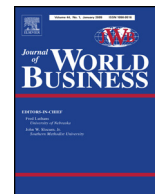




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The influences of perceived organizational support and motivation on self-initiated expatriates' organizational and community embeddedness

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ABSTRACT

Drawing upon Self-determination theory and the Job Demands-Resources model, we examined the influences of perceived organizational support (POS: financial, career, and adjustment) and motivation (autonomous and controlled) on self-initiated expatriates (SIEs)' organizational and community embeddedness. Based on responses from 147 SIEs, financial POS positively related to controlled motivation and career and adjustment POS positively related to autonomous motivation. Autonomous motivation positively predicted both organizational and community embeddedness while controlled motivation was positively associated with community embeddedness. We also found that autonomous motivation mediates the influences of career POS on organizational embeddedness and adjustment POS on organizational and community embeddedness. In addition, controlled motivation mediates the influences of financial POS on organizational embeddedness.

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1. Introduction

As the boundaries between global markets have become more flexible and permeable (Sullivan & Arthur, 2006) and as employment relationships have become less organizationally-directed and more individually-directed, job seekers are increasingly crafting their own expatriation to take advantage of lucrative career opportunities created by a shortage of skilled professionals (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009). Meanwhile, with more than 38% of employers worldwide having difficulty filling positions due to the lack of suitable talent available in their markets (Manpower, 2015), both multinational and local organizations are increasingly relying on *self-initiated expatriates* (SIEs) to redress their shortage of skilled labor. In contrast with corporate expatriates, who are "sent overseas on a temporary basis to complete a time-based task or accomplish an organizational goal" (Harrison, Shaffer, & Bhaskar-Shrinivas, 2004, p. 203), SIEs instigate their own relocation to a country of their choice to pursue cultural, personal, and career

development opportunities (Jokinen, Brewster, & Suutari, 2008; Myers & Pringle, 2005; Tharenou, 2015), often with no definite time frame in mind (Andresen, Bergdolt, Margenfeld, & Dickmann, 2014; Suutari & Brewster, 2000). SIEs are not assigned to an international position, nor are their relocations pre-arranged by a multinational organization (Cerdin & Selmer, 2014; Richardson & Mallon, 2005). Consequently, they generally receive limited or no pre-departure training, preparation, or associated benefits and compensation packages for their expatriation (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010). Indeed, they often fund their own relocation and may face more structural barriers and career constraints such as difficulties or long waiting times to obtain visas and work permits in some host countries (Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2010).

SIEs are generally highly educated professionals who can add significantly to an organization's talent pool by bringing to their employer a particular set of international understandings and capabilities (Cerdin, Diné, & Brewster, 2014; Cerdin & Selmer, 2014). Employed by local or international companies in the host country, SIEs are considered an attractive alternative to traditional corporate expatriates and they may have certain comparative advantages (Tharenou, 2013). For instance, as local hires with non-local perspectives and greater global competence and

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sophistication, SIEs are often considered a vehicle for facilitating cross-cultural understanding and an international outlook in their workplaces (Vaiman, Haslberger, & Vance, 2015). In addition, as a local hire without the traditional expatriate's elite status, SIEs provide a contribution to HR and talent management in an environment that is often marked by potential tensions between traditional expatriates and locals (Toh & DeNisi, 2003). Thus, the effective management and retention of SIEs is an important issue for organizations.

Expatriate success, especially in terms of adjustment and withdrawal, has been a major focus of expatriate research for the last three decades. Most of this research has been based on the stressor-stress-strain paradigm or the psychological contract theory that has rationalized expatriate withdrawal as a process of reacting to the uncertainties or negative experiences of living (e.g., maladjustment to the community) and working (e.g., maladjustment to work or psychological contract breach at work) in a foreign country (Guzzo, Noonan & Elron, 1994; Harrison et al., 2004). More recently, however, researchers (e.g., Ren, Shaffer, Harrison, Fu, & Fodchuk, 2014) have begun to focus on the role of expatriate embeddedness. From this perspective and based on a sample of self-initiated international teachers in the United States and Hong Kong, Ren et al. (2014) demonstrated that expatriate organizational embeddedness, defined as the breadth and depth of connectedness in one's foreign posting, is an important predictor of expatriate retention (Reiche, Kraimer, & Harzing, 2011), even more so than adjustment (Ren et al., 2014). While existing expatriate research mostly focuses on the role of organizational embeddedness and has devoted less attention to community embeddedness, we argue that community embeddedness could be a factor that relates to expatriate retention because both work (organizational) and non-work (community) factors keep people rooted where they are (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001). Indeed, based on a sample of SIE hotel workers in the Macau SAR of China, Lo, Wong, Yam, and Whitfield (2012) found that host country organizational embeddedness negatively predicted turnover intentions and host country community embeddedness further strengthened this negative relationship. Extending this emerging line of research, the purpose of this study is to investigate how SIEs become embedded in the host country organization and community by drawing upon the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001) and self-determination theory (SDT: Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989; Gagné & Deci, 2005).

