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SATISFACTION WITH LIFE IN CROSS-CULTURAL SETTING – CASE OF EUROPEAN EXPATRIATES IN INDIA

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Abstract

Cross cultural studies on satisfaction with life is an area with numerous constructs and perspectives. Our context is European expatriate working in India. The objectives of the study are:- (a) to understand the determinants of satisfaction with life in the cross-cultural setting of European expatriates working in India (b) to understand interrelationships of the variables from a broader qualitative perspective. We used robust and pretested scales. Structural equation modeling was done and the coefficients were estimated. The study finds that personality and spouse support constructs were insignificant in the context. However work life conflict remained significant in the empirical analysis. Work impacts family in more ways than vice versa. The study is valuable for human resource policy makers in designing cross cultural strategy and procedures. The originality of the study is in finding the insignificance of personality and spouse support in the context which implies that some areas of cross cultural research need re-evaluation in particular contexts

Keywords: culture, expatriate, life, satisfaction, work, family

1. INTRODUCTION

The degree to which an individual experiences general contentment with one's life is called Satisfaction with Life (Diener, et al. 1985). Working life accounts for a major portion of one's time and period of life. Studies in work – family domains have found that a mix of work, marital and parental responsibility lead to greater satisfaction with life. It has been found that general life satisfaction is more connected with work to family conflict than family to work conflict (Kossek and Ozeki 1998). Spillover effects happens when an individual is unable to carry out responsibilities in one domain because of extra involvement in another

domain. Negative spillover between work and family domains affects negatively with satisfaction with life whereas positive spillover is associated positively with satisfaction with life (Sumer and Knight 2001). Personality factors (Yamazaki and Kayes 2004) and spouse support factors can also impact satisfaction with life. With regard to life satisfaction, fairly robust scales are available (Diener, et al. 1985; Pavot and Diener 1993).

Cross-cultural settings are a useful bed to test determinants of satisfaction with life because they consider a broader framework. Culture plays a significant role in shaping a nation and also has its impact on various policies affecting business (Vanhonacker and Pan 1997). Culture has been defined as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another” (G. H. Hofstede 1980). From the point of view of Multinational companies, culture is an important factor because of different regulations of business operations and the business environment in general. Many companies still do not provide cross cultural training to their managers, either due to cost implications or because of lack of belief in cross-cultural training. Hofstede (1980) as well as Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) outlined the differences among nations from a cultural perspective, indicating composite mix of factors and most of the research in this field rely heavily on their indicators. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) defined Culture as “the way in which a group of people solve problems and reconcile dilemmas”. Culture includes "shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives and are transmitted across age generations” (House, et al. 2004). Comparison of values among different nations, as indicated by Hofstede (1980) not only gained popularity among the corporate world but also opened new area of research in the field of International Business.

Indian economy has started gaining momentum with huge inward foreign direct investment and it stands to accelerate in the coming future (Bloom 2011). Despite being a lucrative prospect, India has been rated as one of the most challenging countries for international assignment, for reasons including cultural, family adaptation and quality of life (Brookfield 2013). Difficulties in the host nations such as India, may include, but are not limited to, spouse job limitation, quality schooling for children, high rent of residential apartments, vulnerable traveling conditions etc. which could affect expatriate and family adjustment.

Demands of global markets have necessitated use of senior managers as expatriate, who are proficient not only in handling the business operations overseas but also adjust to surrounding conditions abroad (Mendenhall, Dunbar and Oddou 1987). Often these markets offer new insights for managers, as per the prevailing cultural and economic scenario replicated from its host country nationals (Hofstede 1983). These offerings create challenges for managers and occasionally account for termination of international assignment, in between, thus hampering the growth of company (Shaffer and Harrison 1998). There could be many reasons which lead to miserable feeling among expatriates, for example, lack of training and support provided by parent company, inability to adopt to new cultural environment, family related problems, emotional immaturity etc. (Tung 1987).

In the context of the above, we present the objectives of the study as following:-

- (a) to understand the determinants of satisfaction with life in the cross-cultural setting of European expatriates working in India
- (b) to understand interrelationships of the variables from a broader qualitative perspective as well.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Important cross-cultural studies

In order to understand the cultural context, Geert Hofstede (1980) introduced the cross-cultural dimension. He categorized specific indicators on the basis of data collected from these countries. These indicators have been summarized as below:-

- 1) Power Distance Index - the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (such as family) expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.
- 2) Individualism versus Collectivism - the extent to which individuals are integrated into groups
- 3) Masculinity versus Femininity - the distribution of emotional roles between the genders.
- 4) Uncertainty Avoidance - the intolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity
- 5) Long-term versus Short-term Orientation – the time horizon of the society
- 6) Indulgence versus Restraint - gratification versus control of basic human desires, related to enjoying life.

