Article

Repatriates' Job Dimensions, Career Ambition, Career Expectation, and Work Adjustment in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries

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Abstract: Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have seen a significant increase in the number of expatriated students since 2005; despite the high rates, adequate examinations of the lived experiences of students repatriating to the region are lacking. This study aimed to examine the job role determinants of work adjustment among repatriated students in the GCC. It examined the mediating effects of career ambition and the moderating effect of career expectation on repatriates' work adjustment. Data from 317 employed repatriates were gathered through an online survey. SPSS and Smart PLS 3.0 were used to analyze the data. Findings showed that repatriates' job roles are positively correlated with their work adjustment, except for role discretion. Career ambition and career expectation have positively impacted repatriates' work adjustment. However, repatriates' lived experiences from the GCC area have not been empirically documented, particularly from those adjusting to work conditions. Little is known about the influences of career ambition and career expectations on repatriates' work adjustment, how individuals experience their job roles, and what effect those roles have on work adjustment outcomes. This research offered an in-depth understanding of the influence of job roles on repatriates in the GCC, which can be utilized by repatriates and organizations to ensure better adjustment.

Keywords: repatriates; job roles; work adjustment; career ambition; career expectation

1. Introduction

Repatriation has emerged as a popular study topic among scholars and academics in recent decades. Studies frequently examined readjustment and its interactions with other in-country aspects, such as job roles (clarity, discretion, novelty, and conflict) in employment contexts that can affect adjustment efficacy (James 2020). Despite the growth and successes of repatriation studies, room for improvement exists (Ellis et al. 2020). Due to the costs and potential negative implications of expatriation, in-depth investigations are required on this topic. Previous studies on repatriation highlighted the issues and challenges during adjustment linked to the work environment, including organizational support and career planning.

Ineffective repatriation is a major contributor to high turnover rates among repatriates, ranging between 20% and 50% within the first year of return (Paik et al. 2002). Work environment factors, including human-resource-controlled factors related to job and career planning, contribute to ineffective repatriation (Sulaymonov 2017). The financial and strategic costs of employee turnover are considerable in organizations (Aldossari and Robertson 2016; Naude and Vögel 2018; Gaio Santos and Martins 2019). Thus, exploring the association between repatriation and work environment factors helps address turnover among repatriates and the loss faced by organizations.

Research on repatriation has mostly focused on the Western and Eastern nations. Less attention has been paid to the Middle East, including the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (Alawi 2020). Surprisingly, no comparative study has been undertaken among repatriated

students in GCC nations, including Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, and Qatar. According to Alawi (2020), "no previous information on the experiences of GCC repatriates and their opinions of the working environment in the GCC after completing their overseas experience has been documented or published". Since 2005, the GCC countries have sent an estimated 170,000 students to universities in America, Europe, Asia, Australia, and New Zealand (Puri-Mirza 2020).

As prior studies exhibited that the number of GCC outbound students is substantial, repatriated students and their adjustment challenges, particularly in the work environment, should be examined and improved. Nevertheless, research on the labor market in the GCC (Bokhari 2020; Almahamid and Ayoub 2022; Al-Asfour et al. 2022) revealed that outbound students from the GCC prefer and continue to pursue degrees that do not correlate with their labor market demands, making research on repatriates' adjustment to work environment a realistic option.

A scarcity of empirical research exists on organizational assistance and career planning among repatriates in the GCC. Allen and Alvarez (1998) and Swaak (1995) argued that effective repatriation requires assisting expatriates upon their return. The returnees should be appreciated and considered investments to reduce possible turnovers and preserve their knowledge and skills. Swaak (1995) noted that the failure to "appreciate" repatriates is a critical problem for human resource (HR) managers handling repatriation. Thus, this study investigated repatriates' experiences during their adjustment to work environments in the GCC region by employing career ambition as a mediator and career expectation as a moderator. The study aimed to provide insights to organizations and repatriates by broadening the current theoretical and empirical understanding.

In addition, this study attempted to fill the knowledge gap on repatriates adapting to employment by providing sufficient empirical data. This study also contributed to the body of knowledge by evaluating how career-ambitious returning students in the GCC adjust to their job roles in their work environment. Finally, this study offered recommendations for additional research in this area and several practical suggestions. This study advanced the understanding of human resource management practices by examining organizational job roles in the GCC that can affect work transition and impact repatriates' work adjustment outcomes. Understanding repatriates' ambitions during the transition to work in the GCC is vital to avoiding work adjustment challenges and issues. Therefore, the study's findings may help guide regional HR practitioners. As a result of the preceding discussion, the current study addressed the following questions:

1. Do the GCC student repatriates' job dimensions (role clarity, role discretion, role novelty, and role conflict) significantly influence their work adjustment in the GCC?
2. Do the GCC student repatriates' job dimensions (role clarity, role discretion, role novelty, and role conflict) significantly influence their career ambitions in the GCC?
3. Does career ambition positively affect student repatriates' work adjustment process in the GCC?
4. Does career ambition mediate the relationship between student repatriates' job roles (role clarity, role discretion, role novelty, and role conflict) and their work adjustment in the GCC?
5. Does career expectation among student repatriates moderate the relationship between career ambition and their work adjustment in the GCC?

2. Review of Literature and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Work Adjustment

The theory of work adjustment (TWA) is a career choice adjustment model theory known as the "person–environment" fit model, contemporarily termed the P–E fit model (Swanson and Schneider 1999; Chen and Chiu 2018). The TWA concept has been viewed as the interaction between employees and their work environment. The TWA depicts an ongoing interaction between employees and their work environments, implying that employees and organizations collaborate and satisfy each other's expectations (Eggerth

2008; Ullah et al. 2020). It also describes the satisfaction of both employees and employers as "tenure", considering well-performed roles by the employees and the reinforcer (rewards) by the employer (Eggerth 2008).

