

Cultural Satisfaction: An Analysis of Indian Expatriates in the GCC

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the socio-cultural satisfaction levels of Indian expatriates residing in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Utilizing a snowball sampling technique, data were collected from 200 Indian expatriates across six GCC nations, bifurcated by gender, marital, and family status. A structured questionnaire measured the satisfaction across nine dimensions using a 4-point Likert scale. Key findings reveal significant gender-based disparities: men reported higher satisfaction in general cultural and social interaction domains, while women expressed a significantly higher level of satisfaction regarding the personal respect received from nationals. Regression analysis identified gender and social interaction as the strongest predictors of overall cultural satisfaction. The results highlight the complex and gendered nature of the expatriate experience, suggesting that family context and social dynamics are critical to understanding cultural adaptation in the GCC region..

Keywords: Expatriate Indians, GCC, Cultural Satisfaction, gender based disparity, Diaspora..

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INTRODUCTION

Indian expatriates in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries plays a vital role in the inward remittances to India. In the case of Indian economy, the inward remittances help our currency to hold its value against US Dollar and form a significant part in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). India received 87 billion USD remittances in the year of 2022, which made India the world's largest recipient according to the report given by the World Bank.

Indian society confronts many challenges in coping with the cultural differences with the GCC countries. The primary challenge is to direct a society with much stricter social and legal norms than they are used to in India, which affects everything from public conduct to dress codes.

Mostly, the community relies on sticking together. Indians form well woven groups based on region and or language to create a vital support network. Within these circles, they celebrate Indian festivals, and preserve their cultural traditions. They build a familiar home away from home through these types of celebrations effectively. Indians follow the local rules in public spaces with respect and care while maintaining their own customs in private. This balancing act is made easier keeping them connected to family and culture in India through news, entertainment, Social media and video calls. As the focus is on the economic goal to attain a sustainable financial status, make these challenges more convenient for them.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Social Life of Expatriates

Though the expatriate population plays a vital role in the general development of the Gulf countries, the interaction among them is very poor. The published research paper of **Pranav Naithani with A.N. Jha (2010)** discussed the

matter well. It is a descriptive research study which 'presents an overview of GCC countries, reason for their dependence on expatriate workforce, key current challenges faced by expatriates in GCC, and suggestions for facilitating adjustment on expatriate workforce in the GCC.' The authors say that the expatriates of different countries are receiving different social treatments. While the western expatriates enjoying a better social status, the Asian expatriates could not do the same. This type of social division resulted in lower social and cultural interactions between local and expatriate populations.

Still Indian population enjoys some social and cultural interactions comfortably. Studies say that the Indian Art Circle in Kuwait established an auditorium with 1500 seats where regular cultural events are being carried out. Indian art exhibitions are also carried out in UAE and Qatar. India's Independence Day and Republic Day are being celebrated in Bahrain by the Co-ordination Committee of Indian Associations. There are five churches, a number of Hindu religious centres (including a 60-year old Hindu temple), and six gurudwaras in Bahrain. The Sikh Diaspora in the Gulf has also assisted in constructing gurudwaras in the UAE. (**Rhea Abraham 2012**)

In the research article published by **Waseem Ahmed and Anisur Rahman (2022)** it is mentioned that the active registered associations in the GCC include; the Indian Social Club and Kalamandalam (Institute of Performing Arts) in Bahrain, the Indian Social and Cultural Centre and Indian Community Welfare Committee in Kuwait, and the Association of Indian Professionals and Bharathi Kalai Mandalam in Qatar, the Indian Doctors Forum in Saudi Arabia, and the Indian Tamil Fine Arts Association in the United Arab Emirates.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sampling Design

Due to the large and dispersed nature of the Indian expatriate population in the GCC countries, a specific sampling frame was inaccessible. Consequently, a snowball sampling technique was adopted, leveraging Indian social

organizations to reach the target population, a method recommended for hard-to-access groups (Ahmadzadehasl M and Ariasepehr S, 2010; Mahin Naderifar et. al., 2017). The final sample consisted of 200 valid responses.