Defining these indicators, Geert Hofstede, (1993) mentioned, “There are no such things as universal management theories. there is something in all countries called “management”, but its meaning differs to a larger or smaller extent from one country to the other, and it takes considerable historical and cultural insight into local conditions to understand its process, philosophies, and problems” (G. Hofstede, 1993)

Ronald Inglehart and colleagues (2000) at the University of Michigan carried out another research project that explored people’s values and beliefs, how they change over time and what social and political impact they have, named as “world value survey” (WVS). The two measures of cultural values that are main independent variables of interest are Traditional vs Rational and Survival vs Self-expression. Inglehart and Welzel, (2005) defined Traditional vs Rational factors as belief in “traditional” institutions like nuclear and extended families, informal networks of reciprocity and mutual aid, and religious organizations. At the other end of the continuum is “rational”. People in societies with higher scores tend to be less dedicated to family relationships and fulfillment of traditional family obligations, more likely to discuss politics with friends, more opposed to military government, and farther to the left on a left-right scale of political ideology. With respect to the Survival vs Self-expression factor, Inglehart and Welzel’s (2005) interpretation was that societies close to the “survival” pole are characterized by widespread economic and physical vulnerability, because of which simply surviving is foremost among people’s concerns. In societies near the “self-expression” pole, people face few immediate threats to their economic and physical security, restrictive social norms of behavior have been relaxed, and people seek fulfillment and a sense of purpose by pursuing non-material goals. People in more self-expressive societies tend to be more engaged in civic activism and demand to participate in political decision making.

Personality

Although there are several techniques to measure personality, “Big five” has been used very frequently (Goldberg 1993; Bleidorn, et al. 2013). The big five personality theory measures Neuroticism, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness and Openness to Experience (McCrae and John 1992). High neuroticism results in behaviors of nervous, oversensitive, uneasy, uncertain and worried individuals. Qualities of self-assured, energetic, and being socially confident, are found in Extraversion individuals. Traits such as accomplishment oriented, well-organized, and trustworthy are regular among conscientiousness individuals.

Attributes such as being helpful, pleasant, and commiserating are common to agreeable persons. Character of understanding, inquisitiveness, imaginativeness, and originality are found in people who are high in “openness to experience”.

Work-life conflict

Effect of work and family domains on Individual could either result in conflict or enrichment (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). Work life conflict occur because of inter-role conflict between work and family domains, where an individual is not able to cope with the roles and responsibility in one domain and takes it into another domain (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) has classified these inter-role conflict in three categories i) Time based conflict – greater involvement in one role, leads to shortage of time in another domain ii) Strain based conflict – spillover of strain from one domain to another domain iii) Behaviour based conflict – spillover of mismatched behaviour between work and family domains.

Personality dimension in measuring work-family domains has generally been accepted (Michel and Clark 2009; Carlson 1999). It would be consistent to believe that effect of work-family domains to a larger extent depends on the Individual's personality which in turn, leads to conflict or facilitation. Association between personality and work - life conflict has earlier been looked into (Aryee, Srinivas and Tan 2005; Bruck and Allen 2003). While Neuroticism has shown positive association with work life conflict, agreeableness and conscientiousness, was found to have negative relationship with work life conflict (Blanch and Aluja 2009; Wayne, Musisca and Fleeson 2004). In another study, extraversion was found to affect well being and job satisfaction through awareness of work-family conflict (Noor 2003). In summary, Personality has been found to answer the work-life conflict pattern among Individuals. However during relocation, the relationship between expatriates work-life conflict has not been measured during the last decade, which is a Research Gap.

Work-life enrichment

It should be noted that conflict or enrichment are not quite exactly opposite of the each other (Wayne, Musisca and Fleeson 2004). It is hard to put together outcomes on work-family enrichment because of the various constructs used by different authors on the same issue.

Greenhaus & Powell (2006) describe work-family facilitation as “the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role”.

Multiple roles can produce positive outcomes in three possible ways between work and family domains (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). First possible outcome is the additive effects on Individual happiness from role accumulation (Barnett and Hyde 2001). Second possible outcomes is the “buffer” created in individuals from involvement in either domains which helps in recovering “from distress in one of the roles” (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Third possible outcome is the positive spillover effect in which resources from one domain could enhance positive result in another domain (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Carlson, Kacmar, et al. 2006).

