

**EFFECT OF JOB DIMENSIONS ON
REPATRIATES' CAREER AMBITION, CAREER
EXPECTATION, AND WORK ADJUSTMENT IN
GCC**

ALI AL JOFAN

UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

2023

**EFFECT OF JOB DIMENSIONS ON
REPATRIATES' CAREER AMBITION, CAREER
EXPECTATION AND WORK ADJUSTMENT IN
GCC**

by

ALI AL JOFAN

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

April 2023

DEDICATION

It is with sincere appreciation and warm regard that I dedicate this work

To my parents, Salem & Malieha

To my wife, Dhuha

To my son, Salem

To my dearest girls, Joud, Aljori, Haya, Sama & Fouz

To my brothers & sisters

Thank you all for your support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Allah Almighty for helping me to reach this milestone. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to my supervisor, Dr Anees Janeer bin Ali, for his continuous help, support, and guidance during this project. I also would like to express my special thanks to my wife, Dhuha, and my kids, who enabled me to have sufficient time and patience to accomplish this project.

I acknowledge my heartfelt appreciation and thanks to my parents for their support and their Du'ā and to the rest of my family, especially to my brother Dr. Mohamad for his observations, suggestions, and assistance. I also would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone who helped and supported me in making this research possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	v
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	ix
LIST OF APPENDICES	x
ABSTRAK	xi
ABSTRACT	xiii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of the Study	1
1.2.1 Context of the Study	4
1.3 Problem Statement	13
1.4 Research Objectives	14
1.5 Research Questions	19
1.6 Significance of the Research.....	19
1.6.1 Theoretical Significance.....	19
1.6.2 Practical Significance	22
1.7 Scope of the Present Study	24
1.8 Definitions of Key Terms.....	25
1.9 Organization of Chapters of the Present Study	26
1.10 Chapter Summary	26
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	27
2.1 Introduction	27
2.2 Repatriation	27
2.3 Work Adjustment	30
2.4 Dimensions of Job Roles.....	46
2.4.1 Role Clarity	50
2.4.2 Role Discretion.....	55
2.4.3 Role Novelty	59
2.4.4 Role Conflict	61
2.5 Career Ambition.....	64
2.6 Career Expectation	70
2.7 Conceptualizing Literature.....	74

2.7.1	Work Adjustment Model.....	74
2.7.2	Job Roles Theory	77
2.7.3	Career Ambition.....	79
2.7.4	Career Expectation Based on Expectancy-Value Theory	80
2.8	Gaps and Justifications.....	86
2.9	Research Framework.....	89
2.10	Hypotheses Development	90
2.10.1	Job Roles and Work Adjustment	91
2.10.2	Job Roles and Career Ambition	95
2.10.3	Career Ambition and Work Adjustment	99
2.10.4	The Mediation Role of Career Ambition	100
2.10.5	Moderating Role of Career Expectation	102
2.11	Chapter Summary.....	103
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY		104
3.1	Introduction	104
3.2	Research Process	104
3.3	Data Collection Method	108
3.3.1	Primary Data	108
3.3.2	Unit of Analysis	108
3.3.3	Population	110
3.3.4	Sampling Frame	111
3.3.5	Purposive Sampling	112
3.3.6	Sample Size Determination.....	112
3.3.7	G* Power.....	114
3.4	Data Collection Instrument	116
3.5	Questionnaire Design	116
3.5.1	Measurements of Research Variables	117
3.5.2	Measurements of The Variables	117
	3.5.2(a) Role Clarity.....	118
	3.5.2(b) Role Discretion.....	118
	3.5.2(c) Role Novelty	119
	3.5.2(d) Role Conflict	120
3.5.3	Measurements of Mediator Variable - Career Ambition	121
3.5.4	Measurements of Moderator Variable - Career Expectation	122
3.5.5	Measurements of Dependent Variables - Work Adjustment	123
3.6	Data Collection.....	124
3.6.1	Data Collection Procedure	125

3.7	Pre-Test	127
3.8	Pilot Test	128
3.9	Statistical Data Analysis	129
3.10	Conclusion	131
	CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS.....	132
4.1	Introduction.....	124
4.2	Preliminary Analysis.....	132
4.2.1	Response Rate	132
4.2.2	Data Coding	133
4.2.3	Data Screening	133
4.2.4	Data Screening Analysis	134
4.2.5	Missing Value Analysis	134
4.2.6	Outliers.....	135
4.2.7	Multivariate Assessment of Normality	136
4.3	Respondents' Profile	137
4.4	Common Method Variance	140
4.5	Mean & Standard Deviation	140
4.6	Goodness of Measurement.....	141
4.6.1	Construct Validity	141
4.6.2	Convergent Validity	143
4.6.3	Discriminant Validity.....	145
4.7	Structural Model Assessment.....	150
4.7.1	Multicollinearity Analysis.....	150
4.7.2	Path Coefficient and Hypotheses Testing	151
4.7.3	Direct Effect	151
4.7.3 (a)	Hypotheses Testing for Direct Relationship.....	152
4.7.4	Mediating Effect.....	156
4.7.5	Moderation Effect	159
4.7.6	Variance Explained	161
4.7.7	Effect Size	161
4.7.8	Predictive Relevance of the Structural Model	164
4.8	Chapter Summary.....	166
	CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	167
5.1	Introduction	167
5.2	Recapitulation and Summary of the Findings.....	167
5.3	Discussion of Findings on Direct Relationship.....	169
5.3.1	The Effects of Job Roles on Work Adjustment	169

