Perceptions and Coping Strategies: A Thematic Study on Work-Life Balance of Working Women

Rabia Kibriya[1], Ibn-e-Hassan[2], Rehana Kouser[3]

[1] PhD. Scholar, Department of Commerce, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan.
  Email: rabiakabria@gmail.com
[2] Associate Professor, Department of Commerce, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan.
  Email: ibnehassan@bzu.edu.pk
[3] Professor, Department of Commerce, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan.
  Email: rehanakousar@bzu.edu.pk

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: November 16, 2021 Revised: December 25, 2021 Accepted: December 25, 2021 Available Online: December 31, 2021 *Keywords:* Work-life Balance Perception Coping Strategies Pakistani Context Thematic Study	The present study aims to explore different perceptions about the concept of work-life balance and the coping strategies used by working women to maintain this balance in the culturally unique context of Pakistan. The participation rate of working mothers has increased substantially in the labor force of Pakistan, creating problems for them in balancing their work and life responsibilities. Having a job with kids and family responsibilities comes in conflict with social and cultural values. This study adopted a qualitative research approach for in-depth exploration of the topic, engaged a snowball sampling technique to collect the data from 16 professional women using semi-structured, face-to-face interviews. The themes identification in this qualitative study is through the Braun & Clarke thematic six-phase approach. The main objective of the thematic analysis is to recognize themes; identify the significant data patterns, and achieve the research objectives. Thematic analysis revealed that the participants perceived work-life balance as a personal philosophy, managing both sides and event-based. Working women showed their faith in Allah and considered it the most helpful coping strategy. This faith gives them greater strength and courage to deal with problems. Pakistani working women frequently used various work-life balance coping strategies such as; support systems, time and stress management, determining priorities, and task crafting. The study implies that organizations should implement such HR policies and practices that support working women, providing them with child care centers and flexible schedules.

Corresponding Author's Email: ibnehassan@bzu.edu.pk

1. Introduction

Employees often face unprecedented challenges for maintaining a balance between their work and family life and adopt various coping strategies to attain this balance (Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2017). Challenging business environment, technological advancement, demographic shift along with increased work demands and limited resources have made work-life balance a significant matter of concern for organizations and employees (Helvaci & Eker, 2019). While work-life balance has defined as the "individuals' perceptions of how well work and non-work roles fit together and had managed by their system of life values, goals, and aspirations" (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003; J. M. Haar, 2013; J. M. Haar, Sune, Russo, & Ollier-Malaterre, 2019). Sometimes it is viewed as a 'social construct' developed through social practice for a better work-life balance experience but also referred to as the exposition to either individual perception or experience or organizational practices or programs such as flexible timings, childcare facilities, and parental leave (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018). Better work-life balance tends to have a positive association with better psychological as well as physical health and also aids in achieving increased job satisfaction, job performance, and job

engagement (Brough et al., 2014; Ferguson, Carlson, Zivnuska, & Whitten, 2012; J. M. Haar, 2013; Lunau, Bambra, Eikemo, van Der Wel, & Dragano, 2014; Timms et al., 2015; Wood, Oh, Park, & Kim, 2020). However, the lack of balance between work and life results in depression, job burnout, job dissatisfaction, and deteriorating mental and physical health (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Work-life balance has gained increased scholarly attention and has become a significant area of research in management studies for its grander positive effects for organizations and their employees over the past two decades (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011; Kossek, Valcour, & Lirio, 2014; Lu, Chang, Kao, & Cooper, 2015; Ren & Caudle, 2020; Valcour, 2007), with recent reviews (Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2017; Casper, Vaziri, Wayne, DeHauw, & Greenhaus, 2018; Ollier-Malaterre & Foucreault, 2017; Sirgy & Lee, 2018), meta-analysis (Ford, Heinen, & Langkamer, 2007; Kim & Park, 2019; Shockley & Singla, 2011; Wong, Chan, & Teh, 2020) and books (Gambles, Lewis, & Rapoport, 2006; Jones, Burke, & Westman, 2013; Lewis, Anderson, Lyonette, Payne, & Wood, 2017). Given the impressive numbers of research studies on nature (positive & negative; enrichment & conflict (Allen et al., 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), its antecedents and consequences (J. Haar & Brougham, 2020), and the effects of work-life balance on individual and organizational performance (J. M. Haar, Russo, Suñe, & Ollier-Malaterre, 2014), yet several limitations still exist in the present literature.

The idea of dedicating quality time to family and also managing a stressful job is becoming a significant challenge today (Allen, Cho, & Meier, 2014; Allen, Merlo, Lawrence, Slutsky, & Gray, 2021; Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2009). Research studies have explained that family and career roles give female employees the highest volume of conflict and strain in finding meaningful balance (Byron, 2005; Kayaalp, Page, & Rospenda, 2021; Warr, 2011). Excessive demands and few resources engender stress. Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2007) argued that coping is what individuals do to relieve stress. Coping strategies can lessen stress levels that go along with a busy routine of managing the demands of family and work. Work-life balance coping strategies used by individuals to balance their work and life examined by various theoretical models; Hall (1972) presented Type I, Type II, and Type III coping behavior models: reactive role behavior, personal role redefinition, and structural role redefinition, home coping strategies and workplace coping strategies by Hyman, Scholarios, and Baldry (2005), and compensation, segmentation, and accommodation by Jennings and McDougald (2007). Although these models provide a mix and match of the home and work-based tactics to achieve a balanced life, these coping strategies are narrow in scope and are applicable in a specific sector and job environment; therefore, they lack the generalization of coping strategies. Moreover, all these coping strategies were assessed in western countries, lacking their implication in Asian culture because of traditional, social, and economic differences (Chandra, 2012; Ren & Caudle, 2016).

Balancing between work and life is not dissimilar to walking a tightrope between work and non-work life, with individual strategies and institutional support acting as the balancing tool (Ren & Caudle, 2020). Nevertheless, the growing number of studies in this domain observed working issues of women (Hutchings, Lirio, & Metcalfe, 2012; Kossek, Su, & Wu, 2017). Most of the research studies primarily focused on exploring the challenges faced by the working women in their career advancement (Afiouni, 2014; Jamali, 2009; H. Tlaiss & Kauser, 2011), the glass ceiling (Jamali, Safieddine, & Daouk, 2006; Jauhar & Lau, 2018; Marmenout & Lirio, 2014) or lack of satisfaction with their careers (H. A. Tlaiss & Mendelson, 2014; Yaghi, 2016). Therefore, the need for work- life balance conceptualization to incorporate contemporary developments in both work and life (Bansal & Agarwal, 2020; Casper et al., 2018) has become a prerequisite for further understanding of the topic (Kelliher, Richardson, & Boiarintseva, 2019).

