



Self-initiated Academics Work Adjustment: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Expatriation abroad for work and leisure is becoming the norm these days. This necessitates individuals to adjust to life in their new destination and work environment. The purpose of this paper is to present a systematic review of the literature about how the phenomena of SIE academics adjust to their work environment. Method: A systematic literature search was conducted by searching for articles that were published in the field of SIE academics and no restrictions were placed on date of publication because of the nascent nature of the subject of study. The following electronic databases were searched where language was restricted to only English: Business Source Complete, Academic Search Ultimate, Scopus, Web of Science and PsycINFO. Result: The result shows that SIEs face challenges that could affect their adjustment to life in a new country, culture and work. Among these factors are family, local language proficiency, interaction with local hosts and expatriates, prior international work experience and trainings provide at the work place. Another important issue that came up is differentiated treatment of expatriates based on their looks and passport they hold by the HCNs (host country nationals).

Keywords: Work adjustment, Self-initiated academics, expatriation, working abroad

Introduction

The phenomenon of academics crossing international boundaries to seek work abroad is not new (C. Richardson & Wong, 2018). Higher education institutions in different countries employ recruit SIE academics for various reasons. There are countries, Saudi Arabia for instances, that do not have adequately qualified personnel, so recruiting academics from abroad is a necessity (Alshammari, 2012). For other countries, employing qualified individuals from foreign countries is a way of improving their reputation and help their international competitiveness (Trembath, 2016; Scurry et al., 2013). To provide clarity, Trembath (2016) terms expatriate academics as people who work in the higher education (HE) sector and have relocated abroad to teach and/or do research in a university with requisite legal requirements and their duration of stay there is bound by time (see table 1.1)

Table 1. 1. shows Trembath's (2016, p. 116) criteria for someone to be considered as an expatriate academic.

All of the following criteria must be upheld	None of the following criteria are included
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have moved away from dominant place of residence (i.e., a long-term move) • Have moved across national borders • Employment is legal • Employment is time-bound (i.e., no intention to emigrate permanently) • Employment is related to teaching and/or research • Employment is based in a university 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travelers (i.e., they have not moved away from their dominant place of residence). For example, conference attendees, academics on sabbatical or fieldwork • Managers or administrators employed in universities whose employment does not include teaching, or researchers not employed in this role at a university

The seminal study of Richardson and McKenna (2002) on academics' self-expatriation highlights the motivation of SIEs. In their paper they put expatriate academics as: "mercenaries", "explorers", "refugees" and "architects". Academics who are mercenaries are motivated by only money, meaning they relocate to destinations where they think they can develop themselves economically (Austin et al., 2014). Academics who go abroad as explorers are interested in learning about new cultures and are not concerned about economics gain (Richardson & Wong, 2018). The architect academics expatriate from their countries to strengthen their careers. Academics who are classified as refugees are those who escape from boring routines or even from a relationship (Richardson & McKenna, 2002). However, Wilkins & Neri, (2019) are of the opinion that this categorisation may not be rigidly placed because of the fluid nature of reasons for going abroad; an SIE can be an explorer and mercenary at the time, or vice versa. Scurry et al. (2013) contend that SIE academics can change their motivation depending on their

personal circumstances and environment they are in meaning, for example, the architect SIEs can change to mercenaries if they find opportunities to develop themselves financially. Furthermore, in real sense this grouping may not be so clearly defined as people may be influenced by different things at the same time (Selmer & Luring, 2015). For example, SIEs may decide to improve their economic positions, meet people from other cultures, develop careers, while at the same token fleeing from hard conditions in their countries (Kuzhabekova & Lee, 2018).

In their research on 600 SIE academics from 60 countries working in 35 Northern European countries, (Selmer & Luring, 2013) contend that refugee reason for expatriation has a negative effect on work adjustment and time to adjust of SIEs. This study tried to validate Richardson and Mckenna's (2002) qualitative study and the result indicates that those escaping difficulties back in their home countries faced adjustment challenges. Selmer & Luring (2013) speculate that the other reasons for moving abroad are pull factors and that may be the reason why they may not have as much effect on adjustment compared to refugee reason which is a push factor. Indeed, from the psychological decision making literature, emotion-oriented decision are likely to have negative consequences because they are not thought through properly (Pham & Avnet, 2009). Thus, the fact that Selmer & Luring's (2013) study indicates that there may be a negative connection between 'refugee' reason of academic expatriation and work outcome may not be a surprise. Indeed, that may be the reason why SIE academics from developing countries experience problems adjusting to their work environment because these SIEs have to move abroad because it is a necessity i.e., they do not have an alternative.