Our first objective is to consider how different forms of one type of organizational resource (i.e., perceived organization support) contribute to SIE embeddedness. According to the JD-R model, resources encourage and enable individuals to broaden their behavioral repertoires, to forge strong interpersonal connections, and to flourish in their environments. For SIEs who initiate and are generally responsible for their own international relocation and who lack access to a parent organization in the home country, organizational support provided by the local employer may play a more important role in this process (Vaiman et al., 2015). Heeding the call of researchers who have suggested that a more complex conceptualization of perceived organizational support (POS) may be warranted in order to reflect the distinct influence of different forms of POS on employee outcomes such as performance and retention (Guzzo, Noonan, & Elron, 1993; Kraimer & Wayne, 2004), we consider financial, career, and adjustment support forms, each of which have been identified as significant resources for corporate expatriates (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004).

Our second objective in this study is to consider the role of two distinct motivational pathways whereby organizational resources influence SIE embeddedness. Although the JD-R model depicts the resource-based pathway to effective employee functioning as

motivational, the theory does not explicitly include motivation as a linking mechanism in this process. Drawing on self-determination theory (SDT), we offer an explanation for the underlying motivational mechanism that drives SIEs to leverage organizational support to become embedded. From an SDT perspective, there are two types of motivation: autonomous motivation and controlled motivation. Autonomous motivation indicates that a person behaves with a full sense of volition and choice, while controlled motivation means that a person engages in activities under pressure or to assert control (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). The extensive empirical evidence on the application of SDT demonstrates that autonomous motivation yields optimal employee functioning, such as effort, persistence, performance, prosocial behaviors, and various indices of psychological well-being, such as adjustment (Philippe & Vallerand, 2008; Weinstein, Dehaan, & Ryan, 2010; Weinstein & Ryan, 2010); controlled motivation yields sub-optimal outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Applying both the JD-R and SDT perspectives, we seek to understand how financial, career, and adjustment forms of POS assist SIEs in becoming embedded in their organizations and communities. In the achievement of this purpose, our study makes three contributions to the expatriate and embeddedness literatures. First, we contribute to the expatriate literature by integrating the JD-R model and SDT as an explanation for how multi-dimensional forms of POS influence SIEs' organizational and community embeddedness through autonomous and controlled motivation; we go beyond traditional inquiries about "what" motivates SIEs and delve deeper into "how" SIEs are motivated. While understanding the motives of SIEs is important and informative, existing studies fall short on elucidating the underlying psychological mechanism that promotes desirable expatriate behaviors (Chen, Kirkman, Kim, Farh, & Tangirala, 2010). Thus, our first contribution heeds the call of expatriate researchers that more research is needed to clarify how the motivational process contributes to expatriate effectiveness (Chen et al., 2010). Because it has been assumed that SIEs receive little organizational support, we draw attention to the important role of support resources on SIE embeddedness. In doing so, we will be able to inform organizations regarding policies and practices that may help them to keep their SIE employees motivated and attached to their organizations and communities. Second, we contribute to the SIE literature by adopting a multi-wave design that has the potential to advance existing empirical research. Existing research on SIEs has mainly investigated expatriation experiences in a cross-sectional setting by examining all the predictor and criterion variables simultaneously (see Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010; Tharenou, 2008 for exceptions). In our study, we examine SIEs' POS and motivation at Time 1 and embeddedness at Time 2 (one year later). The longitudinal research design contributes to the expatriate literature by providing a more holistic picture regarding how POS and motivation may shape the development of SIEs' organizational and community embeddedness over time. Third, we also contribute to the embeddedness literature by adopting a motivational lens to predict employee embeddedness. In doing so, we provide a potential explanatory mechanism for explaining how all employees, global and domestic, may become embedded in their organizations and communities.

2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

The concept of organizational and community embeddedness was first introduced by Mitchell et al. (2001) as a composite construct comprised of three components: fit, links, and sacrifices. Organizational fit refers to the extent to which an individual's capabilities match organizational requirements and an individual's interests match organizational rewards. Organizational links are

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