JOURNAL OF MENTAL HEALTH AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES
Jul - Dec 2026, VOL. 4, ISSUE 2, pp. 1-9
https://doi.org/10.61577/jmhbs.2026.100006

RESEAPRO JOURNALS

CASE STUDY

OPEN ACCESS

Expatriate stress and psychological resilience in the gulf: A composite conceptual case study

Trinanjan Gupta

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Qatar Steel, Doha, Qatar

ABSTRACT

Working in the Gulf can offer financial security and better opportunities for families, but living abroad can also carry a significant personal cost. Expatriate workers may spend years managing demanding jobs, adjusting to a different culture, living apart from loved ones, supporting families back home, and worrying about job security. When these pressures continue together over time, they can seriously affect psychological well-being. This paper examines these challenges through a constructed conceptual case informed by selected research and the author's professional experience of organizational life in the region. The case is illustrative and is not based on interviews, psychological assessments, clinical records, or other primary data.

Drawing on stress and coping theory, resilience theory, self-determination theory, and positive psychology, the paper explores how workplace demands and personal responsibilities may combine to affect expatriates' emotional health. Its central argument is that good work performance does not necessarily mean good psychological well-being. Employees may fulfil their duties, support their families financially, and meet professional expectations while privately experiencing loneliness, exhaustion, and persistent worry.

To examine this issue, the paper proposes Expatriate Psychological Resilience (EPR) as a context-specific framework for understanding resilience under prolonged expatriate pressures. It considers how occupational demands, cultural adjustment, family separation, financial responsibilities, and employment uncertainty may interact rather than operate independently.

The case illustrates the proposed framework but cannot establish how common these experiences are or confirm EPR as a distinct psychological construct. Further research is needed to explore expatriates' experiences, define EPR's dimensions, develop and validate appropriate measures, and compare it with established concepts of resilience, coping, and work engagement. Ultimately, the aim is to understand not only how expatriate workers fulfil their responsibilities, but also the personal cost of doing so and the support they need to protect their well-being.

KEYWORDS

Coping resources; Emotional exhaustion; Expatriate mental health; Expatriate Psychological Resilience; Family separation; Occupational stress; Psychological well-being

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 03 July 2026;
Accepted 30 July 2026;
Published 06 August 2026

Introduction

Regional and occupational context

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states depend heavily on expatriate workers, many of whom move to the region in search of better jobs, financial security, and a brighter future for their families [1]. For many, working abroad brings true benefits. Yet behind the income, career opportunities, and completed contracts lies another side of expatriate life: the personal and psychological cost of living far from home.

For many workers, this separation lasts for years. Spouses, children, and ageing parents remain in their home countries, while everyday family life continues across borders. Birthdays are missed, children grow up in the worker's absence, and family problems must often be handled over telephone or video calls. Staying financially connected to family does not eliminate the emotional cost of being physically absent.

Life in a foreign country brings further challenges. Workers must adjust to unfamiliar cultures, different languages, new workplace expectations, difficult climates, demanding schedules, and uncertainty about continued employment. At the same time, many carry the responsibility of paying household expenses, funding their children's education, and supporting relatives back home. One pressure may be manageable; but several occurring together for years can become overwhelming, particularly when opportunities for rest and recovery are limited [2]. Contract renewals may also extend expatriate residence well beyond their original plans, prolonging separation and uncertainty [3].

These realities make expatriate mental health an important concern for employers and policymakers. Psychological well-being deserves the same serious attention as physical safety and workplace performance. Persistent work-related strain has been linked to fatigue, isolation, work–life conflict, burnout symptoms, and reduced well-being. Emotional exhaustion is particularly a major concern because it reflects the gradual depletion of emotional energy when demands continue without sufficient recovery [4].

Importantly, psychological distress is not limited to manual workers. Research in Qatar found that both blue-collar and white-collar migrant groups reported more depressive symptoms than Qatari nationals [5]. This finding reinforces a vital point: occupational status alone does not protect migrant workers from psychological difficulties. Understanding their well-being requires attention to the combined pressures of work, family separation, financial responsibility, and life abroad.

Purpose of the paper

This paper examines how chronic stress at work, emotional exhaustion, family separation, and resilience interact to shape expatriate working life. To make these interconnections more

***Correspondence:** Mr Trinanjan Gupta, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Qatar Steel, Doha, Qatar. e-mail: trinanjang2007@yahoo.co.in

© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Reseapro Journals. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

tangible, it uses a composite case as an analytical device, illustrating a possible theoretical pattern without implying that it represents all expatriate employees or workplaces across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region. Although psychological resilience is already recognized as an important resource in expatriate adjustment and retention, its role should be understood within the specific demands and uncertainties of expatriate life in the Gulf [6,7]. Accordingly, this paper does not present resilience as a new concept. Rather, it advances a Gulf-specific formulation of Expatriate Psychological Resilience (EPR), emphasizing how prolonged work demands, cultural adjustment, separation from family, transnational responsibilities, and employment uncertainty can converge and place sustained pressure on psychological functioning. EPR is provisionally defined as the capacity to sustain, restore, or reorganize psychological functioning while navigating these intersecting and often persistent demands. It is proposed as a conceptual lens to guide future research, not as an established or empirically validated psychological model.