2. Literature Review

Early literature on work-life balance presented by Fisher (2001) defined work-life balance in the matrix of a theory of conservation of resources; as an occupational stressor regarding time, energy, goal accomplishment, and strain issues. Work-family balance was defined by Greenhaus et al. (2003) as; "the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in

– and equally satisfied with – their work and family role." Voydanoff (2005) defined work-life balance in the perspective of person-environment fit theory as; "a global assessment that work and family resources are sufficient to meet work and family demands such that participation is effective in both domains." Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) argued that work-family balance is not an attitude perceived personally but embedded in the social environment. However, Valcour (2007) described work-family balance as a psychological approach with affective satisfaction and cognitive assessment of success components.

Greenhaus and Allen (2011) argued that work-life balance happens when role satisfaction and role effectiveness are persistent with life priorities. Recently Sirgy and Lee (2018) defined in their integrative review work-life balance; "as a high level of engagement in work life as well as non-work life with the minimal conflict between social roles in work and non-work life." In a current study, Wayne, Butts, Casper, and Allen (2017) conceptualized work-life balance as balance satisfaction, additive spillover, balance effectiveness, and multiplicative spillover. Wayne et al. (2017) explained that balance effectiveness and satisfaction was jointly the most significant predictor of family and job performance and family satisfaction. The recent improvement by Casper et al. (2018) proposed that the work-life balance notion could be more precisely cited as work–non-work balance, and also recognized three balance domains: involvement (level of engagement), effectiveness (sense of success), and affect (emotional).

Despite a global issue, work-life balance research studies are focused widely in western contexts (Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2017), organizations with good work-life balance policies; child care facilities, flexible work arrangements, and maternity & paternity leave (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006; Taiji & Mills, 2020). Literature shows that work-life balance western perspective is not suitable for explaining the work-life/family issues in Asia, and the coping strategies used by the Asian employees is significantly different from their Western counterparts (Chandra, 2012; Ling & Poweli, 2001; Ren & Caudle, 2016; Ren & Foster, 2011; Xiao & Cooke, 2012). The work-life balance research studies in Western cultures practicing individualism are not appropriate for Asian countries that value collectivism (Phillips & Pearson, 1996). Chinese employees assumed work-life imbalance as a fact of life without demanding their Governments and organizations to address it. They manage their work-life matters by individual coping strategies, while American and European organizations provide flexible work schedules and other WLB facilities to their employees (Chandra, 2012; Cooke & Jing, 2009). Asian employees face job demands in workplaces that impair their health, decreasing their work-family enrichment (Lu et al., 2015).

As the research for work-life balance has been in process for 25 years (Fisher, 2001; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Sirgy & Lee, 2018; Valcour, 2007), its limitations need to be addressed. Work-life balance is a subjective phenomenon that must reflect the personal perspective (Kalliath & Brough, 2008). Hence, exploring perceptions of individuals going through this phase of life is critical to comprehend the nature of work-life balance and recognize the outcomes of a healthy work-life balance (Ford et al., 2007; Kim & Park, 2019; Shockley & Singla, 2011; Wong et al., 2020). Therefore, scholars call for a culturally subtle distinction of work-life balance that is also contextually sensitive (Le, Newman, Menzies, Zheng, & Fermelis, 2020); however, extant literature showed confined efforts. The understanding of different cultural perspective that may impact work-life balance- its nature, prevalence, and contextually different coping strategies- are necessary. Qualitative approaches, to reflect personal perceptions, should be used for measuring work-life balance subjective views. Hence, the work-life balance exploration in an Islamic society, collectivist culture, and patriarchal system of Pakistan is timely. The purpose of this study is to determine how working women in the Pakistani culture are integrating their work and family life and what coping strategies they are using in achieving the balance between their work and personal life.

3. The Pakistani Context

Pakistan is an Islamic country with a traditionalistic society, where women are supposed to stay home and do housework. The working mother job causes conflict with the traditional values that may cause marital maladjustment (Azeem & Akhtar, 2014). The collectivist, symbolic, cultural, and dominant religious beliefs influence their work goals. The responsibility towards their families is a critical barrier to the career advancement of working women (Adogbo, Ibrahim, & Ibrahim, 2015). Women are more possibly to turn down high job

positions for family-related reasons (Allen, French, & Poteet, 2016; Mustapa, Noor, & Mutalib, 2018). Similarly, Waqar, Hanif, and Loh (2021) elaborated those Pakistani working women having the same job experiences are less likely to get promoted as male colleagues. Therefore Pakistani socio-cultural setting provides a unique and rich context to explore the nature and perception of work-life balance and the strategies Pakistani women used to cope with work-life balance issues.

Pakistani women have made far-reaching progress in every field of life during the last few decades. Conferring to the World Bank data, the labor force participation rate for females in Pakistan was 24.10 percent as of 2019, compared to 12.51 percent in 1995 (WDI, 1995). Pakistan development road map Vision 2025 sets a defined target for female labor force participation, currently from 24 percent to 45 percent by 2025. The participation rate of working mothers has increased substantially in the labor force of Pakistan, creating problems for them in balancing their work and life responsibilities. Most of the studies available in Pakistani literature are around the work-life balance of female entrepreneurs managing their businesses and families (Rehman & Roomi, 2012; Roomi, Rehman, & Henry, 2018). Even though the strategies presented are helpful for female entrepreneurs who have control over their businesses and have freedom and flexibility of changing time schedules and work modes. However, the coping strategies for females working in different professions and demanding environments (doctors, teachers, nurses, bankers, and police officers) are still missing. This study attempts to complement the existing literature by adopting the qualitative method to examine the perception of work-life balance and explore coping strategies adopted by working women in Pakistan. This study aims to address the following two questions:

RQ1. How is work-life balance perceived in the Pakistani context?
RQ2. What are the coping strategies used for achieving work-life balance?