The challenges SIEs face may not be necessarily linked to motivating factors prior to expatriation. Some of these factors may manifest themselves while in the host country. For instance, some SIEs from less developed nations may face difficulties at work because they may feel treated differently because of their origin, language and even the way they dress (Al Ariss and O'zbilgin, 2010). Thirlwall et al.(2021) argue that adjustment challenges that SIEs experience is context specific. In their study of SIEs in the UAE, they found that the main issue that hindered adjustment was language. Being able to communicate in the language of the host country could solve some of the difficulties SIEs face in their work adjustment. However, in certain regions, the Gulf for example, the temporary nature of the residency permits given to expatriates make it hard for them to fully learn the culture and language of the host countries, which makes adjusting more challenging (Alsharif, 2022). Singh et al. (2021) contend that SIEs have a better chance of adjusting to their work when the employers clearly clarify the roles or task undertaken by each individual employee. This is particularly

important in the Gulf countries because of the job indigenisation policies, where home country nationals (HCNs) who may not have the requisite skills are employed to fulfil quotas set by governments. In doing these, organisations may be forced to not clearly allocate roles performed by different employees to accommodate the HNCs's inabilities to perform their duties. The lack of role clarity may thus make expatriates anxious and uncertain, which may be detrimental to their work adjustment. Austin et al. (2014) and Richardson and McKenna (2016) highlight the contextual nature of adjustment; whilst SIEs in Europe may experience work adjustment problems due to their backgrounds, those in the Gulf have to overcome language and role clarity issues to be able to adjust. As Dickmann et al. (2008, p. 755) argue "context is an essential variable in understanding research outcomes".

There is a general low retention rate of SIE academics in the Gulf countries because there is less focus on professional and academic development in this region (Tahir, 2022). Tahir (2022)'s exploratory study contends that collegiality is a major factor that contributes to expatriate retention and adjustment among academics that work in universities in the UAE. The short-term nature of contracts given to SIE academics seems to undermine this fundamental factor and contributes to academic flight. As confirmed by (Kalmey, 2022) SIE academics tend to seek help from people of the same background. Collegiality among colleagues seems to exist among individuals who come from the same culture. For example, SIEs from Western Europe tend to associate with each other. Kalmey's (2022) study further adds that there is interaction between SIE academics and local academics. This negatively contributes to lack adjustment and may inevitably lead to academics seeking work elsewhere.

As underlined by Agha-Alikhani (2018), because of the mobile nature of today's personnel, it is imperative to understand the subjective experiences of the many diverse group of people who work in different occupations abroad. Moreover, the adjustment challenges these individuals confront is not general but contextual (see for example, Danisman, 2017; Fu et al, 2017). With this backdrop, this study will review factors that affect the work adjustment of SIE academics. As this area of SIE research is relatively nascent and under-researched, this review will consider both qualitative and quantitative studies.

1. Literature search strategy

The following electronic databases were searched where language was restricted to only English: Business Source Complete, Academic Search Ultimate, Scopus, Web of Science and PsycINFO. There was no restriction placed on dates of publication to ensure all published research was retrieved.

The following combinations of search terms were used to retrieve all possible relevant articles. First the general key words “expatriate*AND “self-initiated” AND “academic*” AND “work adjustment” were used. Subsequently, additional keyword combinations were integrated into the search to account for close synonyms. For example, (“expatriate* OR “expat* OR “international worker*” OR “foreign worker”) AND (“self-initiated” OR “self-assigned”) AND (“academic* OR “professor* OR “teacher*” OR “lecturer*” OR “researcher*”) AND (“work adjustment” OR “work engagement” OR “work performance” OR “job performance” OR “job engagement”). The application of the above search criteria resulted in the retrieval of 202 articles. This was supplemented by a secondary search for articles listed in reference lists but not identified in the original search, which led to further searches of specific researchers who are active in the field of SIEs academics expatriation.

1.1 Studies screening process

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) (Moher et al, 2009) process was followed in the screening of the retrieved documents (figure 2.1). The inclusion and exclusion criteria (table 1 and table 2 respectively) was adhered to.