Partner support

Spousal support has been regarded as a supporting variable which is negatively related with depressive symptoms. In a recent study, it was revealed that low-level of spouse/partner support, as opposed to unavailability of support, was significantly associated with higher depressive symptoms, and high-level of spouse/partner support was significantly associated with lower depressive symptoms (Choi and Ha 2011). In another study results revealed that spouse career support decreased the employee turnover and with lower work interference with family and higher job satisfaction reduced the turnover (Huffman, Casper and Payne 2013).

Support received from spouse may ease expatriate from household responsibilities and hence could mentally focus on the work domain in the host nation. It is anticipated that spouse in the host nation would be helpful in increasing the social network of the expatriate.

Satisfaction with life

Alignment of tasks including work, marital, and parental responsibility has been found to correlate with greater life satisfaction (Peronne 1999). In a meta analysis, satisfaction with life has been found to correlate negatively with work life conflict and its effect for women is much superior in comparison to men (Kossek and Ozeki 1998). In another study, negative spillover from work and family associated negatively with satisfaction with life whereas

positive spillover from work and family associated positively with satisfaction with life (Sumer and Knight 2001). In a recent study, satisfaction with life was found to be predicted by Family-to-work enrichment (Graves, Ohlott and Ruderman 2007).

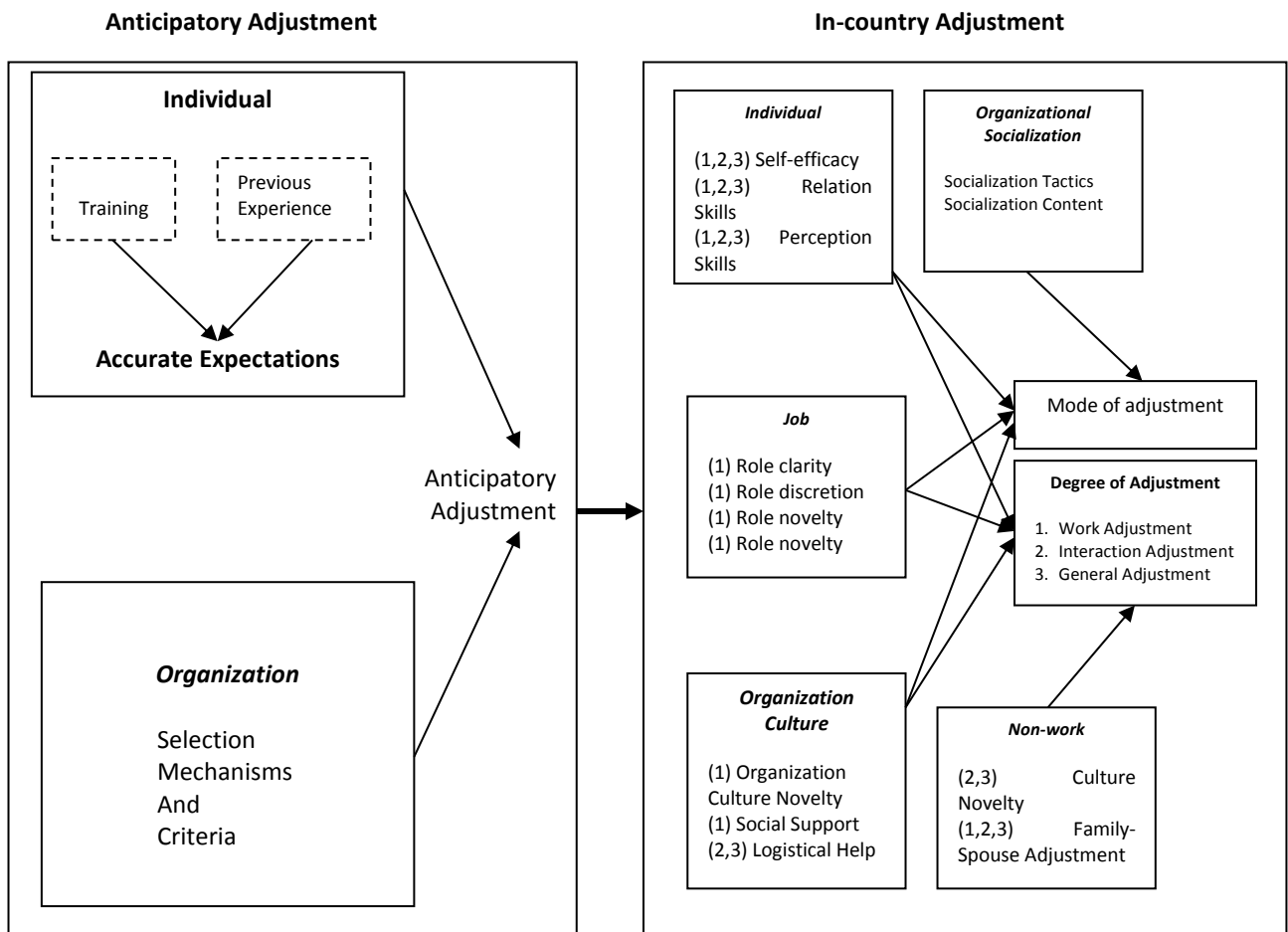
Context of international assignments

Novel experiences occur to individual managers when they transfer from one city to another. (Black, Mendenhall and Oddou, 1991) integrated major theories from domestic transfer's adjustment literature and stated "Most domestic adjustments do not involve significant changes in the non-work environment; living in Los Angeles versus New York may be quite different in many ways, but the language, cultural, economic, social, and political contexts are significantly familiar. This is not the norm for international adjustments." While moving from one country to another, apart from language, food, weather and infrastructure certain other aspects such as value attitude and behavioral norms of the people differs during the international adjustment process. Thus adjustment has been characterized under three heads:- (a) work adjustment, which includes adjustment in the work environment, (b) interaction adjustment, which involves adjustment with host country nationals both inside and outside the work environment, and finally (c) general adjustment, which refers to adjustment with the general environment of the host nation and includes food, weather, means of transportation, entertainment facilities etc. Key Factors which were included to model the expatriate adjustment process were Pre-departure training, Previous Overseas Experience, Organizational Selection Criteria and Mechanisms, Individual Skills, Non-work Factors, Organization Socialization, Organization culture and Job Factors. Most of the studies have indicated that inability of spouse to adjust as per the conditions of host nations has been rated as the biggest factor among the expatriate managers for assignment failure.

