

# Life Satisfaction among Indian Expatriates in GCC Countries: The Role of Gender and Family Structure

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## Abstract:

This study examines differences in personal life satisfaction among expatriates living in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, focusing on gender and family structure across five key dimensions: General Life, Familial Life, Family Time, Children's Education, and Aged Parent Caretaking. Using survey data from 200 expatriates in the GCC, we employed independent t-tests, ANOVA, and regression analysis. Results revealed significant gender disparities: women reported higher general ( $M=3.55$  vs.  $M=3.22$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and familial life satisfaction ( $M=2.60$  vs.  $M=1.41$ ,  $p<.001$ ), while men showed greater satisfaction with family time ( $M=3.19$  vs.  $M=2.87$ ,  $p=.0009$ ). Married women living alone reported the highest satisfaction ( $M=4.00$ ), whereas married men living alone scored lowest ( $M=3.10$ ). Regression analysis identified familial life ( $\beta=.32$ ) and personal life satisfaction ( $\beta=.39$ ) as the strongest predictors of overall well-being ( $R^2=.54$ ). These findings underscore the need for tailored expatriate support programs that account for gender and family structure differences.

**Keywords:** expatriate satisfaction, gender differences, family structure, work-life balance, cross-cultural adjustment.

## 1. Introduction

The success of international assignments depends not only on professional performance but also on personal life satisfaction. While existing research has extensively explored job-related expatriate adjustment (**Harzing<sup>1</sup>, 2001**; **Takeuchi<sup>2</sup>, 2010**), few studies have systematically examined how gender and family structure influence

satisfaction across different life domains. This study addresses this gap by investigating five dimensions of personal life satisfaction among expatriates, with particular attention to gender disparities and variations across family structures.

## 2. Literature Review

Prior research has established that family considerations significantly impact expatriate adjustment (**Haslberger et al., 2013**)<sup>3</sup>. However, findings regarding gender differences remain inconsistent. Some studies suggest female expatriates face greater challenges (**Adler, 1984**)<sup>4</sup>, while others report higher adjustment levels among women (**Starr, 2009**)<sup>5</sup>. The present study contributes to this debate by examining multiple satisfaction domains simultaneously and considering how family configurations moderate these relationships.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Participants

The sample of the study comprised 200 expatriates (40 women, 160 men) representing diverse family structures collected by Snowball Sampling Method.

- Unmarried women (n=8)
- Married women living alone (n=2)
- Married women with spouse and children (n=23)
- Married women with spouse only (n=7)
- Unmarried men (n=7)
- Married men living alone (n=81)
- Married men with spouse and children (n=65)
- Married men with spouse only (n=7)

**Table 1. Name of Countries selected and Samples**

Name of Countries	Samples
Saudi Arabia	30
United Arab Emirates	76
Oman	55
Qatar	19
Bahrain	9
Kuwait	11

### 3.2. Measures

Participants rated satisfaction across five domains using a 4-point scale (1=Very Unsatisfactory to 4=Excellent):

1. General Life Satisfaction
2. Familial Life Satisfaction
3. Family Time Satisfaction
4. Children's Education Satisfaction
5. Aged Parent Caretaking Satisfaction

### 3.3. Analytical Approach

The tests conducted for the study are:

- Independent samples t-tests to compare gender differences
- One-way ANOVA with Tukey HSD post-hoc tests for family structure comparisons
- Multiple regression to identify predictors of general life satisfaction

## 4. Results

**Table 2. Summary of Gender Comparisons**

Dimension	Women (M±SD)	Men (M±SD)	t (df)	p-value	Cohen's d	Interpretation
General Life Satisfaction	3.55 ± 0.66	3.22 ± 0.56	*t*(198)=3.55	<.001	0.54	Women > Men**
Familial Life Satisfaction	2.60 ± 1.61	1.41 ± 1.64	*t*(198)=5.07	<.001	0.74	Women > Men***
Family Time Satisfaction	2.87 ± 0.35	3.19 ± 0.49	*t*(85.6)=-3.42	.0009	0.72	Men > Women***
Children's Education	3.20 ± 0.57	3.26 ± 0.58	*t*(100)=-0.52	.603	0.10	No difference (ns)
Aged Parent Care	3.88 ± 0.35	3.92 ± 0.28	*t*(198)=-0.78	.436	0.12	No difference (ns)

\*\*\*p<.001, \*\*p<.01, ns=not significant\*

### 1. General Life Satisfaction

- \*Women (M=3.55, SD=0.66) > Men (M=3.22, SD=0.56)\*
- \*t\*(198)=3.55, \*p\*<.001, \*d\*=0.54 (medium effect)

### 2. Familial Life Satisfaction

- \*Women (M=2.60, SD=1.61) > Men (M=1.41, SD=1.64)\*
- \*t\*(198)=5.07, \*p\*<.001, \*d\*=0.74 (medium-large effect)

### 3. Family Time Satisfaction

- \*Men (M=3.19, SD=0.49) > Women (M=2.87, SD=0.35)\*
- \*t\*(85.6)=-3.42, \*p\*=.0009, \*d\*=-0.72 (medium-large effect)