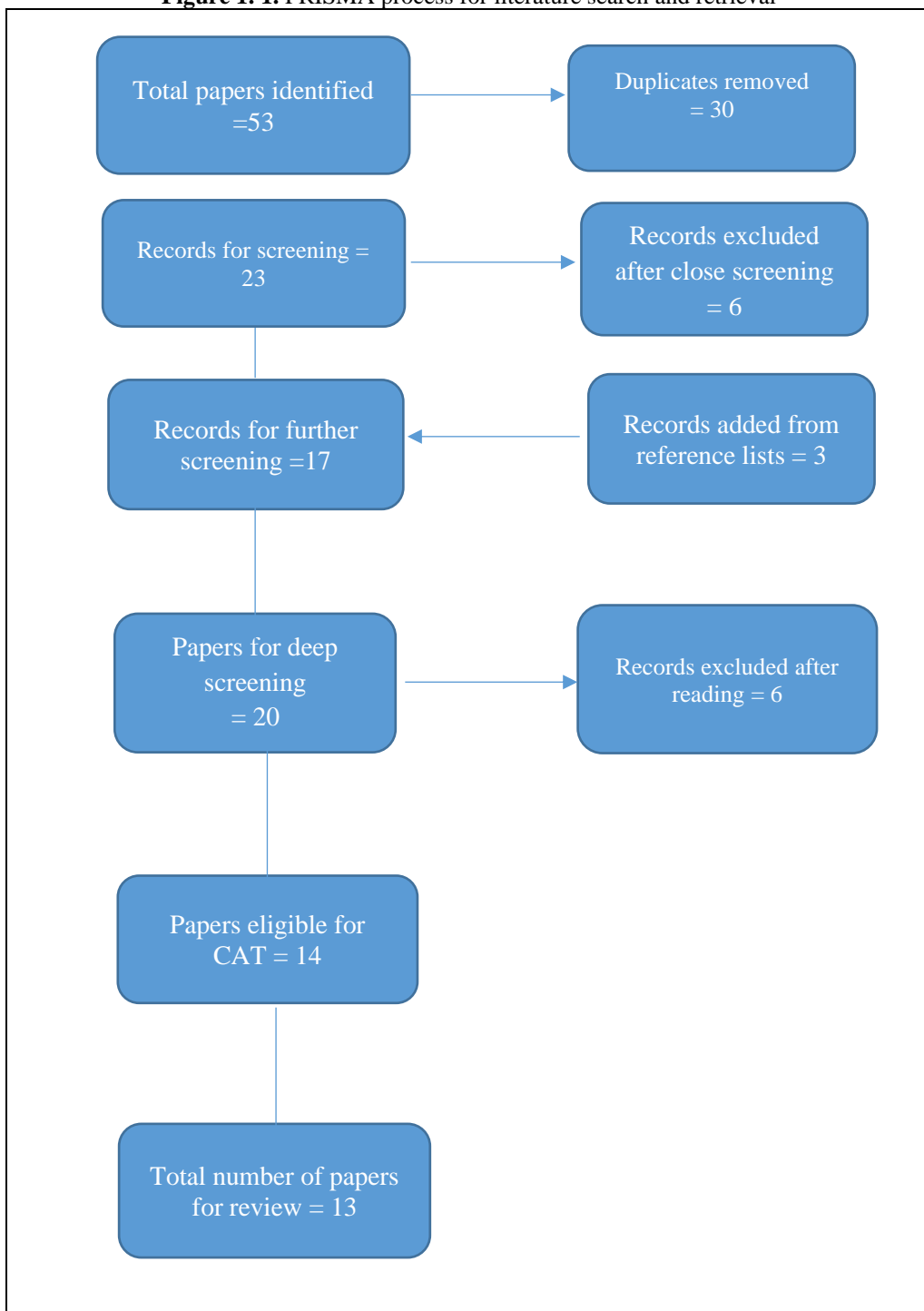
Table 1. Inclusion criteria

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIEs academics • Peer-reviewed materials • English-language text • Containing the search terms in title, abstract and/or article. • Empirical studies • Study addresses SIE academics work adjustment experiences
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Table 1. 1. Exclusion criteria

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference papers and study reviews • Non-English studies • Repatriates, refugees, students, sojourners, immigrants, expatriate spouses, assigned expatriates • Book chapters • Opinion, editorials, and news items • Reviews of other studies that have been included

Figure 1. 1. PRISMA process for literature search and retrieval



2. Quality assessment process

The quality of selected papers was assessed using the critical appraisal tool (CAT) which was developed by Hawker et al (2002). This assessment tool was chosen because it can be useful with research that has varied data and from different subject areas. This review has varied studies that utilised qualitative and quantitative methods.

The current research acknowledges that there are other quality appraisal tools that could have been suitable. A good example is the traditional levels of evidence (Canadian Task Force, 1979), which places more emphasis on randomised controlled trials. Another one is Down & Black scale (Sousa et al, 2017), which uses a 27-item measuring scale. The current study focuses on studies that have heterogeneity, and thus the use of hierarchies of scales may classify studies that are not methodologically quantitative, deficient and expert opinions.

The Hawker CAT uses nine evaluation principles across a research paper, where a score of 1(very poor) to 4 (good) is allocated to different sections (Hawker et al, 2002). Therefore, a research article can have a general lower quality score of between 9 (very poor) to a higher score of 36 points (very good). The papers selected for this review were all evaluated using these criteria and the ones that had a score of twenty and above were added to the review (Firn et al, 2016). At the end, using the Hawker's CAT quality assessment tool (Appendix 1.), thirteen papers got a score of between 21 and 34 and were included in the final review for analysis.

