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Adjustment in international work context: The case of Self-initiated Expatriate

Academics in Saudi Arabia.

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I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATE ACADEMICS ADJUSTMENT

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my late mum. May God, The Almighty, grant her Paradise.

Ameen.

SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATE ACADEMICS ADJUSTMENT

Declaration

This thesis has not been submitted for a degree to another educational institution. It is the result of my own work and contains no previously published or written material by another person, except where due reference is made.

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SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATE ACADEMICS ADJUSTMENT

Abstract

This study explores the work adjustment experiences of (SIE) academics working in Riyadh. Saudi Arabia has heavily invested in higher education (HE) to develop its human capital (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). Consequently, there has been a large influx of SIE academics from different countries (Asif et al., 2020). However, there is a dearth of research about the experiences these academics go through as they cope with the adjustment process.

In an original contribution to knowledge, this study uses phenomenological case approach. Ten male and five female academics from different countries were interviewed. This study confirms that adjustment is a never-ending process where SIEs keep negotiating and making sense of their new surroundings in Saudi Arabia. Secondly, religion, which is rarely mentioned in the literature, can be a pull factor, and it also helps SIEs deal with adjustment problems. Religion as reason for relocation adds to the well cited reasons of SIEs expatriation, which include economy, adventure, exploration, and escape (Richardson & McKenna, 2002). Third, having a prior experience in a foreign setting similar to the host country is seen as a catalyst for adjustment (Guttormsen et al., 2018). In practical terms, the research suggests that providing onsite training about the culture and work procedures help with adjustment. Moreover, mentoring from experienced fellow SIEs should be instituted. Employers should facilitate spouses and family members to join their SIE employees because family is found to be an important pillar in work adjustment. In addition, comprehension of the local language should also be encouraged. However, the current study reveals factors that could negatively impact SIE work adjustment. Arbitrarily assigned privilege, based on ethnicity and nationality, was viewed as being detrimental to successful employee adjustment.

Key words: Work adjustment, adjustment, Saudi Arabia, self-initiated expatriate academics, SIEs, case study research, international work, Riyadh.

SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATE ACADEMICS ADJUSTMENT

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SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATE ACADEMICS ADJUSTMENT

Table of Contents

Dedication	ii
Declaration	iii
Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	v
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	xii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background	2
1.3 Expatriation: A historical perspective	3
1.4 SIEs in expatriation research	4
1.5 Adjustment	5
1.6 Academics' expatriation	7
1.6.1 Academics expatriation in the Gulf	9
1.7 Why Saudi Arabia?	12
1.8 Importance of this study	13
1.9 Research aims and objectives	15
1.10 The researcher's background	16
1.11 Study design	17
1.12 Thesis structure	19
CHAPTER 2: THE LITERATURE REVIEW	21
2.1 Literature search strategy	21
2.1.1 Studies screening process	22
2.2 Quality assessment process	24
2.3 Study designs of papers identified	27
2.4 Factors that affect SIE academics work adjustment	28
2.4.1 Proficiency of the language of the host country	28
2.4.2 Importance of family	30
2.4.3 Prior work experience abroad	31
2.4.4 Other expatriates	32
2.4.5 Training at the workplace	33
2.4.6 Treating people differently	34
2.4.7 Individual characteristics that help in work adjustment	35

SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATE ACADEMICS ADJUSTMENT

2.5 Discussion	36
2.6 Implications for this research.....	37
2.7 Limitation	38
2.8 Conclusion	38
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	40
3.1 Philosophical underpinnings.....	40
3.1.1 Guiding beliefs.....	41
3.2 Case study as a research design	43
3.3 Sampling	48
3.4 Data collection methods and procedure.....	50
3.4.1 Qualitative diary	51
3.4.2 Semi-structured interviews	52
3.4.2.1 The interview process	52
3.4.2.2 The interviews	53
3.5 Data analysis	55
3.6 Research quality.....	56
3.7 Researcher's reflexivity	58
3.8 Ethical matters	60
CHAPTER 4: THE FINDINGS.....	63
4.1 Participants' demographics.....	64
4.2 Adjustment initiators	66
4.2.1 Experiencing life in a new culture	68
4.2.2 Religion.....	69
4.2.2.1 Islamic environment for children.....	70
4.3 Adjustment enablers	71
4.3.1 Support at the workplace	72
4.3.1.2 Support from HCNs.....	73
4.3.1.3 Management support	74
4.3.2 Support outside work.....	76
4.3.2.1 Importance of family support	76
4.3.2.2 Support from expatriates.....	78
4.3.2.3 Support from HCNs.....	79
4.3.3 Experience gained from other cultures	79
4.3.3.1 Previous experience of working abroad.....	80
4.3.3.2 Coming from a multi-cultural background	81
4.3.4 Patience is a virtue	81

SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATE ACADEMICS ADJUSTMENT

4.3.4.1 Optimism is the way	82
4. 4 Contributors to poor adjustment	83
4.4.1 Resources	83
4.4.1.1 Resources at work.....	84
4.4.1.2 Resources outside the workplace.....	85
4.4.2 Lack of orientation.....	86
4.4.2.1 Work orientation.....	86
4.4.2.2 Cultural orientation.....	87
4.4.3 Social norms	89
4.4.3.1 Driving.....	89
4.4.4 Hierarchy of treatment.....	91
4.4.5 Communication.....	94
4.4.5.1 Local language.....	94
4.4.5.2 Information in recruitment process.....	95
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION	97
5.1 Why Saudi Arabia as a destination for SIE academics?.....	98
5.2 Factors that help in the adjustment process	100
5.2.1 Support from fellow SIEs	100
5.2.2 Support from HCNs.....	101
5.2.3 Experience from a country with a similar culture.....	101
5.2.4 Family as a pillar of adjustment.....	102
5.2.5 The local language.....	103
5.2.6 Optimism and positivity	104
5.2.7 Management help.....	105
5.2.8 Religion as a coping strategy	106
5.3 Factors that negatively impact SIE work adjustment	107
5.3.1 No support outside the workplace	108
5.3.2 Orientation and training	109
5.3.3 Behaviour on the roads: driving	110
5.3.4 Privileges: nationality and ethnicity	111
5.3.4.1 Nationality as a basis for survival.....	112
5.3.4.2 Effect of ethnicity on work adjustment	113
5.3.5 Communication.....	114
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS	116
6.1 Contribution to knowledge	116
6.2 Contribution to practice	118
6.2.1 Employing organizations	118

SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATE ACADEMICS ADJUSTMENT

6.2.2 The recruitment processes	120
6.3 Implications for SIEs	121
6.4 Limitations	123
6.5 Suggestions for future research.....	124
6.6 Reflection on the research journey	125
References.....	131
Appendices	146
Appendix 1: Literature review quality assessment tool (Critical Assessment Tool, Hawker <i>et al.</i> 2002)	146
Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet	149
Appendix 3 : Recruitment Letter	152
Appendix 4: Consent Form.....	153
Appendix 5: Semi-structured interview guide	154
Appendix 6: Building Themes	155

SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATE ACADEMICS ADJUSTMENT

List of Tables

TABLE 1. 1: SHOWS TREMBATH'S (2016, P. 116) CRITERIA FOR SOMEONE TO BE CONSIDERED AS AN EXPATRIATE ACADEMIC.	7
TABLE 2. 1: INCLUSION CRITERIA	22
TABLE 2. 2: EXCLUSION CRITERIA	22
TABLE: 2. 3 REVIEW PAPERS ABOUT SIE ACADEMICS	25
TABLE 3. 1: PARTICIPANTS' DETAILS.....	49
TABLE 4. 1: ACCOMPANIED SIE ACADEMICS	65
TABLE 4. 2: SINGLE SIE ACADEMICS	65

SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATE ACADEMICS ADJUSTMENT

List of Figures

FIGURE 2. 1: PRISMA PROCESS FOR LITERATURE SEARCH AND RETRIEVAL	23
FIGURE 3. 1: DATA ANALYSIS STEPS ADAPTED FROM BRAUN AND CLARKE (2006).	55
FIGURE 4. 1: OVERARCHING THEMES	65
FIGURE 4. 2: OVERARCHING THEME I: ADJUSTMENT INITIATORS	66
FIGURE 4. 3: OVERARCHING THEME II: ADJUSTMENT ENABLERS	71
FIGURE 4. 4: OVERARCHING THEME III: CONTRIBUTORS TO POOR ADJUSTMENT	83

SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATE ACADEMICS ADJUSTMENT

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AE	Assigned expatriate
CAE	Company assigned expatriate
CCT	Cross-cultural training
GAS	General Authority for Statistics
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
HCN	Home country national
HE	Higher education
HRM	Human resource management
IHRM	International human resource management
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MNC	Multinational corporation
SIE	Self-initiated expatriate
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
USA	Unites States of America

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This research has been informed by recent developments in international work assignments and the emerging global mobility of people in search of employment. The aim of this research is to explore factors that influence the work adjustment of self-initiated expatriate (SIE) academics working in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. These academics are professionals who have decided to search for, apply, and take up work assignments in Riyadh, on their own volition (Kuzhabekova, & Lee, 2018). The definition of the term SIEs is contested in the extant literature (see for example, Al-Alriss, 2010; Andresen et al., 2014; Baruch et al., 2013; Suutari & Brewster, 2000). However, for this inquiry, the definition of SIE as: (1) self-initiated international relocation, (2) regular employment, (3) intentions of a temporary residence, and (4) skilled/professional qualifications will be utilized (Cerdin & Selmer, 2014). In addition, within this study, the word ‘academic’ describes people who work in the higher education (HE) sector, either as teachers or researchers (Trambeth, 2016).

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, it presents the lived experiences of SIE academics from diverse backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, country of origin and specializations. In that sense, it answers the calls for more diversity in expatriation studies (Farcas and Goncalves, 2016) to expand its range and relevance, particularly from countries and regions that heavily rely on expatriate workforces (Alsheikh, 2015). Second, the study uses the P-E fit model (Haslberger et al., 2014) which suggests that both the environment and the individuals matter when adjusting to life in a new country. Thus, the findings of this inquiry are unique because of the paucity of research from Saudi Arabia, a country with a closed and conservative culture, hosting a large expatriate population. Thirdly, it includes the

voices of female expatriates whose adjustment experiences, according to the researcher's knowledge, have rarely been researched in this context.

1.2 Background

The globalisation of business shows no signs of slowing down due to the continuous quest for expansion driven by economic growth and technological advancements (Reis & Baruch, 2013). Consequently, it is becoming easier for businesses and people to extend their spheres of experience and exposure beyond their home boundaries (Doherty, 2013; Haslberger et al., 2014). There are three main paths describing the global movement of people. The first path is where individuals are sent abroad by organizations that they work for (Zhu et al., 2016). In the second path, people relocate to other countries of their own free-will, to seek employment (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010). The third path represents people who are forced out of their countries by situations beyond their control (Al Ariss, 2010).

According to Andresen et al. (2014) the pathways for people who move abroad are more numerous than the aforementioned three. These varied groups may include business travellers, sojourners, tourists, retirees who move for lifestyle change, aid workers, diplomats, and international students. Baruch et al. (2013) add the term "flexpatriates" to the expatriate lexicon to describe senior executives sent by their organization abroad for a short period. Moreover, they also include two more groups; "inpatriates" and "impatriates". Inpatriates are host country managers sent to the headquarters of a global organization. While impatriates are foreign nationals employed on a fixed term contract. An example of impatriate labour is a Saudi company employing a large group of low skilled foreigners on a fixed five-year contract (Al-Rajhi et al., 2006). Thus, the global movement of labour can involve both skilled and unskilled workers.

Despite this variety of people relocating abroad, the literature on international human resource management (IHRM) has mainly been focused on individuals sent abroad by MNCs (Brewster et al., 2014; Guttormsen et al., 2018). However, as MNCs change the way they conduct business, the nature of the work force that they employ has been evolving too (Linder, 2019). In recent years there has been a tendency for MNCs to employ SIEs (Baruch et al., 2013). According to Chen and Shaffer (2016), this shift towards hiring SIEs is because both MNCs and local organizations are struggling to fill available vacancies. Moreover, SIEs are generally seen as individuals who are highly motivated and who add value to an organization's talent pool (Cerdin & Selmer, 2014). However, the loyalty of SIEs is often questioned because of their tendency to turnover and seek favourable employment elsewhere (Richardson & Wong, 2018).

1.3 Expatriation: A historical perspective

Expatriation (from the Latin *expatria*: - meaning out of country) has existed from time immemorial (McNulty & Brewster, 2017; Vaiman et al., 2015). For example, imperial rulers sent their representatives to other kingdoms (McNulty & Brewster, 2017). Furthermore, the spread of religion where churches sent missionaries to other lands has contributed to expatriation (Oberholster & Doss, 2017). The term 'expatriate' was first introduced in the seventeenth century to refer to artists and entertainers who left one European country for another (Vaiman et al., 2015). As time passed, the number of people moving to other countries has been steadily going up (McNulty & Brewster, 2017). More recently, according to Salt (2008), there has been a sharp growth of the number of MNCs - increasing from 7000 to 70,000 between 1970 and 2005, with this trend expected to continue. Hussein and Deery (2017) estimate that there were fifty million expatriates worldwide by 2014. The increase in the number of multinational companies has led to more people working away from their

home countries (Hippler et al., 2014). Consequently, there has been a proliferation of research about these companies and the individuals sent abroad to work for them (Doherty et al., 2013). Researchers want to find out about expatriates' sociocultural adjustment (behavioural capabilities) and psychological adjustment (subjective wellbeing), for example, both labour market projections and ethnographic mapping of worker experiences and their quality of life (Hippler et al., 2014).

1.4 SIEs in expatriation research

SIEs have recently emerged in the international workforce scholarship (Andresen et al., 2014; Brewster & Suutari, 2005; Inkson & Myers, 2003). The term 'SIE' was first used by Dickmann et al. (2008) and was adopted as a different research strand to assigned (AEs) at the Academy Management Symposium of 2009 (Doherty et al., 2013). It is, however, only in the last few decades that literature on SIEs has become more prominent in the IHRM literature, following special reviews (e.g., Al Ariss & Crawley-Henry, 2013; Doherty, 2013; Doherty et al., 2013) and special issues and edited volumes on the topic (e.g., Doherty et al., 2013; Haslberger & Vaiman, 2013). The interest in SIE research has led to the study of various topics relating to SIEs, for example, mentorship among SIE nurses (Bozionelos, 2009); differentiation between SIEs and AEs (Andresen et al., 2014); perceived organizational support of SIEs (Cao et al., 2014); experiences of Western female expatriates (Harrison & Michailova, 2012); SIE academics' attitudes towards culture in host countries (Danisman, 2017); and work engagement and intercultural adjustment (Selmer & Luring, 2016). Despite the increased interest and diversity in SIE studies, some researchers view it as still developing, hence the need for more theoretical and empirical adjustment (Doherty et al., 2013).

1.5 Adjustment

Adjustment has been identified as an important pillar for one to be able to work or complete an assignment abroad (Black, 1990, Haslberger & Dickman, 2016). Expatriate adjustment has been defined in several ways in the expatriation literature. For some adjustment is achieved when a person overcomes culture shock (Haslberger & Brewster, 2006). Others view adjustment as the degree of psychological comfort (Black, 1990). Yet others argue adjustment is reached when individuals feel they have competence in socio-cultural issues of the new environment. However, some researchers argue that adjustment is a fluid and complex process that cannot be rigidly defined (McKenna, 2010; Richardson & McKenna, 2006).

Much of the earlier theoretical contribution in expatriate adjustment is generally traced to the work of Black et al. (1991) and Black and Mendenhall (1990). Their model, which became dominant in expatriation literature, suggests that for expatriates to feel adjusted they have to reach a certain level of psychological comfort with different domains in the host country. The three facets that constitute cross-cultural adjustment include adjustment to the work environment, being able to interact with HNCs, and general non-work adjustment (Black et al, 1999). Black et al. (1991) developed the theory further by suggesting that expatriates go through four phases of adjustment in a U-curve shape. The first is the honeymoon stage, a period of excitement about the new culture. The second stage is where employees experience “culture shock”; here they realize some difficulties about their behaviour in relation to the new culture. Next, is the adjustment stage when expatriates try to modulate their perception and start to adapt. The last stage is the mastery level, where employees incrementally adjust and feel comfortable in their surroundings (Zhu et al., 2016).

Despite its popularity however, Black et al.'s (1991) model has not been without criticism (Haslberger et al., 2014; Haslberger & Dickmann, 2016). Takeuchi et al. (2019) argue that the model's cross-cultural adaptation may only be applicable to expatriates with low level international work experience. Mckenna (2010) questions the rigidity of the model by positing that adjustment is a process and never a state to be reached. He questions the models use of quantitative approach to measure how individuals adjust to work, interact with Host Country Nationals (HCNs) and their environment. Shaffer et al. (2016) have a problem with the dimensionality of the model, arguing that the three dimensions of measurement are not theoretically distinct, moreover, they were conceptualized statistically rather than theoretically. Haslberger and Brewster (2006) add that adjustment can be influenced by many facets, for example, the environment, personal motivation, especially in engaging with the new work setting, and issues that may surprisingly occur in the new work domain. Moreover, Black et al.'s model was informed by early expatriation studies, and it does not capture current trends in the expatriate population and assignments which are more diverse (Agha-Alikhani, 2018). Thus, Haslberger et al. (2014) came up with a 3-D adjustment model that they suggest captures the complexities of adjustment. The model states that there must be a fit between the individuals and the environment where they work and live. It has three overlapping components: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. The cognitive area highlights where the expatriate is knowledgeable about the place they are situated. The affective components judge whether the expatriate is happy to be in the new environment. Finally, behavioural adjustment considers if the expatriate behaves according to the requirements of the local culture (Hippler et al., 2015).

Using Haslberger et al's model, and their call for a context-sensitive investigation of the adjustment phenomenon, Agha-Alikhani (2018) has demonstrated that adjustment depends

on the individuals and their contexts. For example, knowledge of the local culture and engaging with HCNs, a key component of Black et al's model was not seen as relevant. Moreover, for these individuals, the work adjustment domain was more important than engaging with HCNs or the general environment.

1.6 Academics' expatriation

Internationalization in HE is not a new phenomenon (Scurry et al., 2013; Richardson & McKenna, 2006). Universities in different parts of the world hire SIE academics for various reasons. For example, as in the case of Saudi Arabia, some countries may not have enough locals with the requisite qualifications, and hiring academics from abroad is a necessity (Romanowski & Nasser, 2014). For others, it is about lifting their international standing to aid global competitiveness (Trembath, 2016; Scurry et al., 2013). To provide clarity, Trembath (2016) defines expatriate academics as members of the HE sector who have moved abroad to teach and/or do research in a university setting on a legal basis and for a long, though time-bound duration of 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

One of the first research papers on academics' self-expatriation was a qualitative study by Richardson and Mckenna (2002). In their paper they categorise expatriate academics as: "mercenaries", "explorers", "refugees" and "architects". The mercenary academics have the motivation for only making money, meaning they move to countries where they think they can save money quickly (Austin et al., 2014). The explorer academics are depicted as individuals who move abroad to learn about new cultures and are not interested in material gain (Banai & Harry, 2004). The architect academics leave their home countries to build their careers, while the refugee academics relocate abroad to escape from boring routines in their home countries or even from a relationship (Richardson & Wong, 2018). However, Selmer and Luring (2012) disagree with this categorization by pointing out that SIE academics' motivation for moving abroad is a fluid process, for example, an SIE can be a mercenary at one point in time and become an architect at a later time. Scurry et al. (2013) add that SIE academics' identity can be influenced by their environment and personal circumstances, implying, for example, that the explorer SIEs can become mercenaries if they find opportunities to make money. Moreover, in reality this grouping may not be so explicit as individuals may be influenced by different factors simultaneously (Wilkins & Neri, 2019). For instance, SIEs may wish to improve their financial positions, learn new cultures, build up careers, while at the same time escaping from tough situations in their home countries (Kuzhabekova & Lee, 2018).

In follow-up research, Selmer and Luring (2012) carried out a quantitative study on these three core reasons for academic expatriates' expatriation and linked the effect these reasons can have on work outcomes, such as work performance, work effectiveness and job satisfaction. They suggest that these three work outcome variants are important components for an SIE academic's "external outcome and internal emotions" (p. 668). In other words,

they may be essential components in their working lives. The result of their large-scale study of 600 academic expatriates from 60 different countries shows that there may be a negative link between ‘refugee’ reason of academic expatriation and work outcome. The reason for this, they suggest, is because SIEs from developing countries may have relocated abroad not by choice but by necessity.

According to Al Ariss (2010) and Al Ariss and O’zbilgin (2010), the challenges SIEs face may be influenced by many factors. For instance, some SIEs from developing countries experience negative work outcomes due to their ethnicity, language and even dress code, whereas those from other countries may not. Selmer and Luring (2012) also found that there is no strong link between the ‘mercenary’ reason of expatriation and the three aforementioned work outcome variables, thus the main reason for SIE academic expatriation may not be for monetary purposes only. Austin et al. (2014), however, argue that most expatriate academics in the UAE see money as being their main goal for working there. Nonetheless, Austin et al. (2014) and Richardson and McKenna (2016) raise the issue of context; whilst SIE academics in Europe may not see money as being an important factor, those in the Middle East perhaps do. As Dickmann et al. (2008, p. 755) argue “context is an essential variable in understanding research outcomes”.

1.6.1 Academics expatriation in the Gulf

The countries that constitute the GCC (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain) have seen rapid expansion in economic development since the discovery of crude oil deposits (David et al., 2017). A major consequence of the expansion of their economies has been the dependence on foreign labour (Alhawsawi, 2013). It has been estimated that 90% of the workforce in some Gulf states, for example Saudi Arabia, are expatriates,

especially in areas like medicine, education and finance (Alsheikh, 2015). These expatriates mainly come from the Indian sub-continent, other Arab countries and Western countries such as the UK and USA (Al Ariss, 2014). However, the economic crisis of 2008 has encouraged many of these countries to diversify their economy. For example, Saudi Arabia has established more than seventy-eight universities in less than fifty years (Alhawsawi, 2013; Alsubaie & Jones, 2017). Building local human capital by educating their HCNs was seen as a key pillar in attaining this diversification (David et al., 2017; Rehman, 2008). This rapid expansion of HE institutions has outpaced the availability of a qualified academic workforce that is available locally and has led to the over-reliance on expatriate academics (Austin et al., 2014).

Richardson and McKenna (2002) portray expatriate academics in the UAE as isolated people who find making friends with locals difficult. For Scurry et al. (2013) expatriates see themselves as outsiders regardless of how long they live in these countries. In the GCC countries, many expatriates are housed in closed compounds where they only mingle with other expatriates, which may be a contributing factor for them not learning about the ways of the local culture (Jackson & Manderschied, 2016). Austin et al. (2014) however contend that what makes SIE academics in these countries see themselves as outsiders could be due to the inherent injustice in terms of pay and other remuneration. A good example of this injustice could be the remuneration policies where native Emirati academics are paid the highest, followed by English speaking Western academics and then other nationalities (Austin et al., 2014). In spite of the selective pay structure, Wilkins and Neri (2019) however, found that academics working in the Gulf are generally satisfied and motivated in their jobs despite some adjustment issues. It can therefore be argued that there might have been some

improvements over the years in the way some universities in the Gulf remunerate and help their SIE academics adjust to life in the host countries.

Job security has been highlighted as a major concern among expatriate academics in Gulf (Romanowski & Nasser, 2014) and the UAE (Austin et al., 2014). Austin et al. (2014) claim that lack of job security undermines commitment, which could make expatriate employees fulfil only their contractual duty rather than see themselves as institutional citizens.

Romanowski and Nasser (2014) underscore the sensitivity of job security in their research among academics in Qatar as they had to exclude variables such as participant nationalities and years of experience from their research because respondents were concerned that they could be identified and hence could lose their jobs. However, Cao et al. (2014) suggest that creating job insecurity might be a means for employers to retain their expatriate staff because, inherently, SIEs are a mobile group of people and tend to take up the next lucrative position they find.

In a study about the impact of perceived organizational injustice on work adjustment in four universities in Malaysia, Hassan and Hashim (2011) compared the responses of Malaysian and expatriate academics. The expatriate academics reported lower job satisfaction than their Malaysian counterparts because Malaysian academics had tenured positions while the expatriates were employed on short term contracts. In the same vein, Austin et al. (2014) highlight the negative effect of perceived organizational injustice on organizational commitment. Indeed, many expatriate academics expressed that their lack of commitment is because they feel they do not get enough support from senior management. Furthermore, Hassan and Hashim (2011) also reveal that expatriates who perceive injustice and unfairness at work report low organizational attachment. They attribute this perception of injustice to the

fact that there is little interaction between the Malaysian and expatriate academics, perhaps because the expatriate academics cannot mix with local academics due to cultural differences, thus may not earn “the in-group membership” (p. 90). Hassan and Hashim’s (2011) research, however, does not specify the nationalities of the expatriate academics, which could have a bearing on the different adjustment problems that they experienced (Al Ariss, 2010; Al Ariss & O’zbilgin, 2010).

1.7 Why Saudi Arabia?

Saudi Arabia, also known as the land of the Two Holy Mosques, is home to Islam’s two holiest places, Masjid Al-Haram (in Makkah) and Masjid Al-Nabawi (in Medina). It is a unique country because it is governed by Shariah law (the moral code of Islam), which underscores most aspects of people’s daily lives. For example, businesses have to close during the five daily prayers. Despite its rapid modernisation, the indigenous people who are culturally and ethnically Arab are still entrenched in Bedouin and semi-nomadic herdsmen lifestyle (Alhawsawi, 2013). The use of Shariah law and the adherence to traditional Arab culture may be the reason interacting with the locals is difficult for expatriates (Showail et al., 2013). This uniqueness notwithstanding, Saudi Arabia is home to a very large expatriate population, about ten million (General Authority for Statistics [GAS], 2017), who are employed in different sectors of its economy, from manual labourers to professionals like doctors, nurses and academics. As a country, it has undertaken a significant investment in education in the last few years to achieve its target of improving its education system (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). As a result, there has been a big increase in the number of academics and researchers working in universities in Saudi Arabia (Alrashidi & Phan, 2015). This SIE academic workforce mainly self-initiate their employment to Saudi Arabia to enjoy an expatriate lifestyle with hitherto good remuneration and other benefits (Austin et al. 2014).

