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Progress and Prospects: A Holistic View on the Life of Pakistani Female Expatriates

Kanza Iqbal

Visiting Faculty

*Department of Political Science & Institute of Administrative Sciences,
University of the Punjab, Lahore.*

Correspondence: kanzaiqbal81@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study provides a holistic approach in understanding the experiences of female Pakistani expatriates working in United States and Saudi Arabia with reference to work life balance. Twenty Pakistani female expatriates are interviewed. 10 of them are working in different sectors in Saudi Arabia and 10 of them are working in United States of America. The findings of the research show the enrichment experiences of female expatriates from a developing country like Pakistan while working in different cultural set ups of USA and KSA. The study reveals the effect of enrichment on family as well as work domain. The study indicates the coping mechanism developed by the female expatriates in different cultural settings to have a better WLB. The research develops our understanding and knowledge base with respect to the experiences of Pakistani women working across the borders in different cultural context.

Keywords: *Expatriates, Enrichment, Conflicts, Culture, Work Life Balance*

Introduction

During the past two decades, increased participation of females in international workforce have forced the organizations to reformulate their policies with respect to female expatriates (Mohan and Tabassum, 2017). An increased tendency has been observed with respect to female workforce not just in their home country but abroad with more involvement in international assignments broadening the horizon of subject area. Previous researches have revealed that women expatriates are more successful at managing the international assignments (Jelinek and Adler, 1988; Van der Boon, 2003). International assignments are also showing an increased participation of female workers i.e. “from 3 percent of the worldwide expatriate population in the 1980s (Adler, 1984a), to 10-14 percent at the end of the 1990s (Mathur-Helm, 2002) and reaching 16-20 percent in recent years (Brookfield, 2012)”, though it’s too less in comparison to their male counterparts. Yet the valuable services provided by even this number cannot be ignored, therefore, female expatriates are a very valuable yet untapped factor of production (Tharenou, 2010; Insch et al., 2008).

The two broadest areas of studies on expatriates with international assignments on their work-family life dynamics are mostly summed under its positive and negative spill-over effects. A lot of research has been based on it and further extended by adding other associated dimensions. Spillover is a bi-directional phenomenon and is described in literature as influence of roles with different spheres of family/work and this influence can be positive or negative from one domain to another. Thus,

spillover can be both positive and negative. As a result of these spillovers the transfer of positive and negative skills, experiences, values, behaviors and psychological states occur. These effects create conflict or facilitation in both domains of life (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Meanwhile these are the two root level factors studied in this regard. The subject area has been explored with broad range of aspects associated with it from cultural differences to gender inequity and many other.

Expatriation not only affects the work life but has a deep impact on the whole life situation of an expat (Shaffer and Harrison, 2001). There is a very strong role of family and partners to determine the nature of work-life balance outcomes i.e. either positive or negative (Harris, 2004). Ma "kela " and Suutari (2011) opines that WLB concerns envisages some crucial elements with respect to international careers. Researchers have also found out that international careers are very challenging for most of the individuals and their dependents (Forster, 2000).

Major portion of early studies is based on conflict and negative spill- over effects on lives of expatriates. It is until recent that growing body of studies started focusing on the other side of the international assignments highlighting the enrichment part from work to family or personal life and vice versa. In contemporary societies, an individual life is an amalgam of various roles, for example, a spouse, a parent, an employee or a colleague. These roles either produce conflicts or many at times generate positive spill-over by enriching the life of an individual (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Frone, 2003; Kinnunen and Mauno, 2008). Theorists believe that the balance between work and family or family and work can be explained when "satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum role conflict" (Clark, 2000).

Initially the negative interference for female expatriates from their work to family life was studied. Then in order to have better understanding of family and work relationships the effects of family life of female expatriates on their work has also gained attention. Researches have shown mixed results of work life balance and its relationship with gender; therefore, more research is needed in this area. "Previous literature has also shown that women may experience more positive spillover from family to work than males" (Grywacz and Marks, 2000). Therefore, the research must be enhanced towards gender specific studies exploring conflicts as well as enrichment experiences (Korabik et al., 2008; Lero and Lewis, 2008). Altman and Shortland (2008) has poured a little light on female expatriation. Adler (1984) opines that the process of analyzing the experiences of female expatriates started in 1980s when studies were focused on the reasons of female expatriates on international assignments. In 1990s, the research was directed towards the interest of female workers to work on international assignments and the discriminatory corporate policies in this regard. However, with the advent of 21st century, a considerable number of researchers has started evaluating the experiences of female expatriates and their work life balance (Mayerhofer et al., 2004a). Tharenou (2008) and Hearn (2008) has concluded that expatriation involves a different procedure for women when compared with the men. Tharenou (2008) also suggests that "family members are affected more negatively by women's decisions to work abroad than by men's decisions to do the same. Further, female managers involved in international movements appeared to more often be single or have more career-oriented (Hearn et al., 2008).