The TWA is divided into two main categories, *satisfactoriness* and *satisfaction*, as basic indicators to achieve and maintain the relationship between employees and their environments. Satisfaction is a collection of internal factors of correspondence. For example, "it represents the individual worker's appraisal of the extent to which the work environment fulfils his/her requirements" (Tinsley 2000). Nevertheless, if effectively understood, the TWA allows organizations and employees to reciprocally collaborate and sustain. According to Black et al. (1991), Black (1994), Paik et al. (2002), and Naude and Vögel (2018), repatriates' work adjustment may require variances and changes in the in-country job roles (clarity, discretion, novelty, and conflict) as fewer fulfillments in their work environment strategies were reported in previous studies.

From an HR point of view, organizations must focus their efforts on researching and assessing employees' interests and abilities to align and advance their capabilities through career development approaches for the mutual benefits of employees and organizations. Hence, HR policies and structure are crucial functions that mentor and resource position growth inside firms to attain sustainability (Chams and García-Blandón 2019). Nevertheless, successful transition to work is influenced by responsibilities within the job roles and is highly dependent on the degree of identification of such roles. Therefore, an in-depth examination of the elements associated with such roles and duties is critical from the perspective of repatriates' work adjustment.

2.2. Job Roles

Black et al. (1991) developed an adaptation framework concerning expatriation and repatriation adjustment. Within their construct, Black and his colleagues indicated that individuals could adapt to their work environment during the repatriation phase through what they termed as the in-country job roles (clarity, discretion, conflict, and novelty). Extensive research on these job roles has proven their influence on repatriates' work adjustment (Arman 2009; James 2020). Job roles can be divided into two clusters. In the first cluster, role clarity and role discretion have been identified as work adjustment predictors. In the second cluster, role novelty and role conflict have been identified as work stressors inhibiting work adjustment. The four roles entail identifying the unambiguity that aids an employee in adjusting to work environment (Rizzo et al. 1970; Black and Gregersen 1991).

Both Black et al. (1991) and Black and Gregersen (1991) argued that repatriates with job role clarity adapt to work more easily than those with little or no job role clarity. Singh et al. (2022) found role clarity to positively influence work adjustment among self-initiated expatriates in the United Arab Emirates. Furthermore, role discretion enables employees to adapt to their job responsibilities by adjusting the role to match their individual selves and relying on experience and familiar behavior. As a predictor, role discretion facilitates behavior and predictive control and reduces uncertainty. Variances in job roles may include decreased or increased levels of duty given in organizations and workplaces (Swanson and Schneider 1999). The degree of difference between current and prior work roles, and when a new job varies from a previous one, is referred to as role novelty. A repatriate may suffer higher unpredictability and uncertainty (James 2020) due to changes in work roles. According to Halim et al. (2020), role novelty is a difficult work-related stressor that might adversely impact job adjustment.

The dimension of congruency–incongruency or compatibility–incompatibility in the role requirements is another work-related stressor leading to role conflict. A previous study by Suutari and Välimaa (2002) discovered no substantial correlations between role conflict and work adjustment. Similarly, Morley and Flynn (2003) showed that role conflict was adversely associated with repatriates' work adjustment. A strong negative relationship between job adjustment and role conflict was also highlighted by Halim et al. (2020). To summarize the literature, job roles are working adjustment variables. Thus, work

adjustment may be impacted by job role predictors (role clarity and role discretion) and job role stressors (role novelty and role conflict). Hence, the following hypotheses were proposed in this study:

H1a. *There is a positive relationship between role clarity and work adjustment among repatriates in the GCC.*

H1b. *There is a positive relationship between role discretion and work adjustment among repatriates in the GCC.*

H1c. *There is a negative relationship between role novelty and work adjustment among repatriates in the GCC.*

H1d. *There is a negative relationship between role conflict and work adjustment among repatriates in the GCC.*

2.3. Career Ambition

Career ambition is widely viewed as a prerequisite for labor-force involvement, particularly career success. It is also used to predict students' future careers (Chen and Chiu 2018). Eggerth (2008) defined career ambition as a desire to attain goals and complete tasks. According to Bui et al. (2021), career ambition is a "resource" that pertains to employees' readiness to accept additional organizational duties. Similarly, Ćurić Dražić et al. (2018) observed that career ambition is a cause of individual differences in goals. Another argument for career ambition was presented by Sicherman and Galor (1990). They argued that the dominant discourse of career ambition marginalizes other discourses where ambition is viewed as a type of "upward career mobility". For instance, a return to study might lead to increased chances of career advancement. Previous research on career ambition has shown that it positively influences individuals' goal attainment (Chen and Chiu 2018).

Desrochers and Dahir (2000) and Sicherman and Galor (1990) stressed that career ambitions favorably affect individuals' future goals. Niu et al. (2022) investigated students' self-perceived employability, ambition, and university commitment in human resource development (HRD) programs in the United States. Their findings revealed that self-perceived employability was positively correlated with ambition and university commitment. Students showed higher ambitions than confidence in employability. Based on the reviews above, this study proposed that career ambition places positivity conveying assumptions of work adjustment facilitation rather than negativity in repatriates' job roles. Thus, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H2a. *There is a positive relationship between role clarity and career ambition among repatriates in the GCC.*

H2b. *There is a positive relationship between role discretion and career ambition among repatriates in the GCC.*

H2c. *There is a negative relationship between role novelty and career ambition among repatriates in the GCC.*

H2d. *There is a negative relationship between role conflict and career ambition among repatriates in the GCC.*

