

**Impact of spousal work restrictions and number of dependents on expatriates' work life
and overall life satisfaction**

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Abstract

Purpose

Our understanding of the challenges and the broader role of spouses of expatriates is extremely limited. The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of spousal work restrictions and number of dependents on expatriates' work life and overall life satisfaction using qualitative and quantitative analyses

Design

Data were collected from 416 Indian informational technology professionals working in USA. Hypothesized conditional process models were analyzed using the PROCESS tools.

Findings

Spousal work restrictions and number of dependents created complications in personal life of expatriates, which interfered with their work life resulting in lower overall life satisfaction. We identified six core classes of challenges faced by spouses of expatriates: financial issues, frustration, loss of respect/low confidence, boredom, social isolation, and domestic tension. Older expatriates were able to better manage the responsibilities associated with number of dependents. More importantly, unlike adjustment, the issues associated with spouse work restrictions did not seem to improve with age or length of time in the USA.

Originality

Although media outlets have from time to time brought to light the issues faced by spouses of expatriates, the present study provides more credible and complete findings by conducting a qualitative and quantitative research study. To our knowledge this is the first study that has investigated the complications experienced by expatriates' due to the work restriction (more specifically, visa related) issues faced by the spouses of these expatriates. Our mixed method approach also helps to provide a more comprehensive picture of these complications.

“An English lady who has been accustomed to the performance of various household duties is surprised, on her becoming an inmate or the mistress of a dwelling in India, to find that there is nothing for her to do-or, at least, that there is nothing which is not done for her by the domestics of the house. Yielding to the influences of climate, and the evil suggestions of domestics, who are ever about her person, she falls a victim to indolent habits and coarse indulgences- the sylphlike form and delicate features which distinguished the youth of her arrival, are rapidly exchanged for an exterior of which obesity and swarthinness are the prominent characteristics, and the bottle and the hookah become frequent and offensive companions” (An Old Resident, 1847, p. 148 – reflections from English officers for the East India Company).

“He had a life that used him up, while I sat around, useless, plunging further every day into an existential crisis: What was the point of my life?”
(Duncombe, 2012, p.35- reflections from American spouse living in East Africa).

As the quotes above illustrate, the challenges faced by spouses of expatriate workers are not the new phenomenon they often seem to be. Despite this reality, our understanding of these challenges and the broader role of spouses of expatriates is extremely limited. Although expatriation is increasingly common in recent times given the global landscape of work, these assignments continue to be challenging for expatriates and their families (Shaffer and Harrison, 2001). Adjustment of spouses (e.g. Black and Gregersen, 1991) and children (e.g. Harvey, 1985) to new environment have shown to play a critical role in expatriates’

adjustment and decision to withdraw from an international assignment (Shaffer and Harrison, 1998; Takeuchi, 2010).

Indeed, spouse dissatisfaction and family (spouse and children) related issues has been one of the top reasons for expatriate assignment failure (GMAC and NFTC, 2005; Takeuchi, 2010). Such failures can lead to direct and indirect losses to organizations, and to the employees and families affected by such assignments. At an organizational level, direct losses associated with failed expatriate assignments are estimated to range from US\$250,000 to US\$1M (Nowak and Linder, 2016) and indirect losses, which are more difficult to estimate, include costs associated with reduction in productivity, market share, and competitive position, damage to corporate image and reputation, and diminished employee self-esteem (Shaffer and Harrison, 1998). According to The Permits Foundation (2012), international assignments were turned down due to partner employment concerns in 51 percent of the organizations surveyed and in a sample of 3300 expatriate partners, 22 percent of international assignees had turned down an assignment and 7 percent had terminated the assignment early due to partner's career concerns. Thus, it seems that organizations and researchers have largely overlooked the impact of spousal issues on expatriate assignment (Cole, 2011); it is crucial to consider these issues to save both direct and indirect losses.

To address these concerns, the present study was designed to examine the impact of personal characteristics (spousal work restrictions and number of dependents) on expatriates' work life and overall life satisfaction (see Figure 1). Given the importance of age and length of time (in years) in the expatriate literature, we also hypothesized age and length of time in the USA moderate the relationship between personal characteristics, PLIW (personal life interfering work) and overall life satisfaction. We did this using a mixed method approach that enabled us to identify the challenges faced by spouses of expatriates using quantitative and qualitative survey responses. Our findings improve our understanding of the spillover

effect linking spousal challenges and number of dependents on expatriates' work life and overall life satisfaction. Although media outlets have from time to time brought to light the issues faced by spouses of expatriates, the present study provides more credible and complete findings by conducting a qualitative and quantitative research study. To our knowledge this is the first study that has investigated the complications experienced by expatriates' due to the work restriction (more specifically, visa related) issues faced by the spouses of these expatriates. Our mixed method approach also helps to provide a more comprehensive picture of these complications.

In the next section, we review the literature to summarize and evaluate the current standing of these personal issues in the expatriate domain.