Table 1. 3. Review papers about SIE academics

Author	Date	CAT	Country	Method	Scope
1. Agha-Akhilani.B	2018	33	Denmark	Qualitative	The study explores the adjustment experiences of 12 academics.
2. Alshammari. H	2012	21	Saudi Arabia	Quantitative	The study evaluated whether previous and marital status on SIEs working in a university. There were 207 academics from 2 universities.
3. Asif et al.	2020	24	Saudi Arabia	Qualitative	Describes the experiences of 13 non-western academics working in a university.
4. Austin et al.	2014	26	UAE	Qualitative	The describes the motivation, satisfaction and commitment of 33 academics working in 13 universities.

Author	Date	CAT	Country	Method	Scope
5. Danisman. S	2017	28	Turkey	Qualitative	The study explores the attitudes of 18 participants from 13 different countries towards the culture of host country.
6. Froese. F	2012	32	SouthKorea	Qualitative	The study explores the motivation and adjustment of 30 SIE academics from 30 different countries.
7. Fu et al	2017	34	Hong Kong	Quantitative	The purpose of the study is to investigate organizational socialization aspects of 207 teachers from 4 English speaking countries.
8. Halim et al	2018	22	Malaysia	Quantitative	The study investigates the adjustment of 101 SIE academics working in a university.
9. Isakovic and Whitman	2013	34	UAE	Quantitative	The study investigates the adjustment experiences of 207 academics working in 10 universities.
10. Richardson and Wong	2018	29	Malaysia	Qualitative	Explores the motivation and adjustment of 17 expatriates working in 4 universities.
11. Romanowski and Nasser	2014	28	Qatar	Qualitative	The study presents the experiences and conflicts of 20 professors.
12. Selmer and Lauring	2015	30	Nordic countries and the Netherlands	Quantitative	The paper examines the cognitive and affective reasons of 428 academics.
13. Selmer and Lauring	2011	31	Nordic countries and the Netherlands	Quantitative	The study investigates the marital status and work outcomes of 428 academics working in 34 universities.

3. Study designs of papers identified

The current review identified 13 articles (Table 2) for final analysis. The papers were published between 2011 and 2020. This shows the nascent nature of SIE academics' research. In terms of the research methodologies that were used in the identified records, it seems studies that used qualitative methodology are slightly higher than those that adapted quantitative; 60%

are qualitative (Agha-Akhilani, 2018; Asif et al, 2020; Austin et al,2014; Danisman, 2017; Froese, 2012; Richardson & Wong, 2018; Romanowski & Nasser, 2014) and the other 40% are quantitative (Alshammari, 2012; Fu et al, 2017; Halim et al, 2018; Isakovic & Whitman, 2013; Selmer & Luring, 2011; Selmer & Luring ,2013). Interestingly, the selected research papers emanated mainly from Europe (Northern Europe and Holland), the Gulf (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE), Turkey and from East Asia (Hong Kong, Malaysia and South Korea). The concentration of studies in these countries means that universities there employ many foreign academics. Moreover, it may be an indication of the emerging nature of higher education in these countries and that there may not be enough local talents to fill vacancies.

The sample sizes of the studies in the review varies range from $n= 10$ (Agha-Akhilani, 2018) for a qualitative study, to $n= 428$ (Selmer & Luring, 2015), which is a paper that used quantitative methodology. However, Agha-Akhilani's research is a qualitative longitudinal study (first a sample size of 12 and then 10). As typical with qualitative research, the smaller sample sizes are smaller (for example, Asif et al, 2020). The larger populations samples come from the non-qualitative articles (for example, Isakovic & Whitman, 2013; Selmer & Luring, 2011). This is to be expected as qualitative research is more about details or deeper understanding of a phenomenon, whilst quantitative is meant to assess a larger population for generalisation.

In relation to the objectives of the selected papers, the ones that utilised qualitative methods are exploratory (Agha-Akhilani, 2018; Froese, 2012), and others assessed the participants everyday feelings (Austine et al, 2014; Romanowski & Nasser, 2014). The quantitative articles are cross sectional and assess different facets of adjustment among SIEs. For example, Selmer & Luring (2011) investigate the effect marital status has on adjustment i.e., whether having a family with you helps the adjustment process. Selmer & Luring (2015) asses the relationship between cognition and affectivity on work adjustment. Other papers, for instance, Halim et al (2018) and Isakovic & Whitman (2013) investigate the experiences of expatriate academics in the Malaysia and UAE respectively.

