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AUTHORS

Han, Qin
Jennings, Jennifer E.
Liu, Runjuan
Jennings, P. Devereaux

GOING HOME AND HELPING OUT? RETURNEES AS PROPAGATORS OF CSR IN AN EMERGING ECONOMY

ABSTRACT

This paper extends nascent work on returnees as agents of socio-economic change by examining whether education/training abroad affects the corporate social responsibility (CSR) of privately held firms during the early stages of an emerging economy's transition. Integrating theory and research from the international business and CSR literatures, we argue that returnee-led firms are likely to exhibit higher levels of CSR than local-led firms, due to both the direct and indirect effects of an owner-manager's international experience. We examine our hypotheses using nationally representative data collected in 2002 and 2004 through separate surveys of private enterprises in China. Our findings document the positive impact of education/training abroad on two CSR measures: sustainability initiative scope and charitable donation intensity. We also contribute evidence of the direct and indirect effects associated with an owner-manager's returnee status, with the indirect effects stemming primarily from the greater size and profitability of returnee-led firms.

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