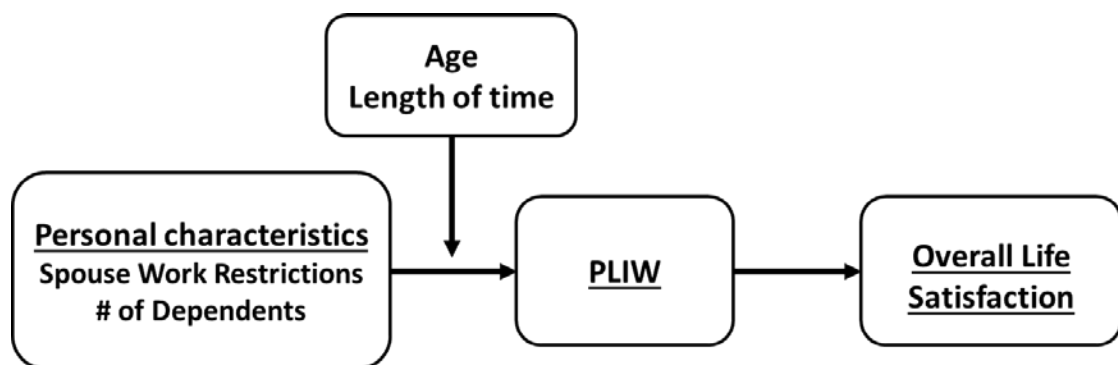


Figure 1. Representation of hypothesized relationships among study variables

Personal characteristics

Nuclear family members (spouse and children) form the essential part of expatriates' personal life. The family of expatriates relocating to the host country may need to learn new language, adapt to the new cultural norms and build new social networks. Due to the challenges associated with spouse and children in the host country (e.g. Takeuchi, 2010), we chose spouse work restriction and number of dependents to be the key personal characteristics affecting expatriates' personal life.

Although the focus of the present study is on work restrictions experienced by spouses of expatriates, within the broad body of expatriation literature this type of spousal limitation is more generally studied under the umbrella construct of *trailing spouse phenomenon* (McNulty, 2012) and explained in the context of dual-career expatriate situations (Harvey, 1998). According to McNulty (2012, p. 420), “the trailing spouse has no official employment status with an MNC but is nonetheless greatly affected by its expatriate policies and practices”. Over the years, research on family migration has shown couples to give priority to men’s rather than women’s career and economic progress (e.g. Brandén, 2014). This has led to men taking up the *lead migrant role* and women choosing *the trailing spouse* or *tied mover role* resulting in women losing their employment (Brandén *et al.*, 2018). However, in recent years research has shown that couples will more likely move with woman’s career if they possess egalitarian attitudes or their behaviour is more egalitarian in various aspects of life (e.g. Brandén, 2014). Also, some researchers believe that lack of studies focusing on male trailing spouse indicate that spousal issues could be more serious in case of men (Selmer and Leung, 2003).

The mobility of expatriates can have a negative impact on partners’ work and personal life. In a study of 264 trailing spouses, McNulty (2012) found trailing spouses to suffer from feelings of isolation, frustration, disappointment and anger during international assignments. Interruptions to the careers of spouses have been shown to result in loss of power, isolation, identity and self-worth which may have spillover effects on personal life (Brown, 2008). These consequences may also lead to refusal of international assignments, marital stress, financial issues, failure of expatriate assignment, repatriation, and re-engagement issues due to spouses’ long absence from work (Haslberger and Brewster, 2008).

On a related line of inquiry, (Andreason, 2008) argued that expatriates and their spouses have different relocation experiences. Expatriates are often provided with pre-

departure training that may help them interact and adjust to the new work environment, whereas the trailing spouses may have to interact with local people and conduct daily activities without such help (Punnett, 1997). Furthermore, expatriates have the opportunity to interact with their colleagues and spend significant time at work in the new host country, while trailing spouses (who may not be able to secure a job in the host country) may have to spend more time alone or interact with host country neighbors who are not necessarily accustomed to socializing with expatriates (Punnett, 1997). Therefore, scholars in the expatriate field have emphasised the importance of training trailing spouses to help them adjust to host country environment (e.g. Vogel *et al.*, 2008).

In addition to spouse as dependents or trailing spouse, about half of the expatriates sent on international assignments are accompanied by children (GMAC, 2006). Along with spouses having issues with work restrictions, children of expatriates may also have difficulties adjusting to the foreign culture. According to Haslberger and Brewster (2008) children may face issue relating to new schooling system in the new country which may use different language of instruction and have a different curriculum. These demands that children face could negatively impact expatriates' adjustment and play important role in expatriates' willingness to stay in the host country. In some instances, expatriates may choose to continue a dissatisfying job to avoid disrupting their children's education (Shaffer and Harrison, 1998).