However, some of their experiences may not be as positive as they are perceived to be before deployment (Romanowski & Nasser, 2014) and “[m]any professors fostered in Western universities face considerable social, professional and academic challenges in teaching and research” (p. 654). Competitive salaries and other benefits notwithstanding, SIE academics could be confronted by a society that is rigidly rooted in culture (Showail et al., 2013) and work policies that might be skewed towards the locals in terms of promotion (Austin et al., 2014).

Saudi Arabia comes third in terms of desirability as a destination for migrants (World Migration Report, 2018), and it has an expatriate population of about ten million (GAS, 2017). In addition to this, there are changes taking place in the Saudi Arabian work arena which may have further precipitated the country’s need for more expatriate workforce. It has launched an ambitious program called Vision 2030 whose primary pillar, among others is to improve the educational level of its citizens (Alsulami, 2018). However, the shortage of local human resources (HRs) means the country has to rely on an expatriate workforce.

1.8 Importance of this study

Although there has been a steady output of research about different aspects of expatriate academics’ adjustment in different countries, for example, motivation-Malaysia (Richardson & Wong, 2018); attitudes towards the culture of the host country-Turkey (Danisman, 2017); and identity issues among expatriate professors-Qatar (Romanowski & Nasser, 2014), little research has explored the lived experience of expatriate academics within the Saudi context. For example, Alshammari (2012) used a quantitative approach underpinned by Black et al.’s model to investigate the effect of prior foreign experiences and marital status on SIEs adjustment. He argues that these two variables have no significant effect on SIEs’ general,

interactional and work adjustment. This outcome, however, may have been due to the fact that over 80% of the participants were Arabs who came from countries neighbouring Saudi Arabia. In a study investigating SIE nurses in Saudi Arabia, Bozionelos (2009) underscores the importance of mentorship in SIE work adjustment. He suggests that for employing organizations to maximise the productivity of SIEs, they should institute mentoring schemes at work, whether formal or informal. Although some of the outcomes of the above study are plausible, it does not provide a direction on how long the mentorship schemes should be. More recently, Asif et al. (2020) investigated SIE academics experiences in a Saudi university. Their qualitative study found that expatriates endure constant struggles as they adjust to life in their new country. For example, one major concern is a lack of job security, and because of this they put extra efforts to please their supervisors. The study, however, did not have diversity as the participants were all non-Western SIE academics. Including samples from other backgrounds, for instance, Western countries, may have provided alternative outcomes and perspectives.

The objective of this research is to add more diversity by exploring the lived experiences of SIE academics from diverse backgrounds in a country that hosts a large expatriate workforce (GAS, 2017). As advocated by Haslberger et al. (2014) in their person-environment fit adjustment model, context is important in a world where there is more diverse expatriate population. This has been demonstrated by Stoermer et al. (2018), who used P-E fit model, to show that adjustment is a subjective and multidimensional phenomenon. Thus, the current study uses Haslberger et al.'s (2014) model as a guide to explore the realities of a group of SIEs that have not been often studied, and especially from a country where very few research has been done. Furthermore, there is a dearth of qualitative research in the expatriate management literature as most is ontologically and methodologically positivistic (McKenna

& Richardson, 2016). Thomas and Lazarova (2006) concur with McKenna (2010) that it may be difficult to gauge a person's feelings using a cross-sectional tick box questionnaire. Their argument is that people's experiences may not be generalisable, for it depends on specific contexts and experiences. Recognising that there are multiple realities and that people interpret what they experience differently depending on their contexts and situations (Gill, 2014), this study uses semi-structured interviews to explore the lived experiences of expatriate academics. To add range and variety, the participants of this study come from different countries. Both male and female SIE academics were sampled.

1.9 Research aims and objectives

The aim of this research is to explore factors that affect the work adjustment of SIE academics working in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The overarching research question of this study is "What are the factors that influence self-initiated academics adjusting to their work environment?" Within this overarching question, the following objectives will be explored further:

- To explore factors that hinder or support expatriate academics adjusting to their work environment abroad.
- To explore if support from family members helps expatriate academics adjust to their new work.
- To assess whether support from native/local work colleagues helps in settling into their work.
- To explore how organizational support affects work adjustment.

1.10 The researcher's background

The diversification of the Saudi economy from oil to other sources of income may have catapulted my SIE journey. Although there was no intention on my part to move to Saudi Arabia as an academic in late 2008, the decisive moment was purely serendipitous. A late-night call from a friend about a job fair in central London for a Saudi university was the trigger of my SIE journey.

In the first institution where I worked, I saw individuals from the UK, USA, Canada, and other English-speaking countries, who had come to Saudi Arabia, mainly as teachers but who did not complete their one-year contracts. Indeed, some resigned or left within the first few weeks of their arrival. The issue became more apparent when I was employed as an education project manager for a company subcontracted by a leading university in Riyadh, where my role involved recruitment and management of academics. I realized that recruiting an SIE academic cost my employer a sizeable amount of money and non-completion of their contract was affecting the company's bottom-line. Therefore, I became curious and wanted to know the reasons behind such a high attrition rate, especially among SIEs employed from countries like the UK, USA, Canada, Ireland, and Australia. As argued by Denzin (1989) the choice of a research topic can be driven by what the person experiences. The topic of my research was hitherto influenced by my curiosity about what underlies people's decision to take up a reasonably paid job but leave within few weeks or months. As such, my initial journey of seeking a teaching position in Saudi Arabia not only gave me the historical perspective of SIE recruitment cycles, but also an experience of the process too. In addition, the fact that I am locally situated meant that I could explore the SIE work adjustment phenomenon from a different context than was available in the wider literature.

1.11 Study design

The aim of this study is to explore the work adjustment experiences of SIE academics in a country where relatively little has been written about in terms of research. Therefore, an exploratory qualitative method was used to find out about the experiences SIE academics undergo in their daily lives and work environment (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The advantage of qualitative research is that the researcher can witness the expressions of the participants in situ (Silverman, 1998). This means participants are interviewed in places that are convenient, and where they feel comfortable. In the context of this research, interviews were held at participants' offices, cafes, and homes.

Exploratory research, as the name suggests, aims to find out about a phenomenon without necessarily trying to generalise it (Patton, 2002). It has the ability to provide in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon, primarily through interviewing, and also through observations and analysis (Bryman, 2012). Moreover, in qualitative inquiry not only is the researcher deeply involved in the experiences of the participants but the interpretation too (Denzin, 1989). Furthermore, the patterns and beliefs of the participants is important to the researcher in order to analyse and interpret the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Finlay (2009) suggests that the philosophical ideas that support the researcher's assumptions is fundamental, for this is what guides the choice of methodology and analysis.

This study was influenced by the interpretivist paradigm because its aim is to find out about the phenomena of work adjustment as lived and experienced by a diverse groups of SIE academics in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. It is believed there are different realities and that each individual subjectively experiences the phenomena in their own way. As this inquiry is guided by the way people uniquely interpret their social world, this study did not seek to test

a hypothesis to deduce or generalise an outcome (Finlay, 2009). The interpretive paradigm, while maintaining each individual's interpretation of the phenomenon, also assumes that experiences can be co-constructed from social interaction (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The research aspires to explore the phenomenon of work adjustment as a life world of these individuals and compare patterns across the data to come up with common themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

As the researcher, I wanted to understand the experiences SIE academics go through as they adjust to life in their work environment abroad. Because the focus of the research is on the everyday experiences of a certain phenomenon (work adjustment), a phenomenological case study was chosen as a methodology (Converse, 2012). As suggested by Flood (2010), the person conducting the inquiry must focus on the phenomenon as experienced by the participants. As an SIE academic who has experienced the phenomenon of work adjustment, my proximity to the participants was seen as an epistemological priority (van Manen, 1990). Hence, I saw myself as part of the research rather than trying to curtail my thoughts and experiences (Patton, 2002). Converse (2012) argues that "interpretation takes place with the understanding that the researcher is part of their historical, social, and political world" (p. 29). Gill (2014) adds, "everyone exists in a culturally and historically conditioned environment" (p. 120). Therefore, I am part of the context of the subject being studied and cannot separate myself from this reality.

Phenomenology as a methodology allows the researcher to stay attuned to the stories of the participants as they develop, rather than being subject to a preconceived idea about the phenomenon (Crowther et al., 2017). Although, as someone who experiences the phenomenon under study on a daily basis, as an investigator, I was open to listening and

making sense of the experiences of the participants. The essence of phenomenology is not about “what to do” but to find out “what is going on” (Crowther et al., 2017). This means the researcher has to continually ask questions of the data to bring out the true essence of the phenomenon. As the researcher I had to re-read, think and re-write to understand the experiences of the participants. Because of its methodological neutrality and step-by-step guide in data analysis, Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis was utilized to help analyse the data. This helped build insights into the data by capturing and linking patterns across the different data sets, to get a deeper understanding by going beyond “surface level content” through interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 201). In the same vein, Gill (2014) argues that for a phenomenological methodology, interpretation is a key aspect of the research process. The use of Nvivo helped organize the data into nodes and categories to build overarching themes, themes and sub-themes to group the data.

Researcher bias and lack of generalisability have been mentioned as major flaws of the interpretive paradigm (Denscombe, 2003). However, Yin (2012) argues that generalisability can be achieved if there is a systematic approach to the way the research is conducted. Flyvbjerg (2006) adds that while the aim of qualitative research is not to generalise, its outcome can be applied to a similar context. This research is exploratory in nature and its result is not intended to be generalised.

1.12 Thesis structure

The following chapter presents a systematized review of factors that affect SIE academics adjustment. Chapter 3 describes the methodology of choice and the philosophical underpinnings of the study, plus the data collection method used. Chapter 4 presents the study findings as experienced by the participants. Here, overarching themes, themes and sub-

themes were extracted from the interview transcripts as guided by the research questions.

Chapter 5 delves into the findings in view of the literature. It explicates the research outcome in relation to what is already known and the contribution the study makes to knowledge.

Chapter 6 brings the study to a close by assessing its implications and discussing its limitations. The chapter also includes my reflection as the researcher on the research journey.

CHAPTER 2: THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to present a systematised literature review about the phenomena of work adjustment in relation to SIE academics. This will provide a greater understanding of the experiences of this group of expatriates as they get used to their work environment. As highlighted by Agha-Alikhani (2018), because of the rapid change in global mobility, it is important to understand the subjective experiences of different occupational groups in the international work arena within their contexts (see for example, Danisman, 2017; Froese, 2012; Fu et al., 2017; for studies about SIE academics). In that vein, this literature review will consider the factors that affect work adjustment of SIE academics. As this strand of SIE research is relatively new and under-researched, this chapter will consider both qualitative and quantitative studies.

2.1 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.

2.1.1 Studies screening process

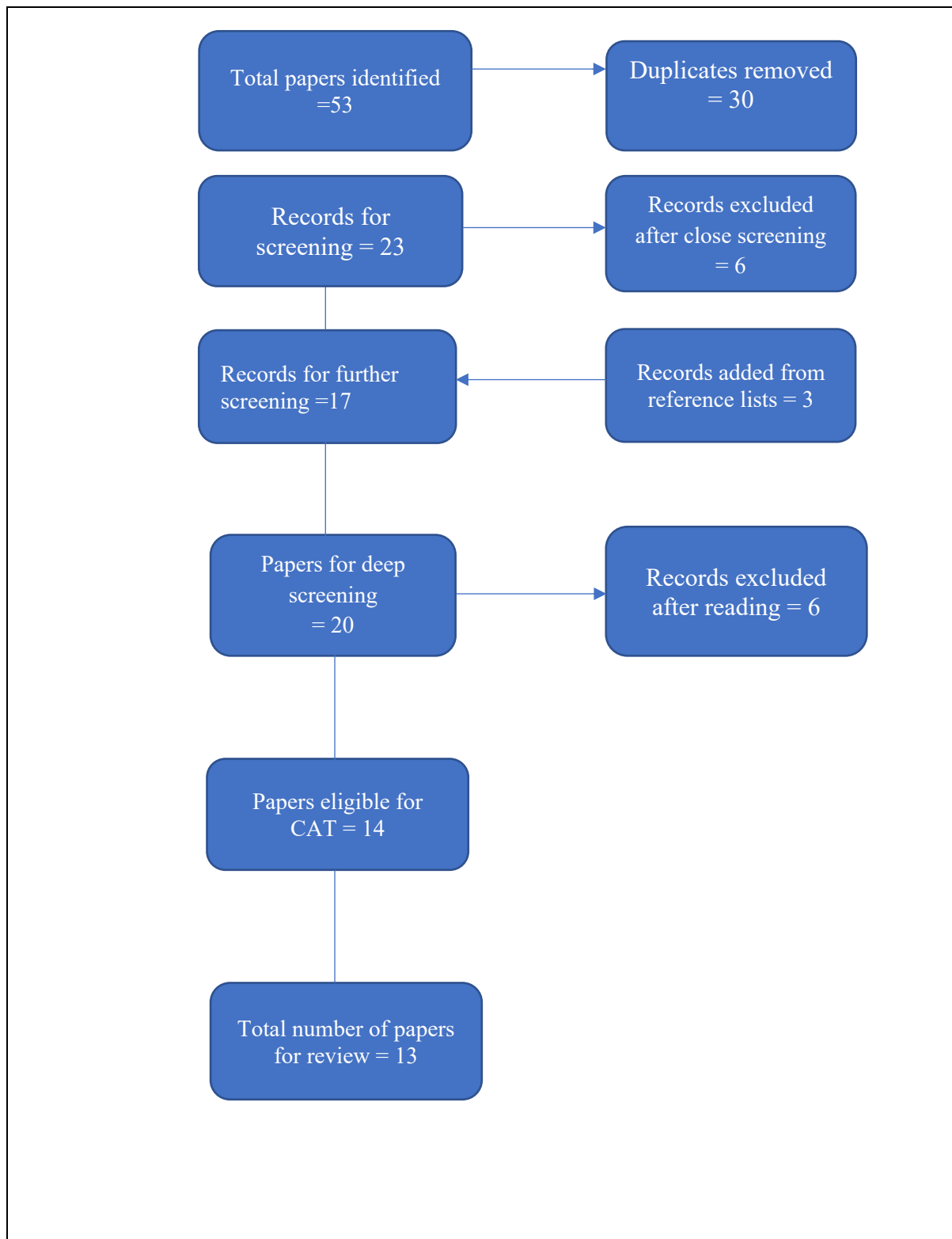
The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) (Moher et al., 2009) process was followed in the screening of the retrieved documents (figure 2.1). The inclusion and exclusion criteria (table 1 and table 2 respectively) was adhered to.

Table 2. 1: Inclusion criteria

- SIEs academics
- Peer-reviewed
- English-language text
- Containing the search terms in title, abstract and/or article.
- Empirical studies
- Study addresses SIE academics work adjustment experiences

Table 2. 2: Exclusion criteria

- 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 2. 1: PRISMA process for literature search and retrieval

2.2 Quality assessment process

The quality of chosen papers was appraised using the critical appraisal tool (CAT) developed by Hawker et al. (2002). This appraisal tool was selected because it can be used with studies with varied data and from across disciplines (Schuster & Dwyer, 2020). This review has heterogenous studies that used qualitative and quantitative methods.

This study recognizes that there are other quality evaluation tools that could have been used, for example, traditional levels of evidence (Canadian Task Force, 1979), which place more weight randomised controlled trials and Down and Black scale (Sousa et al., 2017), a 27-item measuring scale. The focus of this review is on heterogeneous studies and the use of hierarchies of scales may deem qualitative studies inadequate and just expert opinions.

The Hawker CAT utilizes nine assessment criteria across a research paper, where a score of 1 (very poor) to 4 (good) is assigned to different sections (Hawker et al., 2002). This means a paper can have an overall minimum quality point of between 9 (very poor) to a maximum 36 points (very good). The papers were all assessed using these criteria and those with a score of twenty and above were included in the review (Firn et al., 2016). At the end, using the CAT process (Appendix 1.), thirteen papers got a score of between 21 and 34 and were included in the final review for analysis.

Table: 2. 3 Review papers about SIE academics

Author	Date	CAT	Country	Method	Scope of the studies
1. Agha-Akhilani.B	2018	33	Denmark	Qualitative -Longitudinal case study	The study explores the adjustment experiences of 12 academics.
2. Alshammari. H	2012	21	Saudi Arabia	Quantitative -Descriptive co-relational	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 -Descriptive	Describes the experiences of 13 non-Western academics working in a university.
4. Austin et al.	2014	26	UAE	Qualitative -Case study	The study describes the motivation, satisfaction and commitment of 33 academics working in 6 universities (3 public and 3 semi-public).
5. Danisman.S	2017	28	Turkey	Qualitative -Unspecified	The study explores the attitudes of 18 participants from 13 different countries towards the culture of host country.
6. Froese. F	2012	32	South Korea	Qualitative -Exploratory	The study explores the motivation and adjustment of 30 SIE academics from 30 different countries.
7. Fu et al	2017	34	Hong Kong	Quantitative -Confirmatory factor analysis	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 -Descriptive statistics	The study investigates the adjustment of 101 SIE academics working in a university
9. Isakovic and Whitman	2013	34	UAE	Quantitative -Correlational statistics	The study investigates the adjustment experiences of 207 academics working in 10 universities
10. Richardson and Wong	2018	29	Malaysia	Qualitative -Exploratory	Explores the motivation and adjustment of 17 expatriates working in 4 universities
11. Romanowski and Nasser	2014	28	Qatar	Qualitative research.	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.

Author	Date	CAT	Country	Method	Scope of the studies
				- Correlational statistics	
13. Selmer and Lauring	2011	31	Nordic countries and the Netherlands	Quantitative - Correlational statistics	The study investigates the marital status and work outcomes of 428 academics working in 34 universities.

2.3 Study designs of papers identified

This systematic review identified 13 papers (Table 2) for final analysis. The publication dates of the selected papers ranged from 2011 to 2020, pointing to the fact that research in SIE academics is an emerging area (Halim et al., 2018). Of the identified records 54% 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 46% are quantitative (Alshammari, 2012; Fu et al., 2017; Halim et al, 2018; Isakovic & Whitman, 2013; Selmer & Luring, 2011; Selmer & Luring, 2013). The geographical location where the studies were conducted are mainly in Europe (Nordic countries and The Netherlands), Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE and Turkey) and Far East (Hong Kong, Malaysia and South Korea). This may be a reflection of countries with a high number of expatriate academics.

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 quantitative study. However, Agha-Akhilani's paper was a qualitative longitudinal study (first a sample size of 12 and then 10). As expected, the smaller sample sizes are from the qualitative papers (for example, Asif et al, 2020). The larger study samples are from the quantitative papers (for example, Isakovic & Whitman, 2013; Selmer & Luring, 2011).

In terms of the aims of the studies, the qualitative ones are exploratory (Agha-Akhilani, 2018; Froese, 2012), and others assess the experiences of participants (Austin et al., 2014; Romanowski & Nasser, 2014). The quantitative papers are cross sectional and investigate different adjustment aspects of SIEs. For example, Selmer and Luring (2011) and Selmer and Luring (2015) investigate relationship between marital status and adjustment, and

cognitive and affective reasons for SIEs respectively. Other papers, for example, Halim et al. (2018) and Isakovic and Whitman (2013) analyse the adjustment experiences of expatriate academics.

2.4 Factors that affect SIE academics work adjustment

Adjusting to a new country, culture and work can be challenging (Richardson & Wong, 2018). Leaving family, friends and familiar surroundings to settle into a new lifestyle surrounded by strangers can come with many difficulties, including not being able to communicate in the host country language (Danisman, 2017), family members being unsettled (Froese, 2012), and this may result in eventually returning to home country prematurely. The following sections highlight some issues raised in the review articles about SIE academics work adjustment.

2.4.1 Proficiency of the language of the host country

Proficiency of the language of the host country has been mentioned in the literature as being critical in SIE work adjustment abroad (Asif et al., 2020; Froese, 2012), for it affects the way people make sense of their surroundings. Having exposure to the language of the host country may not only be a way of understanding its culture, but also helps expatriates grasp critical information. Some of this information can be crucial in communicating with HCNs at the workplace and dealing with host population outside of work. Danisman (2017) points to the synergy between understanding the host country language and work adjustment. The author argues that language enables comprehension of the HCNs, which could have a positive influence on success at the workplace for expatriate academics. The significance of host country language was also suggested by Richardson and Wong (2018). Based on their research on expatriate academics in Malaysia, they report that speaking or at least understanding the local language may aid both work and general adjustment. Froese (2012)

found that expatriates with good Korean language ability had the means to interact with HNCs, which may improve productivity at the workplace. Indeed, host country language skills have been described as being an essential means of comprehending the immediate surroundings at work and the outer world (Danisman, 2017). Halim et al. (2018) however, found that knowing the local language had no effect on expatriate adjustment in Malaysia. They speculate that this might be the case because many people in Malaysia speak English. Isakovic and 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 foreigners and English has become the *lingua franca*.

Within the Saudi Arabian context, Asif et al. (2020) stress the importance of having some knowledge of the Arabic language. The fact that the Saudi society is largely conservative and homogeneous despite the influx of many cultures means expatriates could benefit from at least having some basic understanding of Arabic. However, based on his study in Saudi Arabia, about SIE academics, Alshammari (2012) report that there is no link between local language knowledge and work adjustment. This outcome may be explained by the fact that the participants in his study came from Arabic speaking countries. Froese (2012) argues that local language proficiency may not be a priority for some types of SIEs. They contend that demographics in terms of age and duration of stay may play a role. For example, learning the language of a host country may not be important for younger SIEs who plan to stay for a short time. The literature shows that local language proficiency may not be important in countries with large expatriate population like the UAE, or those with English as a *lingua franca*. However, as Asif et al. (2020) indicate, despite its large expatriate population, Arabic language seems to be a crucial factor for SIEs in Saudi Arabia. This may be due to the closed nature of the Saudi society (Showail et al., 2013). The fact that local language knowledge as a

means to adjustment depends on the environment where the expatriates find themselves points to the subjectivity of adjustment (Haslberger et al., 2014). Agha-Alikhani (2018) used the P-E fit model to show that local language proficiency may not be precursor to work adjustment, for it depends on the person and their environment.

2.4.2 Importance of family

Danisman (2017) claims that the happiness of the family and spouse may play a vital role in expatriate work adjustment. She reveals that SIE academics who had their families with them felt more comfortable with life in the host country. Froese (2012) agrees with Danisman (2017) that the contentment of the family may be crucial in work abroad. His study in South Korea found that SIEs who had their families with them were more satisfied than those who did not have their families. The significance of family to adjustment is also confirmed by Selmer and Luring (2011). They report that academics who were married and had their families with them reported better work outcomes and performance. The fact that SIEs relocate abroad on their own volition means the planning is a collaborative decision which may contribute to the ease of adjustment (Selmer & Luring, 2011). Froese (2012) argues the criticality of spousal adjustment depends on the country where the expatriate is based. For example, in the Arab culture women are expected to cover their heads and parts of their bodies when outside their homes, hence adapting to this norm can be critical. Jackson and Manderscheid's (2016) study supports this argument, that women who accept such Saudi customs adjust better to life there, which could concomitantly benefit the working spouse's adjustment.

2.4.3 Prior work experience abroad

Prior work experience abroad is considered as one of the most important factors that help in the adjustment process (Isakovic & Whitman, 2013). According to Halim et al. (2018) expatriates with international experience adjust better to working abroad. Data from their study on SIE academics from different countries working in Malaysia shows that those who worked or lived abroad reported fewer adjustment problems. Moreover, they argue that experience abroad exposes expatriates to other cultures, which may give them the ability to confidently cope with different cultural and work situations. Interestingly, Alshammari (2012) in his study of SIE academics in Saudi Arabia, reports that there is no relationship between previous international experience and work adjustment. He speculates that the complex nature of cross-cultural adjustment may be the reason for this. However, the fact that 81% of the participants in his study was Arabic speaking academics may have been a factor in this, as proficiency of the local language positively contributes to adjustment (Froese, 2012). Isakovic and Whitman (2013) claim that it is not about how long the prior foreign experience one has but the quality of it. In other words, the foreign experience has to be suitable and appropriate to what is needed. It is within this context that Halim et al. (2018) report that academics who had worked in countries with similar culture as Malaysia, for example, Indonesia, adjusted easily to their roles.

In his research, Froese (2012) suggests that SIE academics who had prior exposure to Korean culture through personal interest and marriage reported better general and work adjustment. This is consistent with the research outcome of Danisman (2017) who found that expatriates with spouses from the host country tend to adjust better than others. In addition, Danisman (2017) asserts that cultural similarity between the host and home country contributed greatly to the adjustment process of some of her respondents. However, Selmer and Luring (2011)

argue that cultural similarities between the home and host country could negatively impact work adjustment. They attribute this to the fact that the new expatriate may assume certain cultural practices to be the same which may turn out to be different in the new context. In summary, similarity of the prior foreign experience to the host country's culture seems to be crucial. Stoermer et al. (2018) used Haslberger et al.'s (2014) to argue that experiences of cultural similarity as the host country may be useful in countries with homogenous culture, for example, Korea and Japan. This points to the importance of context and the subjective nature of adjustment. Adjustment as a phenomenon is subject to the environment and the personality of the individual (Haslberger et al., 2014). Thus, adjustment may not be a one-size fits all as argued by Black et al. (1991).

2.4.4 Other expatriates

Black et al. (1991) place interaction with the HCNs as being integral to their adjustment model. However as argued by Stoermer et al. (2018) and Agha-Akhilani (2018) this may not be the case in all situations because adjustment is not only subjective but multidimensional too. For example, for some people interacting with other expatriates can be as important as communication with the locals (Agha-Akhilani, 2018). Fu et al. (2017) point to the benefits of networking with other expatriates for social and emotional support. Moreover, other expatriates can be a good source of information relating to the local culture and legal requirements in the host country (Asif et al., 2020). Sourcing information, for example, about legal issues from other expatriates might be particularly useful for SIEs who may not have support from their employing organizations. Because SIEs tend to feel comfortable with other expatriates, organizations should ask them to act as mentors at the workplace (Isakovic & Whitman, 2013). This may not only help them understand the work policy and procedures, but it is another source of getting information about the wider culture of the community they

live in. In their study, Froese (2012) found that SIEs seek social support from people of similar backgrounds. Asif et al. (2020), in their research on academics, indicate that as much as other expatriates' support may be vital for SIE work adjustment, the teacher student relationship is equally as significant. In their findings those who immersed themselves in their students' work, reported better adjustment. Asif et al.'s (2020) findings point to the subjective nature of adjustment as there was no mention of the three domains in the traditional adjustment model in the current study. In other words, the host country's work and non-work environment influences how and why the individual expatriate adjusts.

