

“Navigating between Worlds: Understanding the Mental Health Dynamics of Corporate Expatriates in Multicultural Environments in Singapore”: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

The journey of human development is a continuous process that spans from infancy to old age, with adulthood presenting unique developmental challenges and opportunities. Central to this stage is the role of work, which significantly impacts the quality of life. The workplace serves as a crucible for personal growth, social interactions, and identity formation. The concept of a midlife crisis, a period of intense introspection and lifestyle change typically occurring between ages 40 and 60, is a critical aspect of adult development. Objective: This study aims to explore the specific experiences of mid-level executive expatriates in Singapore, focusing on their identity, sense of belonging, and mental well-being. It seeks to understand how the multicultural work environment in Singapore affects these expatriates' identities and mental health, particularly during the midlife phase, which is characterized by career reassessment and personal transitions. Methodology: The research employs interpretative phenomenological analysis to deeply understand the participants' experiences. This qualitative approach involves conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with 12 middle-aged executive expatriates in Singapore. The methodology is designed to capture rich, personal narratives that reveal how these individuals navigate their unique challenges. Conclusion: The study reveals significant insights into the intertwining of career and personal identity among mid-level executive expatriates, highlighting the critical role of relationships in their happiness and well-being. It also sheds light on the strategies these individuals employ for future planning and coping with midlife transitions. The findings contribute valuable perspectives on

the mental health challenges and adaptation strategies of expatriates in multicultural environments, emphasizing the complex interplay between work, identity, and well-being in the context of midlife development.

Keywords

Corporate Expatriates, Multicultural Environment, Mental Health, Midlife Crisis, Executive Expatriates, Identity, Belonging, Well-Being

1. Introduction

Human development is a continuous process that spans from infancy to old age, with adulthood being a significant stage filled with distinct developmental challenges and prospects. A key element of adulthood is the role of work, which greatly influences life quality. The workplace serves more than just as a means for earning; it's a setting where personal development, social interactions, and identity shaping take place. Theories about adult development frequently intertwine with aspects of the workplace, providing perspectives on how working life influences different phases of adulthood, from the early stages to retirement (Fong & Tripathi, 2021).

In the tapestry of adulthood development, one phenomenon that often garners attention is the midlife crisis. This period, typically occurring between the ages of 40 and 60, is seen as a critical phase where individuals reassess their life's achievements, goals, and aspirations. It aligns intricately with the theories of adult development and the impact of workplace experiences. Erik Erikson's theory, for example, situates the midlife crisis in the stage of "generativity vs. stagnation", where the focus is on creating or nurturing things that will outlast the individual. This could manifest in career shifts, changes in personal relationships, or a deeper pursuit of personal passions, reflecting a desire for meaningful contribution and legacy (Kang, 2020). The concept of a midlife crisis is profoundly ingrained in popular culture and psychological discourse. Typically emerging in adults between 40 and 60, it is marked by intense introspection, identity reassessment, and notable lifestyle shifts. Psychologist Elliott Jaques first coined the term in 1965, encapsulating a phase in adulthood where the awareness of mortality and the finite nature of life triggers a deep reevaluation of one's achievements, goals, and aspirations (Bushong, 2013). In psychological theory, Erik Erikson's concept of "Generativity vs. Stagnation", a stage of psychosocial development in middle adulthood, is often referenced in midlife (Jaques, 1965). This stage is about contributing to society and guiding future generations, focusing on leaving a lasting legacy. In parallel, Carl Jung's psychology emphasizes midlife as a crucial time for self-discovery and individuation, a phase of integrating different aspects of the personality to achieve wholeness (Kang, 2020).

Daniel Levinson's life structure theory further contextualizes this, identifying

three critical life transitions: early adulthood, midlife, and late adulthood. Midlife stands out as a significant reassessment period characterized by profound changes stemming from life review and dealing with internal conflicts (Berger, 2014). Levinson posited that this transition, starting around age 40, involves a “midlife review”, where individuals reflect on their life’s trajectory and consider realignments to express suppressed talents, desires, and core values (Levinson et al., 1978).

