.384		
Language skills	Confidence in English proficiency	0.635	0.471	4.475***	F(2,70)=13.499	0.278***
Foreign contacts	Foreign friends	0.447	0.345	2.713**	F(2,70)=5.595	0.138**
	Friends live aboard	0.059	0.049	0.384		
Indian						
Overseas experiences	Foreign countries travelled	-0.141	-0.075	-0.561	F(2,69)=1.026	0.029
	Length overseas	0.246	0.191	1.428		
	Languages	-0.008	-0.006	-0.072		
Language skills	Confidence in English proficiency	0.712	0.729	8.806***	F(2,69)=38.933	0.53***
Foreign contacts	Foreign friends	-0.172	-0.132	-0.848	F(2,69)=0.776	0.022
	Friends live aboard	0.223	0.194	1.245		

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

There was also a significant relationship between global mindset and Gen Z's international assignment willingness ($F(9,206) = 6.45, p < 0.01$), and 22% of willingness can be explained by global mindset ($R^2 = 0.22$). Hence, H2 was supported. Deep analysis based on nationalities in each factor was conducted and outstanding results were summarised in table 8.

Table 7: Regression analyses results of hypothesis test for H2.

		Dependent variable: willingness		
Independent variables		<i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>
H2: Global mindset	Knowledge of cultures	0.446	0.385	5.126**
	Follow global news	-0.223	-0.19	-2.334*
	Understandings in legal, policy or business issues	-0.057	-0.046	-0.629
	Diversity and variety attraction	-0.043	-0.034	-0.476
	Interests in exploring	0.15	0.105	1.507
	Willingness in challenges	0.242	0.157	2.202*
	Work with differences	-0.055	-0.042	-0.531
	Integrate diversity	0.15	0.109	1.381
	Build global networks	0.222	0.163	2.203*
Adj. R ²		0.220**		
F-value		F (9,206) = 6.45		

*p<0.05 **p<0.01

Table 8: Global mindset significant subcategory results.

Factors	Nationality	<i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>
Knowledge of cultures	British	0.471	0.41	3.074**
	Indian	0.671	0.636	5.739***
Interest in exploring	British	0.379	0.267	2.051*
Willingness in challenges	Chinese	0.527	0.296	2.46*
	Indian	0.325	0.252	2.059*
Build global networks	Chinese	1.009	0.543	4.19***
	Indian	0.326	0.295	2.38*

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

Among nine factors, knowledge of foreign cultures significantly influenced British and Indian respondents' willingness, especially Indian, whose willingness showed a strong relationship with their foreign cultural knowledge ($\beta = 0.636$, $t = 5.739$, $p < 0.001$). British students' interest in exploring the other part of the world also affected their intention. Furthermore, Chinese and Indian Gen Zs' willingness to self-challenge and ideas of building global networks affected their aspiration. Chinese respondents' international career aspirations were influenced mainly by their desire for global networks ($\beta = 0.543$, $t = 4.19$, $p < 0.001$).

Finally, in terms of influence of Covid-19, results in table 9 show that all three nationalities of Gen Z in this research showed relatively the same concerns in Covid-19-related issues ($p > 0.05$). 72.2% of students were concerned more about health issues, and 67.1% more or less felt unhappy, anxious, or depressed because of the virus. However, no matter which nationality, no specific relationship has been detected between pandemic issues and expatriate willingness. With the F value equal to 3.11 and the p-value all above 0.05, H3 was not supported.

Table 9: Regression analyses results of hypothesis test for H3.

		Dependent variable: willingness		
Independent variables		<i>B</i>	β	<i>t</i>
H3: Covid-19 influence	Covid-19 affect willingness	-0.04	-0.041	-0.52
	More health concerns	0.12	0.108	1.27
	Unhappy, anxious and depression	0.15	0.145	1.77
Adj. R ²		0.042		
F-value		F (3, 212) =3.11		

4. Discussion

The results suggest that most Generation Z are interested in international assignments, which aligns with the data released by [16], stating that 67% of Gen Z are willing to relocate for a work opportunity. Moreover, they believe in their ability and consider working abroad even if it is not a mission from the company. When comparing the three nationalities, it is noticeable that British has the lowest average score in international assignment willingness, which is in accordance with research conducted by [7], according to which the Europeans has lower intention compared to Asians as their thirst for exploration of other countries has been satisfied due to geographical advantages. Although this gap was not statistically significant, it could still illustrate that the British are relatively harder to motivate for such assignments.