2.4.5 Training at the workplace

Career-oriented HRM practices have also been mentioned in the wider scholarship as having a positive effect on SIE work adjustment (Fu et al., 2017). Practices of this nature are also ways of the employers showing their appreciation to their new SIE employees, which could hitherto engender positive attitudes among the new SIEs (Isakovic & Whitman, 2013).

Provision of training has been cited as one method of enhancing employees' skills at the workplace and outside work. Based on their study on SIE academics in Hong Kong, Fu et al. (2017) suggest that organizations should provide focused training for their new entrants.

They should provide detailed and explicit 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 that larger universities have more SIEs, resulting in communities for social support.

2.4.6 Treating people differently

In their criticism of the feeling of psychological comfort as an indicator of adjustment, Haslberger et al. (2014) suggest that adjustment is a context sensitive phenomenon. The complexity and context specificity adjustment has been indicated by Austin et al. (2014), who argue that in the Gulf countries SIEs from non-Caucasian backgrounds are treated differently and this has an adverse effect on their adjustment. Romanowski and Nasser (2014) concur that expatriate academics may be judged differently based on their identity and the type of passports they hold, and this could affect their productivity at work and overall work adjustment. This stratified classification forces some academics with dual nationality to use their adopted countries' passports, for example, UK, USA, Canada, Australia etc. to be remunerated better (Romanowski & Nasser, 2014). Furthermore, some respondents in these two studies claimed that to be accepted socially by the HCNs they have to base their identity on the Western passports they hold than their places of origin (Austin et al., 2014). "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). This means there may be positive discrimination towards certain ethnicities such as Europeans rather than those from Asia and Africa.

In a recent study in Saudi Arabia, Asif et al. (2020) support the assertion of Austin et al (2014) and Romanowski and Nasser (2014) about discrimination against non-Western academics. They posit that the participants in their study who were all non-Western academics, were concerned about their job security. They said the organizational climate they were working in was discriminatory against expats with non-Western passports. Because of this explicit segregation, they have to put extra efforts to please and prove to their supervisors that they are doing a good job. They felt instances of this nature negatively contributes to

their work adjustment process. This three research from different Gulf countries (UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia) demonstrate the impact environment and context can have on adjustment. Indeed, Stoermer et al. (2018), using Haslberger et al.'s (2014) model validate similar outcomes in Korea, where they found that discrimination against expatriates is prevalent in countries with closed and homogenous cultures.

2.4.7 Individual characteristics that help in work adjustment

Individual characteristics could be vital in the work adjustment process of SIEs (Agha-Akhilani, 2018). A good example are those SIEs with the orientation to pursue international careers. Halim et al. (2018) argue that individual traits like open-mindedness both at work and outside work can have an impact on work adjustment. Moreover, personality traits, for instance, openness to change and having positive attitude towards the new culture can be a precursor to being able to get used to the new work environment. Based on his qualitative Froese (2012) reports that SIEs with interest in certain geographical areas have a capacity to adjust beyond those who are motivated by other factors, for example, economy and travel. Participants who took part in this study narrated that their prior interests in Korean culture and way of life was a factor in their adjustment. Richardson and Wong (2018) came to the same result about SIE academics in Malaysia. Those with pre-migration geographical proximity and interest in Malaysian culture adjusted to life and work with more ease than those with other motivations.

In terms of overcoming challenges, SIEs tend to possess certain motivational drivers (Agha-Akhilani, 2018) which encourages them to look for employment overseas on their own. However, Froese (2012) argues that there could be underlying personal level circumstances, for example, shortage of employment and poor work conditions in home countries that may

be responsible for the urge to seek work in other countries. Another trait that helps SIEs cope with tough conditions abroad is the ease with which they interact with the HCNs (Fu et al., 2017). In Danisman's (2017) study, she found that SIEs in Turkey portrayed a willingness to meet and learn from the locals and through this, they were able to overcome adjustment difficulties. In the context of Middle East, however, organizational policies sometimes dictate that expatriates are housed in protected compounds, and this may curtail their chances of associating with the local population (Romanowski & Nasser, 2014).

2.5 Discussion

There are a number of issues raised about the papers reviewed for this chapter. In relation to the study settings, it is evident that most of research emanated from Asian countries; 12 of the 13 papers were conducted in countries in the Asian continent. This may be an indicator of the recent expansion of universities in these countries (Asif et al., 2020; Austin et al., 2014; Richardson & Wong, 2018). The fact there is limited supply of qualified instructors in a national population to teach in higher education is a major pull factor (Romanowski & Nasser, 2014). In that sense, there has been a concentration of SIE academics research in Asia.

Another observation is that adjustment is subjective, complex and multidimensional. As argued by Agha-Alikhani (2018) and Stoermer et al. (2018) adjustment is not unidimensional as traditionally suggested (Black et al., 1991) because it can be influenced by many factors, including the host country culture, both at work and outside work (Halim et al., 2018; Austin et al., 2014). Getting used to life in a foreign country also depends on the individual as there are people who have a natural affinity to adjustment, while others do not (Elaine et al., 2019). This may portray the subjective nature of adjustment as suggested by Haslberger et al. (2014)

that there must be a fit between the person and the environment. As converging factors, the host country's culture, the individual's efficacy, workplace policies and other factors, brings McKenna and Richardson's (2007) assertion to mind, that adjustment is a "fluid" process which may never be achieved. In other word, SIEs develop ways to cope with their situations rather feel that they are adjusted.

2.6 Implications for this research

The aim of this review was to find out the factors that affect the work adjustment of SIE academics. The current review has identified the importance of host country language knowledge to adjustment (Froese, 2012). It is therefore important for employing universities and other institutions of learning to help academics have at least some basic understandings of the local language. As suggested by Showail et al. (2013) this might be even more important in countries with closed cultures, for example, Saudi Arabia. When people speak the language of the host country, evidence points to the fact that HCNs feel obliged to welcome them and make them feel settled. Family support should also be considered as a pivotal pillar of adjustment. Adjustment policies and practices should be designed not only for the SIE academics but their families too.

As this review has established, possessing the right knowledge and skills may not be sufficient when it comes to working abroad. Host country universities should thus strive to recruit SIE academics with prior foreign experience that is similar to the culture of the host country (Isakovic & Whitman, 2013). Familiarization with context specific experiences of adjustment may be more useful in countries where tradition is intertwined and engrained in everyday work undertakings. Employing academics with experience similar to the host country may also help save money that would otherwise be 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 of people based on their skin colour and the type of passport they hold can be a problem in countries in the Arabian Gulf (Asif et al., 2020; Austin et al., 2014; Romanowski & Nasser, 2014). SIE academics wishing to self-expatriate to these countries should be aware of this practice because it can be a shock upon arrival. Moreover, employing institutions should try to be upfront and candid with academics about this cultural practice so people can know what they are getting into.

2.7 Limitation

This study has several limitations. First, the nascent nature of SIE academics workforce research may have limited the number of 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 produced a different outcome. Second, the review was undertaken by only one researcher. Therefore, this may have inadvertently led to the risk of bias and subjectivity in the research process. However, as this is a doctoral thesis, this constraint is unavoidable.

2.8 Conclusion

Evidence from this review suggests that adjustment may be subjective and multidimensional (Haslberger et al., 2014). Furthermore, it depends on the context and the individual SIE. Besides its subjectivity, this review has illustrated that there is a requirement to find a fit between the expatriates and the environment where they live and work (Agha-Alikhani, 2018). These realities notwithstanding, where people choose to self-expatriate, they face various hurdles specific to the destination country. Within the context of this review, having

some understanding of the host country language may be essential. This is consistent with the outcomes of other studies (see Asif et al., 2020; Danisman, 2017). In agreement with Jackson and Manderschied (2016), the expatriate's family is another important aspect and especially for destinations where the family is culturally central, for example, Saudi Arabia. Consistent with Isakovic and Whitman (2014)'s research, this review underscores the importance of having a prior foreign experience that is similar to that of the host country. Moreover, SIEs need to be realistic about the country they are relocating to because there may be certain cultural norms that are difficult to adapt to, for example, inherent discrimination based on colour of skin and one's passport.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The first section of this chapter will discuss the philosophical underpinning of the research by outlining the epistemological and ontological stance that informs this inquiry. It will then move on to discuss the choice of phenomenological case study as the methodological approach for this study. The data collection procedures and challenges faced shall then be outlined. This is followed by a description of the sample and sampling techniques utilised. After that, the data analysis procedures are explained. The last section of the chapter will be about research reflexivity and ethical issues.

3.1 Philosophical underpinnings

Philosophical or theoretical perspectives that are used as lenses to guide a study can range from a broad perspective to a narrow viewpoint (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). Theory has been defined in various ways using multiple lenses, although Flinders and Mills (1993 cited in Anfara & Mertz, 2006) argue that it is hard to define what theory is. Strauss (1995) argues that theory can be used as a way to know why the “world is the way it is” (cited in Anfara & Mertz, 2006, p. xiv). Craib (1992) notes that everyone thinks theoretically but may not be wholly aware of it. Silver (1993) defines theory as a special way of “perceiving reality”, in other words, the way someone expresses understanding of nature, which could be a different perspective of the world. In a similar vein, Crotty (1998) contends that theoretical perspective is a philosophical underpinning that explains the way society interacts with the human world. Bradbury-Jones et al. (2014) understand theory as the broad viewpoints that researchers rely upon to make sense of their qualitative inquiries.

Drawing on the work of Bowen (2006), Bradbury-Jones et al. (2014) argue that theory can also be used as a way of making sense of the data, in that it provides a direction that can be

used to start data analysis. However, Denzin (1998) argues that theory on its own will not help in data analysis but only becomes useful when it can help elucidate the meanings of what is being investigated.

3.1.1 Guiding beliefs

The basic set of beliefs or assumptions that guide researchers to know what they are trying to know is referred to as paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A research paradigm is the underlying basic beliefs which underpin the approach used by researchers to understand or solve a problem's, "ultimates or first principles" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 105). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) equate theory to paradigm by arguing that the researcher's world views (paradigms) are made up of ontology (nature of reality), epistemology (the relationship between the researcher and the known) and methodology (the process of research). Indeed, Anfara and Mertz (2006) view theories and paradigms as guiding principles that have to be chosen by the researcher, which then leads to developing epistemologies.

Paradigms give the theoretical lens for a study and determine the way knowledge is studied and interpreted (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). This means the researcher comes up with a set of ideas, which leads to questions being developed (epistemology) to find out what the ideas are, which are then examined in a certain way (methodology) using certain strategies (methods). This implies a synergy between ontology, epistemology, methodology and method in a research study. Moreover, the researcher approaches the world with theories, ideas, and way of thinking, which may result in questions being created in a certain way to find out about the phenomena under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Indeed, paradigms or theories reflect the researcher's concerns about issues which may have come through experiences or even personal interests, and this results in guiding epistemologies.

Diverse research paradigms are used in different research studies to explore the nature of existence and how that reality can be conceptualized. For example, the most common positions are those of positivist researchers versus constructivist or those using interpretative paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). While the positivist paradigm is informed by the assumption that there is an objective reality, and that this reality can be explained factually, the interpretive paradigm assumes humans are not separate from these world objects and that knowledge is co-constructed (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2009). Interpretivism is about how people interrelate, that is, what they think about the social world and how they form ideas about it. Hence, to find out about people, we must get closer to them to understand how they think. To do this involves immersing oneself in the research context by not only talking but observing people as they get through their daily activities. As Thomas (2017) puts it, “so we attend to their blinks, winks, hums and hahs, their nods and nose-blowing, as well as listening to the actual words that are coming out of their mouths” (p. 111). This quote suggests that understanding a phenomenon from an objective point of view as claimed by positivists may not provide a true picture of what happens in the social world. In other words, to understand people’s experiences of a phenomenon it is better to engage with them by, for example, listening to them. Using a tick box questionnaire may not provide a true reality of the issues people are dealing with, and this limitation can be partially addressed by the application of open-ended interviews with research participants while gathering field data.

Interpretivist researchers find about the phenomenon they are studying through the views of their participants, their experiences, and their own background (Creswell, 2003). Indeed, the researchers must be participants in the research situation and “understand it as an insider” (Thomas, 2017, p. 111). They need to acknowledge their social backgrounds, likes and dislikes, gendered assumptions, political affiliations and how this might affect the

interpretation of the result; otherwise known as positionality. As a result of this, research in the interpretivist paradigm is 'naturalistic'- in that the researcher behaves as naturally as possible within the social world to get a good understanding of the phenomenon. This research tradition accepts the "centrality of subjectivity" (p. 112). Moreover, quality in research underpinned by interpretivism may be achieved through an authentic and trustworthy process. For example, the researcher must establish a transparent research process, from design, data collection to analysis (Shaw, 2016).

In that vein, the present research utilises an interpretivist worldview as a philosophical lens to understand how academics make sense of their adjustment to life in Saudi Arabia. As the researcher, it is my belief that a singular reality does not lie outside the individual, but that people subjectively deal with issues in their own way. As argued by Bryman (2012) the context in which people live affects how they interpret realities, consequently, there was a need to interact with the respondents during the research process to understand how they coped with the reality of adjustment within their new context (new country, culture, and workplace).

3.2 Case study as a research design

Case study research is used as a methodology to explore, investigate, and understand complex issues in their real-world settings (Harrison et al., 2017). The application of case study in a research situation largely depends on the researcher's ontological and epistemological underpinnings. It is this flexibility that makes case study methodology unique and one that fits into various philosophical standings (Yazan, 2015). Stake's (2006; 1995) approach is closely aligned with interpretivist ontology and constructivist epistemology as he advocates for strong understanding of meanings and experiences in

context. He views the researcher as having a crucial interpretivist role. For Stake (2006) to understand the case “requires experiencing the activity of the case as it occurs in its context and in its particular situation” (p.2).

Although he does not specifically state his epistemic stance, Yin’s (2002;2009) recommendation is that case study researchers should ensure rigour by maximising, for example, construct, internal and external validities, and reliability. This may mean that the researcher leans towards a more positivistic paradigm. Indeed, Crotty (1998) suggests that if a study aims to meet the three fundamental criteria of objectivity, generalisability, and validity, it means that the philosophical tradition underpinning the research is positivism and thus it could be argued that Yin’s case study methodology is positivistic. In the context of this inquiry, the position taken is that there is no one single reality, but that people may have multiple realities depending on their circumstances and contexts. Furthermore, individuals’ interpretation of knowledge is based on their surroundings and experiences (Stake, 1995). This means people experiencing the same phenomena can have a different interpretation of it, and this is the true essence of interpretivist ontology. In other words, different individuals may interpret a certain phenomenon in their own unique way (Dean, 2018). In the context of this research, each individual academic’s representation of the work adjustment process may be different because of their backgrounds and experiences.

Yin (2014) argues that case study research is suitable in situations where ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions are being asked. Furthermore, he adds that the inquiry being studied must be contemporary with little or no control from the investigator. However, according to Stake (1995) a case is of interest because of its commonality and uniqueness rather than this element of control. As Stake (1995) puts it, hearing the stories of these cases is the aim by

entering the research arena with an open mind to learn and see the research subjects undergoing their daily experiences. In other words, the researcher makes no presumption while trying to understand or learn the phenomenon.

Case study research can be used where a complex system is to be studied comprehensively, holistically and the emphasis is on in-depth investigation of a phenomenon that is bounded by time and context (Harrison et al., 2017; Merriam, 2009). Moreover, the main purpose of undertaking a case study is to highlight the understanding of a complex phenomenon in its real-life setting (Creswell 2014; Yazan, 2015). Merriam (2009) views case study research as a bounded system where the case can be a single person, a group of people, a phenomenon or even a certain policy (Yazan, 2015). Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that in qualitative case studies, if the cases are chosen well, the result cannot only be used at preparatory stages of a generalisable study, but can also be used “to enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field of study” (p. 227). He further argues that research in the social sciences is context dependent anyway, and this is the kind of research knowledge produced by cases studies. Thus, it can be argued that a qualitative case study can be a good methodological choice to explore a social phenomenon and generate an outcome that is trustworthy.

Different researchers have come up with different ways of designing case study research. Stake (1995) classifies case study into three different strands: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. In an intrinsic case study, the emphasis is on the case itself, for example, it could be an interest in a single case to uncover a deeper understanding of a certain issue (Ridder, 2017). In instrumental case study design, the case is not so important but the phenomenon or issue being studied. A collective case study could be considered as just a combination of

either intrinsic or instrumental case studies (Boblin et al., 2013). However, according to Wolcott (1990) the definition of collective studies is dictated by the aim of the study, which means it could be either deductive or inductive.

In contrast to Stake (1995), Yin (2009) identifies three different types of case studies: exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive. While an exploratory case study is used as a first step to find out about a phenomenon, an explanatory case study is preferred when trying to establish causality. A descriptive case study is utilized to provide a deeper description of a phenomenon in its real-life setting (Yin, 2009). However, in a later publication, Yin (2014) argues that a case study need not be used as exploratory, for example, as a preliminary method. He uses the example of Allison and Zelikow's *Essence of Decision*, about the Cuban Missile Crisis, (1999) to show that a case study can be explanatory. Allison and Zelikow's case study outcome has indeed been influential in policy making in international studies.

Thomas (2017) contends that the aim of case studies research is to get a detailed and rich understanding of a case or cases by studying it in detail and sets three criteria where case studies may be relevant as a method of inquiry. The first is that case studies are chosen because the researcher might be familiar with the case and would like to understand it more. Secondly, the case might provide "a good example of something" (p. 159) and lastly, it could be an issue that might reveal a new thing different from what is known. Thomas (2017) adds that single or multiple cases can be chosen to study a phenomenon. Multiple cases can be used as a way of finding out about 'how' different cases deal with the phenomenon (Eisenhardt, 1991) where the interest can be on both the cases and the issue they are dealing with. The data from these cases can be utilized as a way of illuminating and comparing the phenomenon of interest, and this cross-case analysis can reveal similarities and differences

between cases, resulting in the advancement of new theories (Ridder, 2017). However, Dyer and Wilkins (1991) question the use of multiple cases, for this undermines the very essence of digging deep to reveal a richer picture of a phenomenon. For them the comparison of multiple cases results in what they call “surface description”, thus weakening context specific deeper understanding of an issue (cited in Ridder, 2017, p. 284).

This study utilizes a phenomenological case study approach to explore how SIE academics in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, adjust to their work environment. The study uses the experiences of fifteen SIE academics from three institutions undergo on a daily basis in their work and non-work environment as the unit of analysis (the case study). The study can be described as descriptive and exploratory (Stake, 1995; Thomas, 2016) in that it does not test relationships between variables, nor does it establish causality. It is exploratory because, as the researcher, I am interested in finding out about other SIEs’ work adjustment through my own experience as an SIE academic (Thomas, 2016). Furthermore, it is exploratory because the phenomenon under study is relatively recent and the context of the research may be described as difficult because of the closed nature of the society, which may make data collection a challenge. Thus, the study explores detailed and verbatim experiences of factors that affect SIE academics. These factors may be related to work or non-work issues. The emphasis of the research is the participants’ construction and interpretation of their daily experiences through the use of semi-structured interviews. This type of collective phenomenological case study (Stake, 1995) enables the in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of SIE work adjustment from different intrinsic cases. It is envisaged that exploring the experiences of individual cases and then comparing themes across these cases will contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon being explored.

3.3 Sampling

Sampling as a unit of analysis is very important in identifying potential research participants. In case study research it is even more important to carefully select samples to study the phenomena under investigation (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2009). According to Yin (2003) what makes qualitative case study research unique is its ability to provide a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, hence the importance of the careful selection of the case(s); these cases are mostly chosen deliberately (Yin, 2011). However, Dunne et al. (2005) argue that purposive sampling is common in other types of research because researchers recruit participants with a specific plan in mind. One reason for the deliberate choice of samples in qualitative research is that the outcome is largely not generalised (Thomas, 2017). Another reason for purposefully selecting a study sample is to recruit those that the researcher thinks will provide the most relevant data (Yin, 2011). Yin recommends that the researcher tries to recruit research participants who will provide varied but relevant data about the phenomena under investigation; for example, those that might hold contrary views to the subject of the research as this may help reduce bias to the researcher's preconception.

What constitutes as enough samples in qualitative studies has been an ongoing debate (Creswell, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech; 2007; Yin, 2009). The qualitative case study approach is thus no different to other qualitative methodologies. For this approach, Creswell (2007) recommends a maximum of four to five cases, while Yin (2009) argues that six cases will suffice. The problem is that both Creswell (2007) and Yin (2009) do not offer any justification for the range of numbers they recommend. Considering this discrepancy, Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) see the lack of justification of sample sizes as a major problem in qualitative research. Crouch and McKenzie (2006) propose that fewer than twenty participants is an ideal amount in qualitative research for the researcher to be able to have a

close relationship, which helps produce honest exchange of ideas with the participants. For Charmaz (2006) the size of the sample is not what matters in qualitative research because a small study with modest claims can achieve saturation faster than a big study.

As the purpose of this research is to explore how SIE academics working in Riyadh adjust to their work environment, purposive sampling was used to recruit participants. To get varying perspectives and views about the phenomena, fifteen SIE academics; ten male and five female, from different countries and with different subject specializations were recruited, as shown in table 3.1. The data shown in the table was generated from the interviews. The researcher found recruiting female research participants more challenging than male counterparts. Negotiating with gatekeepers sometimes proved difficult, and there were occasions when it seemed it would not be possible to recruit a single female participant. The fact that the research participants are SIE academics and not native Saudis did not matter as the husbands of some of the potential female participants indicated their disapproval of having their wives interviewed by a non-guardian. However, five single female participants were eventually included in the sample, in addition to the ten males.

Table 3. 1: Participants' details.

Participants	Gender	Specialization	Age	Nationality	Ethnicity	Duration in Saudi	Institution
John	M	English	60 – 70	American	European	3 Years	QS-HS
Thomas	M	English	40 – 50	Canadian	European	1 Years	QS-HS
Hassan	M	Physiology	50 - 60	Mauritian	Asian	3 Years	QS-HS
Mark	M	English	30 – 40	Canadian	European	3 Years	QS-HS
Kamal	M	English	50 – 60	Canadian	Asian	6 months +	QS-HS
Muktar	M	Biostatistics	50 – 60	Sudanese	African	8 Years	QS-HS
Nasser	M	English	50 – 60	Sudanese	African	2 Years	QS-HS
Musa	M	Psychology	40 – 50	British	Asian	5 Years	QS-HS
Camilla	F	English	50 – 60	British	European	4 Years	QS-HS
Belkis	F	Medical Sciences	30 – 40	Canadian	African	3 Years	FU-R
Amina	F	English	40 – 50	Canadian	African	6 months +	RCU
Wali	M	Computer Science	30 – 40	Jordanian	Arab	1years	RCU
Shiyam	M	Biomedical	50 - 60	South African	African	4 years	RCU
Furaha	F	English	20 - 25	British	African	4 years	FU-R
Sumaya	F	English	20 - 25	British	African	3 years	FU-R

3.4 Data collection methods and procedure

Using more than one qualitative data collection method is becoming established in qualitative research (Morrell-Scott, 2018). Consistent with interpretivist thinking (Shaw, 2016), the intention of this inquiry was not to find a definitive and generalisable truth about the participants' experiences of the phenomena under study. Instead, the use of two data collection methods (qualitative diaries and semi-structured interviews) was intended as an approach to help understand how people reflected on their lived experiences. However, during the field work, it became apparent that using the diary method was not going to be

possible (see sections 3.4.1 and 4.1 for more details). Therefore, semi-structured interview was the only method that was used to collect the data for this research. The process of data collection and analysis are often interconnected in qualitative research, which means they could happen simultaneously (Neuman, 2011). However, for the purpose of clarification and transparency the key aspects of each stage are presented separately. What transpired in the qualitative diary and interview process is presented in the next section, followed by the approach used in the data analysis.

3.4.1 Qualitative diary

A data collection method that allowed the respondents to record their feelings instantaneously was needed, hence the use of qualitative diaries. Following Plowman (2010), guided questions were used to help the participants answer the research questions. The research participants were given the option of using either an electronic or a manual diary. They were then asked to answer the questions daily over a period of 20 working days. During this period, they were also asked to record moments of adjustment in their diaries on a daily basis. This is consistent with the use of event-contingent diaries where participants are instructed to record minor and routine events that happen at work (Radcliffe & Cassell, 2014). As filling diaries on a daily basis could be problematic and taxing for some participants, I had to constantly encourage them. However, as warned by Radcliffe (2013) even with reminders, not all the respondents were able to complete their diaries daily. Only five male participants partly completed their diaries, whilst the remaining five managed to only complete some of their diary entries. At the outset, all of the female participants declined to take part in completing diaries except one, however, she did not send back any data. Indeed, when the two methods that would be used for data collection were explained to the female participants, most of them said they found completing diaries demanding and made themselves available

only for the interviews. Plowman (2010) reports that although this method allows study participants to record their feelings immediately, writing on a daily basis could hamper the recruitment of participants. Section 4.1 provides more reflection about some of the issues that hampered the use of qualitative diaries.

3.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

The second part of the data collection (which eventually became the only phase) was the use of semi-structured interviews, considered as the most common in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Questions were prepared in advance as a guide; however, the participants were allowed to talk deeper about issues related to the phenomena (Patton, 2002). In other words, there was flexibility in how they answered the questions. The shortest interview was thirty minutes, whilst the longest one was fifty-five minutes. In the longer interviews the participants chose to speak deeper about a certain theme. The recording was done using a portable recording device. Also, during the interviews, brief notes were made to record stimuli like body language to show reactions to answer the questions. On average the interviews lasted for about forty minutes.

3.4.2.1 The interview process

In this section practical issues in the interview process are addressed - in other words what happened in the field in terms of the challenges faced during the data collection.

Trying to collect data in a conservative country that segregates people in terms of gender, posed certain challenges from the outset. The fact that the separation also occurs in institutions of learning, including universities presented added hurdles in this process.