Levinson’s theory takes on unique dimensions when applied to the context of expatriates in Singapore. For these individuals, the midlife transition is a period of comprehensive self-review and reevaluation of life choices, especially in the context of their expatriate experience. It often involves significant shifts in career paths, personal relationships, physical health, and social dynamics (Levinson et al., 1978). In the backdrop of Singapore’s competitive, multicultural environment, these expatriates may reassess their professional goals and personal relationships. “The midlife review” is more than adjusting to a new country; it involves exploring suppressed aspects of themselves, leading to potential personal and professional transformations (Adams & van de Vijver, 2015).

As described by Ward, Bochner, & Furnham (2020), expatriates are typically highly skilled, adaptable, and belong to the upper-middle class in their host societies. This study focuses on corporate expatriates assigned overseas by their companies (Takeuchi, 2010). Singapore, Asia’s wealthiest country in terms of GDP per capita (World Bank, 2023), hosts a significant expatriate population, with about 200,000 holding Employment Passes and earning over SGD\$5000 monthly. Executive expatriates, the top 10% of this group, face unique challenges. Despite Singapore’s attractiveness for globally mobile professionals (HSBC’s Expat Explorer), many report symptoms of burnout (95%) and a reassessment of life priorities since the pandemic’s onset (73%) (Cigna, 2022). This elite group confronts increasing stress amid financial instability, economic uncertainties, and evolving work models. EGN Singapore (2022) estimates that 30% of executives have experienced clinical depression, yet 82% find discussing loneliness difficult.

The international work environment significantly shapes expatriates’ identities and perspectives (Mao & Shen, 2015). Exposed to multiple cultures, they undergo acculturation (Berry, 2005), often valuing these experiences for enhancing intercultural communication skills, though they may struggle with belonging (Moore & Barker, 2012). Common challenges include increased stress, emotional difficulties, mental health issues, depression, and substance abuse along with feelings of alienation and homesickness (Bushong, 2013).

Psychotherapy is recommended for managing these complex lifestyles (Filipic Sterle et al., 2018; Lazarova et al., 2015). There is a pronounced need among expatriates for safety and recognition of their unique multicultural experiences. They often feel alienated from both their home and host cultures, leading to confusion about where “home” truly is (Bushong, 2013). Therapists with per-

sonal expatriate experience understanding these cultural dynamics are seen as beneficial (Filipic Sterle et al., 2018).

In conclusion, the midlife crisis in expatriates is a multifaceted experience shaped by professional pressures, cultural transitions, and personal reevaluations. Their unique position as highly skilled, globally mobile professionals in a culturally diverse and demanding environment like Singapore adds layers to their midlife experiences. The need for psychological support tailored to their specific experiences is evident, as is the importance of recognizing the profound impact of cultural, professional, and personal transitions (OpenAI, 2023).

2. Research Purpose and Identified Gaps

This research aims to delve deeper into the psychological impact of international work experiences on expatriates, mainly focusing on their identity, sense of belonging, and mental well-being. The study explores how their unique position between cultures affects their psychological health and adaptation processes. This research aims to fill these gaps by providing comprehensive insights into the expatriate experience, focusing on their mental health and adaptation strategies in a multicultural environment.

2.1. Considerations for Ethics and Informed Consent Process

Before participating, each study participant received comprehensive information regarding the research's objectives, procedures, and potential implications. They were provided with detailed informed consent documents, which were meticulously explained to ensure a complete understanding of their rights and the nature of their participation, enabling them to make a well-informed choice regarding their involvement in the study. To safeguard participant privacy, all data collected during the study was anonymous. Identifying information was either omitted or replaced with pseudonyms in the presentation of the findings. The data was stored securely and accessible exclusively to the research team members. Participants were also given the chance for a debriefing session following their contribution to the study. This session aimed to provide further insights into the research objectives and to help in case the research process evoked any emotional reactions. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, with participants retaining the freedom to withdraw at any point without facing any repercussions. They were informed about their right to withdraw from the study and the procedure.

