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Balancing work and family through social support among working women in Pakistan

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Work-family balance (WFB) is considered as one of the most important issues in organizational studies. The current study examines the relationship of social support (SS), employee performance (EP) and job satisfaction (JS) with work-family balance of working women in Pakistan. Based on cross-sectional data, out of 315 distributed questionnaires, 150 women working in different public and private sector organizations responded to the questionnaire, thereby resulting in a 47.6% response rate. The work-family balance through social support is a new concept, and as such, little evidence is available in the literature. The study aims to provide empirical grounds for the said relationship in a developing country. Independent sample t – test, Pearson’s correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the data. The study confirms that social support is moderately related to employee performance and job satisfaction and is strongly related to work family balance, whereas employee performance is moderately related to job satisfaction and has weak relationship with work family balance. The multiple regression analysis shows that social support and job satisfaction have a significant strong positive relationship with work family balance, whereas employee performance has a highly significant moderate relationship with work family balance of working women. Significant differences were found among the public and private sector working women with respect to social support, job satisfaction and work family balance. The relationships of independent variables such as social support, well performance at work and job satisfaction are contributors of work-family balance. However, the results are compared and discussed in the light of previous studies.

Key words: Work-family balance, social support, job satisfaction, employee performance, working women, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Work-family balance (WFB), which is an emerging concept, is considered one of the primary concerns in organizational studies. As such, the Western researchers have made considerable efforts to study the concept of work-family balance (Berg et al., 2003; Frone, 2003; Rossi, 2001; Marcinkus et al., 2007; Young, 1999). There are growing numbers of working women in the corporate sector of developing countries and there is a need to explore the same in Pakistan. By definition, work and

family balance means the amount of time given to one’s life at work, relative to the time spent outside work. The aim is not to achieve equal amounts of time at home and work, but to balance the amount that is right for a particular individual or family. Moreover, the work – family balance is basically to reduce conflict between work and family domains (Frone, 2003; Rossi, 2001; Grzywacz and Marks, 2000).

The ability to achieve satisfactory work-family balance affects the societal well-being (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000) and physical health (Frone et al., 1997). This assumption provides a basis to identify work arrangements that can help achieve balance between work and family activities. The work arrangements in an organization

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may include sharing job responsibilities, flexible work timings, support from the colleagues and supervisors. The study examines the way working women of different organizations in twin cities of Rawalpindi-Islamabad, Pakistan, manage their work and family responsibilities and receive social support (SS), both at work and family. It further highlights the factors which affect job satisfaction (JS), employee performance (EP) and their work-family balance. As a consequence, the number of women in the labor force has increased in the recent past (Dalton, 1989; Duffy and Pupo, 1992). In Pakistani society, women look after home affairs, whereas the male is considered to be the "bread winner." The economic pressure, education and changing trends in the improving lifestyle encouraged Pakistani women to join the corporate environment. The demands of business assignments and official duties created a problem of managing the work and family responsibilities for women, in which they demanded to get more social support than men (Antonucci and Akiyama, 1987).

The current study is the first study of its kind in Pakistan. It is the first study, the research team is aware of, which discusses work-family balance with respect to social support, job satisfaction and employee performance among working women in Pakistan. The studies conducted in other parts of the world either examined the relationship of social support with stress (Banyard and Graham-Bermann, 1993), conflict in wife's roles (Aryee, 1992), job satisfaction, organizational commitment, career accomplishment (Marcinkus et al., 2006), health (Cohen and Wills, 1985) and work family conflict (Erdwins et al., 2001). The relationship of employee performance has been examined with respect to HRM practices and employee well-being at work (Baptiste, 2008), job design, direct participation and information provision (Guest, 2002), work and life satisfaction (White et al., 2003), whereas the current study considers work family balance vis-a-vis social support, employee performance and job satisfaction.

