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# THE INTEREST OF SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATES IN WORKING VIRTUALLY FOR THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN IN RELATION TO UNIVERSAL VALUES\*

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## Abstract

*This article aims to investigate the interest of self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) in working virtually for their country of origin and its relationship to the values of the individual. This research contributes to our understanding of the interest in working virtually for the country of origin and its relationships to universal values. The analysis is based on a quantitative study conducted with 1,970 SIEs from Lithuania. More than half of the respondents were willing to work virtually for their country of origin. Moreover, higher motivation influences the willingness to work virtually.*

*Positive correlations were found between collectivist and individualist values and willingness to work virtually for the country of origin and between individualist values and economic motivation. The study is based solely on self-reports of their subjective values and opinions and refers to the case of expatriates from a single country.*

**Keywords:** *self-initiated expatriates, SIEs motivation, virtual work, universal values, country of origin.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mobility and working in a foreign country have become a feature of modern culture (Rodda, 2015). In 2021, there were 56.8 million expatriates, and growth is expected to continue (Ireland, 2021). Self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) pursue international work experience on their initiative (Andresen et al., 2020; Baruch et al., 2016).

When citizens leave their country of origin, they take their human capital, i.e., their knowledge, experience, and potential, with them to another country. This is a loss for the country of origin. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that expatriates' intention to return decreases with the duration of their stay abroad, so that only a small proportion of those who leave implement plans to return to the country of origin during their careers (Al Ariss, 2010; Nekby, 2006). Even when expatriates decide to return to their country of origin, they expect to return to their previous lifestyle and re-establish their social and business contacts (Hurn, 1999); however, the reality is often different. Readjustment for SIEs can be even more difficult than an adjustment in a foreign country because they often do not have a job before their return, and it may take some time to find one (Begley et al., 2008). Therefore, many returning SIEs plan to leave their country of origin again (Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė et al., 2022).

Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė et al. (2014) proposed a conceptual model of a virtual workplace for expatriate work based on the fact that knowledge and work experience can be transferred through electronic communication (Kosłowski et al., 2017). Given that virtual work is flexible in numerous geographic locations, we suggest that virtual work for home-country organizations may be of interest to expatriates who are likely to remain outside their home country

for long periods of their careers but want to stay in touch with the home country and its employees. This assumption is consistent with Baruch's (2000) findings that virtual work opportunities are proposed by employers mainly for economic reasons and accepted by employees for both economic and social reasons. According to Schwartz (2012), goals are associated with values that motivate action. Therefore, we assume values can influence a person's interest in working virtually and formulate our main research question. What is the interest of SIEs in working virtually for organizations based in their country of origin, and how are these related to the individual's values? By 'interest,' we mean the willingness and motivation to work virtually for the country of origin.

This paper explains the theoretical background, including subsections on virtual work and the motivation and values of the SIEs identified in this study context. Then, the research model and instrument are presented. The study results are analyzed, followed by a discussion and suggestions for further research. Finally, a brief conclusion summarises the main findings, implications, and limitations.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. Virtual work

Three main features can characterize virtual work: location (different from the primary workplace), time (synchronous or asynchronous communication with colleagues), and use of ICT. The development of ICT contributes most to the development of virtual work (Craipeau, 2010).

Evidence of the growing popularity of virtual work is the percentage of companies

offering employees the opportunity to perform some or all work tasks away from their employer's premises (Robinson, 2022). Howington (2019) notes that accountants, engineers, teachers/researchers, writers, and consultants are the most demanding occupations when employers hire virtual workers. In addition, the situation during COVID -19 has developed opportunities and acceptance of working from anywhere. Recent studies (e.g., Takahashi et al., 2021; Larson and Zhao, 2017) highlight that the widespread acceptance of virtual work after the COVID-19 pandemic could provide people with more choices in where they work and live and have a positive impact on the environment, and therefore is likely to influence migration patterns in the future significantly.

Komito and Bates' (2009, p. 232) study of Polish migrants in Ireland found that "most Polish nationals interacted only with other Poles, whether they lived in Ireland or elsewhere," mainly through social media. From this, one might conclude that migrants "no longer live in physical ghettos; they now live in 'virtual' ghettos or enclaves" (Komito and Bates, 2009, p. 232). In some ways, these inclinations support our notion of expatriates living elsewhere and working virtually for their country of origin.

Compared to a decade ago, the number of virtual workers has increased by 115 percent due to the positive benefits of virtual work. However, Schawbel (2018) found that virtual workers are lonelier and more likely to quit than others. However, this turnover intention could be related to the tasks assigned to virtual work roles, as well as the values of the individual. Those who are more individualistic and like to work alone may prefer to work virtually. In addition, some studies show that Generation X

and Millennials are more accepting of this alternative form of work (Wilkie, 2019).

## **2.2. SIEs' motivation to work and contribute to their country of origin**

The literature on expatriates lacks enough studies on their motivation to contribute to their country of origin. However, the theory of investment motivation in the diaspora proposed by Nielsen and Riddle (2010) assumes that some people who work abroad for an extended period have a strong interest in investing in their country of origin—financially, socially, and emotionally. Macpherson (1994) and White (2016) agree and note that many expatriates show some level of commitment to their country of origin and are known to invest physical, social, cultural, and intellectual capital in their home country while working abroad

Wicks' (2002, p. 679) study found that the decision to work virtually is based on the individual's beliefs about how it will affect their career, ambitions, and financial incentives. This contrasts with the prevailing belief that virtual work is convenient for workers, saves time, and offers more flexibility in balancing work and family.