The contribution of this paper lies in its contextual integration and not in introducing a new label for an existing construct. It does not claim that EPR represents an entirely distinct form of resilience, that expatriates possess a unique psychological capacity unavailable to other populations, or that the proposed formulation has already been empirically validated. Instead, it argues that understanding resilience among expatriate workers in the GCC requires closer attention to the cumulative and interacting pressures of work, family separation, cultural adaptation, and employment insecurity. This framing provides a basis for developing and empirically testing a more contextually grounded account of how expatriates sustain psychological functioning under prolonged and overlapping demands.

Method and Status of the Case Material

A note on the case material: Mr. J, the employee portrayed in Section 3, is a fictional composite, not a real individual. The case draws on published research and the author's working knowledge of the regional industrial sector; it is not based on interviews, personal records, psychological assessments, or other primary data. Its purpose is to make it visible how chronic work stress, emotional exhaustion, family separation, and employment uncertainty might converge within a single expatriate working life. It is an illustrative analytical device, not empirical evidence of prevalence, representativeness, or causation. The case therefore demonstrates how these pressures may interact, not how frequently they occur or whether the same pattern characterizes expatriate workers across the GCC region.

Rationale for the composite approach

Composite cases have a legitimate and valuable role in conceptual and educational writing. They provide a means of translating abstract theoretical ideas into a plausible human context while protecting the identity and privacy of individuals. This protection is particularly important in research involving expatriate and migrant workers, who may fear that disclosing psychological distress could jeopardize their employment, professional standing, or reputation [2]. Yet, the ethical value of protecting individuals must not be confused with the evidentiary strength of the case itself.

The limitations are equally important. A constructed narrative cannot establish how frequently an experience occurs, how severe its effects may be, or the sequence through which different pressures develop and interact. Even when a case appears realistic and theoretically coherent, it may reproduce the author's assumptions rather than adequately reflect the complexity of lived experience. A compelling narrative can illustrate a possibility; it cannot establish a pattern as fact**.** This distinction is fundamental to the present paper and is revisited in Section 9.

Construction of the composite

The composite was developed in four stages. First, the analysis was limited to four connected concerns: prolonged occupational stress, emotional exhaustion, loneliness associated with family separation, and adaptive resilience. Second, studies of expatriate, migrant, and occupational populations were reviewed for recurring experiences relevant to those concerns [1,8,9]. Third, an industrial setting and an administrative role were selected to provide a concrete but non-specialist workplace context. The choice is illustrative. It does not imply that administrative employees in steel manufacturing experience these pressures more often or more severely than workers elsewhere. Finally, established psychological theories were used to interpret the case and to identify questions for practice and future research.

Throughout the paper, cited findings are separated from the author's interpretation. The case supports conceptual discussion only. It cannot support causal, diagnostic, or population-level conclusions.

The Composite Case

Illustrative profile

For clarity and consistency, the constructed employee is referred to as "Mr. J." The name serves solely as a narrative device. Mr. J is neither a research participant nor a patient, and he does not represent an identifiable individual. His profile should not be interpreted as a typical or representative portrait of expatriate workers in the GCC.

In the constructed narrative, Mr. J is in his early fifties and has spent more than a decade in a mid-level administrative position within a steel-manufacturing organization in the GCC. His close family members remain in his country of origin. At work, he is regarded as reliable and competent; beyond the workplace, however, he continues to contend with prolonged family separation, continuing financial obligations, and the persistent effort of meeting professional and personal expectations across two countries. The contrast is deliberate: overseas occupational stability does not necessarily mean that an individual is free from substantial psychological and personal strain.

The industrial setting provides a defined organizational context, while the administrative role directs attention towards sustained workload, organizational expectations, family separation, and the demands of adaptation. This choice avoids making the analysis dependent on the distinctive pressures of a highly specialized clinical, technical, or manual occupation. It does not, however, imply that these pressures operate uniformly across occupational groups. Their nature and consequences may differ considerably according to job responsibilities, industry, nationality, family arrangements, and employment conditions.

These details are analytical choices, not demographic evidence. They establish the circumstances in which the proposed theoretical ideas can be examined; they do not support conclusions about any age group, nationality,

© 2026 Reseapro Journals
https://doi.org/10.61577/jmhbs.2026.100006

occupation, industrial sector, or the wider expatriate workforce. Mr. J is intended to make the interaction of potentially overlapping pressures easier to examine, while not claiming to represent the diverse experiences of expatriate employees across the GCC.

Presenting pattern

The case begins with changes that could easily be overlooked because work is still being completed. Fatigue no longer lifts after ordinary rest. Sleep has become irregular, and periods of wakefulness are filled with thoughts about deadlines, job security, household expenses, children's education, and family matters that cannot be managed from a distance.

Work that once carried interest and purpose now feels heavier. Duties are still performed competently, but engagement has narrowed into getting through the next task. This difference matters: outward reliability can continue even when the inner experience of work has changed.