4.   Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach for in-depth issue exploration (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2009). The subjective views of participants and social life are explained better through qualitative analysis (Neuman, 2007). By applying a qualitative research approach, the researcher can explore the phenomenon in a natural setting (Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015). A snowball and purposive combination sampling techniques are adopted to select the sample (Waters, 2015). A sampling procedure may be defined as snowball sampling when the researcher approaches informants by the contact information given by other interviewees (Noy, 2008). This process, by requirement, is repetitive: informants introduce the researcher to other informants, the researcher contacts them, and later introduced to other informants, and so on. The demographics collected included the participant's marital status, age, number of children, and experience. Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews for data collection; were conducted in the office of respondents. All the interviews were recorded and later transcribed with the participant's permission. Serial numbers of participants are used instead of actual names. Most of the interviews lasted for about 30 to 50 minutes. The sample consisted of 16 females working in different professions who: are (a) married, (b) working in challenging positions, (c) have two or more kids to raise, and have issues in keeping a balance between work and family life. The ages of the participants ranged from 37 to 58 years, the average being 45 years (Table 1). The interview questions asked are the following: How do you perceive work-life balance? What are the coping strategies used for achieving work-life balance? During the interviews, further information is explored by reflecting on the respondent's responses, asking for examples, and requesting clarification, believed to be an interviewing core skill (Gillham, 2005). The themes identification in this qualitative study is through the Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic six-phase approach. The thematic analysis process provides a detailed and rich, (Nowell, Norris, White, & Moules, 2017), yet intricate data description. The additional benefit of thematic analysis is that it is a method rather than a methodology (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2013), implying that it has no adjunct with any theoretical or epistemological perspective, like various qualitative methodologies. It also makes thematic analysis a very flexible method to be applied in numerous studies examining the lived experiences, meanings, and realities of personal views. The primary purpose of the thematic analysis is to recognize themes; identification of significant data patterns and achieve the research objectives. The themes identified are at the semantic level in this study, representing the working women's

lived experience of managing work-life balance issues through their written interview transcripts.

Table 1: Participants' Demographics

Participant No.	Profession	Age	No. of Children	Experience (years)	Marital status	Participant No.	Profession	Age	No. of Children	Experience (years)	Marital Status
1	Police Officer	54	2	28	Married	9	Assistant Professor	39	2	11	Married
2	Banker	40	2	15	Married	10	Assistant Professor	40	4	16	Married
3	Doctor	47	3	22	Married	11	Doctor	38	3	15	Married
4	Banker	41	3	14	Married	12	Lecturer	40	2	16	Married
5	Police Officer	45	2	18	Married	13	Nurse	53	3	25	Married
6	Doctor	43	3	19	Married	14	Nurse	38	2	15	Married
7	Doctor	46	3	14	Married	15	Nurse	44	3	20	Married
8	Doctor	45	4	15	Married	16	Lecturer	37	2	10	Married

5. Findings

Work-life balance conceptualization is perceived distinctively across participants. Study findings suggest that the work-life balance term has a different perspective for every working woman; it depends on various factors such as marital status, the number of children, and the support system. It is also dependent on the nature of the job, experience, and family setup, living separately or within the joint family system. The participants explained that the most helpful and significant work-life balance coping strategies are support systems and time and stress management.

5.1 Work-life Balance Perceptions
5.1.1 Work-life balance is efficiently managing both sides

Most participants explained that despite the shortage of time, feeling stressed and exhausted at times, they are managing both domains of their lives effectively and efficiently as described by one of the participants;

> *P9: "Work-life balance is the most important thing for me, I always try to balance these two things. I normally leave the office on time, try to come to the office on time during that particular time in my office, I try to manage my office responsibilities, and I try to complete all the family-related responsibilities once I am in the home."*

Another participant emphasized that there should be no dishonesty in any domain of life;

> *P7: "I think work-life balance is that there should be no dishonesty between your work and family life. As your family life is equally important because it has your family and kids as your professional life so there should be no dishonesty in both domains."*

One of the participants shared her views as;

> *P12: "……………, so in case of my work if my students are satisfied, I think it is a balance and in case of my family if my spouse and my children are happy, healthy and they are getting proper time from me then I think it is a balance to work and family life."*

5.1.2 Knowing your value and principles

Being Pakistani Muslims, several working women analyze their work-life balance as they are answerable to ALLAH in both aspects of their lives, and they should only earn through Halal ways as it becomes evident by the following views;

> *P5: "I think we all have a responsibility which we are answerable here and also to ALLAH that whether we have fulfilled our office duties for which we are getting paid and whether we are fulfilling our kids and home responsibilities or not."*

P14: "You have that internal satisfaction that when you left your office you feel like you have earned HALAL money and you have also given quality time to your family; for me, it is work-life balance, besides balancing between my family and work, I also try to balance my Deen and Dunya."

Religion exhibits a substantial role in an individual life, complying with moral and societal values and listening to intuition paves the way in achieving a healthy work-life balance and a satisfying life, as evident from these responses;

P6: "Money is important to fulfill your basic needs, but I kept my conscience alive and not in search of too much of this physical world. I want my patients to be happy, treated well, and satisfied."

P15: "For me, money does not matter, what Allah has written livelihood and subsistence, daily bread for us, it will be delivered no matter what, so I do not think about having more cash, capital, and property. For me, internal satisfaction matters…………when I take care of my patients, help them in recovery; it gives me a feeling that I have done something for someone. It makes me feel happy that they have prayed for me."

Working women relieve themselves from the ever-increasing greed of more earnings by not doing extra work at the cost of imbalance. Being Pakistani Muslims, most working women feel that they should perform all the duties of their job and family life, as they are answerable to ALLAH in both aspects of their lives. Therefore, earning through Halal ways is also a matter of concern for them.

5.1.3 Individual Work-Life Balance Philosophy

Every individual perspective about work-life balance is different, depending on several factors; nature of career, type of job, career stage, number of children, and choices they make in their lives. A working woman has to bear the price of decisions she makes as these females expressed their views as;

P9: "There is always a price to the choices that you make. When a working woman spent her whole life in a job, but her family life had been disturbed, her children have not succeeded in life then; I think it is an imbalance."

P10: "I think there is a price related to your profession which you have to bear, and it is not possible to achieve success in both domains simultaneously."