2.4. Mediating Role of Career Ambition

According to Chen and Chiu (2018), career ambition encourages people to regard themselves as having tremendous strength and capacities for accomplishments, allowing them to aspire high in their career path and be highly competent. Ambitious individuals tend to work hard to attain their goals. Individuals demonstrate new confidence, motivations, greater self-determination, and efficiency improvements. Furthermore, Broadbridge et al. (2007) emphasized that people with good career aspirations, such as challenge, growth, communal objectives, career intention advancement, and professional future, may strive for

goals even in the face of hardship and failures. Hirschi and Spurk (2021) highlighted that career ambition is strongly related to organizational commitment. They found that career ambition mediates the relationship between performance and organizational commitment. Therefore, the following hypothesis was suggested:

H3. *There is a positive relationship between career ambition and work adjustment among repatriates in the GCC.*

2.5. Mediating Effect of Career Ambition

Four roles represent job roles in the current study. Hence, this study proposed the following hypotheses for the mediating effect of career ambition:

H4a. *Career ambition mediates the relationship between role clarity and work adjustment among repatriates in the GCC.*

H4b. *Career ambition mediates the relationship between role discretion and work adjustment among repatriates in the GCC.*

H4c. *Career ambition mediates the relationship between role novelty and work adjustment among repatriates in the GCC.*

H4d. *Career ambition mediates the relationship between role conflict and work adjustment among repatriates in the GCC.*

2.6. Moderating Role of Career Expectation

Expectations previously formed can become factors in selecting a career path in the future (Clinton et al. 2011). Individuals form expectations, from educational experiences to real-life vocational situations before their journeys. El Baroudi et al. (2017) argued that "reality is different sometimes as chosen careers and expectations may fall into conflicts". Career expectation is related to predicting and anticipating all career aspects (Hurst and Good 2009; Balc and Bozkurt 2013; Liu et al. 2019). Kong et al. (2019) investigated the relationships between organizational identity and career management among 476 Generation Y hotel employees in China using career expectation as a mediator. Career management was shown to be a good predictor of career expectations. Moreover, career expectation positively affected organizational identity and career satisfaction through mediation. Hence, individuals form their career expectations as successful in securing future careers, earning income, and working toward career planning to achieve targets. Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H5. *Career expectation moderates the relationship between career ambition and work adjustment among repatriates in the GCC.*

Figure 1 displays the structure of relationships between the variables that connect the several hypotheses that comprise the proposed study model.
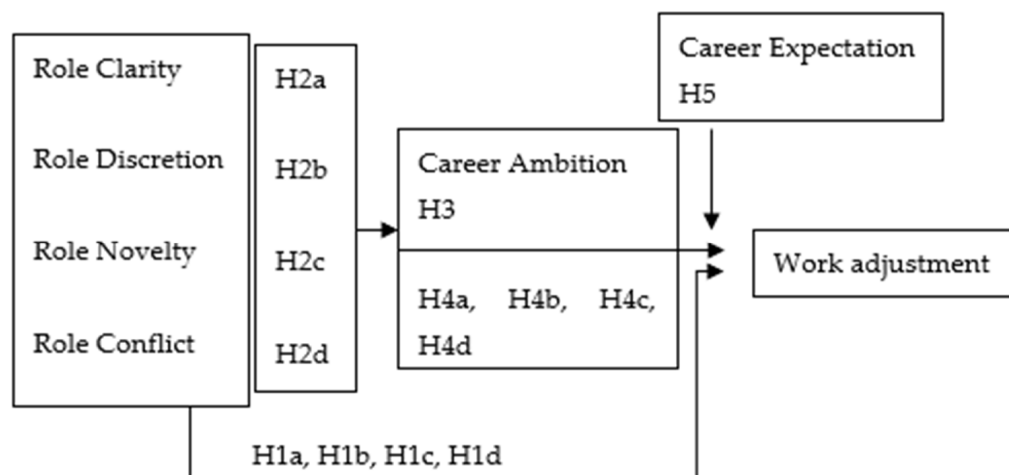
Figure 1. Research model.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Approach

Purposive sampling is used in this study to choose respondents based on nonprobability. This decision was made to guarantee that the data collected are representative and have good quality. Purposive sampling is the process of selecting people who have enough expertise and experience with the subject to offer the necessary information (Janes 2001). An online survey method was used as the research technique since it is a commonly used method worldwide that enables the collection of broad-level data from the target population. Compared with other methodologies, the cost of data collection is extremely low, and faster results are obtained using the online survey method (Rasool et al. 2022).

3.2. Instrument Designing

A designed questionnaire was developed for data collection in this study. Hypotheses were developed when a literature review was undertaken to build the study's foundation. As the targeted respondents in this study were student repatriates from the GCC who internationally studied, the survey was undertaken in English. A pilot study was conducted to validate the instrument's methodological accuracy to guarantee that the respondents understood the questions. Twenty participants from the GCC region were included in the pilot study (involving Ph.D. students, associate professors, full professors, HR managers, and career advisors). The participants were informed of the study's topic. After the instrument was validated, it was distributed to the targeted respondents to gather data. A total of 317 completed responses were subsequently gathered in this study.

3.3. Variables Measurements

A survey method was used in a cross-sectional descriptive analysis. A total of 34 items were adapted and assessed based on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), refer to Appendix A. Table 1 shows the number of items, sample items, and the source according to the variables.

