

The Role of Family Outcomes, Perceived Academic Career Success and Psychological Well-Being on Re-Expatriation Intention

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Abstract

Expatriate literature has mainly focused on the organizational form of expatriates. However, few studies have been conducted on self-initiated academic expatriates (SIE). In addition, focus of expatriate literature has been on the first stage of expatriation whereas very limited studies have been done on the re-expatriation. Therefore, not enough is known about academic SIEs and what drives them towards moving abroad or what drives them for re-expatriation. The aim of this paper is to shed light on the re-expatriation intention among academic SIEs who have completed their assignments, repatriated home and then were influenced to re-expatriate. Family outcomes and perceived academic career success were found to be associated with the intention of academic SIEs to move abroad for the first time. Therefore, these mentioned factors are predicted to have a significant impact on the intention of academics to re-expatriate. Psychological factors such as psychological well-being appear to be associated with the intention of individuals to decide on accepting an international assignment. Hence, psychological well-being is predicted to mediate the relationship between the study variables and re-expatriation intention. The Push-Pull Theory was utilized in this paper to gain a better understanding of the impact of family outcomes, perceived academic career success, and psychological well-being on re-expatriation intention. Thus, this study contributes in filling the gap in expatriate literature by addressing the influence of the mentioned variables on re-expatriation intention among academic SIEs.

Keywords: Re-expatriation intention; Academic SIEs; Family outcomes; Perceived academic career success; Psychological well-being; Expatriation

I. Introduction

Globalization refers to the flow of technology, knowledge, values and people, and economy that has led organizations to place a greater importance on the dynamic role of an overseas assignment (Isakovic & Whitmann, 2013). Globalization is also considered as a central factor for the higher education in universities, colleges and other institutions (Altbach, 2007), which have dramatically opened their doors widely for expatriates to achieve strategic plans and tasks and to achieve competitive advantages (Selmer & Lauring, 2010).

In this regard, a massive number of educational systems around the world have expanded to benefit from global marketplace changes (Austin, Chapman, Farah, Wilson, & Ridge, 2004) which, in turn, has increased the movements among these expatriates seeking jobs in these institutions (Kirk & Napier, 2009). Recently, Finaccord (2014) found that a growing trend of skilled expatriates abroad has been realized in which approximately 50.5 million of expatriates existed across the globe, with number expected to increase to around 56.8 million in 2017. This is a strong indicator that the number of skilled expatriates will be much higher in the coming years.

The bulk of expatriate literature thus far has mainly focused on those individuals who were sent by their organizations in their home countries to fill a position in host country organization subsidiaries. These are known as organisational expatriates (Colings, Scullion & Morley, 2007; Tahvanainen, Welch, & Worm, 2005) with less research being directed on those individuals who have decided to move abroad to live and work on their own initiatives without support from their home country organizations (Selmer & Luring, 2010; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). Though the expatriate literature has examined self-initiated expatriates (SIEs), very few research studies have focused on Academic SIEs despite the fast-rising trend of this group of individuals going abroad (Al Shammari, 2013; Trembath, 2016).

Academic SIEs have been recognized in the literature as seeking international experience and being increasingly employed abroad because of their unique skills and also as a result of the increased demands for skilled and talented individuals by universities and other educational institutions to fill the rapid growth in the established educational institutions around the world (Dessoff, 2011; Selmer & Luring, 2010; Trembath, 2016). The change and expansion in educational systems has increased the number of faculty members working globally (Cai & Hall, 2016). However, exploring and identifying the primary reasons and motivational factors that are associated with this fast-rising trend remains mostly uncovered particularly in developing countries (Al Shammari, 2013). This, in turn has led to a dearth of recognising the dynamic nature of their movements abroad (Selmer & Luring, 2009; Trembath, 2016).

Once an international assignment is completed, the repatriation of academic SIEs to the home country is the next phase. Repatriation is recognized to be a main difficulty and challenge that expatriates have faced after completing their overseas assignment abroad (Ernst & Young, 2009). Some of these difficulties and challenges are re-entry hardships and reverse culture shock (RCS), taking into consideration that these expatriates may have remained abroad for an extended period of time (Adler & Gundersen, 2007). As Hyder and Lovblad (2007) noted, repatriates may face readjustment difficulties once these people have returned their home countries because adjusting to the home country after staying abroad for awhile is considered much more difficult than adjusting outside their own country. These difficulties and obstacles may lead to a negative image of their own lives in the home country (Szkudlarek, 2010), which may as a result lead to re-expatriation when possible (Ho, Seet & Johns, 2015; Tharenou & Seet, 2014).