Every individual viewed work-life balance uniquely, which is why their perspectives about work-life balance also differ:

P4: "I think work-life balance is that I try to fulfill all my professional responsibilities in my office timings and once I go home my kids are my priority then I try to spend all my time with my kids and my family. It depends some days are successful when we are managing things very well, while some days we feel unsuccessful. These things are event-based if my kid is not feeling well; I have to give him more time, which also creates a disturbance in my work."

Females feel the dual responsibility of work and family responsibilities and found it extremely difficult to maintain a balance between work and life as one of the participants quoted;

P16: "I think work-life balance is giving leverage to women,................., at the workplace, it is expected from females to work like they do not have a family life and in their homes, and they have to work like they do not have a job. The biggest problem over here is that everything is the responsibility of females,................, The mindset has changed to a certain extent that the females can be a part of the workforce, the other half of the mindset has not changed yet that men can also cook food, they can also look after the house and

kids, however, it becomes a stigma that they are doing something very inappropriate in our culture."

Work-life balance is the sum of choices a woman makes in her personal and professional life. Every individual has a distinctive philosophy for work-life balance. Pakistani working women trying to achieve work-life balance referred to it as a philosophy or a viewpoint; that they have in their minds to attain work-life balance. Some participants perceive work-life balance as a set of skills and abilities that a person should possess to maintain the balance between work and family life as elaborated by their views;

> P5: "I think work-life balance is developing such skills and abilities that help manage both aspects of life such as; delegating works to the right person, self-reflection, and networking."

> P9: "Work-life balance is personal; one can spend days in the office without complaining about the imbalance or vice versa. It is like acquiring such skills that you handle your family and work in such a way that they do not feel neglected."

> P13: "Work-life balance comes with time, you cannot have it in your early career stages, and it comes with experience, support, and commitment."

Working women employed in challenging positions with a high workload described those skills like networking, self-profiling, and delegation are vital for attaining work-life balance. They also illuminated the fact that experience plays a pivotal role in maintaining the balance. Females tend to understand things better in their organizations and also gather some support in their home life as time passes.

5.1.4 Technology harms work-life balance
Technological advancements have changed the business circumstances by making things easier to do, digitalizing the systems, and minimizing communication barriers. However, excessive use of technology also harms individuals' health by staying online every time on the phone; giving responses to every official message after office hours, hindering the process of achieving work-life balance. The participants elaborated this as;

> P7: "In the recent era, one thing I feel is this technological innovation, you have to be online and responsive on Whats-app 24 hours, whether you are in the academic sector or corporate sector, this thing has destroyed the work-life balance, now if we are going home at 4 p.m. and we are continuously on our phone, so we are mentally not there; this is a huge problem. Things like these impact work-life balance."

> P12: "Technology has made it hard to have a work-life balance because you have to be online every time to respond to things like email, work phones, teleconferencing, etc., in your home time also hence you are physically present in your home with your family but mentally and psychology you are somewhere else."

Work gets aggravated with smartphones with more task completion; however, work becomes more extensive. It has become easier for individuals to fulfill their responsibilities at any place and time with the help of technological advancements. However, it also creates new stressors and demands in an individual's life by imposing an informal commitment for employees to be online and available 24 hours a day, every day of the week.

Participants perceived work-life balance as managing both sides efficiently, without being dishonest to their families and kids. It is all about the sum of choices a woman makes in her personal and professional life. Women working in challenging positions with a high workload explained that skills like networking, self-profiling and delegation are necessary for work-life balance. Pakistani working women referred to work-life balance as an individual's philosophy. They feel like they are answerable to ALLAH in both aspects of their lives, and having this complete faith in ALLAH, they deal with the work-life balance disputes with greater

strength and courage. Some participants indicated that the influx of technology is a reason for their work-life imbalance.

5.2   Work-life Balance Coping Strategies
5.2.1 Prompt Family Support System
Family support is one of the most important reasons cited by the respondents to cope with their work-role demands and perform effectively in a challenging work environment. The emotional support of the husband and positive attitude minimizes the stress and anxiety issues of working women. Husband support is strongly related to psychological well-being and marital satisfaction and emerged as the most significant support for women in our study.

P7: "When my kids were small, I had to do night duties, and then I felt that I neglected my kids. When I came from maternity leave, my kid was only three months old, and I had night duties in my schedule; I cannot forget that time. At that moment, my husband had supported me a lot."

P8: "When I was giving my fellowship exams, it was a very crucial time, had to study in the library for the whole day with my colleagues, having group discussions and I was unable to go home for longer periods, do not know what was happening in my home. My husband supported me a lot in that period, made sure that the children had their lunch and dinner, and it was his compassion that he supported me so much."

P14: "My husband had supported me a lot, if your husband is not cooperative then things became difficult for working women, making every decision by yourselves, the job requires too many other things, sometimes evening duties or night duties, all this requires a husband to be cooperative if he forbids to do night duties or things like this whether your family members are supporting you, but if your husband is with you then you can do your work peacefully and happily, without taking any tension of anything."

Married working women also acknowledge the support from their in-laws for maintaining the work-life balance, along with their parental help. Participants described the support of parents and grandparents as a common coping strategy for taking care of their kids and supporting them in every possible way:

P6: "When I had my first child at that time, I felt difficulty in balancing both sides but, I had the support of my mother every time. She looks after my kids when I am in the office."

P7: "I think that joint family system is better for me; because grandparents can take good care of my kids as compared to if I leave my kids to a maid."

5.2.2 Time Management
Pakistani working women adopted different strategies to cope with their work-life imbalance issues. The often mentioned was time management:

P5: "Police officers have to be vigilant every time anything can happen at any time, so in that matter, time management is crucial." The key is in making better choices regarding how we spend our time and mental energy."

P14: "For balancing work and life, you should be strong, should have the quality of making decisions on time, and should know how to manage things in a difficult time or in happy times."

Individuals have a fixed amount of energy, time, and resources, so employing a lot of time and energy in one domain of their life can damage performance in the other domain.