Literature review

Working women comprise an integral part in generating the economic resources for managing home affairs. The researchers have explored the concept of social support for working women and maintained the balance in work-life matters (Kofodimos, 1993; Antonucci and Akiyama, 1987), but in this regard, Pakistan is an under researched country (Aycañ et al., 2000) and there is a need to explore different social issues. The employed parents can achieve the balance between their work and family lifestyle by receiving social support from the employer in terms of appropriate amount of time and energy given to fulfill their individual needs and values (Kofodimos, 1993). It is essential and important to receive social support in the beginning of business activities (Marcinkus et al., 2007;

Frone et al., 1997). This helps to maintain balance between work and family affairs and diminishes stress (Cohen and Syme, 1985; Deelstra et al., 2003). The effect of independent variables on the dependent variable in the light of past researches is discussed as follows.

Social support and work – family balance

Work-family balance is the achievement of role - related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his/her role - related partners in the work and family spheres (Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007: 458). The social support is the availability of helping relationships and increasing the quality of those relationships (Leavy, 1983; p. 5). Social support can be bifurcated into two facets such as organizational support and family related support (Brough and Pears, 2004). Work related social support comes from the organizational members, such as peers and supervisors, where an employee works, whereas personal social support comes from spouse, parents, children, extended family or friends. However, researchers found that support from the husband was positively associated to curb out conflict in the wife's roles (Aryee, 1992; Barling, 1986).

Social support is believed to have a positive impact on the working roles performed by women at work places by enhancing job satisfaction and creating balance, thereby eliminating work-family conflicts (Carlson and Perrewé, 1994). It is one of the important resources for working women to manage their work and family domains. Work - based social support is generally considered to be associated with the work outcomes and family - related social support with the family or non - work outcomes. The researchers have examined the relationship of social support (both work related and family related) with different factors. Marcinkus et al. (2006) found that the women generally received more personal social support than work - based social support from maximum available sources. They also revealed that work - based social support was positively associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment and career accomplishment. Personal social support was also found to be associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Erdwins et al. (2001) also noted spousal and supervisor's support responsible for significant variations in the work family conflict. One of the research studies show that the sharing of social support was noticed as one of the strategies adopted by women to deal with stress (Banyard and Graham-Bermann, 1993) which may help in reducing the conflict between work and family responsibilities. The people who avail more social support are found to have better health than those who avail less (Cohen and Wills, 1985). Warren and Johnson (1995) revealed that perceptions of work environment support and supervisor flexibility and the use of family-oriented benefits were associated with lower levels of strain

between paid work and family roles. Clark (2001) mentioned that an examination of interactive effects between aspects of culture and individuals' characteristics showed that work-family balance was lower when employees had a large number of children and supportive supervision.

Thiede and Ganster (1995) examined the direct and indirect effects of organizational policies and practices that were supportive of family responsibilities on work-family conflict and psychological, physical and behavioral measures of strain. They inferred that supportive practices, especially flexible scheduling and supportive supervisors had direct positive effects on employee perceptions of control over work and family matters. In short, the social support, either work or family based effects, balances work and family roles in a positive way because it helps in sharing the thoughts and the problems arising out of work and personal affairs. For this study, the social support (work based and family based) was considered as one variable.

Employee performance and work – family balance

Employee performance is the level of productivity of an individual employee, relative to his or her peers on numerous jobs with related behaviors and outcomes (Babin and Boles, 1998, p. 82). Employee performance at work and its relationship with the ability to balance between work and family matters is very critical. Employees performing well at their work tend to be satisfied with their work, which helps in balancing the work and family affairs in a better way. The research has found very little evidence in the literature on the current relationship. Baptiste (2008) conducted a staff survey of employees which provided a brief overview of the link between HRM practices, employee well-being at work and performance. The author revealed that management relationship behaviour in the form of support and development of trust, promoted employee wellbeing at work amongst workers.

