

Is Gender Still Important in Defining the Work-Family Conflict of Married Employees in 21st Century?

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Abstract: The purpose of this research was to analyze the importance of gender in defining the work-family conflict of married employees in 21st century. Especially in workplaces with higher work related and work environment related stress. To achieve the research objective, 362 married male and female bank employees (181 each) who had at least one child, were selected for the study. The research results disseminated that although there is no significant difference in level of work related stress, work environment related stress, and work-family conflict of married employees. But unlike males, work-family conflict of married females is highly dependent on their level of work related stress. Hence, gender still plays an important role in defining the source of work-family conflict. Even though it is no longer important in determining their level of work related stress, work environment related stress, and work-family conflict. So, banks and other organizations should focus on lowering the work stress of their employees: to reduce the work-family conflict of their employees, and to flourish the performance and culture of their organization.

Keywords: Work-family conflict, Work Stress, Gender, Banks, Married employees

I. INTRODUCTION

Increased globalization, technological advancement, workload, and availability of younger workforce have posed many challenges to work and family management [1]. Due to these frequent changes in the labor market, attainment of a balance between work and family has become nearly impossible [2]. Due to inseparable nature of work and family, there is always a tug war situation in equilibrating both. This continuous pressure burdens the individual, and consequently stress [3], [2] and work-family conflict (WFC) generates [4]. The situation becomes hypercritical for married individuals [5], especially those who have to take care of their families [6], [7] and have young children [7].

These work-family issues of labor are increasing everyday due to rapid changes in labor market. To address these issues, employees have to tune themselves according to the demands of labor market [2]. Because, companies have also increased work responsibilities and working hours, to cope up with the market changes, and to cover the broader job scopes. Consequently, employees are experiencing increased levels of job demands [8]. These increased job demands are

further yielding work stress [9]. These labor issues are true for every competitive labor market.

To address the work-family issues of labor, several factors were identified by researchers which can lower the balance and generate the conflict between work and family. These factors could be related to family and personal life, work, and other external paradigms. Factors related to family and personal life could be: higher participation of single parent employees, dual career couples, women and especially child bearing women into workforce, and also responsibility of dependants care and health. Factors related to work could be: increase in part time workforce, longer working hours, time squeeze, unpaid overtime, demand for shorter working hours, work intensification, changes in working time, and stress. Other factors could be: increase in service sector, demographic shift and globalization of workforce, technological complexity, aging workforce, shortage of skills, and loss of social support [10].

In consideration of these factors, this research was carried out to analyze the impact of some of these factors on the WFC of employees in 21st century. In consideration of the family and personal factors, married, divorced, or separated male and female employees who had at least one child were selected for this research. In consideration of the work factors and increase in service industry in other factors, bank employees were targeted. Because, banks are one of those workplaces which have intensified their work, demand longer working hours, and exerts work stress on their employees.

To further explore the issue of WFC in 21st century, this research was carried out in Pakistan. Bank employees from Southern region of Punjab province were further targeted for this purpose. Because, due to time demanding nature of bank's job [11] and higher family responsibilities in traditional cultural systems [12], married bank employees of South Punjab region are much more prone to higher WFC. It's highly probable that gender still plays an important role in defining WFC in such cultures and under developed areas. Even though if it is no longer considered important in developed countries. Moreover, studying bank employees can provide better evidence if work stress from work demands and environment are important in defining the differences between

WFC of married male and female employees. So, studying bank employees of South Punjab can provide better evidence on the role of gender in defining the WFC of married employees with respect to their work stress, in 21st century. Especially in under developed countries, where gender roles are still somewhat same.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Work Stress and Work-Family Conflict in Banks of Pakistan*

In Pakistan banks are one of such workplaces which pose threats to work and family balance of employees and could increase their WFC. Because, banks are one of the toughest workplaces in terms of working hours in Pakistan. Employees often have to spend overtime in the banks especially during accounts closing season [11]. This situation becomes difficult to manage especially for those employees who have to take care of their families [6], [7].

Because, such pressure inducing and time demanding work environment can cause work stress in the employee [13]. These incompatible work demands can also enhance WFC of employees [14]. Moreover, previous research also prove that bank employees in Pakistan experience high levels of work stress [15], [16], and it has been found to be associated with their higher WFC [17].