A persistent undercurrent of apprehension remains. It centers on continued employment, financial stability, and the consequences that any disruption might have for dependents.

Loneliness also persists despite daily contact with colleagues. Social contact is not the same as emotional closeness. Video calls and messages help Mr. J remain involved in family life, but they cannot fully replace physical presence during ordinary routines, important occasions, illness, or difficulty at home.

Contributing psychosocial factors

Four forms of demand meet in the case. Occupational demand includes workload, changing schedules, and continuing pressure to perform, with too little time for recovery [10]. Separation-related demand grows from prolonged absence from close relationships and the accumulation of missed family moments. Cultural and environmental demand concerns everyday adjustment to unfamiliar social, linguistic, and climatic conditions. Financial demand arises from responsibility for household costs, education, and other transnational obligations.

The strain of expatriate work can extend to dependents in the country of origin [11].

The important point is not simply that several demands exist. They can reinforce one another. Financial responsibility may make withdrawal from a difficult work situation feel impossible. The need to remain dependable may discourage help-seeking. Family sacrifice may give work meaning while also making employment uncertainty more threatening [12].

Host-country conditions can also reshape family and career arrangements [13].

Indicative psychological profile

Table 1 organizes selected features of the constructed narrative in relation to established psychological domains. The descriptions are qualitative features of the illustrative case rather than assessment findings. References to established instruments are included only to clarify the corresponding conceptual domains; no psychometric instrument was administered.

Table 1. Descriptive psychological features of the constructed case.

Conceptual domain	Related construct in the literature	Descriptive features in the illustrative narrative	Basis for inclusion
Psychological well-being	Mental well-being, conceptually related to the WHO-5	Diminished enjoyment, reduced positive mood, persistent mental fatigue, and difficulty recovering emotionally from continuing demands	The constructed narrative draws on literature describing reduced well-being among expatriate and occupational populations
Emotional exhaustion	Emotional exhaustion as represented within burnout research, including the MBI tradition	A sense of depleted emotional resources, declining enthusiasm, and the increasing experience of routine responsibilities as burdensome	The narrative reflects theoretical and empirical accounts of emotional depletion under prolonged occupational and relational demands
Psychological resilience	Capacity to recover and adapt under adversity, conceptually related to the BRS	Continued fulfillment of essential responsibilities, preservation of goal-directed behavior, and efforts to adapt despite loneliness, uncertainty, and emotional strain	The narrative illustrates continued adaptive functioning in the presence of distress; it does not establish an assessed level of resilience

Note. The WHO-5, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), and the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS) are referenced only to locate the narrative features within established conceptual domains [14,15]. No instrument was administered, no score or cut-off was calculated, and the descriptions in this table should not be interpreted as assessment findings, diagnostic classifications, or evidence of an individual's psychological status.

Theoretical Formulation

Nothing in the case depends on one dramatic event. The strain is gradual. Work pressure, separation, financial responsibility, and limited emotional recovery accumulate over time. Four theoretical perspectives help explain why a person may remain functional while becoming increasingly depleted.

Stress and coping theory

Stress and coping theory begins with appraisal: people experience strain when they judge that demands are stretching or exceeding the resources available to manage them [17]. In the case, work demands and employment uncertainty are joined by responsibilities that continue across national borders. Some stressors, such as being unable to be physically present during a family problem, cannot be solved through greater effort at work. This helps explain how competent performance and sustained psychological pressure can coexist.

Resilience theory and the positioning of EPR

Resilience is commonly understood as the capacity to maintain or regain psychological functioning in the face of adversity [18,19]. However, it is more useful to view resilience as a dynamic process than as a fixed personal trait. How a

© 2026 Reseapro Journals
https://doi.org/10.61577/jmhbs.2026.100006

person responds to adversity depends not only on individual strengths but also on the support available through family, social relationships, the workplace, the community, and wider living conditions. Resilience, therefore, cannot be understood simply as the ability to endure hardship.

Recent research among expatriates supports this broader perspective. Gao et al. identified psychological resilience as an important factor in expatriate adjustment and highlighted the protective role of social support [6]. In a subsequent study of the construction sector, Gao et al. found that cross-cultural adjustment, self-efficacy, active coping, and social support significantly predicted expatriate resilience and retention [7]. Taken together, these findings suggest that resilience develops through the interplay of personal resources and external support, rather than through individual endurance alone.

The proposed Expatriate Psychological Resilience (EPR) formulation builds on this established understanding but addresses a more specific question: how might resilience work when the demands of expatriate life in the Gulf accumulate over time? For some workers, the pressure of sustained employment may coincide with repeated cultural adjustment, prolonged separation from family, financial and emotional obligations across national borders, and uncertainty about job security. These pressures may reinforce one another, leaving individuals with fewer opportunities to recover. EPR is intended to examine the combined and interacting effects of these demands, and not to give resilience a new name. More specifically, it draws attention to a difficult possibility: an expatriate may continue to perform effectively at work while becoming increasingly exhausted, lonely, and emotionally depleted.