5.2.3 Determining Priorities

For achieving work-life balance, the coping strategy adopted by some of the participants is prioritizing their roles, sacrificing themselves for their kids and family. They prioritize their commitments in the long and short term within their work and family matters based on urgency and importance. The study findings indicate that working women may shift their priorities with their career cycle in early career years job became her priority, but as she gained experience and the job did not seem difficult to her, her priority shifts towards her children, as evident from these views;

> *P2: "In work-life balance, the first thing is you have to decide what your priorities are, I have my career as a priority before, but now it's my family."*

> *P10: "Work-life balance is setting priorities as my kids are in growing age now, they are my priority, then it's my career, after that, we see that which opportunities are available, we can modify them."*

> *P11: "For females, it becomes difficult to manage both sides, she has to sacrifice herself, she has to leave her interest things, and sometimes I can't even take rest. When I go home, I do not take a rest,……………, have to forego myself unless it's not possible to have balanced life."*

5.2.4 Stress Management

Stress comes out to be the biggest obstacle for working women to overcome for managing their work and life issues. Stress management is managing the stress arising from unrealistic expectations, treatment discrimination, and dealing with pressure and anxiety because of work-life imbalance.

> *P4: "Sometimes I get a little emotional and stressed out because banking hours are so long, eventually resulting in work-life imbalance. The expectations from my colleagues and my bosses and our cultural surroundings are a little unrealistic towards me; because of the benefit of the doubt of us being working mothers, I try to manage my stress by thinking that I am not going through this phase alone and talking about it with my female colleagues."*

> *P12: "For my work-life balance is how well I can have a balance between my personal and work life because I have demands on both ends with limited resources and these demands sometimes become the reason of my stress and anxiety. So I have to cope with this stress by trying to say no to unnecessary demands."*

> *P13: "As a working woman, we do not have an alternative to those commitments that we have to perform at our homes, so when we have nonverbal pressure in the sense that it is expected from women to work like men, even though we are also expected from our culture to have all the responsibilities of her house, men are free from that; so that is the main reason for my stress. I accept this as a social norm to relieve my stress."*

Stress arises due to work overload and conflicting attitudes, and managing stress is the most crucial component in achieving work-life balance among participants. As the sample for this study are married women with at least two growing kids, their stress also arises when they have to leave their kids in the home for long periods, and having no childcare facility at the workplace comes as a matter of concern for them. So to reduce their stress, they bring their kids to the workplace.

> *P7: "Keeping in view my duty hours, family functions or gatherings, exams of my children, I have to modify things. Like in those days when their exams are, and specifically I teach my son by myself, so I take him with me everywhere, if I go to the hospital, I will take him with me, in my free time I will tell him to study this, and then I will check him once I became free. My stress level becomes very low when my kids are with me. I do not have to worry about them, what they will be doing home alone."*

One of the participants reported that once her kid was ill and leaving him alone without any support from immediate family made her stressed out, so she brought her son to her workplace to reduce her stress;

P16: "Last Friday, my son was not feeling well, so he had to skip school, but when I was about to leave for the university, he woke up. He did not want me to leave him, so I quickly changed his clothes. I brought him to my office room, made him comfortable there, and I went for my lecture, so this is what I do in emergencies. It is because I have to, for managing my stress."

5.2.5 Task Crafting

Task crafting emerged as a significant theme describing how working women make changes in their work through different techniques for maintaining the balance between work and life responsibilities. Crafting a job involves shaping the task boundaries of the job (either physically or cognitively), the relationship boundaries of the job, or both.

P9: "When you get work outside of your task boundaries, you get distracted, and also it requires more time and more effort, which as a working mother, I cannot afford to give. I, therefore, give preference to working tasks that better suit my skills or abilities."

P5: "I think Work-life balance is creating equilibrium between office responsibilities and family responsibilities and for achieving this we make changes in our work according to our needs. Sometimes, I change the scope of the routine tasks and introduce new methods to improve my work."

Task crafting emerged as a notable theme, comes as a positive approach to avoid conflicts and maintain a work-life balance. Pakistani working women coping strategy to balance work-life balance is to remain within their task boundaries and make changes in their work through task crafting.

Participants adopt various coping strategies for maintaining a balance between their work and life matters, and the foremost of them is support from family, especially husband support. Participants emphasized the importance of the husband as psychological and emotional support in the upbringing of children and coping with home and office problems. Having a happier and healthier relationship with in-laws also reduces stress and anxiety levels which consequently help in keeping the balance between family life and work. Making optimal use of time and implying timely decisions is one of the most helpful coping strategy, one can use for organizing work and family matters. Prioritizing helps one determine the most significant things in life and contributes to work-life balance through effective time management. The most notable element in achieving a work-life balance is stress management. Participants adopt the coping strategy of sharing their views with other female colleagues and not putting themselves in any extra job demands. Sometimes they reduce their stress by bringing their kids to their office. Participants used another coping strategy of task crafting; for maintaining a balance between their work and life responsibilities through making changes in their daily job matters.

6.   Discussion

This study attempts to stretch the knowledge of work-life balance perceptions and coping strategies in the Pakistani context. The findings showed that work-life balance perceptions and coping strategies of Pakistani women are contemplative of the collectivist society of Pakistan. It adds to pre-existing literature about how Pakistani working women in different career contexts view work-life balance and coping strategies. However, the emerged coping strategies found through this study significantly different from the previous adopted strategies though there are limited previous studies on this topic. The most prominent strategies that emerged were task crafting, stress management, and determining priorities. The micro strategies that emerged also add to the missing Pakistani literature in work-life balance settings, such as; making changes in work through different means, unrealistic expectations from female employees. In addition, it will help both individuals and organizations