4. Factors that affect SIE academics work adjustment

Getting used to life in a new country, culture and work can be difficult (Richardson & Wong, 2018). Departing home, family, friends and familiar surroundings to move to a new country surrounded by new people can come with many challenges, including the inability of not speaking the language of the host country language (Kalmey, 2022), dealing with unfamiliar bureaucracy in host country (Singh et al., 2021), accompanying family feeling unhappy (Froese, 2012), and work policies being different

from home country (Thirlwall et al., 2021). These situations may eventually hasten the expatriates returning to their home countries earlier than planned. The sections that follow discuss the issues that were highlighted in the review articles in relation to the work adjustment processes of SIE academics.

4.1 Competence of the local language

Being able to comprehend the host country's language has been mentioned in the wider scholarship as being important in adjusting to work and new country abroad (Asif et al, 2020; (Alsharif, 2022) because language plays a major role in the way people make sense of their living environment. Getting exposed to the language of the host country may not only be a means of understanding its culture, but it also enables expatriates grasp crucial information. Some of this information can be critical in communicating with HCNs at work and interacting with the locals in the community outside of work. Danisman (2017) points to the positive relationship between understanding the language of the host country and adjusting to work. The author argues that language does not only help in interacting with the HCNs, but could have a positive influence on success at the workplace. The implication of host country language has also been raised by Richardson & Wong (2018). Commenting on the outcome of their research on expatriate academics in Malaysia, they argue that speaking or at least having some comprehension of the host country language may aid both work and general adjustment. Froese (2012) established that SIEs with good Korean language ability are able to interact with HNCs, which may improve productivity at work. Indeed, mastering host country language has been described as being an essential means of getting used to the immediate surroundings at work and outside work (Danisman, 2017). Halim et al (2018), however, found that being able to understand the local language had no effect in how SIEs adjusted to life in Malaysia. The reason for this they speculate, may be because locals in Malaysia speak English. Isakovic & Whitman (2013) come to the same conclusion about the importance of Arabic language proficiency for expatriates in the UAE. They suggest that UAE is a country with many expatriates and English has become the lingua franca.

In relation to Saudi Arabian, Asif et al (2020) contend that Arabic language knowledge is extremely important. This may be the case because as opposed to other Gulf countries, Saudis are conservative and homogeneous. Therefore, it is recommended expatriates gain some understanding of Arabic language for them to interact with the local and learn their culture (Richardson & Wong, 2018). Conversely, Alshammari (2012), contends that there is no connection between being able to comprehend the host country language and getting used to a new workplace. The result of Alshammari's

study may be partly explained by the fact that the participants in his research came from countries that speak Arabic. Froese (2012) contends that host country language proficiency may not necessarily be a priority for certain category of SIEs. Demographics, for example, the individuals age and length of stay may dictate the willingness to learn a new language. In that sense, learning the host country's language may not be of priority for expatriates who are young because in most cases their duration of stay tends to be shorter. Furthermore, the literature indicates that knowing the language of the host country may not be of value in countries with large number of SIEs like the UAE, or those that use English as a language of communication, Malaysia, for example (Danisman, 2017). However, as (Tahir, 2022) found, comprehension of the language of the host country is crucial in certain destination, including those countries with a large expatriate population. One of these countries is Saudi Arabia; despite its sizeable SIE population, the use of Arabic language seems to be a main concern for many SIEs. The fact that host country language knowledge may be a precursor to adjustment depends on the environment where the expatriates live and work, pointing to the subjective nature of adjustment (Haslberger et al, 2014). Indeed, Agha-Alikhani (2018) utilised the P-E fit model to demonstrate that host country language proficiency may not be a requirement to work adjustment because this depends on the person and their environment.

4.2 Importance of family

The significance of family in relation to adjustment abroad is emphasised in the expatriation literature (Danisman, 2017; (Selmer & Lauring, 2015). Danisman (2017) confirms that when the family is happily settled in the new country, adjustment becomes easier. She found that SIE academics who were accompanied by their family members felt more content with situations in the host country. Froese (2012) concurs with Danisman (2017) that the comfortability of the family helps expatriates adjust to their work abroad. His research in South Korea established that expatriates who had family members with them were more comfortable than those who did not have their families with them. The impact of family to adjustment is also established by Selmer & Lauring (2011). This study found that faculty who were married and accompanied by their families experienced better work outcomes and performance. The fact that SIE expatriates relocate abroad on their own free means they collaboratively plan decisions to relocate to a certain destination abroad with their, and this may contribute to the ease of adjustment (Haslberger et al., 2014). Froese (2012) add that the spousal adjustment depends on specific factors of the host country. For example, in the Arab culture it is normal for women to cover their heads and their bodies when outside their houses and getting used to

this custom, which might seem peculiar to many SIEs, can be crucial. Jackson & Manderscheid's (2016) study supports this argument, that women who adapt to these Saudi customs tend to adjust better to life there, which could concurrently assist the working spouse's adjustment.