Re-expatriation intention refers to a second movement abroad after having, completing an international assignment and returned to their home country (Tharenou & Seet, 2014). However, insufficient and inadequate research attention has been directed to this issue, which has resulted a crucial gap in the literature and caused obstacles in understanding the primary reasons and motivational factors driving such individuals to re-expatriate (Ho et al., 2016). Therefore, the aim of this conceptual paper is to shed light on reasons such as family outcomes, perceived academic career success and psychological well-being that drive and encourage academic SIEs to re-expatriate after repatriating to their home country.

II. Theoretical Development

2.1 Re-expatriation Intention

The process of people applying again to move abroad after their departure to their own country is a new phenomenon called re-expatriation (Ho et al., 2016, Tharenou & Seet, 2014). The efforts of scholars and researchers have mainly focused and concentrated on expatriation and repatriation and the reasons driving individuals to move abroad or even the reasons that lead these individuals to repatriate to their home countries (Selmer & Luring, 2010; Suutari & Brewster, 2000; Sri Ramalu, 2010; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). However, less efforts have appeared in the expatriate literature among scholars and researchers in recognizing the intention of individuals to re-expatriate, which makes understanding the dynamic nature of the desire of individuals for having another experience abroad very difficult (Ho et al., 2016). More efforts have been called for and needed by scholars and researchers to focus and concentrate on the primary reasons and motivational factors that are associated with the intention to re-expatriate as the reasons and motivational factors for initial expatriation may differ on those reasons and motivational factors among those who have already experienced a first expatriation and are willing to apply for another position abroad (Ho et al., 2016; Tharenou & Seet, 2014).

Accordingly, a massive number of research studies have focused on the reasons and motivational factors of individuals to expatriate for the first time (Dickmann, Doherty, Mills & Brewster, 2008; Doherty, Dickmann & Mills, 2011; Inkson, Pringle, Arthur, & Barry, 1997; Jackson et al, 2005; Suutari & Brewster, 2000; Thorn, 2009). For example, Jackson et al., (2005) found that family issues and lifestyle are factors encouraging individuals to expatriate. Howe-Walsh and Schyns (2010) conducted a study based on academic SIEs and revealed that the main motivational factors driving this group of individuals were personal issues, a different job in a different country, and desiring to migrate to a specific country. Similarly, Selmer & Luring (2010) revealed that financial issues, career development, and seeking a different level of career are considered among the main predictors for the motivation of academic SIEs to move abroad.

Expectedly, once the overseas assignment is completed, the next stage in the expatriation process is repatriation to the individuals' home countries (Bailey & Dragons, 2013) as it the last stage of the expatriation stages starting with filling a position, training, management of international career, international assignment completion and ends with repatriation stage (Solomon, 1995). Accordingly, repatriating to the home country may create several hardships and difficulties for repatriates such as re-entry hardships, reverse culture shock, readjustment, and re-joining family and relatives (Ho et al., 2016; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010).

Repatriates after completing an international assignment and returning to their home country somehow expect to gain several benefits such as a better environment and social ties (Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). Difficulties and hardships faced in doing so may lead to a negative image and attitudes about the life in the home country especially when expectations did not met their desires and may influence the decision to stay their home countries (Ligard, 2001). As a result, this may lead them to consider re-expatriation or to consider that re-expatriation as a plan in their future (Ho et al., 2016). This particularly so among academic SIEs as the opportunity for employment and financial incentives for them can be a bit higher compared to other groups of expatriates due to their specific skills (Al Shammari, 2013).

