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Work to Life conflicts:

A comparison of Self-Initiated Expatriates and Assigned Expatriates.

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Table of contents

| | | |
|-------|---|----|
| 1 | Introduction | 6 |
| 1.1 | Aim and research question | 8 |
| 1.2 | Key concepts and definitions | 9 |
| 1.3 | Structure of the study | 10 |
| 2 | Literature review | 12 |
| 2.1 | Expatriates | 12 |
| 2.1.1 | Self-Initiated Expatriates | 13 |
| 2.1.2 | Assigned Expatriates | 15 |
| 2.1.3 | Differences between Self-Initiated Expatriates and Assigned Expatriates | 17 |
| 2.2 | Work to Life Conflicts | 19 |
| 2.2.1 | Work-life balance dimensions | 19 |
| 2.2.2 | Work to Life Conflict | 21 |
| 2.3 | Work to life conflicts among expatriates | 23 |
| 2.3.1 | Self-Initiated Expatriates and Work to Life Conflict | 25 |
| 2.3.2 | Assigned Expatriates and Work to Life Conflict | 26 |
| 2.3.3 | Differences in Work to Life Conflict between AEs and SIEs | 28 |
| 3 | Methodology | 35 |
| 3.1 | Quantitative approach | 36 |
| 3.2 | Data collection | 37 |
| 3.3 | Sample description | 38 |
| 3.4 | Measures | 40 |
| 3.5 | Analysis of the findings | 41 |
| 3.6 | Reliability and validity | 42 |
| 4 | Results and findings | 45 |
| 4.1 | Comparison of AE- and SIE-groups | 45 |
| 4.2 | Testing the hypothesis | 47 |
| 5 | Discussion and conclusions | 52 |
| 5.1 | Findings related to differences in the perceived WLC of AEs and SIEs | 52 |

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| 5.2 | Practical implications | 54 |
| 5.3 | Limitations and suggestions for future research | 56 |
| | References | 58 |

Figures

| | |
|--|----|
| Figure 1. Dimensions of work-family balance (Frone, 2003, p. 146)..... | 20 |
| Figure 2. Expatriates' type distribution. | 39 |
| Figure 3. Expatriates' gender distribution. | 39 |
| Figure 4. Expatriates' age distribution..... | 40 |

Tables

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1. SIEs and AEs differences of WLC | 34 |
| Table 2. Background variables' differences (mean score and significance) | 46 |
| Table 3. Background variable differences (mean score and significance) | 46 |
| Table 4. WLC of SIEs and AEs (item by item) | 48 |
| Table 5. Independent Samples Test's analysis of WLC among SIEs and AEs..... | 49 |
| Table 6. Group Statistics of SIEs and AEs perception on WLC | 51 |
| Table 7. Independent Samples Test's analysis of SIEs and AEs perception on WLC.. | 51 |

Abbreviations

| | |
|-----|--|
| AE | Assigned Expatriate |
| MNE | Multinational Enterprise |
| SIE | Self-Initiated Expatriate |
| TEK | Trade union for academic engineers and architects in Finland |
| WLB | Work-Life Balance |
| WLC | Work-Life Conflict |

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ABSTRACT:

International organizations have now more than ever a need for qualified and talented people to successfully grow globally. Thus, companies send employees for international assignments. Therefore, there is an increasing interest on the success of international work experience and well-being of expatriates.

The well-being of expatriates is a considerable factor in the achievement of a successful international work experience abroad. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to provide perspective regarding the impact of work on the personal life comparing two distinct expatriates group: Assigned Expatriates (AEs) and Self-Initiated Expatriates (SIEs). It is presumed that SIEs experience a lower level of WLC in comparison with AEs.

The data set utilised in this study was originally gathered for research purpose by the University of Vaasa. This master's thesis analysed the data focusing on WLC of AEs and SIEs. Data set (N=291) was collected through an online survey, the questionnaire was sent to the member of the Finnish Union TEK. Then, a sample of the data fitting the criteria of the thesis has been selected for further research.

The findings reveal that AEs are facing a high level of WLC compared to SIEs. Therefore, the hypothesis is supported. On a managerial level, therefore it would be advised to consider the challenges AEs in their WLC and provide a support in order to have a successful international assignment. Moreover, as companies are facing a shortage of qualified and talented employees, it could be considered to hire SIEs during internationalization.

Concerning the limitations, the concept of work-life balance is broad. Therefore, in this thesis it will be narrowed to work to life conflict. Work-life enrichment, life-work conflict and life-work enrichment are excluded from the study. Therefore, further research regarding the other aspects is needed.

KEYWORDS: expatriate, expat, AE, Assigned expatriate, SIE, Self-Initiated Expatriate, work life, work life balance, work life conflict, well-being, family

1 Introduction

Professionals, media, and scholars agree that there is currently an international shortage of qualified and talented people (Haslberger & Vaiman, 2013, p. 1; Pucik, Evans, Björkman & Morris, 2016, p. 167). This scarcity of qualified employees can affect the internationalization of organizations. Therefore, more than ever, companies need to look for talented people (Pucik et al., 2016, p. 167). To cope with this situation, companies are sending their employees on international assignments. However, nowadays this appears to be insufficient. Thus, researchers shed the light on other groups within expatriates to compensate the lack of qualified employees. For instance, there are experienced people seeking for a work abroad on their own initiatives, that can be an asset for international companies and compensate the shortage of international employees. (Haslberger & Vaiman, 2013, p. 1).

Andresen, Bergdolt, Margenfeld and Dickmann (2014, p. 2307), state that international mobility research has increased over the years. Simultaneously, there is a growing interest and concern about expatriates' well-being (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 281). Overall, academics agree that the work-life balance is more challenging to be achieved for employees with an international career in comparison to a traditional career path (Forster, 2000, pp. 138-139; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001, p. 238; Suutari, 2003, p. 190, pp. 202-204; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2011, p. 373). The balance of the roles in individuals' lives appears to be more difficult to reach than it was. Since the beginning of the new millennium, there is an increase of single parent or dual-earner family. These situations may strain the Work-Life Balance (WLB) of individuals. (Aryee, Srinivas & Tan, 2005, p. 132, Duxbury & Higgins, 2001, p. 6). Frone (2003, p. 145) conceptualized Work-Family Balance by dividing it to four dimensions: work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, work-to-family enrichment, and family to-work enrichment.

Over the past decades, global mobility has significantly increased (Finaccord, 2018). Moreover, in emerging countries, the number of well-educated professionals rises, and they are looking for more attractive opportunities in developed countries. This

population is increasing significantly (The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2015). The total amount of people making the decision to live abroad attains 66.2 million in 2017. Furthermore by 2021 it is estimated to rise to 87.5 million. Saudi Arabia, United Arab Units (UAE) and Germany have most of the expatriates. From the total population of UAE, 87.8% are expatriates. Each country attracts global expatriates for various reasons; United-States of America (USA) and United-Kingdom (UK) attract mostly international students, mostly from China. Then, USA and Spain are attractive for retired expatriates. (Finaccord, 2018.)

In sociology, psychology, and economy literature the definitions of the terms to define the different types of expatriates were overlapping resulting to some confusion. Therefore Andresen, et al. (2014, p. 2307, p. 2295) provide clear definitions that differentiate between SIEs, AEs and migrants. Expatriates can be distinguished in two sub-groups, Assigned Expatriates (AE) and Self-Initiated Expatriates (SIE). AEs are sent by their company for an assignment. SIEs make the decision to move abroad themselves, they organize and arrange the mobility. Because of globalization, multinational firms are sending an increasing number of employees on foreign assignments. This group of employees are so called assigned expatriates. The most common practice is to send expatriates abroad for a limited time and for various objectives. (Silbiger & Pines, 2014, p. 1170.) These two groups will face different challenges due to the nature of their expatriation. (Global Mobility of Employees, 2020.)

To understand better what international mobility is and the influence it may have on expatriates, global mobility can be divided to three levels: micro, meso and macro. The micro level refers to the experiences that might occur while living abroad and the impact it might have on a life or career. Then, the meso level concerns the organization's management of expatriates, as well as the goals and impact on the firm. The third and last level is macro, which refers to how the institution can impact the expatriates and their families' lives for example laws, health system, natures, hospitality of the local population, nature. The meso and macro levels have also an influence on the micro level. For

instance, on the motivation, on the success of the career on a long term, on how expatriates handle the work life balance, and also the well-being. These considerations are important to consider. (Global Mobility of Employees, 2020.)

Simultaneously, in our societies the expectations in life roles have been rising until becoming common in our lives. It is not only expected of women to have a parental role and of men to be devoted to their career. The ambitions and commitment have now evolved, in both family and work spheres. Moreover, the management and fulfilment of these roles may cause strain on individuals. (Amatea, Cross, Clark & Bobby, 1986.)

Scholars and researchers agree that the WLB is more challenging for expatriates compared to people with a more traditional career path (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2011, p. 373, Forster, 2000, pp. 138-139; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001, p. 238; Suutari, 2003, p. 190, pp. 202-204; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2011, p. 373). Concerning expatriates and the differences within the group, it has been stated that AEs have more optimal conditions to reach a WLB in comparison to SIEs (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 297).

1.1 Aim and research question

Even though expatriates' well-being is important in order to achieve a successful work experience abroad, the studies and research on the subject are relatively limited (Ballesteros-Leiva, Poilpot-Rocaboy & St-Onge, 2017, p. 238). Furthermore, in every area of research concerning global mobility there is more research done among AEs than SIEs. Thus, regarding the work-life balance of expatriates, the research concerning AEs is more extensive compared to SIEs (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 281). Nonetheless, there is a limited body of studies and research concerning how the work interferes on the personal lives of SIEs. However, these studies do not take into account all the spheres of life of SIEs and focus more often on either "family" or "life" (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 278, p. 279; Visser, Mills, Heyse, Wittek & Bollettino, 2016, p. 1191). In particular, the studies comparing the WLC of SIEs and AEs are rare.

Due to few studies, the subject deserves more interest. Therefore, the aim of this research is to provide new knowledge on the topic by comparing SIEs and AEs by focusing the research on the interferences that work may bring to the personal life. This will lead to a better understanding of the differences between AEs and SIEs, also indicate the extent to which the professional life interferes on the personal life of these two groups.

As an outcome of this research background, the research question of the study is:

“Are there differences in the experienced WLC between SIEs and AEs?”

This research question is divided into subobjectives:

- Whether AE- and SIE-groups differ with regard to background variables.
- To empirically explore whether and how AEs and SIEs professional life interfere in the personal life.

1.2 Key concepts and definitions

In order to have a better understand of the subject, the definitions of concepts of the research will be presented in this subchapter.