A study by Kumpikaite-Valiuniene et al. (2022) showed the economic and social motivation of migrants to work virtually for their country of origin. This could be related to the geographic flexibility of virtual work. We, therefore, hypothesize that virtual work is likely to be of interest to SIEs for financial (economic) and social reasons, e.g., to advance one's career and make new social contacts (Wicks, 2002; Nielsen and Riddle, 2010; White, 2016):

*H1a. The economic motivation for SIEs to work virtually is positively related to*

*the willingness to work virtually for the country of origin.*

*H1b. The social motivation of SIEs to work virtually is positively related to the willingness to work virtually for the country of origin.*

As noted above, some SIEs are unwilling to contribute to their countries of origin. In addition, Verburg et al. (2013) identified motivators that affect workers' willingness to work virtually. These motivators include control, duty, achievement, creation, community, freedom, harmony, and reputation, which could be related to individual values.

### **2.3. Values concerning SIEs' interest and motivation in working virtually for their country of origin**

Individuals are guided by the value structure of their society and behave accordingly (Schiefer, 2013). Therefore, people have different cultures because their values are different in these societies (Fontaine, 2007). However, individuals' values are flexible and adaptive systems that can respond and change in response to external circumstances such as global critical events (Bojanowska et al., 2021; Bardi et al., 2009). Some studies (e.g., Kumpikaite-Valiuniene et al., 2021; Tartakovsky, 2017; Rudnev, 2014) suggest that value preferences influence migration decisions and that migrants' values are likely to change after emigrating to a culturally different country

Values can be explored at individual and societal levels (Knafo et al., 2011). In this paper, however, the focus is on the individual level, where values can be described as values that express the general motivational goals of a person in different situations

(Rokeach, 1973). The main dimensions that can be used to distinguish values at the individual level are individualism and collectivism (Schwartz, 2012; Triandis, 1993). These dimensions can also affect an individual's Internet use behavior (Lim et al., 2004), which relates to the exploration of virtual work

Taskin and Devos (2005) found that employees with higher individualism scores like to work from home because it is an individualistic way of working. In addition, Maznevski et al. (2002) highlighted that employees with an individualistic orientation are primarily responsible for themselves as individuals, which Adamovic (2020) found to be consistent with the context of virtual work. Based on the previous but limited number of studies, it can be assumed that employees with high levels of collectivist values have a lower propensity to use ICT and virtual work. Therefore, we propose the following:

*H2a. The individualistic values of SIEs are positively related to the willingness to work virtually for the country of origin.*

*H2b. The collectivistic values of SIEs are negatively related to the willingness to work virtually for the country of origin.*

Individualism stands for 'openness to change' (Schwartz, 2012). This orientation is associated with values such as wealth, social recognition, ambition, success, independence, and freedom, which are often associated with economic but not social benefits and motivation. Individualism includes value types that emphasize the independence of thought, action, and feeling and a willingness to change (self-direction, stimulation), as well as value types that emphasize the pursuit of self-interest and relative

success and dominance over others (power, achievement). In addition, hedonism, which involves pursuing pleasure and self-gratification, is among the individualistic values. Based on the characteristics of the values, we hypothesize the following:

*H3a. The individualistic values of SIEs are positively related to the economic motivation to work virtually for the country of origin.*

*H3b. The individualistic values of SIEs are negatively related to the social motivation to work virtually for the country of origin.*

Collectivism stands for values of ‘preservation’ and ‘self-transcendence.’ This dimension includes those values that emphasize order, self-restraint, preservation of the past, resistance to change (security, conformity, tradition), and concern for the welfare and interests of others (universalism, benevolence). Research by Macpherson (1994) and White (2016) suggests that SIEs’ commitment and emotional attachment to their country of origin and past

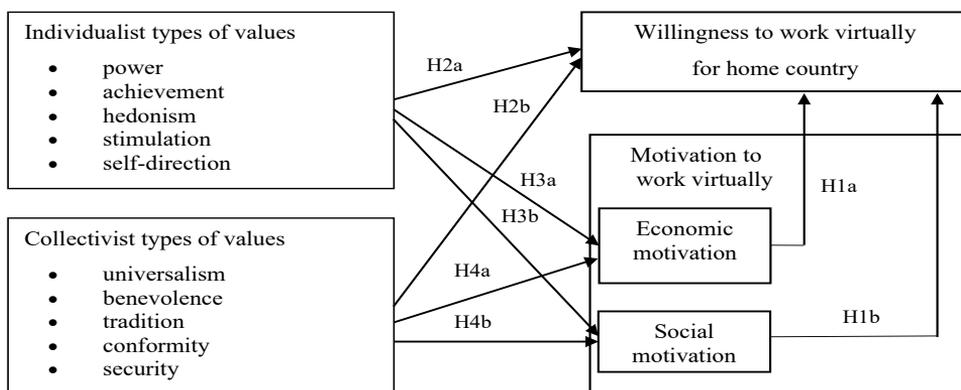
are closely related to collectivist values. Therefore, we suggest that collectivism is more strongly associated with the social motivation to work virtually and hypothesize that:

*H4a. The collectivistic values of SIEs are negatively related to the economic motivation to work virtually for the country of origin.*

*H4b. The collectivistic values of SIEs are positively related to the social motivation to work virtually for the country of origin.*

### 3. METHODS

To investigate the values of SIEs and their relationships with willingness and motivation to work virtually for their country of origin, we conducted a questionnaire survey among Lithuanian expatriates. The theoretical model is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Theoretical model