This distinction matters because continued functioning is not proof of psychological well-being. An employee may meet deadlines, fulfil financial obligations, support family members, and maintain a reputation for reliability while struggling privately with distress. Adaptation in one area of life does not necessarily mean that other areas are going well. Resilience does not make suffering disappear, and visible competence should not be mistaken for an absence of distress. Both can exist at the same time (Table 2).

Whether Gulf-specific EPR warrants recognition as a distinct construct remains an empirical question, not a conclusion that can be settled through conceptual argument alone. It may ultimately be better understood as a context-sensitive expression of general resilience, coping, psychological capital, or work engagement rather than as an independent construct. Establishing its value will require qualitative research with expatriate workers, tests of whether it can be distinguished from existing concepts, and comparisons with established measures. Until such evidence is available, EPR should remain a provisional framework whose usefulness depends on what research can demonstrate, rather than on the appeal of introducing a new term.

Table 2. Conceptual definition and boundaries of EPR.

Element	Proposed position
Core definition	A context-sensitive capacity and adaptive process for sustaining, recovering, or reorganizing psychological functioning under prolonged expatriate-related demands
Primary context	Interaction of occupational demands, cultural adjustment, family separation, transnational responsibilities, and employment uncertainty
Conceptual status	Provisional and unvalidated
Not equivalent to	Absence of distress, uninterrupted productivity, passive endurance, work engagement, or a fixed personal trait
Relationship to general resilience	A context-specific formulation within established resilience scholarship
Relationship to coping	Coping represents responses; EPR concerns the broader adaptive pattern over time
Contextual boundary	Influenced by personal, relational, organizational, and structural resources and constraints
Evidential boundary	The constructed case illustrates EPR but does not establish its prevalence, distinctiveness, or validity

Self-determination theory

Self-determination theory identifies autonomy, competence, and relatedness as basic psychological needs [20]. The case shows why these needs can move in different directions. Competence may remain visible in reliable work performance, and some autonomy may exist within the role. Relatedness may be much harder to sustain when close relationships are lived at a distance. Regular calls provide contact, but contact does not always provide the emotional closeness that gives a person a sense of being known and accompanied.

Positive psychology

Positive psychology adds a necessary counterweight by asking what continues to give life meaning under difficult conditions [21]. In the case, responsibility to family, hope for a more secure future, gratitude for opportunity, and pride in being dependable are not simply pressures. They are also sources of purpose. The same commitment can sustain a person and, when demands become excessive, make it harder to admit that help is needed.

Taken together, the four perspectives suggest that the case is not best understood as a failure of individual coping. It is a recognizable response to demands that have continued with too little relief. They also support the paper's central claim: visible functioning should not be confused with complete psychological well-being.

Supportive Strategies: Theoretical Rationale

The following strategies are not presented as treatments tested in this case. They are theoretically plausible forms of support that could be examined in later research. Each addresses a different part of the pressure described above, and each is framed as a proposition rather than a demonstrated effect.

Reflective practice

Reflective writing may give a person enough distance to identify what is recurring, what can be changed, and what has

© 2026 Reseapro Journals
https://doi.org/10.61577/jmhbs.2026.100006

simply been endured. Its proposed value lies in appraisal and reappraisal, not in the assumption that writing alone can remove structural pressures [17].

Structured family communication

Predictable family contact may reduce uncertainty and create a dependable point of connection during difficult periods. Its value may lie less in the total number of calls than in their meaning and reliability. Even so, mediated contact cannot fully replace physical presence.

Peer and community connection

Connection with peers who understand expatriate life may reduce the sense that difficulty must be carried privately. Community activity outside work may also restore forms of identity and belonging that employment alone cannot provide [22,23].

Supportive supervision

Note. The strategies and hypotheses are proposed for future empirical examinations. They were not implemented or evaluated in the present constructed conceptual case study. The table therefore expresses theoretically plausible relationships rather than demonstrated intervention effects. Specific intervention procedures, comparison conditions, outcome measures, and assessment periods should be determined in subsequent ethically approved research.

A supportive supervisor cannot resolve every personal or structural problem, but supervisory behavior can influence whether an employee feels safe enough to speak and whether reasonable adjustments are considered. The proposed buffering effect on emotional exhaustion remains a question for empirical testing.

Workplace flexibility

Where operations allow, flexibility in schedules, leave, or task organization may reduce conflict between work and family responsibilities. Flexibility is distinct from supportive supervision: one concerns an employment arrangement, while the other concerns the quality of managerial interaction.

Structured strengths identification and application

A guided strengths exercise may help employees recognize capacities they already use and consider how those capacities could be applied deliberately to a current challenge. This proposal has not been implemented or evaluated in the present paper (Table 3).

Table 3. Proposed strategies, mechanisms, and hypotheses for future empirical examination.