2.2. Research Design and Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design, utilizing interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) instead of a quantitative approach. While a longitudinal study might have offered deeper insights, as Bikos et al. (2013) suggested, constraints of time and resources guided the choice of conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews. This approach is particularly suited to gathering rich, de-

tailed data from a small group of participants. The qualitative nature of this research is particularly appropriate for exploring the complex, nuanced, and previously under-researched lived experiences of participants (Richardson, 1996). The study's methodology is inductive, focusing on exploring and understanding rather than testing pre-existing hypotheses. This aligns with the investigative nature of the research and its goal to augment the existing but limited body of research in this area (Smith, 2003).

IPA delves into how individuals perceive and interpret their lived experiences. This method relies heavily on the participants' ability to articulate their thoughts and experiences, enabling researchers to interpret these narratives. Similarly, it requires the researchers to engage in reflective and analytical thinking (Brocki & Wearden, 2006: p. 88). As described by Smith & Osborn (2008: p. 53), IPA involves a dual interpretation process: first, the participants interpret their own experiences, and then researchers interpret these understandings, constructing a comprehensive view of the participants' world. The study's methodology emphasized a systematic approach to identifying, organizing, and interpreting meaningful patterns (themes) across the dataset, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the shared experiences and meanings within the participant group

2.5 Recruitment of the participants:

This research focuses on exploring the personal and professional experiences during midlife among executive expatriates aged between 40 and 60 years, currently residing and working in Singapore. The study will employ a qualitative methodology to gather rich, in-depth insights by interviewing 12 middle-aged expatriates. These individuals will be selected based on their diverse backgrounds, genders, family statuses, and experiences with significant life events such as relocation, career transitions, company restructuring, financial difficulties, divorce, health issues, and concerns about mortality. These experiences are known to induce stress and anxiety, making them particularly relevant to the study.

This group represents a unique demographic of globally oriented, highly educated, and professionally successful individuals. By participating in this study, they will provide valuable perspectives on their most candid and private experiences. The aim is to offer insights that can benefit others facing similar midlife challenges, particularly in the context of the 21st century and the changes brought about by the post-Covid era. This study seeks to understand and provide guidance on managing midlife transitions in these rapidly evolving times.

This research focused on exploring the personal and professional experiences during midlife among executive expatriates aged between 40 and 60 years who were residing and working in Singapore at the time of the study. It employed a qualitative methodology to gather rich, in-depth insights, achieved by interviewing 12 middle-aged expatriates. These individuals were selected based on their diverse backgrounds, genders, family statuses, and experiences with significant life events such as relocation, career transitions, company restructuring,

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3. Thematic Analysis and Results

3.1. Theme 1: Career as Core Identity and Source of Stress

Subthemes 1: Career Pride and Identity

“Career pride and identity” refers to the sense of self-esteem, fulfillment, and personal identification that individuals derive from their careers or professions. This concept is important in understanding how work influences an individual’s self-concept and overall life satisfaction. Some of the participants shared the profound impact that a fulfilling career can have on an individual. P3 takes pride in their impressive career growth and the varied experiences it has brought, indicating a strong connection to their professional journey. P1, on the other hand, sees their work as an integral part of their identity, so much so that they choose to continue working beyond the point of financial necessity. Both perspectives illustrate how careers can offer more than just financial rewards; they can provide a sense of purpose, identity, and personal fulfillment.

Table 1. Participants’ demographics.

Participants	Gender	Country/Area	Age	Marital Status
P1	F	USA	51	Married, no kid
P2	F	Korea	49	Divorced, 2 kids
P3	M	Australia	46	Married, 1 kid
P4	M	Taiwan (China)	59	Married, 1 kid
P5	F	India	43	Divorced, no kid
P6	M	India	46	Married, 1 kid
P7	M	Taiwan (China)	54	Married, 2 kids
P8	M	India	53	Married, 2 kids
P9	F	Taiwan (China)	53	Married, 2 kids
P10	F	Taiwan (China)	48	Married, 2 kids
P11	F	Taiwan (China)	44	Married, no kid
P12	M	USA	50	Single, no kid

P3: “I am proud of my career progression and leadership development in multinational corporations—starting with managing 22 people to over 500 today. I appreciate the diverse experiences.”

P1: “In the last 20 years, my goal was early retirement. Today I realize I want to work even though I reach the financial freedom to retire. My job is my identity.”