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However, in this study, the focus is particularly on female expatriates, taking account of both positive and negative sides of work and private life. The purpose of conducting this study in two different cultural contexts like USA and Saudi Arabia is to draw a comparison with reference to the adjustment strategies used by the women in different set ups and the support provided by the Us culture or Saudi Arabian culture along the continuum of achieving work life balance. Similarly, the study also discusses how difference in cultural aspects can maximize or minimize the conflicting experiences in personal and professional life of female expatriates. The clear shift was observed in 2000s when the interest in the positive influence of work on the family and of family on work escalated. The major terms used to describe this phenomenon in literature are positive work-family spill-over, facilitation, enrichment and enhancement. It is then associated with individual experiences of compatibility, fit, balance and integration among work and family lives of expatriates. With these studies that are based on positive side of work family life of expatriates those aspects are identified that led to positive outcomes. It is the balance, fit or right integration of the different roles one play leading to good functioning and satisfaction for that person. Studies reveal that being wedded is found to be positively associated with expatriation irrespective of the gender by showing increased work effectiveness and better work performance (Selmer and Lauring, 2010). Fitzgerald and Howe-Walsh (2008) indicates that career oriented women take a better charge of their lives and careers as defined by protean career concept. "Researchers observing relationships of work satisfaction with family satisfaction, positive parenting, or positive child outcomes suggest that there is a positive influence of work-related effect on family life" (Barling, 1986; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1996)

The current study focuses on not just work and traditional family life roles balance, but it also incorporates individual aspect to non-work dimension of life. The term enrichment used in this study can occur when what is acquired or developed in one role can improve the performance of the other. The acquisition can be of any resource; tangible or intangible associated with that role (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006, p. 73).

Work-life balance has been studied in different scenarios, but the international assignments context adds in more complexity and perspective. Work-life balance is defined as "achieving satisfying experiences in all the life domains and to do so requires personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment be well distributed across domains" (Kirchmeyer, 2000, p. 81). Also, the non-work life extension from just family related concerns to individual ones takes it a notch higher. Work-family balance is defined as "a global assessment that work resources meet family demands, and family resources meet work demands such that participation is effective in both domains". (Voydanoff, 2005, p. 825). The non-work life is based on not just family related concerns but conceptualize individual personal life such as involvement in leisurely activities, hobbies and similar interests. This added dimension makes the balance between both domains challenging but with positive spill-overs the rewards are even better than the difficulty faced in such assignments.

Women entering the international workforce is becoming more stimulating depending on the number of roles she is performing in the form of wife, mother, and

manager. Likewise, the nature of job with cultural adjustments creates complexity leading to role conflicts and enrichment.

As per literature, Greenhaus and Powell (2006) suggests that the multiple roles results in positive effects and generate favorable outcomes for individuals in three ways. First, given the quality of role is high the role accumulation at work and in family have additive effect in the form of physical and psychological well-being of the individual. The satisfaction derived from both these areas adds in the person happiness and overall satisfaction with their quality of life. It is observed in such research studies that greater well-being is experienced in comparison of the individuals who are involved in just one role or are dissatisfied with any one of their roles.

Secondly, individuals who participated in more roles can use one better performing role as a buffer against the one in which that individual is not doing much good. The well-being is higher in case of such individuals in their lives. And the effect can be in any direction taking more satisfied work role and its influence is passed on to the less satisfied family role and vice versa. The gratification received from better role act as a compensation for the poor performed role and reduce distress to a great extent.

Thirdly, the inter role dependencies mechanism is the one that is of prime interest in given research study. Under this the positive experiences gained from one role is passed on to the other role. The resources, skills, energy created in one role is utilized and transferred enhancing the other role. It is the acquisition in one role that enhance the personality making him/her more tolerant, flexible and adjusting in the face of difficulties posed by the second role.

Among all these three mechanism the third one best described the enriching experience in work-life balance in different scenarios including the international assignments and females as expatriates. And over the span of female expatriates lives there are certain phases in which the extent of improving the quality of life is greater from one role to another. There is however still limited research on female expatriates and work-life enrichment in international assignments context. Some of the challenges faced by female expatriates are based around differences in the social, financial, and parental status. And yet there are still many left to be explored through research.

There is a continuous struggle by the women to fight for their identity in the work place settings (Gatrell, Cooper & Kossek, 2017). However, this struggle has a different face in developing countries or less developed countries where women constitutes a very low percentage in the total labor force. According to the statistics shown by ILO and world Bank, the percentage of female labor force in Pakistan is 25.17% which is very less as compared to the global level which is almost 49%. This percentage is also the lowest one among the South Asian nations ("Gender Data Portal", 2018). The situation becomes bleaker with reference to the percentage of Pakistani females working as expatriates. An ILO study reveals that less than 1% Pakistani women among overseas workers, on the other hand The Overseas Employment Promoters has articulated their inclination to reconnoiter more employment opportunities for women abroad only if the government is willing to support such initiatives. Therefore, this study can help in contributing towards understanding and awareness of women's labour migration from Pakistan.

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Another report shows that around 6,444 female employees headed to different countries from 2008 to 2013, which constitutes 0.12 percent of the total migrant workers going overseas. "According to the 'Labour Migration from Pakistan 2015 Status Report' issued by Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, out of total 6,444, the highest number (3,860) women went to United Arab Emirates followed by 1,153 from Saudi Arabia. The other prominent destination countries of Pakistani women migrant workers have been Oman, United States, United Kingdom and Qatar during the said period". It shows an increased inclination of females towards the international career and therefore calls for a research focusing towards the issues faced by the Pakistani females working on international assignments and the enrichment experiences they receive which helps them getting better adjusted in society and giving them a strong self-identity.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to investigate the enrichment experiences gained by Pakistani females' expatriates while working in two different cultural contexts i.e. USA and Saudi Arabia. Both these countries offer extremely different cultural environments which would enable us to draw a comparison on the cross-cultural adjustments attained by the female workers having Pakistani origin. The unit of analysis is Pakistani females working in various sectors in Saudi Arabia and United States of America.