4.3 Previous work experience overseas

Prior work experience abroad is considered an important pillar that contributes to the adjustment of expatriates (Isakovic & Whitman, 2013). Halim et al (2018) argue that SIEs who had prior foreign work experience tend to adjust easily to life in a different culture than those with no foreign exposure. Data from their research on SIE academics who came from various countries to work in Malaysia indicates that academics who worked in other countries reported fewer adjustment problems. Living and working with HCNs and people from other cultures is what gives SIEs the confidence and means to over with cultural situations both at work and outside (Halim et al, 2018). Surprisingly, Alshammari (2012) found that there may be no relationship between previous foreign experience and adjusting to work. He attributes such an outcome to the complex and fluid nature of international cross-cultural adjustment. However, 81% of those who participated in his research spoke Arabic, so this may have been the reason for such a result because mastery of the language of the host country can have a positive impact on adjustment (Froese, 2012). However, Isakovic & Whitman (2013) add another dimension about the significance of the host country language to work adjustment. For them it is not the length of exposure to a people's language but the quality of the experience. In other words, experience overseas has to be suitable and appropriate to what is needed by the SIEs. The importance of nature of cultural experience over duration is also supported by Halim et al (2018), who found SIE academics who worked in Indonesia before adjusted to life in Malaysia. This is due to the cultural similarities of the two countries.

Froese, (2012) asserts that SIEs who had been exposed to Korean culture through individual interest and family connections reported better general and work adjustment outcomes. This is congruent with Danisman's (2017) research that SIEs who marry from the host country are more likely to adjust than those who do not. In addition, Danisman (2017) contends that when the culture of the host and home country are similar, the adjustment process may be easier. Conversely, Selmer & Luring (2011) are of the view that cultural similarities between the host and home country may be a detriment to SIEs in some cases. This is because SIEs may assume some cultural practices in the host country to be the same as their home country and as a result not pay enough attention to nuanced cultural situations in the new context. This may contribute to these SIEs not being able to fully adjust.

Stoermer et al (2019) utilised Haslberger et al's (2014) to contend that cultural exposure is particularly crucial in countries with homogenous culture, for instance, Korea and Japan. This supports the argument that context can be a major factor in adjustment. In other words, adjustment can be influenced by the environment and the the individual's personality (Haslberger et al, 2014).

4.4 Other expatriates

Black et al (1991) place interacting with the HCNs as being fundamental to their adjustment model. However, as contended by Stoermer et al (2019) and Agha-Akhilani (2018), this may not be not applied in all contexts because adjustment is not only subjective but multifaceted too. For instance, for some people, meeting other expatriates can be as important as interacting with the locals (Bozionelos, 2009). Fu et al (2017) support the significance other expatriates can have in adjustment and emphasise how significant networking with other expatriates is, especially in terms of socialisation and emotional support. Moreover, interacting with other SIEs can be an opportunity to information about the host country culture (Asif et al, 2020). Accessing local information pertaining to legal issues about the host country from other expatriates might be particularly useful for SIEs who generally do not get support from their employers. Indeed, (McKenna & Richardson, 2016) recommend that employers should institute mentorship programmes at the workplace because SIEs feel more comfortable with other expatriates. This may not only help them navigate the work policy and procedures, but may be another route of getting information about the wider culture of the host community. In his study of SIEs in Korea, Froese (2012) found that SIEs prefer to seek social support from people of similar backgrounds. Besides fellow SIEs, Asif et al (2020) add students can be a good source of support; the teacher student relationship can be equally as significant. SIE academics who not only immersed themselves in their students' work, but also engaged with them, reported better adjustment.

4.5 Training at the workplace

Career-oriented HRM practices towards new entrants to the workforce have also been stated in the literature as having a positive impact on the adjustment of SIEs (Fu et al, 2017). These practices are ways for the employers to show their appreciation to their new SIE workers and they tend to engender positive attitudes and work outcomes (Isakovic & Whitman, 2013). One of these practices is the provision of training. Indeed, training has been mentioned as one way of developing employees' skills and capabilities at the work and outside. Based on evidence from their research, Fu et al (2017) contend that SIEs academics who were given training by their

employers in Hong Kong showed better adjustment capabilities. Fue et al recommend that organisations who employ SIEs should provide thorough and clear trainings about what the new SIEs should perform and are expected to do. Moreover, organizations should also encourage informal support system through the establishment of social networks. Froese (2012) attests that SIE academics employed by larger universities in Korea adjusted better than those from smaller universities. This could be because they provided longer and more complex cultural training. It may also be the case that bigger institutes of higher learning have employ SIEs, which may create a community support bubble.