Source: Authors

## 3.1. The context of empirical research

The case of Lithuania was chosen for this empirical study. Lithuania has a population of less than 3 million and one of the highest emigration rates in the European Union in the last 25 years (Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė et al., 2021). Lithuanians leave the country mainly for economic reasons and better employment opportunities abroad (Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė and Žičkutė, 2017). About 70-80 percent of immigrants to the country are returning Lithuanians (Migration in numbers, 2022). However, about 70 percent of returned SIEs have plans to go abroad again (Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė et al., 2022). This mobility is associated with adjustment problems upon return and challenges in finding suitable employment. Factors such as periods of significant political change and the comparative economic performance of the country should also be considered when analyzing and categorizing national culture. Finally, Lithuania is categorized by Hofstede (2016) as oriented toward the individualistic dimension. Previous studies (e.g., Adamovic, 2020; Michailova, 2009; Fontaine, 2002) have shown that employees from individualistic countries have more positive attitudes toward virtual work than employees from collectivistic cultures. Therefore, we selected Lithuania as a helpful context to study the values and interest in virtual work for their country of origin.

## 3.2. Variables

Schwartz's universal values were measured using the Schwartz Value Survey Instrument (Schwartz, 1992). Respondents were asked to rate the list of 52 values on a 9-point Likert scale (from '-1' as opposed to the respondent's to '7' as extremely important) grouped into ten value types defined in the original instrument. Five value

types - power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, and self-direction - measure individualism, and five value types - universalism, benevolence, tradition, conformity, and security - measure collectivism (Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987). Internal consistency of the scales was measured using Cronbach's alpha, which ranged from 0.727 to 0.898, including the scales for individualism (0.846) and collectivism (0.882).

Two questions with categorical response options measured interest in virtual work. Willingness to work virtually was assessed by the question, "If you were offered the opportunity to work virtually for a company in Lithuania (e.g., to partially complete certain projects or tasks) using information technology (ICT) such as Skype, e-mail, etc., how would you evaluate this opportunity?". Motivation was measured following Baruch (2000) and Nielsen and Riddle (2010), both of whom evaluate motivation as an economic and social construct. The question asked, "What benefits could you see in virtual work?" with the response options: none, economic (additional income), social (e.g., relationship with the country of origin or easier job search upon return). In addition, the area of virtual work was included in the questionnaire, with the response options: none, consulting, programming, editing, translation, and accounting. Each question also provided an open-ended response for additional possibilities.

The "other" category was analyzed qualitatively for willingness and motivation to work virtually. Some responses that reflected earlier categories were mapped to these. In the case of willingness to work virtually, a new category, "already working" (category 6), was added. All variables related to interest in virtual work were categorical (see Table 2 for coding categories).

Demographic questions on gender, age, education, and country were added as control variables. Gender was coded as “1” for men and “2” for women. Age was measured by a year of birth question and recoded into the variable age. An additional variable was calculated for age groups, starting with the youngest (up to 24 years, coded as “1”) and continuing in 10-year increments up to 55 and over (coded as “5”) since some respondents were older than 65. Educational level was measured using educational categories (from “1” for primary education to “7” for doctoral degree) and an open-ended question option. All respondents were Lithuanians (the questionnaire was written in Lithuanian), and we added a question about the country in which they now live. It is worth noting that our country of residence variable does not reflect the legal residence status of expatriates. All countries of the world were included in the list of responses and coded accordingly.

### 3.3. Sample and procedure

A convenience sampling method was selected due to the low response rate for this type of research (Shaffer et al., 2006).

Our survey was conducted online before the pandemic COVID -19. Invitations to participate in the survey with a link to an online questionnaire were sent to Lithuanians living abroad through social media and websites and through the websites of Lithuanian expatriates in various countries. Reaching respondents via the Internet was particularly effective because Lithuanian expatriates use the Internet extensively and are in constant contact with their country of origin (e.g., to follow Lithuanian news, discuss current events, and share information with locals).

Four thousand five hundred forty respondents completed the online questionnaire. Next, we excluded respondents who had not made the decision to go abroad themselves but were influenced by other factors (e.g., family or organization), did not intend to return to their country of origin, Lithuania, and were not working (studying, unemployed, or on maternity leave) at the time of the survey. Therefore, we reduced the final sample to 1,970 respondents, all identified as self-initiated expatriates. The demographic characteristics of the sample are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of the sample

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male (1)	560	28.4
	Female (2)	1410	71.6
<b>Age</b>	24 and less (1)	277	14.1
	25-34 (2)	948	48.1
	35-44 (3)	491	24.9
	45-54 (4)	213	10.8
	55 and more (5)	41	2.1

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Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Education</b>	Primary and main (1)	8	0.4
	Secondary (2)	357	18.1
	Professional (3)	322	16.3
	Other (4)	24	1.2
	Higher (5)	1259	63.1
<b>Country of residence</b>	UK (22)	703	35.7
	Norway (16)	381	19.3
	Germany (15)	139	7.1
	Ireland (40)	128	6.5
	Denmark (25)	115	5.8
	US (3)	100	5.1
	Sweden (8)	82	4.2
	Belgium (41)	55	2.8
	Iceland (43)	42	2.1
	Spain (20)	41	2.1
	Netherlands (18)	37	1.9
	Australia (36)	24	1.2
	France (31)	23	1.2
	Other Europe	74	4.1
	Other Americas	16	3.8
	Asia	6	0.3
	Australia	2	0.1
	Africa	2	0.1
		N	1970

There is no clear data on SIEs from Lithuania. However, it is known that about 150,000 people have left Lithuania since 1991. Therefore, based on SurveyMonkey (2022) and a sample size of 1,970 respondents, our data are reliable, with a confidence level of 95 percent and a margin of error of two percent. Even the proportion of male respondents ( $n = 560$ , 28.4 percent of respondents) is reliable, with a four percent margin of error. For more information on the sample, see Table 1, which lists the major target countries and reflects the main trends in Lithuania.