Research Questions:

1. What are the different work life enrichment experiences encountered by Pakistani female expatriates along the way of their professional journey?
2. What kind of strategies are developed by the Pakistani female expatriates to better able to attain a better work life balance?

Research Design

This chapter envisages the research methodology and throws light on the methods of data collection and data analysis. There is a void gap in the extant literature on the experiences of Pakistani female expatriates and the data on Pakistani females working abroad is extremely limited, therefore, this study attempts to reveal the cognitive experiences while working on international assignments through feminist standpoint. Seierstad (2011) and Gherardi (2003) have concluded that most of the extant literature revolves around the men, on men, for men and by men, thus, explaining many of the experiences of WFC from a male lens and consequently ignoring the viewpoint of female. Some recent researches have shifted their paradigm and the researchers have started using a female lens by exploring the woman's experiences (Forson, 2007). As this study reveals and explores the experiences of Pakistani females working in US and Saudi Arabia, therefore, an in-depth interviewing technique is used to explain the reality.

The theories in social sciences and management suggest that reality is socially constructed. The ontological viewpoints in social sciences attempt to explain the nature of reality. The most common ontological perspective used in the qualitative research is subjectivism which emphasizes that the role of the researcher and his/her perception can alter the reality (Saunders et al., 2007, p.108). Researchers believe

that to understand a certain reality, it is very important to understand the role of the social actors who interact with the phenomenon because qualitative research is focused on theory building through the data collected from interviews and focus groups, which indicates the importance of the role of a researcher in his or her theory building (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

This study also tries to explain the intricate roles of gender and culture and how these two factors shape the experiences of work life balance and the coping strategies developed by the expatriates in order to face conflicts, thereby, paving the way for epistemology which is “the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective (Creswell, 2009)”. Epistemology helps us to understand the adequate facts with reference to a specific area of research (Matthews and Ross, 2010).

The ontological standpoint helps the researcher to examine the underlying factors that affects the human behavior (Rarieya, 2010) and the epistemological standpoint helps the researchers to induce, deduce and retroduce about a phenomenon under study (Olsen and Morgan, 2005 cited in; McEvoy and Richards, 2006, p.71).

By keeping in view, the limited literature available on the experiences of female expats, this study provides an ample ground to explore the said phenomenon through feminist standpoint which says “women researchers and participants can better understand and explain the challenges, experiences and problems of women’s reality in different social settings (Smith, 1992)”.

It is quite evident in the researches of social sciences that qualitative techniques are found more pertinent to explore and explain the behavior of people (Matthews and Ross, 2010; Silverman, 2011). Özbilgin et al., (2011) suggest that use of qualitative methods help the researchers to infer various relationships and meanings that exist within work-family interface. Various researchers have pointed out the need to dig out the work family interface with reference to under-researched cultures (Allen et al., 2000; Shaffer et al., 2011b).

An inductive approach has been used in this research where a theory is formulized on the basis of observations made during the interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011). After scrutinizing those observations, themes are developed (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). These themes are further analyzed to enhance the knowledge base of an existing theory (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The present study makes use of qualitative method to explore and increase the knowledge base that has been quite under researched till present times. It encapsulates the lived experiences of female expatriates of Pakistan while working in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and United States of America. At first, two pilot interviews were conducted which has helped in refining the interview guide. A total of 20 interviews were conducted in both the countries. The target population involved only females from Pakistan origin either working in USA or KSA. Both the pilot interviews are included in the final analysis as modifications were minor. The research context of the present study is not industry focused. Therefore, the participants come from different professions including teaching, medicine, retailing, hotel management and administration.

Following tables show the demographic details of women working in both the countries. These demographics details have helped in analyzing the findings.

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Table 1: USA Participants' Demographics (n= 10)

Age Group	Number	Percentage
25 – 30 years	2	20
31 - 35 years	5	50
35 – 40 years	3	30
Above 40 years		
Educational level		
14 years	2	20
16 years and above	8	80
Organization type where females are working		
Public/ govt. based	0	0
Private	9	90
MNC	1	10
Employment		
Part Time Employment	2	20
Full Time Employment	8	80
Marital Status		
Un Married	0	0
Married	10	100
Separated/Divorced	0	0
Number of Children		
None	2	20
1	2	20
2	6	60
More than 2	0	0

Table 2 Table 1: KSA Participants' Demographics (n= 10)

Age Group	Number	Percentage
25 – 30 years	0	0
31 - 35 years	2	20
35 – 40 years	6	60
Above 40 years	2	20
Educational level		
14 years	2	20
16 years and above	8	80
Organization type where females are working		
Public/ gov.t based	0	0
Private	9	90
MNC	1	10
Marital Status		
Un Married	0	0
Married	8	80

Separated/Divorced	2	20
Number of Children		
None	1	1
1	0	0
2	6	60
More than 2	3	30

Sampling

The validity of the research increases if a rationale is provided for sampling as quoted by various researchers (McDonald et al., 2007). Most of the qualitative studies are conducted by using the non-probability sampling techniques namely snowball sampling strategy and self-selection sampling methodology (Chang et al., 2010). By keeping in view, the research culture of Pakistan which is still in an infancy stage (Pardhan, 2010, p.33), I have to rely on my personal network to get access to the females working in USA and KSA. As I have had a chance of working and living in KSA, it was easier for me to get hold of the participants from Saudi Arabia. My sister who has been living in United States of America since last 10 years has helped me in contacting various Pakistani females residing in different states of US and working in different sectors as well. This has helped me to get a detailed insight into conflicting and enrichment experiences of females coming from different backgrounds.