2.2 Family Outcomes

Family outcomes are considered as among the main motivational factors and are related to the benefits that individuals expect to obtain from their re-expatriation or even as a reason to expatriate (Carr, Inkson, & Thorn, 2005; Doherty et al., 2011; Ho et al., 2016; Jackson et al., 2005; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). These outcomes

could be better place and environment for children, a better place for children in terms of education (Tung, 2007) and a better place for children's future (Ho et al., 2016). Accordingly, if individuals believe that moving overseas to work and living in a particular host country will bring a higher level of benefits and advantages to their families in terms of life and career, they would re-expatriate (Tharenou & Caufield, 2010).

In the expatriate literature, numerous research studies have studied and focused on the role of family outcomes in the lives of expatriates (Carr et al., 2005; Jackson et al., 2005; Tung, 2007). For example, in an earlier research study conducted, Tung (2007) pointed out that a better quality of life for a family is considered a main pull factor driving individuals toward living abroad. Jackson et al. (2005) found that family concerns, among other motivational factors, are pulling and attracting individuals to accept an international assignment. Carr et al. (2005) supported these findings, arguing that family issues are very important in deciding on accepting the international assignment.

Therefore, academic SIEs who have completed their international assignments and have repatriated to their home country may face negative expectations about their desires and their lives in their home countries such as re-joining and family readjustments (Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). Hence, academic SIEs who expecting to gain and obtain various kinds of benefits for their families abroad may potentially be more likely and more motivated to re-expatriate rather than staying in their home countries for an extended period of time (Ho et al., 2016).

2.3 Perceived Academic Career Success

Perceived academic career success refers to the benefits and professional opportunities that academics could potentially obtain from their work environment which, in turn, increases their level of work productivity through institutional support for research, instructional facilities and academic freedom, orientation, and opportunity for promotion (Lehn, 2016). The movement of academic SIEs to work abroad can be explained by various kinds of push and pull forces (Altbach, 2013; Selmer & Luring, 2010). Some of these push and pull forces include financial concerns, economic conditions, work productivity and unemployment, which, in turn, lead academic SIEs to start looking for alternative opportunities abroad (Lehn, 2016; Richardson, 2006; Richardson & McKenna 2006; Selmer & Luring, 2010). Other academics could be motivated to move abroad for issues such as conducting research overseas and overseas work experience and to explore other parts of the world (Lehn, 2016; Richardson, 2006; Trembath, 2016).

In addition, academic SIEs may move abroad due to the perception of higher job security or being dissatisfied with job market in their home country (Lehn, 2016; Kim, 2009).

In the expatriate literature, scholars have extensively reviewed an extensive number of factors motivating professional academics toward moving abroad (Kurka, 2007; Trembath, 2016). Accordingly, Kurka (2007) revealed that professionals are encouraged and motivated to work abroad due to financial considerations, quality of life and lifestyle, social networks and work environment, career development and institutional support, employment and international work experience, economic conditions and personal attitudes. Similarly, Altbach's (2004) study showed several obstacles faced by academics at home such as limited academic freedom, corruption in academic promotions, poor job security and instability, which are push forces that drive academics to leave their parent countries for positions abroad (Altbach, 2004).

In this regard, academic SIEs who have their expectations and desires met in terms of work productivity at home may potentially have better opportunities abroad such as academic freedom, communication and orientation, institutional and administrative support (Lehn, 2016). Therefore, as the professional opportunities of academic SIEs have positive impacts on their decisions to move abroad for the first time, professional

opportunities for academic career successes have also a significant impact on their re-expatriation intention especially as they have already experienced the differences between home-host countries.

2.4 Psychological Well-being

The concept of psychological well-being is referred to as the positive psychological functioning of people or the state of people who can function psychologically well enough in terms of realizing the true potential (Badr & Schuster, 2015; Ryff, 1995; Wang & Nayir, 2006). Psychological well-being, particularly in the expatriate literature, has appeared to be critical factor as it reduces stress, complexity and uncertainty that expatriation causes (Tung, 1981; Wang & Kanungo, 2004). In contrast, poor psychological well-being leads expatriates to leave the host country after the international assignment completion as it associated with their psychological withdrawal (Badr & Schuster, 2015; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Wang, 2002). Psychological well-being is significantly related to expatriate outcomes during an international assignment (Wang & Kanungo, 2004; Wang, 2002). This conclusion is supported in numerous research studies in gaining a better understanding of the role of psychological well-being on expatriate outcomes (Badr & Schuster, 2015; Vohra & Bhatnagar, 2010; Wang & Nayir, 2006).