In the survey sample, most respondents were women, which could be related to the online nature of this survey or the fact that the questionnaire was lengthy, and women are more likely to participate in completing and returning lengthy surveys. Seventy-three percent of respondents were between the ages of 25 and 44, representing the most productive age group in the workforce. This also reflects the possibility of a long-term career contributing to the country of origin, not just the host country. In addition, most of the sample has higher education qualifications (63.1 percent), which are also associated with the possibility of participating in virtual work. The significant countries of residence are Western and Northern Europe and the United States. Their technological infrastructures and use show a high positive

capacity for the employment of virtual workers.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Descriptive and correlation analysis

The distribution of individual interests in virtual work for the country of origin in the sample is shown in Table 2. Most respondents (56.4 percent) were interested in working virtually. The second largest group of respondents (20.3 percent) did not know if they would be interested in such work. Therefore, it is conceivable that a portion of this group might consider virtual work as an option later. 6.9 percent of respondents indicated that virtual work was not an option in their case due to lack of time, other commitments, or job-specific factors. Consulting (40.0 percent) was cited as the most popular possible type of virtual work. Translation (13.6 percent) was second, and accounting (8.4 percent) was third. Editing and programming were cited as other possible types of virtual work. However, 23.9 percent of respondents said they could not do virtual work. This is consistent with responses to the question about willingness to work virtually from both respondents who are not interested in such work and those who cannot work virtually.

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**Table 2.** Descriptive matrix of interest to work virtually

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Willingness to work virtually	not interested (1)	311	15.8
	not possible (2)	136	6.9
	do not know (3)	399	20.3
	other (4)	7	0.4
	interested (5)	1111	56.4
	already working (6)	6	0.3
Motivation to work virtually	none (0)	307	15.6
	economic (1)	945	48.0
	social (2)	718	36.4
Possible field of virtual work	none (1)	470	23.9
	consulting (2)	788	40.0
	programming (3)	60	3.0
	editing (4)	112	5.7
	translation (5)	267	13.6
	accounting (6)	165	8.4
	other (7)	108	5.5
	N	1970	100

Most respondents (48.0 percent) saw the value of virtual work and were motivated by economic motives, such as an additional source of income. Maintaining a relationship with the country of origin and the increased likelihood of finding a job if returning to Lithuania were also seen as valuable options. Responses in the “other” category reflected a combination of the categories above, contributing to the country of origin and personal development, and even virtual

work as a hobby (36.4 percent, with the last category). In contrast, 15.6 percent of respondents saw no benefit in virtual work, which is consistent with the previous question about being able to work virtually.

The descriptive statistics and correlation results of the main variables are presented in Table 3. Correlation is measured using Kendall’s tau coefficient.

**Table 3.** Descriptive and correlation matrix

Values	Mean	SD	Correlation coefficient		
			Willingness to work virtually	Motivation to work virtually	
				Economic motivation	Social motivation
<b>Individualism</b>	4.88	1.23	0.061*	0.067**	-0.029
Power	3.93	1.60	0.017	0.056**	-0.027
Achievement	5.04	1.41	0.068**	0.059**	-0.021
Hedonism	4.46	1.92	0.009	0.071**	-0.077**
Stimulation	5.32	1.48	0.077**	0.057**	-0.008
Self-direction	5.67	1.32	0.120**	0.026	0.034
<b>Collectivism</b>	5.05	1.14	0.056**	0.023	0.007
Benevolence	5.57	1.31	0.071**	0.028	0.014
Tradition	4.06	1.56	0.010	-0.001	-0.012
Conformity	4.76	1.46	0.026	0.038*	-0.027
Universalism	5.46	1.39	0.088**	-0.006	0.069**
Security	5.43	1.18	0.054**	0.037*	-0.011

**Note:** N=1970. \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$  (2-tailed).

Correlation analysis showed that economic motivation ( $r = 0.144$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and social motivation ( $r = 0.202$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) to work virtually were positively related to willingness to work virtually for the country of origin, supporting hypotheses H1a and H1b. In general, willingness to work virtually was positively correlated with individualism, supporting H2a. However, no correlation was found between individual values such as power, hedonism, and willingness to work virtually. In addition, a positive correlation was found between collective values such as benevolence, universalism and the security and general dimension of collectivism. Therefore, H2b was rejected. Hypothesis H3a was also supported, as economic motivation to work virtually was positively correlated with individualistic values and all types of values, except self-direction, which belongs to this group. However, all of these significant relationships were very weak. Only a negative relationship was found between hedonism and social

motivation. Therefore, hypothesis H3b was not supported because no statistically significant correlation was found between other individualistic values and social motivation. In addition, no statistically significant correlation was found between the collective dimension and economic or social motivation. Therefore, hypotheses H4a and H4b are rejected. We only found positive relationships between social motivation and universalism and economic motivation and conformity and security. Structural equation modeling provided additional results on universal values and interest in working virtually.