Like millennials, Gen Z students prefer short-term transfer assignments the most, and international business travel also ranks high (top 3). It is typically accurate for British Gen Z, while the Chinese favoured long-term assignments more often. This resonates well with [7], according to whom respondents are generally interested in short-term tasks, but Asian respondents prefer the longer term. However, Indians who are geographically part of Asia showed a task preference more in line with the British. This is one of the findings with which this paper contributes to the extant evidence.

When comparing Generation Zs motivates and demotivates to millennials, it must be pointed out that certain differences have been found. First, unlike millennials, whose primary motivations of expatriate were personal development, learning about foreign cultures, and the opportunity to travel [7], Gen Z's reasons were more pragmatic (career prospect, personal development, and higher salary). They are seeking actual benefits in individual, professional, and finance. This finding aligns with previous studies by [12, 17-18], which described Generation Z as pragmatic and conservative. Likewise, their top reasons for not accepting an expatriate assignment tend to be rational and related to their career or favour (negative impact on future career and unattractive location).

Apart from general personality, such difference between millennials and Gen Z may be explained by the fact that Gen Z travels more than other generations, and they can learn about foreign cultures through smart devices. [19] states that Gen Z travels 29 days per year, surpassing Gen X and Baby boomers. Although lower than millennials who travel 35 days per year, considering the age and financial differences, such a gap is understandable, and Gen Z is quite likely to overtake millennials when reaching the same age. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier [11], globalisation and technological advances have given this generation the opportunity to learn about various cultures and be exposed to global conditions from their early school days. Their desire for cultural study and travel has been earlier and easier fulfilled. Thus, they do not motivate by those opportunities.

As for demotivates, the second most choice factor is family issues. This finding ties nicely with several previous research that family-related issues affect one's expatriate intentions. Specific to students, [10] argued that parents' support affect students' willingness to expatriate. To some extent, it also illustrates the importance of kinship to Generation Z, supporting the ideas of [12] and [17].

Contrary to expectations and [7]'s results, no significant cultural differences in the reasons for accepting or rejecting the task were found in this study. In addition, there is a high degree of convergence in the location preferences of respondents from the three countries, which is quite surprising as Gen Z emphasizes individual uniqueness and refuses to be defined by a uniform label [6]. This similarity may be due to the cultural homogenisation reinforced by globalisation and technology. The various cultural symbols transmitted by Western culture, including customs, ideas and values, have subtly influenced other cultures, causing people from different cultural backgrounds to tend to make similar decisions [20].

Even so, there were still some points that demonstrated unusual cultural differences. To begin with, Chinese students had the lowest mean scores on all self-confidence-related questions, including "how capable in expatriate" and "how confident in English proficiency," showing a relatively lower self-confident or self-esteem level compared to the other two countries. The finding aligns with [21] and [22]'s arguments that eastern Asians tend to be humble in presenting themselves, as well as [23] and [24] illustrated that east Asians have a self-criticism tendency. However, scholars and managers should realise their humility, self-criticism, and lesser self-confidence broadly come from their culture's social philosophy. To be precise, Confucian values emphasize recognising both strengths and weaknesses that make them rate themselves lower [25].

Similarly, improving future social status in 9 motivates was undoubtedly the least likely reason for all nationalities. However, half the 12 students who ranked this factor in the top 3 are Chinese. This, to some extent, accords with [26] who mentioned that the Chinese stated social status as a motivation factor for taking international assignments. The Chinese traditional Confucian values in social status or family obligations largely influence Chinese expatriate decisions, even among young professionals like Gen Z.

In addition, the British and Chinese generally reported that they would turn down an expatriate assignment if it were not the country they wanted to go to, while the Indians were less affected by this reason. After studying the Indian cultural background, the author suggests this phenomenon may be due to a widespread belief among the Indian people. Influenced by various factors, including religious and cultural traditions, they tend to believe that events in their lives are predetermined and controlled by supernatural forces [27]. Therefore, they would still be happy to accept assignments even in countries they have no interest in, as long as the tasks do not affect their future development and other practical needs.

The results were highly consistent with [3] and [28] regarding international exposure and global mindset. Although some specific global mindset traits of students may more significantly shape their desire to deploy, for instance, Indian students with more knowledge of foreign culture and Chinese who want to build global networks showed a higher possibility of accepting international assignments. Overall, a high level of previous international exposure and a global mindset noticeably positively influence Generation Z's expatriate willingness regardless of nationality.