These experiences, which often include working in different cultural contexts and managing diverse teams, are seen as enriching their personal and professional lives. They don't just view these as job requirements but as integral parts of who they are as individuals.

P4: “In terms of job satisfaction, what we all want are freedom and control. I feel I reached my peak as head of the Asia Region. I may be over-qualified today, but that gives me work-life balance and I enjoy being away from headquarters and being in control of my region.”

P2: “I worked hard from 20 to 40, and there was no work life balance. I know how to better manage now. I don't need to be so hands-on anymore at work.”

Subthemes 2: Career-Related Stress

Career-related stress, often referred to as job stress or occupational stress, is the physical and emotional response that occurs when the requirements of a job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. This type of stress can be triggered by various factors and can have significant impacts on both personal well-being and work performance. The participants provide insight into how career developments and workplace environments can impact the psychological well-being of executive expatriates, particularly during midlife (Frankl, 1985).

This experience highlights the significance of career progression and recognition in the professional identity of executive expatriates. A perceived demotion or stagnation can trigger a crisis of identity and purpose, especially during the midlife stage when professional accomplishments and growth are often heavily scrutinized. The transition to a less significant role, in their perspective, led to a period of challenge and uncertainty. The lack of clarity on how to further advance their career likely fuelled feelings of being stuck or regressing, common sentiments during midlife transitions.

P10: “My midlife crisis started when I was in the US at 40 years old. I saw a glass/bamboo ceiling. It was lonely when I was the only Asian woman. I worked nonstop.”

P8: “18 months ago, I felt a midlife crisis because I got a new role that was smaller than my previous global role. It was a challenging period as I did not know what more I can do to get my career advanced.”

3.2. Theme 2: Importance of Relationships to Happiness

This theme explores the significant role that personal and professional relationships play in the happiness and overall well-being of executive expatriates, espe-

cially during their midlife years.

Sub-theme 1: Workplace Relationships and Trust Issues

“Workplace relationships and trust issues” refer to the dynamics of interpersonal interactions among colleagues within a professional setting and the level of trust or mistrust that characterizes these relationships. These elements are crucial in shaping the work environment, influencing team collaboration, employee morale, and overall organizational performance. Expatriates often grapple with complex workplace dynamics. Issues of trust and political manoeuvring within the corporate environment are common challenges. The participants’ reflections suggest that navigating these dynamics can be a source of stress and dissatisfaction. For instance, dealing with jealousy or political behaviours from colleagues can lead to frustration and a sense of isolation within the professional sphere (Fong & Tripathi, 2021). Several quotes highlight the struggles with organizational politics and the stress of continuous changes and the resultant feelings of insecurity and worry. This indicates a common concern among expatriates about the stability of their positions in the face of corporate changes, and the personal toll it takes when long-term contributions are seemingly disregarded.

P7: “I delivered outstanding performance, but others may be more political or jealous. Either way, it’s frustrating at work. Honestly, I don’t trust my colleagues.”

P3: “I am upset with the current company as it becomes headquarter centric and more regional reorg to happen. I have this ‘hero complex’ and I want to protect my team and their jobs.”

They deal with the intricate balance of maintaining performance in an environment riddled with politics and mistrust, the stress of organizational restructuring, and the personal and professional turmoil that accompanies significant changes in their roles. These experiences highlight the need for resilience and adaptability in navigating the complex landscape of corporate careers, especially during midlife when career trajectories and personal aspirations can undergo significant re-evaluation.

Sub-theme 2: Stability and Change in Career Paths

“Stability and Change in Career Paths” is a concept that encompasses how individuals’ careers evolve over time, balancing both consistent elements and dynamic shifts. Achieving a balance between a demanding career and a fulfilling personal life is a recurring theme. The expatriates’ narratives often reflect the struggle to find this balance, with many expressing the need to reassess their priorities and make conscious choices to nurture personal relationships alongside their career commitments. Midlife often prompts a reevaluation of priorities, leading to shifts in how expatriates approach their relationships. This period can be an opportunity to strengthen personal connections and reorient their focus towards more fulfilling and supportive relationships, both professionally and personally. Several factors can influence the balance between stability and change in a career, including personal values, life stages, economic conditions,

industry trends, organizational changes, and technological advancements. Individual choices and external circumstances play a significant role in shaping career paths.

