Expatriate Women's Empowerment and Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Community Embeddedness

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Abstract

Literature has studied the factors affecting people's well-being, but expatriate women's empowerment and community embeddedness has been neglected as factors affecting women's well-being. However, the literature has not examined a relatively new phenomenon: the influence of expatriate women's empowerment, community embeddedness on women's well-being. Specifically, this study aims to empirically investigate the relationship between expatriate women's empowerment and well-being as mediated by community embeddedness. Data were collected in the United Arab Emirates. A total of 161 questionnaires were received among women. The study used multiple regression to examine the study hypotheses. This work finds that there is a direct and significant relationship between women's empowerment and well-being. Additionally, this study finds that community embeddedness mediates the relationship between women's empowerment and well-being. Building on empowerment theory, the link between women's empowerment and well-being is assumed to be explained by community embeddedness. This novel study will contribute to the literature on women's empowerment and expatriate women's studies by elucidating the mechanism by which women's empowerment influences well-being in the United Arab Emirates.

Keywords: *expatriate; women; empowerment; community embeddedness; well-being.*

1. Introduction

The understanding of well-being among women expatriates constitutes a noteworthy and essential research area. Specifically, well-being encompasses the diverse aspects of individuals' lives that are considered crucial by both the individuals themselves and their communities. These aspects are fundamental for personal flourishing and the realization of full potential (Lewis and Rödlach, 2019). This study investigates the well-being among women expatriates, seeking to contribute valuable insights into their experiences and the factors influencing their overall sense of well-being. Therefore, the context of this study is the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a nation with a high number of expatriates, making it a particularly good example for the purpose of this study (Haak-Saheem, 2022). According to United Nations (UN) estimates, there are around 10 million people living in the country as of 2023, with 88.1% of them being expatriates (CIA, 2023).

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The aim of this study links expatriate women's empowerment with well-being as mediated by community embeddedness. The term 'empowerment' refers to a multifaceted social process that gives people control over their own lives and is thought of as a process that develops power that individuals can utilize in their own lives, communities and societies by taking action on topics they see as essential (Page and Czuba, 1999). Peterson et al. (2021) sated that women's empowerment includes emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and relational domains and is therefore considered a multidimensional concept. Zimmerman (1995) conceptualized the concept of empowerment as a synthesis of emotions associated with personal control, a proactive perspective towards life, and an establishing awareness of the socio-political environment. Since this study suggests that the relationship between the empowerment of expatriate women and their well-being can be explained by the community embeddedness. Community embeddedness is characterized as the degree to which an organization is connected to, depends on, and expresses a commitment to its community (Chen and Shaffer, 2017).

The research asserts that the most appropriate framework for understanding this linkage is empowerment theory, as it endeavors to establish a link between individual well-being and the wider social environment, as proposed by Perkins and Zimmerman (1995). Given the substantial focus over the past four decades, empowerment has evolved into a foundational framework in the field of social work (Joseph, 2020). Therefore, this study is different from those that examined women's empowerment because the current study focuses on all types of expatriate women—those who are employed, unemployed or retired—to provide a more thorough understanding of the emotional, cognitive, behavioral and relational dimensions that influence expatriate women's empowerment. In other words, this study treats women's empowerment as a form of empowerment that goes beyond common psychological theories (Zimmerman, 1995).

The literature has only minimally examined the well-being of expatriate women residing in the UAE. Haak-Saheem (2022) explored 'low-status' expatriates' well-being in the UAE. Other studies have examined the relationship between empowerment and well-being (Marin-Garcia and Bonavia, 2021) and women's empowerment and well-being (Annan et al., 2021; Estevan-Reina et al., 2021). However, expatriate women's empowerment has received less consideration in the literature. Additionally, to our knowledge, no prior study has examined the relationship between expatriate women's empowerment and well-being as mediated by community embeddedness, specifically in the UAE. Given these gaps in the literature, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

"Is there a direct relationship between expatriate women's empowerment and well-being? If so, does community embeddedness mediate the relationship between expatriate women's empowerment and well-being?"

2. Conceptual framework and hypotheses development.

2.1 The relationship between women's empowerment and well-being

Women's empowerment has become the focus of global development initiatives over the past 20 years (Upadhyay et al., 2015). This work argues that there is a need for a critical examination of the available literature women's studies as well as for it to be empirically validated because the empowerment of women has been a focus of academics, practitioners, and several non-governmental organizations, mainly in emerging and developing countries. Psychological women's empowerment is described as a series of psychological states required for individuals to experience a sense of control over their engagement (Spreitzer, 2008). In addition, Spreitzer (1995) conceptualized empowerment with four dimensions, namely, (meaning, self-determination, competence, and impact) and all these factors are related to work settings. While this study adopted Peterson et al.

