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Work-family attitudes and behaviours among newly immigrant Pakistani expatriates: The role of organizational family-friendly policies

Running head: *Family-friendly policies & Pakistani expatriates*

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Abstract

The work-life interface literature is often criticized for its limited sample base, with the majority of research focusing on the experiences of white women living in nuclear family households in Western societies. This paper aims to address some of these criticisms by using a qualitative methodology to explore the impact of organizational family-friendly policies on the work-family attitudes and behaviours of 26 newly expatriate Pakistani employees in the United Kingdom. Individual, family, and religious/cultural influences on these outcomes were also explored. Findings indicate that study participants undergo a shift of priorities that result from expatriation and the consequent attenuation of extended family and societal pressures to have children immediately after marriage; participants are delaying childbirth in order to gain educational qualifications and establish careers in a foreign country. A strong preference for familial childcare suggests that family-friendly policies such as part-time or flexible hours have the potential to significantly affect employment outcomes for Pakistani expatriate women, who, in the absence of extended family to provide care for children, might not otherwise return to work following childbirth. Other potential organizational interventions are also discussed.

Work-family attitudes and behaviours among newly immigrant Pakistani

expatriates: The role of organizational family-friendly policies

In Western nations, family-friendly employer policies such as parental leave, flexible working hours and childcare information or provision have an established impact on employees' attitudes toward and behaviours at work. For example, the availability of such policies has been shown to predict individuals' attraction to organisations (Carless & Wintle, 2007; Casper & Buffardi, 2004), organizational commitment and turnover intentions (Casper & Harris, 2008; Cook, 2009; Roehling, Roehling, & Moen, 2001), and women's decisions about when or whether to return to work after childbirth (Han, Ruhm, & Waldfogel, 2009; McDonald, Guthrie, Bradley, & Shakespeare-Finch, 2005). These positive effects of family-friendly policies are usually explained by social exchange theory (Blau, 1964); when employees are treated favourably by their employer, they will feel obliged to respond in kind. If the provision of family-friendly policies is seen as favourable treatment, workers are likely to reciprocate with attitudes and behaviours that benefit the employer (Bourne, McComb, & Woodard, 2012).

While these effects exist for Western employees, what remains unclear is whether family-friendly policies have a similar impact on expatriate workers from non-Western nations. Research suggests that perceptions of organizational support (an indicator of favourable treatment) often mediate the relationship between family-friendly policy provision and positive work-related attitudes and behaviours (Allen, 2001), and so the perceived value of these policies to employees is an important predictor of positive reciprocal actions (Lambert, 2000; Muse, Harris, Giles, & Field, 2008). For employees whose culture of origin has different norms regarding non-

familial childcare and mothers working outside the home, family-friendly policies designed to assist parents – and especially mothers - in combining paid work with family responsibilities may not be perceived as useful or valuable.

The work-life interface literature is often criticized for its limited sample base, with the vast majority of research focusing on the experiences of white women living in nuclear family households in North America, Australia, or the UK (Chang, McDonald, & Burton, 2010; Karimi, 2008; Özbilgin, Beauregard, Tatli, & Bell, 2011). As work and family issues are linked to cultural norms and values (Mortazavi, Pedhiwala, Shafiro, & Hammer, 2009), the research methods employed in this field contribute very little to our understanding of work-life issues among diverse racial and ethnic groups, including immigrant populations, and non-traditional family structures. To the extent that research informs policy making in organisations, this focus may be echoed in human resource interventions that are targeted at a specific subset of the overall employee population and exclude workers who do not fit this narrow profile. With the increasing workplace diversity of many Western nations and the proliferation of multinational firms with large expatriate workforces, this has the potential to become a serious issue in the attraction and retention of key talent.

The research presented in this paper aims to address some of these criticisms by exploring the impact of available family-friendly policies on the work-family attitudes and behaviours of expatriate Pakistani employees in the United Kingdom. As recommended by Agars and French (2011), we seek to identify and define contextual factors that are uniquely meaningful to an individual population. By investigating the experiences of members of an ethnic minority group and by including both men and women, this study seeks to provide a more rounded view of how family-friendly policies are perceived by employees and what influence they wield on employee

attitudes and behaviours, e.g., organizational attraction or returning to work after childbirth.

Diversity and the Work-Life Interface

Research on the work-life interface of ethnic minority groups within a wider Western context is limited. Notable exceptions include work by Barnett, Del Campo, Del Campo and Steiner (2003), who explored the ability of working class Mexican-Americans to balance work and family; Roehling, Jarvis and Swope (2005), who investigated negative work-life spillover among white, black, and Hispanic workers in the USA; and Grzywacz et al. (2007), who found infrequent work-life conflict or effects of work-life conflict on health in their study of immigrant Latino blue-collar workers. In a rare study of family-friendly policies and diversity, Del Campo, Cook and Arthur (in press) concluded that Hispanics perceive greater organizational support as a function of family-friendly policy provision than their white, non-Hispanic counterparts. The findings of all these studies indicate that members of ethnic minority groups may have different experiences in reconciling employment with family life, and consequently may place a different level of importance on family-friendly policies depending on the values of their cultural group.