Therefore, as a male researcher the only way to gain access to female participants was through male gatekeepers. Some of these male gatekeepers were keen not to allow 'their

wives' to be interviewed alone by a man. In one case, one gatekeeper sat across the room as the two females were interviewed in their accommodation.

The second challenge faced was where to conduct the interviews. Most of the male participants requested the interview be done in their offices at their respective universities at a time convenient for them. One male participant, however, chose his local McDonald's restaurant as his preferred interview venue. Scheduling the venues and times of the interviews for the female participants was a slow process because of the aforementioned nature of the society and gatekeepers. At the end two female participants were interviewed at their hotel accommodation as they were friends of each other and lived in the same place. One female was interviewed at a café near to her workplace, while the remaining two were interviewed at their homes.

3.4.2.2 The interviews

The participants were informed that the purpose of the interview was to explore factors that affect academic SIE work adjustment and their permission was sought to record the interview using a digital voice recorder. Two participants, one male and one female were surprised by the use of the term 'self-initiated expatriate' and wanted to know what it meant, which was explained to them. They were then informed that taking part in the research was voluntary and confidential, and that they could withdraw up to two weeks after the interview was conducted without giving a reason. They were further informed that there was no anticipated risk of their participation in the research and that they could contact myself or my supervisor at any time. They were then asked to read and sign the consent form.

The interview technique by Braun and Clarke (2013) was used so that the interview sheet was used as a guide and “not a recipe to be followed to the last gram!” (p. 95). In that context, although the general frame of the interview was followed, the wording and sequencing of the questions were tailored to the individual participants and context. For example, if a participant raised an issue that was planned for a later stage of the interview schedule, it was discussed then, and this gave the interviewee an opportunity to provide more details. Moreover, in instances where the participants provided short responses to certain questions, props like “could you please give more information/example” were used (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

The key to a successful interview is to show that the interviewer is interested in what the respondent is talking about (Thomas, 2017). However, Braun and Clarke (2013) warn against the successive use of responses like ‘mm’ as this might signal to the interviewee that you want them to stop. Instead, more informal responses like “yeah, I know what you mean” were utilised in certain instances to build rapport with the respondents and acknowledge shared experiences, as Garton and Copland (2010) argue that an empathetic approach may be suitable where the researcher is an insider, even though, according to Scully (1994), such an approach could make the participants talk about what the researcher agrees with. In addition, to ensure that the participants talked about issues related to answering the research questions, prompts and follow-up questions were used.

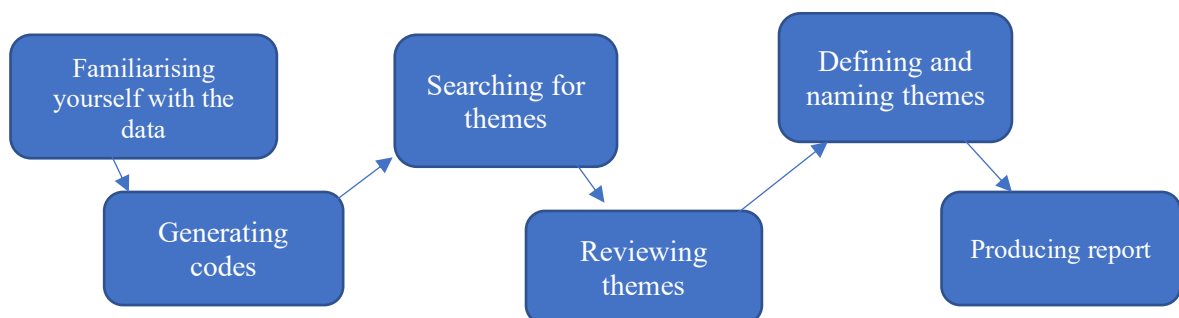
There was no doubt that doing the interviews came with their own challenges. Mediating between the freedom of participants revealing subjective viewpoints and following the thematic direction of what was being said was, at times, challenging. Whilst some participants were talkative and willing to say more, others were reticent and shy. As the

researcher, I was aware of these issues and had to respect the vulnerabilities of the participants and treat their data in accordance with the ethical guidance of Lancaster University. Where participants spoke more about a certain theme, I did not abruptly intervene and where they spoke less, follow up questions were used to get more data.

3.5 Data analysis

In this section the data analysis process is described. To analyse the data Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step thematic analysis was used as a guide shown in figure 3.1. Although the steps appear lineal, the analysis process is iterative as it involves repeated reading and re-checking. NVivo 11 was used to help with the organization of the data.

Figure 3. 1: Data analysis steps adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006).



The first phase in the analysis process was the transcription of the interview material. The recordings were transcribed verbatim. Transcription is seen as the first step in the analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2013) where the researcher gets a feel for the data. As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), the transcribed data was then entirely read to get initial understanding of the data. This included notes that were made during the interviews about the participants moods. Next, the transcripts were uploaded into NVivo 11, which is a data analysis software used by qualitative researchers to analyse data. After that, the transcripts were again read repeatedly to point out the participants' experiences of the phenomenon. However, this feature was not utilised, rather recurring instances were manually identified

across the data to build codes. The generation of the codes across the data was an iterative process and linear. Although the identification of these codes was mainly from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013), but as noted by Miles and Huberman (1994), provisional “start list” (p.58) to the coding come from exposure to the literature review. Despite this, care was taken not to force the coding categorisation into the prior knowledge.

The researcher plays an active role in the identification of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006) because themes do not just emerge from the data. In that sense, all the data were systematically coded and collated together for potential themes. This means different codes were combined to form overarching themes and sub-themes (see Appendix 6). These themes were further refined to come up with final themes that reflected the experiences of the participants about the phenomenon. These themes are: 1) adjustment initiators, 2) adjustment enablers, and 3) contributors to poor adjustment. Each of these overarching themes had sub-themes.

3.6 Research quality

Quality in qualitative research is measured differently than in quantitative research, where accuracy, relevance and reliability are measured statistically to verify the quality of a study (Bryman, 2012). In qualitative research, however, quality is more about “conception, construction and conduct of a study” (Thomas, 2016, p. 76). For Flyvbjerg (2006) qualitative research is evaluated through its trustworthiness and authenticity. Guba and Lincoln (1989) concur with Flyvbjerg (2006) about the importance of trustworthiness in qualitative research, which they suggest should be evaluated in terms of dependability, credibility, transferability, and conformability.

In the context of this research, quality was implemented in various stages of the research process. First, as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1985) prolonged involvement is one way that provides rigour in qualitative research. As an SIE academic the researcher lived within the research. This living notwithstanding, the prolonged engagement with participants meant trust was established which may have made the interviewees to behave more naturally.

Moreover, this provided an opportunity to understand how different participants experienced and coped with the phenomenon of work adjustment.

Second, another way that this study established quality was how the participants were recruited. All the participants volunteered to take part in the study. Contrasting participants were recruited in terms of nationality, specialisations, and duration of residency in Saudi Arabia. These aspects were included to get a wider picture of the participants' experiences of the phenomenon under study, hence enhancing the quality of the inquiry. Furthermore, during the interviews they were told they did not have to answer questions they felt uncomfortable with. This helped the researcher build a rapport with the participants because they felt at ease. Consequently, they spoke their opinions about their experiences without feeling compelled.

Third, throughout all research phases the academic supervisors provided feedback on the process and content of this study. The research was also presented in seminars during the autumn sessions at Lancaster University. This was an opportunity to receive feedback from a wider audience. The comments and perspectives from these sessions provided important points or challenged assumptions that I had made. Indeed, as suggested by Nowell et al. (2017) feedback from peers of this nature helped improve the integrity and quality of this inquiry.

In qualitative research, providing detailed descriptions of all aspects of an inquiry is a way of adding quality. This includes justifying the choice of samples, location and approach (Thomas, 2016). In that token, the study justification in terms of the uniqueness of the setting and rationale are detailed in Chapter 1. Moreover, as Denzin (2001) argues, interpretive studies must provide a deep and thick description about the phenomenon of investigation. The reporting of factual matters may not be enough to depict a true picture in qualitative studies. In that sense, the reporting of this research goes beyond surface appearance, and it is hoped that the readers get a true understanding of the experiences SIE academics go through as they adjust to work in Saudi Arabia.

3.7 Researcher's reflexivity

Reflexivity is the researcher's continuous self-interrogation about his/her position within the research and acknowledging that the side he/she espouses could affect the research outcome (Berger, 2015). In other words, a reflexive researcher is not independent of the research, nor believes that knowledge is objective. Moreover, qualitative researchers use reflexivity as a way of adding rigour to the research outcome and as a means of providing an audit trail of how the research was conducted (Bradbury-Jones, 2007). Shaw (2010) adds that it is important researchers are transparent about their experiences and biases from the recruitment stage. For this study, all the study participants knew that I was an SIE academic and a doctoral student from the outset. However, I did not present myself as an expert in the area I was researching, but rather as someone trying to find out about their experiences of adjusting to a new work environment in a foreign country.

As Shaw (1996) cited in Berger (2015) states, to be part of a group you are researching means "simultaneously being an onlooker in the stalls and a member of the cast" (p. 222). As

such, being an SIE academic gave me the role of the “insider” (Kacem & Chaitin, 2006), which gave me the advantage of having a head-start in that I knew about the topic and could understand the nuanced reaction of the participants as they enumerated their stories. This ‘insiderness’ meant I had less struggle recruiting male participants to my research, although recruiting female participants proved difficult due to the conservative nature of the country where the sexes are segregated. However, being “a member of the cast” (Shaw, 1996 cited in Berger, 2015) also became evident during the interviews as some participants, including female SIE academics, expected me to fill the gaps as they answered some of the questions, especially those who worked in the same institution as I. Phrases like “you know...” came up a few times. Even some of the female participants whom I did not know wanted to further discuss some of the frustrations they face on a daily basis as SIE academics. As a male researcher, who has been in Saudi Arabia for a few years, listening to what they were experiencing made me sympathetic. However, as suggested by Berger (2015) I had to constantly reflect upon how my position shaped the interviews and the information I was gathering, by reminding myself that each individual’s experiences might be different. Keeping a research journal assisted me in dealing with some of these issues as it helped me reflect on each participant’s nuanced reactions and how I reacted (Shaw, 2016). Moreover, the journal gave me the platform to record what engaged my attention and what did not. This was particularly important as I was curious about each individual’s reaction to the interview questions and I reflected upon this during the data analysis phase. One drawback of an insider position is that the boundary between the researcher and researched may be blurred (Drake, 2010). For example, participants may assume that certain aspects of the phenomenon being investigated are obvious and thus may withhold information that may be crucial. To overcome this, I tried to ask the participants to explain more. In retrospect, if my original plan of using qualitative diaries had worked, it might have provided the participants a second

opportunity of giving more details that would have filled the missing gaps with more details of certain aspects of the phenomena.

As emphasised by Lincoln and Guba (1985), the peer debriefer plays an important part for the inquirer during the research process. My two supervisors played the role of debriefers by asking honest and imaginative questions and this helped me refocus the inquiry I was undertaking. Their continued probing assisted me to think deeper about issues. Indeed, Finlay and Evan (2009) argue that supervisors and peers have a key role to play as far as reflexivity is concerned. Besides my supervisors, the feedback I got from my fellow PhD colleagues in the autumn sessions was productive and insightful. In addition, informal discussions that I had with newly qualified PhDs in my institution provided some helpful perspectives and guidance.

3.8 Ethical matters

Ethical considerations are important aspects in research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). They are seen as one of the pillars of establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research (Bryman, 2012.) For research to be considered ethical it must engender the following elements: voluntary participation, informed consent, safety for both the participants and researcher, and confidentiality and anonymity. According to Braun and Clarke (2013) ethical considerations in research are not just about conforming to minimum standards of practice but should have a “broader ethical orientation that informs your research” (p. 61). Cohen et al. (2011) add that ethical researchers should also be aware of the consequences of their study.

Guided by Lancaster University’s code of ethics, this inquiry adhered to these aforementioned principles throughout the research process. In the recruitment stage, the participants were informed that taking part in the research was entirely voluntary and there

was no coercion to enrol anyone without their written consent. It was made clear to them that not only was taking part in the research voluntary, but they could also withdraw even after accepting to take part in it. After explaining the research aims, every participant was given the opportunity to read and sign their consent (Appendix 4).

Thomas (2017) suggests the importance of treating information given by participants confidentially and anonymously in research. In the context of this study, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the process i.e., in the interview, analysis and write-up stages. In the interview stage the participants' names were not mentioned, instead pronouns like 'you' were used. However, the participants were informed that commitment to confidentiality may be overridden in certain circumstances, for example, if there were instances of harm. In the analysis stage, pseudonyms were used to conceal the identities of the interviewees and their places of work. Moreover, the participants were made aware that quotes from the interviews might be used to highlight important phenomenon when the research is published as a PhD thesis, and possibly in peer reviewed journals, and thus complete anonymity might be difficult, however, pseudonyms were used to keep confidentiality.

Braun and Clarke (2013) posit that besides the ethical guidelines from institutions supervising the study, being an ethical researcher is important. By that token this inquiry puts emphasis on the safety of all participants and ensured that there was no risk to anyone during the interviews. Moreover, the participants were given time to ask questions if there was anything they were unsure about at the end of every interview. In addition, in the consent form and at the beginning of an interview, the research participants were given the opportunity to rephrase any answer they were unsure about. Furthermore, during interviews,

the participants were given opportunities to pause a recording if they were uncertain about what they said. To further help anonymity, the exact ages of the participants were not indicated but a range was used instead.

CHAPTER 4: THE FINDINGS

This study has strived to get a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of SIE academics working in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The objective of this chapter is to present these experiences and make sense of what they undergo as they adjust to work. Inevitably some narrations stand out and bring richness to the data, and it is some of these stories that reveal the hurdles and successes these individuals go through as they try to settle in their new environment and make their stay a success.

Fifteen SIE academics whose stories reveal an array of personal challenges and resilience participated in interviews for this study. To get a deeper understanding of the experiences of these professionals, the first step was to elicit the reason they had sought employment in Saudi Arabia, which might have provided the basis for conceptualizing their capacity to adjust to life as an expatriate worker. Asking these questions first generated compelling answers which provided the basis for the first overarching theme. It is these initial narrations which provide the basis for the first overarching theme - adjustment initiators. In addition to this theme, the thematically sorted results indicate that there are two other key overarching themes in the adjustment process:

1. Factors that help in the adjustment process
2. Factors that hinder these processes

In each of these overarching themes there are themes and sub-themes that elucidate the experiences of these individuals further. These themes and sub-themes are discussed in this chapter. As previously mentioned, data from the qualitative diaries is not included because some respondents did not wish to commit to writing the entries as it was too demanding of their time. Additionally, of the ten males, only five partly completed diaries. This limited written output from the participants meant that an adequate text sample was not generated. As

the research was utilizing a phenomenological case study methodology, the lack of and incomplete data meant it was not possible to compare the experiences of the participants.

4.1 Participants' demographics

Fifteen SIE academics, of whom ten were male and five were female were purposefully recruited for this study. The participants came from seven different countries: five (Canada), four (UK), two (Sudan), and one each from USA, Mauritius, South Africa, and Jordan. Of the fifteen participants, eight were married (seven males and one female) and seven were single (four females and three males). Six out of the eight respondents who were married had children with them in Saudi Arabia. A divorced participant had her child with her too. Most of the respondents had been in Saudi Arabia for an average of three years. The average age range of the sample was forty-one to fifty years. Just over half of the participants (eight) teach English, the others teach one of the following subjects: Physiology, Biostatistics, Clinical Psychology, Medical Science, Computer Science and Biomedical Science. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 provide summaries of the demographic profiles of those who are accompanied either by their spouses and/or children only, and single SIE academics.

Table 4. 1: Accompanied SIE academics

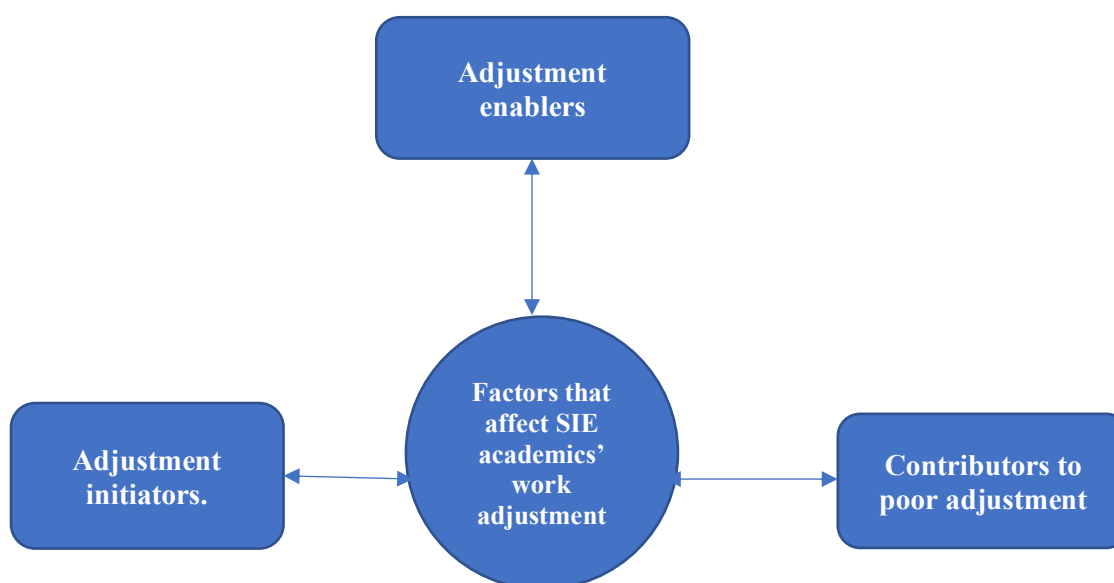
Name	Marital status	Nationality	With Children
Hassan	Married	Mauritian	Yes
Kamal	Married	Canadian	Yes
Muktar	Married	Sudanese	Yes
Musa	Married	British	Yes
Amina	Married	Canadian	No
Shiyam	Married	South African	Yes
Thomas	Married	Canadian	No
Belkis	Divorced	Canadian	Yes
Nasser	Married	Sudanese	Yes

Table 4. 2: Single SIE academics

Name	Marital Status	Nationality	Gender
Mark	Single	Canadian	Male
Wali	Single	Jordanian	Male
Camilla	Single	British	Female
Furaha	Single	British	Female
John	Single	American	Male
Sumaya	Single	British	Female

Figure 4.1 below shows three key overarching themes that emerged from the interviews: adjustment initiators, adjustment enablers, contributors to poor adjustment. The themes and sub-themes of the overarching are discussed below.

Figure 4. 1: Overarching Themes



4.2 Adjustment initiators

Figure 4. 2: Overarching Theme I: Adjustment initiators

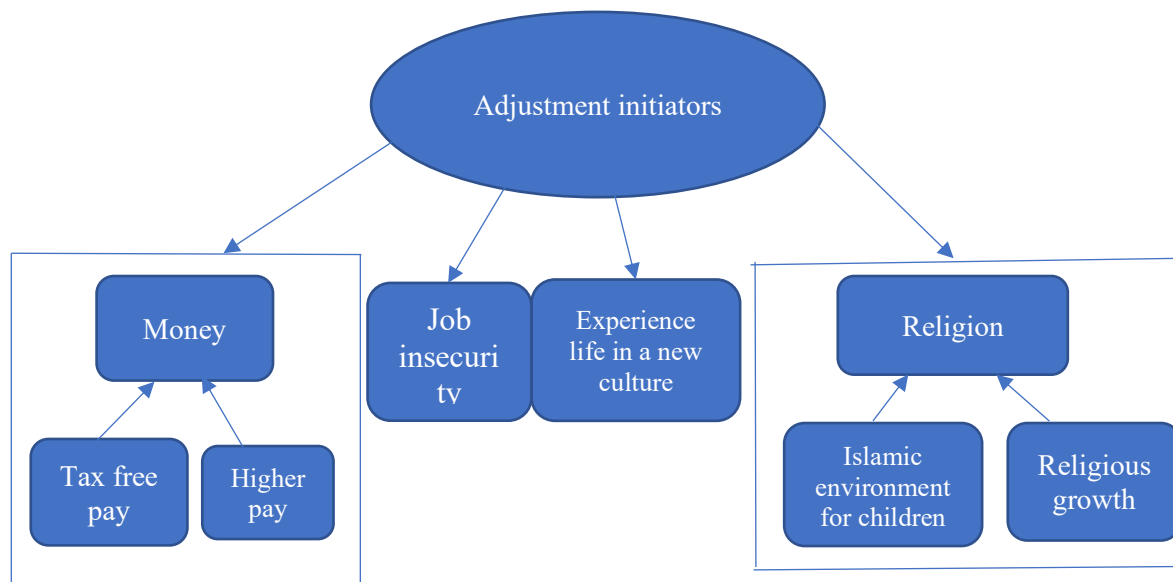


Figure 4.2 indicates the overarching theme that represents what the participants cited as their adjustment initiators in Saudi Arabia. Within the overarching theme are four themes: money, job insecurity, experiencing life in a new culture and religion. These themes were not only viewed as what motivated their expatriation, but as issues they considered crucial in their initial adjustment. Most of the participants frequently mentioned money as the key motivator of coming to work in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, SIEs from Western countries saw saving money as a means to compensate for socializing events they might be missing out on, for example, cinemas, which were not available in Saudi Arabia during the data collection and analysis period (they are now available). Indeed, the theme ‘money’ was an explicit reason for coming to work and live in a country that is generally seen as being tough, yet it attracts expatriates of different professions, from senior consultants in hospitals, university professors to street sweepers.

John, an American SIE academic, reflects on what he considered as imperative when he sought employment in Saudi Arabia, the fact that there are

“No taxes, which was a big plus for me, and I wasn’t sure if I could earn more money here or not, of course, most people believe that the salaries in Saudi Arabia are quite good”.

Here, John, describes his main reason for coming to Saudi Arabia. He seems to imply that what is important is the net amount that is left in the pocket, and not the gross, which is subject to taxation in most other countries. The implicit contrast to other countries is interesting in that the participant suggests that there could be other countries that may pay more, but that is negated by the higher taxation and probable living cost. In contrast, SIE academics from non-Western countries seem to consider having a stable job as the key reason for coming and settling in Saudi Arabia. This is captured by this comment:

“I experienced ... a lot of difficulties in Sudan after the American sanction. And the government don’t pay, and they don’t put us in a permanent job, all the jobs are temporary, and the payment is so low” (Nasser, Sudanese).

Nasser seems to express the frustration of job insecurity, lack of permanence and low pay in his home country as his main reason for coming to Saudi Arabia. It looks as if the issue of saving money is not a key concern for him in comparison to John. The difference in their coming to Saudi Arabia could be attributed to the fact that Western SIE academics may be able to get jobs in other countries and the reason they choose Saudi Arabia is more value addition in terms of higher payment and more savings. In contrast, SIE academics from non-

Western countries expatriate to Saudi Arabia because they are forced by the prevailing tough economic circumstances. Although search for higher paying positions may also be a driving factor for academics from non-Western countries, it seems it is not their main reason for moving to Saudi Arabia. It could be argued that the two viewpoints may reflect the different political and economic backgrounds that the two participants come from. On one side, people expatriate for choice in terms of more savings as exhibited by SIE academics from countries like the UK, USA etc. On the other hand, when confronted by a necessity because of fewer opportunities, where options are limited, individuals may be forced from the comfort of their home countries in search of better long-term employment. This is exemplified in this comment from Wali, who is from Jordan. *“Because I didn’t get the opportunity I wanted in my country. I mean when I worked for the University in Jordan it was a part time semester kind of thing”*. The nature of the job market in his home country had necessitated him to seek full-time employment abroad.

4.2.1 Experiencing life in a new culture

Besides money and job security, some participants mentioned that experiencing life in a new country was one factor they considered when relocating to work in Saudi Arabia. The explorer academic is driven by the desire to see and learn from what is different from home. This is typified by this comment from an SIE academic from Canada.

“It’s the change of environment, and to learn [about] different cultures. I have always been fascinated about different countries, and I have always wanted to learn [about] different cultures” (Kamal, Canadian).

The fascination of getting to know and understand people in different countries is what encourages the explorer to settle abroad. The comment by this participant demonstrates that being a SIE gives the opportunity of travelling the world without necessarily being a tourist. The logic that informs comments like this could be what underpins the narrative of self-initiated expatriation. For example, Thomas said *“I wanted to travel, I like to travel”*. Here, SIEs see themselves as free agents who can travel and learn about the world through their work.

4.2.2 Religion

The theme of religion has two sub-themes; Islamic environment for children and religious growth. Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam and the place where Islam’s two holiest sites are located. For some Muslim SIE academics, especially from countries like the UK, USA, and Canada, coming to work in Saudi Arabia means being close to these holy sites. Nearly all of them said religion was the predisposing factor that may have helped them mitigate their adjustment issues. For them, closeness to these two sites would be a way to build religiosity for themselves and their families. This comment from one participant typifies this:

“Coming from an Islamic background, I want to be a practising Muslim. So many things you appreciate that people in the country [Saudi Arabia] don’t appreciate as you do” (Amina, Canadian).

Here, Amina, associates working in Saudi Arabia with being closer to Islam. She seems to imply that the surroundings in the country make it easier for her to practice her faith. Indeed, Belkis, another participant said, *“For me as a Muslim woman, who’s lived in Canada most of her life, I wanted to experience living in a Muslim country”*. What can be deduced from this statement is that there is a perception that Saudi Arabia provides more in terms of

experiencing Islam than the home countries of these SIEs. A good example of this may be hearing the calls to prayer five times a day, hence praying on time.

4.2.2.1 Islamic environment for children

This is a sub-theme, that Saudi Arabia provides an Islamic environment for children to be brought up. Some participants said that what made them move to Saudi Arabia was to bring up their children in an Islamic surrounding. They felt their children could learn more about Islam in Saudi Arabia than their home countries. For some, other issues were secondary to having their children grow up here.