## 4.2. Multiple comparisons of values

For the multiple comparisons of values, we selected four groups of respondents according to their willingness to work virtually. Due to the lack of a normal distribution, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used. The results showed similarities and differences between the groups in their values (Table 4).

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**Table 4.** Results matrix of multiple comparison analysis of values in groups according to the willingness to work virtually

Values	Willingness to work virtually (mean rank)				Chi-square
	Interested or already working	Do not know or other	Not possible	Not interested	
Individualism	1027.80	919.72	974.42	924.30	15.257**
Power	996.27	981.64	988.94	950.35	1.614
Achievement	1027.98	941.88	932.44	913.08	14.880**
Hedonism	992.44	960.57	1033.45	972.13	2.108
Stimulation	1036.64	902.06	966.34	919.12	22.420**
Self-direction	1066.06	856.28	921.03	893.03	53.796**
Collectivism	1021.93	944.56	979.87	910.56	12.096**
Benevolence	1032.22	921.39	963.85	910.84	18.342**
Tradition	992.14	982.03	1008.25	956.25	1.208
Conformity	1001.06	975.17	1019.70	928.13	4.649
Universalism	1041.65	917.14	936.30	894.59	25.797**
Security	1019.36	949.36	965.06	920.02	9.915*
N	1117	406	136	311	

**Note:** Total sample N=1970. \*\*  $p < 0.01$  \*  $p < 0.05$ .

According to the multiple comparison tests, the groups differed significantly in six of the ten value types, i.e., achievement, stimulation, self-direction, benevolence, universalism, and security, as well as in some collectivistic and individualistic values. Groups that exhibited different levels of willingness to engage in virtual work were similarly associated with values such

as power or hedonism and tradition and conformity.

Multiple comparison analysis of values was performed in groups according to the second variable of interest in virtual work, i.e., the possible area of virtual work. All values except hedonism and conformity differed between groups (see Table 5).

**Table 5.** Results matrix of multiple comparison analysis of values in groups according to the possible field of virtual work

Values	Possible field of virtual work (mean rank)							Chi-square
	None	Con-sulting	Pro-gram-ming	Edit-ing	Trans-lation	Ac-count-ing	Other	
Individualism	908.21	1036.49	886.83	1025.31	966.59	1035.39	933.90	19.815**
Power	944.53	1029.00	897.54	956.54	953.98	1042.42	916.27	12.861*
Achievement	902.42	1034.38	930.51	973.02	948.18	1087.21	970.80	23.015**
Hedonism	991.80	996.88	913.29	1071.38	949.54	1029.47	847.87	12.411
Stimulation	905.07	1029.93	845.54	990.11	1021.87	984.50	995.91	19.199**
Self-direction	847.09	1040.33	1039.49	1051.98	1009.10	936.63	1105.17	44.064**
Collectivism	953.03	993.28	858.14	1043.94	1024.28	1065.13	862.63	15.382*
Benevolence	926.51	999.97	874.37	1031.87	1047.56	1044.16	907.30	15.653*
Tradition	1024.45	966.33	872.78	1033.16	1003.24	1098.52	752.56	31.160**
Conformity	976.83	995.91	933.06	1013.88	972.31	1050.56	880.22	7.201
Universalism	892.10	1005.24	871.06	1080.82	1070.29	953.94	1051.26	27.171**
Security	947.39	994.07	945.88	1002.92	1020.99	1091.58	842.93	16.283*
N	470	788	60	112	267	165	108	

**Note:** Total sample N=1970. \*\* p < 0.01 \* p < 0.05.

Power, stimulation, benevolence, universalism, individualism, and collectivism were rated lowest by the group for the software programming profession. Those who saw other options for virtual work rated tradition, security, hedonism, and conformism higher. However, the last two values did not differ significantly between groups. Regarding the highest scores, the consultants' group, in particular, rated individualism and stimulation the highest, the editors' group rated self-direction and universalism the highest, and the translators' group rated benevolence the highest. The accountants' group rated power, achievement, tradition, security, and universalism, in general, the highest.

Some other significant results were also found. The programmers' group rated stimulation the lowest compared to the consultants, editors, and translators group. Self-direction was rated lowest by those who saw no possible field of activity compared to all other groups except accounting. Universalism was rated highest by those who saw editing as a possible field for work, compared to no possible field and programming. Regarding individualism and collectivism, the group for consulting rated individualism significantly higher than no possible field or programming, and the group for translation rated collectivism higher than programming and other possible fields. The lowest score for collectivism was in the group for programming, which

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was significantly different from those for editing, translation, and accounting.

Finally, a multiple comparison analysis of values was completed in groups

according to their motivation to work virtually. Tradition, conformity, and security were not significant, but differences in other values were significant (see Table 6).