(2021) conceptualization of four dimensions empowerment (emotional, cognitive, behavioral and relational). Therefore, work-life balance takes important role in women's life, for example, an empirical study of 385 hotel employees in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates found that having childcare or other caring responsibilities increased the likelihood that they would have work-family conflicts, which were then adversely correlated with job satisfaction (Al-Ismail et al., 2019). Also, according to a qualitative study conducted in the UAE, the leadership of the rulers and the efforts made to balance work and personal obligations are two important elements affecting women empowerment (Shaya and Abu Khait, 2017). According to an empirical study conducted in the UAE Abukhait et al. (2109), stated that women tend to be a little more reserved and less likely to share their knowledge with others. Abukhait and her colleagues argues that there is no connection between the female groups, and in an unfavorable work environment (characterized by low empowerment), women's ideas are less likely to be heard, recognized, and supported.

Therefore, this work proposes that women who are more empowered are better equipped to speak out for themselves and their families, which enhances the well-being of those families as well. Eluwole et al. (2022) find in their empirical study for 510 residents in Zimbabwe that empowerment promotes well-being and community attachment. Additionally, an empirical study for 541 women and men, find that the presence of a managerial function had a greater impact on differences in well-being and satisfaction than did gender (Frederick and Lazzara, 2020). Based on the previous arguments this work formulate the first hypothesis:

H1. Women's empowerment is positively related to women's well-being

2.2 The mediating role of community embeddedness

Participation in local events and organizations, strong links with neighbors and community leaders, and shared cultural and historical experiences are all factors that contribute to community embeddedness. Thus, community embeddedness reflects people in their community, and it is not limited to the work settings. Therefore, social psychological interactional theory that investigates the function of self-conception, intellectual, and social beliefs inside different groups (Hogg, 2016). In the context of this study, sport team shared same objectives and almost the same aim of participation and to win the game. May the same example be extended for those expatriates from same language, values and culture to be grouped together in a way to be effectively engaged with specific activities. Additionally, women who volunteer in the community or participate in non-business activities, for example, are eligible to additional benefits such as attending conferences, seminars, and training than non-participating women. Therefore, as such activities it is important to let women feel with her identity, and she is accepted within the group that she participates with that may lead to well-being (Collins et al., 2022).

Promoting empowerment at the community level may involve engaging in collective efforts to secure access to government and other communal resources (Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995). Empirical study for 219 employees working in public organizations find that empowerment has positive association with insider status and negative associations with loneliness (Kanbur and Kanbur, 2020). The degree to which individuals engage with and are involved in their local communities through social networks, shared activities, and shared experiences is referred to as community embeddedness. It is a measure of the strength and number of connections that people have with their community, playing a crucial role in shaping individuals' sense of belonging and attachment to their community. Since women's empowerment is likely influenced by common behavior and norms found in national, organizational, and project cultures (Aldabbas et al., 2021), it is crucial for fostering positive feelings and well-being. Building upon these arguments, this research formulates the second hypothesis:

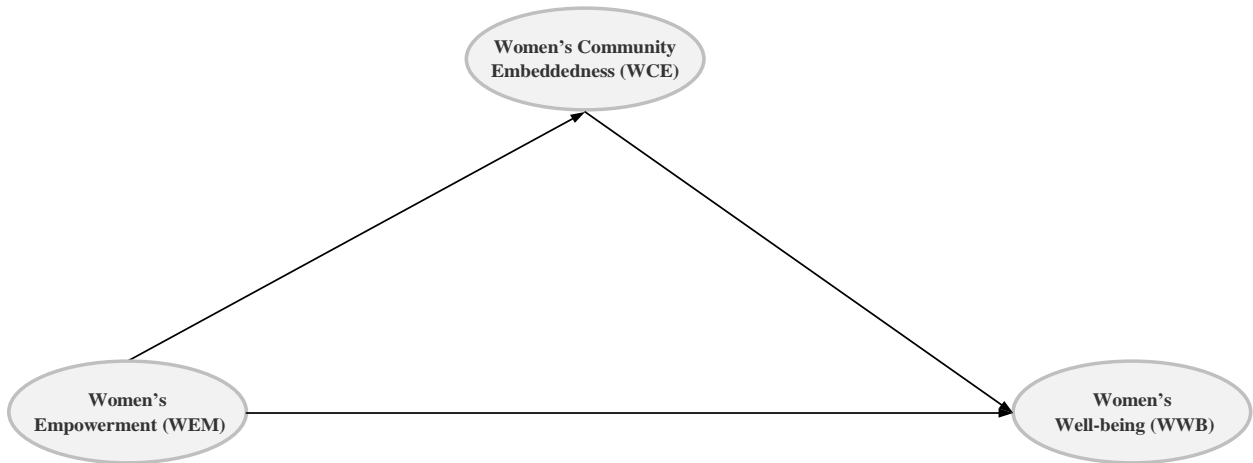H2. The relationship between women's empowerment and well-being is mediated by community embeddedness

Fig. 1 Conceptual framework

3. Research Methodology

This study aims to determine how community embeddedness affects the relationship between women's empowerment and well-being. To achieve this aim, multivariate regression has been used in the quantitative investigation to test the proposed conceptual framework.