Many authors have pointed that pre-departure and post-arrival cross cultural training having positive effect on expatriate managers despite most companies do not provide training to their managers. Previous overseas experience in the same cultural context could also increase adaptability of managers as certain traits and behavioral norms of the people are already learnt during the earlier assignment. Technical competence for an expatriate during their assignment to the host nation has been rated as the most important factor by the organizations. In this context companies tend to ignore certain other major factors such as

possessing cross-cultural skills which could have an impact over expatriate adjustment process.

Figure 1: Framework of International Adjustment



Note: Numbers in parentheses indicate the numbered facet(s) of adjustment to which the specific variable is expected to relate.

Source: Black, Mendenhall & Oddou (1991)

Job factors, such as role conflict inhibits adjustment while role clarity reduces uncertainty and facilitates adjustment. Organizational culture factors such as social support and logistical help are expected to facilitate adjustment. Organization socialization factors such as socialization tactics and socialization content which is an integral part of an organization and the way individual responds to these factors also plays defining role in adjustment process and possibly his / her satisfaction with life.

Research Questions

The research questions which emerge are the following:- (a) What are the factors which determine satisfaction with life for expatriates in India? Is the satisfaction with life scale (Diener, et al. 1985) empirically validated in this case? (b) What are the interrelationships playing between the variables? (c) Can we devise a model to test the empirical validity in other similar contexts?

3. METHODOLOGY

The instrument is a pre-tested, structured questionnaire. We conducted exploratory interviews with diplomats / representatives of European embassies in India. Based on their advice, we met European chambers / association and their heads to access information about European origin companies and parent company representatives in India. We contacted each of them. 129 organizations responded. Surveys were mailed to the expatriates in these organizations. 48 expatriates participated in the in-depth study.

To measure the satisfaction with life we used 5 items scale developed by Diener and colleagues (1985). The scale has been rigorously used across the world and has been cited more than 2000 times. Comparative methodology of the scales for this construct is given at Table 1.