3.4. Sample and Data Collection

The online survey was electronically distributed through Google Form. Responses from 317 respondents were received. Data were gathered from the Saudi students' club in Australia, the Ministry of Education in Kuwait, and a Gulf job search company in Bahrain. The first author contacted these groups and provided them with survey letters through emails. They were supportive and responded to our enquiries. Saudi students' club in Melbourne, Australia, distributed the survey through their alums' social media groups, which generated most of the survey responses. We were supported in publicizing the survey

by an employee of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Education's Department of Authentication, who oversaw ratifying internationally obtained qualifications. Additionally, Gulf Job Search in Bahrain, a company that conducts surveys and market research through paid services, was contacted. They distributed the survey across different GCC countries' platforms, with a decent number of respondents returning completed surveys. The survey link contained simple steps for completion. Initial participating qualifications were included in the screening questions to ensure that the respondent fit the sample criteria.

Table 1. Adapted Items.

Variable	Items	Sample Items	Source
Role clarity		Since I returned to the GCC, I feel secure about how much authority I have	
Role discretion		Since I returned to the GCC, I have had the authority to decide what tasks to delegate	
Role novelty	21	Since I returned to the GCC, the skills required in my current job are different from my previous jobs	Rizzo et al. (1970)
Role conflict		Since I returned to the GCC, I have worked with two or more groups that quite differently operate	
Career ambition	3	Since I returned to the GCC, I have had a strong desire to become a senior executive in the future	Desrochers and Dahir (2000)
Career expectation	7	Since I returned to the GCC, I expect to have good job benefits	Liu et al. (2019)
Work adjustment	3	Since I returned to the GCC, I have adjusted specific job responsibilities	Black (1994)

3.5. Demographics

Respondents in this study were student repatriates who had lived and studied abroad for a minimum of one year. They were GCC nationals of both sexes, employees working in both the public and private sectors. They comprised 40.1% men and 59.9% women. Their nationalities included Bahrain (16.7%), Kuwait (15.1%), Oman (15.1%), Qatar (18.9%), Saudi Arabia (22.1%), and the UAE (12%). The length of their overseas stay was in the range of 1–5 years (80.7%), 6–10 years (13.6%), 11–15 years (5.4%), and more than 15 years (0.3%). All the respondents had working experience of more than 12 months (100%).

4. Results

A descriptive analysis was undertaken on the responses before evaluating the measurement and structural models. To examine the direct and indirect correlations, structural equation modeling (SEM), Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), and Smart PLS 3.0 were used. Hair et al. (2014) suggested that when the study is focused on evaluating a theoretical framework from a prediction standpoint, PLS-SEM is considerably more suited. After estimating the path estimates in the structural model, a bootstrap analysis was used to measure the statistical significance of the path coefficient. Chin (1998) advocated 5000 resamplings when operating bootstrapping to estimate a parameter. Therefore, in this study, bootstrapping procedures with 5000 resamplings were used. Moreover, the mean values of the variables were calculated. Table 2 indicates that the mean values of the variables were higher than the median value of the Likert scale for all measurements.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics.

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
RC	3.709	1.034
RD	3.539	1.047
RT	3.046	1.126
RN	4.091	0.963
CA	3.700	0.992
CE	3.759	0.964
WA	3.660	0.988

4.1. Common Method Variance

Scale items were all subjected to exploratory-factor-analysis (EFA) conditions using unrotated principal component analysis. None of the conditions was applicable. At the end of the analysis, all factors were found to have obtained eigenvalues greater than one. All factors explained 65.50% of the variance. The first factor could only explain 26.20% of the variance. These findings prove that common method bias was not an issue in this study.

4.2. Reliability and Validity

Construct validity determines if the measurements properly measure the target construct using both convergent and discriminant validity (Sekaran and Bougie 2016). To determine the degree of validity, a loading value of more than 0.50 is recommended, with values of 0.70 and above appropriate for a single indication (Hair et al. 2014). A loading value of 0.50 or less suggests that the indication is invalid and should be ignored (Hidayanto et al. 2014; Marcoulides 1998). In this study, a 0.5 loading cutoff value was utilized. The results of the analysis of the factor loading revealed that the constructs surpassed the minimum cutoff point of 0.50 (see Table 3).

Table 3. Convergent Validity.

Variable	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Career ambition	CA1	0.898	0.823	0.893	0.736
	CA2	0.844			
	CA3	0.831			
Career expectation	CE1	0.883	0.922	0.936	0.678
	CE2	0.822			
	CE3	0.819			
	CE4	0.801			
	CE5	0.843			
	CE6	0.788			
	CE7	0.806			
Role clarity	RC1	0.865	0.863	0.895	0.588
	RC2	0.869			
	RC3	0.725			
	RC4	0.703			
	RC5	0.724			
	RC6	0.693			
Role discretion	RD1	0.845	0.918	0.934	0.669
	RD2	0.819			
	RD3	0.808			
	RD4	0.855			
	RD5	0.830			
	RD6	0.814			
	RD7	0.749			
Role novelty	RN1	0.875	0.744	0.85	0.658
	RN2	0.658			
	RN3	0.880			
Role conflict	RT1	0.856	0.885	0.916	0.685
	RT2	0.857			
	RT3	0.843			
	RT4	0.804			
	RT5	0.775			
Work adjustment	WA1	0.820	0.798	0.881	0.712
	WA2	0.843			
	WA3	0.868			

4.3. Convergent Validity

The degree of correlation between measurements within a single construct is determined by convergent validity (Sekaran and Bougie 2016). Factor loading indicators, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR) should all be used to determine convergent validity (Hair et al. 2014). The AVE (mean-variance extracted for items loaded on a construct) was greater than or equal to 0.5. The AVE of all the constructs should satisfy the specified cutoff value. The study's findings indicated a CR range of 0.89 to 0.99, which was higher than the cutoff value of 0.7. Table 3 shows the values of the constructs.