3.2 Sample Demographics

Table 1. Sample Demographics

	Men	Women	Men %	Women%
Age Group				
22-30	24	13	15%	32.5%
31-40	56	13	35%	32.5%
41-50	55	11	34.375%	27.5%
51-60	23	3	14.375%	7.5%
61 and Above	2	0	1.250%	0
Total	160	40	100%	100%
Education				
Doctoral Level	1	0	0.625%	0
Postgraduate Level	35	12	21.875%	30%
Graduate Level	55	19	34.375%	47.5%
Technical / Professional Level	39	6	24.375%	15%
HSC/Lower	30	3	18.75%	7.5%
Total	160	40	100%	100%
Job Class				
White Collar	84	22	52.5%	55%
Blue Collar	23	0	14.375%	0
Professionals	39	17	24.375%	42.5%
Business Men	14	1	8.75%	2.5%
Total	160	40	100%	100%
State				
Kerala	156	37	97.5%	92.5%
Andhra	0	1	0	2.5%
Karnataka	2	1	1.25%	2.5%
New Delhi	1	1	0.625%	2.5%
Gujarat	1	0	0.625%	0
Total	160	40	100%	100%
Country of Residence				
Saudi Arabia	28	2	17.5%	5%
UAE	63	13	39.375%	32.5%
Oman	30	25	18.750%	62.5%
Qatar	19	0	11.875%	0
Bahrain	9	0	5.625%	0
Kuwait	11	0	6.875%	0
Total	160	40	100%	100%

The Table 1, Sample Demographics, provides a detailed breakdown of the 200 respondents. The sample was predominantly male (80%) and heavily represented expatriates from the state of Kerala (96.5%). The majority was aged in between 31-50, with graduate or postgraduate degrees, and was employed in white-collar or professional jobs. The UAE and Oman were the most common countries of residence of Indians. This table establishes the core characteristics of the study's participant pool.

Table 2. Sample Demographic Subgroups

Subgroup Name	N	Percentage
Unmarried Women	8	20%
Married Women Live Alone	2	5%
Married Women Live with Husband and Children	23	57.5%
Married Women Living with Husband	7	17.5%
All Women	40	100%
Unmarried Men	7	4.375%
Married Men Live Alone	81	50.625%

Married Men Live with Wife and Children	65	40.625%
Married Men Living with Wife	7	4.375%
All Men	160	100%
Total	200	--

For the study the eight demographic subgroups are categorised as 1) Unmarried Women, 2) Married Women Live Alone, 3) Married Women Live with Husband and Children, 4) Married Women living with Husband and their men counterparts 5) Unmarried Men, 6) Married Men Living alone, 7) Married Men living with Wife and Children and 8) Married Men Living with Wife as shown in the Table 2.

3.3 Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was used, with responses on a 4-point Likert scale (4=Excellent to 1=Very Unsatisfactory) across nine dimensions of cultural satisfaction.

4. Results and Analysis

The results are presented with compare mean satisfaction scores and standard deviations across different demographic subgroups in a consolidated table, followed by statistical tests for significance against *nine* dimensions; 1) Cultural Satisfaction, 2) Social Interaction Satisfaction, 3) Nationals' Co-Operation with the Expats' Social Activities, 4) Expat's Co-operation in Expats' Social Activities, 5) Indian Festivals' Enjoyment, 6) Value System Satisfaction, 7) Personal Respect from the Nationals, 8) Personal Respect from the Expat Community and 9) Satisfaction in Dealing with the Authorities.

4.1 Core Cultural and Social Dimensions

Q.1. The cultural satisfaction you feel in the country of expatriation is:

The data received in the survey with respect to the cultural Satisfaction shows that the "Married Men Living with Wife and Children" reporting the highest mean satisfaction (3.11), while "Married Women Living Alone" reported the lowest (2.00). The overall mean for men (3.00) was higher than for women (2.68).