However, it is worth mentioning that, unlike [3] discovered significant relationships between oversea experiences, language skills, and foreign contacts (three categories of international exposure) and assignment willingness. The findings of this essay only confirmed a strong positive association between English proficiency self-confidence and expatriate intentions. A possible explanation for this might be the advance in technology that allows Gen Z to experience and build a desire for other countries through the Internet and social media, not needing to have many foreign travel or living experiences.

Unexpectedly, the coronavirus spread does not impact their expatriate willingness. Indeed, Gen Z appeared to have more health concerns and mental issues after the pandemic, which supports the findings by [29] and [30]. Most of them stated themselves as desire affected by Covid-19. However, the data analysis results demonstrate the other way. This outcome has some similarities with [13],

which discussed students' international career willingness after 911. Both as wide-ranging social events; many believe such issues could conversely impact one's intention to work abroad. However, the results prove that there is no or limited influence. Nevertheless, this might be explained by the time of this research. The gradual improvement in the global epidemic since 2021 may have reduced students' fears and concerns, which might again increase their willingness to deploy.

5. Limitations and Future Research

Limitations of this study are undeniable. One, this research used quantitative analysis and many descriptive questions in the survey. This analytical approach does not explain why Generation Z in various countries have such perceptions and decisions about international assignments. The overall questionnaire design lacks a deeper exploration of the reasons. A qualitative analysis could be considered for researching specific factors in future research.

Two, the three countries compared in this dissertation are among the top countries in the world with relatively advanced economies, which may lead to similar intentions among young people. To address this shortcoming, future research could expand the data sources to compare the Gen Z of relatively less developed countries with those of developing and developed countries to reach more objective and comprehensive conclusions.

Three, as the data was collected in only three weeks, and the subjects who participated in the questionnaire were concentrated in their second or third year of study. The results of the current study are not necessarily representative of their perceptions when they graduate and enter the workforce. Therefore, scholars could do a longitudinal study on a similar theme to explore whether Gen Z's willingness changes with age and education.

As for future recommendations, this study successfully demonstrates the impact of cultural background on respondents of different nationalities, which is a topic worth exploring how and to what extent the culture, social values, and norms affect individual expatriate willingness. Meanwhile, differences in the factors influencing the willingness of men and women to expatriate were found. However, the author must admit that the ratio of male to female respondents in this study was 3:4, which to some extent may have led to biased results in the gender-related comparative analysis. Future research could be conducted to ensure the accuracy of the findings by monitoring the number of male and female survey participants or by conducting specific research on the differences in willingness to expatriate between the younger generations by gender.

Furthermore, despite taking the epidemic into account, there is not much discussion of its impact in this thesis, leaving its findings and interpretation of the impact of Gen Z expatriate intentions relatively incomplete and unilateral. Scholars could also conduct more research on this topic, exploring how sudden social events can impact Gen Z.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, selecting competent employees who can overcome cultural differences for overseas assignments has been a necessary, urgent, and challenging task for multinational companies since the beginning of globalisation [3]. Although international assignments have been semi-stalled since 2020 due to the epidemic, it is conceivable that the company will again put expatriate assignments on the agenda from 2022, when the worldwide epidemic gradually recovers.

This research chose the youngest and most diverse group, Generation Z, to study their willingness and preference for expatriation and successfully tested that past international exposure and global mindset significantly affected Gen Z students' willingness to expatriate. However, the effect of the epidemic was not significant. Moreover, with globalisation, the differences in willingness and preference for expatriation between East and West are gradually narrowing, but the reasons behind

young people accepting an assignment or not are still influenced by their cultural background. For example, Chinese may not prioritise international assignments because they are not confident in their personal abilities, which may be largely due to traditional Chinese Confucianism; Indians are happy to accept assignments from companies without much requirement for the location as they tend to believe that God ordains events in life.

Companies should recognise that although Generation Z appears to be the most diverse and independent generation, they are very realistic. They emphasize personal development, life stability, and financial freedom. They are not motivated by simple reasons such as travel opportunities and cultural learning since most of their needs are already being met; however, they are generally very interested in and open to expatriate assignments. In addition, their basic assignment needs and preferences, such as type of assignment, location, and support, are highly overlapping.

As long as companies try to design shorter assignments, locate them in relatively developed countries and regions, and provide adequate support, most of the Gen Zs would be happy to accept international assignments. However, suppose companies want to encourage more employees to participate and expand their talent pool. In that case, they should be aware that the influence of different cultures and social philosophies on employees and their diverse cultural backgrounds makes them make different expatriate decisions. They should motivate young employees based on their needs and cultural backgrounds.

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