Why the Middle East? Mainly my children were at an age where bringing them to an Islamic Environment [was needed]. Me and my wife talked about that it might be helpful. It wasn't finance because finance wasn't an issue. We wanted to give the children a cultural experience, from a Muslim country, Saudi Arabia or the Middle East kind of fitted that. (Musa, UK)

Musa implies that bringing his children up within a country where Islamic practice is more apparent compared to his home country was his family's primary attraction to relocating to Saudi Arabia. In contrast to many SIE academics, it looks like money was not the main reason Musa chose to come to Saudi Arabia, as he had a good job in his home country, as he goes on to say, "You have to bear in mind we are coming from the UK, not from anywhere else. London UK. Decent accommodation and I had a decent job. The problem wasn't finance". The same reason is echoed by Hassan from Mauritius, who said, "given the fact that the sacred places, Makkah and Madina were here so they [the children] were very happy to come here". For the Muslim SIE academics, whichever country they come from, religion

seems to be one recurring theme that initiated their work adjustment. From their perspective, there seems to be an association between religious growth and Saudi Arabia, be it for themselves or their children

4.3 Adjustment enablers

Figure 4. 3: Overarching Theme II: Adjustment enablers

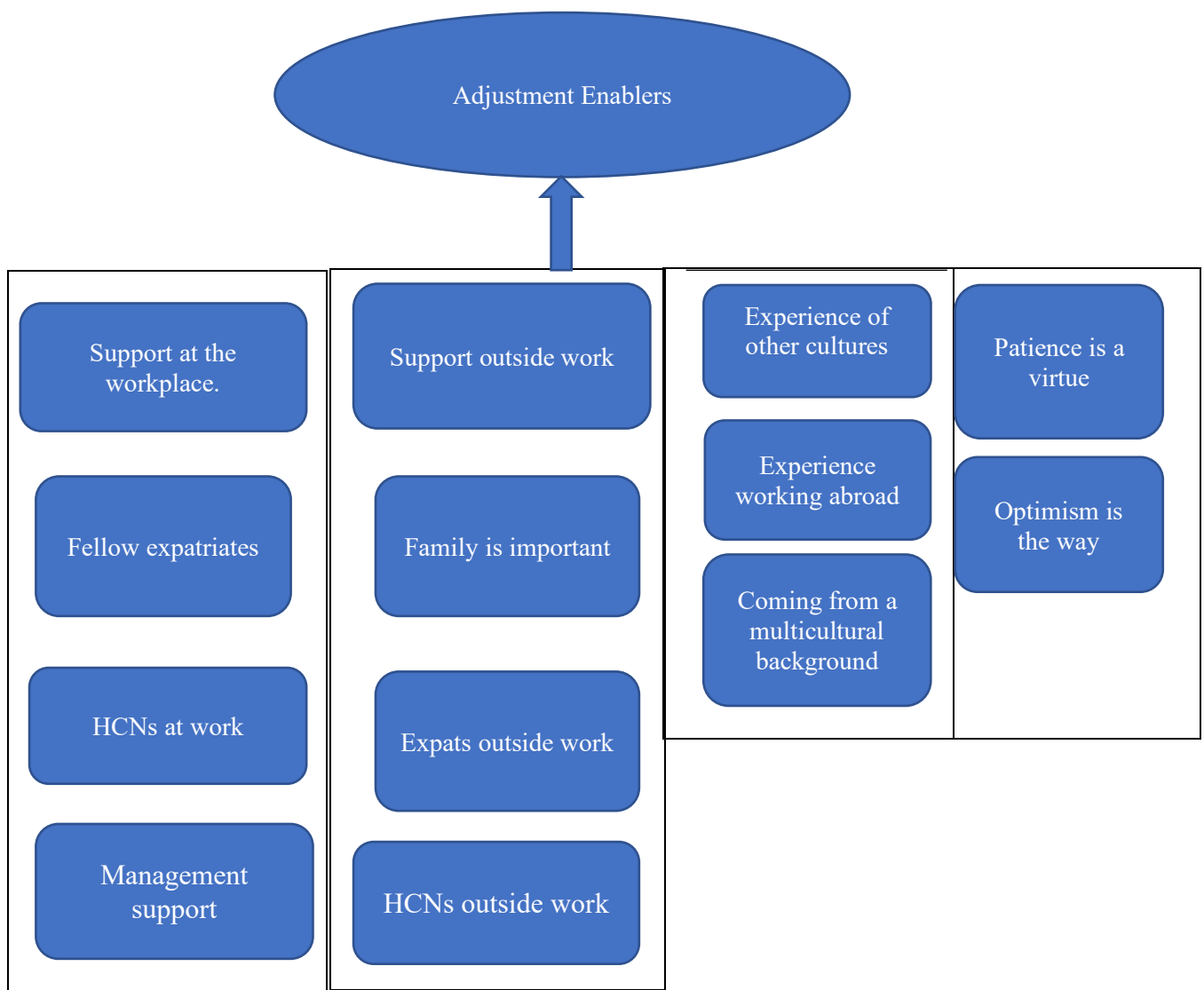


Figure 4.3 shows the overarching theme of adjustment enablers, factors that enabled SIE academics in getting used to their new work environment. There are four themes that come under these overarching themes: *support at the workplace*, *support outside work*, *experience*

of other cultures and patience is a virtue. The participants' talk of the adjustment process was consistently centred around the help they got from others. This could be from a fellow expatriate, HCNs, a family member, or even the management team of their institutions. However, the overall underpinning theme was that adjusting to life in a new country and work environment can be challenging for anybody, whether one has had previous experience abroad or not. Kamal, who has many years' experience working abroad including the Middle East, expresses this point, "*I thought my own foreign experiences would help me greatly, So I wasn't bothered to find out but no, things were the opposite*". Shiyam, articulates these difficulties further, "*the culture is totally different, it was quite an adjustment for me*". The fact that SIE academics with many years' experience working abroad still found it challenging to live in Saudi Arabia might point to the uniqueness of the country, especially in terms of its conservatism and may be even the desert climate because of its extreme heat. Furthermore, it was the only country that did not allow women to drive (at the time of data collection), although this ban has since been partially lifted. The fact that SIE academics with a lot of experience working in foreign countries, sometimes felt difficulties shows that adjusting to a new country is an ongoing process. As such there may not be a time when a person feels fully adjusted. The four themes and their sub-themes are discussed in the following sections.

4.3.1 Support at the workplace

Support at the workplace can be crucial in helping SIEs adjust to work because different countries may have varied procedures and policies at the workplace. This quote from Belkis is a testament to some of these differences. "*You become frustrated, or you become angry with how the system is, how things are either not working or how they do work*". Here, the participant depicts some of the difficulties that new SIEs may face at work. It can therefore be argued that the sooner the new expat gets to know and internalize these policies and

procedures the better the adjustment. This support could come from the management, fellow expatriates and the HCNs.

4.3.1.1 Support from other expats

Asking for help and support when in difficulty is a natural human inclination. It is human nature for some people to ask for help when needed. The requirement for support is accentuated more when an individual is away from home. This sub-theme captures moments where assistance from people made a difference to the lives of these individuals at the workplace. For example, a Canadian SIE academic commented: *“The people you work with, especially the same expat teachers that you work with, if you also get along with them that helps”* (Amina). This comment indicates how paramount help from fellow expatriates is in the adjustment process. It seems like being around people from the same background in terms of nationality and cultural similarity helps in making the new surroundings more habitable. Furthermore, it is natural to associate with people from the same country or culture when far away from home. In a similar vein, Sumaya, a British SIE academic said, *“they give me pointers and do’s and don’ts and places to go and stuff”*. The use of the phrase ‘do’s and don’ts’ shows some of the issues and difficulties SIEs have to navigate through as they get used to not only their new work environment but the wider culture too. For what is acceptable in one culture may be seen as strange in another culture. This example shows that being aware of what is culturally and professionally acceptable in a new setting can be a significant aid.

4.3.1.2 Support from HCNs

This is a sub-theme that represents what some SIEs said about the help from HCNs at work. Although all the SIEs said they mostly rely on help from fellow expatriates as they adjust to

life in their new work, some of them said they get some assistance from Saudi work colleagues. For example, Belkis, a Canadian academic said, “*the people I work with are very welcoming, a good number of them are Saudi, they are very welcoming, they are very hospitable*”. The involvement of HCNs in the adjustment process is particularly interesting because they can provide a deeper or more accurate information about their cultures to the SIEs. Moreover, reassurance and interpretation of certain cultural norms from locals, both at work and outside, could support adjustment. For example, Camilla, a British SIE academic said, “*Also some of my colleagues are Saudi teachers, so that is the link with the society out there, so that’s good*”. This comment is significant in that it indicates interacting with HCNs at the workplace is a good way of understanding the wider society. This can be a means of building cultural bridges, which could be pivotal in settling into a new job in a foreign country. Moreover, for SIEs with little knowledge about Islamic culture, having HCNs’ supports becomes paramount because they can explain important Islamic concepts to them. More so, this is imperative in a country like Saudi Arabia because of its strict interpretation of Islam.

4.3.1.3 Management support

The support of the management of the employing institution has been mentioned by the respondents as being important. Management support is seen as crucial, both at work and outside work. With the exception of a few, most of the participants in this research said they did not receive any support from their management. For John, an SIE academic from the USA, “*Uhm in fact they were just the opposite. They were more of a hindrance than a help*”. The use of strong language like the managers being “*a hindrance*” portrays how this participant was dissatisfied with his managers. He goes further by saying, “*So listen, there was no support in fact whatever they thought was support was negative*”. This quote depicts the participant’s unhappiness and frustration with the management of his institution.

Some female participants had a different interpretation about the underlying reasons for the lack of management support for female academics in Saudi Arabia. For example, Belkis, a female SIE academic, felt she did not get any support because of the segregated nature of the education system in Saudi Arabia. She said, *“The management is not very supportive, because they are mainly men and there are female managers, but all those above are men”*.

The logic from this excerpt is that if there were female managers at senior management level, she would have received some support to help settle into her new work environment. This quote shows that her female managers may not have the capacity to make important decisions unless they consult their senior male managers, which may result in delays for new SIE academics when support may be required urgently. These moments of meaning making from disparate social locations, uniquely interpret the lack of support and delayed response from management.

For Sumaya, there was no support whatsoever, *“Yes, my managers and team co-ordinators did nothing for me, no training about how to mark students, how to record the attendance, their exams, nothing”*. The lack of support at work especially pertaining to work procedures and policies seem to be a major problem here. Different countries have different approaches to teaching, and without getting orientation or training, it can lead to disillusionment and eventually maladjustment. The use of a word like *“nothing”* shows this participant was not offered any support. Furaha, a female SIE from the same institution as Sumaya, concurs that *“there was no support”*. Furthermore, this participant said she did not receive any support outside the workplace from the institution management (see sub-section 4.4.2 for more). She said she solely depended on support from other SIEs: *“So we kind of supported each other”*.

Although many SIEs said they did not get assistance from their senior management, a few reported they got some support from their managers. Wali (Jordanian), who works at RCU university said this about the management at his institution, *“they help me a lot to find the accommodation”*. This participant was pleased that his managers helped him secure an accommodation. A gesture of this nature shows that this employer cares about the wellbeing of their SIE academics, which could have a positive effect on their work adjustment. No doubt, assisting SIEs, who are new to a country, to secure safe accommodation for themselves and their families is a good start to getting adjusted. Moreover, giving new SIEs time to deal with non-work issues like sorting out schools for their children can relieve a huge burden. For example, Nasser, from Sudan, who teaches at QS-HS, said his managers gave him time to find school places for his children - *“they gave me about seven days without any task to do, so I put my children in a school”*. Although support with issues like accommodation and school places may not be a contractual requirement from the employers, nonetheless it creates a positive perception about the organization and helps build confidence, which may contribute to positive adjustment.

4.3.2 Support outside work

In a new country getting support outside the workplace can be pivotal in the adjustment process. Unfamiliarity can cause frustration and may hasten SIEs' poor adjustment. The data from this study indicate that most of the times the participants got assistance from their families, other expatriates, and HCNs. Each of these external support sub-themes will be discussed below.

4.3.2.1 Importance of family support

This is a sub-theme that captures the significance of the accompanying families to SIEs. Some of the interviewees described how having their families with them had a positive

impact on their work adjustment. The family was portrayed as a beacon of calmness and stability in an otherwise tough environment. Furthermore, the role of the spouse was seen as a crucial factor in work adjustment. For instance, Shiyam, with a smile on his face said “*yes, I felt much more relaxed, as you do when your family is around, so yes I feel that I can, you know feel much more adjusted*”. This shows that, for this respondent, the family brings a sense of settlement and serenity. Musa, from the UK, also smiled as he spoke about his family - “*so I think having my family here helps me survive. If it wasn’t for family then I think, they would have to pay me a lot more for it to be worthwhile for me to stay here*”. Not being able to “survive” without his family indicates the key role a family can play in work adjustment abroad. The important position a family has in SIE work adjustment was also highlighted by Belkis - “*so, for me it is my family, they are my support, the biggest support*”. Besides all other sources of support, like work colleagues, it looks like what matters the most to this SIE academic is her family. Indeed, the importance of family is underscored by one participant who did not have her family with her here in Saudi Arabia, by saying, “*had I known I would be here alone, I would not have accepted this offer*” (Amina).

For other SIEs however, as important as the family may be in helping with work adjustment, it can be problematic for spouses who are not working, as they can get bored when the working partner goes to work, and this might inevitably affect the working spouse’s work adjustment. For a country that did not allow women to drive until recently, although there are still some restrictions, staying at home can be more challenging for women because they depend on their husbands to assist with domestic chores like going to the supermarket for food shopping. Thomas with a bit of smile on his face reflects on this by saying, “*but when she first arrived here, she hated it because she was just at home, before she used to have a job, she hasn’t got a job, so she can’t work here, because she is staying here on my visa*”.

Being accompanied by family might provide the basis for adjusting to work in a new environment, but in some cases, it may have a destabilising effect.

4.3.2.2 Support from expatriates

According to the data from the study, fellow SIEs are not only supportive at work but outside too. Many SIEs have expressed their gratitude to their colleagues as they settled into their job. The quote below indicates some of the array of support attributed to other SIEs. This support includes help with shopping for food, to finding schools for children and even providing psychological support to the spouses.

I mean with regards to daily life, to do for instance mobile phone, grocery stores and other [things] in term[s] of psychological support, for me and my wife, because she was deprived of everything, so these kind of things like people who have been here, expats who have been here earlier than me, their wife happens to help [give] psychological support to the family and some of them they help[ed] me ... to find [a] school for my kids and things like that, the organization did not mention what we need for admission (Hassan).

Helping the family settle is certainly pivotal to work adjustment, hence the significance of getting appropriate schools for children. Hassan's comment illustrated the role SIE friends had played in helping his family settle rather than any formal settlement plan from the employer.

Other types of support outside the workplace related to socializing. "If we wanted to go somewhere, we would pick a date and go as a group" (Furaha). Here, it looks like the idea of going out together as a group outside the workplace provided a sense of family and security,

especially for female SIEs. The data from the study indicate that doing things together as group is more of female SIE experience than males. It is plausible that the loneliness and vulnerabilities female SIEs experience in Saudi Arabia may be a reason why they prefer to go out together. Moreover, some of them mentioned that they did not feel comfortable travelling in taxis, which was their only means of mobility when alone.

4.3.2.3 Support from HCNs

Living in a foreign country inevitably involves coming into contact with the locals outside the workplace. Some of these interactions can be important for SIEs work adjustment. In this research there were instances where some participants were happy to share good stories about HCNs outside work. For example, an SIE academic from South Africa, recounted an incident that happened on the first day he came to Saudi Arabia and it gave him a positive outlook about the locals' hospitality: *"I just took a walk to a shop and I found his shop open and I asked him, and he said, 'use this computer'. And he even invited me for lunch and gave me 100 riyals and said pay me back any time! So that was the positive part for me"* (Shiyam). Experiences of this nature may inculcate positivity and a good start to life in the new country.

4.3.3 Experience gained from other cultures

Previous contacts with other cultures may positively mitigate SIE work adjustment. Being exposed to other cultures may provide the foundation for coping with unfamiliar surroundings far away from home. For example, Kamal, a Canadian said, *"I thought my own foreign experiences would help me greatly."* Here, this participant bases the ability to adjust to life in a new country on his prior experiences abroad. This shows working abroad is an opportunity to learn about other people's way of life and a way of building cultural awareness portfolios. Some participants said the multicultural nature of their home countries was really valuable in the work adjustment process. *"so being exposed to different people and different*

ways of life was not something new to me” (Belkis, Canadian). It shows, in both situations, whether home or abroad, exposure to people from other cultures can have a positive relevance in foreign work adjustment.

4.3.3.1 Previous experience of working abroad

This is a sub-theme that captures the importance of previous work experience abroad to SIEs’ work adjustment. Some SIE academics felt that their experiences of working in other countries has helped them adjust to life in Saudi Arabia; a country that is hitherto viewed as a difficult destination to work. A good example is this is from an SIE academic from Mauritius. *“Having worked for different organizations in different countries and places, so this was a plus for me to help in my quicker adjustment to Saudi Arabia” (Hassan).* The logic here is that reflecting on previous situations learned in a foreign setting can be used as a basis to adapt to a new work environment in a new country. A good example can be how to work with HCNs, who might have different work approaches to the SIE academic. However, Furaha, an SIE from the UK, felt prior experiences in non-Middle Eastern countries may not be so helpful in a Saudi context, especially in teaching situations where cultural sensitivities are important. *“It’s a totally different culture and to just throw anybody from any religion into this, and [told to] teach from your own experiences [without orientation/training], and you can’t do that”.* This participant implies that exposure to Islamic and Muslim culture is important to avoid saying or teaching things in class that could be viewed as being culturally inappropriate. In this vein, Thomas (Canadian) viewed his previous experience as relevant. *“Well mainly that I have already been in Jeddah, So I knew what to expect”.* Jeddah is a city in west of Saudi Arabia. Consequently, it can be deduced that having experiences of Muslim and Arab culture, can equip SIEs with the capacity to deal with complex cultural situations at work and outside work.

4.3.3.2 Coming from a multi-cultural background

Coming from a country with people from different cultural backgrounds can be an advantage in work adjustment abroad. This logic was interestingly only expressed by Canadian SIE academics, both male and female. This excerpt from Thomas exemplifies this, “*My country’s multicultural we have all different groups of people you have friends that are [from]different cultures and everybody kinda mixes*”. The participant implies that this had not only given him the ability to work with the HCNs but other expatriates too. Moreover, Belkis, a female SIE from Canada, also said this about multiculturalism in her home country, “*You know one benefit of living in Canada was that it was very multicultural, so being exposed to different people and different ways of life was not something new to me*”. These quotes portray the effect multiculturalism can have in helping people deal with people from different countries, which may help in the adjustment process.

4.3.4 Patience is a virtue

In this main theme, some SIEs said that patience is a virtue that they found helpful in overcoming challenging situations both at their new workstations and outside work. This is an excerpt from Kamal, “*I just had to have some patience, go with the flow and see how this and that ends up*”. This participant constructs his success in adjusting to life in Saudi Arabia due to his determination. The idea of “*going with flow*” shows that a more patient and relaxed attitude might be a good strategy for coping and adjusting. Belkis, adds there is a need “*to be a little bit more understanding, it is a different system, it is a different culture*”. This quote shows that being open to the fact that systems of working in the new country, may not be like one’s home country could be another method of avoiding poor adjustment. The above two quotes show that these SIEs have the flexibility to constantly learn in order to make their stay in their new work environment more successful.

4.3.4.1 Optimism is the way

Some SIEs said that having an optimistic outlook provides a way of making working abroad a success. Amina, puts this into perspective:

I think it's because I try to be positive, and from every experience I try to learn from it, and I will be the first person to tell you that maybe it's because I come from North America, and the working environment there is totally different from here. So, I don't look at everything through minute binoculars, I look at everything through a different perspective. And something new to learn and experience, and to me achievement was my goal.

Here, the participant expresses her optimism by seeing every experience she goes through as a means to overcoming adjustment problems. Her recognition that the working environment in Saudi Arabia is different to her home country is a significant step in accepting that a change needs adaptation. The logic is that not expecting things to work as they do back home is an admission that the SIEs are prepared to learn. The acceptance of these differences opens the door to appreciating the new culture and working environment. Musa, from the UK, concurs with this thought by saying, *"I try to look at the positive things of most situations, and just get on with it"*. The notion of putting positive thinking to new challenges may be a way of acculturating. The hope of these SIE academics is that with time things will change for the better as they get to discover more about the working environment, the work systems and the new culture. Kamal says, *"There were times where I felt really negative, but I controlled my emotions in those situations"*. This participant seems to say that controlling negative emotions helped him to manage negative situations. Optimism may thus be key to managing adjustment challenges.

4. 4 Contributors to poor adjustment

Figure 4. 4: Overarching Theme III: contributors to poor adjustment

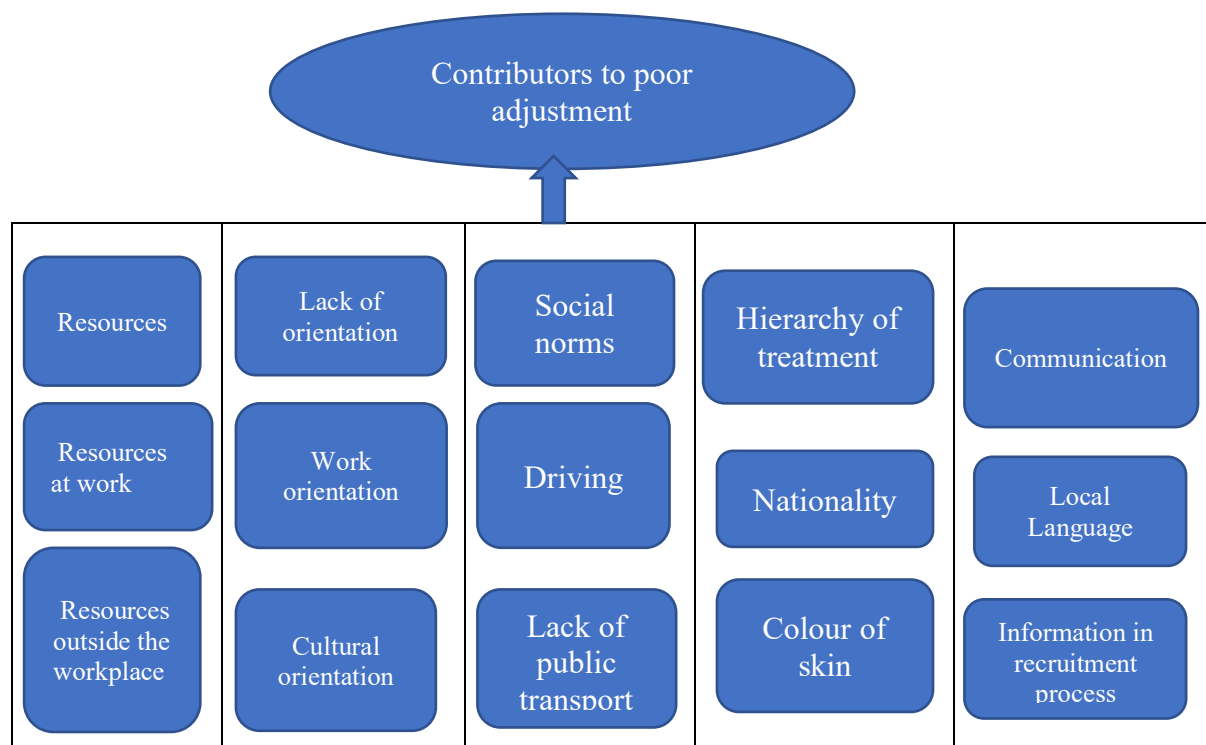


Figure 4.4 The overarching theme of Contributors to poor adjustment contains five themes: resources, lack of orientation, social norms, hierarchy of treatment and communication. Each theme has two sub-themes.

4.4.1 Resources

This theme has two sub-themes: resources at work and resources outside the workplace. The first sub-theme captures how the lack of resources at the place of work negatively affected the adjustment of the SIEs. The second sub-theme shows how resources outside the workplace hindered their work adjustment. As new SIEs, feelings of this nature can be predisposing factors to lack of adjustment and eventual return home. The following two subsections will discuss the lack of resources at work and outside work respectively.

4.4.1.1 Resources at work

Some will argue that the lack of adequate tools to teach may be an everyday occurrence in institutions all over the world. However, when faced with such deficiencies in a foreign country and in a new work setting, it can lead to frustration and in some cases expatriate flight. In this research lack of resources was cited as an impediment to work adjustment by some SIE academics.

Some participants identified the lack of resources like computers that are fundamental in HE institutions these days. In some cases, some respondents said they were not even given course books. Visibly angry, John (QS-HS) said, *“Good textbooks, if they can give us a list of supplementary textbooks or resources”*. Kamal, from QS-HS, with bemusement and shock on his face said, *“When I have no material to teach with, I send an email to the administration, and they tell me to just bring some material from my side to teach the students with”*. Experiences like this can be seen by some SIEs as a negative precursor and this can unsettle them from the outset. Moreover, people naturally tend to compare what they are experiencing at that moment with their previous experiences and expect the same professional standards and services from their current employer. A comment from John (US) illustrates his frustration:

“If they can build a resource centre for teachers, which they don’t have any clue what that is, but if they could build a resource centre, so new teachers could go and see what other teachers had done before them, or what is available for them to use”.

As evidenced in the above two quotes, it seems both individuals may have worked in other institutions with resource centres that teachers used to supplement their teaching. The fact

that their current institution did not have enough resources seems to have affected their ability to work and perhaps their overall work adjustment.

4.4.1.2 Resources outside the workplace

This sub-theme captures what the SIE academics thought about the services their employers provided outside the workplace. Surprisingly, many of them said they received no support.

This following excerpt from Muktar, an SIE from QS-HS typifies this:

“I had to deal with my three kids I had to bring them every day to the hospital and go back until one o’clock in the morning ... and it was a very bad experience for me and my family. That was the first week of arriving”

The fact that the above incident happened in the first week of arrival of this participant and he was not offered any help by his employer may have had a profound effect on his work adjustment. Moreover, Furaha from FU-R, adds, *“I was feeling that I should go back home and that I should not have done this, it wasn’t really nice at all”*. Sumaya, who also works at FU-R, said they got *“nothing, the only help they gave was providing us with a bus”* [for a weekly trip to malls.] As a female who could not drive, she felt this was not enough for her to get all the things she needed. Sumaya alluded to this by saying *“everything else we ask our friends, where do we buy Abaya for example (a dress worn by Muslim women)”*. Female SIEs can be more vulnerable to lack of support outside the workplace especially in a country where, until recently, they were not allowed to drive or even go out alone. However, some other female SIEs in other institutions said that they got help outside work. For instance, Amina, from RCU, said *“Well they give me a call, how are you adjusting, how is everything, even if I don’t need anything. The knowledge that someone is watching out for you, is very important”*. It is interesting that without even needing any support, just knowing that your

employer is always available to deal with your needs, helps not only build positivity about the employer, but the employee feels more relaxed too. These initial positive experiences can engender feelings of security, thus building optimism about the adjustment process.