B. *Gender and Work-Family Conflict in South Punjab*

The work-family issues manifold in underdeveloped areas where traditional gender roles are still being followed. South Punjab is one of those areas in Pakistan where such issues still prevail. Because in such traditional eastern cultures, parents prefer to live with their sons rather than daughters [18]. Hence in such a family system, their sons and daughter in laws are liable for taking care of them. In such systems, females are entitled to perform house chores and males are responsible for financial support and outside chores [12].

Moreover, females rely on males most of the time for various cultural constraints, and their mobility is limited in certain aspects in under developed areas of Pakistan [12], [19]. They cannot travel alone and should go along with some male. Even if wife does not do any job, husband is still responsible to perform outside chores. Such practices are more prevalent in those areas where cultural patterns are still intact and gender roles has not changed much, such as south Punjab [19].

Hence in such cultural systems, both males and females have defined responsibilities towards family, and these responsibilities remain unchanged [12]. Making the situation equally difficult for both married males and females, and increasing the probability of higher WFC in case of time demanding jobs irrespective of gender [20].

Based on current situation of: work stress and WFC in banks, and gender roles and WFC in South Punjab, it was hypothesized that:

H1: Married employees experience high work-family conflict.

H2: Married employees experience high work related stress and work environment related stress.

H3: There is no significant difference between work-family conflict of married male and female employees.

H4: There is no significant difference between work related stress and work environment related stress of married male and female employees.

C. *Relationship of Work Stress with Work-Family Conflict*

There is vast research on the relationship between work stress and WFC. Some of these studies were based in western countries [21], [22], and some were based in eastern countries [8], [23], [24], [17], [25], [26]. But all of these studies more or less suggest that work stress increases the WFC. But sometimes other factors can also control their relationship [21], [8], [24].

A Study conducted in United States identified that work stress increase WFC of firefighters [22]. An Australian study suggest that if employees perceive high levels of job threat stress and job pressure stress, then their work-life conflict will increase as well [21]. Another study conducted on bank employees of Pakistan also pointed out that job pressure and job threat stress increase WFC [17].

A Chinese study suggested that both challenge and hindrance work stress increase the WFC. But this negative effect can be minimized with the work-family balance practices. However, work-family balance practices are more effective in case of challenge stress and less effective in case of hindrance stress. One reason could be that most of the work-family balance practices focus on providing work flexibility and employee care programs which can reduce the challenge work stress factors such as work overload or job demands. Whereas hindrance work stress includes more than job's factors, it could be due to undercover biased practices prevailing in the organization as well [8]. Other than work threat stress, work pressure stress [21], challenge work stress and hindrance work stress [8], role stressors can also contribute towards increased WFC, especially in women [27].

A Lebanese study also suggest that the direction of interference is gender reliant. They identified that in females, the impact of work stress on work interference with personal life was more powerful as compared to its impact on personal life interference with work. Whereas in males, work stress was more powerful antecedent of personal life interference with work as compared to work interference with personal life. These varying effects of work stress across gender exist due to understanding of employers for family demands of females. As they are more supportive towards their family duties and tend to relax them from work [24].

Based on the suggestions of previous research on work stress and WFC, it was hypothesized that:

H5: Work related stress is a stronger contributor of work-family conflict in female employees as compared to male employees.

H6: Work environment related stress is a stronger contributor of work-family conflict in female employees as compared to male employees.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Framework

Figure 1 presents framework of this research. On the left side is independent variable work stress, which is further categorized into work related stress (WS) and work environment related stress (WES). On the right side is dependent variable, WFC.

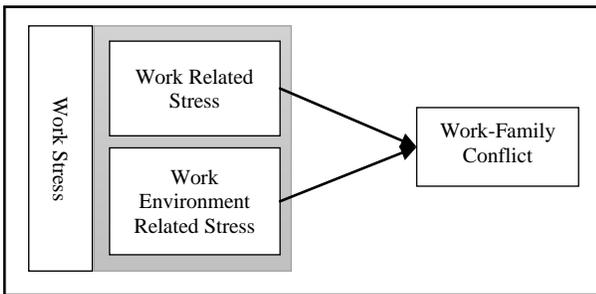


Fig. 1 Research Framework

B. Instrumentation

Research data was collected through self-administered structured questionnaires. Questionnaire contained three important sections: screening questions, demographics, and research instruments. Screening questions were included to filter those employees who were married, divorce, or separated, and had at least one child. Demographics covered respondent’s age, gender, education, marital status, and working experience. Research instruments were based on six point forced choice rating scale ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

WFC was operationalized as the inter role conflict directed from work to family [14]. Five items of WFC were adopted from the scale of [28]. WS and WES were operationalized as the employees’ perceptions about their work because of work demands and work environment respectively [29], [30]. Eight items on WS, and four items on WES, were adopted from an adapted version of work stress scale of [31] adapted by [29].