The participants I selected belong to the metropolitan cities of Pakistan. They have shifted to KSA or USA from Karachi, Lahore or Islamabad. Most of the participants have moved to these countries with their husbands.

The participants residing in Saudi Arabia are mainly from the educational sector. 7 out of ten females are working in either schools or colleges. 2 of them are doctors and 1 is working in an international chain of hotels i.e. Marriott. All of these ladies come of educated background and are married. Two ladies who participated in the research from Saudi Arabia were once married but now are divorced and living an independent life. The age bracket of participants from Saudi Arabia is from 33 years to 50 years.

The participants from United States of America are from diversified fields. 4 out of 10 females are doctors. 2 are from educational sector. 1 is from a retail/administration background and 1 participant is self-employed. All of them are married falling in the age bracket of 27 years to 39 years. 2 out of 10 participants are working as part time employees and rest of the 8 contributors are full time employees.

All interviews are conducted on phone because of the unavailability of the participants in person. All the participants got interested immediately in my subject area when I gave them a little background to my study. I explained them the reason and rationale of my study which intrigued the interest of almost all the participants. Most of the interviews were conducted with ease and were recorded on a device. The only constraint I had to face was the time difference between America and Pakistan, due to which I ended up waking late at night just to get hold of the participants to record an interview. Some of the interviewees were a little

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apprehensive regarding their identity. I shared a confidentiality agreement and all the participants were made sure that their identities would be kept anonymous.

Data Analysis

As discussed earlier that the qualitative research attempts to explain the experiences of people by digging beyond the surface realities. Therefore, qualitative research helps in developing better understanding of social behaviours (Flick, Kardorff & Steinke, 2004, p. 3). Qualitative data can be analyzed by grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) or conversation analysis as developed by Garfinkel (1967) and Goffman (1983).

Content analysis is regarded as one of a reliable technique while analyzing the data collected from two or more countries and is also considered as one of the classical methods to evaluate textual data (Bauer, 2000). “The use of categories and assessing this data against the categories, further modifying the data using categories is a necessary feature of content analysis, where the basic purpose of content analysis is to reduce the material” (Flick, 2009).

The data is collected from 20 participants by conducting in-depth interviews. Interviewees are provided with complete ease and are assured of complete anonymity. The interviewees are given full support so that the information can be tapped entirely, and realities can be explored in detail (Khilgi and Wang, 2006). All the 20 interviews are recorded and transcribed by me. All interviews were conducted in English and then later transcribed as it is without making any changes to keep the interviews as much real as possible. The duration of interviews ranged between 30 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes.

As suggested by various researches, the cues and hidden realities of work life balance need to be explored in non US cultures by using the purer methods (Shaffer *et al.*, 2011b), like semi-structured interviews (Khilji, 2003), by keeping in view this rationale a questionnaire consisted of semi structured questionnaires is used to get a better insight and understanding of WLB experiences. The questions are adapted by taking the help from previous researches and are aligned with the theoretical framework and the research objectives. The interview guide consists of 5 sections in total. The first section consists of some general questions which act as icebreakers. The questions are about the background/introduction of the interview, family structure and the daily routine. The second section comprises of questions related to work life conflicts, the negative spillover these conflicts generate either towards job or personal life. The third section aims at exploring the enrichment experiences through which an individual goes through while working on an international assignment and the positive spill over these enrichment experiences generate towards family life or professional life. The fourth section focuses on the coping strategies used by the females in order to face or resolve the conflicts and the last section discusses the cross cultural family related aspects.

In qualitative studies, the data is gathered through interviews and then is organized by transcribing them. These interviews are recorded in research diary (Pope and Mays, 2008). In order to analyze the data, it is converted into text by me which assisted me in generating codes and themes (Silverman, 2013). Transcription has also helped me in doing a line by line analysis which are ultimately developed into

key concepts (Silverman, 2013). After re reading the interviews several times, a detailed analysis is developed in alignment of the theoretical model used for this study. I have not used any software to analyze the data rather a manual data analysis is done by generating the themes and codes on a soft copy and thus contextual links with the existing studies is developed along with the identification of many future research implications.

Findings and Discussion

Attainment of WLB by Developing Coping Strategies

A glut of research is available on work life balance which elucidates that if a person wants to stay away from the negative spill overs of WFC, he/she needs to develop an effective coping mechanism. Previous researches show that employees develop different strategies to attain a balance among their work life domains and personal life domains (Wierda-Boer et al., 2009). Baral & Bhargava (2011) have suggested that employees must utilize the policies and organizational support in an effective way to ensure work-family balance. Other factors that contribute in achieving a WLB are help in domestic chores and child care arrangements (Rajadhyaksha, 2004).

The current study has revealed the coping mechanism as suggested by the literature and also provides an indication about the improvisation done by the women to resolve WFC. The coping strategies mentioned by the participants are discussed below in detail.