- **Expatriate.** The origins of the word expatriate came when people were moving and expatriate from where they are originally from (country or administrative area). From the verb expatriare, “ex” means out and “patria” country. Hence the definition is someone who has left their own country to live in another. More recently the literature uses the word “expatriate” to refer to those who move abroad for business purposes (Suutari, Brewster & Dickmann, 2018, pp. 64-65).

- **AE** is an individual send abroad by an organization, often on a determined time. The initiatives come from the company when a position might be available in another country. (Inkson, Arthur, Pringle & Barry, 1997, pp. 351-352).
- **SIE** is defined as “individuals who choose to go abroad on their own to find work there, without being sent by an organization from their home country” (Cerdin & Le Pargneux, 2010, p. 288)
- **Work-life balance** has been defined as “the extent to which employees hold a favorable evaluation regarding their combination of work and nonwork roles, arising from the belief that their emotional experiences, involvement, and effectiveness in work and nonwork roles are commensurate (compatible) with the value they attach to the roles.” (Casper, Vaziri, Wayne, DeHauw & Greenhaus, 2018, p. 199). There are also some other concepts that have been used with similar meaning, namely work-nonwork balance, role balance or work-family balance.
- **Work-life conflicts** occurs when the work can be incompatibility or create interference into the personal life, which create a role pressure (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77).
- **Subjective well-being** can be defined as a state when an individual is satisfied in life. This state of happiness is associated to the repetition and duration of positive emotions and fewer negative emotions (Diener, Sandvik & Pavot, 1991, p. 213; Ballesteros-Leiva et al., 2017, p. 239).

1.3 Structure of the study

The study will be divided in six chapters. The first chapter is the introduction. In this part, the background of the study will be discussed. Furthermore, the research gap and the

research question and objectives are identified. Then, the definitions of key concepts will be provided.

In the second chapter, the focus is on literature review. The literature review is threefold. First, a clear definition of expatriate as well as AEs and SIEs will be provided. Secondly, there will be a brief introduction of WLB and the concept of WLC will be developed in depth through the literature. Finally, in the third part the research comparing AEs and SIEs WLC will be presented.

The third chapter is about the research methods. In this part, the research philosophy will be explained. The following sub-chapter will explain the approach of the research, which is a quantitative approach. Next, information concerning the research method will be given. In the following sub-chapter, the information about the survey and the data of the study will be provided. Then, a sample of the research will be presented. The next sub-chapter discusses the method of analysing the findings. Finally, for the trustworthiness of the study, a sub-chapter will be devoted on the reliability and validity of the research conducted.

In the fourth chapter, the findings of the study will be presented.

The last section of the research presents the conclusions of the study. In this part, the answers to the research question, as well as the theoretical contributions and practical implications will be discussed. Also, the limitations of the study will be provided. Finally, suggestions for future research will be presented.

2 Literature review

This chapter will provide the theoretical framework of the present study and thus, discuss the necessary theoretical groundings of the subject. This is done by defining who are expatriates and by introducing the different types of expatriates. Furthermore, the work and life balance will be discussed. Finally, these two parts will be combined, and thus, work-life balance of expatriates will be discussed.

2.1 Expatriates

The international influences resulting from the globalization, with the exponential growth of technology and a need of international workforce have impacted careers, among other environmental changes. As a result, the choices of individuals in their career path goes beyond the borders of countries and therefore increases the amount of international mobile employees. The length of the assignment and the nature of the expatriation will depend on the types of contracts to work abroad (Myers & Pringle, 2005, p. 421; Baruch, Dickmann, Altman & Bournois, 2013, p. 2369; Aryee & Stone, 1996, p. 158).

Multinational companies make different international operations. Therefore, the success of their operations depends on the global competencies of the employees and managers. (Biemann & Andresen, 2010, p. 430; Kohonen, 2005, p. 22, Suutari, 2003, p. 185). Several studies point out that international business experience is essential to develop the required competencies for successful global careers (Vance, 2005, p. 374; Richardson & Mallon, 2005, p. 410). The competencies expected from international managers are defined as competencies such as cooperating effectively with people from different cultures, handling diverse competitive and political situations, and perceiving uncertainty and quick changes as an opportunity (Biemann & Andresen, 2010, p. 430). Moreover, the number of individuals taking initiatives to travel and work abroad has significantly

increased. These alternative groups give new representations of international careers (Myers & Pringle, 2005, p. 421).

Originally, research concerning expatriation focused on “long-term expatriation”, but nowadays researchers have also defined other groups of expatriates. Baruch et al. (2013, pp. 7-8) defined and categorised 20 types according to seven dimensions (time spent abroad, the intensity of international contacts, breadth of interaction, legal context, international work instigator, the extent of cultural gap and specific position). These categories represent most expatriates such as self-initiated foreign work, globetrotting, immigration, and students studying abroad. The research is an initial step to have a better understanding of global careers concerning international assignments (Baruch et al., 2013).

According to Andresen et al. (2014), the definition of expatriates and migrants has led to confusion, and the different forms of expatriates are not clearly differentiated, and the term expatriate is considered as an umbrella word. Based on research, the authors classify the expatriates in four different groups: Intra-Self-initiated Expatriates, Inter-Self-initiated Expatriates, Assigned Expatriates and Drawn Expatriate. However, in this thesis the traditional terms of SIEs and AEs are used.

In this thesis the focus is on SIEs and AEs. Therefore, in the following part these groups will be explained in depth. Even though, SIE and AE also have many similarities, there are also important differences. These will be highlighted in chapter 2.1.3 in order to have a clear understanding of these distinct groups.

2.1.1 Self-Initiated Expatriates

An SIE refers to an individual who will make the decision based on their own choices to search employment abroad, without being assigned by a company to work abroad. They are typically hired by a company from the host location. As a difference compared to

traditional expatriates, an SIE does not receive benefits and support from an organization. However, as AE, the social and personal life of an SIE in the new country influences the adaptation to the host country. The length of the stay for an SIE is less predictable compared to AE. (Crowley-Henry, 2007.)

SIEs are a heterogeneous group and six subgroups have been suggested: “young opportunists, job seekers, officials, localized professionals, international professionals, and dual careerist.” (Suutari & Brewster, 2000, p. 434; Dorsch, Suutari & Brewster, 2012, pp. 45-46; Suutari et al., 2018, p. 68). Moreover, studies have shown that SIEs are diverse concerning gender and tends to consist of more women (Ballesteros-Leiva et al., 2017, p. 242). This can be explained by the wish of women to break the glass ceiling of their homeland by going abroad and be proactive in their career choices (Fitzgerald & Howe-Walsh, 2008, p. 158; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 298). Gender differences have been reported also in some expatriates’ studies. For example, Selmer and Luring (2010, p. 175) have found that women are less motivated by opportunities and money than men. The study also reported that women need more security and safety, therefore women are less likely to take risks than men.

The results of Selmer and Luring’s (2010, p. 175) study concerning the motives of SIEs in different age group explains that younger individuals are most likely motivated by adventure, career and for financial interest while deciding to start their expatriation compared to older individuals. Additionally, younger individuals (average 32 years old) will be more adventurous and take more risks compared to the older group (average 48 years old). This can be explained because older people tend to prefer security, comfort, or convenience. Moreover, one difference within SIE group, is that younger people are facing more challenges while building their career and therefore, are more career-oriented than their older counterpart. Younger individuals will also find financial benefits from working more important than older individuals. The financial motives and the career opportunities explain why younger people are more likely to move abroad than older people. (Selmer & Luring, 2010, p. 175.)

According to Richardson's and Mallon's (2005, pp. 412-415) findings, the reasons which lead to the decision for SIEs to move abroad include looking for new experiences of adventure or traveling. Also, the reasons can relate with a desire of life change, family reasons, improve career opportunities or financial reasons. Additionally, the desire of new adventure is not depending on the gender, the age or if the participants have children. The SIEs have the desire of adventure independently from which demographic they belong to.

Even though, there might be a desire of adventure, Tharenou (2003, p. 510) explains that having a partner or a family act like a barrier for both men and women, young or older, to have an international career. Having a family has more influence as a barrier for younger men or women to develop their career abroad.

Crowley-Henry (2010, p. 449) argues that concerning the SIEs, the decision to start a life abroad is supported by a desire of international life and to increase their own career experiences. Also, SIEs might have the desire to start a new life abroad in order to improve their lives in a country with a better quality of life, economic situation or political context.

2.1.2 Assigned Expatriates

AE is defined as an individual sent abroad by their employer organization for a limited time. The initiative comes from the company when a position might be available in another country. The position will require from the employee to have the necessary knowledge and the ability to work in a foreign country. At the end of the assignment, the AEs are likely to return to their original work position. The employees can hopefully employ their new skills and knowledge after the expatriation and improve their career (Inkson et al., 1997, pp. 351-352). The initiatives of expatriation come typically from the organizations, but it can also come from the employee wishes to work in the same

company in another country. The expatriations' period is long-term oriented. It can be either temporary or permanent. In most of the case, the period is determined beforehand. On an average the length of stay is between three to five years for an expatriation. AEs' expatriations are highly supported and they receive benefits from the home and host company. Organizations have goals and motives to send their employee in expatriation; however, the employee can have personal and professional motives to expatriate as well. (Andresen et al., 2014, pp. 2301-2302.)

The intention of repatriation is expected in most cases at the end of the assignment. The expatriates' family might follow or not the employee in the host country. Also, the work contract gives work permit and therefore legal support to be in the host country, according to immigration policies of the host country. Moreover, AEs will rather pay their taxes to their home countries. (Andresen et al., 2014, pp. 2301-2302.)

Additionally, family status influences the success or failure of the international assignment. A spouse who does not accommodate to the host country is one of the main reasons for expatriation failure (Crowley-Henry, 2007, p. 48). In turn, when a spouse follows their AE partner this requires them to interrupt their careers and to search a new employment in the host country. This is a reason why the expatriates' spouses have difficulties to adapt to the host country (Riusala & Suutari, 2000). Then, at the end of the international assignment, it is likely from AE to return to their home country at the end of their assignment (Crowley-Henry, 2007).

AEs main motivation to work abroad is to progress further in their career (Linder, 2019, pp. 552-553, p. 566). Moreover, AEs being career driven, they are often motivated to be promoted or have a higher status by earning more knowledge during their international assignment (Suutari et al., 2018, p. 97; Shaffer, Kraimer, Yu-Ping & Bolino, 2012, p. 1304). Another motivation for AEs to do an international assignment is to develop their network in the company's subsidiaries (Farh, Bartol, Shapiro, & Shin, 2010, p. 447, p. 451).