The t-test for Cultural Satisfaction confirms that the gender gap is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), with a medium-large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.71$). This indicates that gender is a strong differentiator in general cultural satisfaction.

Q. 2. Social Interaction Satisfaction you feel in the Country of Expatriation is:

The data of Social Interaction Satisfaction and its corresponding t-test show that Men reported significantly higher satisfaction with their social interactions in the host country (Mean: 3.01) compared to the counterpart women (Mean: 2.65). The t test showed a difference that was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

4.2 Cooperation and Community Engagement

Q. 3. Nationals Cooperation in the social activities with expat communities is:

The data received on Nationals Cooperation survey shows low and similar levels of satisfaction for both men and women (Means ~2.11). The t-test confirms no significant difference ($p = 0.848$). It suggests that perceptions of cooperation from host nationals are uniformly modest across the genders.

Q.4. Level in the Co-operation of Expats in Social Activities of Expats

Expats Cooperation data and its t-test show uniformly high satisfaction with the cooperation from fellow expatriates (Overall Mean: 3.80), with no significant gender difference ($p=0.753$). This indicates a strong and supportive in-group community.

4.3 Cultural Identity and Social Systems

Q.5. Your level of enjoyment in the Indian Cultural Festivals and Entertainments is:

Indian Festivals Enjoyment survey data shows high enjoyment levels in overall. However, the t-test shows a small but statistically significant advantage for men ($p = 0.001$), suggesting possible gendered patterns in participation or access to cultural events.

Q. 6. Your Level of Satisfaction in Value Systems of the Country of Expatriation is:

The data analysis of satisfaction with the host country's value systems revealed near-identical, high mean scores for both men and women (approximately 3.92). An independent samples t-test confirmed this similarity, indicating no statistically significant difference between the groups.

4.4 Personal Respect and Bureaucratic Dealings

Q. 7. Personal Respect Received from the Nationals in the Country of Expatriation is:

The Personal Respect from Nationals data exposes the most striking finding of the study. Women's satisfaction is extraordinarily high (Mean: 3.88), while men's is noticeably lower (Mean: 2.37). The t-test confirms this is a statistically significant difference with a very large effect size ($d=2.04$, $p < 0.0001$).

Q. 8. The Personal Respect Received from the Expat Community in the Country of Expatriation

As per the data received with respect to the the Personal Respect Received from the Expat Community, a statistically significant difference is not seen in the personal respect received from the expat community between men and women. The independent samples t-test shows a negligible mean difference of -0.04, with men and a slightly higher average score (3.87) than women (3.83). This difference is not statistically significant, as indicated by a p-value of 0.472. Further the Cohen's d value of 0.11 confirms that the effect size is negligible.

Q.9. Level of Satisfaction in the Dealings with the Authorities and Departments is:

It is evident from the data that there is no statistically significant difference in the level of satisfaction with authorities and departments between men and women. The independent samples t-test shows a p-value of 0.397, which also shows that the difference between men and women is not significant. The size of this difference, as measured by Cohen's d (0.14), is considered negligible further confirms it has no practical significance.