Furthermore, organizations are paying less attention to developing professional and social skills necessary for the trailing spouse to create a meaningful life in the host country (Anderson, 2005) and in general providing family support to expatriates. A survey conducted by Cartus and Primacy (2010) showed that 196 organizations in North America, Europe, and Asia lacked interest in improving spouse and family assistance (i.e., only 13 percent of the organizations making it a priority, down from 19 percent in 2007).

Overall, researchers and practitioners have paid less attention to these personal issues faced by expatriates although spouse dissatisfaction and family (including spouse and children) issues have been one of the main reasons for assignment failure.

Spouse work restrictions, PLIW, and Overall life satisfaction

For the present study, we focused in on one specific population of expatriates. There has developed a domestic shortage of software-related skills within the United States of America (USA) and large numbers of technical positions have been filled by skilled Indian expatriates who can provide these skills in the American computing and technology industry (Upadhyaya and Vasavi, 2006). The information technology (IT) industry in the USA is estimated to represent more than a quarter of the \$3.8 trillion global IT market (SelectUSA, 2015). Also, it is estimated around 411,000 USA jobs are supported by the Indian IT industry and 300,000 IT jobs are taken by USA nationals and green card holders (BusinessLine, 2016). Indian citizens are top recipients of H1-B visas (H1-B visa allows American organizations to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations) accounting for 74 percent of the 345,000 petitions approved by United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (Migration Policy Institute, 2017).

Apart from adjusting to cultural differences in the USA, spouses of Indian expatriates face the additional challenge of work restrictions. Under the Obama presidential administration, spouses (on H4 dependent visa- visa issued to dependents; spouse and children) of expatriates on working visa H-1B visa (with I-140 approved) were granted work permits in the year 2015. More recently, however, under the Trump presidential administration, USCIS is planning to reverse the 2015 final rule that granted eligibility and cancel the work permit of dependent spouses. According to Silicon Valley-based FWD.US (founded by top IT companies like Facebook, Google and Microsoft), annulling this rule would remove tens of thousands of people from the American workforce. This in turn, could

devastate many families and dramatically hurt the American economy (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 2018).

Based on this new eligibility rule, it is estimated around 100,000 spouses of H-1B visa holders will lose their jobs, with 93 percent of these spouses being women from India (Outlook, 2018) who held successful jobs and often advanced degrees in their native country before coming to the USA. In some instances, these women are more qualified than their expatriate working partner (Moneycontrol, 2018). Silicon Valley-based FWD.US also argued that these individuals financially contribute to their households and communities and pay taxes on their wages (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 2018). Thus, there are many likely negative ripple effects associated with this policy change.

We are concerned that policy changes like this one are often made in the absence of complete information that might help policy makers better understand the true breadth of likely consequences. The data for the present study were collected in the year 2014, when dependent spouse of H-1B expatriates were similarly not allowed to work (i.e., pre-Obama era policy changes noted in the preceding paragraphs). As such, these data are particularly relevant to the impending situation that is likely to unfold with the recent policy changes. In all honesty, we anticipate the situation that will develop in coming years will be more critical than in 2014, as many expatriate families who were temporarily benefited by the Obama administration's immigration policies may have, in this time, bought a home or started their own businesses, which they may soon have to forgo if spousal work permits are cancelled.

It is also important to note that the unpredictability of these impending changes will not only cause financial strain, but is already also causing psychological burden on families, particularly the spouses of expatriates in these families. Furthermore, cancelling work permits for spouses could negatively affect business operations for major IT companies. This assertion is supported by the recent decision of key technology industry group The

Information Technology Industry Council (ITI) (which represents 60 of the world's largest tech companies including: Amazon, Apple, Facebook, Google, IBM, Intel, Microsoft, Samsung, Toshiba, Toyota, and Qualcomm) to join forces against the Trump administration's plan to cancel work permits for spouses of highly skilled H-1B workers (Chudnovsky Law, 2018).

Setting aside these legal and political complexities, the question can also be asked of why immigration and expatriation happens, even when spouses of expatriates are aware that these types of visa restrictions are a real possibility? The answer for many Indian expatriates is, in part, due to traditional gender- and marital role expectations. India is a patriarchal society and this traditional mindset is believed to have led spouses of expatriates living across Asia, Europe, North America and Australia to place more importance to their partners' careers than their own (Gupta *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, wives of Indian expatriates may feel obligated to accompany their working spouses on international assignments.

In recent years, however, there has been an increase in employment of women and dual career couples in India (e.g., Rajadhyaksha and Velgach, 2009). When these types of arrangements are affected by an expatriate assignment, the woman in the relationship typically is expected to sacrifice her career to accompany her partner. The inability of "trailing spouses" to continue their career may heighten the spillover of tension interfering in the work role of expatriates (Harvey and Buckley, 1998). With these considerations in mind, we hypothesized,

H1: Spousal work restrictions result in personal life interfering in expatriates' work roles, which in turn negatively affects expatriates' overall life satisfaction.