Outside of the USA, Kamenou's (2008) qualitative study examined the family circumstances of ethnic minority women in the UK, their cultural and religious affiliations within their communities, and the ways in which these affiliations intertwined with their experiences of the work-life interface. The Pakistani participants contended that they were compelled to fulfil conflicting demands between family and cultural expectations on the one hand, with career ambitions and work responsibilities on the other. While Kamenou (2008) acknowledges that white women face similar struggles in prioritizing either work or home responsibilities, her

study demonstrates clearly that there exists for these Pakistani women an additional element of cultural or religious responsibilities that serves to exacerbate the difficulty in meeting demands from both paid work and family commitments. For example, female participants spoke of needing to fulfil cultural demands such as observing Muslim practices in the home and interacting with extended family members and the wider Pakistani community, including visiting individuals who are ill. Male Pakistani participants, meanwhile, spoke in a disparaging fashion of female Asian colleagues focusing on their career development and neglecting their duties to the community, implying that the latter should be prioritized over the former.

In a similar vein, Dale (2005) studied work-life balance among Pakistani and Bangladeshi women living in the UK and deduced that compared to their white counterparts, these ethnic minority women faced particular challenges in combining paid work and family responsibilities. While the cultural context of their workplaces was based on Western social and religious traditions, the women participating in the study were expected to observe south Asian customs at home, which included heavy caretaking duties for the household and both immediate and extended family members. Both Dale's (2005) and Kamenou's (2008) findings suggest that for ethnic minority groups, and for Pakistani women in particular, work-family decision making takes into account different considerations than those of the ethnic majority. Attending religious services, participating in cultural events, and hosting and attending large social gatherings are also expected of many Pakistani women whose time and energies are concurrently devoted to paid work and household responsibilities. This in turn suggests that organizational family-friendly policies designed for the ethnic majority may not necessarily be suited to the concerns of ethnic minority members.

While these two studies are undoubtedly pioneering in their investigations of an under-researched group, both Dale (2005) and Kamenou (2008) studied the experiences of second- to third-generation Pakistani migrants, the younger members of families that have settled in the UK over the past fifty years. The next section will provide a brief overview of this longstanding Pakistani population in the UK. The circumstances of young Pakistani expatriate workers who have settled in the UK in recent years are remarkably different and will be discussed in the following section, 'Newly Immigrant Pakistani Expatriates'.

The Pakistani Population in the UK

The UK is home to the largest overseas Pakistani community (Webner, 2005). The Pakistani population in the UK has grown from about 10,000 in 1951 to roughly 1.2 million in 2010, and comprises the UK's second largest ethnic minority population (Abbasi, 2010; ONS, 2011a). Large-scale immigration to the UK from Pakistan began in the 1950s, when the UK encouraged migration to fulfil its post-war labour requirements (The Change Institute, 2009). Most of these Pakistani immigrants were economic migrants from rural areas of Kashmir, which relied upon *biradaris* (kinship groups comprising immediate and extended family bloodlines) for health, social, and justice provision. The efforts of Pakistani immigrants to maintain these cultural customs have manifested themselves in the imposition of traditional codes of practice upon second and third generations, and resulted in social insularity among many Pakistani communities (predominantly in northern England) (Malik, 2005).

Second- and third-generation migrants are therefore subject to the unique psychological identities and mindsets that exist in culturally cohesive groups, and are also subject to the socio-cultural religious norms that exist within their communities (Sial, 2008). For instance, in his analysis of ethnic family formations, Berthoud

(2000) found that Pakistani women within south Asian communities in the UK were generally married by the age of 25, to partners chosen for them through a system of arranged marriage, and gave birth to an average of three to four children. This compares to an average age of 30 at the time of first marriage for women in the UK overall (ONS, 2012), and average family sizes of 1.88 children for UK-born women overall and 2.45 children for women born outside the UK (ONS, 2011b). While there is evidence that attitudes toward women's education and employment within the UK Pakistani community are slowly changing, a visible majority of these women remain outside the labour market in order to engage in full-time childcare and domestic responsibilities (Dale, 2008). Approximately 30% of British Pakistani women are in employment (with 10% of these being self-employed), compared to 73% of white British women (of whom 8% are self-employed) (DWP, 2012; Limmer, 2007; Opportunity Now, 2008).

According to Labour Force Survey statistics, the Pakistani population is one of the most economically disadvantaged ethnic groups in the UK (Nandi & Platt, 2010). There are, however, considerable variations within this group according to geographic region and class. For example, the experiences of Pakistani women in larger urban areas of the UK, such as London, differ from those residing in smaller, more insular communities in the north of England, who have fewer opportunities to play an active role in society. Furthermore, recent migration has produced an influx of highly educated, middle class Pakistani migrants in professional jobs (The Change Institute, 2009). The older, established Pakistani community in the UK is therefore not representative of individuals newly migrated from Pakistan, who generally emanate from urban as opposed to rural settings and more privileged socio-economic backgrounds.