5.3.1(a) Role Clarity and Work Adjustment	170
5.3.1(b) Role Discretion and Work Adjustment	171
5.3.1(c) Role Novelty and Work Adjustment	173
5.3.1(d) Role Conflict and Work Adjustment.....	176
5.4 The Effects of Job Roles on Career Ambition	177
5.4.1 Role Clarity and Career Ambition	178
5.4.2 Role Discretion and Career Ambition.....	180
5.4.3 Role Conflict and Career Ambition	182
5.4.4 Role Novelty and Career Ambition.....	185
5.5 Discussion on Effect of Career Ambition on Work Adjustment	187
5.6 Discussion on Findings of Mediation Effects	189
5.6.1 Mediating Effect of Career Ambition Between Role Clarity and Work Adjustment.....	189
5.6.2 Mediating Effect of Career Ambition Between Role Discretion and Work Adjustment.....	190
5.6.3 Mediating Effect of Career Ambition Between Role Novelty and Work Adjustment.....	192
5.6.4 Mediating Effect of Career Ambition Between Role Conflict and Work Adjustment.....	193
5.7 Discussion on the findings of Moderating Effect	194
5.7.1 Moderating Role of Career Expectation on Career Ambition and Work Adjustment.....	195
5.8 Implications of the Study	197
5.8.1 Theoretical Implications.....	197
5.8.2 Practical Implications.....	200
5.9 Limitations of the Study.....	208
5.10 Direction for Future Research.....	208
5.11 Conclusion	211
REFERENCES.....	213

APPENDICES

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Table 1.1	GCC Students Studying Abroad	2
Table 1.2	Responses from GCC on Work Barriers	13
Table 1.3	Definition of Key Terms	23
Table 2.1	Antecedents of Work Adjustments Studies	41
Table 2.2	Definitions of Ambition in English Language and Psychology Research	59
Table 3.1	Adapted Items for Role Clarity	118
Table 3.2	Adapted Items for Role Discretion	119
Table 3.3	Adapted Items for Role Novelty	120
Table 3.4	Adapted Items for Role Conflict	120
Table 3.5	Adapted Items for Career Ambition	122
Table 3.6	Adapted Items for Career Expectation	122
Table 3.7	Adapted Items for Work Adjustment	124
Table 3.8	Total Number of Completed Questionnaires Returned	127
Table 4.1	Summary of the Number of Questionnaires distributed	133
Table 4.2	Respondents Demographics	137
Table 4.3	Assessment of Non-Response Bias Using Independent Samples T-Test	139
Table 4.4	Descriptive Statistics	141
Table 4.5	Factor Loadings	142
Table 4.6	Convergent Validity	144
Table 4.7	Fornell and Larcker Criterion	146
Table 4.8	HTMT Criterion	147
Table 4.9	Direct Hypothesis Result	153
Table 4.10	Direct Hypothesis Results	155
Table 4.11	Mediating Hypothesis Results	157
Table 4.12	Mediating Hypothesis Results	159
Table 4.13	Moderating Hypothesis Results	160
Table 4.14	Variance Explained (R^2)	161
Table 4.15	Effect Size (f^2) of the Study Variables	162
Table 4.16	Blindfolding Q^2	164
Table 4.17	Summary of Hypotheses Findings	166

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1.1	Map of the GCC 5
Figure 1.2	Share of Workforce Employed in the Public Sector Across the GCC in 2016 by Country 6
Figure 1.3	Rate of Unemployment in GCC 11
Figure 2.1	Role Requirements as Predictors of Adjustment 43
Figure 2.2	Framework of International Adaptation 48
Figure 2.3	Vroom’s Expectancy Model 83
Figure 2.4	Hypotheses Development Framework 90
Figure 3.1	Research Process 105
Figure 3.2	G* Power 115
Figure 4.1	Multivariate Normality 136
Figure 4.2	HTMT Criterion 148
Figure 4.3	PLS Structural Model of the Study 149
Figure 4.4	Structural Model of the Study 163
Figure 4.5	Blindfolding Q ² 165

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CMV	Common Method Variance
CR	Composite Reliability
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
HR	Human Resource
HRM	Human Resource Management
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait
PLS	Partial Least Square
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SPSS	Statistical Packages for Social Sciences
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A 1	Questionnaire Survey
Appendix A 2	Demographic Measures
Appendix A 3	Measurements
Appendix B	Structural Model of the Study
Appendix C	Common Method Variance
Appendix D	Cross Loadings

**KESAN DIMENSI KERJA TERHADAP CITA-CITA KERJAYA
REPATRIAT, JANGKAAN KERJAYA DAN PENYESUAIAN KERJA DI
GCC**

ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan ini mengkaji hubungan antara dimensi kerja (kejelasan peranan, budi bicara peranan, konflik peranan dan kebaharuan peranan) dan penyesuaian kerja pelajar repatriat di negara-negara Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), melalui mekanisme pengantaraan (mediator) cita-cita kerjaya dan jangkaan kerjaya sebagai moderator. Tambahan pula, penilaian literatur terhadap penyesuaian kerja menunjukkan bahawa repatriat yang pulang ke negara asal berkemungkinan menghadapi cabaran dalam peralihan penyesuaian kerja berdasarkan model yang dijadikan rujukan (*Framework of International Adaptation*). Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji pengalaman repatriat di rantau GCC dan bagaimana penyesuaian kerja mereka dipengaruhi oleh empat dimensi kerja yang penting. Dengan menggunakan reka bentuk penyelidikan kuantitatif, kajian ini menyelidik 317 pelajar repatriat di GCC yang telah tinggal sekurang-kurangnya selama 12 bulan di luar negara dan juga telah bekerja sekurang-kurangnya 12 bulan selepas kembali ke GCC. Data untuk kajian ini dikumpul dari enam buah negara GCC (United Arab Emirates, Arab Saudi, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, dan Bahrain) dengan bantuan Agensi Penyelidikan Teluk di Bahrain, Kelab Pelajar Arab Saudi di Melbourne, Australia, dan juga Kementerian Pendidikan Kuwait. Data dikumpulkan secara elektronik dengan penggunaan Google Form melalui pendekatan persampelan bertujuan untuk mencapai objektif kajian. Penemuan utama kajian ialah “role discretion” di tempat kerja di GCC tidak

menunjukkan kesan yang signifikan. Justeru, penemuan ini menunjukkan kewujudan ketidaksesuaian antara pihak pengurusan atau para pekerja. Satu lagi penemuan penting dalam kajian ini ialah cita-cita kerjaya (career ambition) menjadi pengantara (mediator) antara tiga pembolehubah iaitu kejelasan peranan (role clarity), konflik peranan (role conflict) dan kebaruan peranan (role novelty) secara signifikan. Kajian ini turut mendedahkan bahawa tiada penyiasatan awal mengenai pengantaraan (mediator) cita-cita kerjaya dalam kajian silang budaya. Seterusnya, kajian ini mendapati jangkaan kajian sebagai moderator telah memoderatkan hubungan antara cita-cita kerjaya dan penyesuaian kerja para pelajar repatriat di GCC. Oleh itu, penemuan kajian ini telah membantu penyelidik untuk mendedahkan hasil penyelidikan ini yang menawarkan pengembangan literatur dalam bidang repatriat secara praktikal memberikan sumbangan kepada ejen dan pengamal dalam bidang repatriat dan ekspatriat secara praktikal. Selain itu, batasan signifikan penyelidikan ini serta hala tuju untuk penyelidikan masa hadapan juga telah dibentangkan.