Number of dependents, PLIW, and Overall life satisfaction

Besides dependent spouses negatively impacting expatriates' wellbeing as discussed in the previous section, challenges faced by children in the new country can also negatively affect expatriates' personal life. Cultural differences experienced by expatriate parents and their children can function as a source of conflict in expatriates' personal life. Nonwork conflicts between American parents and adolescents mostly occurred over doing chores, getting along with siblings, regulating activities, homework, and appearances (Smetana, 1989). In contrast, nonwork conflicts within ethnic minority communities are often due to different rates of acculturation, defined as "the extent to which individuals have maintained their culture of origin or adapted to the larger society" (Phinney, 1996, p. 921), between foreign born parents and their American-raised children (e.g. Ying, 1998). Children of foreign-born parents tend to acculturate faster to the dominant culture when compared to their parents which can lead to conflict in families (Vega *et al.*, 1995). Research has shown that expatriate parents have had difficulty in raising their children in "two cultures" (Nah, 1993). Foreign born parents also have had to adapt to the host country's lifestyle to be successful in school and society (e.g., Ying, 1998). These issues have been particularly noted within Asian Indian populations (Dasgupta, 1998).

Children of expatriates may face issues relating to identity formation, social and educational disruptions (e.g. Borstorff *et al.*, 1997; Harvey, 1985). Increase in family responsibilities has shown to be positively associated with expatriates' satisfaction and adjustment. In general, based on human capital and role theories, individuals with more children experienced more family-work conflict and decreased job satisfaction (Netemeyer *et al.*, 1996). Expatriates with larger family responsibilities may spend more time and effort in their personal life with spouse and children which may result in spending less time at work (Shaffer and Harrison, 1998). Based on this perspective we hypothesized,

H2: The number of dependents an expatriate supports is positively associated with personal life interfering in expatriates' work roles, which in turn is negatively associated with expatriates' overall life satisfaction.

Moderating role of Age and Length of time in the USA

Demographic factors such as age and length of time (in years) have been shown to play a crucial role in explaining cross-cultural adaptation and job performance in expatriates (e.g. Selmer, 2001; Selmer and Luring, 2014). Older expatriates were more adjusted to general facets of the host country (Church, 1982) and have shown to possess higher emotional stability (Van Der Zee and Brinkmann, 2004), and higher cultural empathy (Peltokorpi and Froese, 2012). Previous research has shown age to be positively associated with managerial performance (which included, expatriates' ability to build and maintain morale of subsidiary, to maintain good relationship with host country nationals, to supervise and develop host country national subordinate) (Selmer *et al.*, 2009). According to Selmer and Luring (2011) older expatriate academics (generally with higher publication record, visibility, contacts and salary level) were more financially secured than younger colleagues and as a result they were less concerned with financial gain from their work. Also, younger expatriates were more concerned with their careers than older expatriates (Selmer *et al.*, 2011).

Length of time in the host country has shown to be positively related to general adjustment, interaction adjustment, and work adjustment (Selmer *et al.*, 2014). Also, expatriates who spent longer time in the host country were more inclined to remain on the international assignment (Caligiuri, 1997). Length of time spent in the host country has been linked to expatriate adjustment through increased opportunities for social learning (Black and Mendenhall, 1991) and uncertainty reduction (Black *et al.*, 1991). More time spent in the host country helped expatriates to learn the language, and to value other cultures (Yamazaki and

Kayes, 2004). Previous research has shown that expatriate managers who spent more time in the USA were more inclined towards learning through active experimentation than reflective observation (Yamazaki and Kayes, 2007). Longer time spent on international assignment has helped expatriates acquire appropriate work behaviors (Bandura, 1977) and develop successful working relationship with peers, which in turn may enhance job satisfaction (Takeuchi *et al.*, 2005). Overtime expatriates also develop larger repertoire of coping strategies based on the past good and bad experiences (Sanchez *et al.*, 2000).

Based on these relationships we expect older expatriates to possess the financial ability and professional stability to manage challenges associated with spouse work restrictions and number of dependents. Similarly, expatriates who have spent greater amount of time in the USA may have developed certain coping mechanisms to deal with spouse work restrictions and manage larger families. Also, when expatriates stay for a longer time in the USA, their work visa (H1-B visa) may be processed for green card, which in turn may result in them being granted citizenship. This change of visa status may help spouses of expatriates to have the eligibility to work, eventually reducing conflict and improving the overall life satisfaction of expatriates. Hence, we hypothesized,

H3: Expatriates' (a) age and (b) length of time in the USA weaken (i.e., moderate) the strength of the mediational relationships linking spouse work restriction to overall life satisfaction, through PLIW.