Newly Immigrant Pakistani Expatriates

The traditional Pakistani family structure is the joint family, which usually consists of a group of three or more generations with a complex set of mutual obligations and pooled income and expenditures. Joint family systems remain prevalent in Pakistan, but mass urbanisation has recently brought about a shift from traditional extended family structures to more 'modern' nuclear families in city settings (Ahmed, 2002). This creation of smaller units has also created more democratic families, with less authoritarian control being exerted by household heads and extended family members. Nuclear families are increasingly able to wield control over their income, lifestyle, and childrearing activities (Ahmed, 2002). **Many** newly immigrant Pakistani expatriates (NIPEs) are the offspring of these more recently urbanized, nuclear families. As such, they have been raised in a nuclear family structure, and few have lived in a joint family system for any length of time.

Change is also evident in other social arenas in Pakistan, with an increasing number of women receiving education as well as being economically active (Ahmed, 2002). In Pakistan, women give birth for the first time at an average age of 21, compared to 27.8 for women in the UK (Hanif, 2011; ONS, 2011c). However, industrialisation and employment opportunities available to the wealthier and more educated segments of the population in Pakistan permit women a delay in childbearing until they have reached certain educational and financial objectives. The new generation of women hailing from the upper and middle socio-economic class are able to delay conception until they have finished their education and established careers for themselves. That having been said, urban women still tend to have their first child within 2.7 years of getting married (Hanif, 2011).

Given that these new Pakistani expatriates appear at least superficially more similar to their Western colleagues than to the established Pakistani community in the UK, it is worthwhile investigating whether NIPEs' work-family attitudes and behaviours are influenced to a similar degree by the provision of organizational family-friendly policies. This study therefore poses the following research questions:

1. How are organizational family-friendly policies perceived by newly immigrant Pakistani expatriate employees?

2. To what extent do family-friendly policies influence newly immigrant Pakistani expatriate employees' attitudes and behaviours in combining work and family, compared to individual, extended family, and cultural factors?

Methodology

In their review of research methods in the work-life interface literature, Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood and Lambert (2007) note a heavy reliance on surveys and methodological designs aimed at **quantitative** analysis, and call for greater diversity in methods of data collection. A qualitative methodology was therefore selected for investigating the research questions. Qualitative research is also well suited for the purpose of addressing elements of diversity, as it does not disregard difference or see it as a deficit; it acknowledges difference, rather than accepting uniformity of behaviour as the norm (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

The methodological approach of the study is based in template analysis (King, 2004) of in-depth interviews conducted with newly immigrant Pakistani expatriates. Template analysis involves producing a list of codes (the 'template') representing themes identified in the interview data as being important to describing the topic of interest. The template is organized to represent the relationships among themes, using a hierarchical structure (Brooks & King, 2012). Through reading and re-reading of the

data, researchers engage in a form of pattern recognition. Recurrent themes are identified and become categories for analysis (Fereday & Cochrane, 2006). Template analysis also allows researchers to define some 'a priori' themes in advance of the analysis (Brooks & King, 2012). This analytic technique has a number of advantages, including its capacity to usefully summarize the key features of a large body of textual data, to highlight similarities and differences across the data set, and to generate unanticipated insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Sample

Thirteen newly immigrant Pakistani expatriate couples (twenty-six individuals) took part in the study. The sample was collected through a combination of convenience and snowball sampling, whereby people were recruited on the basis of accessibility. An initial convenience sample was requested to nominate other research participants. Snowball sampling is subject to numerous biases (see Auerbach & Silvestein, 2003); because participants tend to nominate people that they know well, it is very possible that the study participants will share similar traits and characteristics to an extent greater than is the case in the population. The sample may therefore not be representative, and the study's results may therefore not be generalizable to the wider population of newly immigrant Pakistani expatriates. Despite these disadvantages, snowball sampling was employed for this study because the chain referral process allowed the researchers to access a specific population of interest that would be difficult to reach using other sampling methods.

For the purposes of the research, individuals recruited for the study were required to adhere to a particular set of criteria. All participants were NIPEs from urban areas of Pakistan who had settled in the UK within the past ten years for reasons of education, transnational marriage, migration or work, and formed part of a

married Muslim (thus heterosexual) couple. Participants were either employed or in full-time education with the intention of entering the labour market. A summary of the sample characteristics can be found in Table 1. The interview participants have been labelled A1 and A2, B1 and B2, etc. to indicate couple dyads, with '1' indicating the husband and '2' the wife.

Although no criteria were established with regard to participant age and parental status, the participants were all between the ages of 25-35 years and either had no children, or only one child. This can be attributed to two factors, the first being the study's requirement that participants were recent migrants; NIPEs tend to be young, settling in the UK immediately after completing their university degrees, and are thus in the early stages of family formation. Second, snowball sampling often generates a group of demographically alike participants, as an individual's personal networks are frequently homogeneous with regard to many sociodemographic characteristics (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001).

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted at the participants' homes, with some interviews taking place via Skype as a convenient alternative when requested by the participant. Although all participants were members of married couples and cohabitating, each individual was interviewed separately. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes each and were recorded for transcription purposes. Participants were briefed about the study and informed of their right to withdraw participation or data at any time. They were also assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

In addition to questions about family-friendly policies available to the participants at their place of work, the interview guide contained questions about

attitudes toward work, family and childrearing more generally, in an effort to uncover individual, cultural, or religious attitudes or values that may or may not be compatible with policies offered by employers.