Proposed strategy	Operational meaning in future research	Theorized mechanism	Hypothesis for future testing
Structured reflective practice	Regular guided reflection in which participants identify recurring demands, emotional responses, coping resources, and possible alternative responses	Cognitive appraisal, emotional processing, and reappraisal	P1. Participation in a defined structured reflective-practice program will be associated with change in perceived stress among expatriate workers.
Predictable family communication	Mutually agreed and regularly scheduled contact with close family members, while recognizing that remote contact cannot fully replace physical presence	Relational predictability and partial support for the need for relatedness	P2. Greater predictability of meaningful family contact will be associated with lower loneliness, independently of overall contact frequency.
Peer and community connection	Regular participation in supportive relationships or activities involving people with comparable expatriate experiences	Social support, shared identity, and normalization of experience	P3. Stronger perceived peer connection will be associated with lower emotional exhaustion among expatriate employees.
Supportive supervision	Supervisor behaviors that communicate understanding, psychological safety, reasonable responsiveness, and openness to discussing work-related or personal pressures affecting work	Perceived organizational support, psychological safety, and greater perceived control	P4a. Perceived supervisory support will weaken the association between occupational demands and emotional exhaustion.
Workplace flexibility	Reasonable adjustments to work schedules, leave, or task arrangements where operationally feasible	Demand reduction, increased autonomy, and improved work-family coordination	P4b. Greater access to workplace flexibility will be associated with lower work-family conflict and emotional exhaustion.
Structured strengths-identification and application exercise	A guided activity through which participants identify personal strengths and plan how those strengths may be applied to a current expatriate-related challenge	Self-efficacy, meaning, purposeful coping, and adaptive resource recognition	P5. Participation in a defined strengths-identification and application exercise will be associated with change in resilience-related outcomes among expatriate workers.

Discussion

The composite case brings together one plausible pattern of expatriate strain, but it cannot tell us how common that pattern is. It should not be mistaken for a survey finding concealed within a narrative. Its value lies elsewhere: it brings into a single account burden that are often examined in isolation-occupational demands, cultural adjustment, family separation, transnational responsibilities, employment uncertainty, emotional exhaustion, and the need to keep functioning despite mounting strain. The central concern is not simply how much pressure an expatriate worker faces, but what happens when several pressures accumulate and leave little room for recovery.

From an occupational-psychology perspective, the case exposes a gap between how work and personal life are often treated in organizational policies and how employees experience them. Family obligations, loneliness, and uncertainty do not stop at the workplace gate. Equally,

© 2026 Reseapro Journals
https://doi.org/10.61577/jmhbs.2026.100006

demanding schedules, contractual pressures, and concerns about job security do not disappear when the working day ends. These demands travel with the employee, intersecting across work and home life and shaping the same person's psychological well-being [8].

This reality calls for greater attention to mental health in regional workplace policy [23]. Physical safety remains a central organizational responsibility, but psychological well-being deserves equally serious consideration. Employers can make a meaningful difference by providing confidential referral pathways, providing clear protection against retaliation, encouraging psychologically safe conversations, and offering reasonable flexibility where possible. Yet such measures have limits if the conditions producing distress remain unchanged. Support services cannot compensate indefinitely for excessive workloads, insecure employment conditions, or the cumulative pressures of prolonged family separation. Meaningful prevention must address both employees' access to support and the organizational conditions that shape their daily lives.

The proposed Gulf-specific Expatriate Psychological Resilience (EPR) formulation draws its significance from this convergence of pressures. Existing research has established the importance of cross-cultural adjustment, self-efficacy, active coping, social support, and psychological resilience in expatriate adjustment and retention[6,7]. The present paper builds on that foundation by bringing four interconnected concerns into sharper focus: prolonged physical separation from family, responsibilities that extend across national borders, dependence on employment for financial and personal security, and the possibility that dependable performance may conceal growing psychological depletion. EPR is not presented as an alternative to established resilience theory. Rather, it offers a context-sensitive framework for examining how resilience may be sustained, strained, or reshaped under the demands of expatriate life in the Gulf.

The distinction has direct practical implications. An employee may remain punctual, productive, and dependable even as emotional resources diminish and recovery becomes increasingly difficult. Reliability is not proof of well-being, just as continued employment is not proof that a person is coping without harm. At the same time, declining emotional resources should not automatically be treated as evidence of a psychological disorder. The appropriate response is neither to diagnose from performance nor to assume that everything is well because performance remains strong. Recent clinical evidence from Qatar also draws attention to occupational and psychosocial vulnerabilities among migrant workers [24]. Taken together, these considerations strengthen the case for workplace approaches that look beyond visible productivity and take the less visible costs of prolonged strain seriously.

Implications for Practice

The recommendations below emerge from the conceptual analysis and remain propositions for future evaluation, not empirically validated interventions. Their central argument is clear: family separation, contractual uncertainty, financial obligations, and cultural adjustment are not peripheral to working life. They interact with workload, shape psychological well-being, and influence how much an employee can sustain over time.

A critical principle cuts across all stakeholder groups: continued performance does not necessarily indicate psychological well-being. Employees may continue to meet expectations while experiencing significant emotional strain. The recommendations below should therefore be treated as proposed applications of EPR that require direct empirical evaluation before they can be considered evidence based.

