

Digital Nomads in Emerging Economies: Institutional Embeddedness, Autonomy, and Organizational Support in Cross-Border Work

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Abstract

Digital nomadism is a recent trend in cross-border work that has become visible, but lacking an organization in theoretical explanations in the fields of international management of the institution theory and remote work studies. The digital nomads as described in the existing literature are usually portrayed as geographically free agents without taking into account the institutional complexity of emerging economies where most of them are located. This study creates a multilevel conceptual model of how digital nomads negotiate the institutional structures of regulatory dynamism and infrastructural unevenness. The study relies on the institutional theory, global mobility research, and organizational support theory to present the construct of autonomy, and embeddedness alignment. It posits that the cross-border work should be based on sustainable work, where congruence between individual autonomy orientation, organizational governing intensity, and institutional strength of the host country is important. Mismatch creates compliance risk, identity strain, and organizational exposure, and the calibrated support structures allow institutional navigation without compromising autonomy. The research adds to the global mobility theory by theorizing digital nomads as intermediate actors between expatriates and gig workers, expands the institutional theory to the context of voluntary mobility, and develops the organizational support research to the context of cross-border remote work.

Index Terms

Autonomy, Cross-Border Work, Digital Nomads, Emerging Economies, Institutional Embeddedness, Organizational Support