**Table 6.** Results matrix of multiple comparison analysis of values in groups according to motivation to work virtually

Values	Motivation to work virtually (mean rank)			Chi-square
	None	Economic	Social	
Individualism	897.24	1034.25	959.08	15.879**
Power	919.54	1025.33	961.28	10.077**
Achievement	899.36	1027.55	966.99	12.997**
Hedonism	992.34	1034.14	918.56	17.093**
Stimulation	880.74	1024.65	978.77	15.167**
Self-direction	858.36	1003.93	1015.61	18.502**
Collectivism	919.83	1002.27	991.51	4.993
Benevolence	895.56	1005.29	997.91	9.207*
Tradition	1012.35	985.09	974.56	0.950
Conformity	959.89	1012.15	961.38	4.009
Universalism	852.87	981.28	1047.76	25.432**
Security	927.57	1011.97	975.44	5.466
N	307	945	718	

**Note:** Total sample N=1970. \*\*  $p < 0.01$  \*  $p < 0.05$ .

Economic benefit was most often considered a value of virtual work and received the highest importance (along with self-direction) when measured by an individualistic group of values. At the same time, it differed when measured by a collectivistic group of values. An additional comparison of values by the group was made using the Mann-Whitney U test. The group of respondents whose motivation was based on economic motivation valued power, achievement,

and individualism higher than the other two groups. This group also rated hedonism and universalism higher than those motivated to work virtually because of social reasons. Other significant differences in values showed that the groups with social motivation to work virtually rated values such as self-direction and universalism higher than those without motivation to work virtually. The difference in tradition, conformity, security values, and collectivism concerning

motivation was not found in the multiple comparison analyses. However, those motivated by economic reasons rated collectivism significantly higher than those not motivated to work virtually for their country of origin.

### 4.3. Structural equation modeling

Structural equation modeling was performed for three models. The first model included all ten value types as independent variables, willingness and motivation to work virtually as dependent variables,

and gender, age, and education as control variables. The second model included two sets of values, i.e., individualism and collectivism as independent variables and the same dependent and control variables as in the previous model. Because the model fit was not satisfactory for either model, the third model included only value types with previously significant paths and the same dependent and control variables (see Table 7). The moderation effects for the control variables were also tested but could not be confirmed.

**Table 7.** Results of tested models

	Models		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Power → Economic motivation to work virtually	0.046 (0.217)		
Power → Social motivation to work virtually	-0.028 (0.517)		
Power → Willingness to work virtually	-0.060 (0.063)		
Achievement → Economic motivation to work virtually	0.015 (0.719)		
Achievement → Social motivation to work virtually	0.019 (0.670)		
Achievement → Willingness to work virtually	0.041 (0.204)		
Hedonism → Economic motivation to work virtually	0.021 (0.507)		0.056 (0.023)
Hedonism → Social motivation to work virtually	-0.099 (0.002)		-0.107 (0.000)
Hedonism → Willingness to work virtually	-0.010 (0.718)		-0.025 (0.262)
Stimulation → Economic motivation to work virtually	0.008 (0.844)		
Stimulation → Social motivation to work virtually	0.042 (0.260)		
Stimulation → Willingness to work virtually	-0.003 (0.933)		
Self-direction → Economic motivation to work virtually	0.012 (0.770)		0.047 (0.163)
Self-direction → Social motivation to work virtually	-0.008 (0.851)		-0.004 (0.889)

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Self-direction → Willingness to work virtually	0.078 (0.022)		0.088 (0.001)
Benevolence → Economic motivation to work virtually	0.027 (0.569)		
Benevolence → Social motivation to work virtually	-0.009 (0.835)		
Benevolence → Willingness to work virtually	0.013 (0.699)		
Tradition → Economic motivation to work virtually	0.005 (0.886)		
Tradition → Social motivation to work virtually	-0.083 (0.335)		
Tradition → Willingness to work virtually	0.006 (0.806)		
Conformity → Economic motivation to work virtually	-0.004 (0.919)		
Conformity → Social motivation to work virtually	-0.050 (0.295)		
Conformity → Willingness to work virtually	-0.016 (0.601)		
Universalism → Economic motivation to work virtually	-0.081 (0.053)		-0.060 (0.105)
Universalism → Social motivation to work virtually	0.115 (0.001)		0.111 (0.001)
Universalism → Willingness to work virtually	-0.024 (0.445)		-0.005 (0.842)
Security → Economic motivation to work virtually	0.031 (0.467)		
Security → Social motivation to work virtually	-0.034 (0.425)		
Security → Willingness to work virtually	0.027 (0.368)		
Individualism → Economic motivation to work virtually		0.087 (0.020)	
Individualism → Social motivation to work virtually		-0.060 (0.184)	
Individualism → Willingness to work virtually		0.026 (0.416)	
Collectivism → Economic motivation to work virtually		-0.046 (0.216)	
Collectivism → Social motivation to work virtually		0.078 (0.067)	
Collectivism → Willingness to work virtually		0.031 (0.265)	
Economic motivation to work virtually → Willingness to work virtually	0.650 (0.000)	0.653 (0.000)	0.649 (0.000)
Social motivation to work virtually → Willingness to work virtually	0.677 (0.000)	0.683 (0.000)	0.677 (0.000)
Gender → Economic motivation to work virtually	0.016 (0.504)	0.015 (0.538)	0.018 (0.424)

Gender → Social motivation to work virtually	0.042 (0.066)	0.048 (0.040)	0.040 (0.070)
Gender → Willingness to work virtually	-0.020 (0.350)	-0.019 (0.340)	-0.018 (0.378)
Age → Economic motivation to work virtually	-0.122 (0.000)	-0.132 (0.000)	-0.124 (0.000)
Age → Social motivation to work virtually	0.012 (0.634)	0.039 (0.103)	0.015 (0.544)
Age → Willingness to work virtually	-0.075 (0.001)	-0.071 (0.000)	-0.075 (0.000)
Education → Economic motivation to work virtually	0.035 (0.141)	0.024 (0.296)	0.032 (0.183)
Education → Social motivation to work virtually	0.066 (0.006)	0.092 (0.000)	0.072 (0.002)
Education → Willingness to work virtually	0.045 (0.029)	0.058 (0.004)	0.045 (0.030)
SRMR	0.128	0.108	0.079
Chi-Square	33,526.33	15,785.441	13,773.908
NFI	0.511	0.005	0.344
RMS theta	0.114	0.178	0.132
R Square Adjusted (Economic motivation to work virtually)	0.022	0.021	0.022
R Square Adjusted (Social motivation to work virtually)	0.033	0.016	0.028
R Square Adjusted (Willingness to work virtually)	0.275	0.273	0.275