4.4.2 Lack of orientation

A new workstation in a foreign country with a different culture and work policies and procedures can be challenging for anyone. Some participants were surprised and shocked that they were not given any training or orientation, rather they were told to get on with the job. Depicting gloom and apathy on the subject of orientation, Furaha, a UK SIE academic from FU-R said, as previously mentioned, *“It’s a totally different culture and to just throw anybody from any religion into this and be like, teach....”*. This quote is an indicator of the problems of lack of cultural training and orientation. The use of the phrase, *“just throw anybody from any religion”* shows the religious and cultural nuances that SIEs have to be aware about, even in a classroom setting. Some interviewees said that they needed to be orientated about work culture and how it can be affected by the general culture of the country. This theme is divided into two sub-themes: work orientation and cultural orientation.

4.4.2.1 Work orientation

To be made aware of what to avoid in a classroom setting, especially in a different culture, can help new SIE academics feel confident and settle into their new surroundings. However, some academics reported that they were not given any training and most of the time they found out what to do from their work colleagues. *“Yes, my managers and team co-ordinators did nothing for me, no training about how to mark students, how to record the attendance, their exams, nothing”* (Sumaya of FU-R). This excerpt indicates that simple task like marking student papers and giving feedback can be a concern for teachers in a new work setting. For example, anecdotally, Saudi students can aggressively demand higher grades and this can be

a big shock to teachers from other countries. Furaha, from the same university as Sumaya adds, *“I was not given an adjustment period. I was just kind of thrown in because the government has paid already, so they want to get their money’s worth as soon as possible”*. Kamal from QS-HS adds, *“I would say the orientation process is quite weak here, because there are many things that are not co-ordinated professionally the way they are supposed to be”*.

However, some SIEs said that they were given work orientation. For instance, Hassan from QS-HS said, *“After I reached here there was orientation program, where this was [a] little bit of help”*. Both Hassan and Kamal work for the same university (QS-HS) and the fact one said he had orientation while the other did not may be explained by the different times they joined the university. Although Kamal is relatively new (six months), Hassan has been there for three years. Their institution may have had a better orientation programme when Hassan joined. SIEs from other institutions also seemed content with the orientation they were given when they first arrived. Wali, from RCU, said his university provides helpful orientation.

“We were going to do this, and we were going to do that, this is the teaching management, and these are the assistants, he explained from X to Z. They have [a] black and white procedure, so you don’t get lost”.

4.4.2.2 Cultural orientation

Cultural orientation was cited as being important in facilitating work adjustment by some SIE academics. Where there was no cultural awareness orientation or training, some SIEs reported difficulties and confusion with certain cultural norms. On the issue of differences in culture, Belkis, from FU-R said, *“there are differences in culture, in etiquette, in how they do things and how they expect things, that are different”*. This participant acknowledges that the

difference in culture may mean that employers in Saudi Arabia may have different approaches to work orientation to those in other countries. As such, getting acquainted with culture of the host countries can be a way of reducing stressors. For example, Hassan from QS-HS emphasized the significance of cultural training by using his previous employer in Taiwan as an example. *“Because living in Taiwan where [the] majority of the population is non-Muslim, so it would have been difficult for me without a guideline to proceed or even to decide to go to that place”*. As a Muslim SIE, he felt that his employer gave him enough cultural training about life in Taiwan. On the same point of the interface of culture and religion and the effect this can have, Furaha discussed some pitfalls that might happen to some SIEs:

There are so many things we are not supposed to say that they give you this orientation, but they give you this after six months and by then a lot of teachers that are not Muslims have done these things, the effect is already there. They have been given warnings, disciplinaries, because nobody has told them beforehand, ‘don’t do this’. (Furaha)

The above quote means while some Muslim academics might know what to avoid teaching in terms of cultural sensitivity, the experience might be different for non-Muslim academics. For example, they may teach or say things that might be seen as culturally inappropriate, which might in some cases result in them losing their jobs. Therefore, being aware of these issues in advance may be the difference between adjusting or not adjusting.

4.4.3 Social norms

This theme has two sub-themes and discusses the participants' experience of how some of the social norms in the host country affected their adjustments. Some participants said that coping with some of these norms was not easy for them.

4.4.3.1 Driving

Some of the participants expressed dismay at how people drove in Riyadh. Compared to their home countries, they said that the driving here can be reckless. Musa remembered how he felt when he started driving in Riyadh, *"I rented a small car, which was fine, but driving was horrendous. Every time you went out you thought, I'm not coming back"*. The thought of not being able to make it back home safely shows his strong feelings about how dangerous the driving is. Moreover, John, came to the same conclusion about driving in Riyadh. For him, to be safe on the roads in Riyadh, one had to be aggressive. Camilla, who does not drive because she is a female came to this conclusion about the locals, she describes as *"wonderful people except when they are behind the wheel of a car, then they change into some sort of monster"*. For a non-driver, it is interesting that this participant depicts the HCNs as changing to *"monsters"* when they start driving. These two comments by Musa and Camilla point to how unsafe expatriates feel about the driving in Riyadh, and further highlight the importance of training SIEs about the cultural and social norms of their host country so that they can make an informed decision about whether to accept employment or not.

Although the rule of females not driving has since been relaxed by the Saudi authorities, all the female SIE academics, at the time of this research, were frustrated that they were not permitted to drive, like their male counterparts. They said their inability to drive has negatively contributed to their work adjustment. The excerpt from Amina, below is a good

example: *“When you are male you can adjust here easily, you can jump into a car, you can do whatever you want to do, get yourself sorted out, but when you are a woman you need assistance to get your life started”*. This participant implies that it is easier for men to adjust because of the lack of restrictions for them. Indeed, Camilla, does not understand the logic of only men driving. For her, it should be women driving as they take the children to school and do shopping while men only go to work. *“I’m not sure why it is the men, because I thought the women would need to get out and about more and do the shopping and take the children to school, where men just need to get to the office and stay there”*. Although this is a logical assumption it shows no understanding of the Saudi Arabia culture and tradition.

The prohibition of women from driving is compounded by the lack of public transport other than taxis. Female SIEs have thus voiced the way they feel incapable of getting around on their own. This quote from Furaha shows this concern, *“But here, because there is no public transport, you have to depend upon taxis and then here the taxis are an issue of safety”*. On the same issue of the lack of public transport and difficulty of mobility, Amina, commented, *“Especially being mobile in Canada as a female, when I came here the mobility was the hardest part to adjust”*. Here, the participant’s experiences of lack of mobility seems to be contributing to her feelings of not being able adjust to life in the host country. Therefore, a city that does not have adequate public transport system but taxis, which can be expensive, can contribute to the apprehension of female academics and may eventually make them terminate their contracts prematurely. Moreover, some female SIE academics raised safety concerns about taxis, for example, Furaha said this, *“So when I came, there was the issue of you can’t rely on this taxi firm or that taxi driver like anything could happen to you, so we spend a lot of time indoors”*. Here, it can be deduced that being made to stay in the house can be a precursor to frustration, which could eventually translate to maladjustment. When in a

new country, people naturally want to learn more by seeing places. If this is curtailed by the lack of a means of mobility, then new employees are bound to feel suffocated. In Riyadh and Saudi Arabia in general, it can be argued that this might be a common feeling among female expatriates.

4.4.4 Hierarchy of treatment

This theme has two sub-themes: nationality and colour of skin. It captures how some participants felt they were treated by the HCNs, mainly outside the workplace. Some of these non-Caucasian academics were exacerbated at how they were seen as different from their Caucasian looking colleagues. One SIE casually narrated these instances of discrimination, *“The Saudis are number one, the white foreigners maybe two and then you have foreigners of professional status, and then you have all the workers, so there is definitely a hierarchy”* (Thomas). On many occasions some participants said that they were judged based on their skin colour, and the type of passport they held. Musa, who is of Pakistani origin but from the UK, was visibly angry when recounting some of these occurrences, of what he described as outright racism *“You can see the discrimination, discrimination is very widespread, it amazed me”*. Paradoxically, Musa said he came to Saudi Arabia to bring up his children in an Islamic environment and some of these discriminatory issues go against that. Evidenced by his hesitant speech he says:

I think that's why I like to have minimum local contact and I think that's my motto of survival here. The minimum local contact I have here I can survive and if it's too much those days then I.... There isn't a week that goes by that I don't think about packing up and leaving.

Bad experiences can make people come up with coping mechanisms. For instance, having minimal contacts with locals can be seen as a way of protecting oneself from being pigeonholed based on appearance. Such strong feelings towards the existence of explicit discrimination were expressed by other SIE academics of colour, Hassan:

Yeah, I mean it shouldn't be like this but then by the issue of my Indian origin then I look like [I'm] Indian, so they think that maybe they have to deal with him [me] in the same way that they are dealing with labourers, or [the] labour class. But eventually when they come to know that you [I'm] not that one, then the whole language will change.

As the above quote reveals, from the outset, all people of colour are viewed as labourers by default by the HCNs, whatever their professions. Based on these accepted societal social norms, professionals of colour may not be accorded the same status as other professionals. Going through experiences of this nature, where for example, the approach of HCNs change the moment they find out about the person's profession, may make these academics reconsider their stay in this country. Moreover, respect and human decency should not be based on colour, race, profession, creed, or religion.

When it comes to service delivery, some Caucasian SIE academics mentioned that they were given preferential treatment by HCNs, and this might be because of how they look. They said when they go to places like banks, they get served much faster than their colleagues. With a slightly uncomfortable smile, Mark, a Caucasian from Canada said:

Oh, you're an English teacher from North America, and You're white, you must be a doctor. You must be someone to whom I need to disprove the stereotypes about Saudi, by being extra friendly or maybe you know, whatever just these kinds of.... Uh, things that would make stuff go smoother, than for somebody else.

This participant seems to imply that white colleagues get treated better to prove a point that Saudis can be friendly and that they can provide a good service to the people they perceive as being the best. For SIE academics of colour, however, such blatant instances of discrimination can leave a bad impression of the host country. Thomas, who is a Caucasian academic thinks people of his colour are seen as having higher status than other people by the HCNs, and that is the reason they are given preferential status. With an expression of guilt, he said, *"I guess maybe you know being a white person also they think that you are a higher status maybe, so they will push things through for you"*. Here, it seems Thomas recognises that being white opens doors for you as opposed to people of colour. As much as he was uncomfortable with the issue of being seen as superior, from his body language it seemed he did not disapprove getting faster and better services because service in places like banks can take a long time.

Paradoxically, SIEs from non-Western countries, although they say they are better off in Saudi Arabia than their home countries, believe that SIE academics from the West, whatever their skin colour, receive favourable treatment. An Arab SIE from Jordan said that there was lack of equality in terms of benefits accorded to expatriates. *"The British or the Canadian, they get benefits because they are obviously foreigners. They can get away with anything. But us, no"* (Wali, Jordanian). In addition, the perception among Arab academics is that their

colleagues from Western countries are given better pay and remuneration. This could lead to resentment and lack of collegiality between staff.

4.4.5 Communication

This theme is divided into two areas and relates to what the participants said about communication. The first one is language as the basis of communication and the second is the way information is passed or shared in the recruitment process of SIEs.

4.4.5.1 Local language

The ability to communicate in the host country's language is seen as a key pillar in adjusting to life in a foreign country. Language helps with understanding subtleties of the local culture, both at work and outside work. Thus, the inability to understand the local language can be a major drawback to work adjustment. This excerpt succinctly captures the importance, yet difficulties related to language, "*But being immersed in a different language and a different culture has its challenges*" (Belkis). Here, the participant brings together language and culture, may be implying that speaking or understanding the local language can help in the appreciation of the local culture. Staying on the importance of the language, Musa refers to difficulties related to "*Mainly language, culture and how do I say this? Lack of openness from the local culture*". This perception may be due to not being conversant with the language of the host country, so interacting with the locals becomes difficult. As a result of this, the SIEs may view the locals as closed to other cultures. Hassan, however, highlighted the importance of host country languages for daily tasks that SIEs may need done, for example, filling forms when opening a bank account or even getting a local driving licence, "*when you go the office everything is in Arabic, and I needed help to do all of these things, my basic need*".

4.4.5.2 Information in recruitment process

Effective and efficient flow of information from the employing company in the host country has been identified as a possible impediment in the adjustment process. Many SIE academics mentioned the inadequacy of information both during the recruitment and mobilization processes. Some said they had to do their own research about the institution they were about to join. Furthermore, no cultural information about the host country was provided. Below is an excerpt from Shiyam who works at RCU:

Unfortunately, the guy that recruited me didn't give me much information about the culture and the country [laughs], the work environment, I mean even the fact that regarding my visa, I wasn't given much information about that either. So, it was quite unsettling when I first arrived there. Yeah, I was totally lost.

Here, Shiyam's comment showed how important it was to receive information prior to arrival. It seems the lack of information about the host country had unsettled him at the beginning. Reflecting on the lack of information, John who works for at QS-HS university said, *"the hiring process was not really transparent, it wasn't really clear cut, it was cloudy, it was muddled and was disjointed"*. The use of descriptive words like cloudy and muddled, illustrates the lack of clarity of the information that was given to this participant.

For female SIE academics, the lack of enough information from the recruiter meant they had to do their own research by contacting other women who either worked or were working in Saudi Arabia. *"I asked women expats in Saudi Arabia, what they had to say, the bad and the good, yeah. So that kind of helped"* (Sumaya). This quote shows women who come to Saudi Arabia need to know more about issues relevant to them. The idea that the participant

preferred to ask other women is significant. It seems that there are certain things that men, although they work in Saudi Arabia, may not have answers to, therefore, getting this relevant information from other woman is a way female academics prepare for life in Saudi Arabia.

However, some SIE academics were happy with the information given to them before they came. *“Most of the time there is like a five-page contract, which most of the time has an ethical code of the country, what you should do and what you should not be doing”* (Amina, RCU). This participant was content with the information she received, for she knew the dos and don'ts in the host country. Wali, who works at the same institution as Amina, was also positive about the provision of information, *“When I came here I met Mr.XXXX and he explained everything to me, they have black and white procedures”*.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the study findings in relation to the pre-existing evidence in the literature. Three overarching themes were previously identified in this study: (1) Adjustment initiators; (2) Adjustment enablers; and (3) Contributors to poor adjustment. The first part of this chapter discusses what makes Saudi Arabia attractive to SIEs despite its unique deeply conservative Bedouin culture. Factors that help in the work adjustment process are then highlighted. Finally, the chapter delves into what contributes to SIEs failing to adjust to their work environments.

This study explores the lived experiences of fifteen SIE academics working in three different universities in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. They were purposively selected to conduct the interviews required for the research. Initially, the study was to utilize both semi-structured interviews and qualitative diaries as data collection tools. However, because of the poor response from the participants in their qualitative diaries, semi-structured interviews were used as the only source of analysis.

The participants of the study are all SIE academics from different countries and with different areas of specialisation. As suggested by Haslberger et al. (2014), there has to be a fit between the individuals and the environment where they live. In that sense, a phenomenological case study approach (Crowther et al., 2017) was chosen to interrogate the subjective lived experiences of these academics. The researcher's motivation for understanding SIE work adjustment was as a result of his own experience as an SIE academic. As espoused by van Manen (1990) about the insider researcher, it was not possible for him to simply put to one side what he knew about the phenomenon of work adjustment, so he had to be as close as possible to the participants.

The participants were different in terms of age, family, marital status, religion, time of employment in Saudi Arabia, areas of specialisation, and countries of origin. However, there were also some similarities in relation to their career status (professionals) and an annually renewing contract. The chapter will begin by analysing the study findings in relation to existing knowledge.

5.1 Why Saudi Arabia as a destination for SIE academics?

SIEs may have a preference for certain destinations abroad. This inherent reason for relocating could have a positive bearing on their ability to adjust. The current study found that these ingrained motivations may help some individuals cope with life in their new countries. Saudi Arabia might be one of these destinations that may require psychological preparedness because it is a deeply conservative country where people's daily experiences are influenced by Shariah Law (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017). For example, businesses have to stop trading during prayer times, and genders are segregated. Moreover, this Shariah Law is also underpinned by a Bedouin culture where blood relationship comes first over social friendships (Showail et al., 2013). These unique cultural situations can be a big shock for many SIEs. In addition to the pre-departure psychological preparedness, certain individual motivations are drivers which may include making and saving more money (Richardson & McKenna, 2003), having a permanent job (Selmer & Lauring, 2016), experiencing life abroad (Zhu et al., 2016), religion or achievement-based drivers, for example, demonstrating the confidence to believe one can succeed in working abroad (Presbitero & Quita, 2017). Of these pre-mobilization factors, the study findings suggest that most SIE academics seek employment in Saudi Arabia for economic reasons. This outcome resonates with Austin et al.'s (2014) study about SIEs in the UAE. However, it is a sharp contrast to what Selmer and Lauring (2016) found in their study of SIE academics in Europe, which suggested that money was not the main reason for expatriation. The difference between the outcomes of these two

studies may be plausible because people associate the Gulf States with money. In contrast, it is possible that Europe's touristic sites, history, climate, and culture might be their main motivation for moving there. Interestingly, the data from the current study reveal that SIE academics from developing countries, for example, Sudan and Jordan, did not cite finance as their main reason for relocating to Saudi Arabia. As opposed to their colleagues from Western countries, limited job opportunities and lack of commensurate benefits in their home countries played an important role in their expatriation to Saudi Arabia. This outcome supports the findings from Scurry et al. (2013) and Luring and Selmer (2012) which found that SIE academics from developing countries move abroad because of necessity and not by choice. This dichotomy between the two sets of SIEs (Western vs non-Western) supports Haslberger et al.'s (2014) notion that adjustment is not just influenced by the environment but the individual SIE's motivation plays a key role too.

The second major factor mentioned by the participants as being integral to their decision of expatriating to Saudi Arabia is religion. They felt working in Saudi Arabia gave them spiritual fulfilment because they have the freedom to visit Islam's two holiest cities of Makkah and Medina. They also expressed that Saudi Arabia provides an environment that is suitable for raising their children. Religion as a basis for expatriation to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf has hardly been discussed in the expatriation literature. Finance, career and culture are given as the main reasons for expatriation to the Gulf (Asif et al., 2020; Hussain & Deery, 2017 and Wilkins & Neri, 2019). The next section discusses what the participants said helped in their adjustment process.

5.2 Factors that help in the adjustment process

Feeling settled in a new country and culture is not an easy process (Doherty et al., 2013). The challenges faced notwithstanding, the participants in this study narrated that there were aspects that helped them mitigate the adjustment problems they faced. As asserted by Agha-Alikhani (2018) regarding the subjective nature of adjustment, the respondents to this inquiry cited the following factors as being helpful to their adjustment experiences.

5.2.1 Support from fellow SIEs

This study findings show that primarily SIE academics rely on their fellow SIEs for assistance when confronted by difficult situations and things they are unsure about in the new culture. These issues could be work related or outside of work. The important and perhaps at times critical role played by other SIEs becomes more significant because in many cases there seems to be a deficiency of support accorded to SIE academics from their employers in the host country (McNulty & Brewster, 2017). Thus, as posited by Jonasson et al. (2017), this inquiry shows that SIE academics rely on other SIEs for emotional, psychological, and informational support. All the respondents indicated that the main source of assistance was their fellow SIEs, mainly those of the same background as them, as Wilkins and Neri (2019) also found. For example, if an SIE comes from the UK, he/she tends to seek help from SIEs from that country or another Western country. This was not different with academics from non-Western countries, as they also stated that most of the time, they turned to their colleagues from the same country to seek help, comfort, and reassurance. Thus, this outcome further corroborates the finding of Shaffer et al. (2016) who established that expatriates tend to depend on other expatriates for assistance. As far as individuals seeking support from other SIEs who come from the same countries as them is concerned, this result is congruent with Guttormsen et al. (2018), who suggest that adapting to work abroad could be positively

influenced by colleagues of the same background at work. This localized help seeking behaviour exhibited by these respondents may be an indication of the way people co-construct their lived experiences as they deal with a phenomenon, such as, adjusting to life in a new country.

5.2.2 Support from HCNs

Some of the academics, whether from the West or other countries indicated that they received advice and assistance from Saudi colleagues at work. As argued by van der Laken (2019) and Takeuchi (2010), interaction with HCNs can help expatriates overcome culture shock. On the other hand, ethnocentric attitudes where for example, HCNs viewed SIEs as outsiders and were not willing to help (Sonesh & DeNisi, 2016) was found not to be a main issue in this study. Furthermore, SIE academics who sought specific guidance from HCNs in the acquisition of governmental documents like driving licences reported positive accommodation and helpfulness. In that regard, this research confirms the outcome of the study by Mahajan and Toh (2014) who stated that expatriates who proactively seek specific help from HCNs may be better equipped to adjust faster. In the context of this study, being proactive in seeking assistance is not just about interpretation of specific cultural issues but also practical issues like dealing with bureaucratic procedures in accessing services, for example, driving licences and residency permits. In contrast to AEs who get support from their employers, von Borell de Araujo et al. (2014) argue that these may be special skills of self-advocacy developed by SIEs as they adapt to life in their new countries.

5.2.3 Experience from a country with a similar culture

Data from the study indicate that although previous experiences of working abroad may be helpful in adjusting to work, what may be more relevant is having a prior length of employment in a country with a similar culture to Saudi Arabia. Danisman (2017) came to

the same result about the value of having cultural experiences that are similar to the that of the host country. This type of experience can make a difference in work situations, especially in classroom settings, where academics have to decide on content that is culturally appropriate for students. The implication here may mean that prior exposure to Islamic culture may be an added advantage in handling certain cultural situations in classrooms. Hence, this study confirms Froese's (2012) assertion that academics who had been exposed to a culture which was similar to that of the host country coped better with adjustment issues than those without. Indeed, as the study of Richardson and Wong (2018) suggests, a good knowledge of the host country's religion and culture may be important, particularly in academic institutions. Such knowledge may hitherto inculcate a new worldview about the host country and alleviate difficult situations both in a teaching setting and outside. As Furaha, one of the participants in this study revealed, there were cases where academics had lost their jobs because they had engaged in behaviours in the classroom that were deemed culturally unacceptable.

5.2.4 Family as a pillar of adjustment

SIE academics accompanied by their families reported that they coped better with adjustment problems at work and life in general compared to those without families. This perhaps points to the important role the non-working spouse plays in overseas work. Some participants said they struggled with life before their spouses and children joined them. This conclusion echoes the same outcome as the meta-analysis of van der Laken (2019), who concludes that spousal support is not only crucial to the SIE outside the workplace but has important positive impacts on work productivity. In the same vein, Luring and Selmer (2010) and Selmer and Luring (2011) suggest that SIE academics who are married and who have their families with them tend to adjust better than unmarried SIEs and those without their families.

Paradoxically, data from this study also show that if the family or non-working spouse is unsettled in the host country (Richardson, 2006), it may affect the adjustment of the working partner and eventually lead to premature departure (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009). Hence, as argued by Froese (2012) the accompanying family may not necessarily be the solution to work adjustment issues but could be an impediment in certain circumstances.

5.2.5 The local language

Having some understanding of the host country's language can make a difference in the way SIE academics deal with cultural nuances, which may help or hinder their work adjustment (Richardson & Wong, 2018). Speaking or even having some understanding of the language of the host country may mean being able to interact with HCNs at work and the wider community outside (Wilkins & Neri, 2019). Not only does language help SIEs learn about the culture (Ott & Michailova, 2017), it makes the locals appreciative towards the SIEs (Showail et al., 2013). In this inquiry, one SIE academic said that the perceived lack of openness of Saudis may be because many SIEs do not speak Arabic. Therefore, similar to other research like Bhaskar-Shrivinas et al. (2005) and Danisman (2017), the current study indicates that language may be an important predictor for adjusting to work, for it opens avenues of communication with the locals. An interesting finding that has not been mentioned in the wider literature is the relationship between language and accessing governmental services that may be paramount to SIE work adjustment. According to this research, inability to speak and/or write the language of the host country may result in delays in getting relevant documents like driving licences and residency permits because government services in Saudi Arabia are transacted in Arabic. Hence, in the context of this inquiry, having some understanding of the host country language is not just about gaining some cultural knowledge (Ott & Michailova, 2017), but it may have a wider significance that

may be paramount in facilitating SIE adjustment. A good example of this is processing of documents that are needed for family members to join the working expatriate. This outcome indicates the contextual nature of adjustment (Haslberger et al., 2014; Agha-Alikhani, 2018) and the fact that adjustment may not be a phenomenon that can be generalised. As such the host country environment in terms of culture, workplace policies, attitude towards foreigners, may all have certain bearings in how SIEs cope with the adjustment process in that particular country and setting.

5.2.6 Optimism and positivity

Research has shown that individual level characteristics can be a positive factor in SIE work adjustment. In examining the data of this study, it became apparent that having an optimistic attitude could form a foundation for getting used to working abroad (Hue et al., 2020). Tabor and Milfont (2011) found out that SIEs with fortitude and perseverance may be able to adapt to work in a foreign country. Furthermore, individuals who exhibit a strong sense of determination and are prepared to learn new skills are likely to be successful (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This study shows that people with patience and a positive outlook can adjust to life in their new work, even when things may not be as they expected. As reported by Ang et al. (2007), in this study, some of the respondents revealed that when they faced challenges, they viewed them as an opportunity to enhance their fortitude, and this gave them the chance to resolve the conflict. This is what van Borell de Araujo asserted in their 2014 study that SIEs with psychological preparedness exhibited fortitude that may have facilitated their adjustment. In contrast to Black et al.'s model, this outcome is in agreement with the findings of Stoermer et al. (2018) which suggest that adjustment is fluid and subjective and certainly may not be unidimensional because it depends on the individuals and their surroundings.