Table 1: Satisfaction with Life Scale

Research	Sample characteristics	Sample Size	Scale	Data Analysis Procedure
Diener et al. 1985	Graduate students	176 & 163	New	Regression analysis
Perrone et al. 2005	Employee	95	Diener et al. 1985	Regression analysis
Lapierre et al. 2008	Working Managers	1553	-do-	Structural Equation Modeling
Steger, et al. 2006	undergraduate students	151	-do-	Confirmatory factor analysis
Valenzuela et al. 2009	undergraduate students	2,603	-do-	ordinary least square (OLS) Regression
Dixon & Sagas, 2009	Head Coach with family	348	-do-	Structural Equation modeling

To measure the personality, we used 44 items questionnaire developed by John and Srivastava (1999). This questionnaire measures five personality traits and has been one of the most extensively used research scale. All questions in the personality dimension were answered on a 5 point scale. We used 22 items measurement scale from Shih et al. 2010, who adopted Carlson, Kacmar and Williams (2000), and Netemeyer et al. (1996) scale in the Asian context and measured three dimensions of work–family conflict (time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based). This is detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Work Life Conflict

Research	Sample characteristics	Sample Size	Scale	Data Analysis Procedure
Carlson et al. 2000	MBA Graduates	228	New	Structural equation modelling
Lapierre et al. 2008	Managers	1553	Carlson et al. 2000	Structural equation modeling
Shih et al. 2010	Expatriates in China	174	Modified Carlson et al. 2000	structural equation modelling

To measure the work life enrichment we used 18 items scales developed by Carlson and colleagues (2000), given at Table 3. Spouse Support scale has been measured by 4 items social support scale developed by Caplan and colleagues (1976) for NIOSH. The comparative methodology the scales for this construct is outline at Table 4.

Table 3: Work Life Enrichment

Research	Sample characteristics	Sample Size	Scale	Data Analysis Procedure
Carlson et al. 2006	Students + Married	80+243	New	Structural equation modeling
Michel & Clark, 2009	Employees	187	Carlson et al. 2006	Structural equation modeling
Siu et al. 2010	Full-time workers	786	-do-	Structural equation modeling
McNall et al. 2010	Employee	220	-do-	Hierarchical Regression Analysis
Baral & Bhargava 2010	Managers	216	-do-	ANOVA

Table 4: Spouse Support Scale

Study (Author, year)	Sample characteristics	Sample Size	Scale	Cronbach's alpha	Data Analysis Procedure
Caplan et al. 1976 (NIOSH)	Workers in US		New		Scale on a 5 point likert's scale
Lim, 1996	MBA graduates	306	Caplan et al. 1976	.84	Regression analysis
Kraimer et al. 2001	Expatriates	213	-do-	.86	Structural equation modeling
Frese, 1999	Workers in Germany	90	-do-	.87	Regression analysis
Ramadoss & Rajadhyaksha, 2012	Husband and wife	104+ 104	-do-	>.70	Regression analysis, factor analysis

The preliminary nature of data was observed as in figures below. The expatriates belong to various European countries representing diverse multicultural Diaspora. There is a spread with respect to age of the working people, academic qualification, languages known and position of work but only respondents who were married and staying with their spouses were considered for the study so that the dimension of spouse support was properly captured. Based on the figures below it is clear that our respondents are highly educated and mostly in responsible positions.