4.6 Treating people differently

In their critique of adjustment being a point to be reached (Wilkins & Neri, 2019) i.e., a psychological comfort level, Hassleberger et al (2014) suggest that adjustment experiences that people go through in a new country and place is underpinned by contexts because each individual's interpretation of situations can be different. The complexity and context specificity of adjustment has also been supported by Austin et al (2014), who found that in the Gulf countries people from non-European backgrounds are treated differently, and this may affect the adjustment of these individuals. Another study from the same region came to the same conclusion in the way non-Caucasian academics treated (Romanowski & Nasser, 2014). This study contends that as opposed to their European colleagues, SIE academics of colour may be judged in a different manner because of their identity and the type of passports they hold. As a result of policies of this nature, it is not a surprise that academics from Asia and Africa may feel less valued. This stratified classification sometimes forces some academics who hold dual nationalities to use their adopted countries' passports, for example, UK, USA, Canada, Australia etc. to try to be at parity with their white colleagues in terms of equality and remuneration (Romanowski & Nasser, 2014). Indeed, some non-white participants in Romanowski & Nasser's, (2014) study narrated they often identify themselves as nationals of Western countries so that the locals can accept and respect them. "Some faculty members may choose an identity that might not be the true core of their being but rather an identity that is sociably acceptable" (Romanowski & Nasser, 2014, p. 662). From this quote it is apparent that there may be positive discrimination towards certain ethnicities such as Europeans.

Asif et al's (2020) research about SIE academics in Saudi Arabia, comes to the same conclusion as that of Austin et al (2014) and Romanowski & Nasser (2014) about discrimination against academics of colour in Gulf countries. They argue that the participants of their research, who were all non-western academics, were nervous about their job security. These

participants claim that HR policies in their institution is skewed in favour of those with Western citizenship. Because of this perceived stratification of people based on the type of passports they hold, there is a general fear for their jobs. Thus, they are forced to work harder and be nicer to their managers. These academics feel such discriminatory policies negatively contribute to their ability to adjust. These three studies from different Gulf countries (UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia) show that adjustment is not one size fit all, but can be influenced by context. Thus, stratified remuneration based on one's nationality, which affects adjustment may be specific to these region and other Asian countries and less to countries Europe. Indeed, Stoermer et al (2019) found that discrimination against expatriates is prevalent in countries with closed and homogenous cultures, for example, Japan and South Korea.

4.7 Personal level characteristics that help in work adjustment

Personal level features may be critical in the work adjustment process of SIEs (Agha-Akhilani, 2018). A good example are those SIEs with personal drive to pursue careers abroad. Halim et al (2018) contend that certain attributes, for example, being open-minded can have an effect on work adjustment. Moreover, personality traits, for instance, the ability to accept change and having positive outlook towards the new country and its people may provide a means to getting used to the new work environment. Froese (2012) found that SIEs with interest in certain countries and culture have capabilities to adjust than those driven by other things, for example, finance and travel. Those who took part in this research stated that their previous interests in Korean way of life was the reason they were able to settle in their new country. Richardson & Wong (2018) came to the same conclusion about expatriate academics Malaysia. Those with pre-migration interest and had relocated from countries with geographical proximity to Malaysia reported better adjustment process than those who did not have these plans.

In relations to overcoming adjustment difficulties, SIEs tend to possess personal motivational drivers (Agha-Akhilani, 2018) which encourages them to not only look for employment overseas, but to persevere difficult situations. Froese (2012) adds that there could be pre-disposing circumstances that makes people endure condition abroad. A good example is lack of employment and undesirable work conditions in their home countries that may necessitate SIEs to withstand harsh and discriminatory HR policies in host destinations. In addition, SIEs with the ability to interact with HCNs (Fu et al, 2017) tend to overcome adjustment difficulties. Danisman (2017) claims that in Turkey, academic SIEs who portrayed a willingness to meet and learn from the HCNs they were able to overcome

adjustment problems. In the context of Gulf, however, organizational HR policies sometimes curtail the interactions between expatriates and HCNs because expatriates are housed in protected compounds, which makes their chances of associating with the local population almost impossible (Romanowski & Nasser, 2014).

5. Discussion

There are a number of fundamental issues highlighted about the papers that were reviewed. As far as the study setting is concerned, it is evident that most of the studies were conducted in countries in Asia; 12 of the 15 papers emanated from countries in the Asia. This might be a consequence of the recent expansion of higher education institutions in these destinations (Asif et al, 2020; Austin et al, 2014; Richardson and Wong, 2018). Moreover, the limited supply of qualified instructors in the host countries to teach in institutes of higher learning has resulted in the high numbers of SIE academics working in these countries (Haslberger et al., 2014). This has resulted in the higher of SIE academics working in many countries in East Asia and the Middle East.