**Note:** Path coefficients (p-value in brackets) are presented for models. Model fit is shown for estimated models.

The best-tested model showed the influence of values such as hedonism and universalism on social motivation to work virtually and self-direction on willingness to work virtually ( $\chi^2 = 13,773$ , SRMR = 0.079, NFI = 0.344, RMS theta = 0.132). However, the influence of the values on economic and social motivation to work virtually was low (R Square Adj. = 0.022 and 0.028, respectively), and the influence of all variables on willingness to work virtually was more substantial (R Square Adj. = 0.275). In addition, an economic and social motivation to work virtually had a positive influence on willingness to work virtually ( $\beta = 0.649$ ,  $p < 0.001$  and  $\beta = 0.677$ ,

$p < 0.001$ , respectively), further supporting H1.

In addition, structural equation modeling results revealed the role of age and education on motivation and willingness to work virtually. Older expatriates were less motivated ( $\beta = -0.124$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and less willing ( $\beta = -0.075$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) to work virtually for economic reasons, while expatriates with increasing education levels were more socially motivated ( $\beta = 0.072$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) and more willing ( $\beta = 0.045$ ,  $p = 0.030$ ) to work virtually

## 5. DISCUSSION

We interpret the support for H1 because of the respondents' different economic and professional goals. SIEs' motivation to work virtually is positively related to their willingness to work virtually for their country of origin and is consistent with other studies on economic and social benefits (Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė et al., 2022; Baruch, 2000, Nielsen and Riddle, 2010). SIEs who express a higher willingness to work virtually for the country of origin may be seeking additional income, greater individual and family wealth, more significant opportunities to expand social relationships, develop their careers, more independence, and freedom, or simply additional activities that are not possible by working in the host country. In addition, virtual work (Koslowski et al., 2017) can also support values such as self-respect, choosing one's goals, freedom, independence, or creativity.

Our survey showed that respondents with either collectivist or individualist values were willing to work virtually for their country of origin. As Schwartz (2012) states, this means that the individualistic value group is associated with achievement, stimulation, and self-direction. Those who are successful in pursuing individual goals and have made it in their careers may be inclined to contribute to community goals and thus work not only for themselves but also for their country of origin. They may also feel connected to the country they left (Vemuri, 2014). Working online maintains social and cultural ties and builds social capital with organizations in the country of origin, which is helpful if they decide to return in the future.

According to Hofstede (2016), Lithuania is an individualistic society. This means there is a high preference for a loose social structure in which individuals are

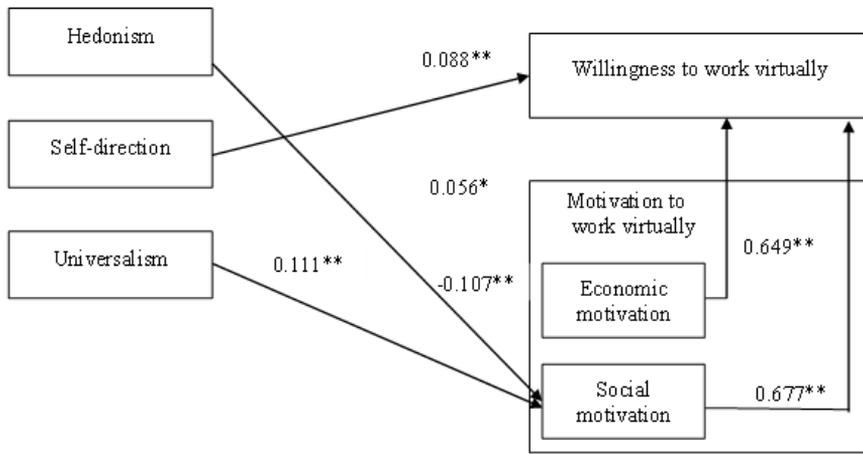
expected to care for themselves and their immediate family. More than 56 percent of respondents showed a willingness to work virtually for the country of origin, and the majority of respondents were motivated primarily by economic benefits, which is consistent with the findings of Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė et al. (2022), who studied migrants in Lithuania. In addition to this study, the current study examines the role of universal values. The results show support for H3a, which implies that individualistic values are positively related to economic motivation to work virtually for the country of origin, but H3b was not supported. The survey provided no evidence that collectivist values were positively related to social motivation to work virtually for the country of origin. However, structural equation modeling revealed that universalism significantly impacted social motivation.

Respondents who value security and conformity were found to be motivated by economic motives, which in this survey means that they focus mainly on their own and their family's wealth. Respondents who value family security highly seek an additional material incentive to work for the good of the country of origin, consistent with the findings of Hofstede (2016), who classifies Lithuania as an individualistic society. Moreover, the distribution of responses within the group of questions on willingness to work virtually allows for the interpretation that some of the respondents who do not know if they are interested in virtual work or do not currently see a possible field for virtual work, nevertheless recognize the value of engaging in virtual work. In addition, the model test results showed that hedonism has a positive effect on economic motivation and a negative effect on social motivation for virtual work.