H4: Expatriates' (a) age and (b) length of time in the USA weaken (i.e., moderate) the strength of the mediational relationships linking number of dependents to overall life satisfaction, through PLIW.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The participants for this study were Indian expatriates working in the IT industry in the USA as consultants, managers, analysts, developers, quality assurance engineers, technical support engineers and C-level executives. The members of this population were born in India and expatriated to the USA as adults (at least 18 years old). The final overall sample consisted of 416 individuals (gathered as part of a larger study of Indian expatriates) who responded to the majority of survey questions. Of these individuals, 325 (78.1%) were male (265 married and 58 single) and 90 (21.6%) were female participants (72 married and 16 single). We contacted approximately 1800 Indian expatriates to participate in this research. Purposive sampling took place at the NATA (North American Telugu Association, Indo-American organization of Telugus from North America which was founded in 1977 in New York) which was held in Atlanta, where names, occupation, job title, email address, and phone numbers was collected for potential participants who met the inclusion criteria. Additional participants were solicited via social networking and through relevant professional association membership lists. Also, participants from Kannada Koota (North American Kannada Association, Indo-American organization of Kannadigas) working in the USA IT industry were recruited to participate in the survey. Participants were asked to respond to an internet-based survey composed targeted measures detailed in this section.

Measures

Spousal work restrictions. Participants were asked to answer a survey question “If you are married, have limited work opportunities for your spouse (due to dependent visa) created complications in your nonwork (outside of work) life?” If the answer to this question was “Yes”, the participants were given the opportunity to provide an open-ended explanation. Options “No” and “Yes” were coded as “1” and “2” respectively.

Personal life interference with work (PLIW) and Overall life satisfaction. PLIW measured with Fisher *et al.* (2009) six-item scale. Participants responded to the items on this scale along a five-point scale with higher scores indicating higher levels of interference (Cronbach's alpha = .89). Overall life satisfaction was measured using the seven-item scale by Pavot *et al.* (1991). Participants responded to these items on a seven-point scale, such that higher scores indicate higher overall satisfaction (Cronbach's alpha = .88).

Results

Descriptive statistics (Table 1) were generated with the SPSS package (v22) and the more complex, hypothesized conditional process model was analysed using the PROCESS computational tool for SPSS (Hayes, 2013). Demographic information such as age, gender, number of dependents, marital status and years of experience in the USA were included in the analyses. We tested Hypothesis 1 by using a simple mediation model (PROCESS Model 4; Hayes, 2013) linking spousal work restriction to overall life satisfaction via PLIW. Results from this analysis supported the hypothesis, in that spousal work restriction relationship with overall life satisfaction was fully conditioned (mediated) by individuals' PLIW ($\beta = -.075, p < .05$) (Table 2). Empirically, this shows that spousal work restrictions negatively affected expatriate's work role and in turn overall life satisfaction. Therefore Hypothesis 1 was supported.

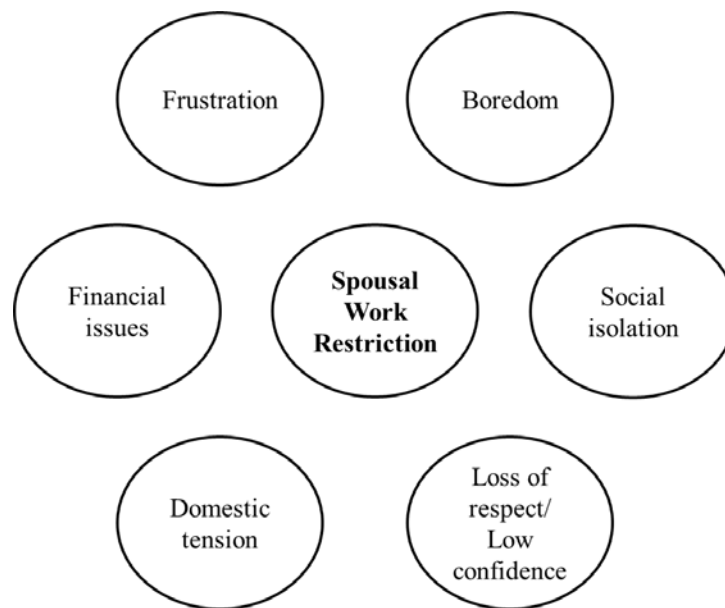


Figure 2. Issues faced due to spousal work restriction

This statistically supported finding was corroborated by the qualitative responses participants provided to the follow-up survey question that asked participants to explain the complications in their nonwork/personal life due to visa restrictions. From these qualitative data, we identified six key challenges faced by spouses of expatriates: financial issues, frustration, loss of respect/low confidence, boredom, social isolation and domestic tension (as shown in Figure 2).

Some participants mentioned that their wives had to sit idle at home due to visa restrictions, which resulted in *boredom*:

“Dependent Visa does not allow my spouse to work whereas she used to work in India. Hence sitting idle does create complications”; “Keeping spouse busy or occupied is a challenge”; “Have to spend more time with the spouse to make her feel comfortable in USA”; “Looking for other opportunities so that my wife can accomplish something without sitting idle, so there is lot of planning and patience that is essential to keep her happy”; “Wife's bored, doesn't have friends here and feels down after a while.”