P5: "I feel stress in the last few months due to company organization uncertainty, and I am losing sleep to think about my Plan B."

P7: "I am 54 and in the same company for 30 years. I was in R&D but 5 years ago, the company went through restructuring, and I almost left. Now I am in an operations role."

3.3. Theme 3: Planning for the Future

This theme delves into how executive expatriates approach planning for their future, especially during their midlife years. It encompasses their strategies for future career moves, personal development, and preparation for life beyond their current professional roles.

Sub-Theme 1: Career Transition and Adaptation

Career transition and adaptation refer to the process of changing one's professional path and adjusting to new roles, industries, or work environments. This can happen for various reasons, including personal choice, industry shifts, or technological advancements. Many participants speak of making strategic decisions about their career trajectories as they navigate midlife (Blanchflower & Graham, 2021). This often involves considering potential roles that might offer more satisfaction, less stress, or better alignment with personal values. For some, this means transitioning to roles with a broader scope or higher autonomy, while for others, it might entail a shift to smaller organizations or entirely different industries. The participants acknowledge the need to adapt to the rapidly changing professional landscape, especially in the wake of global events like the Covid-19 pandemic. This adaptation might involve embracing new technologies, adjusting to remote or flexible working models, or developing new skill sets that are relevant in a changing world.

P4: "At 50, I made a conscious decision to switch from large MNC to a midsize private company, just 5% the size of the last company. It's been 9 years, and I feel very secure."

P3: "After my episode of burnout, I want a new chapter to do something different. I want to spend 50/50 time at work vs. outside of work."

Few participants highlight the transformative power of career advancements and changes. For P8, a promotion to a higher executive level marks a significant achievement and a testament to their professional growth. For P1, a job change has revitalized their enthusiasm and reinforced the integral role their career plays in their identity and daily motivation. Both experiences underscore the profound impact that career development can have on an individual's sense of self and overall life satisfaction.

P8: "Recently, my boss left the company, and I got a big promotion to succeed and break the glass ceiling into the executive committee."

P1: "Since I change job, I feel so energized and happy. My job is my identity, and the identity gives me not only emotional security and intellectual stimulation, but also gives me energy to wake up every day."

Sub-theme 2: Reassessing Career and Life Goals

This sub-theme encapsulates the forward-looking strategies and considerations of midlife executive expatriates as they plan for their future. It highlights their thoughtful approach to career transitions, personal development, relationship building, and financial security, all of which are geared toward ensuring a fulfilling and secure future as they navigate the complexities of midlife. Visions for retirement vary among the participants, but there is a common thread of wanting to retire on their own terms (Kang, 2020). This includes considerations about when to retire, where to live post-retirement, and what activities to pursue. Retirement planning is not just about financial readiness but also about ensuring a sense of purpose and fulfillment in the post-career phase of life.

P8: "Recently, my boss left the company, and I got a big promotion to succeed and break the glass ceiling into the executive committee."

P1: "In the last 20 years, my goal was early retirement. Today I realize I want to work even though I reach the financial freedom to retire."

3.4. Theme 4: Managing Midlife Crisis and Transition

This theme addresses how executive expatriates manage their midlife crisis and transition, focusing on their coping strategies, adjustments, and the pursuit of well-being during this critical life phase.

Subtheme 1: Job Satisfaction and Work-Life Balance

Job satisfaction and work-life balance are interconnected concepts that play a crucial role in an individual's overall well-being and effectiveness in their professional life. For many, midlife brings the opportunity or necessity to transition to new roles or even entirely new career paths. This shift can be a response to job dissatisfaction, a desire for new challenges, or the result of external factors like company downsizing (Lachman et al., 1994). These transitions, whether voluntary or involuntary, are often seen as a way to rejuvenate their careers and rediscover professional passion. This process of career transition is a significant aspect of managing the midlife crisis, as it allows individuals to realign their professional lives with their evolving personal identities and values (Silbiger & Pines, 2014).