**EFFECT OF JOB DIMENSIONS ON REPATRIATES' CAREER AMBITION,
CAREER EXPECTATION, AND WORK ADJUSTMENT IN GCC**

ABSTRACT

This study is founded on the notion that student repatriates' work adjustment is influenced by job dimensions set out in the Framework of International Adaptation. Generally, student repatriates expect effortless transitions prior to adjustment to the work environment. Their career ambitions and career expectations regarding their future careers might be affected by the job dimensions once they transfer to workplaces. Thus, understanding the factors that impact the adjustment process is necessary. This research is important for investigating how Gulf Cooperated Council (GCC) countries, as developing nations, encourage their students to pursue qualifications abroad, particularly in higher education. The GCC students are expected to acquire advanced skills and knowledge that can be utilized upon their return. Therefore, this investigation explores the relationships between the determinants that may affect the GCC student repatriates' job dimensions (role clarity, role discretion, role conflict, and role novelty) and their work adjustment through the mediation mechanism of career ambition and moderation of career expectations. Furthermore, the evaluation of work adjustment literature suggests that individual repatriates are likely to face challenges in their adjustment transitions modelled by the job roles. This study aimed to examine the current experience of repatriated students in the GCC region and how their work adjustments are affected by the four vital job roles. By employing a quantitative research design, this study investigated 317 repatriated students who have spent 12 months abroad and are employed for at least 12 months

upon their return to the region. Data were collected from six GCC countries (United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain) with assistance from the Gulf Research Agency in Bahrain, the Saudi Student Club in Melbourne, Australia, and the Education Ministry of Kuwait. Data were collected electronically by employing Google Forms using a purposive sampling approach to generate the findings. The investigation's key findings demonstrated that role discretion, role novelty, and role conflict exist in GCC workplaces, suggesting the presence of either managerial or employee mismatch. Another significant finding in this study revealed that career ambition significantly mediated role clarity and work adjustment. In contrast, the remaining three variables (role discretion, role conflict and role novelty) failed to mediate the relationship. No prior investigation on the mediation of career ambition has been undertaken in cross-cultural studies, which is a limitation this study addressed. A subsequent finding in this study disclosed that the moderator, career expectation, moderated career ambition and work adjustment among student repatriates in GCC. The findings assisted the researcher in drawing the outcomes of this research, which theoretically offers an expansion of the repatriation adjustment literature and practically provides an insightful contribution to agents and practitioners. Moreover, significant limitations of this research and directions for future research have also been discussed in this study.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of the study background and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) context. Subsequently, the research problem statement is introduced, followed by research objectives, research questions, theoretical and practical significances, scope, and the definition of key terms. Additionally, the chapter describes repatriates' adjustment and repatriation challenges, mainly in the GCC context. The last part of this chapter presents an outline of the research and the chapter's summary.

1.2 Background of the Study

Professionals are progressively viewing international assignments as opportunities for career growth and development. They are moving towards gaining such experience with the belief that international assignments would increase their career options in their institutions and the global job market (Ellis, Thorn & Yao, 2020). The movement of sending individuals abroad is known as expatriation (Black & Gregersen, 1999). Many organizations invest largely to provide international experiences to develop their talent pools. Besides, organizations view individuals with international experiences as valuable assets (James & Azungah, 2021). After completing an international assignment, the individuals return to their home countries and become repatriates. Repatriation is a term utilized to describe the return of the

sojourners (Black & Gregersen, 1999; Selmer, 1999). According to several authors (Bucher, Burmeister, Osland & Deller, 2020; Geeraert, Demes & Ward, 2021; James & Azungah, 2021), repatriation or cross-cultural re-entry adjustment back home is the transition from the foreign country back into the home country.

Since 2005, the GCC countries have implemented workforce strategies to minimize unemployment caused by growing populations, market trends, and technologies. The nations rely highly on the local workforce through a term they refer to as localisation. For a long time, the GCC nations have relied on expatriates, who largely occupy many sectors in their countries. One of their strategies was to send their students abroad to learn new skills and knowledge to fill local professional positions upon their return. This phenomenon has been viewed as human capital development (Ramaswami, Carter & Dreher 2016). Human capital is vital for the development and prosperity of organizations and governments.

The number of individuals from GCC who have been studying abroad has increased and continues to grow since 2005 (Almuarik, 2019; Aluwaisheg, 2020). Unfortunately, such movements, which represent significant issues for individuals and associated bodies (organizations and governments), have not been investigated in the context of GCC. Similarly, there are no consistent statistics on the number of self-funded repatriates who have returned. Data in Table 1.1 details the large numbers of GCC students studying abroad.

Table 1.1

GCC Students Studying Abroad

Country	Total Number of Students Abroad	Percentage of Total Students (%)	Outbound Ratio
United Arab Emirates	12,276	0.2	5.9

Country	Total Number of Students Abroad	Percentage of Total Students (%)	Outbound Ratio
Saudi Arabia	77,406	1.4	4.8
Kuwait	24,694	0.4	21.2
Oman	16,306	0.3	13.6
Qatar	13,319	0.2	0.8
Bahrain	5,686	0.1	12.7

Source: uis.unesco.org (2019)

The top preferred destinations to study abroad among GCC outbound students are the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, Canada, and Asia. Preferences were given to English-speaking countries and areas of expertise, where English is an essential skill for work and study and eases the process of finding jobs when they return (Almuarik, 2019). Furthermore, as education becomes increasingly global, student repatriation will remain a key topic that requires ongoing scrutiny.

Numerous studies indicated dissatisfaction associated with repatriates' adjustments as encountered challenges in such phases override expatriation (James & Azungah, 2021). Nevertheless, researchers believe re-entry barriers to the repatriation process, which hinder effective repatriations, range from personal, social, and organizational factors.

Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991) stated that incoming repatriates could adjust to their homelands through work. Work adjustment occurs when employees use their skills, experiences, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours towards organizational roles and the workplace (Findeisen, Jüttler, Neuenschwander & Schumann, 2022). In addition, Black and his associates (1991) found vital factors for work adjustment, which they referred to as job dimensions (role clarity, role discretion, role novelty, and role

conflict). The job dimensions are applicable for expatriation and repatriation work adjustments.

Research scholars in GCC (Almalki, FitzGerald & Clark, 2012; Alshammari, 2012; Salam, Segal, Abu-Helalah, Gutierrez, Joosub, Ahmed, Qarni, 2019) have paid attention to work adjustments of the existing or local employees. Unfortunately, the work adjustment of repatriates has not been sufficiently discussed in the literature (Aldossari & Robertson, 2018). Furthermore, the literature investigating the indirect influence of individual-level factors on work adjustment among student repatriates remains scarce. No study has examined work adjustment factors, particularly in the context of GCC.

Consequently, there is a dire need to study the return students' repatriation pattern and work adjustment. Therefore, this study aims to develop a framework to examine work adjustment among student repatriates in GCC.

1.2.1 Context of the Study

The Gulf Cooperation Council, abbreviated as GCC, was established in 1981 and consists of six sovereign States Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Bahrain (Britannica.com) (refer to Figure 1.1). Furthermore, GCC societies consist of two main ethnicities with different ecological structures: Bedouin (nomadic), in Arabic text qabīla, ashīra, qawm, and non-Bedouin (sedentary) rural and urban haadhira or hadhar. Both ethnicities have a parallel linguistic system (Cadora, 1992; Fiazuddin, 2012). Bedouins are the tribal ethnicities originating from the Arabian Peninsula, currently known as the GCC countries, including Iraq and Yemen. Bedouin tribes have long developed travelling behaviours that they still exercise today, where

knowledge resources represent essential elements in their way of life. According to the old poetries of the Bedouins, knowledge-seeking and resources have been prominent throughout the different dynasties (Fiazuddin, 2012). Knowledge seeking has been continuously observed and adopted in the GCC region today.

Economically, the GCC holds about 40% of the world's oil reserves and 20% of the world's gas reserves (Aluwaisheg, 2020). According to the US International Trade Administration (2018), the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the world's key player in oil-exporting countries, with 267.0 billion barrels. Similarly, the natural resources of the State of Qatar are the world's third-largest proven reserves of natural gas, with an existing reserve of approximately 25 billion barrels of crude oil and 23.7 trillion cubic meters of natural gas. Nevertheless, the reserves are lower than the reserves held by Russia and Iran (export.gov, 2019).

Figure 1.1

Map of the GCC



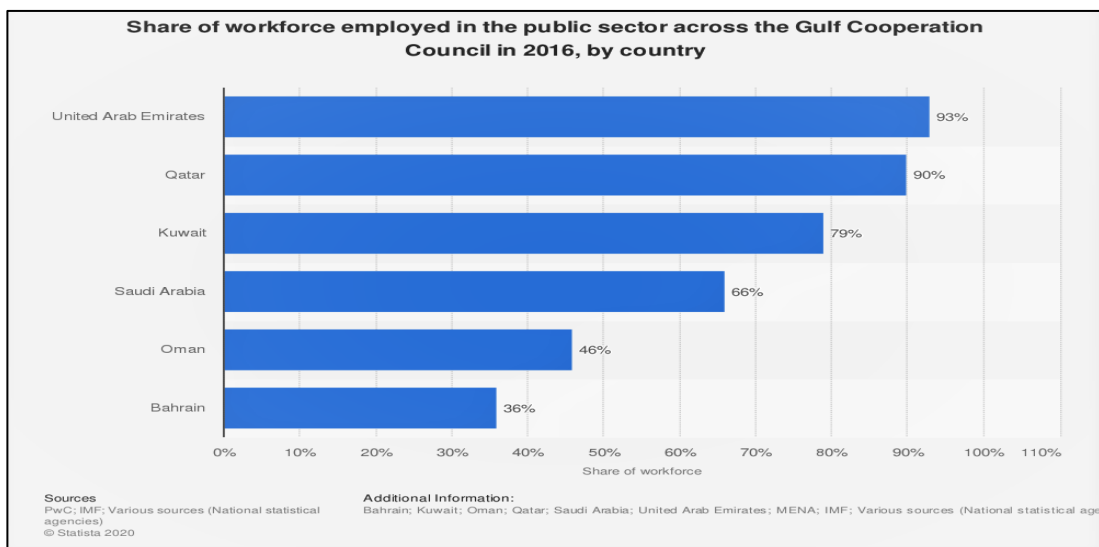
Source: Google Images/Map of GCC

Unfortunately, the GCC economies face challenges within their Labor markets as they depend on low-skilled expatriate Labor in many economic sectors (Financial Tribune, 2018; Peddada & Alhuthaifi, 2021). The jobs are filled by these low-skilled labor, leaving the repatriates with fewer job alternatives. Coincidentally, the public sectors across the GCC region are experiencing a spike in hiring rates, which has inevitably triggered GCC countries led by Saudi Arabia to gradually adopt localisation principles, such as “Saudization” in their respective economic sectors (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2020).

A senior economist, Richard Boxshall (2018), from Power Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) Middle East, a reputable academic institution specialized in economic studies based in Dubai, reasoned that GCC economies are experiencing weak Labor productivity levels compared with their peers as they rely on low-skilled expatriates in numerous sectors. Boxshall further asserted that the public sector across the region is heavily overstuffed (see Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2

Share of the Workforce Employed in the Public Sector across the GCC in 2016 by Country



Source: Statista (2020)

Figure 1.2 shows the massive share of employment in the public sector in UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar. Bahrain and Oman have moderate numbers compared to the other GCC states in 2016. It illustrates the percentage of citizens filling positions within the public sectors per country in the GCC due to the adapted localisation policies by local governments. The localization policy is believed to cause the public sector to be overstaffed, significantly impacting the private sector. For new workforce entrants in the private sector, challenges include the unwillingness to join the private sector due to low pay.

