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INVESTIGATING NEW ZEALAND WORKERS’ WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE EXPATRIATES WITH INFORMATION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT IN THE NEW ZEALAND WORKPLACE

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ABSTRACT

New Zealand organisations are required to ‘import’ expatriates to fill skills shortages in the labour market caused by ‘brain drain’. A major contributor towards retaining expatriates in their New Zealand jobs for as long as possible is the amount of help, such as information and social support, expatriates receive from their local co-workers. The present study set out to explore New Zealand workers’ willingness to provide information and social support to expatriates, and subsequently understand New Zealand workers’ psychological motivations for providing help to expatriates in New Zealand workplaces. Specifically, the present study tested the similarity of expatriates’ countries-of-origin to New Zealand, the social dominance of expatriates’ countries-of-origin and the threat that expatriates pose to finite work-related resources as psychological motivators for providing or withholding help to expatriates. Fifty-six Subject Matter Experts who had approximately 13 years experience with observing relationships in New Zealand workplaces completed an online scenario-based questionnaire. The questionnaire presented seven fictitious expatriates from Britain, Australia, Canada, South Africa, USA, Japan and India, and asked participants to estimate the typical helping preferences of New Zealand workers towards the above expatriates. Kendall’s Tau rank correlation coefficients (τ) indicated that, as suggested by the present sample of Subject Matter Experts, New Zealand workers’ willingness to provide information was related to their willingness to provide social support for expatriates from Australia, Canada, South Africa and USA; but not for expatriates from Britain, Japan and India. Overall, as rated by the present sample of Subject Matter Experts, Sign tests indicated that New Zealand workers were most willing to help a) British and Australian expatriates, then b) Canadian, South African and American expatriates, and lastly, c) Japanese and Indian expatriates. Kendall’s tau rank correlation coefficients (τ) indicated that the above pattern of preferences for helping was largely influenced by similarity and threat of expatriates; specifically, New Zealand workers, as rated by Subject Matter Experts, were more willing to help more similar and more threatening expatriates. In the present study, social dominance of expatriates’ countries-of-origin was not rated as a significant predictor of New Zealand workers’ willingness to help expatriates. The discussion presents various implications for stakeholders involved with expatriate transfers to New Zealand.
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This thesis is dedicated to Elva Evelyn van Rooyen (“Gran”)
1930 - 2010

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