3.1 Sample and data collection

To determine the sample size, G*Power was utilized, selecting the appropriate statistical test multiple regression with an effect size (f^2) of 10%, a power of 95%, and a 5% margin of error. The analysis, considering two predictor variables, indicated that a sample size of 158 respondents was needed. The survey was distributed through online link to a group of female residents in the UAE by one of the authors of this study, who has access to large groups of females. Thus, this research used convenience sampling make it more accessible for the researcher (Etikan et al., 2016). The link was shared within these groups, resulting in 161 respondents during December 2023. This study systematically addressed the issue of common method bias, and the findings revealed a common method variance of 30.545, a value deemed acceptable as it falls below the 50% threshold. The comprehensive interpretation of all demographic variables is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic variables

Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percent
Educational Level		
High school	9	5.6
Bachelor	86	53.4
Masters	35	21.7
Doctoral	26	16.1
Other	5	3.1
Marital status		
Single	54	33.5
Married	95	59.0

Widowed	1	.6
Divorced	8	5.0
Separated	3	1.9
Employment status		
Employed, working full-time	123	76.4
Employed, working part-time	6	3.7
Not employed, looking for work	9	5.6
Not employed, not looking for work	2	1.2
Student	18	11.2
Retired	3	1.9
Number of Years Living in UAE		
1-4 years	33	20.5
5-8 years	30	18.6
9-12 years	30	18.6
13-16 years	21	13.0
17-20 years	13	8.1
Above 21	34	21.1
Nationality		
Asia	96	59.0
Middle East	44	27.3
Africa	11	6.8
Europe	6	3.7
North America	4	2.5
Total	161	100.0

3.2 Measurements

Women's Empowerment (WEM)

The 20 items of the sacle adopted from Peterson et al. (2021), meanwhile, the scale adapted seven items from Hunter et al. (2013). However, the construct contains four dimensions (emotional, cognitive, behavioural or relational). In details, emotional contains four items, an example for this dimension 'I am aware of my own strengths as a person'. Cognitive, contains four items, an example for this dimension 'I know what community resources I need to improve the quality of my life'. Behavioral contains three items, an example for this dimension 'I am active in organizations in my community'. Relational contains nine items, an example for this dimension 'I work to build common cause with people who are different from me'. However, the Cronbach alpha for the entire scale (20 items) is .909. The Likert scale used for this construct from Almost never to Almost always.

Wome's Community Embeddedness (WCE)

Community embeddedness was assessed employing a nine-item instrument as specified by Felps et al. (2009). From the original set of 21 items, this study specifically chose nine

items pertaining to activities within the community, such as "I participate in cultural and recreational activities in my local area." Moreover, embeddedness was frequently defined at the individual level according to Chen and Shaffer (2017). However, it is important to note that the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the scale used in this study is denoted as .833. The Likert scale employed for measuring this construct ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Women's Well-being (WWB)

This study adopted the 5-item World Health Organization Well-Being Index (WHO-5) is a short and generic global rating scale measuring subjective well-being and contains positively phrased items only (Topp et al., 2015). WHO-5 contains five items "I have felt cheerful and in good spirits" and "I woke up feeling fresh and rested", which measures the degree of positive feelings experienced in the last two weeks. The WHO-5 uses a 6-point Likert scale response format (from 0 = at no time to 5 = all of the time). Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = .844$ in the current sample.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 2 contains the means, standard deviations (Std), correlation between the variables, skewness, and kurtosis. Women's community embeddedness and well-being have the strongest correlation (r = 0.436), which is significant at 1%. Women's empowerment and well-being have the second-highest correlation (r = 0.409), which is also significant at 1%. Additionally, women's empowerment and well-being have a substantial 1% correlation (r = 0.392). Considering that our sample had a range of ± 1.96.

Table 2. Correlations (r), mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis

Variables	WEM	WCE	WWB	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
WEM	1			5.315	.8789	-.653	.691
WCE	.392**	1		2.870	1.0496	-.408	-.478
WWB	.409**	.436**	1	4.856	1.135	-.674	.682

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 tailed). WEM: women empowerment; WCE: women community embeddedness, WWB: women well-being.