C. Population and Sampling Techniques

The research was based on the married employees in banks of South region of Punjab province of Pakistan. Purposive sampling technique was used to define the sampling frame. As this research involved the comparison of different gender groups, hence questionnaires were distributed to employees until an equal number of both male and female respondents was achieved. Previous research indicates that

married female employees are quite less in banks of South Punjab [32], and for optimum statistical results at least 150 respondents are required [33]. Hence, we set the females as the required minimum and distributed questionnaires to the banks.

First of all, approvals of branch managers were taken to conduct the survey. Out of 557 identified banks in South Punjab, only 213 banks agreed to participate in the survey. Managers were further requested to point out those employees who fulfill the predetermined requirements of this research; employee should be married, divorced, or separated from their partner, and have at least one child. Then questionnaires were distributed to the identified employees. From 210 banks, only 190 responses from married female bank employees were received.

After further data screening 9 questionnaires were removed from the female sample. Out of these 9, 4 were mistakenly filled by single females, 3 were filled by married females who did not had the children, and 2 were incomplete. Hence, only 181 responses could be collected from married female bank employees. Although more responses were collected from male employees, but for the fair comparison, only 181 responses were retained for the further analysis. Hence, the final study sample was consisted of 362 bank employees, 181 females and 181 males.

D. Demographic Profile

Table I: Demographic Profile

Demographics	Sub categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20-29	108	29.83
	30-39	169	46.69
	40-49	70	19.34
	50-59	15	4.14
Gender	Male	181	50
	Female	181	50
Education	Bachelor	66	18.23
	Master	293	80.94
	Ph.D.	2	0.55
	Other	1	0.28
Marital status	Married	353	97.51
	Divorced	7	1.93
	Separated	2	0.55
Working experience	1-3 years	97	26.80
	4-6 years	69	19.06
	7-10 years	64	17.68
	More than 10 years	132	36.46

Table I presents demographic profile of respondents. Table statistics indicate that half of the respondents were in their thirties ($f=169$, $\%=46.69$), and mostly had master’s

degree. Almost all of them were happily married ($f=353$, $\%=97.51$) except few. Moreover, majority of the respondents were either highly experienced or entry level employees. As more than one third of them had experience of more than 10 years ($f=132$, $\%=36.46$), and nearly one third of them had experience of 1 to 3 years ($f=97$, $\%=26.80$).

IV. RESULTS

A. Descriptive and Normality Analysis

Table II presents the descriptive and normality statistics of research constructs. Table indicates that there were total 362 responses, and the responses covered minimum and maximum possible values. However, the level of WS ($M=3.93$, $SD=0.958$) and WES ($M=3.37$, $SD=1.207$) experienced by bank employees was in moderate range, and level of their WFC ($M=4.15$, $SD=0.925$) was in high range. As WFC of bank employees is high, hence, H1 was accepted. H2 was rejected, because of moderate WS and WES experienced by bank employees.

TABLE II: Descriptive Statistics And Normality Analysis

Variables (N=362)	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Skewness (SE=0.128)	Kurtosis (SE=0.256)
WS	1	6	3.93	0.958	-0.170	-0.618
WES	1	6	3.37	1.207	0.111	-0.993
WFC	1	6	4.15	0.925	-0.325	-0.110

N: Number of cases; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation; SE: Standard Error

Table II further indicates that data distribution was symmetrical and normal, and there was no issue of outliers in the dataset. As all the skewness and kurtosis values are within the ideal range of ± 1 [34], [33]. Moreover, responses on WS and WFC were negatively skewed, and responses on WES were positively skewed. However, kurtosis statistics of all the variables were negative.

B. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Table III presents results of reliability and convergent validity of research constructs. Results indicate that all the instruments were reliable, as Cronbach’s alpha values of all the research constructs are more than 0.8 [35], [36]. Factor loadings extracted through principal components analysis with Kaiser Normalization further indicates that all the items were relevant to their respective constructs [36]. As all the factor loadings were more than 0.6 [35]. Hence, inter item consistency reliability, and convergent validity [36] of all the research constructs were established.

C. Correlation Analysis

Table IV presents results of two tailed Pearson correlation analysis, to test the multicollinearity and discriminant validity of research constructs [36]. Results indicate that there is no critical issue of multicollinearity between research constructs. As all correlation coefficients are less than 0.8 [37]. Hence,

discriminant validity of all research constructs was established. Results further suggest that WS and WES are strong contributors of WFC.

Table III: Reliability And Convergent Validity Of Constructs

Variables and Their Items	Cronbach’s Alpha	Factor Loadings
Work Related Stress	0.829	
WS1		0.745
WS2		0.865
WS3		0.670
WS4		0.634
WS5		0.720
WS6		0.723
WS7		0.700
WS8		0.779
Work Environment Related Stress	0.824	
WS9		0.758
WS10		0.851
WS11		0.844
WS12		0.784
Work-Family Conflict	0.815	
WFC1		0.714
WFC2		0.817
WFC3		0.820
WFC4		0.772
WFC5		0.683

Table Iv: Correlation Analysis

Variables	WS	WES	WFC
WS	1	0.701***	0.256***
WES	0.701***	1	0.176***
WFC	0.256***	0.176***	1

Correlations are significant at *** $p < 0.001$

D. Independent Samples T-Test

Table V presents results of independent samples t-test to analyze the differences between work stress and WFC of male and female bank employees. Results indicate that although mean values of females’ WS, WES, and WFC were higher than males. Yet, these values were not high enough to create a significant difference between WS ($t=-0.974$, $p=0.331$), WES ($t=-0.696$, $p=0.487$), and WFC ($t=-1.125$, $p=0.261$) of married male and female bank employees. As there is no difference between WS, WES, WFC of male and female bank employees, hence, H3 and H4 were accepted.

Table V: Differences Between Work Stress And Work-Family Conflict Of Males And Females

Variables	Gender	N	M	SD	t	p
WS	Male	181	3.88	0.942	-0.974	0.331
	Female	181	3.97	0.974		
WES	Male	181	3.33	1.188	-0.696	0.487
	Female	181	3.42	1.227		
WFC	Male	181	4.10	0.939	-1.125	0.261
	Female	181	4.21	0.911		

N: Number of cases; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation; p: Significance Value

E. Regression Analysis

Table VI presents results of bootstrapped hierarchical regression analysis to analyze the differences in the relationship of work stress and WFC, between married male and female bank employees. Prior to the regression analysis, dataset was split on the basis of gender to identify the differences between male and female bank employees.

Results indicate that although the predictive accuracy of both male and female models is quite weak [38], [39], but predictive accuracy of females' regression model ($r^2=0.086$) is double as compared to males' regression model ($r^2=0.046$). Results of model (1) indicate that in absence of WES, WS is a strong contributor of WFC in in both males ($\beta=0.215$, $p=0.019$) and females ($\beta=0.274$, $p=0.000$). However, its predicting power was much stronger in case of female bank employees rather than male bank employees.

Table VI further indicate that the predicting power of WS changes in model (2) when WES is introduced into the equation. Results of model (2) indicate that in presence of WES, neither WS ($\beta=0.211$, $p=0.074$) nor WES ($\beta=0.004$, $p=0.968$) predict WFC of male bank employees. However in case of female bank employees, WS ($\beta=0.286$, $p=0.002$) is still a strong contributor of WFC, even though WES ($\beta=-0.014$, $p=0.848$) does not predict their WFC. As WS is a strong contributor of WFC in females as compared to males, hence H5 was accepted. H6 was rejected, because WES is not a contributor of either male or female bank employees.

V. DISCUSSION

The results of this research propound that married male and female employees in banks of South Punjab experience high WFC, but moderate WS and WES. Furthermore, no significant differences were found between WS, WES, and WFC of married male and female bank employees in South Punjab. These results suggest that in today's world, even in under developed and traditional areas like South Punjab, gender does not define the WS, WES, and WFC of married employees. There are some other factors which paly more

important role, and those factors could be controlled by gender.