2.1.3 Differences between Self-Initiated Expatriates and Assigned Expatriates

Concerning the scientific literature, studies have focused on AEs more than SIEs, nonetheless SIEs are a considerable and significant group within global careers (Carr, Inkson & Thorn, 2005, p. 386). Whereas SIEs is a common phenomenon, this group is underrepresented in the scientific literature compared to traditional expatriates. (Suutari & Brewster, 2000, p. 429; Biemann & Andresen, 2010, p. 441).

Even though, AEs and SIEs as groups share many characteristics, they differ on some points. The key difference that relates already to the definition of these groups concerns the initiatives of expatriation: among AEs it will most likely come from their work organizations, when for SIEs the initiative comes from the individual's action (Andresen et al., 2014, p. 2301). Furthermore, among SIEs the period of expatriation is undetermined while AEs will typically know beforehand the length of stay in the host country. Linked with that, the repatriation is more expected from AEs than SIEs.

The relationship between a company and a SIEs or a AE will also differ. On one side, AEs will be highly supported by their organization during their expatriation and keep their current contract. On the other side, SIEs will seek for new employment and will have rather no organization's support during their expatriation. (Andresen et al., 2014, p. 2302). Moreover, SIEs typically work in smaller and less international oriented organization compared to AEs who are more likely working in their home country organization or subsidiaries. (Suutari & Brewster, 2000, p. 429; Biemann & Andresen, 2010, p. 441.)

Among other differences between the distinctive group relates with taxation, when SIEs will have assessment mostly towards their host countries, AEs will rather pay their taxes to their homeland (Andresen et al., 2014, p. 2302). Additionally, concerning the work situation, SIEs change organizations more frequently compared to AEs (Biemann & Andresen, 2010, p. 441, Suutari, Brewster, Tornikoski, 2013, p. 172).

Concerning the location, work contracts and motives, SIEs are more frequently located in Europe than AEs. Furthermore, SIEs' work contract is typically on temporary basis and SIEs will work on a lower hierarchical level than AEs. The interest towards internationalism and improvement in their work situation might give more motivation to start an expatriation for SIEs than for AEs. (Suutari & Brewster, 2000, p. 429.)

The motivation to accept or decide to work abroad varies whether the expatriate has been assigned by the company or initiated the experience. Depending on the reasons why expatriates chose to work in another country, will affect the job effort as well as the career satisfaction. The differences between AEs and SIEs is the mindset, and this career mindset may influence the performance of the employee. AEs will see their assignment as career progress, while SIEs assignment perception is daily work. (Linder, 2019, p. 552, p. 566.)

SIE group is more represented by women compared to AEs which are most likely men (Ballesteros-Leiva et al., 2017, p. 242; Suutari & Brewster, 2000, p. 429; Cerdin & Le Pargneux, 2010, p. 292, Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009, p. 1104). Additionally, SIEs are in average younger than AEs, most commonly single and their spouses work more commonly in foreign country than spouses of AEs (Suutari & Brewster, 2000, p. 429). Another noticeable difference concerning the family is that SIEs have fewer children compared to AEs (Cerdin & Le Pargneux, 2010, pp. 291-292).

Concerning the experience of working abroad, it is more common for AEs to work in several countries during their career compared to SIEs. Additionally, the expatriation tenure is on average shorter for AEs compare to SIEs (Cerdin & Le Pargneux, 2010, p. 292).

Research concerning the length of previous experience abroad appears to be contradictory. On one side Jokinen, Brewster & Suutari (2008, p. 990) suggested that there is a significant difference between the AEs and SIEs. However, other empirical studies have

found non-significant differences between the groups. (Cerdin & Le Pargneux, 2010, p. 292; Suutari & Brewster, 2000, p. 423).

2.2 Work to Life Conflicts

In this chapter, the first part will bring an overall perspective of literature concerning the relationship between work and life. The first part will bring the necessary background information on WLB on order to provide a better understanding of WLC. The second part will only focus on the theoretical background concerning WLC.

2.2.1 Work-life balance dimensions

The balance between work and life is more difficult to achieve than before for many people. This can be explained with the development of women's participation to the workforce combined with changes in family patterns such as the increase of either single-parent or dual-earner families (Aryee et al., 2005, p. 132, Duxbury & Higgins, 2001, p. 6). This shift has considerably increased researchers' interest on how the responsibilities of work and families are managed by these modern families. Overall, the research has been more focused on the conflicts experienced by the family in their work-life balance. (Aryee et al., 2005, p. 132). Work-life balance is the fulfilment of role-related expectations which require commitment, time, and energy (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001, p. 3, Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007, p. 466). These roles are: "employee, boss, subordinate, spouse, parent, child, sibling, friend, and community member" (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001, p. 3). Therefore, when there is a conflict between the personal and professional life it will affect the work-life balance. Reducing the conflict between work and life will have a positive effect on employees (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001, p. 3). Clark (2000, p. 751) supports this idea and defines balance as "Satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict".

The figure 1 conceptualizes Work-Family Balance using four dimensions: work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, work-to-family enrichment, and family to-work enrichment (Frone, 2003, p. 145).

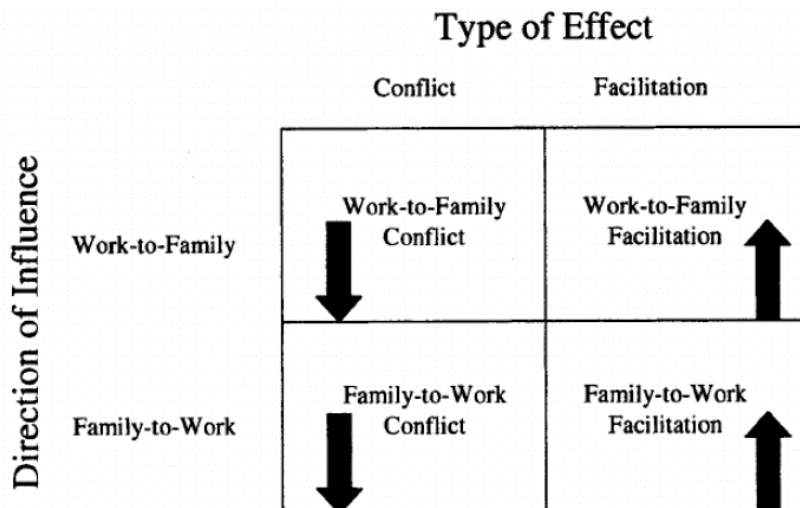


Figure 1. Dimensions of work-family balance (Frone, 2003, p. 146).

However, Frone's (2003) research had some limitations and has received critics from other researchers concerning the measure of facilitation, also called enrichment. Later, Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne and Grzywacz (2006, pp. 159-160) have developed a better measure of enrichment, and therefore provides a more accurate measure that can be used in research concerning work-family balance.

It has been demonstrated that the influence of the work on family is bidirectional, and therefore, the family has also an influence on the professional life (Gutek, Searle & Klepa, 1991, p. 566). Concerning the conflict and enrichment, their influence is bidirectional, however their influence is distinctly constructed in how they act in each direction (Carlson et al. 2006, p. 160; Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrin, 1996, p. 407).

The existing research usually focuses on the family to describe the personal life. Nonetheless, in the contemporary society other aspects than family are part of lifestyle: friends, leisure, networking, sports, or any other activities (Sturges & Guest, 2004, pp.

18-19, Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 280, Grawitch, Barber & Justice, 2010, p. 151, Fisch-Imayr & Kollinger, 2010, p. 455). The support of friends, family, colleagues, managers, and company decrease the WLC (Ballesteros-Leiva, Poilpot-Rocaboy & St-Onge, 2018, p. 293, p. 200).

2.2.2 Work to Life Conflict

Work to life conflict (WLC) has been defined as “a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985, p. 77). The professional and personal lives are interdependent. Additionally, the authors examine the literature concerning work-family and found three major forms of conflicts: time-based, strain-based, and behaviour-based conflicts. The time-based conflicts relate to the time a person needs to fulfil the requirement for each role. The strain-based refers to the challenges and difficulties each role can require. Then, behaviour-based conflict happens when some specific behaviours are required in a role and prevent the fulfilment of another role requirement. Moreover, the authors mentioned the importance in WLC research to evaluate and measure through these different forms of pressure (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985, p. 86).

Concerning background of WLC, there are no difference between men and women. Both genders experience WLC (Byron, 2005, p. 190; Martocchio & O’Leary, 1989, p. 498, Rehel & Baxter, 2015). The profession has more impact on the work outcomes than the gender (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001, p. 27). However, employees with a great time management and coping behaviour have less WLC. (Byron, 2005, p. 190)

Employees with children are having more work stress compared to the employees without children (Byron, 2005, p. 190). Additionally, single parents have more WLC compared to parents that are married. Although, employees who are married and single without children, have rather similar relationship with WLC (Byron, 2005, p. 187)

The personality might also have an impact on the work-life conflict. Personalities which are more extravert, have more self-esteem or more hardiness, will have lower levels of WLC (Frone, 2003, p. 151). On the other side, personality more concerned by neuroticism may have a negative spill over on WLC (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000, p. 345).

The volume of weekly hours assigned for work will have an impact on WLC (Frone, 2003, p. 150). The degree of involvement and commitment in a social role will also affect the work-life balance. To illustrate, if an employee is psychologically highly involved in the work role, it might also affect the personal life, even though the person has physically another role (Frone, 2003, p. 150). Moreover, other factors such as lack of energy or cognitive preoccupations might weaken the capacity and determination of an individual to fulfil the requirement of each role (Frone et al., 1997, p. 146).

Organizations with not family-supportive managers might create work to life conflicts for the employees. However, when employees have more flexibility in their schedule, as well as a supportive work environment, it will reduce the work to life conflict. This suggests some considerations from the employer to support employees with children might have a positive impact to have a better WLC (Byron, 2005, p. 193; Trzebiatowski & Triana, 2020, p. 27, Duxbury & Higgins, 2001, pp. 54-60; Frone, 2003, p. 151). Additionally, when managers let the possibility for employees to refuse overtime, it might reduce the work to life conflict (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001, pp. 56-57).

Individual employees have also the possibility to reduce work to life conflict by having more control on their lives as well as a positive attitude towards their work and coping style (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001, pp. 62-64). When there is no balance between the responsibilities at work and at home, job dissatisfaction might be an outcome of the situation (Thomas & Ganster, 1995, p. 7). Similarly, family stress, distress, or dissatisfaction impact the WLC. Moreover, a supportive partner or family member may help to reduce tension between work and life (Frone, 2003, pp. 150-151; Mäkelä, Käsälä & Suutari, 2011, p. 194).