Another observation from the current review is that getting used to life in a new country may not only be subjective, but also quite complex and multifaceted. As argued by Agha-Alikhani, (2018) and Stoermer et al (2018) adjustment is not one dimensional as traditionally suggested (Black et al, 1991) because it can be influenced by the context where the expatriates live and work. What affects adjustment in one country may be not apply in a different country (McKenna & Richardson, 2016). Moreover, getting used to a new culture is varied and continuous (Farndale et al., 2019). Furthermore, adjusting to life in a foreign country also depends on the individual expatriate as there are people who are inherently able to adjust, while others do not (Thirlwall et al., 2021). This may portray the subjective nature of adjustment as suggested by Haslberger et al (2014) that there must be a fit between the persons and their surroundings. The confluence of the host country culture, the individual's ability, policies at the workplace and other factors, brings McKenna & Richardson (2007)'s claim to mind, that adjustment is a "fluid" phenomenon which may never be realised. In other word SIEs develop ways to cope with their situations rather feel that they are adjusted.

6. Practical implications

The objective of this review was to investigate the factors that affect the work adjustment of SIE academics. The current review has identified the significance of comprehending the language of the host country (Alshahrani, 2022). Thus, it is imperative for employing institutions of higher learning to

help academics develop some basic understanding of the host country language. As suggested by Showail et al (2013) comprehension of the host language may be even more critical in destinations whose culture is conservative and is closed to outsiders, for example, Saudi Arabia and Korea. When a foreigner speaks the language of the host country, evidence points to the fact that HCNs go out of their way to welcome them and make them feel settled (Danisman, 2017). Family support has also been identified as a key pillar that positively contributes to work adjustment (Thirlwall et al., 2021). Employing organisation should help their SIE employees and families learn the language of the host country because this may stabilise the adjustment process and thus make the SIE stay longer.

According to the current review possessing the right know-how and skills should not be used as a prerequisite for employment. Institutions in host countries should consider employing SIE academics with prior foreign experience that is similar to that of the new country (Isakovic & Whitman, 2013). Having a foreign experience may be useful in expatriation, but when the gained experience is similar to that of the host country, it becomes more beneficial. Indeed, being familiar with the culture of the host country may give the SIE the repertoire to confront and adapt to situations that might otherwise have been challenging. Employing academics with experience similar to the host country may also help organizations save money in the long term that would otherwise have been used for cultural training. Related to having some experience of the host country culture is the issue of discrimination based on ethnicity, colour, and place of origin. This review has found a compartmentalization policy that may be engrained in HR policies of Asian countries. The policy of remunerating SIEs based on their origins and the type of passport they hold can be demotivating, disheartening and demoralising to many SIEs (Asif et al, 2020; Austin et al, 2014; Romanowski & Nasser, 2014). Inevitably this may affect the productivity of these SIEs. In that sense, SIE academics wishing to self-expatriate to these countries should be made aware of this practice because it can be a shock upon arrival. Employing institutions should try to be upfront and candid with academics about this cultural practice so people can know what they are getting into.

7. Limitation

This study has several limitations. First, the nascent nature of SIE academics research may have limited the number of review articles. Future research could expand the search criteria and include more articles, books and book chapters. Moreover, most of the articles included are qualitative and the inclusion of more quantitative articles may have generated a different outcome. Second, the review was undertaken by only one researcher. This

may have affected its depth and scope as most reviews are conducted by a group of researchers.

Conclusion

Evidence from this review suggest that adjusting to life in a new country may be subjective and multidimensional (Hasslberger et al, 2014). Furthermore, adjustment is contingent on the context and the individual expatriate. Its subjectivity notwithstanding, the current review found that there is a requirement to find a fit between the SIEs and the environment where they live and work (Agha-Alikhani, 2018). Despite these realities, if individuals decide to self-expatriate at their volition, they may face various impediments specific to a destination country. Within the context of this review however, having the ability to comprehend the language of the host country may be essential. This outcome is congruent with the findings of other studies (see Asif et al., 2020; Thirlwall et al., 2021)). In agreement with Jackson & Manderschied (2016) the accompanying family of the expatriate is another important factor and especially for countries where the family unit is central to the culture, for example, Saudi Arabia. Consistent with Isakovic & Whitman (2014), this review emphasises the importance of having a previous work experience abroad that is similar to that of the host country. Moreover, expatriates have to realistic about the destination they are relocating to because there may be certain cultural norms that are difficult to deal with, for example, remunerations that based on ethnicity and one's passport.

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