4.4. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity recommends the degree to which measures of different latent variables are distinctive. For example, the variance in the measure should reflect only the variance attributable to its intended latent variable and not to other latent variables (O'Leary-Kelly and Vokurka 1998). According to Gefen and Straub (2005), discriminant validity is demonstrated when

(1) The measurement items' loading patterns are appropriate, with the measurement items substantially loading on their theoretically specified component but not on other factors;

(2) Each factor's square root of AVE is higher than any pair of its correlations with any other component.

In this study, all the measurement items had suitable pattern loadings. Each item loaded higher on its major construct than other constructs. The Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion was also utilized to check for discriminant validity. The criterion states that the average variance shared between each construct and its measures must be larger than the variance shared between the construct and other constructs. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Fornell and Larcker Criterion.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Career ambition	0.858						
Career expectation	0.126	0.824					
Role clarity	0.250	0.401	0.767				
Role conflict	0.178	−0.053	−0.132	0.828			
Role discretion	0.178	0.576	0.689	−0.041	0.818		
Role novelty	0.196	0.140	0.425	−0.064	0.392	0.811	
Work adjustment	0.254	0.220	0.351	0.065	0.297	0.213	0.844

The table shows the discriminant validity using the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker 1981), which indicates that all constructs exhibit sufficient discriminant validity where the square root of AVE (diagonal) is larger than the correlations (off-diagonals) for all the constructs in the study.

The heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) was established by Henseler et al. (2015) to validate discriminant validity. Henseler and his colleagues conducted simulations to show that standard criteria such as the Fornell and Larcker criterion, as well as cross-loadings, are ineffective in determining discriminant validity. As a result, HTMT can more accurately measure discriminant validity. If the HTMT score is less than 0.90, discriminant validity between the two conceptions has been demonstrated. Therefore, this study utilized the HTMT criteria to further check the discriminant validity concerns. The correlation for each construct was smaller than the square root of the average variance retrieved by the indicators assessing the constructs, as shown in (Table 5), indicating satisfactory discriminant validity. All values in the table are below 0.90, demonstrating that discriminant validity has been established.

Table 5. HTMT Criterion.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Career ambition							
Career expectation	0.129						
Role clarity	0.263	0.454					
Role conflict	0.204	0.078	0.143				
Role discretion	0.186	0.621	0.777	0.085			
Role novelty	0.232	0.162	0.529	0.117	0.476		
Work adjustment	0.306	0.241	0.428	0.083	0.341	0.284	

Note: Diagonal represents the square root of average variance extraction; off-diagonal represents the correlation.

4.5. Variance Explained (R^2)

According to Hair et al. (2014), the main assessment test for the goodness of the structural pattern in PLS is the beta value of the R^2, determination coefficient, and path coefficient significance levels. Cohen's (1988) recommended values for R^2 are as follows: 0.02–0.12 weak, 0.13–0.25 moderate, and 0.26 above substantial. In this study, the R^2 value for career ambition in the endogenous construct was 0.119, which suggests that exogenous variables describe 11.9 per cent variance on career ambition. The R^2 value for work adjustment in the endogenous construct was 0.10, which suggests that exogenous variables describe 10 per cent variance on work adjustment. Table 6 presents the values of variance explained.

Table 6. Variance Explained (R^2).

Dependent Variables	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Career ambition	0.119	0.107
Work adjustment	0.101	0.095

4.6. Effect Size

The study calculated the impact of all factors. Sullivan and Feinn (2012) argued that the study results should be recorded with statistical validity (*p*-value) as well as analytical relevance. Hair et al. (2014) suggested that change in R^2 should be considered when a model is omitted to calculate the impact (f^2) of an exogenous variable that explains the substantial impact on endogenous variables of the omitted variable. Commonly used guidelines for effect size were given by Cohen (1988), which are 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 representing small, medium, and large effects, respectively. Hair et al. (2014) concluded that the low effect size of the variable does not imply that the variable is not negligible. The effect size of all the exogenous study variables is shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Effect Size of Study Variables.

Variables	Career Ambition	Work Adjustment
Career ambition		0.07
Role clarity	0.035	
Role conflict	0.053	
Role discretion	0.001	
Role novelty	0.012	

4.7. Predictive Relevance of the Structural Model

Hair et al. (2014) suggested that the predictive relevance of a structural model is established if the above Q^2 value for the dependent variables in all the hypothesized relationships is greater than zero. The predictive relevance of the proposed structural model is determined through blindfolding procedure by using the cross-validated redundancy technique in Smart-PLS (version 3.0). The findings of this study have established the

predictive relevance of the proposed structural model as the Q^2 values for the dependent variables in the hypothesized relationships are greater than zero. The results are given in Table 8.

Table 8. Blindfolding Q^2.

Variables	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)
Career ambition	951	878.737	0.076
Role clarity	1902	1902	
Role conflict	1585	1585	
Role discretion	2219	2219	
Role novelty	951	951	
Work adjustment	951	908.848	0.044

4.8. Structural Model Assessment

Structural model evaluation is validated by reporting the path coefficient, standard errors, *t*-value, *p*-value, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size, and predictive relevance in the second, third, fourth, and fifth steps (Hair et al. 2020). Tables 9–12 depict direct and indirect effects.

4.9. Direct Effect Testing

Table 9 depicts that H1a (role clarity -> work adjustment), H1c (role novelty -> work adjustment), and H1d (role novelty -> work adjustment) are supported (β = 0.252, *t* = 3.463, *p* < 0.000; β = 0.115, *t* = 2.122, *p* < 0.017; and β = 0.218, *t* = 3.791, *p* < 0.00, respectively). H1b (role discretion -> work adjustment) is rejected (β = −0.032, *t* = 0.441, *p* < 0.330). Therefore, this study confirmed that there is a positive relationship between role clarity (H1a) and work adjustment. Role novelty (H1c) and role conflict (H1d) both supported the hypotheses that they have negative relationships with work adjustment. Role discretion (H1b) shows a negative correlation with work adjustment, and the hypothesis was not supported.