Role of Organizational Support

Organizational support plays a significant role in developing a better coping mechanism to WFC. It has been observed during the analysis of semi structured interviews that organizations in USA provide better organizational support to their employees, as a result of that female expatriates in US though become a victim of WFC but are better able to resolve the conflicts by using the organizational support. They have the facility to work part time, they can work from home and flex time arrangements are also helping the employees to work in a more productive way. Not a single woman from US sample complained about the lack of organizational support.

I am a partner in my practice so I can change my schedule, I can ask for coverage. So in my case I think my job has never created a negative vibe in my family. I am home more often and I am present for my family most of the time so I don't think so. (AGul, USA).

When I look at my kids and when I look at my career, I feel that if I am working full time, it could have a negative impact but since I am working part time like 2-3 days a week, just because I want to be with my kids, I want to raise them with my own values and morals. My part time work is much better for my family especially when my husband is working for long hours, so my personal preference is that one parent should always be available for the kids. You can monitor your kid's activities and academics. So I feel that I can maintain a better balance of household and motherhood and work if I am working part time like 3 days a week. (SJalil, USA)

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I thought to work as a part time hospitalist but I don't regret that. I am happy with my current job status and life routine. I am very happy with my present routine and the right kind of mix that I have attained. (KGull, USA)

On the contrary, women in Saudi Arabia mention quite often about lack of the support from the organizations.

"We never have a strong support system earlier but whatever little support we had, it's not there anymore because of current wave of Saudization". (SVaqa, Saudi Arabia)

"I think school people believe that we are free at home and thus assign us an insane amount of work which takes a huge chunk of time even on weekends. We are not paid for this extra work rather our salary gets deducted for every other thing". (SMadni, Saudi Arabia)

Some of the narratives are mentioned in the previous chapter where women working in Saudi Arabia also referred to the non-availability of paid leaves even in the case of a death of parents or medical emergencies.

Role of Family

It has been noticed that women both in USA and Saudi Arabia have acknowledged the importance of support that they get from the family members. No one has hesitated slightly even about the help they get from their in-laws or other family members.

"I feel more confident when someone from the family is around, like you can leave your kids in safer hands and secondly there's someone to have an eye on the live in nanny as well". (ASHafiq, USA)

"My mom does help a lot. Whenever I have like extra work, I have to cook a lot of things on the weekend, my mom helps. And my, you know, family does take up some chores if I'm at work would have to mail something out. So they would go and mail things for me". (FHyder, USA)

"Having some family members around in a country like Saudia is a great blessing. We keep on arranging visit visa either for my mom or my mother in law, so some sanity prevails in our household". (AAdil, KSA)

Role of Husbands

One of the most important factors and probably one of the robust elements, among all is the support from the husband. Women who have support from their husbands are found to be more at peace, happier and settled in their lives. It is also observed that the supportive husbands do play a vital role in the career growth of their better halves. Women who do not have support from their husbands, even they have mentioned that husband's support is very crucial in attaining the work life balance.

"I think I have a very supportive spouse and this factor has really played very very vital role in me being where I am. He helped me through my training, he helped me through my classes, through all those tough times where I would probably have collapsed. The mutual understanding the respect for each other has actually contributed a lot". (SJalil, USA)

“The biggest support I have is in form of my husband. I believe he is the best thing that happened to me. I might not have achieved this much in my career if I didn’t have his support”. (AShafiq, USA)

“I think I have a very supportive husband, he is a physician too and many at times we discuss things at home regarding an interesting case or a complicated case which helps me at work as well”. (KGull, USA)

“One factor that affects the performance of a female expatriate is the husband himself. I have the colleagues who tell me how much their husbands help them in cooking”. (RShabbir, Saudi Arabia)

Role of Domestic Help

“Many females integrate their work and family lives by outsourcing domestic work through paid help” (Chandra, 2012). It has been observed that almost all married women have utilized this strategy to align their personal life with work life. Single women or women who do not have kids show a less reliance on domestic help, yet haven’t denied the importance of domestic help in form of house helpers/house boys and maids.

“I used to have help previously. I had been working like 20 hours so I couldn’t do many of my domestic chores, so I had a maid who used to come regularly. Now I am living all by myself and not working 20 hours a day so work at home is manageable. If there’s a chance that I could manage it economically, I want the helper to come every second day and clean my house. You know everybody would love that when you come home, the home is clean and the food is served on table”. (NKhan, Saudi Arabia)

“Life does make a lot of sense, if a house help is there in the evenings”. (AMunawar, KSA)

“If you can afford it, you should have it. if you are working then obviously you are making some money then hopefully you will be able to have some help. We have a cleaning lady who comes every week and help in extensive cleaning”. (HIqbal, USA)

“I hired the services of a houseboy who comes for cleaning etc. and it has made my life easier. I feel good about having this help because then at least I have some time for myself as well”. (SKhurrum, Saudi Arabia)

Role of Time Management and Advanced Planning

Various females have pointed out that they are able to achieve a good balance between their work and life because they have been planning well, using their time effectively and has mastered the art of prioritizing.