Data analysis

After the interview data were transcribed and the researchers had read through the transcripts, initial codes were generated. Codes were then analysed and sorted into themes. The principal aim of the study, the influence of family-friendly policies on the work-family attitudes and behaviours of the participants, was identified as an a priori first-level theme. Three elements that emerged as significant over the course of the data collection were also identified as a priori themes: individual attitudes toward when to have children, family influences on when to have children, and religious / cultural influences on when to have children. These were categorized as second-level themes, subordinate to the first-level theme of 'Decisions about when to start having children'. All themes were reviewed for internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Patton, 1990), in an effort to ensure that data within themes fit together in a meaningful way, and that there were clear and identifiable distinctions between themes. A summary of the themes identified is presented in Table 2.

Results and Discussion

The global theme derived from analysis of the data was NIPEs' attitudes toward having children and combining work and family. Contained within this 'umbrella' theme were four organizing themes: organizational family-friendly policies, individual attitudes, family influences, and religious/cultural influences. Each of these will be examined in turn.

Family-friendly policies

Participants were largely aware of family-friendly policies available in their employing organizations, and expressed appreciation for visible signals of a supportive work-family culture. This was more common among the women than the men.

> "[W]hen in my induction when I got to see my senior manager she was talking about how she went away on pregnancy leave and how she came back so it was interesting to know that there is that kind of support in the organisation, that sort of culture where women can come back and continue their role..." (B2)
>
> "[T]here are many women in senior positions and my own boss has just returned from maternity leave after having her third child and she has been promoted as soon as she came back to work [...] Although I don't have a detailed view of the family policies at the moment, I know that leaving work early and coming late to work to pick up or drop your child from nursery is allowed and not frowned upon plus there are work from home policies to make life easier to manage with children which is excellent..." (F2)

There was little evidence that knowledge of these policies had played a role in attracting participants to their employing organizations. Most individuals had not been familiar with their organizations' family-friendly policies before starting work, although some did mention that a supportive work-family culture and policy availability might be a criterion in accepting future job offers.

> "[S]o their understanding… so I would say yes that's one point and I would say on paternity leave what is their policy... do they go by law, statutory or do

they give you more paternity leave and then also... how lenient they are if I
want to be flexible in my job like working hours if I want to do early hours or
late hours…" (C1)

Individual circumstances had an influence on the importance that participants
placed on a prospective employer's family-friendly policies. When asked if the
availability of such policies had played a role in her recent decision to join a particular
organization, one participant replied:

"No, because even if these policies were available and they were very good
even, because I have my in-laws here with me that sort of decision is made
up… after maternity leave if I were to start work again, my in-laws would be
there to take care of my child and I guess would prefer that more than a
nursery and childminder." (B2)

This participant was an exception to the rule; as a result of their expatriate
status, most of the participants did not have parents or parents-in-law living in the UK
upon whom they could rely for assistance with childcare. In collectivist societies
(such as Pakistan), work involvement is of paramount importance in ensuring the
financial well being of the family. To facilitate this well being, extended family
members often share domestic and childcare responsibilities (Hassan, Dollard, &
Winefield, 2010). In their discussion of the policies offered by their employers, the
female NIPEs in this study were of the opinion that in the absence of familial
assistance, these policies were - or would be - beneficial in allowing them to return to
work after childbirth, or in helping them more generally to balance employment with
family responsibilities.

"I was fairly new in the country [...] the only time I was aware of the policies
was after I was pregnant… [The policies were] not in my decision making

process to have a child, but maybe in my decision making process to go back to work earlier." (C2)

Part-time or flexible hours were mentioned most frequently by female participants, and appeared to be the most attractive family-friendly policies on offer for most. The following two quotes are from women who are planning to start having children within the next few years:

"[I]f God willing [my parents-in-law] have a very long life to be able to take care of my child while I'm at full time work, but if not or if their health does not permit, I will take up maybe part time work, maybe flexible working hours, whatever sort of easy way that my organisation can provide me I will consider it, probably not full time work, it looks like it's going to be difficult." (B2)

"The cost of childcare is so high that I don't want to work for just a small amount of net gain and also miss out on time with my children. I don't plan to be a full-time mother either and would like to work part-time or as a consultant." (F2)

A postgraduate student with a young child said,

"[It's] not like I'm dying to work or something, I want to work but in a sort of a manner where my domestic life and my work life they don't clash with each other… if I would actually plan to work in this next couple of years I would try to do something which is part time or I can flexibly work." (E2)

These intentions to remain in the workforce after having children distinguish this new generation of migrants from the majority of the women in older, more established Pakistani communities in the UK who eschew employment for unpaid household work. As Werbner (2005) notes, this reinforces the argument that a

particular ethnic group cannot be assumed to be homogeneous; class background, migration history, and regional origins must all be considered when accounting for attitudinal and behavioural outcomes.