Table 9. Direct Hypotheses Results.

Hyp	Path	Beta	Std Error	T Values	*p* Values	Decision
H1a	RC -> WA	0.252	0.073	3.463	0.000	Supported
H1b	RD -> WA	−0.032	0.073	0.441	0.330	Not supported
H1c	RN -> WA	0.115	0.054	2.122	0.017	Supported
H1d	RC -> WA	0.218	0.057	3.791	0.000	Supported

Table 10 depicts that H2a (role clarity -> career ambition), H2c (role novelty -> career ambition), and H2d (role novelty -> career ambition) are supported (β = 0.252, *t* = 3.463, *p* < 0.000; β = 0.115, *t* = 2.122, *p* < 0.017; and β = 0.218, *t* = 3.791, *p* < 0.00, respectively). H1b (role discretion -> career ambition) is rejected (β = −0.032, *t* = 0.441, *p* < 0.330). As a result, this study showed that there is a positive correlation between role clarity (H1a) and career ambition. The hypotheses that role novelty (H1c) and role conflict (H1d) have negative correlations with career ambition were both validated. Role discretion showed a negative association with career ambition, and the hypothesis (H1b) was not supported.

Table 10. Direct Hypotheses Results.

Hyp	Path	Beta	Std Error	T Values	*p* Values	Decision
H2a	RC -> CA	0.252	0.073	3.463	0.000	Supported
H2b	RD -> CA	−0.032	0.073	0.441	0.330	Not supported
H2c	RN -> CA	0.115	0.054	2.122	0.017	Supported
H2d	RC -> CA	0.218	0.057	3.791	0.000	Supported
H3	CA -> WA	0.256	0.052	4.918	0.000	Supported

H3 (career ambition -> work adjustment) is supported ($\beta = 0.256$, $t = 4.918$, $p < 0.000$). Therefore, this study showed that there is a positive correlation between career ambition and work adjustment.

4.10. Mediating Effect Testing

In this analysis, we adhered to the guidelines of Zhao et al. (2010) and applied bootstrapping measurements in SEM. The calculated bootstrap t-statistic value was computed based on the following formula:

$$t = \frac{a * b}{\text{The standard deviation of } (a_i * b_i)}$$

Table 11 depicts that H2a (role clarity -> career ambition -> work adjustment), H2c (role novelty -> career ambition -> work adjustment), and H2d (role conflict -> career ambition -> work adjustment) are supported ($\beta = 0.065$, $t = 2.608$, $p < 0.005$; $\beta = 0.029$, $t = 1.839$, $p < 0.033$; and $\beta = 0.056$, $t = 2.997$, $p < 0.01$, respectively). H2b (role discretion -> career ambition -> work adjustment) is rejected ($\beta = -0.008$, $t = 0.426$, $p < 0.335$). Therefore, this study confirmed that career ambition mediated the relationship between role clarity (H2a), role novelty (H2c), role conflict (H2d), and work adjustment. Career ambition did not mediate the link between role discretion (H2b) and work adjustment.

Table 11. Mediation Hypotheses Results.

Hyp	Path	Beta	Std Error	T Values	*p* Values	Decision
H4a	RC -> CA -> WA	0.065	0.025	2.608	0.005	Supported
H4b	RD -> CA -> WA	−0.008	0.019	0.426	0.335	Not supported
H4c	RN -> CA -> WA	0.029	0.016	1.839	0.033	Supported
H4d	RC -> CA -> WA	0.056	0.019	2.997	0.001	Supported

4.11. Moderating Effect Testing

Table 12 depicts that H5 (career ambition -> career expectation -> work adjustment) is supported ($\beta = 0.139$, $t = 3.051$, $p < 0.001$). Therefore, this study confirmed that career expectation moderated the relationship between career ambition and work adjustment.

Table 12. Moderation Hypothesis Results.

Hyp	Path	Beta	Std Error	T Values	*p* Values	Decision
H5	CA * CE -> WA	0.139	0.046	3.051	0.001	Supported

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This study examined the relationships between job roles, career ambition, career expectation, and work adjustment on GCC repatriates who have been working for more than 12 months since their return. The results demonstrated that H1b, H2b, and H4b were not supported. As predicted, career ambition was found to mediate variables and repatriates' work adjustment in the three accepted hypotheses. Career expectation considerably moderated career ambition and work adjustment. Similarly, the link between role clarity and work adjustment was statistically significant. Previous studies by Black and Gregersen (1991) and Paik et al. (2002) indicated that repatriates with role clarity in their job roles adjust to work more easily than those with little or no clarity. Suutari and Välimaa (2002) emphasized that role clarity significantly influences repatriates' work adjustment.

The study's findings support prior research, which argued that clarity among job roles plays a significant part in facilitating work adjustment since it lowers ambiguities and uncertainties. When high clarity exists in work positions, employees may use their talents and expertise to establish trust in themselves. Therefore, role clarities in the workplace

environment in the GCC show that employed repatriates have enjoyed considerable levels of role clarities. Unfortunately, the hypothesis of role discretion and job adjustment was rejected. James (2019) emphasized that the loss of choices at work might negatively impact repatriates' transition to employment for different reasons, including the lack of organizational support. The limited choices might have impacted the GCC work environment. Organizational managers or supervisors may have given their staff little discretion, or there may be misfits among the employees who were unqualified for the roles. The findings support the studies of Almahamid and Ayoub (2022) and Al-Asfour et al. (2022). They highlighted that outbound students from the GCC sought qualifications that did not reflect their local market needs and avoided employment in the private sector. Furthermore, a large portion of the unqualified graduates is hired in the public sector to reduce unemployment.