For Organizations

- Strengthen mental health awareness. Sustained, purposeful awareness initiatives can help challenge stigma, encourage early help-seeking, and establish psychological well-being as a legitimate organizational priority.
- Integrate well-being into work design. Stress-management resources and protected recovery time may support employees, but they should complement rather than replace meaningful action on excessive workload and working conditions.
- Build a psychologically safe culture. Employees should be able to raise psychological difficulties without fear of embarrassment, discrimination, or professional disadvantage. Early disclosure depends on trust, and not on slogans.
- Guarantee confidential employee assistance. Counselling and mental health support must be genuinely confidential and accessible without jeopardizing employment. This protection is particularly important for employees already experiencing contractual or financial insecurity.

For Human resource professionals

- Design support around expatriate realities. Generic employee programs may overlook the emotional, cultural, financial, and practical pressures of living and working away from family. Support must reflect these circumstances to be relevant and accessible.
- Establish peer-support networks. Structured opportunities for employees facing similar challenges to connect can reduce isolation, strengthen belonging, and help individuals recognize that they are not navigating these pressures alone.
- Equip supervisors to respond early. Targeted training should help managers recognize possible signs of emotional exhaustion, initiate appropriate conversations, and refer employees to qualified professionals without attempting to diagnose psychological conditions.
- Adopt family-inclusive policies. Within the permissible limits of operational requirements permit, flexible leave around significant family events can acknowledge the continuing importance of family relationships to expatriate employees' well-being.

For psychologists and mental health practitioners

- Adopt culturally informed practice. Assessment and intervention should account for migration experiences, prolonged family separation, cultural adjustment, and the wider conditions shaping expatriate life.
- Address the lived experience directly. Loneliness, homesickness, identity shifts, and persistent stress should be treated as substantive concerns, not

© 2026 Reseapro Journals
https://doi.org/10.61577/jmhbs.2026.100006

dismissed as incidental features of working abroad.

- Build on existing strengths. A strengths-based formulation should identify and develop employees' existing coping resources, adaptive capacities, and sources of meaning rather than concentrating exclusively on deficits.
- Recognize the limits of individual coping. Contractual separation, financial obligations, and restricted family contact may be shaped by structural conditions beyond an individual's control. Psychological support cannot substitute for organizational responsibility or resolve structural problems through resilience training alone.

Directions for Empirical Research

The priority is not to present EPR as an established construct, but to determine whether it offers a distinct and scientifically defensible contribution. Research must establish whether EPR captures a meaningful pattern of expatriate experience, represents a context-specific expression of established resilience, or merely relabels familiar processes of coping and adaptation. Its distinctiveness must be demonstrated empirically, not assumed conceptually.

A rigorous, staged research program is therefore warranted:

- Qualitative exploration. Conduct semi-structured interviews with expatriate workers under appropriate institutional ethics approval and informed consent. The aim should be to establish whether the proposed EPR dimensions reflect workers lived experiences, identify overlooked dimensions, and examine how these experiences vary across individuals and employment contexts.
- Construct operationalization. Develop candidate measurement items grounded in qualitative findings and relevant literature. Expert review and cognitive interviewing should assess conceptual coverage, clarity, relevance, and whether participants interpret the items as intended.
- Psychometric validation. Use exploratory factor analysis in an initial sample, followed by confirmatory factor analysis in an independent sample, to evaluate the proposed structure. Discriminant validity should be examined against established measures of resilience, burnout, and work engagement, alongside appropriate assessments of reliability and convergent validity.
- Testing the theoretical propositions. Subject the propositions presented in Table 3 to systematic empirical scrutiny using validated measures and appropriate analytical methods. Longitudinal designs would be particularly valuable for examining change over time and clarifying the relationships among expatriate circumstances, psychological processes, and work-related outcomes.
- Comparative investigation. Extend research across sectors, countries, and expatriate populations to determine whether the proposed pattern holds beyond heavy industry. Such comparisons should examine how migration circumstances, employment arrangements, cultural contexts, and family-separation experiences influence the applicability of EPR.

Research involving expatriate workers also demands heightened ethical vigilance. Employees facing insecure employment may fear that disclosure could affect their job, reputation, or future opportunities. Recruitment must therefore be independent of managerial pressure, participation must be genuinely voluntary, and confidentiality must be protected through credible procedures rather than assurances alone. Researchers should also establish appropriate support and referral pathways in case participation raises distress.

Ultimately, the credibility of EPR will depend not on the strength of its language, but on the rigor of its testing. The next step is to establish what the construct explains, whether it explains anything that existing frameworks do not, and under what conditions it offers meaningful value for expatriate workers and the organizations that employ them.

Limitations

The paper must be interpreted within the following limitations, which define the boundaries of its claims and the extent to which its conceptual contributions can be interpreted.