Moreover, there are two main different reasons that create positive or negative impact on either the personal or professional life. One reason is the different roles every individual must fulfil when their roles may be sometimes contradictory. Another reason is the limited resources when there may not be enough time and energy available. This might have a negative effect in the achievement of requirement of each role (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 280).

2.3 Work to life conflicts among expatriates

The work-life balance is more challenging for employees with an international career than a traditional career (Forster, 2000, pp. 138-139; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001, p. 238; Suutari, 2003, p. 190, pp. 202-204; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2011, p. 373). The WLC is often due to three main conflicts: the first one is the time-based conflicts. For example, long days at work, repetitive commute, as well as time commitment will altogether prevent individuals to fulfil the requirements of each of their roles, thus creating WLC interference in personal life. The second, strain-based conflicts are due to the combination of roles that will create imbalances between work and life. The third main conflict is named behaviour-based conflict. This may happen when some behaviour happening in one role is incompatible with another role (Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000, p. 250; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 76).

More recent research focusing on WLC on expatriates did not find relevance with behaviour-based strain. However, expatriates do have time-based, and strain-based conflicts. Concerning the strain-based conflict for expatriates, it may come from work position with responsibilities, new environment's challenges, and autonomy required from expatriates that are causing imbalance from work to life (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2011, p. 373).

Furthermore, the same research points out another conflict which is mobility-based conflicts, due to the nature of being expatriates. The uncertainty of new upcoming

assignments and need for readjustment to new locations may strain the WLB. Additionally, expatriates will face uncertainty concerning the future such as repatriation might also cause WLC. The mobility-based conflict can also be caused by the distance due to the expatriation from the family and friends living in the home country may also be challenging (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2011, p. 373). Additionally, a research conducted on expatriates by Schütter and Boerner (2013, p. 63), identified the energy-based conflicts. This may occur when the expatriate does not have enough energy to fulfil the requirements of different roles.

In contemporary society, studies have also highlighted an increase of dual career couples. Dual career couple has been defined as a couple in which both partners are devoted to their professional careers (Harvey, Novicevic & Breland, 2009, pp. 178-179; Mäkelä et al., 2011, p. 188). Dual career couple is a phenomenon that has increased, and so does its occurrence within expatriates (Selmer & Leung, 2002, p. 9). Global dual career couples have an impact on Multinational enterprise's (MNE) operations, for example, the decision to go in an international assignment are made more carefully (Mäkelä et al., 2011, p. 188). Moreover, WLC are interfering more in dual-career couples compared to the family when one partner has a career (Mäkelä et al., 2011, p. 186).

The WLB is not steady but evolves during life in a continuous process. During the early stage of their careers, individuals' goals tend towards their careers. However, then when people get older, they focus more on their personal life (Mäkelä, Suutari & Mayerhofer, 2011, p. 268). Therefore, it could be suggested that WLC is changing during the life of every individual. Additionally, according to Greenhaus and Powell (2006, p. 73), the optimal balance does not exist. The WLB is specific from every individual; how to set time priorities or how to cope with stress are specific to each person. Expatriates' WLB permeability as well as the WLB flexibility is different between expatriates and may change also according to different demographic variables. The possibly of flexibility and permeability of private life are two factors influencing the WLC (Kempen, 2017, p. 55).

The organization's support such as the relocation support has a significant impact on the WLB of expatriates. Therefore, the WLC of international workers is different compared to traditional careers or other kind of careers (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux & Brinleya, 2005, pp. 158-159; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2011, p. 374). Additionally, the review on WLB research by Eby et al. (2005, p. 181) highlights that gender role, as well as gender difference, need to be taken into consideration to have a good comprehension of the work-life balance.

Research conducted on WLC on women AEs has demonstrated that long working days, frequent business trips or commute, among other work duties, were causing interference on their personal life (Mäkelä et al., 2011, p. 268; Fischlmayr & Kollinger, 2010, p. 474; Mäkelä et al., 2011, p. 193). The challenges faced by women expatriate are rather the same as men counterpart (Mäkelä et al., 2011, p. 268). Expatriate women may feel WLC more isolated than men and may find more challenging to have social interaction and time for hobbies (Fischlmayr & Kollinger, 2010, p. 474).

Causes of stress and work-life imbalance of expatriates might occur to, for instance, with long working hours, due to business travel, telephone and conference calls, meetings, pressures to do these longer hours, taking too much time out, therefore doing overwork and being overwhelmed (Shortland & Cummins, 2007)

2.3.1 Self-Initiated Expatriates and Work to Life Conflict

As explained earlier, SIEs are a disparate and heterogenous group, therefore the motives of expatriation might differ between SIEs. Furthermore, as the group is diverse, the work-life interfaces are varied as well (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 280; Suutari & Brewster, 2000, p. 434). Therefore, WLC may also be different according to each individual.

SIEs are making the decisions to expatriate, therefore this decision has a strong impact on the SIEs lives, as well as their family's life (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 297; Richardson,

2006, p. 469, Hearn, Jyrkinen, Piekkari & Oinonen, 2008, p. 52; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2011, p. 374; McLachlan, 2008, p. 91).

In a study by Mäkelä & Suutari (2013, p. 296), on “highly educated business professionals”, the work responsibilities of this sample were high and SIEs may require long working days, stress, and repetitive business travel creating WLC. Those causes are affecting SIEs personally along with the family.

It is more frequent for SIE to have a long-lasting international career. Thereby, SIEs are moving plenty of times during their lives and this might have a negative impact on their lives (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 296). About the career, it may also be challenging for dual-career couples when the careers get often interrupted (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 296; Mäkelä et al., 2011, p. 188).

2.3.2 Assigned Expatriates and Work to Life Conflict

AEs have support from their organization for their international relocation. This support can have a huge influence on the WLC of expatriates and the family (Eby et al., 2005, pp. 158-159; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2011, p. 374)

Working overtime is a problem for expatriates to decrease the WLC interferences as well as a lack of flexibility at work. However, offering flexibility will support employees to have more time for their personal life. Then, a global career can be demanding, and therefore the work-life conflict may affect personal relationships. Separation of married or not married couples within expatriates seems to be strongly linked with the long period of absence. Moreover, while doing research concerning AEs it is important to take into consideration the life situation of the expatriate to understand of WLC (Mäkelä et al., 2011, p. 268).

WLC can negatively affect the motivation of the employees to accomplish the assignment. Therefore, to avoid assignment withdrawal from the employee after repatriation, organization must take in consideration the WLC to success in the expatriation (Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley & Luk, 2001, p. 117; Boies & Rothstein, 2002, p. 247).

To enhance the success of the international assignment, organizations ought to ensure that the employee is accepting the assignment on his or her own free will already before sending their employees abroad. Furthermore, the organization should encourage their employee to choose the position, but also the possibility to decline the offer, if it could affect expatriates' professional and personal lives too much. Additionally, to make the international assignment beneficial for the employee and the organization, the employee' motivation should also be a criterion while selecting the candidates (Cerdin & Le Pargneux, 2009, p. 18).

Assigned women expatriates are more often single and without kids compared to men. However, it could be suggested that the personal lives of women are more associated to taking care of others (Mäkelä et al., 2011, pp. 268-269; Collings, Scullion & Morley, 2007, p. 201; Tharenou, 2008, p. 187), but other spheres of personal life are important as well (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 280). Women might aspire to expatriation to break the glass ceiling. Additionally, research on women's career aspiration might help to understand how the society and cultural expectations impact women work-life interface (Shah & Barker, 2020, p. 23; Fitzgerald & Howe-Walsh, 2008, p. 158, Andresen, Biemann & Pattie, 2015, p. 942)

Concerning the gender division of expatriates' families, a study conducted on AEs by Hearn et al. (2008, p. 52) has shown differences between men and women. In the families where men managers have an international assignment, traditional gender division is strengthened. In the same study, some interviewees stated that their wives interrupted their professional career by volunteering themselves. Moreover, the traditional gender division is also reinforced as, in these families, even though women move abroad

with their partner, they are spending time at home to take care of their children. On the other side, when women are managers, it is more common that they travel between their home and host country. These commutes are necessary when the working husband has continued his career and the family is living apart (Hearn et al., 2008, p. 52; Käsälä, Mäkelä & Suutari, 2015, p. 2206). The perception could also be a factor to consider during research, as women expatriates may perceive WLC as an issue. Although men expatriates were aware of WLC in their lives they did not perceive it as an issue (Schütter & Boerner, 2013, p. 64)

Moreover, the perception of roles within the couples might differ between men AEs and women AEs. In the sample gathered by Mäkelä et al. (2011, p. 268) men expatriates were describing their wife as “family affairs manager” and take care of the administration difficulties. The situation is relatively similar for women expatriates, as the partner is also taking care of the family affairs, including children. However, a noticeable difference is that women expatriates are more frequently doing their expatriation alone, without a partner or children. Overall, in expatriate couples, the support of the expatriates’ partner affects a lot the success of the expatriation assignment (Mäkelä et al., 2011, p. 268; Käsälä et al., 2015, p. 2206). However, Schütter and Boerner (2013, p. 63) established that not only the adjustment of the spouse matters but the adjustment of the children is also important. Additionally, compromise can be made between personal and professional life. For example, younger expatriates will plan to start a family depending on their assignments.

2.3.3 Differences in Work to Life Conflict between AEs and SIEs

Overall, research among international mobility has been more focused more on AEs than SIEs. Similarly, research about work-life balance has been more oriented towards AEs’ work-life balance than SIEs’ (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 281).

The main difference, i.e. whether the initiative for expatriation comes from employer organization or the individual, impacts the WLC of SIEs and AEs during the expatriation. SIEs have less support or benefits from their employers compared to traditional assigned expatriates (Dorsch et al., 2012, p. 44; Ballesteros-Leiva et al., 2017, p. 249). As mentioned earlier in chapter 2.1.2, AEs are more connected to employer organization policies than SIEs for example taxes, legislation, allowance, insurance (Andresen et al., 2014, pp. 2301-2302; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 297). Thereby, SIEs do not have optimal conditions in their WLB compared to AEs (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 297).

Furthermore, AEs have more comfortable work conditions than SIEs. Indeed, AEs have organization support and thus often receive logistical support for the expatriation, wage compensation, and support for the family to settle in the host country such as support to seek for schools, useful information, and a network (Ballesteros-Leiva et al., 2017, p. 249). An organizational support for AEs will play a role on the success of the expatriation (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2011, p. 374). Indeed, when expatriates feel supported by their organization, they have less depression, anxiety, and lower level of WLC (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001, p. 273).

