


Chapter 21

Determinants of Self-Initiated Expatriates Resilience: Conceptual Framework and Research Propositions

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ABSTRACT

Self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) are classified as highly qualified specialists who can independently find employment overseas. However, little is known on how this cohort became resilient to cope with high uncertainty and adjust to novel international contexts. This chapter presents the most dominant resilience factors impacting the development of SIE resilience based on the current literature and develop specific hypotheses based on these factors. In addition, the chapter builds on the self-determination theory to present a research model that could help to predict SIEs in choosing their career paths abroad.

INTRODUCTION

Our increasingly globalized world demands increased levels of global mobility and flexibility in the workplace and workforce. As a result, and propelling this globalization further, ever-increasing numbers of skilled individuals are seeking out international career opportunities. As contemporary work environments have become more stressful and turbulent than traditional environments, it has become more important than ever that individuals should develop the psychological capital to remain adaptable and resilient in coping with career uncertainty (Bimrose & Hearne, 2012).

According to the Labour Market Outlook report published by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD), approximately 45% of global employers report experiencing problems in filling positions due to talent shortages in the first quarter of 2022 (CIPD, 2022), with many organizations increasingly using expatriates to meet their talent requirements.

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Among these mobile employees is the distinct category of the self-initiated expatriate (SIE) (Przytuła, 2015). An SIE is different to a migrant or an assigned expatriate (AE), although there are commonly similarities between the three categorizations. Since they represent different types of internationally mobile employees, research results therefore cannot be transferred between these distinct groups (Wolff, 2013).

SIEs demonstrate individual motivation and initiative to move abroad for work, without their relocation being contingent on the direct support of a company or organization (Carr, Inkson, Thorn 2005). SIEs are professionals who choose to expatriate and who are not transferred by their employer (Muir et al., 2014), they relocate to a country of their choice to seek a job or to try an entrepreneurial venture (Jokinen et al., 2008). On the other hand, a migrant is a person who relocates from one geographical location to another, changing their place of residence as the centre of their personal life (Litwak, 1987). An expatriate relocates from one geographical location to another, changing their place of residence for both personal and professional reasons. If the foreign relocation is undertaken by a company or organization which employs the expatriate, this person is defined as an AE (Przytuła, 2015).

SIEs are typically classified as highly qualified specialists who can find employment for themselves in a foreign labour market (Haslberger & Vaiman, 2009). Researchers have emphasized that international corporations tend to make use of SIEs and treat them as an antidote to the shortage of qualified managerial staff in host markets (Banai & Harry, 2004; Suutari & Brewster 2000). Furthermore, SIEs are strategically valuable human resources for multinational corporations (Howe-Walsch & Sschyns, 2010) and growing numbers of them are employed by organizations (Jokinen et al., 2008). However, there is not one solidified definition of an SIE that is universally accepted (Andresen et al. 2020). In addition, little is known about the antecedents/factors that could make SIEs more resilient abroad. Therefore, this chapter advances the literature on (1) self-initiated expatriates' resilience and (2) offers insights on the factors that could predict SIEs resilience determinants from environmental and personal perspectives and (3) proposes seven propositions, and (4) a research model. In addition, this chapter offers (5) implications for research and practice and concludes (6) by the limitations and future research directions.

BACKGROUND

Defining a Sie

Cerdin and Selmer (2014) propose a definition of an SIE according to four criteria which must be simultaneously fulfilled to qualify for this classification: (a) self-initiated international relocation, (b) regular employment (intentions), (c) intentions of a temporary stay, and (d) skilled/professional qualifications. On the other hand, Alshahrani (2022) proposes another definition that he argued would suits some countries such as Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) that required work visas and contracts in hand before SIEs relocation to GCC countries. Alshahrani defines an SIE as "A skilled and professional individual who has a job offer/work visa in hand prior to his/her expatriation and who takes the decision to go abroad through self-funding and self-control to embark on a temporary work-related assignment" (2022:4).

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