Figure 2: Age distribution of Sample

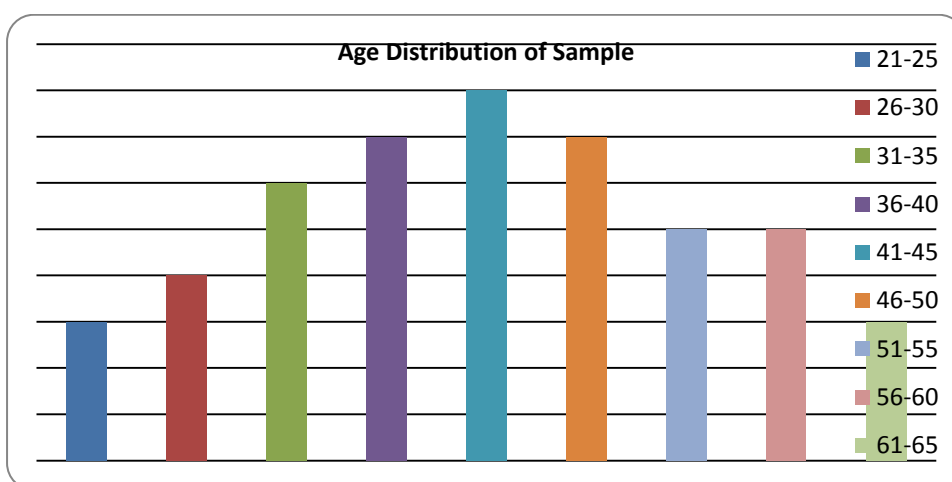


Figure 3: Language Known

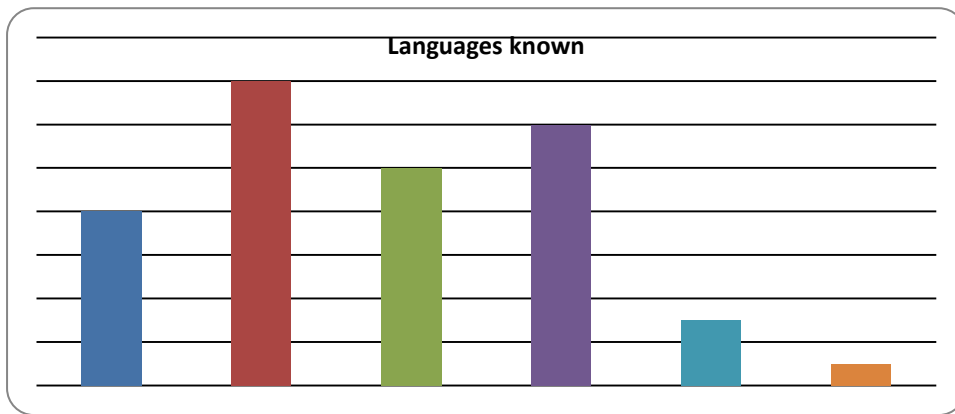


Figure 4: Academic Qualification

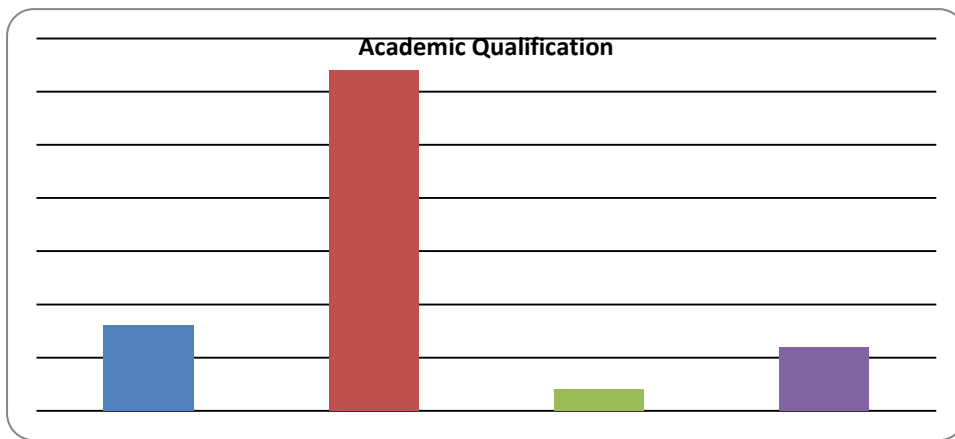
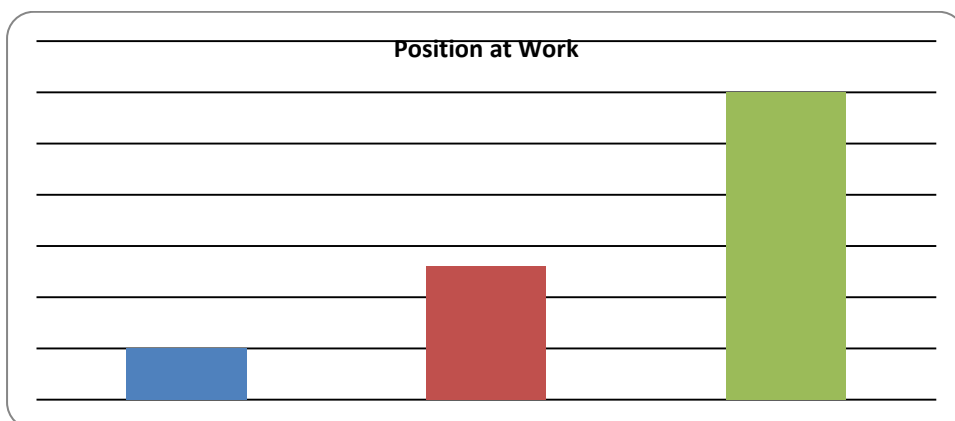


Figure 5: Position at work



Non parametric measurements such as chi square and correlations were initially done to understand the basic association of the variables. Then the observed and the unobserved variables were analyzed through structural equation modeling (Byrne 2012; Tremblay and Gardner 1996) The unobserved variables were personality (derived from 5 observed

variables), work life conflict (derived from 6 observed variables), work life enrichment (derived from 6 observed variables). The remaining variables were observed and modeled with identifying restrictions. The variables and their explanations are in table 5 below.