In addition, it was found that those who were interested in virtual work or were already working virtually scored higher on stimulation, self-direction, benevolence, security, and universalism than those who did not know if they were willing to work virtually and the SIEs who were not interested in

virtual work. This supports the idea of the benefits of virtual work for some SIEs and confirms the differences in universal values.

The general model, which corresponds to the theoretical model, is shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Results of the theoretical model testing in groups of values

**Notes:**  $\beta$  values are presented; \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; the model also includes significant paths of control variables: age > economic motivation to work virtually, age > willingness to work virtually, education > social motivation to work virtually, and education > willingness to work virtually.

As our study shows, respondents who value hedonism more than others are motivated by economic reasons compared to the others. In addition, self-directed SIEs are more likely to work virtually than others.

Some interesting findings were made regarding the nature of virtual work and individual values. For example, respondents who selected translation as a possible type of virtual work valued universalism much more than others, and stimulation was rated lowest by the group in programming compared to consulting, editing, and translation. We speculate that this might be related to those people working in programming who

usually value accuracy and explicit phenomena based on exact sciences and working methods. However, such explanations require a more profound analysis than was undertaken in this study. Therefore, these issues are highlighted as a possible direction for further study. In addition, multicultural studies would be beneficial to investigate further expatriates' attitudes toward virtual work in the context of their values.

## 6. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

This study is the first step in understanding the individual values of expatriates and their interest in virtual work for their country of origin. It offers interesting ideas and insights that should be analyzed more comprehensively and thoroughly to contribute to international human resource management knowledge. Indeed, more than half of SIEs are interested in working virtually for organizations in their country of origin, which is related to individual values. The results show that in the case of Lithuania, SIEs are willing to work virtually for the country of origin, regardless of whether individual or collectivist values are the predominant orientation.

### 6.1. Contributions and implications

We contribute to the expatriation literature by adding new insights into expatriates' interest in working virtually for their country of origin regarding universal values not considered in previous studies.

These findings will be valuable to employers and managers facing a shortage of highly skilled employees for jobs and projects that could be performed virtually. In addition, it could be suggested that organizations in source countries should be encouraged to consider employing SIEs living in host countries to work for them virtually. Since virtual work offers the opportunity to work at any time and from any location (Messenger and Gschwind, 2016), it could be helpful for people who have trouble balancing work and family obligations.

Policymakers could offer some benefits to organizations that employ expatriates, as they do in other areas of social inclusion.

This form of working could reduce communication problems in the Lithuanian language by employing home country nationals and reduce difficulties related to time zone differences, as some employees work and live in different time zones (Shi and Weber, 2018). However, no studies have been conducted and published on the willingness of firms to employ SIEs from abroad, which is a potential area for future research. Finally, these findings should be helpful for policymakers in government organizations interested in promoting repatriation to source countries with high emigration rates.

### 6.2. Limitations

The study is based solely on the respondents' self-reports of their subjective values and opinions. The questionnaire study was conducted over the Internet by contacting potential respondents through social networks and websites. Therefore, there may be some bias, as Lithuanian emigrants who do not communicate through social media and computer networks were more likely to be excluded from the sample. However, considering that the study focuses on virtual work, the sample of respondents is the most appropriate for the research problem. In addition, over 70 percent of the respondents in the study were female. However, the results with 560 males are reliable, with a confidence level of 95 percent and a margin of error of four percent, which is sufficient for surveys in the social sciences (SurveyMonkey, 2022). In this paper, the interest of SIEs to work virtually for the country of origin is analyzed only in terms of individual values. Other factors, such as respondents' economic situation, marital status and number of dependents, and other personal circumstances that should be considered in future studies, are not examined.

Moreover, the survey is based on the case of expatriates from only one country, which does not allow a broader generalization of the results. The survey did not ask respondents whether they identified themselves primarily as expatriates or migrants. Host countries were not included as a control variable in this study because of the large number of destination countries considered.

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## INTERES EKSPATRIDA PO VLASTITOJ INICIJATIVI ZA VIRTUALNI RAD U ZEMLJI PODRIJETLA U ODNOSU NA UNIVERZALNE VRIJEDNOSTI

### Sažetak

*Ovaj se rad bavi istraživanjem ekspatri-  
da po vlastitoj inicijativi za virtualni rad u  
zemlji podrijetla i njegov odnos prema po-  
jedinačnim vrijednostima. Istraživanje do-  
prinosi razumijevanju interesa za virtualni  
rad u zemlji podrijetla i njegovom odnosu  
s univerzalnim vrijednostima. Analiza se te-  
melji na kvantitativnoj studiji, provedenoj na  
1970 pojedinaca iz Litve. Više od polovice  
ispitanika je pokazalo spremnost za virtualni  
rad u zemlji podrijetla. Međutim, veća moti-  
vacija utječe na spremnost za virtualni rad.*

*Pronađena je pozitivna korelacija između  
kolektivističkih i individualističkih vrijed-  
nosti te spremnosti za virtualni rad u zemlji  
podrijetla, kao i između individualističkih  
vrijednosti i ekonomske motivacije. Studija  
je zasnovana isključivo na samoprocjeni su-  
bjektivnih vrijednosti i mišljenja te se temelji  
na uzorku ekspatri- iz samo jedne zemlje.*

**Ključne riječi:** *ekspatri- po vlastitoj  
inicijativi, motivacija, virtualni rad, univer-  
zalne vrijednosti, zemlja podrijetla.*