

Work-family Conflict: An Innovative Exploration of Factors Affecting Female Workforce in Pakistan

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Abstract

Currently, work-family conflict (WFC) is becoming a buzz word in worldwide political economy. The significance of this issue has engrossed attention of huge number of researchers in Pakistan and many researches have been conducted to analyze this matter. Still no research has mainly focused on work-family conflict faced by women having different professions and their conflict management style in regard to their professional commitments to personal values. This study focuses on this research gap by exploring the main issues behind work-family conflict. To meet the objectives of this research, we have used qualitative approach in which face-to-face in-depth interviews are conducted from 50 respondents in order to get insight on this issue. The study uses primary data collected through self-administered questionnaires from 50 female employees selected from 12 private and public organizations and they are asked questions for exploring the factors that lead to WFC. The findings revealed that long working hours, high work demand and personal issues are the major factors causing WFC. The research implications and future directions are also discussed.

Keywords: Work-family conflict, Family-work conflict, Qualitative method, female working employees

Jel Classification Codes: D1, J83, M1.

1. Introduction

Work family conflict (WFC) is becoming a burning problem both in the advanced and developing countries. Work-family conflict (WFC) is a common issue of modern life in many countries. Academicians, experts, policy makers and researchers are very much concerned about WFC and resultantly they are paying more attention to create a balance between work and family life. As imbalance between family and work life is harmful to both for the organization and individual employee.

Few researchers have defined the WFC term as “Work-family conflict represents the extent to which an individual’s perception participation in one role interfere his/her ability to meet demand/responsibilities of another role” (Frone & R, 2000). “Work family is a form of inter role conflict in which the role pressure from work and family domain are mutually incompatible in some respect, that is, participation in work (or family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (or work) role” (Bethge & Borngräber, 2015). WFC can be considered as bidirectional, where family can interfere with work i.e. family-to-work conflict and work can interfere with family i.e. work-family conflict (Matthews, Sowdy, & Barnes, 2011). Family-work conflict affect the ability of a worker to fully participate in workforce (Keene & Quadagno, 2004). Particularly this sort of inter-role conflict may remove time from work task and may resulting in family strain to work or may an interruption in person required to perform their tasks. According to Frone & R, (2000) family distress, family over load, and strong family commitment foster greater family-to-work conflict. For the women, family and work both are very important. Women experiences work family conflict, as their integral part of work, but their experiences is not necessarily same as they frequently have different commitments in the both work and family arenas (Bagozzi, 1978). “Work and family as domains of experiences are expected to conflict because the norms and responsibilities within each are incompatible” (J & N, 1985). “Work-family conflict is defined as a type of inter-role conflict wherein some work and family responsibilities are not fitting together concerning time and effort spent, which may result in scarring each of the domains” (Gupta, Koshal, & Koshal, 1998). The WTC is also described as a discord that arises when the time devoted to or time spent fulfilling professional responsibilities interferes with or limits the amount of time available to perform family-related responsibilities, making it difficult to manage both” (G, Boles, & McMurray, 2009).

“Over the past few decades a significant change in the nature of employment and family patterns has been observed globally. Moreover a large number of parents are participating in the workforce as dual earner or single parent families, as contrasting to tradition two parents single income and in this situation they have to balance between work and family. Consequently they have to face conflict between work and family role. Furthermore, time pressure often leads to work family conflict and in this situation everyone deals with critical tasks and family responsibilities and they have to rapidly run through in this situation. The rise of women employment is due to the rise in literacy rate in women, fostering productiveness and change in household work. In the recent years’ work and family life is also associated with the profound change in household composition, especially the transition to dual earner household and growing rate of single parenthood associated with pervasiveness of divorce (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Due to the increase in employment opportunities for women the issue of work family is increased and became more considerable. It is obvious in advanced era that it is associated with

changes in productivity, house hold work, rise in higher education and growing in participation in women employment, changes in organization policies and expansion in awareness of social policies. Moreover, time schedule that are more flexible for employee may make a situation that allow women employees to merge their family responsibilities and work demand. Long working hours and rigid time schedule definitely create problem for female employees to keep balance between work demand and family role. If there are flexible hours for female employees, they can easily meet their family expectations. Organizations having non-standard hour's situation are also another cause of work family conflict especially for low pay earning employees. (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). Flexible work arrangements may benefit employer more than their employees. Flexible hours make possible for women employee to focus on their work as well to take care and support their family.

1.1 Significance of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine relations between work demand and flexibility in family and work, cause of WFC, and its outcomes in Pakistan's context. It is mandatory for us to understand the factors causing WFC and its consequences across time and culture in order to for assisting employees to prevent and manage the discomfort that happens when work and family demands clash with each other.