Table 5: Description of Variables

Variable	Explanation	Nature
Behaviour_FIW	Behavior based Family interference with work	Observed, endogenous (final model)
Behaviour_WIF	Behavior based work interference with family	Observed, endogenous (final model)
Strain_FIW	Strain based Family interference with work	Observed, endogenous (final model)
Strain_WIF	Strain based work interference with family	Observed, endogenous (final model)
Time_FIW	Time based Family interference with work	Observed, endogenous (final model)
Time_WIF	Time based work interference with family	Observed, endogenous (final model)
FTW_Efficiency	Family to work efficiency	Observed, endogenous (final model)
FTW_Affect	Family to work affect	Observed, endogenous (final model)
FTW_Development	Family to work development	Observed, endogenous (final model)
WTF_Capital	Work to family Capital	Observed, endogenous (final model)
WTF_Affect	Work to family affect	Observed, endogenous (final model)
WTF_Development	Work to family development	Observed, endogenous (final model)
SWL	Satisfaction with life	Observed, endogenous (final model)
WLC	Work life conflict	Unobserved, exogenous (final model)
WLE	Work life enrichment	Unobserved, exogenous (final model)
Pers_openness	Personality trait of openness	Observed, endogenous (exploratory model only)
Pers_Consc	Personality trait of Conscientiousness	Observed, endogenous (exploratory model only)
Pers_Extra	Personality trait of Extraversion	Observed, endogenous (exploratory model only)
Pers_Agreeable	Personality trait of Agreeableness	Observed, endogenous (exploratory model only)
Pers_Neuro	Personality trait of Neuroticism	Observed, endogenous (exploratory model only)
Spouse_Support	Support received from spouse	Observed, endogenous (exploratory model only)

4. FINDINGS

Satisfaction with Life (SWL), the dependent variable has scores ranging from 2.2 to 4.8 with a mean of 3.784 in a Likert scale of 1 to 5.

We checked two models, one with work life conflict and work life enrichment as moderating constructs and another model without the moderating constructs. The model with work life conflict and work life enrichment as unobserved moderating variables was found to be better than the model without the moderating effect. The personality and spouse support dimensions were found to be insignificant from this empirical analysis. Out of the conflict dimensions, time based work interference with family, strain based work interference with family, behavior based work interference with family and behavior based family interference with work were found to be highly significant, whereas for enrichment dimension, work to family affect and work to family capital were found to be highly significant. From the results that it seems that work and family are interfering with each other. This is a significant determinant of satisfaction with life. It is also observed that work impacts family in more ways than family impacts work.

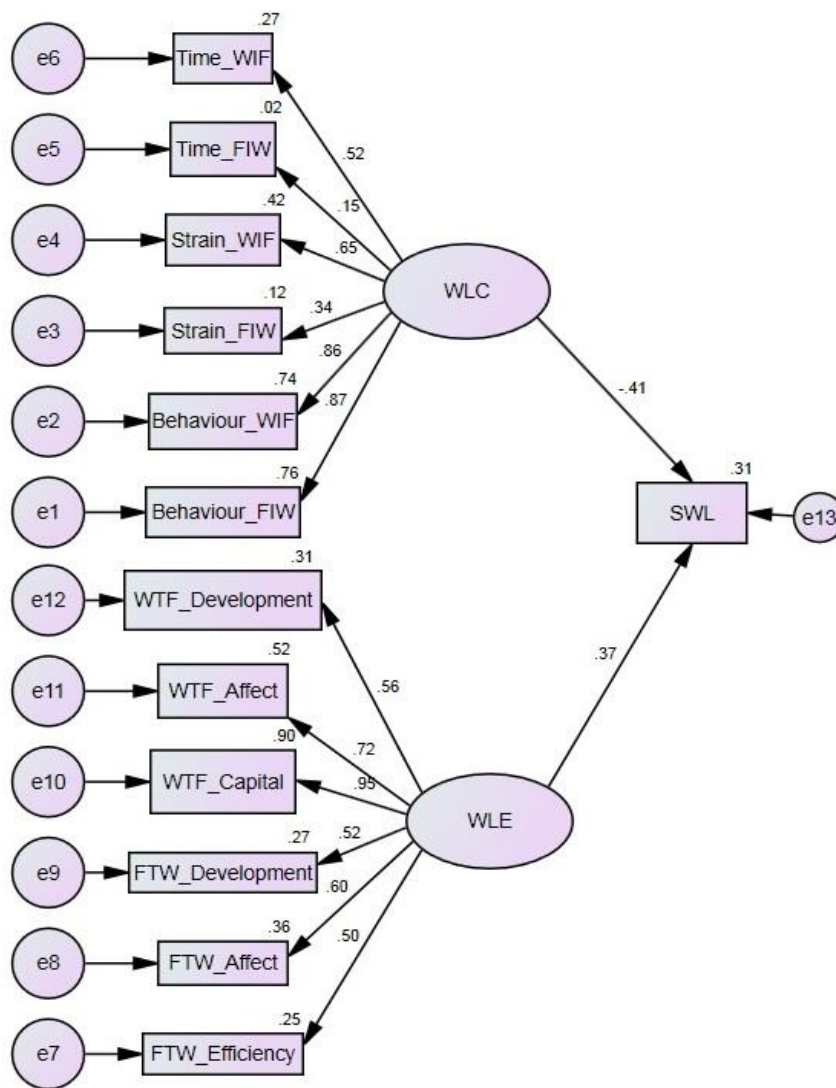
The squared multiple correlations in the final model are given at table 6.