develop better strategies for females in managing careers and family life. This research may also yield some discoveries concerning an individual's abilities to achieve work-life balance, along with career advancement. Although work-life balance perceptions are individual, some commonalities had emerged from the study evidence. Participants perceived work-life balance as managing both sides efficiently, without being dishonest to their families and kids. Pakistani working women are trying to achieve work-life balance referred to it as a philosophy or a viewpoint; that they have in their minds and which they follow to achieve work-life balance. Women working in Pakistan face a disproportionate burden of domestic work with childcare and family responsibilities simultaneously, resulting in deterioration of their physical and mental health which proved to be a vital obstacle in their career advancement. They resolve their caregiving, housework, paid work, and family management individually. Therefore, work-life balance comes as an elusive thing for some participants. Like every individual, our participants had a distinctive philosophy for work-life balance, and they perceived work-life balance as a sum of choices a woman makes in her personal and professional life. The participants described work-life balance as event-based, and it depends on the nature of career and career stages. Work-life balance is also perceived as a multi-layered process, changing with career stages. It is consistent with the findings of Darcy, McCarthy, Hill, and Grady (2012), where the "one size fits all" approach seemed to be ineffective in catering to the individual needs of employees at various career stages. Women working in health care departments, police postings, and the banking industry affirmed that keeping a work-life balance is very difficult due to long office hours with high work demands and few resources. Pakistani people have faith completely interwoven in their culture. They believe that they are answerable to Allah for their actions and that earning Halal money will pay them here and in the afterlife. These beliefs formed their perceptions and views about work-life balance. Having complete faith in ALLAH, they deal with the work-life balance disputes with greater strength and courage. Relationship with ALLAH assisted the participants in harmonizing and effectively managing the different life roles as it gives meaning to whatever they were doing on their job and at home. Another interesting finding is the role of technological advancements that have changed the world, making them easier to perform individual responsibilities at any place and time, providing a tremendous volume of information and uninterrupted communication. However, the compulsion to always be accessible and ready to respond hinders the process of work-life balance attainment and leads to stress and anxiety disorders. Consequently, based on qualitative findings, we suggest that work-life balance for our participants was; a set of skills, choices, and priorities an individual has for managing work and life responsibilities depending on the job and life demands with the resources available.

The socio-cultural norms of Pakistan are very different compared to western societies where organizations have good work-life balance policies; child care facilities, flexible work arrangements, and maternity & paternity leave for their employees. While in Pakistan, childcare and other home responsibilities are the prime responsibility of women who also work full-time, making them more vulnerable towards their societal and cultural norms. Pakistan is an Islamic country with a collectivist society, where women are considered to stay home and do housework. Their job causes conflict with the values that may cause marital maladjustment (Azeem & Akhtar, 2014). Their work meanings are affected by dominant religious, cultural, symbolic, and collectivist beliefs shared with some Asian cultures. They have to adopt various coping strategies to balance their work and life matters. Pakistani women who live in a joint family system within a collectivist society rely more on their parents and in-laws, making this coping strategy distinctive from western studies incorporating individualism with nuclear families. Respondents credited parental support as the safest and reliable option as far as child care is concerned. Working women in this study associated family support with husband, parents, and in-laws: managing household chores and fulfilling the responsibilities of kids without them will be troublesome. The social and family system of compassion behaviors makes the support system of Pakistan distinctive from other societies.

Time management emerged as an essential coping strategy as every interviewee emphasized the importance of time in managing their work and family life. Given the fact that an individual could not be present at the same time in two different places, therefore with a finite amount of energy, time, and resources, employing a lot of time and energy in one domain of their life can damage their performance in the other domain. Consequently, COR recommends preserving these limited resources. It is in line with Fujimoto, Azmat, and Härtel (2013) and Liswandi (2020), and also with the conservation of resources theory (COR) which

states that individual resources are limited (Hobfoll, 1989). Also, the conservation of resources theory proposed that individuals acquire the resources and preserve them for achieving their goals, such as increased well-being, improving the quality of life, and obtaining more income. Every individual is different from others, as their priorities, implying that different people value their work and private life uniquely (Valcour, 2007). Setting priorities usually manifest professional achievement or life enjoyment. The study findings indicate that working women may shift their preferences with their career cycle. However, the results also showed that priorities might remain stable over time concerning balancing work and home life depending on their desired goals. Stress management comes as a notable coping strategy for achieving work-life balance. Lack of support with high job demands causes stress (Ahola, Toppinen-Tanner, & Seppänen, 2017). Stress management pertains to interventions or strategies to control or reduce stress (Happell et al., 2013). The qualitative data analysis showed that health care workers like doctors and nurses suffer more stress issues than other participants in the study with no work-life balance in their lives, along with the guilt of not giving proper time and attention to their children. Participants adopt the coping strategy of sharing their views with other female colleagues and not putting themselves in any extra job demands. Sometimes they reduce their stress by bringing their kids to their office. Pakistani working women coping strategy to balance work-life balance is to remain within their task boundaries and make changes in their work through task crafting. Task crafting is a component of job crafting that promotes person-job fit (Tims & Bakker, 2010). Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) defined job crafting as changes self-initiated by employees intended at their jobs alignment with their passions, motives, and preferences. Based on the job demand–resources model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), employees initiate a bottom-up redesign (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012). Thereby, the changing job demands crafting behavior is associated with task crafting. Task crafting is a distinctive coping strategy because individuals have to self-manage their work and life without government interventions and organizational policies.

7. Conclusion

This study aimed at exploring the work-life balance perceptions and coping strategies that employed Pakistani women use in the context of cultural and social values and the patriarchal system. This qualitative study explained that Pakistani working women perceive work-life balance as skills, abilities, and priorities they set for themselves to achieve balance with the available resources. Work-life balance observed from different perspectives was significantly revealed from the interviews, as the backgrounds of working women varied on the professional and personal levels. The coping strategies that emerged are a support system, task crafting, prioritizing, and time and stress management. Support from husband, parents, and in-laws are significant in different scenarios, which a working woman feels inevitable for attaining the balance. Working women adopted crafting behavior in their home chores and job tasks and ascertained their priorities for maintaining their work-life balance.

The study findings imply that organizations should implement such HR policies and practices that support working women, providing them with child-care centers and flexible schedules. Crafting techniques are indispensable for females for achieving work-life balance. Organizations must create and foster a crafting culture while practicing job crafting at every level. It will decrease burnout, increase the motivation and well-being of working women. Organizational managers should support female employees in decreasing hindering job demands strategy by encouraging them to adopt increasing resources and challenges. Mangers can undoubtedly shape the employees' perceptions about the opportunity to shape, craft, and increase their job performance by finding a better fit between their knowledge, skills, and job requirements. As every female employee's needs and requirements differ, the crafting technique should be individual-based. Some require flexible timings while some need options of teleworking and unique work arrangements, so organizations should enable female employees to make the schedule and apply them to their personal preferences and requirements to achieve a better work-life balance. Hence organizations should contemplate facilitating females with manners such as; performance measurement through results instead of time spent in the office. In particular, organizations can encourage job crafting for female employees by providing workshops and training to incorporate job crafting techniques in their job design, decision-making, and critical thinking. Consequently, providing women with better

support in the organization comes a long way through their contribution to the performance of an organization and economic growth.