Guest (2002) mentioned that HR practices such as job design, direct participation and information provision were associated with higher performance, whereas White et al. (2003) found a conflict between high - performance practices and work - life balance policies associated with higher work and life satisfaction. It concludes that the workers who are better able to perform at work are better able to manage their work and family responsibilities.

Job satisfaction and work – family balance

Job satisfaction can be defined as an overall feeling about one's job or career in terms of specific facets of the job or career (Thompson et al., 2003). The researchers have examined the interrelationship of work family balance and job satisfaction (Thomas et al., 1995;

Saltzstein et al., 2001; Clark, 2001; Karimi, 2009), and thus, Nadeem and Abbas (2009) found that job satisfaction was significantly and negatively correlated with work and family to family interference and work interference, respectively, whereas Saltzstein et al. (2001) revealed that a variety of policies widely presumed to be "family friendly" were used in varying degrees by disparate groups of federal employees. The use of family friendly policies had diverse effects on both employee satisfaction with work-family balance and job satisfaction among employees.

Clark (2001) examined the relationship of flexible working hours, flexible work, supportive supervision and work/family balance in the context of dual career partnerships, number of children and hours worked per week. As such, the study revealed that the flexibility of the work was associated with the increased work satisfaction and increased family well-being. The gender differences have diverse impact on work-family interference and perceived job - life satisfaction. Although the work - to - family interference has significant and negative effects on job - life satisfaction among male employees than female employees, working hours and family - to - work interference had even more significant and negative effects on their job - life satisfaction (Karimi, 2009). Buffardi et al. (1999) assessed the impact of child care, elder care (facets of work – family balance) and gender on work-family balance and various facets of job satisfaction. They revealed that elder-care responsibility was associated with lower levels of satisfaction as well as perceived organizational support, pay, leave benefits and work-family balance, whereas the negative main effects of child care were limited to leave benefits and work-family balance.

Lu et al. (2009) found that child care responsibilities, working hours, monthly salary and organizational family - friendly policy were positively related to the conflict component of work-family balance; whereas new parental experience, spouse support, family-friendly supervisors and coworkers had significant positive effects on the facilitation component of work-family balance. Moreover, the authors stated that in comparison with the effects of work-family conflict, work to family facilitation had positive effects on work and life attitudes.

Hypotheses

This study addresses three main hypotheses which are developed in the light of available literature. The hypotheses are:

H₁: Social support has a positive effect on balancing work-family responsibilities of working women in Pakistan,

H₂: Employee performance has a positive effect on balancing work-family responsibilities of working women in Pakistan,

Table 1. Source, number of items and Cronbach's alpha measures used.

Variable	Source	No. of items	Cronbach's alpha
Social support	Caplan et al. (1980)	20	0.78
Employee performance	Babin and Boles (1998)	05	0.85
Job satisfaction	O'Driscoll and Randall (1999)	14	0.90
Work – family conflict	Netemeyer et al. (1996)	10	0.90

H₃: Job satisfaction has a positive effect on balancing work–family responsibilities of working women in Pakistan.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The study sample comprised 315 working women in different private and public organizations such as banks, universities, colleges, call centers and hospitals in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The questionnaire was distributed and 162 responded to the study. After exclusion of incomplete questionnaires, 150 completed surveys were included in the study resulting in 47.6% response rate and were analyzed using non – probability random sampling technique.

Measures

The measures used for the current study to determine the relationship among the work – family balance (dependent variable) and social support, employee performance and job satisfaction (independent variables) were adopted from the pervious researches. The reliability was reconfirmed through Cronbach's alpha scores. The scales, social support, employee performance and work – family balance were assessed on a five point Likert type scale ranging from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”, whereas job satisfaction was assessed on a scale ranging from 1 = “very dissatisfied” to 5 = “very satisfied”. Work – family balance and work – family conflict are two sides of the same picture, so the same scale that was used earlier for measuring work – family conflict was used to measure work – family balance. The details of the measures used with Cronbach alpha scores are listed in Table 1.

Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed personally by visiting banks, universities, colleges, call centers and hospitals. The distribution and collection of the questionnaire took more than two months. The responses were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Independent sample t – test was applied to determine differences among public and private sector. Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analysis were used to determine the relationship among the dependent and the independent variables.

ANALYSIS

Results are based on the responses of 47.6% working women in the private and public sector organizations.

Normality of the data was measured by using Levine's test. The skewness and kurtosis were checked and it ranged within the acceptable limits of ± 1 . Thus, the results supported the application of parametric tests. The hypotheses were tested by using Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analysis. The results of the Pearson's correlation are summarized in Table 2.

The Pearson's correlation results show that social support is not responsible for the performance (0.44) and job satisfaction (0.41) of working women, whereas social support is more responsible for balancing the work and family (0.62) affairs of the working women. Employee performance has a moderate relationship with job satisfaction (0.55) of the working women in the public and private sector organizations, whereas employee performance has weak relationship with work – family balance (0.32) of the employed women. The results provide evidence that job satisfaction is a strong predictor in maintaining the balance between work and family life (0.61).

Multiple regression analysis results are shown in Table 3. They confirmed the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. Work family balance of working women played the role of dependent variable, whereas social support, employee performance and job satisfaction played the role of independent variables. The results show that social support (0.631, $p = 0.000$) and job satisfaction (0.721, $p = 0.000$) have a significant strong positive relationship with work family balance, whereas employee performance (0.433, $p = 0.000$) showed highly significant relationship with work family balance of working women. The high value of R^2 (0.723) shows variance of the dependent variable being explained by independent variables and the value of F - statistic (205.54) shows the overall significance of the relationship. The high and statistically significant value of F statistic confirms the fitness of the model. The value of R (0.753) shows the strong relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The R^2 shows that the independent variables that are social support, employee performance and job satisfaction account for 72.3% variation in the work family balance of the working women.

Independent sample t – test is used to examine the differences among the working women in public and private sector organizations. Table 4 shows the differences among public and private sector. The independent sample t – test results predict the difference among the

Table 2. Pearson's correlation matrix.

Variable	SS	EP	JS	WFB
Social support	1			
Employee performance	0.44**	1		
Job satisfaction	0.41**	0.55**	1	
Work – family balance	0.62**	0.32**	0.61**	1

** Significant at 0.01%.

working women with respect to the public and private sector organizations. The p - value for social support ($p = 0.004$), job satisfaction ($p = 0.000$) and work family balance ($p = 0.000$) at 5% level of significance shows that the women working in the public and private sector organizations have significant differences with respect to the social support acquired, satisfaction with their jobs and managing the home and work affairs. However, employee performance ($p = 0.425$) shows no significant difference among the two groups. Women working in the private sector organizations acquire more social support and are more satisfied with their jobs ($M = 5.62, 3.96$) as compared to the women working in the public sector ($M = 5.08, 3.21$) organizations, whereas women in the public sector organizations perform well at work and are better able to balance their work and family affairs ($M = 4.12, 3.11$) as compared to the other group ($M = 4.05, 2.52$).

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to test the effect of social support, employee performance and job satisfaction on work – family balance of the working women in developing countries of the world. Generally, catering for home affairs is regarded as the essential part of Pakistani women. In the competitive environment, they are also expected to combine the home responsibilities with working - life. Pearson's correlation results provide evidence that social support is moderately related to employee performance and job satisfaction and is strongly related to work family balance, whereas employee performance is moderately related to job satisfaction and has weak relationship with work family balances. The multiple regression analysis results illustrate that social support and job satisfaction have significant strong positive relationship with work family balance, whereas employee performance has highly significant relationship with work family balance of working women. Significant differences were found among the public and private sector working women with respect to social support, job satisfaction and work family balance. The women generally receive more social support from work and family (Marcinkus et al., 2006), whereas our findings suggest that women working in private sector organizations acquire more social support as compared to the women working in public sector

Table 3. Multiple regression analysis.

