

Chapter 22

Does Justice Climate Prevent MENA Female Self-Initiated Expatriates to Quit Their Companies? The Mediating Effect of Cross-Cultural Resilience

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ABSTRACT

This chapter builds on social identity and conservation of resources theories to understand how perceived overall justice (POJ) reduces turnover intention among female self-initiated expatriates under the effect of cross-cultural resilience (CCR). A sample of 123 women expatriates from Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries, working in Saudi Arabia, participated in an online survey. Results were analyzed using a statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) tool to test the hypothesis regarding proposed associations. Findings show that a POJ climate reduces intention to stay among female expatriates. Furthermore, this relationship is fully mediated by CCR. This chapter offers evidence that fair policies must be cultivated and developed to retain highly skilled expatriates during turbulent times. A fair climate offers more protection for expatriates, enhances resiliency levels, and encourages them to stay in the host organizations.

INTRODUCTION

After the Arab Spring, self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) from countries like Tunisia and Egypt fled their homes in search of better living conditions in Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) countries like Saudi Arabia. This wave of expatriation impacted female cohorts, although the topic is largely neglected in

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expatriation literature (Bastida, 2018; David et al., 2021). Those female expats are “self-initiated” because they chose to pursue international careers independent from their home organization (Alshahrani, 2022; Andresen et al., 2020; Harry et al., 2019).

In their host countries, highly skilled talents face challenges related to international assignments (Amari et al., 2022; Chen & Hong, 2016; Crowley-Henry et al., 2018; Davies et al., 2019; Harry et al., 2017). One challenge is the indigenization of human resources (HR) policies in GCC countries. For example, Saudi Arabia established an issue that expats should view as a risk to repatriation (Amari et al., 2021). This indigenization of HR policies may result in social exclusion and discrimination in the workplace (Amari et al., 2021; Stoermer et al., 2017), making female expats feel more anxious and frustrated about their employability (France et al., 2019). This situation is accentuated by COVID-19 circumstances and high levels of uncertainty (Maley et al., 2020), affecting overall well-being and mental health (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Godinic et al., 2020; Mousa & Samara, 2022). Feelings can lead to high levels of turnover (Marinov & Marinova, 2021; Davis et al., 2021). Hence, female self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) resemble refugees (Richardson & McKenna, 2006) because they feel torn between leaving or staying in the host countries. Given this, retaining highly skilled expats is a critical issue faced by host organizations as they develop strategies to improve female expats’ overall well-being in times of global crises.

To maintain highly talented individuals, it is necessary to create a healthy vocational climate where the cross-cultural workforce feels like full-fledged stakeholders. Fair and just values are prominent work resources that affect expats’ behaviors and attitudes, including intent to leave. Perceived overall justice (POJ) could be defined as a global perception of fair judgements inspired by an individual’s experiences or the experience of others (Aryee et al., 2015). A just climate is a comfortable psychological workplace in which expats feel more confident and have more visibility regarding uncertain futures (Kim et al., 2017). Evidence highlights that a just climate enhances trust among employees toward leaders, as well as reduces turnover rates (Aryee et al., 2015; Johnson & Lord, 2010; Mulki et al., 2008; Simha & Pandey, 2020). Nevertheless, it remains unclear what exactly causes the effects of POJ on employees’ intention to leave (Wang et al., 2020). In this vein, the social identity theory (SIT) is introduced in this chapter as a valuable theoretical framework to better explain how POJ is associated negatively to intention to leave. According to this theory, expats with high levels of self-identity drives largely from just and fair climates, would better trust their management. These factors would, in turn, deter them from leaving their host organizations (Jiang et al., 2019; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Van Dick et al. 2004). Hence, this chapter suggests that POJ can help female SIEs develop a positive bond with their host company to maintain their membership even in hardship (e.g., skills shortage, pandemics, or economic crises).

While facing several challenges stemming from the context of high adversity that contributes to their psychological discomfort (Amari et al., 2022; He et al., 2019) and can lead to high turnover (Andresen et al., 2020), resilience is a fundamental positive psychological resource for expatriates (Andresen et al., 2020; Davies et al., 2019; He et al., 2019; Kuntz et al., 2019; Luthans et al., 2007; Milosevic et al., 2017). Indeed, in the cross-cultural context, resilience helps employees adopt proactive skills and tactics to maintain their place within host organizations, especially in critical circumstances (Ibrahim & Amari, 2018; Kraimer & Wayne, 2014; Prayag et al., 2020). Scholars underline that those positive psychological resources like resilience reduce turnover intentions (Amari et al., 2022; Gangi & Johnson, 2020; Gom et al., 2021; Gupta & Shaheen, 2017). Nevertheless, the resilience of expats receives limited attention in the context of high uncertainty (Davies et al., 2019; Tonkin et al., 2018). Moreover, female workers have been identified as particularly vulnerable due to higher baseline levels of anxiety and depression (Hasin et al., 2018; Kumar et al., 2021). In this vein, adopting resilience characteristics contributes to

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