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When all roads lead to Rome: Expatriate Adjustment in a United Nations Organisation.
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Abstract

Studies of expatriate adjustment have traditionally focused on corporate expatriate assignments where foreign employees are often the only expatriate, or one of a handful in a host organisation. Multicultural not-for-profit organisations such as United Nations organisations have largely been ignored. It was hypothesised that classic predictors of expatriate adjustment – Spousal Adjustment, Culture Novelty and Acculturation Style, and novel variables of Economic Adjustment and Stage in Assignment would predict Expatriate Adjustment and subsequent Cognitions to Withdraw prematurely from the assignment.

181 expatriates representing 38 countries from all economic levels completed an online survey investigating their experiences on assignment to a United Nations Organisation in Rome, Italy. Black & Stephens (1989) classic scales of Expatriate Adjustment, Spousal Adjustment, Culture Novelty and Cognitions to Withdraw were employed along with Acculturation Style, Economic Adjustment and Stage in Assignment measures designed for this study. Qualitative data was also collected around expatriates' cognitions to withdraw from their assignment and reasons to stay in order to gain a richer understanding of the expatriate experience.

The best predictors of Expatriate Adjustment and subsequent Cognitions to Withdraw for United Nations expatriate employees in Rome were classic predictor Culture Novelty and novel predictors Economic Adjustment and Stage in Assignment. Structural Equation Modelling indicated the best fitting model of Expatriate Adjustment and subsequent Cognitions to Withdraw demonstrated moderate fit ($\chi^2 = 1045.19$, $df = 486$, $p = .000$, TLI = .80, CFI = .82, RMSEA = .08) with Culture Novelty predicting General and Interaction Adjustment; Economic Adjustment predicting General Adjustment; and Adjustment Stage predicting General, Interaction and Work Adjustment. General Adjustment was the only significant predictor of Cognitions to Withdraw.

Qualitative analysis suggested that the classic adjustment measures used did not adequately capture the experiences of these expatriates and that caution should be taken in generalising the literature to not-for-profit populations. Furthermore the outcomes of this study suggest that the inclusion of novel variables of Economic Adjustment and Stage in Assignment as predictors of expatriate adjustment could be warranted for future research. Sample size and adequacy of measures both limited the extent to which

analysis could be conducted and results generalised. More research into the expatriate experience in the not-for-profit sector is desperately needed.

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