In contrast to the women participating in the study, the men were much less likely to view their employers' family-friendly policies as being personally relevant. The majority of the male respondents did not view paternity leave as something that would have a meaningful or lasting impact on their lives; they did not see part-time work as relevant to their career plans, although a few expressed interest in flexible working hours. In general, the male participants were of the opinion that family-friendly policy availability would not play a major role in their work-family decision making.

"I don't think that family friendly policies are really the answer to how we think about raising children [...] they can be handy but not really play a big role in our lives." (K1)

"[Flexible working hours are] a good thing to know [...] it would be an added perk but not at all an influencing factor." (A1)

Without exception, the male participants were strongly opposed to the use of employer-sponsored childcare facilities for their children. All the participants, male and female, expressed the belief that the first few years of a child's life before reaching school age are of crucial importance to the child's development, and should be influenced primarily by family members rather than paid childcare workers. The importance of family involvement in childrearing emerged as a significant issue in most of the participants' accounts of combining work and family.

"[Nurseries or childminders] are not going to give you a homely sort of environment, they are just helpers, by the end of the day it is you who decides

in the best way what is right for your child or not, they are just there to help you for the time when you are not around your kid." (E1)

"[I]t's not like I have to work, because one of the parents has to see how the kid is brought up." (E2)

In addition to the desire to closely monitor a child's upbringing and to be the primary influence on his or her early development, participants also spoke of concerns regarding the lack of Pakistani cultural influences available within a Western childcare setting, and the potential sense of isolation that might result for their children.

"If I were to leave [my son] to a childminder here it would be like leaving him to a different culture and different kind of nurturing than I would want to give him in the first couple of years." (C2)

"[I]t's just healthy I guess to have family involvement… healthy for the child's personality, for the child to know that he is not alone if he is different in a sort of culture, which he will because we are not really very white or very British, in that sense we are different […] so… just to know that he has somewhere he can go back to and he's just not alone basically." (B2)

In this context, the importance placed on familial childcare is accentuated by the participants' expatriate status. In Pakistani culture, the primary caregiver for children is traditionally the mother; for the 22% of women participating in the labour force in Pakistan, alternative caregivers usually include grandmothers, aunts, or elder sisters (Akbar Ali Hirani, 2008; World Bank, 2012). For NIPEs in the UK, these alternative family caregivers are generally not available, thus reinforcing the importance of having the child's mother play a dominant role in childrearing. This contributes also to the emphasis placed on part-time hours by the female participants

in this study. Part-time work represents a way to combine employment with a greater amount of day-to-day childcare than can be afforded by full-time work hours.

In sum, family-friendly policies were of greater importance to female NIPEs in their work-family planning and decision-making than to their husbands, reflecting their primary caregiving role. The men's accounts of factors influencing their work-family decisions were more likely to prioritize financial stability and career progression. Extended family and societal or religious influences were also discussed, as will be seen in the following sections.

Individual attitudes

Attitudes among the NIPEs toward having children and combining work and family were influenced by individual priorities regarding emotional and financial maturity. For instance, when asked what needed to be in place before she had children, one participant replied:

> "[Y]eah there is a checklist so that is acculturising myself with the life in Britain, to get well settled in my family, to get an education in order to get a qualification in order to get a job to then obviously have enough money … to be earning for myself and my husband to support a family, a child, or if not a child ourselves, so yeah there is a checklist of conditions." (B2)

These priorities differed in degree from one couple to the next and also differed between the genders. The male participants wanted to be financially stable enough to support their wives and children, and there was an implied and sometimes explicit assumption that their wives would be responsible for the provision of childcare. There was also an implicit assumption that husbands would act as the

primary breadwinner after the birth of a child, until the child was of school age, after which the wife would go back to full-time work if she wished.

"[You need to be in a position] where you are reasonably comfortable financially, can support a family on your own… [Where you have] capabilities to find alternatives... so how large your network is, how transferable your skills are…" (F1)

"[The right time to have children is] when at least one of the parents most preferably the father has a stable job that pays well." (M2)

"At the current stage, it would be easy to have a child, because of my wife. Her career is very flexible, she has her own hours and she is her own boss. Although, it would be difficult for me to give a lot of time to a newborn in our house, I know she will be there to look after the baby." (L1)

Family influences

A dominant theme emerging from empirical research among household members in Pakistan is the importance of communality, rather than individuality, as the social ethic (Mumtaz & Salway, 2009). In collectivist societies, joint family living increases the financial and social obligations individuals have toward their extended family members (Poster & Prassad, 2005). Pakistani society is generally acknowledged as being strongly patriarchal, with clearly demarcated gender roles; men are seen as economic providers, and women as family caretakers, with sizeable gender differentials existing in access to resources of all types (Durrant & Sathar, 2000, cited in Mumtaz, Salway, Waseem, & Umer, 2003; Khan, 1999; Winkvist & Akhter, 2000). In the typical household, relationships are hierarchical between the sexes and between generations, with women subordinate to men and younger women subordinate to older women (Ballard, 1982). Certain realms are, however, deemed to

be the preserve of women rather than men. As such, it is common for mothers-in-law to have greater decision-making authority over young couples' family planning than either member of the couple itself (Mumtaz & Salway, 2007; Varley, 2012).