There were also participants who reported that their wives faced *social isolation* due to work restrictions. When wives of expatriates are given the opportunity to work, it helps them to culturally adapt to new place by creating social networks and interacting with local people:

“My wife used to work in India but due to her status in USA, she was not able to work and was restricted to home making only, which resulted in some mental dissatisfaction and other issues”; “Work opportunities and socializing exposure is important for spouse as well. It would be difficult for them to understand the outside environment”; “My wife is on dependent visa and is on 'house arrest' for last 5 years which makes it difficult for her to get exposed to 'American' environment, work culture, social life & social interactions. For a person who was working in India and came to US thinking big, her 'American Dream' has been anything but a disappointment.”

Many participants also mentioned feeling burdened by having to be the single-earner for their household as an expatriate which led to *financial issues*:

“The place where I live is very expensive, it would be good if both of us work for financial stability”; “Jus[t] the financial concerns....had she been working, it would be easier for me to pay rent”; “Spouse has to study to get work permit, this would be challenging for families with kids.”

Participants also mentioned that their spouses felt *frustrated* due to not being able to further their careers:

“Spouse is feeling restless to do something”; “Spouse cannot work on dependent visa. Very unfair to her, so going back to India”; “My wife was working in India for 7/8 years and always enjoyed her work. It's really frustrating to be an MBA and forced to be a housewife”; “My wife is frustrated that she is unable to further her career”

There were many participants who reported that they faced *domestic tension* due to their wives' career restrictions:

“Views mismatch, fights, disturbances, financial issues, spouse feels complex in mixing with working spouses of friends, life style changes”; “We went through several periods of domestic tensions due to unhappiness to my wife. Also, the expense related to getting through graduate school added to the tensions”

Some participants also noted that their wives suffered from *loss of respect* and *low confidence* levels:

“My wife feels like she doesn't get due respect among American neighbors who don't understand the Visa limitations for work”; “The dependent visa situation and significant delay we had in getting the green card almost destroyed my professional wife's confidence to such an extent its now impossible to imagine a job leave alone a career”

There were also participants who reported that their wives were highly educated and felt the dependent visa situation was unfair. As some participants wrote: “My wife has her Masters' degree and currently unemployed due to work permit/visa restrictions.”; “My wife though has all required qualifications for the IT sector here, still cannot work due to H4 visa legal laws. America must provide good work opportunities for all eligible immigrants/migrants.”; “Having educated spouse restricted to work is not encouraging.”

These responses further emphasise that spousal work restrictions created complications in expatriate's personal life, which in turn negatively affected their own already challenging work lives as expatriates in a highly technical field. By providing valuable insights and a useful, simple taxonomy, we explored the negative impact of spousal work restrictions on an aspect of expatriates' work-nonwork role relationship (i.e., the extent to which personal life interferes with work).

Hypothesis 2 was tested using a simple mediation model (PROCESS Model 4; Hayes, 2013) linking number of dependents to overall life satisfaction via PLIW. Relationship between number of dependents and overall life satisfaction was fully conditioned (mediated) by individuals' PLIW ($\beta = -.040, p < .05$) (Table 3). The moderated mediation Hypotheses 3 and 4 were tested separately using PROCESS Model 7 (Hayes, 2013). In the case of Hypothesis 3, both age and length of time did not moderate the relationship between spouse work restriction and PLIW. Hence, Hypothesis 3(a) and 3(b) were not supported. With respect to Hypothesis 4, only age moderated the relationship between spouse work restriction

and PLIW ($\beta = -.077, p < .05$; Table 4a, Figure 3), and older expatriates experienced reduced interference (PLIW) and increased overall life satisfaction (see Table 4b). Therefore, Hypothesis 4(a) was supported, but there was no support for Hypothesis 4(b).

Discussion

The quantitative and qualitative results reported in the present study brings to light the issues faced by Indian IT expatriates in their personal life. More specifically, personal characteristics such as spouse work restrictions and number of dependents created complications in expatriates' work life which in turn negatively affected their overall life satisfaction in the host country (USA). With respect to spouse work restrictions, we identified six key challenges faced by spouses of expatriates: financial issues, frustration, loss of respect/low confidence, boredom, social isolation and domestic tension. These results are consistent with the qualitative study conducted by McNulty (2012) in different expatriate populations, where trailing spouses suffered from feelings of isolation, frustration, disappointment and anger during international assignments. Here it is also important to note that most of the trailing or dependent spouses in the present sample were women. Similarly, number of dependents had a spillover effect on expatriates' work life and overall life satisfaction. This is in line with the study conducted by Shaffer and Harrison (1998) where expatriates with larger family responsibilities spent more time in their personal life which resulted in spending less time at work.