- The case is composite, not empirical. The constructed case provides an illustrative framework for examining expatriate experience; it is not an empirical observation. It cannot establish the prevalence, severity, sequence, or co-occurrence of the experiences described. Its internal coherence reflects the process of construction, not empirical corroboration.
- No primary data was collected. The analysis draws on no interviews, psychometric assessments, clinical records, or observational data. No empirical outcomes are reported, and no claims regarding intervention effectiveness are warranted.
- Measurement instruments are discussed conceptually only. Table 1 organizes relevant constructs for theoretical analysis. No instrument was administered, no participant scores were obtained, and no measurement-based conclusions can be drawn.
- Author positionality may have influenced the composite. Professional familiarity with the regional industrial sector informed the construction of the narrative. This perspective may have foregrounded difficulties more visible from the author's professional vantage point while overlooking experiences, interpretations, or concerns that workers themselves might priorities. The composite must therefore not be mistaken for a comprehensive representation of expatriate workers lived experiences.
- The literature base presents limitations in transferability. Research on expatriate and migrant occupational mental health is substantially represented by healthcare and professional populations. Whether findings from these groups adequately explain the experiences of industrial workforces remain an open empirical question, requiring context-specific investigation rather than assumed generalization.
- EPR remains an unvalidated conceptual construct. Its dimensions have not yet been operationalized or

© 2026 Reseapro Journals
https://doi.org/10.61577/jmhbs.2026.100006

empirically tested. Considerable overlap may exist with established constructs, including general resilience, work engagement, and psychological capital. Its distinctiveness, explanatory value, and incremental contribution must be demonstrated through systematic validation.

- Causal relationships cannot be inferred. The relationships discussed in the paper are theoretical propositions, not established effects. The analysis does not demonstrate causation, determine the direction of relationships, or rule out alternative explanations.
- The occupational context is deliberately narrow. The composite focuses on an administrative role within steel manufacturing to facilitate conceptual analysis; it does not represent the wider expatriate workforce across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Manual, technical, managerial, healthcare, service, construction, and other occupational groups may encounter markedly different combinations of workload, autonomy, employment security, family separation, and access to support. The applicability of EPR across occupations, industries, and national contexts must therefore be established through direct empirical investigation, not presumed from this illustrative case.

Ethical Considerations

This paper involved no human participants, personal records, or identifiable data. The case was constructed from published literature and general professional familiarity with organizational life; no person was recruited, interviewed, assessed, or observed. For that reason, informed consent and institutional ethics approval applicable to primary human-participant research were not required. The composite approach was chosen in part to avoid exposing expatriate employees to identification or employment-related risk. Any later empirical study of EPR will require independent ethics approval, informed consent, credible confidentiality safeguards, and appropriate support for participants who disclose distress.

Conclusion

This paper has used a composite case to examine how work pressure, emotional exhaustion, family separation, cultural adjustment, financial responsibility, and resilience may intersect in expatriate life in the Gulf. The account suggests that commitment, hope, and responsibility can help a person continue, but the same qualities may also conceal growing depletion when demands remain high and recovery is limited.

EPR is offered as a question for research, not as a finding. Before it can support measurement or practice, researchers would need to establish its content, compare it with existing constructs, and test its validity in ethically designed studies with expatriate workers themselves.

The contribution is therefore deliberately modest. The paper brings several pressures and adaptive processes into one context-sensitive formulation and identifies what would have to be examined next. It does not establish that the same configuration is common, unique, or measurable across Gulf workforces.

Behind labor statistics are working lives shaped by distance, duty, sacrifice, and hope. Many expatriate employees may appear settled because they continue to meet

expectations. What cannot be seen so easily is the emotional cost of doing so. If this cost is to be understood rather than assumed, future research must begin by listening carefully to expatriate workers and protecting them while they speak.

The case illustrates one plausible configuration of expatriate stress and adaptation. Its purpose is to open a line of inquiry, not to close it.

Declarations

Author contributions

The author conceived and designed the study, constructed the composite case, conducted theoretical analysis, and drafted, revised, and approved the final manuscript. The author accepts full responsibility for the content and integrity of the work.

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Not applicable. This study involved no human participants, no personal data, and no identifiable individual. Informed consent and institutional ethics approval were therefore not required. See Section 10.

Consent for publication

Not applicable. No individual person's data, images, or identifiable details are reported in this manuscript.

Data availability

No datasets were generated or analyzed during this study. All material supporting the analysis is contained within the article and its reference list.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest and no competing interests relevant to the content of this article.

Funding

This work received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

AI disclosure statement

The author declares that artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used solely for language editing, grammar correction, and improving the clarity and readability of the manuscript. All scientific and conceptual content, interpretations, arguments, and conclusions were reviewed and validated by the author, who takes full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the work.

AI tools were not treated as authors and did not assume responsibility for the intellectual or scholarly content of the manuscript. The author exercised independent judgment in reviewing and approving the final manuscript and remains fully accountable for its final content.

Author declaration

I confirm that the information provided above accurately reflects the use of AI tools in the preparation of this manuscript. I further confirm that I take full responsibility for the scholarly integrity, accuracy, originality, interpretation, and final presentation of the work.