5.2.7 Management help

The study reveals that getting the support of the management of the employing institution may mitigate the adjustment problems. As van der Laken et al. (2019) emphasise, management support can make a difference to the way expatriates cope with life in their new environment. They argue that support from those in positions of responsibility may improve performance at work and instil reciprocity from staff, which might boost retention. However, many of the Western SIE academics from the three institutions, concurred that their managers provided little or no assistance, both for work related issues and outside work. Interestingly, however, some SIE academics from neighbouring Arab countries, for example, Sudan and Jordan were happy with the support they received from the management of their respective institutions when they first joined them. This dichotomy of opinion may be attributed to the subjective nature of how people interpret their experiences. Whereas Western SIEs may view perceived support through a Western work policy lens, their colleagues from Arab countries may see expectations from managers through Arab work culture perspective. Indeed, Danisman (2017) explains in her research outcome on SIE academics, those who felt most comfortable in their new surroundings were academics who had a similar cultural background as the host country.

Another plausible explanation why SIE academics from non-Western countries tolerate lack of support from the management may be because of the limited job opportunities in their home countries. As intimated by some of them, there is scarcity of jobs that pay as much as they get paid in Saudi Arabia. This points to the to what Agha-Alikhani (2018) argued, that fitting in a new work environment may be due to the individual's underlying circumstances. Personal situation coupled with subjective interpretation of difficulties faced may make it

hard to assume that adjustment as a phenomenon is a one-size fits all as argued by Black et al. (1991).

5.2.8 Religion as a coping strategy

Context plays a significant role in the social construction of people's experiences (Guttormsen, 2017). In that sense, different people may be motivated to persevere in certain situations to achieve a goal. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, religion does not just play a significant part in people expatriating to Saudi Arabia, but may also function as a coping mechanism. For many Muslim expatriates, the prevalence of mosques where they can easily perform their obligated daily prayers adds to their spiritual fulfilment. Secondly, working in Saudi Arabia means it is not financially taxing for them to performing Hajj (pilgrimage); a main pillar in Islam and which is required to be undertaken at least once in a person's lifetime (Alhawsawi, 2013). In addition, the opportunities of making regular visits to Makkah and Medina is another reason why they overlook some of the adjustment difficulties they face on a daily basis. For instance, one participant said, *"My wife and kids very much liked, given that the sacred places, Makkah and Medina were here, so they were very much happy"* (Hassan).

The need for children to grow up in an Islamic country was raised as factor that helped strengthen the coping mechanism of Muslim SIEs. For these academics, having their children grow up in Saudi Arabia is a way of engendering a better understanding of Islam (Baruch and Fortenlechner, 2017). The effort of raising their children here is worth the perseverance however challenging their adjustment experience may be. This result challenges the notion that all SIEs are either mercenaries, explorers, refugees, or architects (Doherty, 2013; Richardson & McKenna, 2002). The current study supports Haslberger and Brewster (2006) suggestion that adjusting to a work environment abroad may be influenced by an individual's

unique and personal circumstances, in this case, their religious beliefs. The fact that Muslim SIE academics elucidate their adjustment worldviews through a religious lens is interesting, and it could be argued that this is an example of how personal beliefs can situate people's interpretation of their experiences (Creswell, 2003).

This research raises the significance religion may have on SIE work adjustment. However, the relationship between religion and work adjustment does not appear to have been discussed in the literature, particular in a country that is the birth of Islam. As highlighted in this chapter, spiritual attainment seems to act as a pull factor as well as a coping mechanism in dealing with adjustment difficulties. Thus, this thesis calls for a longitudinal study to determine the link between spirituality and SIE adjustment in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia in particular.

5.3 Factors that negatively impact SIE work adjustment

The suggestion in the literature that adjustment is achieved after a certain period (Black et al, 1991) was not reflected in the outcome of this study. The data from this thesis portrays that adjustment is a continuous process. Moreover, the way SIEs deal and cope with the adjustment challenges on a daily basis depends on the individual.

All the interviewees of the study, ranging from those who had been in Saudi for over five years and the newly arrived ones indicated there was a general sense that they did not fully feel comfortable with life in Saudi Arabia. This outcome shows that expatriates may never feel adjusted to life in a foreign country as claimed by Black et al., (1991). Interestingly, most of the participants in this study did not feel comfortable with most of the variables used in the development of Black et al.'s measurement scale like interaction with locals outside work, entertainment, recreation facilities and even specific job responsibilities at work. This

particular outcome resonates with McKenna (2010) and McKenna and Richardson's (2016) claim that adjustment may be a never-ending process considering most of the participants had been in the country for over three years and did not feel adjusted. As suggested by Haslberger et al. (2014), the way individuals react and cope with their experiences cannot be generalised, as each person interprets his/her situation differently.

Haslberger and Brewster (2006) support McKenna's (2010) assertion that adjustment is a subjective issue that can be influenced by, for example, the environment; in other words, the contexts of the time and situation. The result from this inquiry shows that the participants were constantly facing new challenges to overcome and negotiate. This may be because of the closed and conservative nature of the Saudi society. As such this result is in line with Stoermer et al.'s (2018) argument that adjustment may be more challenging in countries with homogenous culture. Moreover, the changing dynamics in the Saudi employment arena, can mean reaching a point of comfort in the new culture may be difficult. As McKenna (2010) succinctly puts it: "Adjustment will also be influenced by environmental factors such as cultural distance; surprises that develop within the new context; previous expatriate experience; social networks; and organizational support" (p. 283). The following sections discuss some of the specific issues that the study participants raised as contributors to poor adjustment.

5.3.1 No support outside the workplace

As expatriate employees, all the participants of this study stated that they had expected to be given some form of help and guidance outside the workplace by their employers, for example where to go for food shopping and other supplies. Although there was a general sense of frustration among most of the participants, women seemed to be affected the most. This

might be because of the prohibition on women driving (at that time) and their need to rely on taxis, about which many felt apprehensive about for safety reasons. When they first arrived in Riyadh, four of the female participants said they were forced to stay in their accommodation for days because they did not know where to go. Moreover, they had to depend on other female expatriates and not their employer to show them around the city for places to buy food, clothing, and other items. This lack of due care by the employer may be associated with the wider dynamics in Arab societies where working women are seen as stepping away from the established cultural norms of being stay-at-home mothers (Harrison & Michailova, 2012). This notion is supported by Alsubaie and Jones (2017) that the Saudi society is built on male guardianship, where women have to be accompanied by male custodians to go out, even to work. Furthermore, Alsubaie and Jones (2017) add that Saudi Arabia is ranked one of the lowest countries in the world when it comes to giving women economic participation and opportunities. The data from the current study indicates that for the Saudi male, there is no difference between Saudi and expatriate women. This problem seems to be the same in the wider Gulf countries which are hitherto seen to be more open than the Saudi society. Rodriguez and Ridgeway (2018) suggest that while women enjoy expatriate status, they also are faced with the Gulf's patriarchal system.

5.3.2 Orientation and training

Another major contributor to ill adjustment may be lack of orientation and training. The study has found that many SIE academics were not given orientation and training about work procedures and culture of the country (McNulty & Brewster, 2017). Indeed, some of them said that they relied on the internet to learn about Saudi culture. Participants from two of the three universities reported that they were not given work and cultural orientation. In some cases, the lack of cultural training may have led to some academics losing their job or getting warning letters for teaching or mentioning culturally insensitive subjects in class. From the

data, it seems that cultural illiteracy may have disproportionately affected those who had no previous exposure to Muslim culture. As discussed earlier, having a prior knowledge of Muslim culture may alleviate some of the cultural pitfalls that some SIEs may experience in the new country and work setting. Interestingly, the participants from one university that provided training and orientation did not report problems with cultural issues at the workplace. Contrary to Harrison and Michailova's (2012) claim that prior CCT may not be necessary, this study points to the significance of CCT to SIE academics' work adjustment in this context. As argued by Takeuchi et al. (2019), CCT prior to arrival in the host country followed by mentorship at work can help SIEs better prepare for and manage their new life. Moreover, CCT reduces what Mahajan and Toh (2014) describes as "the psychic distance expatriates may perceive between themselves and the HCNs" (p. 484).

5.3.3 Behaviour on the roads: driving

There are certain norms in a host country that may be strange to expatriates but perfectly normal etiquettes to HCNs. These may come as a shock to many SIEs, may be more to those without foreign experience (Hussain & Deery, 2017). Takeuchi et al. (2019) suggest prior cultural training could provide SIEs with the capacity to mentally prepare and cope with local habits that they not used to. As discussed in Chapter 2, because of the nature of their expatriation, SIEs do not get the privilege of cultural training before they relocate.

This study reveals that the driving habits of some HCNs may have a negative effect on some SIEs. The poor driving habits was more of a concern for Western SIE academics than non-Western ones. The participants narrated how anxious they become when driving or even as passengers. Baruch and Fortenlechner (2017) suggest that this may be the case because SIEs tend to compare what they encounter in the host country to their home countries. This may be why there was some tolerance of the driving habits of HCNs among SIE academics from

neighbouring Arab countries. More broadly, this may point to the affectivity of ethnic origin and geographical location when it comes to acceptance of cultural norms of host countries. This duality (Western and non-Western SIEs) of individual cultural interpretation may be an indicator of how people's background and experience influence their interpretation of certain realities (Haslberger et al., 2014). In other words, SIEs from a neighbouring country, or even those who had worked in countries with similar culture as Saudi Arabia, may see the driving of the HCNs perfectly normal. However, Richardson and Wong (2018) intimate, there might be other underlying individual reasons for some people's acceptance of behaviour that might seem unacceptable to others. One of these might be economic hardship in the home countries of some SIEs, which might make them more tolerant and accepting of HCNs behaviour (Rodriguez & Scurry, 2014). This assertion might be true in the context of this research because the non-Western academic SIEs came from countries with poor economic climate, for example Sudan.

5.3.4 Privileges: nationality and ethnicity

The way people understand culture is informed by how they imagine their differences and characteristics, and this may lead them to interact with each other in certain ways (Stalker, 2015). According to Al Ariss, (2014) the reality of ethnic and nationality categorization in expatriation in the Gulf is complex. They opine that ethnicization of the workplace is underpinned by cultural and colonial discourses. There is a general acceptance that the top tier positions should be preserved for certain ethnic groups. However, the normalization of such selective HR policies could affect the sociocultural dynamics and have a negative impact on expatriate's adjustment. The way SIEs interpret their experiences of these categorization can depend on where they are on the continuum. The segmented system favours mainly European and American whites, whilst on the opposite end of the hierarchy are a range of racialized groups who feel they are subjugated, those chiefly doing menial jobs

who are mainly from Asia and Africa. This section will discuss how the participants' realities are constructed through an ethicized environment and how these experiences shape their work adjustment.

5.3.4.1 Nationality as a basis for survival

A person's ethnic background may include inherited traits like colour of skin and place of origin. These inherited characteristics coupled with nationality may hinder or facilitate how individuals adjust to work depending on the prejudices of the local population. Rodriguez and Ridgway (2018) point out that SIEs in the Gulf have to wriggle through contours of privilege based on their passport and ethnic origin. In this study, some participants used phrases like "*until the passport comes out*" (Musa, UK) to describe the influence of the type of passport one has. As indicated, there seems to be a high regard for passports from countries like the UK, USA and other Western countries. In that vein, the findings in this study are consistent with that of Romanowski and Nasser (2014) which found that SIEs in the Gulf are judged based on the travel documents they hold. Haak-Saheem and Brewster (2017) contend that categorization based on nationality is explicitly prevalent in HRM in the Gulf States; the Saudi HR system bases merits on the passport type rather than the person holding it. Goxe and Paris (2016) suggest that in many countries, how developed the expatriate's country of origin is, can be "a relevant criterion to explain organizational and social hierarchies in the context of expatriation" (p. 186). Based on the experiences of SIE academics from this study, the discourse of segmentation based on nationality rather than skills and expertise may counter the appeal of expatriation to countries in the Gulf.

In their findings, Romanowski and Nasser (2014, p. 662) report "some faculty members may choose an identity that might not be the true core of their being but rather an identity that is socially desirable". For example, a faculty member, who identified himself as Indian when

he first started work decided to adopt his American nationality because he realised it was more acceptable in Qatari society. Whilst writing about his experiences as an SIE academic in Saudi Arabia, Jenkins (2018) an African-American academic reveals that in many occasions he had to hide his identity to be appreciated by HCNs. The current study shows that the assumption of another identity is a way of survival, even for highly educated SIEs, like academics. For instances, an ethnic Pakistani academic from the UK would identify himself with his British passport than his Pakistani ethnicity because that is what employers and the wider community respect and accept. Indeed, Bauman (1999) suggests people change their identity to feel more secure and preserve their existence.

5.3.4.2 Effect of ethnicity on work adjustment

Ethnicity is another issue that many of the SIEs said had a negative effect on their work adjustment process. Accounts from SIEs in this sample show the layered nature of ethnic hierarchies in the Saudi social norms, including the workplace. The analysis of the participants' narrative shows that the HCNs have a special affinity for people of certain ethnicities, whilst others are categorized as 'just workers.' This finding is similar to the outcome of the study by Al Ariss (2014) which found out that Emirati managers hired expatriates based on where they came from. Whilst Europeans came on top in terms of job hierarchy, expatriates from Asia were placed at the bottom. Data from this thesis indicates ethnicization and segmentation have become so entrenched within the Saudi social fabric that white Western SIEs sometimes tend to rationalise the privileges given to them. For them the 'special status' they are accorded is part of the existing layered ethnic structures in Saudi Arabia. As one white SIE academic put it, "The Saudis are number one, the white foreigners may be two and then you have foreigners of professional status, and then you have all the workers, so there is definitely a hierarchy" (Thomas).

Data from this study further portrays that categorization becomes more apparent when SIEs seek necessary government documentation like residency permits and opening bank accounts. Some respondents reported that the locals working in these institutions are prone to giving faster services to those who look Caucasian rather Asian or African. One explanation for this attitude, may be to counter the stereotypical Western caricature of Saudis being generally lazy. Therefore, according quicker and efficient services to Caucasians may be one way to disprove this notion. For SIE academics of colour, however, such explicit discriminative actions create a negative picture about the host country's people and culture, which could undermine their adjustment process. Rodriguez and Ridgeway's (2018) conclusion about the discrimination female expatriates in the Gulf contend with may be compared with that experienced by male SIE academics of colour in Saudi Arabia. They argue that societal value attached to one's skin colour may not only be ingrained culturally but institutionalised in a formal system of racial bias designed into HR recruitment policies in Gulf countries. For example, Jenkins (2018) an SIE academic of colour, reports that he does not send anything with his picture on when he applies for work in the Gulf because it may get rejected outright because of the colour of his skin. Therefore, academics of colour may have to learn how to circumvent these prejudices to find employment in these countries.

5.3.5 Communication

Making information about the country readily available so SIEs can decide about their relocation has been cited as being crucial (Stoermer et al., 2018). In the present study, inefficient dissemination of information from the recruiting agencies and new employers in the host country, had necessitated some SIE academics to rely on third parties to find answers to some of their concerns. The implication of this, may be that these SIEs may not have had adequate information about the work procedures and policies of the new employer. As argued by Peltokorpi (2017) it is imperative that there is a good communication link between SIEs

and employers. Wilkins and Neri (2019) found that dissemination of information is a way of reducing anxiety among expatriates. As the current study found, SIEs inevitably had many questions about the host country, the work procedures and what happens on the day they arrive. However, the fact that some employers did not even have a website at the time of recruitment may have compounded the confusion and concerns of some of them. Female SIE academics in particular, reported that they had more misgivings and preoccupations because of the perceived vulnerabilities of females in a highly conservative country. Most of them said they had got information through the internet or from other females who were either working or had worked in Saudi Arabia before. Although helpful at the time, most of them narrated that they were not sure about the authenticity of what they were told. As such, their experiences in the first few weeks were one of panic and confusion because they did not know whom to trust, from the taxi drivers to their company's male employees.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter summarises the study's contributions to knowledge and practice for SIE employers. The chapter also discusses contextual implications for SIEs, the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research. The chapter ends with the researcher's reflection on the research journey.

6.1 Contribution to knowledge

The intention of this study was not to engender knowledge that could be generalised to other contexts. Instead, it sought to explore and interpret the lived experiences of a group of SIE academics from diverse backgrounds working in Riyadh. However, it generated new insights about the work adjustment experiences of SIE academics working in a country with a homogenous, closed, and conservative culture (Abdul-Cader & Anthony, 2014). As discussed previously, context matters, and, in that sense, the adjustment experiences of the participants of this study could resonate with people in a similar context (Selmer et al., 2015; Haslberger et al., 2014). The fact that there is a paucity of literature from a Saudi Arabian context about SIE academics work adjustment may make its knowledge contribution more relevant to SIEs in similar cultures.

The outcomes from this study contribute to the extant literature in various ways. First, it adds to the knowledgebase of what is currently known about SIEs working in the GCC (Alshammari, 2012; Asif et al., 2020; Austin et al., 2014; Romanowski & Nasser, 2014; Wilkins & Neri, 2019). It suggests that adjustment is a never-ending process (McKenna, 2010) and SIEs may never feel fully adjusted, contrary to Black, et al.'s (1991) adjustment model. This finding echoes Haslberger et al.'s, (2014) suggestion that adjustment is not an outcome but is context and individual dependent. Indeed, the contention of this inquiry is that

rather than feeling adjusted, SIEs find ways to cope with life in a particular country until they achieve their goals. Thus, the adjustment narrative may be a fluid concept that may not be achievable (McKenna, 2010).

The seminal study of Richardson and McKenna (2002) posit that SIEs move abroad to explore, make money, build careers, or change lives. However, depending on the destination country there may be other factors too. This study adds that religion is a pull factor for SIEs who move to Saudi Arabia. For many respondents to this research, working and living in Saudi is a way of enriching their spirituality. Besides being immersed in daily religious rituals, they also treasure visiting Islam's two holiest sites of Makkah and Medina. Moreover, for these SIEs Saudi Arabia provides an Islamic environment which is ideal to raise their children.

In the expatriation literature having a prior foreign experience is suggested as being crucial in work adjustment (Richardson & Wong, 2018; Danisman, 2017). However, this study finds that exposure to a similar culture as that of a host country may be more valuable than any kind of a foreign experience. This may be due to the uniqueness of certain destination's culture. For instance, Saudi Arabia adheres to conservative Islam, and in that sense SIEs with experience of Muslim culture may be able to cope with nuanced religious and cultural sensitivities. For example, being aware of what not to discuss in class and outside may help SIEs avoid pitfalls that could negatively affect their coping with the adjustment process. This supports Haslberger et al. (2014) P-E fit suggestion that the country where the expatriates are influences how they adjust. Similar to Saudi Arabia, Japan and Korea have a closed culture and according to Froese, (2012) and Stoermer et al. (2018) having prior similar cultural experience as these countries help SIE adjustment.

6.2 Contribution to practice

Many studies in IHRM have recommended the improvement of HR strategies to deal with the globalised nature of international employment. This is necessitated by the high attrition rate of international deployment and the rising cost of hiring AEs (Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013; Dickmann & Baruch, 2011). Nearly a quarter of employers do not prepare their employees better for the foreign relocation (Brookfield, 2013). That is why there has been a call for global companies to focus their HR policies in recruiting SIEs (Farcas & Gonclaves, 2016). Employers could benefit more from SIEs if they provided training about the culture and work policies of the host country (Brewster & Suutari, 2005). This could help the relocating SIEs cope with life and work procedures in the host country, consequently improving their retention and productivity (Selmer et al., 2015). The present study shows that this may not be the case in Saudi Arabia, because most of the SIE academics did not have training in terms of culture and work procedures. Although this study's findings may not be generalisable, it is reasonable to assume that many SIEs in Saudi Arabia may be facing the same phenomenon.

6.2.1 Employing organizations

As discussed in previous chapters, Saudi Arabia has hugely invested in education and heavily relies on academics from abroad. To maximise on the potential of these individuals, it is imperative for the employers to appreciate that SIEs are from other countries and should thus be prepared to provide adequate training about the country's culture, the organisation's working procedures and policies (Baruch & Fortenlechner, 2017). The participants in this inquiry did not have pre-departure training about the host country and recognising this fact may be a good starting point. Employers should thus put in place training programmes for their new academics about the culture of the host country, perhaps prior to deployment, but

more practically upon arrival (Harrison & Michailova, 2012). They suggest that short training at the workplace may be more effective than long training.

Another useful step should be the provision of mentorship programmes. Mentorships from experienced expatriates (Bozionelos, 2009) can help new entrants learn about the inner culture of the new employer (Wilkins & Neri, 2019). This may help build confidence among the new SIEs, and possibly make them more productive at work. Instead of the classic classroom training, employers should consider providing a more adapted training like a buddy system at the workplace. The likely benefit of such programmes is that there is a readily available real-time support to clarify issues that the SIE may be unsure about.

The third suggestion is the importance of non-work aspects to SIE adjustment. Jonasson et al. (2017) and Shaffer et al. (2016) point to the importance of family and spouse to the adjustment and performance of SIEs abroad. Host country employers should pay special attention to how the families and spouses of those they hire adjust to the new surroundings, because the happiness and well-being of the accompanying partner may have an impact on the adjustment of the SIE (Danisman, 2017). As Jackson and Manderschied (2016) and Lauring and Selmer (2010) found, SIEs may adjust better and be more productive at work when their families are happy in the new country. One way employers can assist SIEs and their families is to provide advice about local schools where they can enrol their children because it instils a feeling of being settled (Wilkins & Neri, 2019). Employers should adopt other inexpensive techniques, for example, encouraging the SIEs and families to develop social networks with people from similar backgrounds and culture (Suutari & Baruch, 2001); or helping them locate places where they can find familiar food, as this engenders a feeling of having connection with their home. In Saudi Arabia, establishing a closer link with HCNs

can be difficult because of the conservative nature of its culture. To overcome this, Showail et al. (2013) suggest that SIEs should try to reach out to the local population. In that sense employers should organize home visit events where the expatriates and locals can learn from each other. As confirmed by the study of Harrison and Michaelova (2012), such get-togethers can be a means for the SIEs to adjust to the general culture of the country.

6.2.2 The recruitment processes

As the research on AEs has shown (Guttormsen et al., 2018; Mendenhall & Oddu, 1985), success in international assignments may be positively influenced by an individual's prior international experience. This is likely to apply to SIEs. There may still be a tendency however, for organisations to consider technical knowledge above other skills that individuals possess. While technical know-how about the role is a crucial factor in deciding whether to offer employment, there may be other skills, traits and capabilities, for example, knowledge of the host country that could be important too. The possession of these skills can either be included in the selection process or developed through training (Black & Gregersen, 1999). The fact SIEs do not generally receive cross-cultural training, as found in this study and other studies means recruiting organisations should pay more attention to skills like host country language ability (Ott & Michailova, 2017) and prior international work experience, especially from the region where the new assignment is going to be (Baruch & Fortenlechner, 2017). For example, experience of previous work in Muslim countries should be a priority consideration for SIEs being recruited for jobs in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, work experience in the Middle East could be an added advantage, for the working norms and Arab culture could be different to other Muslim countries.

Research suggests that personal traits may contribute to people's success in expatriation (Presbitero & Quita, 2017). Besides SIEs being aware of their own psychological strengths and weaknesses, recruitment agencies or employers should devise ways of identifying these capabilities to aid in the recruitment and adjustment process. As Fu et al. (2008) suggest, spotting such traits within SIEs can be crucial in cross-cultural adaptation. With the advancement in technology, recruitment agencies could develop software programmes that give them a good idea about SIE's inner traits that may make them successful in working abroad. Moreover, this technology could act as a filter to reduce failure rate in expatriation.

The current study also explored how the issue of ethnicization (Al Ariss, 2014) permeate through the Saudi cultural arena and how these segmentations affect SIE academics' experiences. The study speculated that white privilege may be ingrained in the Saudi culture, because of the construction of Western whites through postcolonial hegemony (Al Ariss et al., 2014). The status quo in Saudi Arabia in which some expatriates enjoy privileges and others are discriminated against, based on the colour of their skin or types of passports they hold, needs to be addressed. People's skin colour and nationality should not be used as a predictor of their abilities and performance at work.

6.3 Implications for SIEs

The experiences enumerated by these group of SIE academics as they tried to adjust and make sense of their lives in Riyadh can provide insights to some of the issue SIEs can expect to encounter if they decide to expatriate here. The first is that Saudi Arabia has a strict conservative culture, and SIEs working and seeking to relocate here have to be aware about the implications it can have on them. Some expatriates may have the intention of learning the local culture by interacting with the locals. However, as voiced by the participants of this study interaction with the indigenous may not be easy because the Saudi society has more

connection with the family and the tribe than with outsiders (Showail et al., 2013). Moreover, there is a tendency to house expatriates in separate compounds (Jackson & Manderscheid, 2016) which means there are fewer opportunities to meet the locals. Secondly, Saudi businesses have to conform to Shariah Law that guides the time they have to be open for business. For example, they are expected to close during prayer times; about five times in a day. Everyone is expected to respect these norms which may come as surprise to many SIEs. Another implication from this research which SIEs may need to be aware about is the segmented nature of the Saudi Arabia society, where whiteness is privileged (Rodriguez & Ridgway, 2018) and people of other colours are regarded of a lower class. Indeed, data from current study indicate that the pigeon-holing of individuals based on their complexions has made SIEs of colour disinterested in associating with locals outside.

This study findings have implications that are specific to female SIEs. Those intending to work in Saudi Arabia will be able to reflect on the experiences narrated by the female participants of this study and carefully think and plan their relocation. The Saudi Arabian society views women as subordinate to men (Alsubaie & Jones, 2017) because they are expected to stay at home. This assumed societal norms can bear unnecessary stress on the working women, including female expatriates. For example, data from the current study indicate that female managers could not make timely important decisions because they had to consult and involve male managers in their decision making. In addition, females are expected to conform to the country's dress codes. They are expected to wear *abaya* (a long dress) and cover their heads with scarves when outside their homes. This may be problematic for some SIEs who may see changing the way they dress as an affront to their freedom.

6.4 Limitations

The exploratory nature of this study means that it has limitation in its scope and focus. First of all, the limited number of fifteen participants means that the outcome of this study cannot be generalised, and it was not the intention of this study. Indeed, the experiences reported here apply to only a specific group of SIE academics from three HE institutions only, which may mean their experiences of the adjustment phenomenon might be different to other SIEs in other sectors, for example, private companies. The outcome of their experiences may not be applied in other situations. Although researchers like Flyvbjerg (2006) argue that where the context is the same, qualitative case study outcomes can be applied in such situations.