Even though employer organization is a major and unique supporter during AEs international assignment, other actors might also ease AEs WLC. For example, social support from manager will ease the adjustment, satisfaction, or commitment during the international assignment (Van der Laken, Van Engen, Van Veldhoven & Paauwe, 2016, pp. 423–424). Additionally, SIEs perceive less WLC when they have support from their colleagues compared to AEs. Concerning AEs, the support of colleagues is not so significant on the WLC (Ballesteros-Leiva et al., 2018, pp. 307-308, Agha-Alikhani, 2016, p. 466). In turn, the support from the organization has a considerable importance to lower WLC of AEs while for SIEs who do not have the same support when arriving to the host country. Thus, their relationships with colleagues may have an important role to lower WLC. When an organization gives support such as flexibility, benefits, or holidays to prepare their departure, these reduce the WLC of internationally mobile employees. (Ballesteros-Leiva

et al., 2018, pp. 307-308). Moreover, organizations provide crucial financial and informative support, for example, tax equalization, allowances and pre-departure preparation for AEs (Van der Laken et al., 2016, p. 424).

In turns, SIEs tend to have larger networks with locals than AEs. It could be suggested this is due to the length of stay which is limited for AEs and ease SIEs adjustment. However, it is required from SIEs to make more effort to elaborate a supportive social network than AEs. Therefore, it is suggested that SIEs put effort to maintain this network, even the network from previous places, more than AEs. (Agha-Alikhani, 2016, p. 466.)

SIEs also have more flexibility compared to AEs in the choice of the location, length of the stay and type of work they are willing to do. Therefore, this can be beneficial for the family adjustment (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 279, pp. 283-284). On one hand, families of SIEs might have an easier adjustment because the decision to go abroad is made by the family. On the other hand, concerning the families' well-being, the responsibilities lean on the SIEs (Shaffer, Sebastian, Dimitrova, Lazarova, Chen, Westman & Wurtz, 2006, p. 134).

Age and family situation between AEs and SIEs is also different in average. The international career tends to start at an earlier age for SIEs compared to AEs. AEs are usually married and have already a family with children (Ballesteros-Leiva, Poilpot-Rocaboy & St-Onge, 2018, p. 298). AEs depend more on the family compared to SIEs. SIEs will instead socialize more with the people they will meet in the new country (Shaffer et al., 2016, p. 134). Furthermore, even though SIEs have the possibility to choose the country they desired, SIEs might feel guilty to make the decision to go abroad as it interrupted or affected the career of their partner (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 290). Therefore, expatriates' family situation or age will influence whether they face challenges within their WLC.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier the behaviour-based conflict should also be taken in consideration while researching WLC (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985, p. 86). Therefore,

SIEs motivations to move abroad depends more on the location as well as the appeal or reputation of the new location while AEs are rather motivated by the possibility to enhance career opportunities (Doherty, Dickmann & Mills, 2011, p. 596, p. 608). SIEs, while moving abroad can prevent their career progression or skills growth by finding a work below their expectations and capabilities (Global Mobility of Employees, 2020). Thus, SIEs do not have as challenging responsibilities and do not work in as high hierarchical position as AEs. Therefore, SIEs do not have as good network to support them in their career growth. This situation can limit SIEs' career progression. Therefore, it might affect the SIEs motivation (Ballesteros-Leiva et al., 2018, p. 298). In comparison to AEs, SIEs are more mobile and tend to work in more countries and to change more frequently the location as well as organizations (Biemann & Andresen, 2010, p. 441; Suutari et al., 2013, p. 172, Ballesteros-Leiva et al., 2018, p. 298). Moreover, the motives of AEs and SIEs to do their expatriation vary, thus differences in career path and destination influencing the WLC differently within the two groups. The SIEs sample from the research conducted by Mäkelä and Suutari (2013, p. 296) consisted of high professionals. Therefore, their work required high responsibility, more stress, extend working hours and commutes, altogether causing WLC. These are due to the work position which requires high responsibility. However, SIEs usually have more diversity in the kinds of work and tasks they have compared to AEs and thus not all SIEs have as challenging jobs.

There is also a difference between expatriate groups career orientation. SIEs have a more turbulent career and they are more focused on their own careers (Biemann & Andresen, 2010, p. 434). A protean career attitude is a term to describe a career orientated person, which is driven by the person's priorities, and not the priority of their organization (Hall, 2004, p. 1). An individual with a protean career attitude is characterised by the ability to adapt, to be flexible and to be able to continuously learn (Lazarova & Tarique, 2005, p. 367). The characteristics of protean career attitudes are also necessary for expatriation (Lazarova & Cerdin, 2007, p. 423). This protean attitude is more usual for SIEs compared to their counterpart AEs (Biemann & Andresen, 2010, p. 431; Cerdin & Le Pargneux, 2009, p. 19, Crowley-Henry, 2007, pp. 59-60).

Another attitude that might emphasize the chances of international assignment success is a boundaryless career attitude (Cerdin & Le Pargneux, 2009, p. 16). Boundaryless career occurs when individuals are willing to span their career abroad, with concern regarding organizational mobility in comparison to a protean career (Briscoe, Hall & Frautschy Demuth, 2006, p. 31). According to a study conducted by Andresen et al. (2015, p. 942), SIEs tend to have a more boundaryless career than AEs. However, there is only a slight difference between AEs and SIEs concerning their boundaryless career attitude.

Another difference between AEs and SIEs is regarding how they pursue their career. SIEs tend to follow a boundaryless international career and they are moving regardless of an organization or country. AEs work usually within one company and pursue an organizational international career (Inkson et al., 1997, p. 352; Jokinen et al., 2008, p. 989; Dorsch et al., 2012, p. 45; Biemann & Andresen, 2010, p. 431; Ballesteros-Leiva et al., 2017, p. 238). However, individuals who follow a boundaryless career and SIEs are still different in some areas. For example, SIEs may settle in the country. They might learn the host country language, find work, get involved in relationship with someone from the host country and stay in this country and pursue their career in the same country (Dorsch et al., 2012, p. 45).

High subjective well-being is a state when an individual is satisfied in life. This state of happiness is associated to the repetition and duration of positive emotions and fewer negative emotions (Diener et al., 1991, p. 213; Ballesteros-Leiva et al., 2017, p. 239). Concerning expatriates, their own subjective well-being was intertwined with the work-life interference, but also depending on their partners' subjective well-being (Van der Zee, Ali & Salomé, 2005, p. 257). Furthermore, the research conducted by Ballesteros-Leiva et al. (2017, p. 249) points out that WLC impacts more on the subjective well-being of SIEs than AEs. According to the authors, this could be explained by the support provided by the organization to AEs, which might help and ease the life of those expatriates.

Concerning the adjustment on the early stage of their expatriation, SIEs adjustment is a fundamental issue of their new lives abroad. SIEs will face challenges such as professional or national barriers. SIEs should recognize these barriers in order to work on them and adjust to the country. Moreover, learning languages will also support SIEs in their adjustment to the host country. Additionally, it could be important to mention that not all SIEs can adjust successfully to the host country (Dorsch et al., 2012, p. 48). Nonetheless, SIEs have more motivation to interact with the people living in the host country than AEs. Additionally, they are also willing to learn more compared to AEs, since AEs have higher support from the organization. Due to such support, AEs have fewer challenges to adjust concerning the general aspect of life in the host country. The difference in adjustment to the host country between AEs and SIEs is one reason which proves that the research on expatriates must focus on AEs and SIEs separately, to have more accurate findings (Inkson et al., 1997, p. 366; Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009, pp. 1106-1108).

Also, the countries where SIEs and AEs move are different. For instance, Finnish SIEs are most likely living in close by countries in Europe more than AEs would (Suutari & Brewster, 2000, p. 429). Though, the research concerning the location of SIEs is fairly limited, it has been reported that they are typically moving to developed countries such as New Zealand, the UK and Finland (Doherty, Richardson & Thorn, 2013, p. 7). This could be explained by the fact that it might appear less risky and less difficult for AEs to move abroad with the support of the company (Suutari et al., 2013, p. 167). The decision possibilities regarding the destination vary within AEs and SIEs. While AEs' decision depends on the organization's possibilities, SIEs have the opportunity to choose a country where they are rather attracted by. Therefore, the choice of SIEs will be made according to their own preference and considering their own well-being.

Table 1. SIEs and AEs differences of WLC

| | SIEs | AEs |
|---|---|--|
| + | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social support from colleague network. • Developed social network with time, which help the adjustment. • Flexibility of choice in the location, length of the stay and type of work. • Behaviour: protean and boundaryless attitude. SIEs are more flexible in their career choices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimal situation with organization support • Social network from the organization (colleagues) |
| - | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No organizational support • Social network need effort to be developed. • Challenge to settle in the new countries without support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited social network often limited to colleagues. • Life situations (have a more often a partner, more advanced life situation e.g., have children) • AEs have positions requiring more responsibility leading to stress |

All in all, the existing research supports the view that both types of expatriates, AEs and SIEs face both challenges with their WLC (see **table 1**). In the light of all evidence, we could expect that SIEs are experiencing a lower level of WLC compared to AEs as an outcome. Thus, the following hypothesis is formed:

Hypothesis: SIEs experience a lower level of WLC than AEs.

3 Methodology

Epistemology is a social science viewpoint and can be defined as the way we question “the nature of the physical and social worlds” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson, 2012, p. 21). From the epistemology’s point of view results two positions: positivism or social constructionism (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 22). The position of this research chosen is positivism. On the ground that, epistemology, underlying by positivism is the dominant research philosophy, this justifies also the choice of the survey strategy (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 22). Therefore, first a phenomenon of a social reality will be observed, then hypotheses are developed based on existing theories. Next, these hypotheses will be tested to be either accepted or not (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007, p. 103).

Concerning the research approach, this study is deductive. This means that the theories collected in the literature review will be tested. Therefore, the theory is the first source of information. The process of deduction in scientific research is divided in five stages. The first stage is to figure out the hypothesis by deducing. The second stage consists of the of presentation the hypothesis with the relevant terms. The third stage is the empirically testing of the hypothesis with quantitative data. Fourth stage is to analyse the outcome of the research. If it is needed, the last stage consists of proposing new findings to the theory, if needed. (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 117, p. 138.)

In order to explain the reasons or causes for a certain phenomenon, explanatory studies are used for research purpose. Explanatory studies are often utilised by analysing the relationship of variables with quantitative data (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 134). Therefore, exploratory research is the most convenient for this study, as this thesis is using quantitative data.