Constant	SS	EP	JS	R ²	F-statistic
26.321	0.631	0.433	0.721	0.723	205.54
0.201	(0.083)	0.074	0.079		
27.123	11.531	8.221	13.224		
0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.000

Regression coefficient: Standard error in parenthesis, t values in brackets and p values in italics; *Dependent variable: Work family balance (WFB); *Independent variables: Social support (SS), employee performance (EP), job satisfaction (JS).

organizations.

The results proved the first hypothesis stating that social support has a positive effect on the work family balance of the working women. The findings of the current study are consistent with the findings of other researchers. Carlson and Perrew (1994) noted that social support has a positive impact on the work roles performed by women at work in terms of enhanced job satisfaction, which in turn positively affect work life balance. Social support has positive effect on work life balance by diminishing work-family conflict. As such, Erdwins et al. (2001) also noted that spousal and supervisor's supports (social support) are responsible for significant variations in the work-family conflict. Nonetheless, Clark (2001) mentioned that work/family balance was lower when employees had a large number of children and supportive supervision.

The second hypothesis states that employee performance has a positive effect on balancing work – family responsibilities of working women in Pakistan. As such, the authors have found a weak relationship of employee performance with work family balance of the working women. Baptiste (2008) noted that the management behavior of employees in the form of support and development of trust, promoted employee well - being in workers at work. Guest (2002) noted that certain HR practices are associated with higher work and life satisfaction such as job design, direct participation and information provision that were associated with higher performance, whereas White et al. (2003) found a conflict between high-performance practices and work-life balance policies.

Finally, the last hypothesis states that job satisfaction has a positive effect on balancing work – family responsibilities of working women in Pakistan. As such, our findings suggest that job satisfaction has a strong and positive relationship with work family balance. Nadeem and Abbas (2009) found that job satisfaction was significantly and negatively correlated with work to family interference and family to work interference, whereas Saltzstein et al. (2001) mentioned that the use of family friendly policies had diverse effects on both employee satisfaction with work-family balance and job satisfaction among employees. The use of social support and family

Table 4. Independent sample t – test.

Variable		Mean	St. Dev.	t – value	P – value
SS	Public sector	5.08	0.55	-2.91	0.004
	Private sector	5.62	0.41		
EP	Public sector	4.12	0.45	0.80	0.425
	Private sector	4.05	0.44		
JS	Public sector	3.21	0.58	-3.88	0.000
	Private sector	3.96	0.69		
WFB	Public sector	3.11	0.77	3.85	0.000
	Private sector	2.52	0.79		

friendly policies enhances employee satisfaction, and satisfaction with work family balance is one of the predictors of job satisfaction as well (Saltzstein et al., 2001). The relationship of independent variables shows that social support, performance at work and job satisfactions are the necessary contributors of work family balance. Also, social support is a contributor of psychological well – being for working women.

The current study highlighted the cultural aspect by testing the said relationship and proved that the relationship existed in the same manner as in other parts of the world. The basic phenomenon behind the same results may be that women have to take dual responsibilities of home and work which creates the work to family conflict and is responsible for creating stress. Thus, social support helps in minimizing stress which in turn reduces work to family conflict showing that they manage their work and family affairs better.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

In the light of the research findings, the current study suggests that by promoting social support in the organizations, the satisfaction of employees can be enhanced and which in turn helps the employees to feel free to work at their work places. The satisfaction of employees and the support at work places help in enhancing productivity, which is the ultimate objective of any organization.

This article highlights the importance of social support and job satisfaction in achieving work family balance among Pakistani working women who has to take care of their work as well as their home affairs. Social support is one of the medicines used in reducing stress especially in women, which helps in enhancing the ability to balance their work and family responsibilities. By providing social support and maintaining an acceptable level of satisfaction among working women, they can be offered successful careers.

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