In the present study, the expatriate status of NIPEs allowed them the freedom of an independent and democratic family unit. While social, cultural, and religious norms would have been sources of pressure had they lived in Pakistan, the study participants felt that the influence of these norms and institutions on their family planning and work-family decision making had decreased considerably due to decreased geographic proximity from their extended families and from Pakistani society in general. This freedom primarily manifested itself in accounts of decisions to delay having children.

> "No [...] there would be some sort of indirect talk of why my husband and I are not starting a family. But obviously because I am not physically present there so... there is no pressure." (H2)
>
> "...my parents are quite conservative and old fashioned. [...] children are the next step and should happen almost immediately. At the moment I would say this pressure is to a lesser degree because obviously we live so far away from them in the UK [...] we have lesser amount of communication with our parents then we would normally... Due to working hours and time differences as well [...] The pressure would be constant if we were in Pakistan [...] First and foremost from our own family and then from the surrounding people." (K1)

Pressure could be applied directly, via questioning or admonishments during phone conversations and/or face-to-face visits, or indirectly, via remarks from extended family members about how much they were looking forward to welcoming a baby into the family.

"I remember the first time I went home when after a year of my marriage when I went home my mother just asked me." (E2)

"I have not felt any pressure directly from my family, may it be the in-laws or my family. But at times I think that my husband gets the pressure indirectly mainly because his parents are craving grandchildren." (L2)

Another way for pressure to be applied indirectly is for family expectations to become internalized. One woman, while denying that she herself felt any pressure from extended family members to have children, spoke of how childless individuals with less supportive families might perceive themselves as thwarting the happiness of the collective and thereby put pressure upon themselves:

"[B]ecause you become the outcast and the person that is […] not willing to give [the extended family] happiness by giving them children, I guess for my own peace of mind you would want to have children." (B2)

Among those who reported experiencing pressure from extended family members to have children, several different coping strategies were mentioned. The woman quoted below cited her husband's support as giving her the confidence to face pressure from her parents-in-law.

"Yes! My in-laws wanted us to have a baby 9 months after we were married [...]. It's such a huge responsibility – even though it may have been easier then. [...] personally... I think they don't even understand how it is to be living alone and supporting yourself alone. [...] My mother-in-law thinks something is wrong with my fertility. She can't seem to comprehend someone not rushing into having children. My husband tells me to ignore them. [...] I'm so glad I'm not living in Pakistan when it comes to having a baby [...] I think if I were there, my hair would have fallen out." (K2)

Her husband, meanwhile, cites geographical distance and the example of his UK friends and work colleagues as providing him with the opportunity to withstand his parents' demands for a grandchild.

"[M]ost Western people wait until they are ready to have children instead of giving in to pressure from their parents […] I think living here in the UK with my wife… and away from my family… I can align my views more with my Western colleagues. […] I will still have children [who are] relatively older than my colleagues' and friends', I think they put off having children for a long time, whereas I am ready to have children now." (K1)

In addition to this type of passive non-cooperation ("ignoring" the source of the pressure), reframing was another strategy used. One woman raised the possibility that it was a matter of choice as to whether comments from extended family members about babies were interpreted as exerting pressure or not.

"[T]hey know that it's up to us… depends if you take it as a pressure." (A2)

Another strategy involved using a third party as a buffer against other family members. The following participant was in the unusual position of being able to rely on her mother-in-law to rebuff any unwanted interference:

"I live in a joint family system at the moment […] my mother-in-law has only talked about it to me only once that I should have children because it grounds the relationship between my husband and myself... […] [B]ecause I have already been married longer than the average Asian couple is when they have children, these sort of cultural pressures don't really affect me anymore as in they don't matter to me and also particularly because my mother in law is

always there to sort of... so if the pressure is there from… regarding other

people, friends and family, etc., my mother-in-law is always there to shut them

up or answer on behalf of us. Nobody can really ask us directly these sort of

questions." (B2)

Religious/cultural influences

It was generally acknowledged by the study participants that Pakistani culture

encouraged couples to have children soon after marriage, regardless of personal or

employment circumstances.

"[T]he man also feels that he needs to have children at a certain age. I also

think that, very strongly that, you know, once you are mature enough you

should start thinking of it and obviously age also becomes a very big factor

because you do not want to have them too late…" (A1)

"Most of the time that's the norm in Pakistan you get married you have

children and you have them soon so it's something completely normal and if

you don't have children soon then you are the abnormal one basically like

there is either something wrong in your family, your family life or there is

something wrong with you biologically. […] [I]t's important for lineage, it's

important to have an heir to your property, its important when you want to just

extend your own life through another body basically and to carry on your

family name or to do something for the society…" (B2)

This finding echoes previous research demonstrating that cultural ideology is

the primary factor shaping Pakistani couples' attitudes toward early childbearing. For

instance, female participants in Zafar, Masood and Anwar's (2003) focus groups

spoke of women achieving greater respect and power in society through being seen to

continue their husbands' family line and fulfil the expectations of their parents-in-law. Varley (2012) interprets the lack of family planning uptake among childless married women in Pakistan as evidence of the pressure upon newly-married couples to avoid any delays in childbearing.