The research method selected for this study is the mono method. Therefore, one type of data collection technique is utilised (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 145). In this study, only one quantitative data research procedure, the use of a survey is applied.

Concerning the time horizon, a cross-sectional study is a research conducted by collecting the data at once and, on a short time-period, and on a certain point of time. This time horizon is often used with the survey strategy. (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 148.) Therefore, the cross-sectional study appears to be the most convenient for the overall study design of the present study.

3.1 Quantitative approach

While doing business management research there are two ways to distinguished data collection and analysis approaches: qualitative and quantitative. A qualitative approach consists of collecting data for instance by doing interviews. The data are non-numeric, not quantifiable. The data collections are, for instance, words that could be gathered through methods such as interviews. On the other side, a quantitative approach differs from a qualitative approach by collecting numeric data, therefore numbers. The collection can be done by gathering data from large-scale surveys, graphs, or statistics. (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 165; Creswell, 2008, p. 46.)

Once quantitative data is collected, the original form of the data does not have a clear meaning. Therefore, the meaning needs to be interpreted and analysed. Then, these numbers become useful and provide information about a certain phenomenon. The interpretation can be made by statistics, graphs but also charts. These techniques are a support to give sense, explore, interpret, and explore the correlation between the data. Management and business researchers are for the most part supporting the study by using numerical data. Thus, from the interpretation of the data finding an answer to the research question and reaching the aimed objectives (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 406; Creswell, 2008, p. 46.)

Another specificity of quantitative research lies in asking specific and narrow question. Moreover, the research must be conducted objectively and with an unbiased approach. (Creswell, 2008, p. 46.)

Quantitative data is classified into two data types that are either categorical or quantifiable data. The categorical type means that the data can be classified into a set of categories, it could be characteristics such as eye colour and gender. The quantifiable type concerns numbers and measurable occurrence for instance, age and number of children (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 406.)

3.2 Data collection

The research strategy utilised for collecting the data is a survey research design. According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2012, pp. 42-45), supposition of patterns can be expected in trends, societal behaviours, human attitudes, or opinions. However, these assumptions can be difficult to identify and explain. Therefore, gathering data from a large-scale sample, which can be measurable, is applied. Thus, this allows the possibility to examine relationships of multiple factors (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, pp. 42-45; Creswell, 2014, p. 155). Moreover, one of the types of secondary data is survey-based secondary data (Saunders et al., 2007, pp. 249-251). Thus, it could be suggested that the survey is the most suitable strategy to answer the research question, more specifically using a survey-based secondary data.

The survey strategy is aiming to answer the question such as what, what, where, how many or how much. The advantage of a survey for researchers is the possibility to gather a large data collection from a substantial sample (Saunders et al., 2007, pp. 138-139)

There are three types of survey: factual, inferential, and exploratory. The type of survey selected for this research is inferential which is the predominant type utilised in academic management research. The purpose of the inferential type of survey is to identify the correlation between the theoretical concepts and variables, and to test whether the hypothesis is accepted or rejected. The tasks of the researcher will be to identify

independent and dependent variables. The independent variable is expected to be the cause of the dependent variable. (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 43.)

Secondary data analysis is the opportunity of reanalysing archived source of data gathered from previous research. To support their activities, organizations will often collect data. For instance, the government could conduct survey among the population and share statistics, such as demographic or economic information. Most of the time, these data are not accessible and are confidential. (Saunders et al., 2007, pp. 246-247; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 235.)

The data set of the present study was originally gathered for a research project at the University of Vaasa. A selected part of the data is utilised and analysed in this thesis. The original research conducted aimed to study expatriates' well-being. Using archived data enable to analyse a large-scaled population, in comparison with data that would have been gathered exclusively for this thesis. Thus, this ensure that the sample is large enough to solve the aim of the study.

3.3 Sample description

The data (N=291) was gathered by the University of Vaasa for research purpose in March 2016 through an online survey. The aim of the study was to research on expatriates' well-being. The data collection has been conducted in collaboration with the trade union for academic engineers and architects in Finland (TEK). The invitation has been sent to the members living outside Finland.

To ensure the accuracy of the research it is necessary to have a sample which is representativeness of the characteristic the study is focusing on (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 223). The data previously gathered has the relevant representativeness in order to answer the research question of this thesis: WLB of AEs and SIEs. The research of this study is a narrower topic of the original research and will focuses on WLC.

The total of respondents of the survey is 291 (N=291). The data analysis demonstrates that 179 (61,5%) of the participants are SIEs, 104 (35,7%) of the participants are AEs, and 8 (2,7%) responses are missing (Figure 2). The measure is made with binary variable as 0 for SIE and 1 for AE.

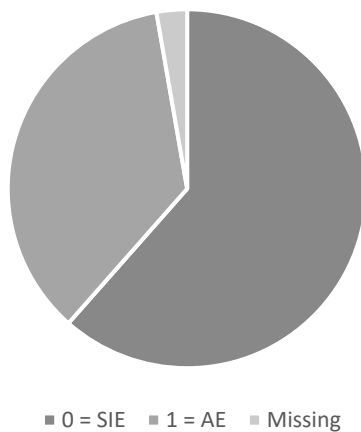


Figure 2. Expatriates' type distribution.

The respondents are Finnish. Age of expatriates varies between 26 to 64, the mean age is 42.35 (standard deviation is 9.29). There are 221 (75.9%) men and 67 (23%) women expatriates. Further details and comparison between AEs and SIEs will be presented in sub-chapter 4.1 "Comparison of AE- and SIE-groups".

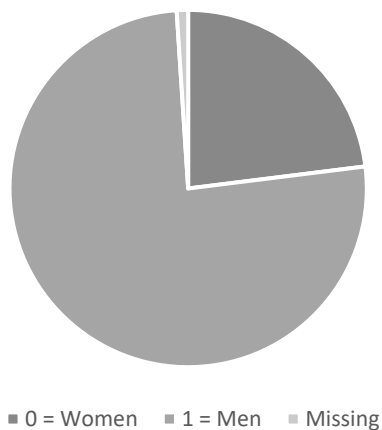


Figure 3. Expatriates' gender distribution.

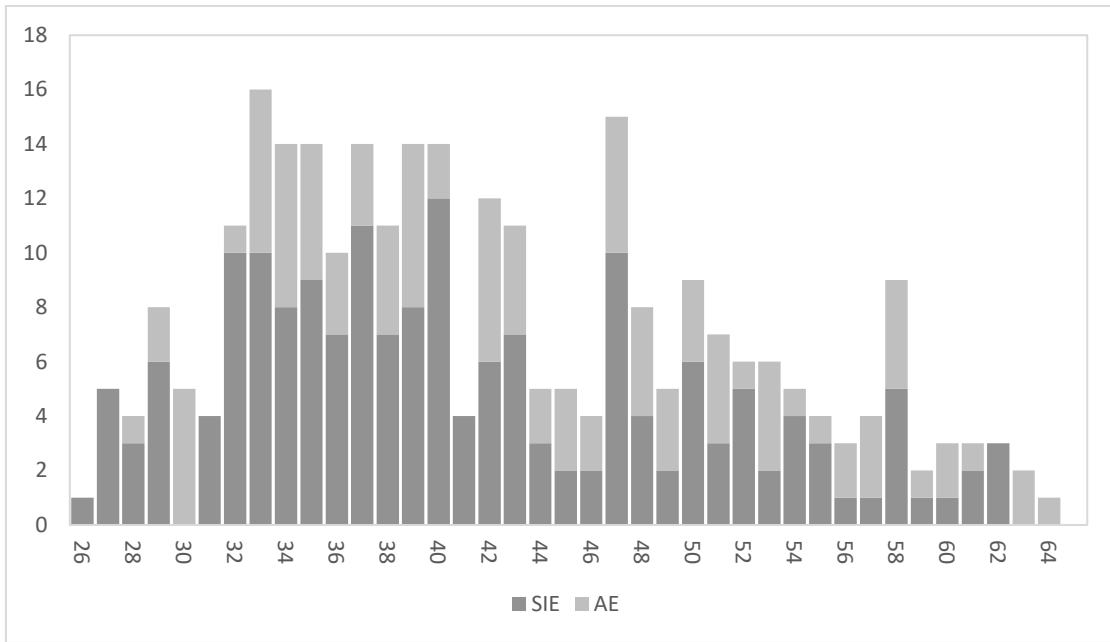


Figure 4. Expatriates' age distribution.

3.4 Measures

Data collection can be done in different way according to the nature of the research. Measurements of the output are also depending of the study. For example, depending on whether the study measure performance or behaviours, the methods to measure will be different. Thus, it is important to choose the appropriate scales and measures. (Pal-lant, 2013, pp. 5-6.).

Measuring the opinions and attitudes of people has been the interest of psychologist, but also more broadly. Therefore, there are effective methods in order to measure atti-tudes and opinions. Rensis Likert has elaborated a scale in five-point responses scale, named Likert scale. This scale has a mid-point, being neutral. Then, on moderate point and extreme on each side of the mid-point, being for or against the statement question. (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, pp. 241-242.)

The first part of the survey are questions related to the background information of the respondents. With regards of WLC, the survey has been built using Likert Scale. The respondents answered five questions regarding their opinion on how the work interfere in their personal life. The mean of the five questions has been calculated. Then the mean of WLC of SIEs and AEs have been compared in order to assess and study the possible difference between these groups.

For the background information, the gender has been measured using binary variable, 0 for “woman” and 1 for “man”. Then, respondents answered whether they are SIE (0) or AE (1). Also, whether respondents have a relationship, children, have previously been abroad were assess using binary variables, 0 for “no” and 1 for “yes”. Concerning the age and length of stay respondents were giving the number of years as an answer.

3.5 Analysis of the findings

The comparative analysis of AE- and SIE-groups of the data has been conducted on IBM SPSS Statistics 26. Therefore, comparison of AEs and SIEs background variables will be done through crosstabulation analyses. Crosstabulation analysis is commonly used in order to investigate the relationship between two categorical variables (Pallant, 2013, p. 228).

To pursue the comprehension of the data set, AEs and SIEs background comparison will be done with independent sample T-test method. Independent sample T-test is utilised to compare the mean between the value of one dependent variable and one independent variable with two categories, for instance here two groups: AEs and SIEs. AEs and SIEs will be compared regarding four numerical variables: gender, family situation (having children), previously abroad, or whether they have a relationship.

Then to comprehend deeper the background variables, continuous variables (length of stay and age of the respondents) are analysed through a correlation in order to know the strength of the relationship of the variables between the two groups: SIE and AE. A

Pearson correlation or Spearman correlation analysis is conducted in order to investigate the strength of the relationship between two continuous variables, as well as the direction, either positive or negative (a cause-and-effect relationship) (Pallant, 2013, p. 107; Saunders et al., 2007, p. 451).