P2: "I worked hard from 20 to 40, and there was no work-life balance. I know how to better manage now. I don't need to be so hands-on anymore at work."

P1: "3 months ago, my company initiated a restructuring program, and my role was to be eliminated. I was surprised that my years of contribution would lead to a sad ending of retrenchment at 50."

Sub-theme 2: Coping with Corporate Challenges

Coping with corporate challenges involves navigating and effectively managing the various difficulties and obstacles that can arise in a corporate environ-

ment. These challenges can be diverse, ranging from interpersonal conflicts to strategic business hurdles (Lachman, 2004) experiences often trigger a midlife crisis, prompting a reevaluation of their career paths and personal goals (Responses to these challenges vary, with some opting to leave toxic work environments, while others adapt by seeking more fulfilling roles or striving for a better work-life balance. These coping mechanisms reflect a proactive approach to managing career-induced stress and preserving mental health.

P3: Work balance is important. Work is for mental stimulation. Free time for my passion and energy. I may join a start-up or an entirely different gig like running a music pub. Different headspace from the corporate life, that's what I want now. I am allergic to large corporations now. Last time at a start-up, I enjoyed the vision. Even though it's less money but I had much more fun.

In summary, these quotes illustrate two different but related aspects of workplace challenges. P8 is dealing with the immediate stress brought on by organizational changes, leading to anxiety and the exploration of alternative options. Both scenarios underscore the impact of organizational dynamics and personal circumstances on career satisfaction and decision-making.

P8: 18 months ago, I felt a midlife crisis because I got a new role that was smaller than my previous global role. It was a challenging period as I did not know what more I can do to get my career advanced. I report to a boss I didn't learn anything from. I feel stuck.

4. Discussion

The study's findings echo and expand upon existing literature on midlife crises and transitions. The dual nature of professional life, as both a source of fulfillment and stress, aligns with prior research on midlife career reassessment. This research provides unique insights into the midlife experiences of a specific demographic—executive expatriates in a multicultural and dynamic environment like Singapore. The themes that emerge offer a valuable perspective on how global mobility, cultural diversity, and high-pressure corporate environments intersect to shape midlife experiences (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In summary, these executive expatriates' careers are deeply intertwined with their sense of self. Their professional accomplishments and experiences are not merely external achievements but are integral to their identity. This strong identification with their career brings a sense of pride and fulfillment but also poses challenges, especially when they encounter professional setbacks or undergo transitions in their midlife stage (Fisher et al., 2014). Midlife often brings with it a quest for more meaningful work. After years of experience, individuals might find that their personal values no longer align with the corporate culture or goals of a large multinational company. Smaller companies often offer a sense of community and a closer alignment with personal values and ethics. This shift can be seen as a move towards work that feels more personally fulfilling and impactful (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

Another aspect driving this transition could be the pursuit of a better work-life balance. Large corporations, with their demanding schedules and often rigid structures, might not offer the flexibility that individuals seek in their mid-life. Smaller companies might present opportunities for more flexible working hours, a less stressful environment, and a chance to prioritize personal life alongside professional responsibilities (Berger, 2014). At this stage in life, there's often a heightened desire to leave a legacy or contribute meaningfully to the next generation. In a smaller company setting, there might be more opportunities to mentor younger colleagues, influence the company's direction, and see the tangible impact of one's work. This can be deeply satisfying for individuals looking to make a lasting contribution in their field (Blanchflower & Graham, 2021).

This theme 1 is central to understanding the executive expatriates' experiences. Their careers are not just jobs but integral parts of their identity. The work of Fong (2020) appears to have similar findings, emphasizing how deeply career achievements and challenges are intertwined with self-perception and self-worth. The pride in career achievements versus the stress from work-related challenges demonstrates the dual nature of their professional lives. This juxtaposition highlights the complex relationship these individuals have with their careers, serving both as a source of fulfillment and stress. This aspect relates to the broader concept of midlife crises and transitions. According to (Case & Deaton, 2015), midlife is a critical period for reassessing career paths, which can lead to either fulfillment or crisis. This suggests that the midlife period is a significant transitional phase where past achievements and future aspirations are critically evaluated. The study also seems to touch upon how these career-focused experiences interact with other aspects of life, such as relationships and future planning. It highlights the need for coping mechanisms to manage the transitions and challenges faced in midlife.