Table 6: Squared Multiple Correlations

	Estimate
SWL	.307
WTF_Development	.311
WTF_Affect	.523
WTF_Capital	.896
FTW_Development	.269
FTW_Affect	.364
FTW_Efficiency	.247
Time_WIF	.274
Time_FIW	.023
Strain_WIF	.420
Strain_FIW	.116
Behaviour_WIF	.738
Behaviour_FIW	.758

The layout of the final model with coefficients, in this context, is given in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6: Structural Equation Model



The estimates of the final model are given at Table 7 (with restrictions for model identification).

Table 7A: Estimates

			Estimate	P
SWL	<---	WLC	-.490	.003
SWL	<---	WLE	.888	.022
Time_WIF	<---	WLC	.855	***
Time_FIW	<---	WLC	.171	.321
Strain_WIF	<---	WLC	.975	***
Strain_FIW	<---	WLC	.343	.024
Behaviour_WIF	<---	WLC	1.128	***
Behaviour_FIW	<---	WLC	1.000	
WTF_Development	<---	WLE	1.735	.004

			Estimate	P
WTF_Affect	<---	WLE	1.857	***
WTF_Capital	<---	WLE	2.368	***
FTW_Development	<---	WLE	1.187	.006
FTW_Affect	<---	WLE	1.270	.003
FTW_Efficiency	<---	WLE	1.000	

*** Highly significant

Table 7B: Estimates

			Estimate	P
SWL	<---	WLC	-.574	.014
SWL	<---	WLE	.512	.016
Time_WIF	<---	WLC	1.000	
Time_FIW	<---	WLC	.200	.334
Strain_WIF	<---	WLC	1.141	.001
Strain_FIW	<---	WLC	.402	.046
Behaviour_WIF	<---	WLC	1.320	***
Behaviour_FIW	<---	WLC	1.170	***
WTF_Development	<---	WLE	1.000	
WTF_Affect	<---	WLE	1.071	***
WTF_Capital	<---	WLE	1.365	***
FTW_Development	<---	WLE	.685	.003
FTW_Affect	<---	WLE	.732	.001
FTW_Efficiency	<---	WLE	.576	.004

*** Highly significant

5. CONCLUSION

Satisfaction with life is a construct which has been examined by author from extant literature and the measuring scale have been existing for a long time however it is important to check the empirical validity in different contexts. One important concept is the multicultural context in a fast developing nation such as India. There is also a need to check the empirical validity of satisfaction with life because of the temporal dimension i.e., the significance of the determinants may change over time. Another gap which this study addressed was the understanding of life satisfaction of people relocating to different cultures as with expatriates. This is an important dimension because with the fast breaking of barriers on movement of people across the globe and major difference in wage levels, the topic is gaining major interest.

Our study found interesting results because personality and spouse support factors were not found to be significant. The study does not extend to find the reasons behind declining importance behind these factors, which could be an interesting area of future research. One possible cause is the communication revolution in the last decade, due to which emotional and societal support are available through mobile devices and collaboration applications. All the expatriates were well connected on social media.

The role of work life conflict and work life enrichment was found to be still significant. This is possibly because multinational companies may still have a long way to go in implementing the cross cultural strategy in their training and communication policies and programs. The study does not examine the impact of specific corporate cross cultural training as applicable to these expatriates and this could be another area of future research.

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