Because, In spite of the insignificant differences in the levels of WS, WES, and WFC between males and females, it was discovered that WS is a strong contributor of WFC in females. But it does not define WFC of males. Only if there is no WES, then WS of male employees also predicts their WFC. The results of WS and WFC are in line with the previous studies of [21], [8], [23], [24], [17], [25], [22], [26]. However, results of WES and WFC are not in line with these studies, neither for males, not for females.

The insignificant relationship between WES and WFC could be because of the lower level of WES as compared to WS in banks of South Punjab. Chances are that this level of WES is not high enough to affect the WFC of male and female employees. Even the existence of this WES reduced the contribution of WS in enhancing WFC of male employees. But the effect of WS on WFC of females was so strong that it could not be reduced with comparatively lower WES.

These results suggests that even though there are no significant differences in the level of WS, WES, and WFC experienced by male and female employees, but sources of their WFC are still controlled by their gender. As both genders process the work stress and conflict differently. There could also be some behavioral differences in stress and conflict management of married male and female employees.

VI. CONCLUSION, RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The focus of this research was to analyze the differences in level of work stress and WFC of married male and female employees in 21st century. After comparing the equal datasets of male and female bank employees, it was identified that there is no significance difference in level of WS, WES, and WFC of male and female bank employees. But unlike married male employees, WFC of married female employees is highly dependent on their level of WS. Hence, this research suggest that even though there is no difference in the experienced work stress and conflict between married males and females, still gender plays an important role in defining the sources of WFC in 21st century.

In consideration of these results, researchers should focus on the gender related contributors of WFC, especially in under developed countries with traditional cultural patterns. Behavioral differences in stress and conflict management of males and females should also be studied in work environments to better understand the interplay between these constructs.

Table VI: Differences in The Relationship Of Work Stress And Work-Family Conflict Across Genders

Gender	Variables	Models									
		(1)					(2)				
		β	SE	<i>p</i>	BcaLL	BcaUL	β	SE	<i>p</i>	BcaLL	BcaUL
Male	WS	0.215	0.091	0.019	0.038	0.390	0.211	0.116	0.074	-0.014	0.442
	WES						0.004	0.084	0.968	-0.157	0.160
	Constant	3.267	0.355	0.000	2.588	3.970	3.267	0.356	0.000	2.587	3.984
	R-squared	0.046					0.046				
Female	WS	0.274	0.067	0.000	0.142	0.407	0.286	0.090	0.002	0.112	0.455
	WES						-0.014	0.074	0.848	-0.161	0.144
	Constant	3.120	0.289	0.000	2.562	3.682	3.118	0.289	0.000	2.565	3.674
	R-squared	0.086					0.086				

β : Beta Coefficients; SE: Standard Error; *p*: Significance Value; BcaLL: Bias Corrected Accelerated Confidence Interval Lower Limit at 5%; BcaUL: Bias Corrected Accelerated Confidence Interval Upper Limit at 95%

Furthermore, banks should try to reduce WS and WES of their employees through providing better and supportive work environment to them. If they want to enhance work commitment and efficiency of their employees. Because, people working in unsupportive work environment are less committed to their work [40]. Such an unsupportive work environment and time consuming work duties can also enhance one's WFC [8], [13]. However without WFC, employees can catalyze organizational performance and culture through efficient management of their family and professional lives. Hence, all these negative outcomes of WS and WES ultimately affect overall organizational performance and culture through unsatisfied, inefficient, and less committed workforce [41], [42].

So banks and other organizations should consider these suggestions to attract and retain more efficient, cooperative, and committed workforce. Which can facilitate their organizational performance and culture in the long run. Through these measures they can also improve the personal life quality of their employees by reducing their work stress and conflict. Because, employees with lesser work stress and conflict can not only perform their work duties efficiently, but they can also improve their family system. Because when someone have a good balance between work and family, they have enough mental and emotional energy to provide nurturing and loving environment to their family [43].

In addition to this, banks and other organization with time demanding jobs should address the gender related sources of WFC, and try to eliminate the factors which could enhance a particular stress experienced by a specific gender, especially females. So that representation of married females in banks of Pakistan could be increased, and more supportive work environments could be created for them. So, they could not only contribute towards the betterment of society, but also towards the financial status of their family.

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