Furthermore, according to Hertog (2022), there are severe segmentations in Labor markets in GCC countries. The segmentations emerge from the immigration and gender policies and the creation of highly paid protected jobs for nationals in the public sector. These have led to overstaffing, low productivity, avoidance of employment in lower-paid private industry, and distortion in the preparation of the education system to fulfil careers in the public sector. Similarly, problems exist with the level of training and expectations in national Labor forces that heavily impact recruitment in private sectors.

Work barriers have also been identified in a career-related study by knowledgegroup.co (2017) in the GCC region. The study collected responses from six GCC states. The responses are presented in Table 1.2 below. A total of 1337 respondents of different age groups between 25 to 44 years old, with varying qualifications from bachelor's degree to PhD and full-time employees from entrant to senior levels, took part in the study.

Table 1.2

Responses from GCC on Work Barriers

What Are the Barriers?	Percentage
Lack of support from the organization	53.5%
Not willing to sacrifice other aspects (such as family and children).	47.4%
The spouse's career has priority	40.1%
Lack of suitable development programmes within the organization	38.6%
Difficulty in moving to a different location or too long commute to work	35.8%

Source: Knowledgegroup.co (2017)

According to Mina (2021), unemployment, segregations, and work barriers are long and complex issues that require in-depth research. Consequently, GCC governments implemented strategies to reduce the reliance on expatriates and foreign workers and to fill skill shortage gaps within their Labor markets, the governments have made significant investments in education (Karabchuk, Shomotova & Chmel, 2021). According to (El-Saharty, Kheyfets, Herbst & Ajwad, 2020), many people from the region sought qualifications and internship opportunities from various institutions abroad, with some attempting to acquire undesirable skills. Such activities resulted in a massive skill shortage, putting an additional strain on the Labor market.

1.2.2 Repatriation Challenges in GCC

Repatriation is conceptualized as an objective period that describe a person's return from abroad, whether to work, study, or migrate. For students this journey is accompanied by objectives and expectations of finding a career or advance in a career.

GCC countries send their students to study abroad for different programs, technical (information technology, engineering), and non-technical (business, management, science) (Peddada & Alhuthaifi, 2021; Lambert, Yaaqeib, Crookes, Cody & Saad, 2021), with generous scholarships being offered to students from different study backgrounds and disciplines. It has been reported that there is inappropriate selection of specializations by students from the GCC and a lack of career programs (Zayed, 2018), signifying the challenges in their local markets that contribute to the rise in unemployment rates and creating skill shortages. Traditionally, individuals in the GCC prefer employment in public-sector and avoid private jobs. With the rising unemployment in the region and the overstuffed public-sectors (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2020), it has become more challenging for graduates to find suitable careers (Lambert et al., 2021). Therefore, the poor selection of specializations by students and the absence of career programs counselling could represent difficulties for adjusting repatriates.

In the environment of increasing economic globalisation, the transition from education to practical and rewarding careers is challenging for young people in many places worldwide. Some GCC countries (such as Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain) face persisting high unemployment rates among youth (aged 15-24), particularly young individuals. The high unemployment rates suggest that economic development is insufficient to solve the region's youth unemployment issues (Mohamed, 2020). Besides GCC nations, reducing unemployment is a serious challenge for most governments (Bokhari, 2020).

Unemployed workers (or potential workers) waste a nation's resources, a drain on the informal support networks, and a pool of possible or actual troublemakers

(Harry, 2007). Based on the statistics available from 2016, the youth unemployment in Saudi Arabia was 27.8%, UAE was 11%, and Qatar was the least, with 1.7% (refer to Figure 1.3). High unemployment levels are a rapidly growing problem due to the increasing population and the reluctance of locals to work in the private sector. The efforts by local GCC governments to train local nationals to raise their competency levels for private sector firms to recruit more local workers are also facing challenges (Bokhari, 2020).

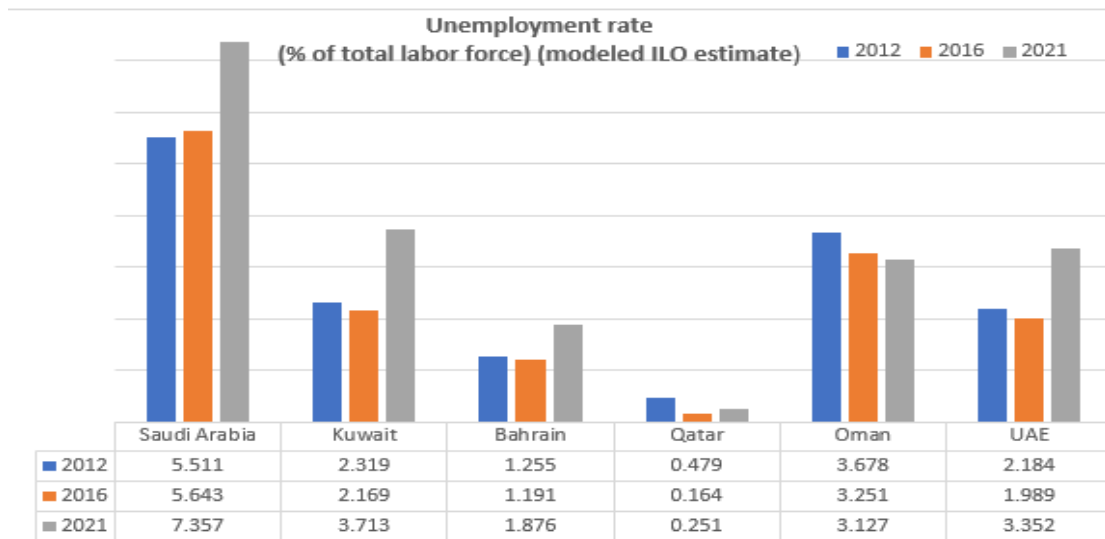
Challenges persist in workplaces within both public and private sectors for GCC student repatriates (Lambert et al., 2021). Al-Waqfi and Forstenlechner (2014) stated that adopted localisation programmes are not assisting the private sector or multinational firms in achieving rationalisation in their work environments.