Literature Review

There is an enormous literature focusing on the issue of work-life conflict. A comprehensive review of this literature is beyond the scope of this study therefore, the study narrates few significant research studies from the past. As in recent years, research has increasingly focused on examining work-family issues due to the changing nature of work and family responsibilities. A few researcher like Achour (2012) and Grine (2015) revealed that WFC caused low productivity, high absenteeism, high turnover, lower morale. The strong relationship among work attitude, job satisfaction, and conflict variables significantly influences WFC (Cohen & Liani, 2009). However, a study also revealed that organization and individual characters are significant in determining the WFC and there is no relation between WFC and outcome of employees (Nikandrou & Panayotopoulou, 2010). A research study by Grant, Wallace, & Spurgeon, (2013) explained different factors between e-working including access to technology ability to work in flexible hours, and individual competences and revealed that the unpleasant effect was found on women due to overworking and lack of time for family. Similarly, Montgomery, Panagopolou, & Wildt, (2010) described job having more focused on display rules creates severe burnout psychosomatics complaints and they revealed that WFC partially mediated the relationship between the hidings of negative emotions and burnout. In addition to this a study also highlighted that imbalance in work role creates problems in contribution of family role causing WFC (J & N, 1985). Similarly researchers like Greenberger & Goldberg, (2001) explained that work and family demands are equally incompatible and meeting demand to one field create difficulties to meet other domain which causes work family conflict and also found that WFC causes psychology disturbance in female employees. According to Piotrkowski, (1999) psychological and structural interference related to working long hours results to lose stamina of employees and ultimately they are unable to meet their family expectations. On the similar lines Parasuraman & Greenhaus, (1990) confirmed that work family conflict is closely associated with life stress.

Role are associated with a set of defined activities and conflicts between role occurs when pressures from one role make it difficult to meet the demand of another role (Rotondo & Kinsaid, 2008) . Impact of work family conflict among working women in Taiwan was examined and found that work family conflict is strongly associated with lower job and dissatisfaction of family, high levels of stress, and more serious physical ailments (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Consistent long working hours create the work family conflict (Khan, 2014). Individual's propensity to face high level of distress, depression, feelings anger, disgust and fear also boosts the effect of WFC. (Stoeva, chiu, & Greenhaus, 2002). Similarly, a study found that family stress leads to work conflict and job stress lead to family conflict (Yardley & Markle's, 1997). Anxiety and depression among female employees are positively associated with work to family conflict. Female experiences more anxiety associated with spillover and it is also studied that conflict and agony were also found to share strong relationship among female employees with routine jobs (Aminah. A, 2008). In national survey of post-secondary faculty it is revealed that long work weeks are associated with dissatisfaction and lead to work to family conflict (Jacque L. King, 2013).

Few researchers have also tried to explain how the issue of WFC can be tackled , therefore, a study found that the elimination of work family conflict is possible only through work family facilitating factors which could reduce stress level leading to positive mental health (Piotrkowski, 1999). Similarly, a study revealed that by spending quality time with close friends and family per week, friendly work policies and overseer support could also lead to reduce work to family conflict (Hyde, 1981). From the previous researches significance of work family has proved and it is found to be the major determinants of work and life conflict.

In accordance to previous research studies, it is proved that WFC is a major problem which is faced by almost all female employees and it generates negative outcome like depression, fatigue, absenteeism at work and intentional turnover as well. Therefore, to explore the factors causing work family conflict is the objective of our

study. By taking into account the significance of managing WFC an effort has been done to address the following research questions of the study: a) Which factors cause WFC of female employees in Pakistan? b) What are the consequences of WFC?

The conceptual framework of our study comprised of seven factors playing a key role in causing WFC.

Figure 1. Reasons of Work Family Conflict

3. Methodology

In this study we have used qualitative method to explore the issue of Work Family Conflict and Family Work Conflict. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews were conducted because it leads to in-depth analysis of sensitive cases as opposed to statistical information and permit a better understanding of organizational complications (Achour, Grine, & Nor, 2014). We have adopted depth interview technique as it allows a researcher to examine the social realities at the back of problems and increases deeper insight into the existing phenomena as personal interaction take place through interview method and therefore, it is the best way to gain valid and reliable information. Hence, face to face interviews are conducted to collect the data because it permits to analyze the respondents answers along with their expressions. This study is based on primary data. The data were collected from a sample of 40 female working employees of age between 30 and 50 years. For selecting the respondents purposive sampling method was used for the study. The selected respondents were working in public and private universities, private and nationalized commercial banks, and government institutions.

Overall 50 in depth interviews were conducted comprising of open ended questions supplemented by demographics data related to interview age, qualification, family members, marital status, age of kids and joint family system and before conducting the interviews from the respondents, official permission was taken from the respective authorities. Among the selected respondents, 60% were married and 40% were unmarried. Out of the married respondents, 45% were having young children while 15% married women having no child. The respondents were asked questions to determine the factors that cause WFC.