“Time management and advanced planning. These are the key factors to attain WLB successfully. You must try to finish maximum during the working hours. When you are working, and you want to achieve in the allotted time, it makes you do things at a faster pace. You work faster, you talk faster, you walk faster. Because of advanced planning and time management you become successful in every field. When you plan well and able to manage your time well, you can meet your deadlines successfully. This has proved kind of magical in progressing my career.” (NKhan, Saudi Arabia)

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“Prioritizing is the key. You don’t need to get overwhelmed with the amount of work you have. I mean, there are certain things you need to outsource. There are work you can divide between yourself and your husband and then there are certain things which you can delay and do later. (HIqbal, USA)”

“The most important thing is time management. If you learn this skill you will become the most successful person in the world. Then comes the patience, because being an expat, sometimes you have to go through such situations which are tough”. (RShabbir, Saudi Arabia)

Role of Cultures

Besides all the factors mentioned above, culture can have a strong impact of work-life interface. Hofstede (2001) defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”. Triandis (1995, p. 4) defines culture as “shared beliefs, attitudes, norms, roles, and behaviours”. Therefore, performance of an individual gets affected by the culture of the country as the national and societal norms do help in shaping the role of an individual with reference to work (Ashforth et al., 2000). As our sample contains women working in two entirely different cultures namely Saudi Arabia and USA. Both the countries have extreme contrast in their cultures, therefore, in order to evaluate the cross cultural adjustments made by female expatriates, the qualitative study would help us in building some notions with respect to the cultural support that female expatriates get in the respective countries. Women residing in USA clearly identify many aspects of US culture which have helped them in adjusting better in the country.

“It’s easier to be a person working here in US. For a single woman it’s much easier. You have lot of resources and you have a lot of security. You have a lot of safety. The society is very civic as compared to our desi society. So it has definitely provided me a better platform to work well and manage my home well”. (AGul, USA)

“One thing is that in US there are less family obligations and less social obligations. So even if I have guests coming over to my place, I am not obligated to cook, I can order a take away food and they will not mind and they will also help me in clean up later on. So. So that helps you adjust better because people around you are also struggling with the same challenges”. (HIqbal, USA)

“In US it’s very normal for a woman to work just like men. The fact that the society is very much accepting for the women who are working. They accommodate women a lot as compared to our country where it’s not considered normal for a married woman to work for as many hours. There are lot of agencies that help you find appropriate child care facilities and then there are many day care facilities. A lot of schools provide child care facility. Some of these facilities are also available in the hospitals where you are working. Flexibility like working from home like a physician can provide online support and can look at the patient charts from home or working on the weekends only is one of the biggest help that we get in US. This facility of working on different days or different hours has helped a lot in my case in managing my household and home successfully”. (SJalil, USA)

On the other hand, people in Saudi Arabia have complained about the racial discrimination at work place and has also identified the wave of Saudization as a negative factor.

“Talking about KSA as the things are changing here a lot of emphasis is given on Saudization. When any of the member or an employee is made redundant, it affects the whole team. The morale, motivation or enthusiasm just goes down the drain. So this Saudization has affected a great deal. The morale has gone down, absenteeism has been increased, employee turnover is high and then the constant psychological pressure is building and multiplying day by day (RShabbir, Saudi Arabia)

“I feel racial discrimination is extremely prevalent in Saudi Arabian culture and Arabs seem to be proud of that. Expats can never get equal opportunities to grow”. (AMunawar)

Conceptualization of Work Life Enrichment

This portion of the chapter conceptualizes the process of Work-life Enrichment processes in the backdrop of women expatriates from Pakistan. Contemporary researchers identify WLE as appositive outcome of attaining WLB. Carlson et.al, (2006) recognize WLE as a process where work domain and life domain generate positive spillover on each other. Marks (1977), in his role theory, has anticipated that the positive experiences in one role can benefit the performance of an individual in another role. WLE has gained the attention of researchers lately and expanded the knowledge base by discovering various variables responsible for WLE (Shockley, 2011). “Positive spillover focuses primarily on the transfer of positively valenced individual attributes between work and family domains” (Lewis and Humbert, 2010). However, the research on positive aspect of WIF and FIW is still scarce (Karatepe and Bekteshi, 2008) and calls for the attention of contemporary researchers to explore this particular phenomenon in an innovative way (Carlson and Grzywacz, 2008).

The qualitative analysis of this proposed study also helps to highlight the enrichment processes experienced by the female expatriates

Directions Work Family Enrichment

The research framework which is followed in this research is based on the work of n their Mäkelä, Suutari and Mayerhofer (2011). Their research model categorizes Stage as a phase when the work life generates a positive spillover towards the personal life. Women strongly identify the energy, positive feelings, confidence and other positive attributes generated through work has eventually transformed their personal lives and has helped them to become better person. During this phase the women see themselves growing personally because of the experiences they get from their work life. Similarly, they have categorized a fourth metaphor in their model as Harbor which depicts the enrichment that flows from their personal life to the work life. This theory says that the peaceful family life helps in attaining a better conduct and showing a better performance at work. Mäkelä, Suutari and Mayerhofer (2011) has commented that women who have a strong support system in terms of their family tend to be more successful in their career. By keeping in view this model we will analyze the WIF enrichment and FIW enrichment experiences of Pakistani expatriates in USA and Saudi Arabia.

Work-Family Enrichment

This portion presents the concrete examples from female expatriates of Pakistani origin showing the effects of positive spillovers from their work life, thereby, enriching their personal life in various ways.