According to Khan, Rajasekar and Al-Asfour (2015), efforts are needed to move away from relationship-based practices. Performance-based criteria in hiring, selection, rewards, and promotion must be employed regularly to change the attitude of top management. Managers' beliefs are embedded in routines and old ways of doing things. Involving employees in the career development decision-making process and bringing transparency and fairness to the process can create a win-win situation. Organizational principles must be developed to encourage employee engagement and needs to be combined with a move away from the inequitable relationship to be based on merit (Bindabel, 2020). In GCC, human resource (HR) managers usually rely on "trial and error" to cope with the impact of macro-level changes occurrences at workplaces. Unfortunately, the region also has a scarcity of skilled HR professionals (Abdalla, 2015), which has impacted the Labor market and contributed to the increase in unemployment. According to (Mohamed, 2020; Bokhari, 2020), unemployment in

GCC has inflated, and when repatriates cannot find jobs matching their skills increases the number. Figure 1.3 depicts the GCC unemployment rates by country.

Figure 1.3

Rate of Unemployment in GCC



Source: World Development Indicators 2021

For a long time, the GCC governments were able to deal with unemployment by providing government positions for its relatively few residents or having enough money from oil exports to pay large social allowances and keep young people engaged in the low-demanding education system (Mohamed, 2020). Nevertheless, the population has increased, while the oil revenue has decreased (at least until 2004). Thus, in recent years, unemployment among citizens has risen to levels where real jobs must be created, and many foreigners who hold jobs have been sent away. In such situations, outbound students may face serious challenges in returning to their home countries due to the scarcity of new jobs, high occupancy of existing roles, and large numbers of returning repatriates that can become burdens in the future.

As per the data available, the number of individuals going to study abroad from the GCC countries indicates that Saudi Arabia has the highest number of outbound among the GCC with 1.4%, followed by Kuwait (0.4%), Oman (0.3%), UAE and Qatar (0.2% respectively) and Bahrain (0.1%). Notwithstanding, serious repatriation issues in GCC varied between lack of repatriation programmes, local workforce market in both public and private sectors, and selection criteria for sending students abroad. According to Dr Zayed Al-Harhi, a former Saudi cultural attaché in Malaysia in 2018, scholarships and students studying abroad are giant projects contradicted by overcrowding, negligence, poor regulations, and absence of standards (Al-Harhi, 2018). A lack of individual discretion is allowed with an inappropriate selection of specialisations. Students who achieved low academic levels and requirement standards were sent abroad in large numbers, resulting in material waste, family loss, and wasted opportunities, while some acquired counterproductive qualifications (Bodor & Holzmann, 2016; Mina, 2021).

There are no adequate statistics concerning the number of returning students repatriated to the GCC region. Many students from GCC attend overseas universities, and the vast majority return home to begin their careers (Lazell, 2022). The work laws in GCC stipulate that a certain percentage of a corporation's workforce must be local citizens. The percentage depends on the activity of the business. Research from the GCC Labor market exposed a great mismatch between qualifications acquired by repatriates and market needs that give rise to work adjustment challenges.

The issue of unemployment and its effects on repatriates remains vital as its linkage with individuals returning to their homelands is complex (jobs-saudia.com, 2020). Unemployment is a long and multifaceted issue that requires in-depth studies

and the development of practical and realistic solutions to shift from partial and cosmetic solutions, in which all sectors participate to diagnose the reality to consider the social future and economic effect of unemployment to elevate its severity to achieve prosperity (Fasano & Goyal, 2004; Hariri, 2010; Alamoudi, 2017; Mina, 2021).

Repatriation is also an increasing challenge as Labor market challenges in GCC are escalating. One can envisage the challenges associated with the incoming students' repatriates and, most importantly, work engagement and adjustments. Therefore, the present study investigates factors of work adjustment among student repatriates in the GCC region.

1.3 Problem Statement

Governments and organizations in GCC invest substantially in sending their students overseas to pursue higher degrees (undergraduate and postgraduate) to compete in global markets and satisfy the need for competent and skilled employees in the GCC Labor market (Pavan, 2020). In the private sector, GCC nationals comprise only 10 to 25% of the workforce (El-Saharty et al., 2020). Resultantly, there is a mismatch between GCC workers' educational and technical credentials and the skill requirements of private businesses. The governments have acknowledged GCC residents' underemployment in the private sector as a serious social and economic issue (El-Saharty et al., 2020; Pavan, 2020). The remuneration offered to citizens of GCC nations is less than public remuneration. Nevertheless, GCC citizens do not favour low remuneration.

Regulations in private sector employment differ largely from public employment rules in GCC. Private sector rules are not as flexible as other rules in the

public sector. An employee has less stress in meeting the demands of work roles in the public sector. Private sectors are mostly owned by investors, where demands are high, and mistakes are not simply tolerated (El-Saharty et al., 2020). According to the Arab Human Development Report (2021), many people from GCC countries, particularly high numbers of young people and individuals who heavily rely on employment in public sectors, continue to receive educations that do not reflect the needs of Labor markets. Nevertheless, professional and talent shortages in the region (ilo.org) may represent serious issues for repatriates returning and engaging with work. Nonetheless, this situation may also be attributed to a lack of expectations considering the market situation, uncertainty, and the type of education sought by the local workforce.

Studies showed a high level of dissatisfaction with how repatriates were appraised and promoted in GCC countries compared to what they had witnessed in international organizations (Syed, Ali & Hennekam, 2018; Budhwar, Pereira, Mellahi, & Singh, 2019). In such cases, individuals reflect negatively on the lack of explicit criteria in HR policies after recognising the loose ends in the policies and transparencies when their expectations are not fulfilled. Almuarik (2019) explored repatriates' dis-assimilation with their home organizational culture upon their return in the context of a transition from Western learning and practice to Eastern corporate values. Their findings revealed that repatriates' dis-assimilation with a specific aspect of their organizational roles led to a difficult repatriation adjustment period. Approximately 90% of the study respondents were found to be dissatisfied with their jobs.

Al Shimai (2018) stated that repatriates experienced adjustment challenges in performing new work tasks or carrying out old work tasks upon repatriation for two main reasons in the GCC region. Al Shimai further highlighted that a lack of concern in the Saudi public sector department and the absence of a repatriation programme are

the main concerns in repatriates' adjustment issues. Aldossari and Robertson (2016) conducted a study in Saudi Arabia on repatriation during international assignments. According to them, the returnees have begun to consider using their old work skills and not utilising their newly acquired skills, which led to difficulties with the adjustment. For many returnees, organizational principles and business practices are inappropriate. Aldossari and Robertson (2016) reported that one of the interviewees claimed:

“I did my PhD in geophysics, I came back to the same department, same team, same everything. I expected that I would be able to move a little bit after the PhD. The work I am doing now doesn't need a PhD degree; they should move me to a more advanced department where I can apply my knowledge.”