Furthermore, we also considered the moderating effect of age and length of time on the relationship between personal characteristics (spouse work restrictions and number of dependents) and PLIW. In our analyses, only age moderated the relationship between number of dependents and PLIW such that older expatriates faced less interference (PLIW) and improved overall life satisfaction. This could be due to the fact that older expatriates may be well adjusted to the culture of the host country (Selmer, 2001) or may be

financially/professionally stable (Selmer and Lauring, 2011) which in turn may allow these individuals to divert resources to focus on their personal life. Also, older expatriates may have fewer or different personal life commitments than younger expatriates (for example, young children).

Last but not the least, it is important to note here that age and length of time in the USA did not reduce the impact of spouse work restrictions on expatriates' work life. Previous research has indicated that both age and length of time spent in the host country are positively related to adjustment in expatriates (e.g. Selmer, 2001; Selmer and Lauring, 2014). The present findings suggest that, unlike in the case of adjustment, issues relating to spouse work restrictions do not get better with time or age. Because of this, these issues need more serious investigation and attention by researchers and practitioners. As one participant wrote "*The dependent visa situation and significant delay we had in getting the green card almost destroyed my professional wife's confidence to such an extent its now impossible to imagine a job leave alone a career*". Therefore, spouse work restrictions may not only have a long lasting detrimental effect on wellbeing of spouses, but these restrictions also negatively affect expatriates' overall life and cause other serious ripple effects.

In sum, the expatriate literature has overlooked the importance of continuation of spouse career in the host country and the present study brings to light the negative effect of these issues on expatriates' work life and overall life satisfaction. We also highlight the importance of age and length of time in the USA in studying these relationships.

Implications

The present study has brought the issues relating to spouse work restrictions and number of dependents to the forefront due to the recent media attention on the possible policy change on dependent visa situation in the USA. These issues and complications may result in turnover of IT expatriates, who may attempt to resolve these challenges by returning to their

home countries or seeking alternative assignments in more expatriate-friendly countries. This is already visible in the USA, as American-based Indian expatriates are increasingly moving to Canada due to tighter American immigration policies (Bloomberg Businessweek, 2018). This creates another challenge for the American IT industry, as emigration of these skilled members of the IT workforce creates to brain drain and loss of talent.

If the current American presidential administration goes ahead with the plan to cancel work permits for spouses of expatriates, IT organizations and businesses will have to come up with an action plan to support spouses to prevent or at least minimize turnover of critical members of their highly talented IT workforces. According to The Permits Foundation (2009), employment of trailing spouses in the host country has a positive impact on adjustment, family relationships, health and wellbeing, and willingness to complete the assignment. Researchers have emphasized the importance of creating meaningful life for spouses of expatriates in the host country (e.g., Adler, 2002). Previous studies have also shown professional support and social support to help spouses create new identities (e.g., Cole, 2011). Based on these studies we can say that organizations could work towards recreating new identities of trailing spouse in the host country.

As one straightforward example of how companies can at least partially support spouses of expatriates, there is some evidence that organizations in the USA would be wise to develop skilled volunteering programs for this often highly skilled and untapped resource base. Research has shown that immigrants and descendants spend substantial amount of time volunteering within USA (Migration Policy Institute, 2010). Through these programs highly skilled/educated spouses of expatriates could participate in community development, transfer of knowledge, provide professional advice and training, and work with grass root level organizations. Organizations also can provide opportunities for spouses to volunteer for causes related to their country of origin with the help of non-profit and community-based

organizations, ethnic-community groups and professional associations. Overall, the present study emphasises the importance of career continuity in spouses of expatriates and help IT organizations and businesses realize the criticality of these issues.

Conclusion

The present study adds to the existing, but limited evidence base regarding the challenges faced by spouses of expatriates. In particular, we focused on how spousal work restrictions affect the expatriate's experiences at work and outside of work in the host country. With the help of qualitative analyses, we identified six core classes of challenges faced by spouses of expatriates: financial issues, frustration, loss of respect/low confidence, boredom, social isolation, and domestic tension. Furthermore, using quantitative analyses, we found these spousal issues and number of dependents to have a spillover effect on expatriates' work life and overall life satisfaction. Older expatriates were able to better manage challenges associated with number of dependents. Therefore, the study contributes to better understanding of these personal issues faced by Indian expatriates working in the American IT industry and may help future researchers to conduct a more comprehensive study to understand these issues in detail. We hope the present study also encourages other researchers and practitioners, as well as policy makers to more fully consider the implications of visa-related policy changes on expatriates' spouses, families, and communities.