For example, a research study conducted by Wang and Nayir (2006) revealed that expatriates with a higher level of psychological well-being are positively associated with their social network interactions through various kinds of support resources such as emotional, appraisal, instrumental, and informational support resources. These may, in turn, help expatriates to get rid of all obstacles that expatriation causes. Similarly, Badr and Schuster (2015) found that all kinds of support resources increase the level of psychological well-being in the lives of expatriates during their international assignments, which, as a result, enhancing them in performing effectively, readjusting faster and reducing stress and complexity.

In line with this, the motivational factors that attract individuals and particularly academic SIEs to accept an international assignment such as family outcomes and academic career success will not be motivational factors if these individuals are adversely affected psychologically in the host country (Badr & Schuster, 2015). That is because the psychological factors related to the process of individuals in deciding for expatriation have significant impacts on their decisions and behaviours including personality traits, beliefs and intentions (Groenewold, Bruijn, & Bilsborrow, 2012).

Moreover, research studies have been done on the impact of psychological well-being as a mediator on expatriate outcomes (Groenewold et al., 2012; Wang; 2002). For example, Wang (2002) found that psychological well-being positively mediated the relationship between social network in the host country and expatriate performance and effectiveness during their stay in the host country. A large number of studies in the expatriate literature have focused on the relationship between the expatriate outcomes and psychological well-being during their initial time of expatriation (Badr & Schuster, 2015; Groenewold et al., 2012; Wang, 2002; Wank & Kanungo, 2004; Wang & Nayir, 2006).

However, very few studies have been found so far on re-expatriation (Ho et al., 2016), and motivational factors such as psychological well-being and family outcomes may significantly differ as reasons for their movements abroad for several times. Therefore, psychological well-being plays a significant role in the intentions of academic SIEs re-expatriate as the limited research studies on re-expatriation intention among this group of academic contributes to a misunderstanding of the different reasons attracting and encouraging them to apply again for living in a host country (Ho et al., 2016).

III. Propositions

Several research studies on the motivation of academic SIEs to move abroad has revealed that numerous factors influence their decisions to accept an international assignment for the initial time of expatriation, whereas very limited studies have recognized the re-expatriation intention of such individuals and the motivational factors driving them towards moving abroad (Ho et al., 2016; Tharenou & Seet, 2014). Based on the suggestions of Abdel-Rahman, Ramalu and Subramaniam (2017) in focusing on family and career outcomes in terms of re-expatriation intention among academic SIEs and based on the discussion above, this study proposes several propositions on the relationship between family outcomes, perceived academic career success, psychological well-being, and the re-expatriation intention, which will be tested in later research study.

Proposition 1: Family outcomes are considered as motivational factors in terms of re-expatriation intention among academic SIEs.

Proposition 2: Perceived academic career success is considered as a motivational factor in terms of re-expatriation intention among academic SIEs.

Proposition 3: Family outcomes associated with psychological well-being among academic SIEs increase the level of re-expatriation intention.

Proposition 4: Perceived academic career success associated with psychological well-being among academic SIEs increase the level of re-expatriation intention.

Proposition 5: Psychological well-being is considered to mediate the relationship between family outcomes, perceived academic career success and re-expatriation intention among academic SIEs.

IV. Conceptual Framework

The illustrated conceptual framework shown in Figure 1 proposes that family outcomes and perceived academic career success have a positive relationship with the re-expatriation intention of academic SIEs. In addition, family outcomes and perceived academic career success have a positive relationship with the mediator effect of psychological well-being. Psychological well-being positively mediates the relationship between family outcomes and perceived academic career success. Based on the theory of Push-Pull forces (Toren, 1976) suggested that push factors are those factors that drive people to move outside of their home country to a specific host country due to reasons such as economic conditions or unemployment (Richardson, 2006; Selmer & Luring, 2010), whereas pull forces are those factors motivating and encouraging these people to moving abroad for several reasons such as lifestyle and family outcomes and career advancement and development (Ho et al., 2016; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). Therefore, family outcomes and perceived academic career success are among the motivational factors pulling individuals towards moving abroad not only for the initial time, but also for re-expatriation too.