4.5 Consolidated Analysis and Multivariate Insights

Table 3. Showing Consolidated Data of Dimensions

Dimension	Women (Mean ± SD)	Men (Mean ± SD)	Overall (Mean ± SD)	(p-value) Significance	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Cultural Satisfaction	2.68 ± 0.44	3.00 ± 0.45	2.94 ± 0.46	Yes (p < 0.001)	0.71 (Medium-Large)
Social Interaction Satisfaction	2.65 ± 0.62	3.01 ± 0.58	2.94 ± 0.63	Yes (p < 0.001)	0.59 (Medium-Large)
Nationals' Cooperation	2.13 ± 0.60	2.11 ± 0.53	2.11 ± 0.54	No (p = 0.848)	0.03 (Negligible)
Expats' Cooperation	3.78 ± 0.43	3.80 ± 0.40	3.80 ± 0.41	No (p = 0.753)	0.05 (Negligible)
Indian Festivals Enjoyment	3.83 ± 0.38	3.99 ± 0.16	3.80 ± 0.41	Yes (p = 0.001)	0.54 (Medium)
Value Systems Satisfaction	3.90 ± 0.29	3.93 ± 0.23	3.93 ± 0.25	No (p = 0.473)	0.11 (Negligible)
Personal Respect (Nationals)	3.88 ± 0.38	2.37 ± 0.93	2.67 ± 0.99	Yes (p < 0.0001)	2.04 (Very Large)
Personal Respect (Expat Community)	3.83 ± 0.39	3.87 ± 0.35	3.86 ± 0.36	No (p = 0.472)	0.11 (Negligible)
Dealings with Authorities	3.90 ± 0.32	3.94 ± 0.24	3.93 ± 0.27	No (p = 0.397)	0.14 (Negligible)

Based on the consolidated analysis, men report significantly higher satisfaction than women in the cultural and social interaction areas, with medium to large effect sizes. The most remarkable disparity is in "Personal Respect from Nationals," where women report a much higher mean (3.88) than men (2.37), resulting in a very large effect size that indicate an extremely different gendered experience. In

contrast no significant gender differences were found in areas like cooperation from others, value systems, personal respect within the expat community, or dealings with authorities, where insights are mostly similar. This suggests that gender-based challenges are not universal but are highly concentrated in the socio-cultural and respect areas of expatriate life.

Table 4. Shows One-Way ANOVA (Cultural Satisfaction by Marital/Family Status)

Group	N	Mean	SD	F-statistic	p-value	Post-Hoc (Tukey HSD)
Unmarried Women	8	2.75	0.43	6.42	<0.001	Married men (w/ family) > Others
Married Men (Wife & Kids)	65	3.11	0.45			Unmarried women < Married men
Married Women (Husband & Kids)	23	2.70	0.46			No diff. among women's subgroups

The ANOVA table demonstrates that the family structure significantly impacts cultural satisfaction (F = 6.42, p < 0.001). Married men with families are most satisfied.

4.6 Multiple Linear Regressions

Dependent Variable: Cultural Satisfaction
Predictors: Gender, Marital Status, Social Interaction, Respect from Nationals, Festivals Enjoyment.

Table 5. Shows Multiple Linear Regression

Predictor	Beta (β)	p-value	Interpretation
Gender (Male)	+0.28	<0.001	Strongest predictor.
Social Interaction	+0.35	<0.001	Strongest predictor.
Respect from Nationals	+0.22	0.002	Higher respect → Higher satisfaction.
Indian Festivals	+0.18	0.012	Cultural engagement matters.
Marital Status	NS	>0.05	Not significant after controlling for others.

Model Fit: R² = 0.52 (52% variance explained), p < 0.001. The Multiple Linear Regression identifies the key drivers of overall cultural satisfaction. The model explains 52% of the variance (R² = 0.52), with Social Interaction (β = +0.35) and Gender (β = +0.28) being the strongest predictors, followed by Respect from Nationals (β = +0.22). Marital

status was not a significant predictor in the multivariate model.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study shows that the experience of Indians in the Gulf is different for men and women. The results tell two main facts. First, men generally feel more satisfied with the overall cultural and social life, especially when they are

living with their families. Second, women feel a much stronger sense of respect from the Arab natives than men do. This feeling of being respected is a very important part of their well-being abroad. The analysis shows that being able to build a good social life and one's gender are the biggest factors in determining how culturally satisfied a person feels.

5.1 Conclusion

In a nutshell, there is no single story for Indian expatriates in the Gulf Countries. To help this large community thrive, both the people they work for and the organizations that support them must understand these key differences. Support should be tailored: for example, creating more opportunities for women to connect socially, and making it easier for men to bring their families to live with them. By recognizing these specific needs, we can better support the well-being of the Indian community in GCC countries...

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