Another limitation of the study is that it was conducted in only one location – Riyadh. Having study cohorts from elsewhere may have produced a different set of more generalisable outcomes. Although the respondents of the study came from different countries, there were fewer participants from neighbouring countries to Saudi Arabia. Having equal numbers of participants from these countries may have resulted in a different outcome. Furthermore, this study could not recruit equal numbers of female and male participants and all the five female respondents came from Western countries. The inclusion of female academics from countries neighbouring Saudi Arabia or from developing countries may have yielded alternative results. However, exploring the experiences of the participants who took part in this research produced a rich result about their lived experiences and what they go through as they adjust to life in a new work environment. It was not the intention of this study to use its outcome as definitive, but rather as a starting point, and to contribute to knowledge about SIE academics' work adjustment. By that token, the outcome of this research can be used as a platform for more research.

There is no perfect methodology choice in qualitative research. The choice of methodology was based on two reasons. The first was to provide an alternative ontological and epistemological paradigm to the mainly positivistic based expatriation literature (McKenna & Richardson, 2016). The second was because of my researcher position that people's experiences are subjective, and these subjectivities cannot be generalised (Thomas, 2017). However, other research methodologies like grounded theory and narrative analysis may have influenced the focus of the analysis and areas to be explored. As previously discussed, the semi-structured interview data was going to be supported by data from qualitative diaries, however, the lack of interest from the participants meant that this data was not produced. As such, although most of the discussion focused on only the participants' current situation and experiences, often they tended to reflect on their previous experiences in different contexts that might have shaped their current thinking. This retrospection was based on memory, which might have been influenced by other experiences they might have undergone throughout their lives. In addition, more interviews rather one per participant might have produced a different set of results. Considering my ability as an aspiring researcher I wonder whether there are themes that I might have missed, or whether the use of other methodologies would have yielded a different outcome.

6.5 Suggestions for future research

This is an exploratory study and often research of this nature has the potential to result in newer studies. First, a longitudinal study regarding issues that affect SIE academics as they adjust to the host country's culture and work environment could provide more insights and generalisability. In a country and region where reliance on an SIE workforce is high, such a study could be useful to better inform policy and practice. Another area of future research could focus on the impact family and spouse can have on employee work adjustment in Saudi Arabia. Evidence from this study suggests that an adjusted family may positively contribute

to the employee's adjustment, however, its exploratory nature means it cannot be generalised. Moreover, other studies have claimed that SIEs with families have better chances of adjusting to life abroad (Froese, 2012; Selmer & Luring, 2010). However, most of these studies were carried out in other countries. For Saudi Arabia, as a country that largely depends on expatriates, a study of this nature is timely. Third, the adjustment of female expatriates in Saudi Arabia needs a more in-depth investigation as females face more challenges than their male counterparts. Fourth, a longitudinal study that examines the attrition rate of SIEs in Saudi Arabia could shed more light on its causes. Consequently, this study could uncover what causes SIEs to leave their posts prematurely. Fifth, the issue of religion and expatriation is heavily under-researched, especially in the Gulf. A study that looks at religion as an incentive for Muslim expatriates to work in Saudi Arabia and how it contributes to work adjustment could be important.

6.6 Reflection on the research journey

As I reflect on my research journey, I feel some of the experiences that were narrated by the research participants had some similarity to my own journey as an SIE. Vivid memories still linger about the day I decided to explore SIE academics' work adjustment. What I did not envisage at the time is how participants who came from the same countries interpreted and coped with the phenomenon of work adjustment differently. What became apparent to me was that individuals situate their experiences through their own unique lenses. Listening and analysing the data made me realise the way people conduct themselves in a particular time may be a product of the environment and those around them. This relates to Pool's (2018) comment that "interpretive phenomenology focuses on the way we are rather than on what we know" (p.246). Although my prior knowledge of being an SIE may have had an influence on how I viewed the subject of the study, I felt the present played a more significant role.

As an SIE academic, who faces adjustment issues on a daily basis, similar to the participants of this study, this research has given me the ability to understand, reflect, and question issues than I previously could not. I view the realities faced by SIEs from different countries through multiple lenses because now I know people's perspectives and experiences may be unique to their personalised context. For example, male and female SIEs who come from the same countries may have different adjustment experiences. Indeed, people working in the same institution may interpret the same situations they face differently. But then I tell myself this is the uniqueness of phenomenology, where people tell their stories in their own ways. In that sense I find myself contemplating upon the different experiences and contextualised interpretations of every individual's unique position.

First, the fact that I positioned myself as a researcher trying to explore the phenomenon of work adjustment did not prevent the participants seeing me as one of them. I empathised with the stories I was hearing and acknowledging their experiences of the situation. Stepping back and just allowing them to tell me how they lived the phenomenon felt like a natural communication. However, there always was an expectation of understanding from the participants; a sense of a nuanced collective construction of meaning (Creswell, 2007). Certainly, as the participants answered the questions during the interview process, there was the anticipation that as an SIE I must be experiencing the issues, too. Henceforth, at times there was a palpable expectation from the interviewees for me to fill some of the gaps. In such circumstances, I had to revert to my epistemic and ontological positioning; should I fully engage or step back? However, being in the culture meant I could not detach myself from what was happening around me, for I believe it influences a person's interpretation of reality (Gill, 2014), thus, not bracketing my thoughts from the researched was something I had to embrace. Moreover, this was necessitated by my contemporaneous living in the

research context. Therefore, the outcome of this study is a collective construction that relates to my experiences and those of the fifteen SIE academics who took part in it.

Second, another enriching experience that fascinated me in the research journey was the way the participants constructed their individual experiences yet shared some similarities. This might be an acknowledgement of the subjectivities of the social world, where people contextually depict their individualized epistemologies through their own knowledge and accrued experiences (van Manen, 1990). The various voices that were expressed may have been influenced by historical, social, and political discourses experienced over time by these individuals. The use of phenomenological ontology as an overarching philosophy as a guide enabled me to position myself as an insider researcher throughout the study process. I understood that my personal situation, for example, my race, colour, gender, and nationality could impact the research. Moreover, I could not see myself putting my experiences and biases about the subject of the study to one side, rather I saw myself as being part of the process. This awareness has not only enabled me to be more reflexive when doing the analysis and interpretation of the data, but throughout the research journey.

Third, during the data collection and analysis, there were instances where I felt more engaged in some participants' experiences. This gave me a sense of being one of them, which enabled them to tell their stories. I felt deeply touched by some of these stories, for example, on race and segregation. One particular interviewee stated that he had to use his assistant who was a native Saudi to get things done, despite the fact he was a consultant clinical psychologist and an assistant professor. He told me that because of the colour of his skin, the administration staff at the hospital where he had a clinic would, at times, not respond to his requests. As far as he was concerned the locals in-charge did not see a difference between him and the many

expatriates from the Indian sub-continent. Hearing experiences of this nature made me empathise and reflect on some of the problems I encountered as an SIE academic. I could feel the deep connection in our epistemologies and how our background defined our ontology of the phenomenon.

Fourth, another aspect that I found intriguing during the fieldwork was that there was a difference in the way participants responded to certain aspects of the interview. Judging by their body language and responses, I felt SIE academics of colour were more guarded in their answers. Comparatively, their white counterparts seemed more open and freer, which could be connected to the issue of white privilege. As Lan (2011) argues, Western whites working in non-white countries convert their whiteness into social and economic capital because they are seen as being a superior race. In the context of this research, it is probable the overt privileges accorded to the Western whites by the HCNs, plus the covert preference they get at the workplace, may have given them the confidence to be more expressive about issues affecting work adjustment. By the same token, the racialised nature of the Gulf society (Rodriguez & Ridgway, 2018), where whiteness is seen as number one in the racial order and blackness at the bottom, may have given them a sense of indispensability and lack of fear of negative consequences from their Saudi employers. Indeed, Sang and Calvard (2019) found that white male Westerners (European, USA) tend to find stability in their work abroad because of the special status conferred upon them. It can thus be argued that academics of colour, who do not get the same preferential status, have to be measured and nuanced in the ways they portray their employers in matters relating to their experiences in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, working and living in such a selective society coupled with the inherent temporary nature (Romanowski & Nasser, 2014) of SIE employment may have made the non-white academics tentative in their answers. As I listened and observed the body language of the

respondents, I pondered over the binary explications from coloured and white SIEs. It is possible that people construct coping mechanisms when experiencing negative social and cultural conditions. Moreover, I started to consider some of my personal experiences of racialisation, and I wondered whether I would have acted in the same way as the academics of colour, possibly concealing what I truly think about the issue of segmentation based on race in the wider Saudi society.

Fifth, Saudi Arabia is a conservative country where the population is separated along gender lines. For example, in educational institutions, there are separate universities or campuses for men and women. This gendered segregation means male and female faculty members hardly meet. When I commenced the fieldwork for this enquiry, however, I thought the expatriates living in Saudi Arabia were not bound by this tradition. I felt confident that getting access to female SIE academics was not going to be a problem because I assumed the tradition of gender separation tradition was meant only for Saudi society. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, my initial optimism proved futile. It therefore makes me wonder whether the difficulty of getting access to female SIE academics is because of the law being applied to everyone or whether the Saudi male guardianship custom (Alsubaie, 2017), where females must seek the permission of their husbands or fathers, may have permeated expatriates' psyche too. Indeed, the issue of male dominance was evident in one of my interviews, in that the guardian of the two female SIEs academics, who was from the USA, sat across the room as I interviewed them. I wondered why this situation was tolerated by the women because in their home countries they might not seek permission to speak to men. Indeed, Sang and Calvard (2019) argue that gendered dominance and hegemonic masculinity has become ingrained in certain countries and that may be why it is accepted as the norm. In the context of this research, it seemed perfectly fine for the Western academics to have a male guardian

with them. This experience may be an example of the way people interpret, situate and adapt their behaviour according to their unique surroundings.

In summary, this research journey has taught me that what we perceive to know about a phenomenon may have an inevitable link to the people we meet and interact with. I have come to realize, however, that every individual may have his/her own interpretation of the experiences they encounter. In that sense, the experiences of the participants of this study have enriched my understanding of the situated nature of work adjustment. As discussed in the past chapters, each individual may have had their own ways of adapting to their environment, but they also shared some similar coping mechanisms, pointing to how people learn from one another and co-construct their experiences. This research has shown that although each individual's circumstance is unique, a common theme is the fluid nature of the adjustment process. Both the newly arrived and the ones who had been there seemed to face adjustment obstacles. This points to the fact that adjustment is an ongoing process which may never end.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Literature review quality assessment tool (Critical Assessment Tool, Hawker *et al.* 2002)

	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor
1. Abstract and title: did they provide a clear description of the study	Structured abstract with full information and clear title	Abstract with most of the information	Inadequate abstract	No abstract
2. Introduction and aims: Was there a good background and clear statement of the aims of the research?	Full but concise background to discussion / study containing up-to-date literature review and highlighting gaps in knowledge. Clear statement of aim AND objectives including research questions.	Some background and literature review. Research questions outlined.	Some background, but no aim / objectives / questions OR Aims / objectives but no adequate background	No mention of aims / objectives, No background or literature review.
3. Method and data: Is the method appropriate and clearly explained?	Method is appropriate and described clearly (e.g. questionnaires included). Clear details of the data collection and recording.	Method appropriate, description could be better. Data described.	Questionable whether method is appropriate. Method described inadequately. Little description of the data.	No mention of method, AND/OR method inappropriate AND/OR no details of data.

	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor
4.Sampling: Was the sampling strategy appropriate to address the aims?	Details (age/gender/race/context) of who was studied and how they were recruited. Why this group was targeted. The sample size was justified for the study. Response rates shown and explained.	Sample size justified. Most information given, but some missing.	Sampling mentioned but few descriptive details.	No details of sample.
5.Data analysis: Was the description of the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Clear description of how analysis was done. Qualitative studies: Descriptions of how themes derived / respondent validation or triangulation Quantitative studies: Reasons for tests selected hypothesis driven / numbers add up / Statistical significance discussed.	Qualitative: Descriptive discussion of analysis Quantitative	Minimal details about analysis	No details of analysis
6.Ethics and bias: Have ethical issues been addressed, and what has necessary ethical approval gained? Has the relationship between researchers and participants been adequately considered?	Ethics: Where necessary, issues of confidentiality, sensitivity, and consent were addressed. Bias: Researcher was reflexive and/or aware of own bias.	Lip service was paid to previous (i.e. these issues were acknowledged)	Brief mention of issues.	No mention of issues.

	Good	Fair	Poor	Very poor
7.Results: is there a clear statement of the findings?	Findings explicit, easy to understand, and in logical progression Tables, if present, are explained in the text Results relate directly to aims Sufficient data are presented to support findings	Findings mentioned but more explanation could be given. Data presented relate directly to results.	Findings presented haphazardly, not explained, and do not progress logically from results.	Findings not mentioned or do not relate to aims.
8.Transferability or generalizability: Are the findings of this study transferrable (generalisable) to a wider population?	Context and setting of the study is described sufficiently to allow comparison with other contexts and settings, plus high score in Sampling question.	Some context and setting described, plus more needed to replicate or compare the study with others, PLUS fair score or higher in Sampling question.	Minimal description of context / setting.	No description of context / setting.
9.Implications and usefulness: How important are these findings to policy and practice?	Contributes something new and/or different in terms of understanding / insight or perspective. Suggests ideas for further research. Suggests implications for policy and/or practice.	Two of the above (state what is missing)	Only one of the above	None of the above.

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

Title of Study

Self-initiated Expatriate Academics in Saudi Arabia and Factors that Influence their Work Adjustment

My name is Farah Muhamad. I am conducting this research as a PhD student in Organizational Health and Wellbeing at the Division of Health Research, Lancaster University: Lancaster, United Kingdom.

What is the study about?

The purpose of this research is to explore the positive and negative factors that influence self-initiated expatriate academic employees adjusting to a new work environment in a foreign country. To achieve this aim data will be collected in two phases. The first part of the study involves the use of paper or electronic diaries; you will choose the method you prefer. The second part of the data collection will be one to one interview with the researcher

Why have I been approached?

You have been approached because you are an expatriate who has independently sought employment abroad. We are inviting you to share your experiences of working abroad.

Do I have to take part?

No. It's completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part in this research. If you do not take part, you do not have to give a reason and no pressure will be put on you to change your mind.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?

If you decide you would like to take part, you will be invited to answer 4 questions in a diary for everyday over a one month period. The set questions in the diary will help you answer about your experiences of working in a new work environment and how you are adjusting to these challenges. Answering these questions will not take more than 15 minutes of your time. You will then be invited for an interview to explore some of the issues raised in the diary. The interview will be one to one with the researcher and is expected to last between 30 -60 minutes.

Will my data be identifiable?

The information you provide is confidential. All the information you provide during this research will be stored securely in a password protected and encrypted laptop accessible to only the researcher. Back up data will be stored securely on a Lancaster University server. The paper diary information will be stored and locked in a cabinet; only the researcher has access to this cabinet. The electronic diary information will be stored in an encrypted and password protected laptop that belongs to the researcher. The researcher's appointed supervisors will have access to scanned copies of the paper and electronic diary data. You will be given a code and pseudonym which will be used throughout this research. Your personal details will never be put with the interview and diary information. The data collected for this study will be stored securely and only the researcher conducting this study and his appointed supervisors will have access to this data:

- The interview data can be withdrawn for up to two weeks after the interview. If you choose to withdraw your interview within this period your diary data will also be

withdrawn. However once the data have been anonymised and incorporated into themes it might not be possible for it to be withdrawn.

- Audio recordings will be transferred to an encrypted and password protected laptop owned by the researcher. Once transcribed the recording will be transferred to the Lancaster University secure server. Audio recordings will be deleted once the PhD has been examined. The transcript information will be destroyed 10 years after the PhD has been examined.
- Copies of diaries and interview transcripts will be kept in a locked cabinet separate from any personal identifying details and accessible to the researcher and appointed supervisors.
- The files on the computer will be encrypted (that is no-one other than the researcher will be able to access them) and the computer itself password protected. This information will be kept until the study is finished. The recorded information will then be destroyed. However written transcripts will be kept for a further 10 years at Lancaster University archives. At the end of this period they will be destroyed
- Some of the information recorded in the diaries may be used as direct quotes in the PhD thesis, and peer reviewed journals, however, you will remain anonymised.
- The typed version of your interview will be made anonymous by removing any identifying information including your name. Anonymised direct quotations from your interview may be used in the reports or publications from the study, so your name will not be attached to them.
- All your personal data will be confidential and will be kept separately from your interview responses.

There are some limits to confidentiality: if what is said in the interview makes me think that you or someone else is at significant risk of harm, I will have to break confidentiality and speak to my supervisors about this. If possible, I will tell you if I have to do this.

What will happen to the results?

The results will be summarised and reported as a PhD thesis and may be submitted for publication in an academic or professional journal like International Journal of Human Resource Management, International Journal of Business and Social Sciences among others.

Are there any risks?

There are no risks anticipated with participating in this study. However, if you experience any distress following participation you are encouraged to inform the researcher and contact the resources provided at the end of this sheet.

Are there any benefits to taking part?

Although you may find participating interesting, there are no direct benefits in taking part. Once the study is finished it could provide useful information about how expatriates adjust to working in a foreign country.

Who has reviewed the project?

This study has been reviewed by the Faculty of Health and Medicine Research Ethics Committee, and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee at Lancaster University.

Where can I obtain further information about the study if I need it?

If you have any questions about the study, please contact the main researcher:

Researcher: Farah Muhamad, Email: f.muhamad@lancaster.ac.uk

Complaints

If you wish to make a complaint or raise concerns about any aspect of this study and do not want to speak to the researcher, you can contact:

Professor Bruce Hollingsworth, Head, Division of Health Research
Tel: (01524) 592154
Title; Email: b.hollingsworth@lancaster.ac.uk
Division of Health Research
Lancaster University
Lancaster
LA1 4YG

If you wish to speak to someone outside Division of Health Research may also contact:

Professor Roger Pickup Tel: +44 (0)1524 593746
Associate Dean for Research Email: r.pickup@lancaster.ac.uk
Faculty of Health and Medicine
(Division of Biomedical and Life Sciences)
Lancaster University
Lancaster
LA1 4YG

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Resources in the event of distress

Should you feel distressed either as a result of taking part, or in the future, you are encouraged to contact your doctor at your local hospital for assistance.

Appendix 3: Recruitment Letter

Dear Participant,

Study Title: Self-initiated Expatriate Academics in Saudi Arabia and Factors that Influence their Work Adjustment

I am sending this letter to invite you to take part in a study exploring the experiences of self-initiated expatriates in Saudi Arabia. The aim of the research is to explore how people employed from abroad get used to working in a new work environment and the factors that influence their adjustment to work. The study has two phases. The first part of the research involves answering questions in a paper or electronic diary about instances that may help/hinder you getting used to your work environment. Answering these questions will not take more than 15 minutes. The second part will be a one to one interview with the researcher and will be around one hour long.

The study has ethical approval from Lancaster University, UK. Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason. The information you give throughout the research process for both the diary and follow up interview will be kept confidential and anonymous. At no time will your personal information be kept with the diary and interview transcripts.

The attached participant's information sheet provides further details about the research.

If you would like to participate in the study, or require further information, please contact me:

f.muhamad@lancaster.ac.uk

Thank you very much for your time and contribution to my PhD research.

Yours Sincerely

Farah Kalmey Muhamad

PhD student Lancaster University, Lancaster, United Kingdom

Appendix 4: Consent Form**Study Title: Self-initiated Expatriate Academics in Saudi Arabia and Factors that Influence their Work Adjustment**

We are asking if you would like to take part in a research project. The study will explore factors that affect people employed from abroad getting used to their new work environment. Before you consent to participating in the study we ask that you read the participant information sheet and mark each box below with your initials if you agree. If you have any questions or queries before signing the consent form please speak to the principal investigator, Farah Muhamad

Please initial each statement

I confirm that I have read the information sheet and fully understand what is expected of me within this study.

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask any questions and to have them answered.

1. I understand that the first part of the research involves filling out a diary, which will be followed by interview

2. I understand that my interview will be audio recorded and then made into an anonymised written transcript.

3. I understand that audio recordings will be kept until the research project has been examined and destroyed after that.

4. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason

5. I understand that interview data can be withdrawn for up to two weeks after the interview and that diary data will be withdrawn too. However once my data have been anonymised and incorporated into themes it might not be possible for it to be withdrawn.

6. I understand that the information from my interview will be pooled with other participants' responses, anonymised and may be published

7. I consent to information and quotations from my interview being used in reports, conferences and training events.

8. I understand that any information I give will remain strictly confidential and anonymous unless it is thought that there is a risk of harm to myself or others, in which case the principal investigator will/may need to share this information with his research supervisors.

9. I consent to Lancaster University keeping written transcriptions of the interview for 10 years after the study has finished.

10. I consent that this information will be shared and discussed with the researcher's supervisors

11. I consent to take part in the above study.

Appendix 5: Semi-structured interview guide

Introduce myself and the research. Speak about confidentiality and anonymity

Questions and Prompts

Please tell me about yourself?

Prompts

- Is this your first job abroad? Which country did you come from?

Why did you decide to work abroad?

Prompts

- Was it because of lack of employment at home?

What helped/hindered you adjust to your new work environment?

Prompts

- Could be experience abroad
- Support from work/colleagues/family

What kind of information did you receive in the hiring process that you think was helpful?

Prompts

- Cultural awareness, about the country, working conditions, working hours etc
- How did that help?

What kind of support do/did you receive from your employer when you came that helped you get used to your working environment?

Prompts

- Was that contractual? Please tell me more
- Did you expect to be supported anyway?

What kind of help do/did you receive outside work that helps/helped you with adjustment process?

Prompts

- Family, local Saudis, fellow expats, neighbours

What kind of support from your colleagues do you think helps/helped in the adjustment process?

What else can you tell me that you think helped/hindered your work adjustment?

Remind confidentiality and anonymity again

Thank you

Appendix 6: Building Themes

Money	Tax free salary - Camilla <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Furaha - John - Muktar Higher pay - Mark <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sumaya - Thomas
Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amina - Belkis - Furaha - Muktar – Mainly for children - Musa – Mainly for children - Shiyam – family (wife)
Experience life in a new culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belkiis - Camilla - Hassan - Kamal - Shiyam
Economic realities in home country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mark – recession of 2008 affected his mother - Nasser – Lack of jobs and less pay - Muktar – Jobs not reliable in home country - Wali - less pay in home country
Family preference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sumaya – her mum preferd Saudi Arabia
Adjustment enablers	
Help	Fellow expatriates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amina- help from work colleagues - Belkis- help from work colleagues - Hassan - Shiyam - Mark - John - Kamal – from work colleagues - Musa - Furaha - Sumaya - Camilla - Shiyam - Wali – support from colleagues - Nasser – from work colleagues e.g Home country nationals at work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belkis Home country nationals outside work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shiyam – local shop owner lent him money - Hassan – help from locals who helped with getting a driving license and banks - Thomas – local facilitated getting bank paperwork - Mark – help from Saudi nationals who studies in Canada - John – helped with how to drive in Riyadh

	From employer
	- Camilla – shopping trips
	- Furaha – shopping trips
	- Sumaya
	- Amina
	- Hassan – given advance money by employer
	- Wali – helped by employer to find accommodation
Prior experience abroad	- Kamal – Worked in Oman, Sri Lanka etc
	- Belkis – Lived and worked in America
	- Thomas – worked in Taiwan, Korea and Jeddah
	- John – Lived in South Korea and UK
	- Mark – Voluntered in Vietnam as a teenager
	- Camilla – Worked in China
	- Hassan - worked in Hong Kong and studied abroad e.g. UK, Singapore
	- Muktar – lived and worked in South Africa and UK
Family	- Musa
	- Belkis -
	- Thomas
	- Hassan
	- Shiyam
Positive personality	- Belkis
	- Amina
	- Kamal
Management support	
Contributors to maladjustment	
Resources	At work
	John – lack of good textbooks
	-Resorce centre
	Kamal - No computer access for 2 weeks
	Muktar – No computer at work first few days.
	Outside work
	Kamal – didn't know where to get water when he arrived
	- Sim card – lack of Iqama
	Musa – promised accommodation not the same
	Nasser – problems with provided accommodation.

Lack of orientation

Work orientation

Sumaya – no orientation. Class poorly behaved.

Furaha – thrown straight into class

Kamal – No work orientation.

Muktar – no support in 1st week. Large classroom sizes.

Nasser – he was given orientation – last teacher to be recruited.

Wali – differences in type of teaching styles btw home country and host country

Cultural orientation

Furaha

Sumaya

Hassan – compares his previous job in Taiwan in relation to cultural orientation

Kamal – did his own orientation online

Hierarchy of treatment

Nationality

Hassan- Says people see him as any other labourer of Indian origin until they see his qualification

Musa – treatment based on nationality

Wali- He says he is discriminated because of his Jordanian nationality.

Skin colour

Mark- he gets treated better because of his skin colour

Thomas

Social norms

Lack of public transport

Amina

Furaha

Belkis

Driving

Musa – finds driving problem because of how the local drive

John

Communication

Local language

Hassan – lack of local languages hampers getting government papers.

Musa – interacting with locals problematic

Belkis – language hampers communicating with locals

Sumaya – No interaction because of language problem

Camilla -

Information in recruitment process

Sumaya- Yeah, I did, I asked women expats in Saudi Arabia, what they had to say, the bad and the good, yeah. So that kind of helped.

Belkis - I didn't receive much at all.... It was a very difficult thing. I felt that I was going in blind

Furaha - Nothing, really. We didn't receive anything like a welcome pack or anything

John – Information in the hiring process was muddled

Mark - Light on information in advance but at the same time like.... Its its an..... kind of obscure thing for me to do to..

Shiyam - Unfortunately the guy that recruited me didn't give me much information about the culture and the country

Sumaya – I got a lot of information, but it was not useful, because most of it wasn't true

Thomas - they didn't give me too much information about it really

Musa – He felt he was coming to place he didn't know about.

Access to government services

Amina

- Complained of female expats not being able to bring their families.

John

- Lack of residence permit hence not being able to open bank account, rent a car etc.

Kamal

-Lack of residence permit – took too long to get one.

Shiyam

- Type of visa wouldn't allow him to bring family