4.2 Hypotheses tests

This study employed Hayes' PROCESS macro with a 95% confidence interval and 5000 bootstrap iterations to examine the direct impact of women's empowerment on well-being, alongside investigating the mediating influence of women's community embeddedness in the relationship between women's empowerment and well-being, as outlined by Hayes (2018). Firstly, hypothesis one is substantiated by the observed direct association between women's empowerment and well-being, demonstrating a positive and statistically significant relationship (B = 0.363, t = 3.775, p < 0.001). Secondly, the relationship between women's empowerment and well-being is mediated by community embeddedness (point estimate: 0.165, 95% confidence interval [0.065 to 0.280]). Thus, the indirect relationship is positive and significant (B = 0.165) at a 5% significance level. Although the non-hypothesized relationships between women's empowerment and community embeddedness on one side, and community embeddedness and well-being on the other, the regression analysis reveals a positive and significant relationship. Further details can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Regression results

	Women's Community Embeddedness (the mediator)						Women's Well-being (the dependent vari				
	B	SE	t	P-value	LLCI	ULCI	B	SE	t	P-value	LLCI
WEM	0.468	0.087	5.375	0.000	0.296	0.540	0.363	0.096	3.775	0.000	0.173
WCE	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.352	0.081	4.369	0.000	0.193
Constant	0.381	0.469	0.812	0.418	-0.546	1.308	1.914	0.478	4.004	0.000	0.970

$R^2 = 0.154$

$F (1,159) = 28.886 < 001$

$R^2 = 0.257$

$F (2,158) = 27.338 < 001$

Note: N = 161. B= beta. SE= standard error. LLCI= lower level of confidence interval. ULCI= upper confidence interval. WEM= Women's Empowerment. WCE= Women's Community Embeddedness. Women's Well-being

5. Discussion and implications

This work investigates the direct relationship between expatriate women's empowerment and well-being. And the results that there is positive and significant relationship consistent with the previous studies (Ahmed and Malik, 2019; Rawat, 2014; Omang et al., 2022). Since empowering women is not only a crucial objective but also a means to provide women with the authority to make substantial advancements in economic endeavors, positioning them as active contributors on an equal footing with men (Al-Hassan and Al-Dulaimi, 2023). The progression described will empower and grant autonomy to women, thereby contributing to an elevation in life satisfaction and overall well-being. Additionally, this work find support for the second hypothesis that investigates the mediating role of community embeddedness in relationship between women's empowerment and well-being. Since community embeddedness within a context of this study can also contribute to our understanding of how women's empowerment enhances well-being. A community of embedment fosters women a sense of belonging, enhancing a shared feeling of community destiny arising from empowerment, which can positively impact their overall well-being (Aldabbas 2022; Pervaiz et al., 2021).This research findings consist with other study conducted in the UAE that adaptive capacity (e.g., empowerment, coping ability) may afford the necessary resources to sustain higher levels of happiness, even in the face of demanding life circumstances, such as relocation due to immigration and the consequential significant life changes (Mendonca et al., 2020).

This study findings propose some implications for policy makers and practitioners because of the pressure on the women for caring responsibilities (e.g., pregnancy). Therefore, the promotion of women's well-being is a crucial objective, and strategic plans and initiatives should be created to this end. First, delegating authority up front will enable women to make their own decisions, which will enable them to experience autonomous and empowerment resulted to well-being. Second, policy makers in the UAE have to ensuring access for the women to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities to enhance her community embeddedness and that may lead to well-being for the women and community as well. Third, encouraging women to take responsibility

for their own health and well-being by practicing self-care and self-advocacy. Fifth, expatriate women actively seek opportunities for community participation, such as joining clubs, volunteering, and attending cultural events. Building social support networks and creating a sense of belonging could contribute to their well-being and empowerment.

6. Limitations and Future studies

This study recognizes several limitations. The survey focused solely on females in the UAE, and future research endeavors may benefit from extending the scope to encompass the broader Arab World for enhanced generalizability. Additionally, incorporating qualitative research methodologies such as case studies and interviews could offer valuable insights into the subjective aspects of empowerment among expatriate women. Another limitation arises from the study's cross-sectional design, which assesses the influence of women's empowerment on well-being through community embeddedness. To address this, there is an imperative need for longitudinal designs to longitudinally track the empowerment of these women, discern changes over time, and ascertain their impacts on both community embeddedness and well-being. Finally, comparative research across different cultural contexts. This could help explore the interplay of cultural factors and community embeddedness, providing further insights into this phenomenon.

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