The relationship between job novelty and work adjustment was negatively significant in this study. The negative association might be attributed to inadequate working conditions in the GCC. This finding is consistent with earlier studies by Suutari and Välimaa (2002) and James (2020). Resultantly, repatriates might have encountered inconsistent managerial practices and a lack of workplace organizational support. Other causes for this negative correlation might include the lack of essential abilities for the positions and unique organizational functions.

A significantly negative relationship exists between role conflict and work adjustment. This finding is congruent with earlier studies by Black (1994), Suutari and Välimaa (2002), and James (2020). The significant relationship might have resulted from the lack of organizational knowledge on employees' abilities obtained from other workplaces and sophisticated place modeling that differed from existing operational norms in GCC workplaces.

Role clarity and career ambition correlation were also significant. The present study's findings report gaps in the literature as it provided and demonstrated associations between variables from job roles and career ambition in adjusting to work environments. El Baroudi et al. (2017) studied ambition from a career development perspective. They believed that career ambition as an internal motivational process leads to success if correctly utilized. Career ambition was also found to tackle most abstracts and general dispositions in their study. The correlated relationship might have resulted from defined goals and clear work purposes among repatriates, encouraging them to adjust to their work environments. Career ambition might have driven GCC repatriates' actions by channeling and inspiring them to satisfy their work purposes. Combining both factors might increase work adjustment facilitation by clearly acknowledging how to recognize work principles.

The effect size of role discretion and career ambition was small, which might be caused by misfits of employees, managers, or supervisors. Misfits can impact discretions in the work environment (Suutari and Välimaa 2002). There is a possibility of low or absence of role discretion in the GCC work environment, which results in the insignificant relationship between role discretion and career ambition. Research on labor markets in the GCC revealed that individuals from the region obtain unnecessary qualifications that do not reflect market needs (Nair 2017). The mismatch between the market requirements and acquired qualifications might have contributed to the findings. Discretionary roles within the work environment and GCC organizations cause doubts due to misfits or the disappearance of merits that might have contributed to the low correlation between role discretion and career ambition.

The effect size of role conflict and career ambition was large possibly because organizations or managers may have misunderstood new techniques or their employees' skills; employees might have learned different work practices and views to undertake their work tasks. Other potential reasons could be organizational controlling practices that GCC countries commonly implement (Nair 2017) or the lack of training and development programs. In previous studies by Black (1994) and Suutari and Välimaa (2002), role conflict was found to impede work adjustment among repatriates.

The effect size of role novelty and career ambition was also large potentially due to the inadequate work environment in the GCC. Employees examined in this study might

have confronted role novelty issues in their work environment that contradicted their skills, knowledge, or the lack of enough information. Bad management practices and the lack of organizational support could impact career ambitions, causing discouragement among the employees. The impacts can limit employees' performances and disrupt behaviors, affecting their ambitions. Nevertheless, correlations between other factors such as insufficient job skills, organizational culture, and the lack of support have been previously studied in the context of the GCC region. Almahamid and Ayoub (2022), Al-Asfour et al. (2022), and Nair (2017) highlighted that a substantial number of GCC students qualified abroad had sought qualifications that did not reflect market needs, which caused low productivity, overstaffing, avoidance of employment in the private sector, lower-paid employment, and distortion in the education system in preparation for careers in the public sector. On the other hand, employees might be inexperienced in undertaking work roles and tasks that could affect their career ambitions.

Career ambition's effect was found to mediate the association between job roles (clarity, novelty, and conflict) and work adjustment among GCC repatriates. Obvious expectations such as compensation and income, operating hours, tasks and obligations, and rules and regulations could have led to this issue. Higher career development chances are associated with entering the workforce directly after education, which would be a reasonable cause for such an outcome. Studies by Bui et al. (2021), Ćurić Dražić et al. (2018), and El Baroudi et al. (2017) provide evidence that career ambition is a source of goal setting and readiness to take on extra duties for an organization. Nevertheless, as anticipated, the correlation between role discretion and career ambition was not supported. Role discretion in the GCC work environments did not significantly impact career ambitious repatriates' work adjustment. Role discretion was either limited or not permitted to employees due to misfits by their managers or supervisors within the GCC work environment, contributing to the hindrance of work adjustment. In this case, misfits can make individuals indeterminate in their work environment, reducing repatriation career ambitions toward work adjustment.

Furthermore, novelties in job roles within organizations would be challenging for ambitious repatriates to pursue their targets. In turn, adding challenges to their job roles influences their performance, reduces motivational factors, and develops negative attitudes, thereby becoming more likely to be unsatisfied and diminishing their career ambitions. Therefore, understanding their work development and career progress loses importance toward work adjustment. Concurrently, conflicting job roles within workplaces would make it difficult for ambitious repatriates to achieve their goals and result in dissatisfaction.

This study demonstrated that career ambition significantly mediated the accepted hypotheses in repatriates' work adjustment. The literature on repatriates' work adjustment perspective lacks career ambition studies. Thus, this study's findings can be the basis for in-depth future studies. Nevertheless, among GCC students, this study revealed that the effect of career ambition on the role (clarity, novelty, and conflict) is a predictor of repatriates' work adjustment. In the current study, career expectation moderated between career ambition and work adjustment possibly due to GCC repatriates successfully securing employment positions to earn desired incomes, plan their careers, and work toward achieving their targets. The literature on career expectations is associated with forecasts and anticipation of all career aspects (Hurst and Good 2009; Balc and Bozkurt 2013; Liu et al. 2019). Lastly, findings from the study's hypotheses framework and correlation results confirm the projected positive link between career ambition and career expectation and their effect on work adjustment. The observed data collectively confirm the notion that career ambition has either a positive or negative relationship with work adjustment in the GCC environment. This study's findings have further expanded the understanding of the robustness of career expectation and its effect on predicting work adjustment among repatriates.