Then, hypothesis will be tested. Because the study aims to compare two groups, independent-sample t-test analyses is chosen to test the hypothesis. Independent sample t-test is utilised to search the mean between the value of one dependent variable (continuous variable) and one independent variable with two categories (two groups or two occurrences) (Pallant, 2013, p. 247; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 346).

3.6 Reliability and validity

To support the credibility of research findings it is fundamental to reduce the possibility of wrong answers. This requires looking two characteristics of the research designed known as reliability and validity (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 149). The reliability and validity of the study are influencing the quality of the data, thus the study (Pallant, 2013, p. 6).

Reliability refers to the consistency in collection methods and analysis techniques (Saunders et al., 2007, pp. 149-150). One of the main concerns in a study using survey design relates with the measurement. The researchers must pay attention on the accuracy and stability of the instruments and questionnaire items. Therefore, measure of reliability is necessary to evaluate the instrument (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 48).

The coherence and steadiness of the variables' measurements could be assessed with the Cronbach's coefficient alpha (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 345). Cronbach's coefficient alpha is a common measure of reliability. This statistic with a range value from 0 to 1. This value indicates the degree of consistency in the scale used to measure a set of items. The higher the value is, the greater the reliability is (Pallant, 2013, pp. 6-7, pp. 101-105; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 340). Measuring the Cronbach's alpha coefficient

is commonly used to assess the reliability of a study. Moreover, Cronbach's alpha is used frequently when there are multiple questions using Likert scale in a survey to measure the internal consistency of the research. (Lund Research, 2018). Therefore, measuring Cronbach's alpha coefficient is relevant for this study. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha of WLC-scale was 0.927 and thus, the reliability of the scale was good.

Another concern to consider is the reliability and validity when using secondary data. It is important beforehand to evaluate the source of the data. For instance, survey data gathered from recognized organization are most likely trustworthy and reliable. Moreover, the procedures of these organizations are presumably reliable and precise (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 265). The data of the present study was collected by researcher from the University of Vaasa for research purposes. This ensures the good quality of data.

To ensure reliability in this study, on the high rate of respondents, data has been narrowed down to get only the answers relevant for the research while keeping a large data set to be considered as quantitative research (Saunders et al., 2007, p. 265). Moreover, the accuracy of the research depends also on the representativeness of the sampling (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 223). In the present study, the respondents of the survey belong to the Finnish Union TEK, when a membership in union is very common in Finland, the sample represent well Finnish expatriates overall.

The validity of a research is described as the accuracy of the measurement and findings of the study representation that what the study aims to describe (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p. 347). According to Creswell (2014, p. 174), threats of validity can come from different points. The researcher must question these threats to support the validity of the research. Then the researcher can identify the possible threats and minimise the threats of validity.

As one relevant example of threats of validity could be cited: selection. The selection of the participants can be made with some specific characteristics that may influence

certain outcome. Therefore, the selection of random respondents will increase the diversity of respondents and can show accurate outcomes (Creswell, 2014, pp. 174-175). The respondents of the data gathered had the possibility to define their expatriation whether it was AE or SIE. Moreover, there were no selection for instance according to the gender, family situation or relationship status, offering a wide possibility of outcomes.

Another relevant threat of the validity can be the instrumentation, and the changes it may have during the research (Creswell, 2014, p. 175). The instruments of the research have been the same during all procedure of the study. Moreover, during the elaboration of Frone's (2003) definition of WLB, has been argued the measure of enrichment. However, the current research is focusing on conflictual aspect of the work to life, the WLC. According to Clark, Early, Baltes and Krenn (2019, p. 39), WLC has been commonly used as a measurement of on individual perception of conflict.

4 Results and findings

At the beginning of this chapter, the comparison of AE- and SIE-groups will be presented in order to fully understand the background differences between AEs and SIEs. Then, the hypothesis will be tested and the findings will be discussed in light of existing research.

4.1 Comparison of AE- and SIE-groups

The comparative analyses consist of comparing the background variables of AEs and SIEs. Crosstabulation analyse is utilized to compare the background variable of the two expatriate groups. The results of the analyse demonstrated a very strong significant difference concerning the gender within the two groups of expatriates ($\chi^2 1 = 7.851$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). There are 70.6% of men and 29.4% of women as SIE. While for AE, 85.4% of men and 14.6% of women. Moreover, there is a very strong difference between expatriates based on their relationship ($\chi^2 1 = 8.848$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). 77.4% of SIEs are in a relationship and 22.6% are single. While 91.3% of AEs are in a relationship and 8.7% are single. Furthermore, there is very strong significant difference between expatriates with regards to their number of children. ($\chi^2 1 = 19.208$, $df = 1$, $p < .05$). 43.8% of SIEs have children and 56.2% do not have children. Among the AEs, 70.9% have children and 29.1% do not have children. However, the crosstabulation did not show difference whether AE or SIE have been previously abroad before their current expatriation ($\chi^2 1 = 0.022$, $df = 1$, $p > .05$). (See **Table 2**).

Table 2. Background variables' differences (mean score and significance)

| <i>Scale items</i> | | <i>AEs</i> | <i>SIEs</i> | <i>Pearson Chi-Square value</i> |
|--------------------------------|-------|------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Gender | Women | 15 | 52 | 7.851** |
| | Men | 88 | 125 | |
| 2. Family situation (children) | Yes | 73 | 78 | 19.208*** |
| | No | 30 | 100 | |
| 3. Previously abroad | Yes | 55 | 92 | 0.022 |
| | No | 49 | 85 | |
| 4. Having relationship | Yes | 95 | 137 | 8.848** |
| | No | 9 | 40 | |

*** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$

Independent sample t-test was used as a method to compare some background variables of AEs and SIEs. The results show that, there is very significant difference ($t= 4.613$, $df= 278.545$, $p = 0.000$) in the length of stay between SIEs (5.7 years) and AEs (3 years). Also, concerning the age there is very significant difference ($t= -2.419$, $df= 279$, $p = 0.016$) in the age between SIE (41 years old) and AE (43.8 years old). SIEs are younger than AEs. (See **Table 3**).

Table 3. Background variable differences (mean score and significance)

| <i>Scale items</i> | <i>AEs</i> | <i>SIEs</i> | <i>t-value</i> |
|-----------------------|------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1. Length of the stay | 3,0769 | 5,7374 | 4.613*** |
| 2. Age | 43,8447 | 41,1124 | -2.419*** |

*** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$

As seen in the comparison analyses, the age and family situation of SIEs varies from AEs (see **Table 2** and **Table 3**). Indeed, SIEs tend to start their international career earlier compared to AEs. AEs are on an average married and have a family with children (Ballesteros-Leiva et al., 2018, p. 298). It could be suggested that the life situation of AEs and SIEs have a direct impact on the level of WLC.

4.2 Testing the hypothesis

In order to evaluate the level of WLC experiences by the respondents, five questions have been asked using the Likert scale. First the finding on these five questions will be analysed, with a comparison between AEs and SIEs. Then, to test the hypothesis, the mean of the five items is calculated, which will provide the possibility to see whether SIEs and AEs experiences different level of WLC and which group is facing more challenges.

WLC-experiences were asked with the following question: "What do you think about the following statements?". The respondents answered using the Likert scale. The first statement is: "I come home from work too tired to do things I would like to do" and for this statement there is no significant difference ($t= 0.239$, $df= 278$, $p = 0.811$) in the way SIEs (2.91) or AEs (2.88) are feeling tired after a working day. As well as the first statement, the second statement "Because of my job, it's hard for me to live the kind of life I personally would like." does not show significant difference between groups ($t= -1.155$, $df= 279$, $p = 0.249$). This means that between SIEs (2.66) and AEs (2.82) there is no evidence in the work prevent them to have the kind of like they are aiming for. However, the third statement "I often ignore my personal needs because of the demands of the job", there is very significant difference ($t= -2.764$, $df= 279$, $p = 0.006$). When AEs (2.88) experience more jobs' demands in comparison to SIEs (2.53). Answers for the fourth statement "My private life suffers because of my job" shown significant difference between groups ($t= -1.965$, $df= 276$, $p = 0.050$). Therefore, SIEs' (2.46) work is affecting less their personal life in comparison to AEs (2.88). Finally, there are extremely significant difference ($t= -3.384$, $df= 192.397$, $p = 0.001$) concerning the last statement: "I have to be away from important activities related to my private life because of the time I spend at work". AEs (2.53) must be away during important activities happening in their personal time due to the time they need to work in comparison to SIEs (2.53). (see **Table 4** and **Table 5**).

Table 4. WLC of SIEs and AEs (item by item)

| What do you think about the following statements?: | | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|--|-----|-----|------|----------------|-----------------|
| I come home from work too tired to do things I would like to do | SIE | 176 | 2,91 | 1,008 | ,076 |
| | AE | 104 | 2,88 | 1,036 | ,102 |
| Because of my job, it's hard for me to live the kind of life I personally would like. | SIE | 177 | 2,66 | 1,143 | ,086 |
| | AE | 104 | 2,82 | 1,121 | ,110 |
| I often ignore my personal needs because of the demands of the job | SIE | 174 | 2,53 | ,989 | ,075 |
| | AE | 104 | 2,88 | 1,002 | ,098 |
| My private life suffers because of my job | SIE | 174 | 2,46 | 1,131 | ,086 |
| | AE | 104 | 2,73 | 1,081 | ,106 |
| I have to be away from important activities related to my private life because of the time I spend at work | SIE | 175 | 2,09 | ,948 | ,072 |
| | AE | 104 | 2,53 | 1,097 | ,108 |

Table 5. Independent Samples Test's analysis of WLC among SIEs and AEs

(item by item)

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|--|---|------|------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|-------|
| | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| What do you think about the following statements?: | | | | | | | | | |
| I come home from work too tired to do things I would like to do | 2,207 | ,139 | ,239 | 278 | ,811 | ,030 | ,126 | -,218 | ,278 |
| | | | ,238 | 211,417 | ,812 | ,030 | ,127 | -,220 | ,280 |
| Because of my job, it's hard for me to live the kind of life I personally would like. | ,502 | ,479 | -1,155 | 279 | ,249 | -,162 | ,140 | -,438 | ,114 |
| | | | -1,160 | 219,319 | ,247 | -,162 | ,140 | -,437 | ,113 |
| I often ignore my personal needs because of the demands of the job | ,226 | ,635 | -2,764 | 276 | ,006 | -,341 | ,123 | -,583 | -,098 |
| | | | -2,755 | 214,633 | ,006 | -,341 | ,124 | -,584 | -,097 |
| My private life suffers because of my job | ,202 | ,653 | -1,965 | 276 | ,050 | -,271 | ,138 | -,542 | ,000 |
| | | | -1,987 | 224,522 | ,048 | -,271 | ,136 | -,540 | -,002 |
| I have to be away from important activities related to my private life because of the time I spend at work | 6,068 | ,014 | -3,511 | 277 | ,001 | -,437 | ,125 | -,683 | -,192 |
| | | | -3,384 | 192,397 | ,001 | -,437 | ,129 | -,692 | -,182 |

