



## FEMALE EXPATRIATES AND CROSS CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT: A STUDY OF SAUDI ARABIA

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### Abstract

Organizations all over the world are concerned about the success of expatriates on international assignments due to the highly global nature of business today. They try to enhance cross cultural adjustment of expatriates and try to minimize expat failure resulting into pre mature return and low performance. The paper deliberates on this important issue of international human resource management to examine adjustment of female expatriates working with multinational companies in Saudi Arabia. It attempts to investigate the challenges and issues faced by female expatriates and explore factors affecting their adjustment process in order to have a meaningful understanding of the issue. It adopts a qualitative research method to obtain information from ten female expatriates working with diverse multinational companies in Saudi Arabia through semi-structured interviews and derived themes. The findings of the study reveal myriad factors that facilitate or hinder adjustment of female expatriates. It found housing facilities provided by the organizations, expat community support and training and development opportunities to be major

facilitating factors, while cultural novelty, lack of entertainment and leisure activities, limited interaction with locals, difficulty in adjusting to new roles, lack of courteous and professional organizational culture and non-parity in compensation and benefits were noted as major factors impeding cultural adjustment of female expatriates. Gender was also found to be an important factor that negatively influenced the adjustment of female expats in Saudi Arabia. Major challenges in this regard were reported as absence of spouse support and problems in raising children. It provides meaningful discussion towards initiating relevant interventions, countering gender stereotypes and facilitating cross cultural adjustment of expatriates performing their assignments in Saudi Arabia.

### **Keywords**

Expatriates, cross-cultural adjustment, gender, Saudi Arabia