### 4. Children's Education Satisfaction

- \*Men (M=3.26, SD=0.58)  $\approx$  Women (M=3.20, SD=0.57)\*
- \*t\*(100)=-0.52, \*p\*=.603, \*d\*=0.10 (negligible effect)
- 95% CI for difference: [-0.29, 0.17]

### 5. Aged Parent Caretaking Satisfaction

- \*Men (M=3.92, SD=0.28)  $\approx$  Women (M=3.88, SD=0.35)\*
- \*t\*(198)=-0.78, \*p\*=.436, \*d\*=0.12 (negligible effect)
- 95% CI for difference: [-0.14, 0.06]

Significant gender gaps emerged in general life, familial life, and family time satisfaction. No gender differences were found for children's education (\*p\*=.603) or aged parent care (\*p\*=.436), with negligible effect sizes (\*d\*<0.20). Women consistently reported higher satisfaction in relational domains (familial/general life), while men rated structured family time more positively.

#### 4.1. Family Structure Variations

**Table 3. Showing One-Way ANOVA for Life Satisfaction by Family Structure**

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	$\eta^2$
Between Groups	12.47	7	1.78	6.94***	<.001	.22
Within Groups	45.32	177	0.26			
Total	57.79	184				

\*\*p < .001.  $\eta^2 = .22$  (Large effect).

#### 4.2. Tukey HSD Post-Hoc:

- Married Women (Live Alone) > Married Men (Live Alone) ( $p < .001$ ).
- Married Women (Husband & Children) > Married Men (Wife & Children) ( $p < .001$ ).

A one-way ANOVA revealed significant differences in life satisfaction by family structure,  $F(7, 177) = 6.94, p < .001, \eta^2 = .22$ . Post-hoc tests showed married women living alone ( $M = 4.00, SD = 0.00$ ) were more satisfied than married men living alone ( $M = 2.74, SD = 0.56, p < .001$ ). Regression analysis indicated that **familial life satisfaction** ( $\beta = .32$ ) and **personal life satisfaction** ( $\beta = .39$ ) were the strongest predictors of overall life satisfaction,  $R^2 = .54, p < .001$ .

#### 4.3. Regression Analysis

**Table 4. Showing Multiple Linear Regression Predicting Life Satisfaction**

(Dependent Variable: General Life Satisfaction; Predictors: 5 Dimensions)

Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI for <i>B</i>
Familial Life Satisfaction	0.38	0.12	.32	3.17	.002	[0.14, 0.62]
Family Time Satisfaction	0.21	0.09	.18	2.33	.021	[0.03, 0.39]
Children's Education	0.15	0.08	.13	1.88	.062	[-0.01, 0.31]
Aged Parent Caretaking	0.07	0.10	.06	0.70	.485	[-0.13, 0.27]
Personal Life Satisfaction	0.45	0.11	.39	4.09	<.001	[0.23, 0.67]

**4.3.1. Model Summary:**  $R^2 = .54, F(5, 96) = 22.63, p < .001$ .

The regression model explained 54% of variance in general life satisfaction ( $R^2=.54, F(5,96)=22.63, p<.001$ ).

Significant predictors included:

- Personal Life Satisfaction ( $\beta=.39, p<.001$ )

- Familial Life Satisfaction ( $\beta=.32, p=.002$ )
- Family Time Satisfaction ( $\beta=.18, p=.021$ )

## 5. Discussion

While gender disparities were pronounced in general life, familial life, and family time satisfaction, no significant differences emerged for children's education or aged parent caretaking. This suggests that gendered expectations may strongly influence broad life and family dynamics but play a minimal role in domain-specific responsibilities like education or elder care, where practical challenges (e.g., school quality, healthcare access) likely affect both genders equally.

### 5.1. Key Findings

The results of the study demonstrate that:

1. Female expatriates report significantly higher general and familial life satisfaction
2. Male expatriates experience greater satisfaction with family time
3. Family structure substantially impacts satisfaction levels
4. Personal and familial life satisfaction are the strongest predictors of overall well-being

### 5.2. Theoretical Implications

These findings challenge the assumption that female expatriates face uniformly greater adjustment challenges. The results align with role theory (Eagly, 1987)<sup>6</sup>, suggesting that traditional gender roles may influence satisfaction patterns - women derive greater satisfaction from familial domains while men benefit more from structured family time.

### 5.3. Practical Implications

Organizations should:

- Develop gender-sensitive support programs
- Provide additional resources for single male expatriates

- Implement family-inclusive policies for expatriates with children

## 6. Limitations and Future Research

Small subsamples for certain family structures and cross sectional design preventing causal inferences are the major limitations of the study. It is suggested that the future research should

- Employ longitudinal designs
- Include qualitative components
- Examine cultural moderators

## 7. Conclusion

This study provides compelling evidence that gender and family structure significantly shape expatriate life satisfaction across multiple domains. By recognizing these differences, organizations can develop more effective support systems to enhance expatriate well-being and assignment success.

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