The GCC repatriates face career planning challenges, which in turn, affect employability and adjustment. According to a recent study by Lambert et al. (2021), there is a dearth of awareness concerning how to invest in careers from the views of (knowing and knowing how) planning careers in GCC, therefore, placing challenges on finding jobs that match their experiences. According to Elbanna (2021), HR departments in GCC tend to disregard repatriates' notions, which complicates their potential abilities and aspirations, which are key necessities for adaptation.

Kuwaiti Alrai newspaper published an article on the 19th of April 2021 concerning the avoidance and rejection of jobs offered by private sectors among Kuwaiti citizens. The report stated that a young Kuwaiti citizen graduated with a distinction grade in mechanical engineering master's degree from a reputable UK university and was repatriated back to Kuwait in 2018. He rejected jobs offered to him that did not meet his expectations after all the years he spent studying abroad. The

article concluded that the jobs offered to him did not match his skills and desire. When the article was written, he was applying for jobs overseas (alraimedia.com, 2021). The situation indicates that returning individuals feel that the jobs offered do not match their skills and abilities. Therefore, they seek new work opportunities with other organizations because they think their newly acquired abilities are underappreciated or underutilized in their new jobs.

According to aleqt.com (2019), work conflicting values were mentioned by a repatriate who recently returned to Kuwait from Australia after completing a higher degree in electronic engineering. Working in the public sector, he was assigned to a career unrelated to his field at first, then to a lower-level position. In addition, he stated that collaborative tasks at work are handled differently than he had previously learned. The same report from aleqt.com (2019) indicated that 64% of university students acknowledged receiving job offers from outside their countries after they graduated in an attempt to secure better work conditions. For instance, 19% of Saudi, 10% of Kuwaiti, and 13% of Bahraini graduates sought jobs outside their countries, including UAE and Qatar. A study from Harvard University (2019) reported the following Labor market issues in GCC:

- There is a large mismatch between the skills that Saudis acquire and those required by employers.
- Human capital investments do not match the needs of the private sector, which leads to inefficient allocation of skills and workers.
- Saudi workers generally expect more favourable pay, working conditions, and career objectives than firms are willing to offer.

- Policies facilitating the information flow from employers to future job seekers would help students make more informed decisions and adjust expectations to reality.

Furthermore, according to Elbanna (2021) and Almuarik (2019), no efforts are apparently being made to bridge the expectations gap between repatriated employees and employers, including gaps linked to HR practices that can effectively understand the repatriation-related challenges. Similarly, Lambert et al. (2021) stated that there is a lack of understanding concerning Labor market trends and career planning by students studying abroad.

Repatriates can adjust (better fit) to the organization's environment with the assistance of a good re-socialization process. External variables connected with repatriates' adjustment have been investigated in theories. For example, James and Azungah (2021) argued that organizational support lessens the uncertainty involved with adjustment. Nevertheless, empirical research on the impact of human aspects such as career ambition, role clarity, role discretion, role novelty, and role conflict on repatriates' adjustment has not been undertaken as per the researcher's knowledge. No such study has been conducted among GCC students' repatriates.

Previous scholarly research in the GCC context has focused on the challenges and changes students endure while studying abroad and when they return home. According to Alawi (2020), no previous information on the actual experiences of GCC repatriates and their impressions of the working environment after their abroad experience had been written or published. The lack of such information and the debate over whether the technique is the best in the context of the GCC reveals a pressing need and a promising opportunity to investigate the lived experiences and transformation

tales of GCC students' repatriates. The challenges confronting GCC repatriates will remain critical and multifaceted, including an increase in unemployment that will necessitate sound decision-making strategies and extensive research. According to studies, many people obtained undesirable qualifications abroad and continue to do so, which can lead to long-term problems. Resultantly, the current study attempts to validate the reason and purpose for choosing this research since there is a dearth of research in this field, especially in GCC contexts.

1.4 Research Objectives

The present study focuses on achieving the following objectives:

1. To investigate the effect of student repatriates' job roles (role clarity, role discretion, role novelty, and role conflict) on their work adjustment in GCC.
2. To investigate the effect of student repatriates' job roles (role clarity, role discretion, role novelty, and role conflict) on career ambition in their work adjustment in GCC.
3. To determine the effect of student repatriates' career ambition on work adjustment in their work in GCC.
4. To examine the mediating effect of student repatriates' career ambition on the relationship between job dimensions (role clarity, role discretion, role novelty, and role conflict) and work adjustment in their work in GCC.
5. To examine the moderating role of student repatriates' career expectations between career ambition and work adjustment in their work in GCC.

1.5 Research Questions

- 2 The present study aims to address the following questions:
- 3 Do the GCC student repatriates' job dimensions (role clarity, role discretion, role novelty, and role conflict) significantly influence their work adjustment in GCC?
- 4 Do the GCC student repatriates' job dimensions (role clarity, role discretion, role novelty, and role conflict) significantly influence their career ambitions in GCC?
- 5 Does career ambition positively affect student repatriates' work adjustment process in GCC?
- 6 Does career ambition mediate the relationship between the student repatriates' job roles (role clarity, role discretion, role novelty, and role conflict) and their work adjustment in GCC?
- 7 The higher the expectation, the stronger the relationship between career ambition and work adjustment.

1.6 Significance of the Research

The present study provides theoretical and practical contributions, as discussed in the following sections.

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

The current study contributes to the existing literature by analysing the relevance of the frameworks to the GCC society, where religion, beliefs, economics, social structure, and perceptual elements are culturally distinct from the previously studied places and cultures. Previous research on repatriation literature has greatly

emphasised industrialised economies and focused less on developing nations (James, 2021; Tahir, 2021). A study on GCC, such as the present study, will help expand the extant literature.