One such experience is shared by a single mother, who has a strong belief that her work/job has given her more confidence to fight the challenges of the world. She says:

“My work has affected my personal life as well as my children’s life positively. Because the challenges I had were different. When my marriage broke, then I had to provide for my kids. So my degree, my past experience in corporate sector and my job, all these factors helped my kids to grow confidently and independently. They had a feeling that they are not dependent on anyone for the provision of finances. They knew that their mother was providing for them. The comforts never stopped. My children also saw that when you are working, you are actually more geared to face challenges because you are in a better position to combat them”. (NKhan, Saudi Arabia)

Another woman, who is single has also narrated the similar feelings by saying:

“Because of my life situation, as you know I am a single mother, this job gives me such a sense of security and brings peace in my life. I think I may not be able to express my feelings of self-confidence and self-reliance. My parents know that I am not dependent on any one, my children are confident that their mother is there”. (HIrfan, Saudi Arabia)

“I think it has become more kind of the need of the hour. When women are getting education and aspiring for challenging careers and have a strong potential, it’s very unjust to make them sit at homes. I think it’s the high time to develop such support structures which would help the working women to realize their potential to the maximum”. (AShaftiq, USA)

“I think I am a better person for my home when I have a job, you know, it gives me this sense of responsibility, sense of balance. I’m more active, I wake up early in the mornings and done by like 5pm and then five or 6pm I can be home. When you’re in a routine of having a job you just you’re just more active and more responsible to both and I think that has a good effect on my home. (FHyder, USA)

Many women have clearly mentioned about the financial well-being that they attain because of their jobs.

“I reckon that in present days, if the financial burden lies on one person, it would become very difficult to manage your household in a nice way. So my job gives me kind of a financial independent. I mean we are able to save some money for a rainy day. We don’t think a lot before spending on vacation or dining out. Secondly, I believe the financial independence also give you some control on future planning. Like I know many women who are considered good for nothing by their husbands specially when it comes to the financial planning. It’s bad but they can’t help it. But it’s not the case with women who are working”. (SMadni, Saudi Arabia)

“Financial independence is one of the factors that do affect your life in positive ways. Like I never knew how to ask for money from my husband since the beginning of my marriage. I mean he used to provide for basic necessities but then there are other things too. At times it used to feel like begging from him. That’s not the case now”. (AGhani, Saudi Arabia)

“Then obviously money. It’s a great factor. Money is not everything but it is kind of everything. I am supporting my husband financially so right now we are financially much stable than earlier when I was not doing the job. So we had seen some hard times due to insufficient funds and our personal relationships and family ties suffered as my husband has a big family to support back home. But now we are much at peace. Plus, in Saudia it’s very difficult to provide quality education to your kids. It comes expensive. So this job is providing me a good assistance in funding my kid’s education. Again this brings a peace of mind. And believe me when you are satisfied emotionally and are peaceful, that effect generates an overall positivity in your personal life”. (SKhurram, Saudi Arabia)

When you are in a country like USA, people back home consider that money grows on trees, you know the typical desi mentality. My husband has a family to support back home. If he would be doing it single handedly, we might not have been able to keep up the appearances probably but with my job, we both are managing really well. We have a nice home to live in, we go for travelling once in a while as well and we are able to invest some money in property in Pakistan”. (AAMjad, USA)

“Living in another country away from your parents in a culture which is alien to you don’t come easy but I think most of us do it for the kind of financial rewards associated with it”. (RAhsan, USA)

“One thing would be financial obviously. We are not relying on one income. So there is no insecurity. We can afford better living standard, better house, better access to facilities, travelling etc. so it has brought a lot of peace of mind which automatically seeps in your personal life. (AGull, USA)

All the participants agree unanimously on a fact that their productive potential have been increased because of their jobs. They are think they are a productive member of the society and not sitting at home idle, wasting their time in gossips and watching TV. It has been observed that economic needs are not the only factor which affects positively to the personal life because we come across many notions where women are not working because of financial needs rather they want to work just to realize their own potential.

“Since I am working after getting a training from med school, I feel work is important. Had I not been working, I would have felt left out or useless, so I dun feel like this. I feel being an important member of the society and I feel motivated towards my work. Then monetary benefits that you get, you enjoy them. They give you a feeling of security you know. My job gives me peace of mind”. (SJalil, USA)

“It makes me feel definitely privileged and blessed. It makes me feel that I use the resources which I am blessed with in a better way. I am very connected with my job. Without job I cannot even recognize myself”. (AZahid, USA)

“Being a doctor I think you can connect to humans at a very personal level. It does teach to be very caring, tolerant and be patient. So I do feel it teaches me to be kind

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and humane. So I have become more patient in my personal life as well". (KGull, USA)

"When I am working I have a good social life. If I stay at home, my mind will be full of negative thoughts. I will feel confined. So I think job is a blessing. When I go out and I meet people I feel good. I feel I am doing something constructive and this thing affects my home positively". (BKhan, Saudi Arabia)

"When women are working they are helping in building up an educated society. They are being constructive members of the society". (SVaqas, Saudi Arabia)

Some women strongly believe in becoming a better role models for their kids. They say that they take pride in their work because their kids and other family members have developed a kind of respect. *"I feel a working mother is a very good example for her kids because they understand that women are equally sharing the responsibility of a household like a man and contributing to the society. They develop a respect towards women and understand that women are a useful member of the society plus it's equally good for your sanity. Working also gives you a break from a monotonous routine of running a kitchen and allows you to interact socially in an adult setting". (SJalil, USA)*

"I am the kind of person who wants to teach her children to be a productive part of the society, how can I teach them if I myself would not set an example". (AZahid, USA)

"Parents are a role model for their children, so essentially kids learn a lot from them. When both mothers and fathers are working and kids grow up while watching them and recognizing the importance of hard work, they become able to understand the value of money. They know things don't come that easy". (ANisar, USA)

Along with these factors, another factor which stands tall and has been mentioned by many participants is about emotional and psychological wellbeing.