6. Implications

6.1. Theoretical

This study incorporated career ambition as a mediator between job roles and work adjustment, and career expectations as a border condition between career ambition and work adjustment to extend and add new understanding to work adjustment and adaptation in the repatriation process. Evidence indicates the lack of studies on this issue in the GCC region. Hence, the current study is immensely useful in explaining the existing situation and establishing a framework for future research. By addressing the gaps in the literature and practices of repatriation experiences in the GCC, the findings justify other aspects of adjustment issues (such as lack of organizational support and career development) commonly discussed in HR and cross-cultural studies. Organizational support and career development should be assessed through various lenses (for instance, HR strategies), including management and supervisory awareness of repatriates' career ambitions and expectations.

6.2. Practical

Based on the study's findings, several recommendations for improving repatriates' awareness of job roles, career ambitions, and career expectations and how these recommendations might improve work adjustment in the GCC area are described as follows. First, repatriates need to understand job roles and responsibilities from different perspectives, such as work duties and skill compatibility. Repatriates may generate incorrect assumptions and expectations about their home countries' organizational systems, leading to confusion. According to Bandura (1977), "expectations are primarily concerned with people's aspirations for favorable results". Resultantly, researching and understanding the differences in GCC work practices between knowledge and skills acquired from different institutions that may greatly differ in their nature and business can assist repatriates in correctly utilizing their skills and knowledge. The approach will allow repatriates to feel satisfied with their accomplishments and recognize their capacities. As Bokhari (2020) mentioned, "a reasonable awareness of work cultures in the GCC may lead to pursuing the relevant qualification". It can also lead to finding the right work position and filling a labor shortage that can lead to tenure.

7. Limitations and Future Research

The initial limitation of this study is that the population sample size of 317 repatriates may not be large enough to generalize the findings. Second, this study was designed to evaluate (work adjustment) an antecedent of the GCC repatriates' in-country adjustment from the International Adjustment Model of Adaptation by Black et al. (1991) without considering other adjustment modes (for example, general and/or interactions from the model). As a result, a future study should assess greater population size and consider other antecedents (for instance, general and interaction adjustment). Furthermore, future research needs to independently examine career ambition on a sex variable, as it may differ across individuals in the GCC because culture, customs, and values differ from previously examined models. Elements and critical linkages significant to career ambition in international adjustment must also be identified.

repatriation. It followed the faculty of management's research guidelines at the Malaysian University of Science.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The datasets created and/or analyzed during the current investigation are accessible upon reasonable request from the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Table A1. Study's questionnaire.

	Construct
	Role Clarity (Rizzo et al. 1970)
RC1	Since I returned to GCC I feel secure about how much authority I have.
RC2	Since I returned to GCC clear, planned goals and objectives exist for my job.
RC3	Since I returned to GCC I know that I have divided my time properly.
RC4	Since I returned to GCC I know what my responsibilities are.
RC5	Since I returned to GCC I know exactly what is expected of me.
RC6	Since I returned to GCC explanation is clear of what has to be done.
	Role Conflict (Rizzo et al. 1970)
RT1	Since I returned to GCC I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently.
RT2	Since I returned to GCC I have to downgrade a rule or policy to carry out an assignment.
RT3	Since I returned to GCC I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.
RT4	Since I returned to GCC I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not accepted by others.
RT5	Since I returned to GCC I have to do things that should be done differently.
	Role Discretion (Rizzo et al. 1970)
RD1	Since I returned to GCC I have discretion as to how work gets done.
RD2	Since I returned to GCC I have authority to decide what tasks to delegate.
RD3	Since I returned to GCC I have freedom to choose what to become an expert in.
RD4	Since I returned to GCC I have discretion as to what tasks subordinates do.
RD5	Since I returned to GCC I have authority to decide what work gets shared.
RD6	Since I returned to GCC I have freedom to decide how much of a generalist or expert to become.
RD7	Since I returned to GCC I have discretion as to what I am responsible for.
	Role Novelty (Rizzo et al. 1970)
RN1	Since I returned to GCC the tasks involved in my current job are different from my previous jobs.
RN2	Since I returned to GCC the skills required in my current job are different from my previous jobs.
RN3	Since I returned to GCC the methods used to do the job in my current job are different from my previous jobs.

Table A1. *Cont.*

		Construct
		Career Ambition (Desrochers and Dahir 2000)
CA1		Since I returned to GCC if a management position will be offered to me in the near future, I will accept such a position immediately.
CA2		Since I returned to GCC I have a strong desire to become a senior executive in the future.
CA3		Since I returned to GCC I make a strong effort to get promoted and have a high status.
		Career Expectations (Liu et al. 2019)
CE1		Since I returned to GCC I expect to have a good salary for my job.
CE2		Since I returned to GCC I expect to have good job benefits.
CE3		Since I returned to GCC I expect to have a high job stability.
CE4		Since I returned to GCC I expect to incorporate my interests and talents in my work.
CE5		Since I returned to GCC I expect to work in an elegant environment.
CE6		Since I returned to GCC I expect to have more promotion opportunities through fair competition.
CE7		Since I returned to GCC I hope my supervisor cares about employees.
		Work Adjustment (Black 1994)
WA1		Since I returned to GCC I made adjustment to specific job responsibilities.
WA2		Since I returned to GCC I made adjustment to performance standards and expectations.
WA3		Since I returned to GCC I made adjustment to supervisory responsibilities.

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