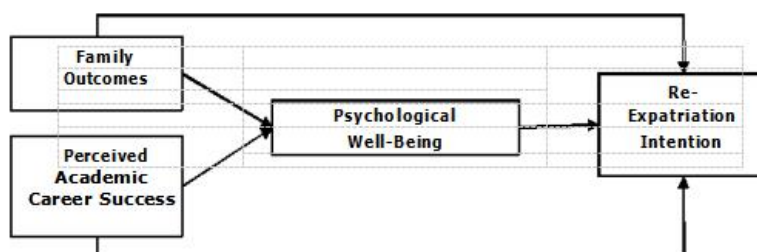


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

V. Discussion

The main findings of the expatriate literature that focused on the reasons to expatriate have revealed that these reasons could be explained by push and pull factors (Selmer & Luring, 2010; Toren, 1976; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010), which is supported by the theory of Push-Pull Theory of Toren (1976) that stated push forces are these forces driving individuals to escape to a specific host country such as unemployment and economic conditions, whereas the pull forces motivating individuals toward moving to another country such as social and career-related outcomes. In reference to the expatriate literature, research studies have revealed that motivational factors abroad are associated with an individual's re-expatriation intention once he/she repatriates to their his/her country after completing an international assignment specially if he/she is faces different kinds of challenges and difficulties such as reverse culture shock and readjustment (Ho et al., 2016; Tharenou & Seet, 2014).

This study suggests that family outcomes and perceived academic career success as motivational factors are related to the re-expatriation intentions of academic SIEs. This study also proposes that psychological well-being mediates the relationship between the study variables mentioned above and re-expatriation intention. Theoretically, this study contributes in adding to the existing literature on new phenomenon called re-expatriation intention because previous studies have mainly focused on expatriation for the initial time (Doherty et al., 2011; Jackson et al., 2005; Richardson, 2006; Selmer & Luring, 2009; Tharenou & Caufield, 2010). Very few studies can be found in the literature on re-expatriation intention (Ho et al., 2016; Tharenou & Seet, 2014). In addition, very limited studies can be found in the expatriate literature on academic SIEs despite the ever-increasing number of such individuals moving abroad seeking jobs in the global marketplace (Lehn, 2016; Trembath, 2016). As the previous studies have mainly focused on organizational expatriates, academic SIEs have not be given enough research attention to understand the main reasons of expatriation among this group of individuals (Al Shammari, 2013; Richardson, 2006; Trembath, 2016).

Therefore, the aim of this study is to understand the dynamic nature of the reasons aligning with the trend of their increased movements trends abroad. Practically, this study helps expatriates, particularly academic SIEs, to understand and determine the main motivational factors aligning with re-expatriation and the major reasons for the array of challenges and difficulties that they face in being an expatriate or in re-expatriation. Additionally, re-expatriated academics who have experienced life work-related issues in a host country are considered more valuable compared to individuals who will be selected for the initial time due to their previous work experience that allows them to be more familiar with a host country environment, which, in turn, allow them to adjust faster and achieve more success in a short period of time.

VI. Conclusion

This study suggested and discussed the re-expatriation intention among academic SIEs through several motivational factors, namely, family outcomes, perceived academic career success, and psychological well-being. Based on the Push-Pull theory (Toren, 1976), which as stated that pull factors are among the reasons motivating and encouraging expatriates toward move overseas, the literature reveals that family outcomes and perceived academic career success are considered among the most critical forces that pull individuals to accept an international assignment. In particular, academic SIEs are found to be highly influenced by psychological well being in the host country, and individuals with a higher level of psychological well-being will be more likely to stay for a long time in the host country. In this regard, such these factors are found to positively influence the decisions of individuals to accept an international assignment and exert a significant impact on individuals during first-time expatriation.

Therefore, this study predicts that family outcomes, perceived academic career success, and psychological well-being are likely to influence the decisions of individuals to re-expatriate. However, the reasons to expatriate or even to re-expatriate vary among individuals. Future studies could examine another pull factors such as a better quality of life or a better work environment. Future research should also examine push forces such as financial issues and unemployment at home on re-expatriation intention, taking into consideration that push factors have a significant impact on an individual's decision to stay at home or to leave for another country.

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