In contrast to the participants who spoke of wanting to establish themselves financially and in their careers before having children, other participants referred to the teachings of Islam as steering them away from this path. The general view among the sample was that a child is God-given, that it is by God's decree that one is able to conceive, and that often the 'right time' for having a child is when God wills it. This last idea is somewhat at odds with the wishes expressed by some participants to wait until both members of the couple had completed their education and launched their careers before expanding their families. It is, however, consistent with existing research from Pakistan on religious teachings with regard to conception. Religious leaders' views of family planning are generally perceived to be hostile (Ali & Ushijima, 2005), a view borne out by research conducted among *ullemas* in urban Punjab; all the religious leaders participating in the 2003 study affirmed that God is responsible for providing all the basic necessities of life, and therefore deliberate delays in childbearing are unIslamic actions (Zafar et al., 2003).

> "My take on Islam and children is that we should not put off having children for material things like money and not having enough of it... I'm a very firm believer... that when God blesses you with a child, He... provides the means to sustain it [...] as for me it was more about how ready we were as individuals rather than anything else and if Allah wanted us to have children we would have one by now." (K1)

"I have been told a number of times by my grandmother that a child brings luck and things automatically sort themselves out. A child is God given, so when He gives we receive. […] I feel that you can plan only to a certain extent, I mean if you were to have a child by accident, it is slightly easier for [my Western colleagues] […] they can abort the child but in our culture and our religion if you have a child even if by mistake then there is no such thing as aborting it because God will provide for its needs." (L1)

Some participants acknowledged the role of Islam in encouraging couples to have children soon after marriage, but simultaneously rejected that pressure in their personal decisions to delay childbearing. For instance, the following quote is from a male participant married nearly six years. He and his wife had decided to delay having children while they focused on building their careers.

"Islam definitely encourages people to have children […] because for you to progress in your life you need to have children." (B1)

"[C]hildren are considered a blessing from God [...] it is said that you will be tested with your wealth, health and your offspring [...] my decision with regards to having kids has not been due to the importance placed on it by Islam. I believe that being able to give our children a good life and a good education is the most important factor in deciding to have children." (M1)

This tension between perceived religious obligation and personal decisions notwithstanding, the study findings appear to demonstrate that in this particular context, religion is more flexible than national culture about the decision of whether or when to have children. While having children was not seen as a religious duty per se, there was recognition that a family with offspring is the primary social unit in both Islam and Pakistani culture.

"…it says in the Quran that *when* you have children you must treat them this way, it doesn't say you *must* have children but apart from our scriptures if we look at our messengers they have all had family, our last prophet peace be upon him he had a family so if we are supposed to live in this light of Islam and live in the light of our messengers they have all had families and if we are supposed to follow these people there must be some logic to it… it must be healthy." (B2)

"I'm not sure if it is Islam that gives importance, as much importance as it is in our Pakistani culture or our Asian culture. I'm not sure, I think what happens is that when you live in an Islamic state… you sort of… there is no real line between Islamic faith and culture, so you kind of tend to mix those… consciously and subconsciously." (C2)

Research on attitudes toward family planning in Pakistan finds that within young married couples, women are more likely than men (27% vs. 11%) to be of the opinion that Islam permits the use of contraception and deliberate delaying of pregnancy (Kadir, Fikree, Khan, & Sajan, 2003). In the present study, however, there were no pronounced gender differences in views on whether children were chosen, or "sent". The men participating in the study were generally more likely than the women to raise the perceived position of Islam with regard to childbearing, but seemed no more likely than the women to indicate that they subscribed to this position, or that it impacted their own decision-making.

Conclusions and Practical Implications

In Voydanoff's (2002) conceptual model of the work-family interface, work-family adaptive strategies predict work and family characteristics, which predict in turn work, family, and individual outcomes, moderated by social categories and

coping resources. The themes explored in this study lend empirical support to this model and confirm its applicability to populations beyond that of the Western workforce upon which it is based. Adaptive strategies consist of making changes in work or family roles, obtaining support from spouses, and using family-friendly organizational policies. The NIPEs in this study made changes to their work and family roles by resisting extended family pressure to have children, delaying childbearing, and reprioritizing life goals such as the completion of educational qualifications and the establishment of careers; their assessment of available family-friendly policies influenced their intended behaviour regarding working after the birth of a child. In so doing, work and family characteristics were altered: the number of household members was kept lower than would normally be expected for this population, norms and expectations regarding gender roles changed to include the possibility of wives returning to paid work after childbirth, and career aspirations were enhanced. Outcomes such as marital, family, and job satisfaction were thus enhanced.

This study illuminates in particular the role of ethnicity as a social category moderating the link between work and family characteristics and outcomes. While Voydanoff's model includes social categories and coping resources as separate moderators, the present study demonstrates that resources such as assistance with childcare provided by extended family members may in fact be predicted by ethnicity, with older members of multigenerational south Asian families expected to fulfil a caregiving role. Family adaptability, identified by Voydanoff as another coping resource, was illustrated here by the ability of NIPEs to adjust to expatriate status in the West and, in some cases, to make plans for a future far away from the support network extended family members.