Theme 2's emphasis on relationships underscores the importance of social connections for happiness and well-being, as identified in previous research (Moore & Barker, 2012). The struggles with workplace politics and the effort to maintain personal relationships highlight the balancing act that expatriates face in their pursuit of happiness. In line with Richardson (1996)'s findings, the intricate dynamics of workplace relationships, as highlighted in our study, play a pivotal role in the overall well-being and job satisfaction of executive expatriates. These individuals often find themselves navigating a complex web of interpersonal interactions, where trust issues and political manoeuvring within corporate environments emerge as prominent challenges. This is consistent with the research of (Fong & Tripathi, 2021), who emphasize the impact of such dynamics on expatriates' professional and personal lives. The study's findings reveal a common sentiment among expatriates of feeling undervalued, isolated, or politically marginalized within their professional spheres. These narratives underscore a broader issue within multinational corporations: the need for more inclu-

sive and empathetic leadership and management styles that recognize and value the diverse experiences and contributions of expatriate employees. This delves into the midlife career transitions of expatriates, highlighting the tension between the desire for stability and the inevitability of change. During midlife, many individuals reassess their career paths and life priorities, often leading to significant shifts in their professional trajectories (Moore & Barker, 2012). The stories of our participants reveal a recurring theme of seeking a balance between fulfilling professional ambitions and nurturing personal relationships. This echoes the broader literature on midlife transitions, indicating that this period can be an opportunity for strengthening personal connections and reorienting focus towards more fulfilling and supportive relationships (Fisher et al., 2014).

Echoing the literature on midlife crises (Smith & Osborn, 2008), this theme illustrates the various coping strategies employed by the participants to manage their midlife transitions. These strategies range from career changes to personal evaluations, indicating a period of significant personal growth and a redefined sense of self. Many participants viewed career transitions not just as a necessity but as an opportunity for renewal and growth. These transitions, whether by choice or circumstance, were often seen as a way to realign their professional lives with their evolving personal identities and values. Midlife transitions were often accompanied by a profound process of personal reevaluation. Participants spoke about reassessing their life choices, values, and what they considered essential for their happiness. This process often led to a redefined sense of self and a more profound understanding of their desires and aspirations. The narratives reveal various strategies to cope with the inherent changes and uncertainties of midlife. These include seeking support from peers and mentors, engaging in self-reflection and mindfulness practices, and exploring new interests and hobbies that provide a sense of fulfillment and balance (Lachman, 2015).

5. Implications for Future Studies and Practices

The findings have significant implications for understanding the midlife transitions of highly mobile, career-oriented professionals. They provide a foundation for future research and can inform practices in areas such as career counseling, mental health support for expatriates, and organizational policies that support midlife career transitions and well-being.

In conclusion, this study offers a comprehensive view of the midlife experiences of executive expatriates, highlighting the interplay between career, personal identity, relationships, and coping strategies. It underscores the unique challenges and opportunities faced by this group, contributing valuable insights to the broader discourse on midlife transitions in the modern, globalized world.

6. Conclusion

This study sheds light on the multifaceted experiences of executive expatriates in Singapore navigating their midlife years. The intertwining of career and identity,

the significance of relationships, the focus on future planning, and the strategies for managing midlife crises and transitions all paint a complex picture of their lives (Berry, 2005).

The study contributes to the limited research on midlife experiences among executive expatriates, particularly in the unique context of Singapore. It underscores the need for a holistic understanding of their challenges and strategies for well-being. Support systems and policies aimed at helping expatriates navigate these aspects could be beneficial (Lachman, 2001).

In conclusion, this study adds to the existing knowledge of midlife transitions. It offers practical insights for expatriates, organizations, and policymakers to better support this unique population during a pivotal stage of their lives. Future research could further explore the long-term impacts of these midlife experiences, comparing different cultural contexts and expanding the understanding of midlife transitions in a globalized world.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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