© 2026 Reseapro Journals
https://doi.org/10.61577/jmhbs.2026.100006

References

1. Abu-Ras W, Elzamzamy K, Burghul MM, Al-Merri NH, Alajrad M, Kharbanda VA. Gendered Citizenship, Inequality, and Well-Being: The Experience of Cross-National Families in Qatar during the Gulf Cooperation Council Crisis (2017–2021). Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2022;19(11):6638. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19116638
2. Haist J, Kurth P, Lau A, Ritter M, Hofmann S. Work, private, self – towards an integrative framework of accountability: the case of low-status expatriates in precarious employment. Int J Hum Resour Manag. 2024;37(5):784–815. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2024.2374008
3. Naithani P, Jha AN. Challenges Faced by Expatriate Workers in Gulf Cooperation Council Countries. Int J Bus Manag. 2009;5(1):98–104. https://doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v5n1p98
4. Dael N, Meister A, Krings F. Reaching point break: understanding the lived experience of being overwhelmed. Front Organ Psychol. 2025;3:1590159. https://doi.org/10.3389/forgp.2025.1590159
5. Khaled SM, Gray R. Depression in migrant workers and nationals of Qatar: An exploratory cross-cultural study. Int J Soc Psychiatry. 2019;65(5):354–367. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020764019850589
6. Gao L, Lu Y, Zhang N, Wang Y, Yang W, Deng X. Psychological resilience-based multifactorial framework of expatriate adjustment. Psychol Res Behav Manag. 2023;Volume 16:3907–3924. https://doi.org/10.2147/prbm.s423152
7. Gao L, Luo X, Wang Y, Zhang N, Deng X. Retention in challenging international construction assignments: Role of expatriate resilience. J Constr Eng Manag. 2024;150(2):04023158. https://doi.org/10.1061/jcemd4.coeng-13760
8. Alharbi HA. COVID-19-Related Effects on the Psychological Well-Being and Resilience of Frontline Expatriate Nurses in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: A Qualitative Analysis. Healthcare. 2025;13(17):2200. https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare13172200
9. Rahiem MDH, Krauss SE, Ersing R. Perceived Consequences of Extended Social Isolation on Mental Well-Being: Narratives from Indonesian University Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2021;18(19):10489. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph181910489
10. Marsh E, Perez Vallejos E, Spence A. Digital workplace technology intensity: qualitative insights on employee wellbeing impacts of digital workplace job demands. Front Organ Psychol. 2024;2:1392997. https://doi.org/10.3389/forgp.2024.1392997
11. Mathew J, Joseph S, Kuncheria J. Cross-border precarity: the complex strain on expatriates and their families amidst public health crisis. Glob Health. 2025;21(1):12. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-025-01098-4
12. Abonil M, Shrivastava A, Hyland L. Resilience and well-being among expatriate entrepreneurs: Envisioning life after a global crisis. Glob Bus Organ Excell. 2023;43(2):107–121. https://doi.org/10.1002/joe.22225
13. Ridgway M. Taking a Step Back? Expatriation Consequences on Women in Dual-Career Couples in the Gulf. Merits. 2021;1(1):47–60. https://doi.org/10.3390/merits1010006
14. Schaufeli WB, Leiter MP, Maslach C, Jackson SE. Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey. Consulting Psychologists Press. 1996.
15. Smith BW, Dalen J, Wiggins K, Tooley E, Christopher P, Bernard J. The brief resilience scale: Assessing the ability to bounce back. Int J Behav Med. 2008;15(3):194–200. https://doi.org/10.1080/10705500802222972
16. Folkman S. Stress: Appraisal and Coping. Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine. 2013;23(6):1913–1915. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-1005-9_215
17. Masten AS. Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. Am Psychol. 2001;56(3):227–238. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.56.3.227
18. Windle G. What is resilience? A review and concept analysis. Rev Clin Gerontol. 2010;21(2):152–169. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0959259810000420
19. Deci EL, Ryan RM. The "What" and "Why" of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior. Psychol Inq. 2000;11(4):227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli1104_01
20. Seligman MEP, Csikszentmihalyi M. Positive psychology: An introduction. Am Psychol. 2000;55(1):5–14. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.55.1.5
21. Alodhialah AM, Almutairi AA, Almutairi M. Exploring Nurses' Emotional Resilience and Coping Strategies in Palliative and End-of-Life Care Settings in Saudi Arabia: A Qualitative Study. Healthcare. 2024;12(16):1647. https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare12161647
22. Finstad GL, Giorgi G, Lulli LG, Pandolfi C, Foti G, León-Perez JM, et al.. Resilience, Coping Strategies and Posttraumatic Growth in the Workplace Following COVID-19: A Narrative Review on the Positive Aspects of Trauma. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2021;18(18):9453. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18189453
23. Latoo J, Wadoo O, Khan F, Safi AW, Zaka-ul Haq M, Iqbal Y, et al.. Depression and anxiety among migrant workers with diabetes in Qatar: findings from the first national study. BJPsych Int. 2026:1–11. https://doi.org/10.1192/bji.2026.10121
24. Kaur H, Nixon L, Samuels F, Zenner D. A scoping review of mental health among south Asian migrants to the UK and Gulf states. Eur J Public Health. 2025;35(Supplement_6):ckaf180.136. https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckaf180.136

© 2026 Reseapro Journals

https://doi.org/10.61577/jmhbs.2026.100006