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Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics and Correlation among study variables*

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Age	416	34	7.248							
2. Sex	415	NA	.413	-.184 **						
3. Marital status	412	NA	.389	.348 **	.012					
4. # of Dependents	335	NA	1.138	.585 **	-.107 *	.355 **				
5. Years in USA	416	8.704	6.640	.795 **	-.109 *	.216 **	.422 **			
6. SWR	377	NA	.418	-.130 *	-.166 **	.161 **	-.024	-.181 **		
7. PLIW	391	11.128	4.528	-.080	.034	-.044	.049	-.065	.150 **	
8. Life satisfaction	414	4.756	1.210	.076	.038	.114 *	-.026	.104 *	-.130 *	-.301 **

Note. ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; SWR- Spousal work restriction (“No” and “Yes” were coded as “1” and “2” respectively); PLIW – Personal life interfering work; Years in USA considered as Length of time in the USA

Table 2. Model 4, PLIW mediating the relationship between Spousal work restriction and Overall life satisfaction

	Coeff	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Direct effect of Spousal work restriction on Overall life satisfaction	-.275	.171	-.612	.062
Indirect effect of Spousal work restriction on Overall life satisfaction through PLIW	-.075 *	.046	-.184	-.003

Note. $N = 300$, Overall Adj $R^2 = .112$, $F(7, 292) = 5.242$, * $p < .05$

Results reported after controlling for the covariates age, gender, number of dependents, years lived in USA and marital status

Table 3. *Model 4, PLIW mediating the relationship between # of dependents and Overall Life Satisfaction*

	Coeff	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Direct effect of Number of dependents on Overall life satisfaction	-.112	.073	-.256	.033
Indirect effect of Number of dependents on Overall life satisfaction through PLIW	-.040 *	.020	-.085	-.007

Note. $N = 312$, Overall Adj $R^2 = .103$, $F(6, 305) = 5.814$, * $p < .05$

Results reported after controlling for the covariates age, gender, years lived in USA and marital status

Table 4a. *Model 7, Age moderating the relationship between # of dependents and PLIW*

	Coeff		SE	LLCI	ULCI
Age	.043 *		.095	-.144	.229
# of Dependents	3.245 *		1.349	.590	5.900
<i># of Dependents x Age</i>	-.077 *		.038	-.152	-.002

Table 4b. *Conditional Indirect effect of # of dependents on Overall Life satisfaction at the value of moderator Age*

Age	Coeff		SE	LLCI	ULCI
29	-.069	*	.029	-.133	-.021
32	-.054	*	.023	-.106	-.014
44	.009		.025	-.043	.057

Note. $N = 312$, Overall Adj $R^2 = .102$, $F(5, 306) = 6.959$, * $p < .05$

Results reported after controlling for the covariates gender, years lived in USA and marital status

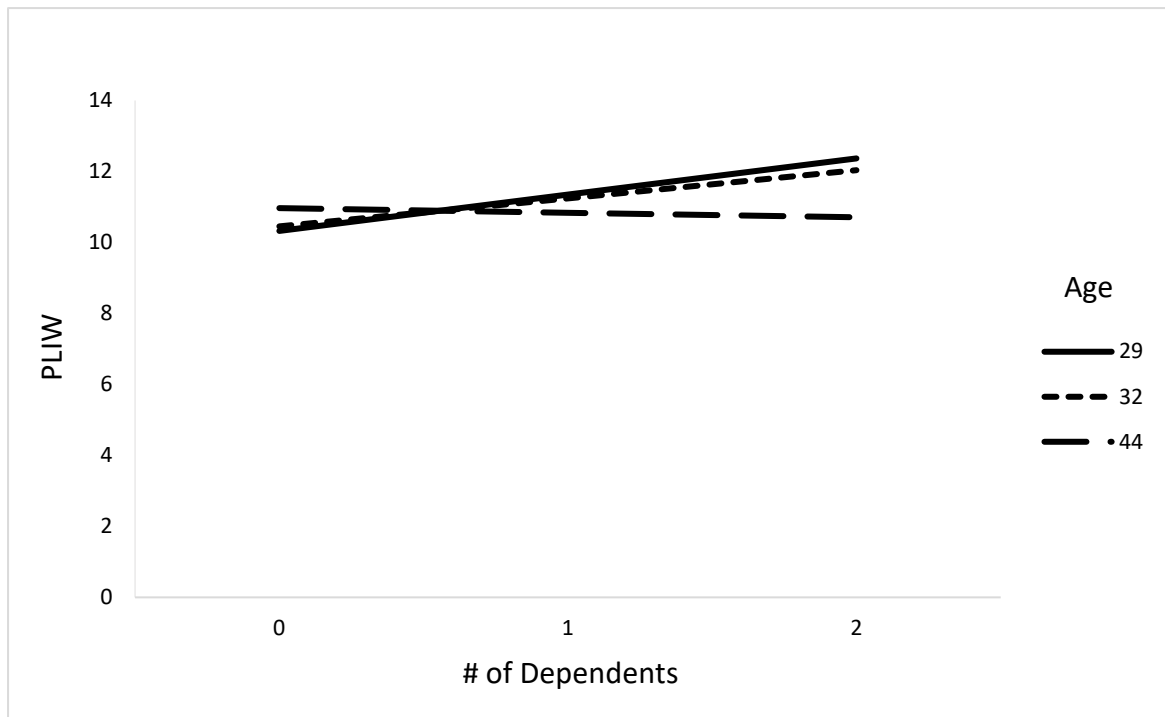


Figure 3. Moderating effect of Age