From the findings of this study, it can be deduced that NIPEs undergo a shift of priorities that result from expatriation and the consequent attenuation of extended family and societal pressures. The process of acculturation refers to alterations in cultural attitudes, values, and behaviour that arise following contact between two distinct cultures (Berry, 1997). Previous research has found that migrants' acculturation experiences produce changes in traditionally held views, such as conservative gender role beliefs becoming more liberal (Kagitcibasi, 2006; Marin & Gamba, 2003). Despite their urban background, NIPEs originate from a traditional Muslim and patriarchal society where extended families are organized in hierarchical structures and decision-making authority is generally vested in older relatives. Exposure to the different lifestyles practised and values espoused by UK residents – whose society is, relatively speaking, more open, tolerant and egalitarian – may result in NIPEs adopting less traditional attitudes and beliefs with regard to education, employment, and childbearing. Rather than having children immediately after marriage as would normally be the case in Pakistan, the participants were delaying childbirth in order to gain educational qualifications and establish careers in a foreign country. This acculturation process was likely facilitated by the high levels of educational and work qualifications achieved by the women participating in this study, which have been shown to play a key role in husbands' modifications of traditional gender role beliefs (Khalid, 2011) and which may also contribute to changes in beliefs regarding autonomy in decision-making about childbearing and women's employment.

As Pakistani society is highly family-oriented, however, the view among all the study participants was that these career-building activities were in the service of creating a family. This resonates with research conducted among many Eastern

cultures, which has found that work often carries a different meaning for individuals than it does in Western societies; rather than a means of individual self-fulfilment, the primary purpose of work is seen as providing for and supporting one's family (Lu, Robin, Shu-Fang, & Mao-Ting, 2006). There were no participants who questioned whether or not they wanted children; it was accepted that unless they were biologically unable to conceive, they would do so.

While organizational family-friendly policies were of interest to participants, particularly the women, these policies did not appear to play a primary role in determining when couples would have children. A number of participants spoke of their belief in a divine decree to bestow children upon them, after which the ability to provide for these children would fall into place. Others acknowledged the role of Islam in encouraging family formation, but preferred to establish themselves financially and career-wise before having children. A strong preference for familial childcare was expressed by most of the study participants, which was connected to concerns about children being isolated in a foreign culture. Family-friendly policies such as part-time or flexible hours thus have the potential to significantly affect employment outcomes for Pakistani expatriate women, who, in the absence of extended family to provide care for children, might not otherwise return to work following childbirth. It can therefore be concluded that organizational family-friendly policies may influence when or whether Pakistani expatriate women return to work after giving birth. The same may be true of female employees from other south Asian backgrounds with similar cultural attributes, such as members of the Bangladeshi, Indian, and Sri Lankan communities.

Agars and French (2011) argue that researchers have a responsibility to ensure that organizations are aware of the ways in which their family-friendly policies may

not appropriately serve different populations. The findings of this study support the view that organizations recognizing the complex relationship between employees' needs for work and family support on the one hand and their cultural values on the other are likely to reap greater benefits from offering family-friendly policies (Del Campo et al., in press). For instance, Dale, Lindley and Dex (2006) contend that childcare options that are not sensitive to religious or cultural concerns are unlikely to be acceptable to most Pakistani families. The findings of the current study support this view; organizations that wish to retain expatriate Pakistani staff after childbirth may need to investigate the availability of local Pakistani childcare providers and invest in these in order to promote them as a viable alternative to direct family care. More creative, flexible benefits could also be considered; for example, supporting the travel of expatriate staff members' parents to provide childcare assistance, by paying expenses for airfare and visitors' visas.

Limitations and Future Research

As with all studies, the one presented in this paper suffers from a number of limitations. Because the majority of the sample did not yet have children, the study was able to determine more about work-family attitudes than behaviour. As the interview participants were in the early years of their marriage and newly expatriated, it is possible that over the course of time and greater acculturation to their host country, the importance of family-friendly policies, individual attitudes, family and cultural/religious influences on work-family attitudes and behaviours might change. Longitudinal studies of interview cohorts would be useful in order to observe any shifts in attitudes or behaviours.

Özbilgin et al. (2011, p. 14) state that the work-life interface research "is not yet aligned with the heterogeneity of work-life experiences in labor markets".

Although there is a growing literature on ethnicity, there is a need for further research on the diversity that exists within diversity, as exemplified by the present study's sample of newly immigrant Pakistani expatriates who exist within the larger demographic of the Pakistani community in the UK. Historical and social contexts may differ, rendering work-life experiences diverse among different social groups often lumped together under the label "ethnic minority". This has clear implications for human resource management interventions and outcomes that are informed by such limited understandings of diversity.

In order to understand such demographics in detail, cultural and historical contexts should be investigated further from a comparative transnational perspective. In line with previous criticism on work-life interface research methodology, we have two recommendations. One is that the sample base of future studies should be expanded to include marginalised groups. The second is that in order to bring forward unique subjective experiences based on group membership, qualitative means may prove more useful than limiting research designs to quantitative methods alone.

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