With regard to whose WLC-scale, there is very significant difference ($t = -2.182$, $df = 279$, $p = 0.030$) in the level of WLC of SIE (2.52) and AE (2.76) (see **Table 6**). Therefore, the hypothesis is supported. This means that AEs are facing a higher level of WLC compared to SIEs. (see **Table 6** and **Table 7**). The results of this study align with the existing research (Dorsch et al., 2012, p. 44; Ballesteros-Leiva et al., 2017, p. 249, Andresen et al., 2014, pp. 2301-2302; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 297). Thus, though AEs have more supports and benefits from their organizations, SIEs are experiencing less WLC in comparison with AEs. This can be explained as SIEs WLC can be lower due to the support of their colleagues (Ballesteros-Leiva et al., 2018, pp. 307-308, Agha-Alikhani, 2016, p. 466) and a larger network (Agha-Alikhani, 2016, p. 466). The flexibility in the choice of the destination, length of stay and type of with are also beneficial in SIEs adjustment as well as their families' adjustment (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 279, pp. 283-284). SIEs relies more on socializing with locals while AEs depend more on the family (Shaffer et al., 2016, p. 134).

Table 6. Group Statistics of SIEs and AEs perception on WLC

| | | Group Statistics | | | |
|----------|-----|------------------|--------|----------------|-----------------|
| | | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
| Mean WLC | SIE | 177 | 2,5286 | ,88199 | ,06629 |
| | AE | 104 | 2,7673 | ,89143 | ,08741 |

Table 7. Independent Samples Test's analysis of SIEs and AEs perception on WLC

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|----------|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|---------|
| | | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Mean WLC | Equal variances assumed | ,384 | ,536 | -2,182 | 279 | ,030 | -,23868 | ,10940 | -,45404 | -,02332 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | -2,176 | 214,111 | ,031 | -,23868 | ,10971 | -,45493 | -,02244 |

5 Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings of the whole study. Then, practical implications in an international human resources management context will also be presented. Finally, the chapter ends with the discussion on the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

5.1 Findings related to differences in the perceived WLC of AEs and SIEs

The growth of internationalization has resulted in a need and shortage of talented and experienced international employees. Thus, employees can make the decisions to go abroad within their employer organization (Myers & Pringle, 2005, p. 421; Baruch et al., 2013, p. 2369; Aryee & Stone, 1996, p. 158). Furthermore, individuals are also making the decisions to move abroad, without being assigned by an organization (Crowley-Henry, 2007). Although there are similarities between these two groups, these expatriate groups remain different (Andresen et al., 2014, p. 2301). The findings of the research agree with previous research and disparities between the two groups have been found.

It has been demonstrated that the WLB is more challenging for employees with international career compared to traditional career path (Forster, 2000, pp. 138-139; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001, p. 238; Suutari, 2003, p. 190, pp. 202-204; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2011, p. 373). Hence, the aim of the study was to get new knowledge on AEs and SIEs through a comparison of their perceived WLC. The findings show differences in the perceived WLC between AEs and SIEs as SIEs are experiencing a lower level of WLC than AEs.

Indeed, SIEs have more flexibility in their choices regarding the location, length of stay or the type of work they are wishing than AEs (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 279, pp. 283-284). Thus, the decision can be agreed among the family and therefore ease the adjustment (Shaffer et al., 2016, p. 134). The results of the thesis shown disparities regarding

the family or relationship status of AEs and SIEs. Professional decisions have an impact on the personal life, especially regarding important decision such as moving to another country. For instance, according to Suutari & Brewster (2000, p. 429) and Suutari et al., (2013, p. 167) SIEs have the possibility to choose less risky, less difficult countries or close by countries, when AEs are limited to the company's possibilities.

Another factor that might explain why SIEs experience a lower WLC than AEs is the adjustment to their new lives abroad. SIEs are facing professional and national barriers that AEs do not know, for example SIEs are facing more challenge to get the career they desire (Dorsch et al., 2012, p. 59). However, if SIEs recognize these challenges, they can work on them to improve their adjustment. SIEs eagerness to learn the host language will improve the WLC (Dorsch et al., 2012, p. 48). Additionally, SIEs show more motivation to interact with locals (Inkson et al., 1997, p. 366; Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009, pp. 1106-1108), colleagues (Ballesteros-Leiva et al., 2018, pp. 307-308; Agha-Alikhani, 2016, p. 466)

The existing research concerning the gender has indicates that there are more females among SIEs than among AEs (Ballesteros-Leiva et al., 2017, p. 242, Fitzgerald & Howe-Walsh, 2008, p. 158; Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 298; Selmer & Luring, 2010, p. 175; Suutari & Brewster, 2000, p. 429; Cerdin & Le Pargneux, 2010, p. 292, Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009, p. 1104). The findings of this master's thesis are compatible with the previous research, as there were more women among SIEs than among AEs.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that, AEs are more often in a relationship, older and with kids than to SIEs. The earlier research has also demonstrated the same results, SIEs are in average younger than AEs, most commonly single, (Suutari & Brewster, 2000, p. 429; Ballesteros-Leiva, Poilpot-Rocaboy & St-Onge, 2018, p. 298). According to Cerdin & Le Pargneux (2010, pp. 291-292) the families of SIEs have fewer children than AEs. Therefore, it can be more challenging for the families of AEs to move to another country than families of SIEs. SIEs tend also to socialize and meet local, providing a considerable

support on their adjustment (Shaffer et al., 2016, p. 134). However, the SIEs can feel guilty as they are making the decision to move abroad and therefore impact the partner career (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2013, p. 290).

Concerning the length of the experience abroad, Jokinen et al. (2008, p. 990) reported that there is a significant difference between the AEs and SIEs. Also, the findings of the present study show that there is difference in the length of stay between SIEs and AEs. However, other research such as studies by Cerdin & Le Pargneux (2010, p. 292) and Suutari & Brewster (2000, p. 423) did not reveal difference between these groups on the length of their expatriation. Therefore, further research would be necessary to understand the differences in the length of the expatriation of AEs and SIEs.

However, regarding whether the expatriates have been previously abroad, the earlier research shows that AEs have been more commonly previously abroad than SIEs (Cerdin & Le Pargneux, 2010, p. 292). However, the findings of the thesis did not show difference between the two groups. Therefore, further research could be conducted.

These findings related with the differences between AE and SIE-groups reveal that the background information of expatriates might have an influence on the perceived WLC. SIEs are, in average, younger woman, more often single, and without children. Even though SIEs do not have the same organizational support in comparison to AEs, the life situation may be favourable towards an international expatriation.

5.2 Practical implications

The findings of the present study led to several managerial implications. First, in order to compensate the shortage of qualified employees for international organizations, companies could consider to also hire more SIEs (Haslberger & Vaiman, 2013, p. 1). The findings show that SIEs are experiencing lower WLC than AEs. As for AEs, managerial understanding and consideration of personal life could lower the WLC. However, AEs may have

work position requiring more effort, and may thus face higher level of stress than SIEs (Ballesteros-Leiva et al., 2018, p. 298). Concerning AEs, training and support from the organization before the expatriation is important to reach a successful assignment. Regarding SIEs, on one hand government could provide language training and support in order to retain possible international talents. On the other hand, organizations that face a shortage of qualified employees for the internationalization can hire SIEs.

On a micro level, which refers to the experiences that might occur while living abroad and the impact it might have on a life or career (Global Mobility of Employees, 2020); it could be suggested that AEs decision to move abroad should be made according to the family requirements. This would help with the adjustment abroad. As for the SIE, on a micro level, eagerness, and prone attitude to adjust to the host country might support the adaptation. Preparation before the expatriation, learning the language or looking for work might ease SIEs decision. SIEs awareness of professional and national barriers can ease the WLC. In order to support SIEs, public and governmental organizations could provide some training (i.e. learning the language, get trained and supported to find work). However, according to Bozionelos (2009, p. 125) cultural training might not be enough. Interpersonal ties such as mentoring, and a supportive network have a considerable influence on SIEs adjustment.

The meso level is the largest level and concerns the organization's management of expatriates. This level also gathers the goals and impact management of expatriates have on the firm. (Global Mobility of Employees, 2020.) It can be recommended that managers support AEs to balance their WLC, to improve adjustment, commitment, and satisfaction (Van der Laken et al., 2016, pp. 423–424). Providing managerial support could also enhance the possibility of a successful international assignment. As for the goals of the company, it could be suggested that companies could hire more SIEs in order to cope with the shortage of qualified employees during the internationalization phase.

Regarding SIEs, their decision to move abroad might be motivated by a desire to improve the quality of life. The improvement may be a motive for SIEs family to stay in the country, when at first this was not expected. Therefore, organizations and government must consider expatriate family to retain talented and skilled employees. (Crowley-Henry, 2010, p. 449.)

5.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

The limitations and contributions of the present study open opportunities for further research. Now that it has been empirically demonstrated that there are differences in the perceived WLC between AEs and SIEs, other implications could be considered. As SIEs have more flexibility regarding the choice of the location, they might choose less risky countries. Therefore, have a better level of WLC. For instance, future research could be conducted on AEs and SIEs regarding the choice of the location and influence it could have on the WLB.

Moreover, the concept of work-life balance is also a broad. Therefore, in this thesis it is narrowed to WLC. While work-life enrichment, life-work conflict and life-work enrichment are excluded from the study. Therefore, these other aspects of WLB could be analysed and compared between SIEs and AEs.

Another limitation concerns the data set collected when the sample consists of Finnish expatriates with technical degrees at university level (i.e. highly skilled) and thus the findings cannot be generalized into other contexts. Thus, further research would be necessary regarding the nationality, as well as diversity regarding study or work field of the respondents.

Furthermore, within AEs and SIEs men and women could be compared, in order to understand further the disparities between genders and WLC. For instance, it could be insightful to study and research why SIEs tend to be more represented by women and AEs

by men. Then, developing the research on the WLB, gender representation and whether the respondents are AEs or SIEs. Therefore, further research could bring insightful information on that topic.

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