"My job is very much important for my emotional wellbeing. I know I would get sick and would get obsessed with petty things if I stay at home". (AAdil, Saudi Arabia)

"Believe me when you are satisfied emotionally and are peaceful, that effect generates an overall positivity in your personal life" (SKhurrum, Saudi Arabia)

"When you work, you go out, meet many people. Sometimes, your job gives you an opening where you can vent out your emotions and believe me your sanity remains intact". (RAhsan, USA)

My work is also essential for my mental wellbeing. If I won't be working, I will be feeling unhappy continuously and it will affect my personal life (AGul, USA)

"It's better to use your energies in a productive way rather than wasting them on useless activities like gossiping, discussing family politics. When you go out, you explore innumerable venues to discharge your energies on. This brings mental peace and you make more sense to your own self and people around you". (HIqbal, USA)

Family-Work Enrichment

Family-work enrichment experiences are strongly embedded in support from different family members and the cultural norms of the family. Most of the women very vividly identified the positive spill overs generated by their work life on personal life. Some of them negated the idea of positive spill overs from the family to work.

“I am living in another country all alone and provide for my family, this feeling keeps me going. But because of a family I am a better employee than No. you can be a better family member because of your job but cannot become a better employee because of your family”. (NKhan, Saudi Arabia)

“For me work is a totally different world and different place. Whatever happens in school stays in school. So whatever happens in home stays in home. I don’t see anything positively flowing from my personal life to work”. (RShabbir, Saudi Arabia)

“I don’t think my personal life positively influences my work life if anything maybe like negative because as I told you we have some you know my husband and I get into some arguments due to work or something like that so I wouldn’t say that personal life has a positive effect”. (FHyder, USA)

However, only 3 women out of 20 have stated so. The rest of the participants strongly feel about the importance of role of a family in their work life.

“One of the things I would like to mention is the support from my family. They might have a different opinion but they give me a freedom to choose my career. Having that flexibility definitely helps you a lot. Because fighting all these barriers and negativity hinders your performance a lot.” (AZahid, USA)

“When you know all is well back home, you feel more energetic towards your work” (A Munawar, Saudi Arabia)

“It is basically all connected. If I am unhappy at home, I won’t be productive at work. We are happier since we have a child. Its different kind of happiness and fun going around. When you are feeling positive at your house, you will be productive at your work otherwise you will feel miserable at work if you are disturbed at home. Even it generates a negative vibe and patients can feel it too. The patients would definitely don’t want to come and see a doctor who is just sulking over them”. (AGull, USA)

“It goes both ways, you know, when I am relaxed, I don’t have any tension or stress in my personal life, if everything is going well, I feel that I am more productive at work. When you are emotionally tired, whether at your workplace or at your home, it would generate the respective vibes”. (AGhani, USA)

“If I know my family is all fine back home and my kids are good, am more motivated to provide for them. When I spend good time with my kids, am at peace in my personal life, I feel more energetic at my work. I feel more motivated. I want to perform good. I want my kids to identify me as a role model. So these feelings keep me going to achieve better in my career”. (HIRfan).

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“It goes both ways, when there’s nothing wrong in my personal life, like kids are not sick, they are doing fine, there is no tension between me and my husband; definitely I work with full peace of mind”. (SVaqa, Saudi Arabia)

Conclusion

During the last two decades, the fabric of socialization has been changed a lot due to the rapid advancement of technology and increased interconnectedness among countries. Whereby, expatriation has always been viewed as a challenging yet promising regime for the people concerned, the inclusion of female expatriates in a large number has given it a new meaning, which has eventually given an impetus to an ongoing research in this particular area (Mohan and Tabassum, 2017). The international assignments opted by either a male or a female do not only affect the person’s family life or work life rather it affects the whole life situation. The current scenario has very much changed the meaning of traditional gender roles and most of the households are seen with husband and wife both as working members. The proposed study very vividly illustrates experiences of female expatriates with respect to their work life balance. The researchers have very successfully proved that females do experience work life conflict but at the same time they experience an ample amount of enrichment in their work life as well. Different life experiences and career stages play a significant role while determining the experiences of enrichment or conflict.

Being a working expatriate myself, I can well relate to the experiences and agree to the inference drawn in the article. Creating a work life balance seems an impossible assignment, yet having a helpful partner, supportive extended family members, work place environment and organizational culture play a momentous role in one’s experiences of conflict or enrichment. A female expatriate, while working in an international organization, goes through invariable experiences which are challenging, demanding yet worth taking for.

The area of work-family interface during the international assignments still needs a lot of research particularly in reference with the female expatriates. Researchers believe that there is a void of research gap that must be interrogated by conducting the research on the perception of female workers in an expatriate situation. Different contextual studies can be carried out by evaluating and comparing different cultural settings. The research can be carried out on single working mothers discharging their duties on international assignments and their coping strategies can be evaluated to get an insight into many contexts.

The study has provided an in-depth analysis of many variables to explain the inter role conflict or enrichment yet there is still a lot of potential variables need to be identified in order to capture a more precise picture of work life conflict and work life enrichment. The organizations must develop a comprehensive framework by giving detailed attention to the needs of a female expatriate and thus develop policies to help them creating a healthy work life balance.

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