Table1. Causes leading to WFC

Causes of WFC	Respondents	Percentage
Long working hours	46	93%
Family demand	24	48%
Individual perception	40	80%
High work demand	43	86%
Lack of spouse support	47	94%
Inflexible schedule	21	42%
Personal issues	43	86%

Source: Author's own calculations

4. Results and Discussion

Out of 50 respondents, 94% working female employees are having lack of spouse support as one of the prime causes of WFC. 93% respondents think longer working hours leads to WFC. 42% agreed with inflexible schedule for causing WFC, 48% considers family demand a major factor of WFC. 86% female employees believe that high work demand, 80% consider individual perception, and 86% respondents assume that personal issues are the causes of WFC. The results revealed that most of the females are facing difficulties associated with their family role and balancing work conflict. Both work to family conflict and family to work conflict are quite complex to manage for full time working female employees whose involvement in their family activities are unpaid. Pressure of long working hours in weekends is also undertaken to cause work family conflict and family to work conflict. In the context of difficulty both work to family conflict and family to work conflict are opposite in zero sum game. In this situation conducted interviews stated that every female employee faces work to family conflict and family to work conflict. The key factors of these problems are long working hours, family demand, individual perception, high work demand, lack of spouse support and inflexible schedule. Some respondents said that the problem of WFC also depends on women's time management and preferences of work. The output revealed that females having have younger kids have major tendency of distress over family issues. They all are very regretful for not giving enough time and attention to their family ,children and spouse, they further expressed that major constraints to their work performance are household chores and family commitments.

The research is conducted to explore the conflicts that are faced by female employees and to determine the impact on their life. The outcome of the study are supported by former empirical evidences. For example long working hours are highly correlated with work family conflicts is also been narrated by (Alam, 2010). Work schedules inflexibility causes WFC is also been explained by Grant, Wallace, & Spurgeon, (2013). Family to work conflict happens when more time is spent on doing family tasks (Frone & R, 2000). Working women having 6 or above age children faces more conflicts rather than older age of children (Hyde, 1981). Consistently doing work late night, long hours in course of completing important duties and tasks that take too much time and

keep female employees away from their personal life are also key factors leading to WFC.

5. Conclusion

Outcomes from the research indicate that work-family conflict has become a major issue for the married professional women in Pakistan. Married working women in Pakistan are guilty of demands playing multiple roles as a professional and a mother. Work-life balance is the balance maintenance between responsibilities at home and at work. Work family balance allows an employee to tackle multiple duties both at home, workplace and at social level as well. Workplace characteristics lead to higher levels of WFC. The research reveals that long working hour, high family demands, inflexible work schedule, unsupportive spouse, and a rigid organizational culture increase the chances that female employees will experience conflict between their work and family role.

6. Future Directions and Research Implications

The study is limited to Pakistan and limited professions are undertaken that can be enhanced in term of scope by extending to other cities and cultures. The outcome of this study may help private and public organizations to understand the impact of WFC on their tasks, they may start giving importance to flexible work environment and understand personal issues of their female employees and cooperate with them to solve their problems. In this way they can keep their female employees more loyal and sincere with their organizations which will ultimately increase their work productivity and through this organization can gain more competitive edge especially to retain their talented female employees.

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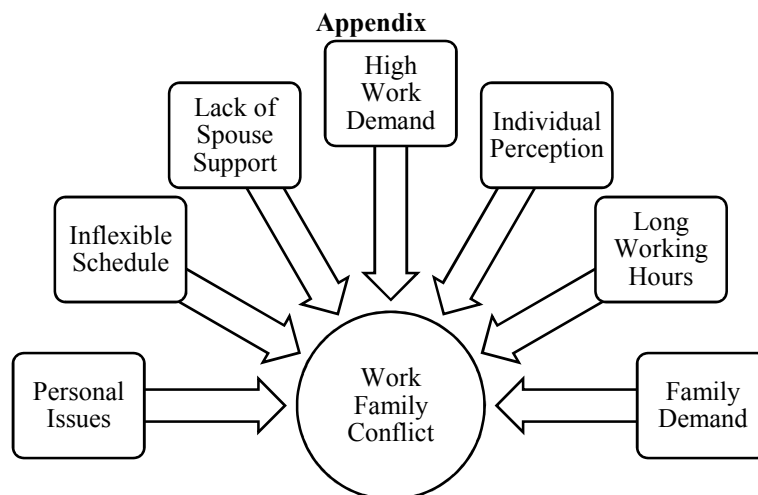


Figure 1. Reasons of Work Family Conflict