Additionally, the study will explain the factors used that might influence work adjustment through the mediating role of GCC repatriates' career ambitions that have not been previously tested. Theoretically, this study will test the existing literature on career ambition and the roles of job dimensions (work clarity, work discretion, work novelty, and conflict) supported by Black et al. (1991). In such a context, the study enhances knowledge of the influence of career ambition.

In psychology, career ambition is defined as goals or plans for accomplishments in Locke's (1996) goal-setting theory. It was also defined as the persistent and generalized striving for success, attainment, and accomplishment, which positively influences success (Judge & Mueller, 2012; Bui, Shoaib, Vu, Nguyen & Nhuận, 2021). Moreover, the present study adds to the body of knowledge by examining the moderating role of career expectation and its effect between career ambition and the mode of work adjustment among the repatriates in GCC.

Career expectations in the workplace play significant roles in developing thoughts, beliefs, and behaviours that drive attitudes to meet reality towards meeting business objectives. People are likely to reflect on career expectations in forecasting the present or future work situation (Kong, Okumus & Bu, 2020). According to Adeoye (2005), two types of career expectations exist. Direct expectations, such as visible ones, include wages and salary, hours of operations, duties and responsibilities, rules and regulations. The direct expectation, also known as the visible expectation, is normally understood by both the employee and the employer.

The second type is linked to the individual's level of experience and work, with great relation to miscommunication, misunderstanding, and occasionally conflict. Relatively, different career expectations derive from factors such as family backgrounds, perceptions, situations, and the environment of individuals (Adeoye & Williams, 2007; Kong et al., 2020). Nonetheless, the present study will add to the existing literature on work adjustment by exploring the moderating role of career expectations. Hence, it develops knowledge by employing both variables of career ambition as a mediator and career expectation as a moderator to understand further the relationships between job dimensions' roles and work adjustments.

Most of the research on repatriates has used the traditional approach to measure the model. The current study contributes to the body of knowledge by examining the theoretical framework using structural equation modelling (SEM) in Smart PLS 3.0. Furthermore, this study employed the latest techniques to explore the predictive model of repatriates' adjustment to achieve highly accurate and reliable results.

Many studies on the organizational settings have assessed the expected impacts of repatriates' adjustment during returning home or the impacts on those already working in their home countries. Therefore, this study selected the population comprising individuals who returned to their home countries in the last five years to offer a broad view of the latest trend in the GCC region.

Lastly, previous studies on repatriation in the Middle East chose a qualitative approach to explore adjustment for repatriates. Nevertheless, limited attention has been given to empirical examinations of the repatriation phenomena compared to general research and investigations on expatriation. Therefore, the current study adds knowledge to the literature by examining repatriates' adjustments through quantitative

research. In addition, the current research adds to the literature by introducing a new construct and explaining in-depth comprehension of relative theories and how they relate to important constructs. For example, the study includes new variables (career ambition and career expectation) that help to develop and explain the phenomena of repatriation with detailed reasoning by identifying factors and key relationships.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

As the research on the topic of GCC appears to have been disregarded, the researcher is motivated to investigate the region and believes that the topic is essentially worthwhile to be assessed. Therefore, this study is expected to shed light on the adjustment of repatriates in the GCC region to understand better how a repatriation process occurs in the region by relating it to the work adjustment phase. Practically, this exploratory study concerning the GCC region provides help to actors (repatriates) and agency stakeholders (governments, private businesses, and educational institutions). The findings will help regulate their understanding of the phenomenon and tackle any likely issues resulting from the lack of awareness and better knowledge.

Understanding the repatriation process minimize s the risk of failure, as shown in previous studies by Black and Mendenhall (1990) and Black et al. (1991). As there is little work on this topic within GCC, the present study will be viable to explain the current situation as a platform for future research. The study findings will be practically helpful for the ministries of education, cultural attaché offices abroad, private businesses, and other associated bodies in GCC to better understand the process their repatriates undergo.

Moreover, the practical contribution of the present study for individuals is that it will create an awareness of the adjustment processes to work, enabling them to be better prepared and equipped with the proper skills to ease their adjustment process.

The personal narratives and perspectives of the repatriates will be beneficial for GCC students currently studying abroad or individuals looking to study overseas. They can learn what to expect when travelling overseas for further studies and returning to GCC, especially on potential issues attached to administering their return and the adjustment to their work roles. Understanding these issues may be pivotal in helping prospective scholars form suitable support networks abroad and back at home, manage their expectations, and determine the best ways to transfer knowledge upon their return.

Lastly, the current research will benefit the respective ministries of the GCC governments (how they should review and update higher education policy, curriculum, and instructional materials), taking into account the repatriates' views and how their views can be utilized for the best possible career planning outcomes.

Reducing bureaucratic processes in the GCC system could help increase flexibility in decision-making, incentivising faculty to participate proactively in the change process. The toned-down process could be complemented by professional development opportunities such as accessibility to facilities, support resources for international professional meetings, and the development of a strong career for returning individuals.

This research focuses on identifying repatriates' work adjustment through lived experiences of repatriation procedures by emphasising cognitive and motivational forces (career ambition) influencing repatriates' adjusting to their work. For example, the research reviews the repatriation process and how motivational forces can affect the

repatriates' psychological cognition to drive them to make adjustments. Fatigues associated with repatriates (including distress, anxiety, trauma, and dissatisfaction) are results of inadequately managed repatriation endeavours hindering adjustment to work (Aldossari & Robertson, 2018; Naude & Vögel, 2018; James, 2021).

This study evaluates such weaknesses by addressing the effect of career ambition as a factor that is believed to act as a mediator even in adverse events and its effectiveness as a source of success in career psychology (El Baroudi, Fleisher, Khapova, Jansen & Richardson, 2017; Dražić, Petrović & Vukelić, 2018; Bui et al., 2021). Furthermore, this study provides a primary empirical contribution to the literature on repatriation and work adjustment in the domain of cross-cultural studies.

1.7 Scope of the Present Study

Based on the theoretical foundation, the current research examined role clarity, role discretion, role novelty, and role conflict in GCC student repatriates' work adjustments. The study also tests the mediating role of career ambition and moderating role of career expectation. The scope of the present study is limited to student repatriates' comprising working citizens involving both genders (males and females) from the GCC region (including Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar) who have experience studying overseas of a minimum of 12 months outside the GCC region and a working experience of at least 12 months.