This study tries to fill the gap of Asian working mothers' work-life perceptions and the coping strategies they used that have not been studied before (Le et al., 2020). It will also contribute from a collectivist and an Islamic culture perspective to the work-life balance literature of working women. This study also has several limitations; it has used a small sample of sixteen working women. A research study with various geographical regions and a larger sample probably will help in findings generalization. Future studies may include working women from professions such as lawyers, engineers, and scientists.

References

Adogbo, K., Ibrahim, A., & Ibrahim, Y. (2015). Development of a framework for attracting and retaining women in construction practice. *Journal of Construction in Developing Countries, 20*(1), 99-115.

Afiouni, F. (2014). Women's careers in the Arab Middle East: Understanding institutional constraints to the boundaryless career view. *Career Development International, 19*(3), 314-336. doi:https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-05-2013-0061

Ahola, K., Toppinen-Tanner, S., & Seppänen, J. (2017). Interventions to alleviate burnout symptoms and to support return to work among employees with burnout: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Burnout research, 4*, 1-11. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.burn.2017.02.001

Allen, T. D., Cho, E., & Meier, L. L. (2014). Work–family boundary dynamics. *Annu. Rev. Organ. Psychol. Organ. Behav., 1*(1), 99-121.

Allen, T. D., French, K. A., & Poteet, M. L. (2016). Women and career advancement: Issues and opportunities. *Organizational Dynamics, 45*(3), 206-216.

Allen, T. D., Herst, D. E., Bruck, C. S., & Sutton, M. (2000). Consequences associated with work-to-family conflict: a review and agenda for future research. *Journal of occupational health psychology, 5*(2), 278-308. doi:https://doi.org/10.1037/1076-8998.5.2.278

Allen, T. D., Merlo, K., Lawrence, R. C., Slutsky, J., & Gray, C. E. (2021). Boundary management and work-nonwork balance while working from home. *Applied Psychology, 70*(1), 60-84. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12300

Azeem, S. M., & Akhtar, N. (2014). The influence of work life balance and job satisfaction on organizational commitment of healthcare employees. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies, 4*(2), 18-24. doi:https://doi.org/10.5296/ijhrs.v4i2.5667

Bansal, N., & Agarwal, U. A. (2020). Examining the Relationships Among Work–Life Constructs: A Review. *Business Perspectives and Research, 8*(2), 257-271. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/2278533719887456

Beigi, M., & Shirmohammadi, M. (2017). Qualitative research on work–family in the management field: A review. *Applied Psychology, 66*(3), 382-433. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12093

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Brough, P., Timms, C., O'Driscoll, M. P., Kalliath, T., Siu, O.-L., Sit, C., & Lo, D. (2014). Work–life balance: A longitudinal evaluation of a new measure across Australia and New Zealand workers. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 25*(19), 2724-2744. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2014.899262

Byron, K. (2005). A meta-analytic review of work–family conflict and its antecedents. *Journal of vocational behavior, 67*(2), 169-198. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2004.08.009

Casper, W. J., Vaziri, H., Wayne, J. H., DeHauw, S., & Greenhaus, J. (2018). The jingle-jangle of work–nonwork balance: A comprehensive and meta-analytic review of its meaning and measurement. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 103*(2), 182-214. doi:https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000259

Chandra, V. (2012). Work–life balance: eastern and western perspectives. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 23*(5), 1040-1056. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2012.651339

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2013). Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *The psychologist, 26*(2), 120-133.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). Planning educational research. *Research methods in education. New York: Routledge Editors*.

Cooke, F. L., & Jing, X. (2009). Work-life balance in China: sources of conflicts and coping strategies. *NHRD Network Journal, 2*(6), 18-28. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/0974173920090603

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.): Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.

Crompton, R., & Lyonette, C. (2006). Work-life 'balance'in Europe. *Acta sociologica, 49*(4), 379-393. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699306071680

Darcy, C., McCarthy, A., Hill, J., & Grady, G. (2012). Work–life balance: One size fits all? An exploratory analysis of the differential effects of career stage. *European Management Journal, 30*(2), 111-120. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2011.11.001

Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The job demands-resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*(3), 499.

Eby, L. T., Casper, W. J., Lockwood, A., Bordeaux, C., & Brinley, A. (2005). Work and family research in IO/OB: Content analysis and review of the literature (1980–2002). *Journal of vocational behavior, 66*(1), 124-197. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2003.11.003

Ferguson, M., Carlson, D., Zivnuska, S., & Whitten, D. (2012). Support at work and home: The path to satisfaction through balance. *Journal of vocational behavior, 80*(2), 299-307. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2012.01.001

Fisher, G. G. (2001). *Work/personal life balance: A construct development study.* (Doctoral), Bowling Green State University,

Ford, M. T., Heinen, B. A., & Langkamer, K. L. (2007). Work and family satisfaction and conflict: a meta-analysis of cross-domain relations. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 92*(1), 57-80. doi:https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.1.57

Fujimoto, Y., Azmat, F., & Härtel, C. E. (2013). Gender perceptions of work-life balance: Management implications for full-time employees in Australia. *Australian Journal of Management, 38*(1), 147-170. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/0312896212449828

Gambles, R., Lewis, S., & Rapoport, R. (2006). *The myth of work-life balance: The challenge of our time for men, women and societies*: John Wiley & Sons.

Gillham, B. (2005). *Research Interviewing: The range of techniques: A practical guide*: McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Greenhaus, J. H., & Allen, T. D. (2011). *Work–family balance: A review and extension of the literature* (2nd ed.): American Psychological Association.

Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. *Academy of management review, 10*(1), 76-88. doi:https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1985.4277352

Greenhaus, J. H., Collins, K. M., & Shaw, J. D. (2003). The relation between work–family balance and quality of life. *Journal of vocational behavior, 63*(3), 510-531. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/S0001-8791(02)00042-8

Greenhaus, J. H., & Powell, G. N. (2006). When work and family are allies: A theory of work-family enrichment. *Academy of management review, 31*(1), 72-92. doi:https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2006.19379625

Grzywacz, J. G., & Carlson, D. S. (2007). Conceptualizing work—family balance: Implications for practice and research. *Advances in developing human resources, 9*(4), 455-471. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422307305487

Haar, J., & Brougham, D. (2020). Work antecedents and consequences of work-life balance: A two sample study within New Zealand. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1-24. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2020.1751238

Haar, J. M. (2013). Testing a new measure of work–life balance: A study of parent and non-parent employees from New Zealand. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 24*(17), 3305-3324. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2013.775175

Haar, J. M., Russo, M., Suñe, A., & Ollier-Malaterre, A. (2014). Outcomes of work–life balance on job satisfaction, life satisfaction and mental health: A study across seven cultures. *Journal of vocational behavior, 85*(3), 361-373. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2014.08.010

Haar, J. M., Sune, A., Russo, M., & Ollier-Malaterre, A. (2019). A cross-national study on the antecedents of work–life balance from the fit and balance perspective. *Social Indicators Research, 142*(1), 261-282. doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-018-1875-6

Hall, D. T. (1972). A model of coping with role conflict: The role behavior of college educated women. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 17*(4), 471-486.

Happell, B., Dwyer, T., Reid-Searl, K., Burke, K. J., Caperchione, C. M., & Gaskin, C. J. (2013). Nurses and stress: recognizing causes and seeking solutions. *Journal of nursing management, 21*(4), 638-647. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/jonm.12037

Helvaci, M. A., & Eker, N. (2019). The effect of teachers' work-life balance on organizational citizenship behavior. *European Journal of Education Studies, 6*(6), 59-81.

Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of resources: a new attempt at conceptualizing stress. *American psychologist, 44*(3), 513-524.

Hutchings, K., Lirio, P., & Metcalfe, B. D. (2012). Gender, globalisation and development: a re-evaluation of the nature of women's global work. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 23*(9), 1763-1787. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2011.610336

Hyman, J., Scholarios, D., & Baldry, C. (2005). Getting on or getting by? Employee flexibility and coping strategies for home and work. *Work, employment and society, 19*(4), 705-725. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017005058055

Jamali, D. (2009). Constraints and opportunities facing women entrepreneurs in developing countries: A relational perspective. *Gender in management: an international journal, 24*(4), 232-251. doi:https://doi.org/10.1108/17542410910961532

Jamali, D., Safieddine, A., & Daouk, M. (2006). The glass ceiling: some positive trends from the Lebanese banking sector. *Women in Management Review, 21*(8), 625-642. doi:https://doi.org/10.1108/09649420610712027

Jauhar, J., & Lau, V. (2018). The'glass ceiling'and women's career advancement to top management: The moderating effect of social support. *Global Business and Management Research, 10*(1), 163-178.

Jennings, J. E., & McDougald, M. S. (2007). Work-family interface experiences and coping strategies: Implications for entrepreneurship research and practice. *Academy of management review, 32*(3), 747-760. doi:https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2007.25275510

Jones, F., Burke, R. J., & Westman, M. (2013). *Work-life balance: A psychological perspective* (1st ed.). London: Psychology Press.

Kalliath, T., & Brough, P. (2008). Work–life balance: A review of the meaning of the balance construct. *Journal of management & organization, 14*(3), 323-327. doi:https://doi.org/10.5172/jmo.837.14.3.323

Kayaalp, A., Page, K. J., & Rospenda, K. M. (2021). Caregiver burden, work-family conflict, family-work conflict, and mental health of caregivers: A mediational longitudinal study. *Work & Stress, 35*(3), 217-240. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2020.1832609

Kelliher, C., Richardson, J., & Boiarintseva, G. (2019). All of work? All of life? Reconceptualising work-life balance for the 21st century. *Human Resource Management Journal, 29*(2), 97-112. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12215

Kim, J. Y., & Park, S. M. (2019). Meta-Analysis on Factors Influencing Work-Life Balance (WLB). *Journal of the Korea Academia-Industrial Cooperation Society, 20*(4), 214-223. doi:https://doi.org/10.5762/KAIS.2019.20.4.214

Kossek, E. E., Su, R., & Wu, L. (2017). "Opting out" or "pushed out"? Integrating perspectives on women's career equality for gender inclusion and interventions. *Journal of Management, 43*(1), 228-254. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316671582

Kossek, E. E., Valcour, M., & Lirio, P. (2014). Organizational strategies for promoting work–life balance and wellbeing. *Work and wellbeing*, 295-318.

Kreiner, G. E., Hollensbe, E. C., & Sheep, M. L. (2009). Balancing borders and bridges: Negotiating the work-home interface via boundary work tactics. *Academy of management journal, 52*(4), 704-730. doi:https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2009.43669916

Le, H., Newman, A., Menzies, J., Zheng, C., & Fermelis, J. (2020). Work–life balance in Asia: A systematic review. *Human Resource Management Review, 30*(4), 100766. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2020.100766

Lewis, S., Anderson, D., Lyonette, C., Payne, N., & Wood, S. (2017). *Work-life balance in times of recession, austerity and beyond*: Routledge New York.

Lewis, S., & Beauregard, T. A. (2018). *The meanings of work-life balance: A cultural perspective*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Ling, Y., & Poweli, G. N. (2001). Work-family conflict in contemporary China: Beyond an American-based model. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management, 1*(3), 357-373. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/147059580113006

Liswandi, L. (2020). A Qualitative Exploration of Work-Life Balance: Experiences of Millennial Married Women Workers. *International Journal of Management, Accounting and Economics, 7*(3), 134-148.

Lu, L., Chang, T. T., Kao, S. F., & Cooper, C. L. (2015). Testing an integrated model of the work–family interface in C hinese employees: A longitudinal study. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology, 18*(1), 12-21. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/ajsp.12081

Lunau, T., Bambra, C., Eikemo, T. A., van Der Wel, K. A., & Dragano, N. (2014). A balancing act? Work–life balance, health and well-being in European welfare states. *The European Journal of Public Health, 24*(3), 422-427. doi:https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cku010

Marmenout, K., & Lirio, P. (2014). Local female talent retention in the Gulf: Emirati women bending with the wind. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 25*(2), 144-166. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2013.826916

Mustapa, N. S., Noor, K. M., & Mutalib, M. A. (2018). Why can't we have both? A discussion on work-life balance and women career advancement in Malaysia. *Journal Of Asian Finance Economics And Business, 5*(3), 103-112.

Neuman, L. W. (2007). *Social research methods, 6/E*: Pearson Education India.

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International journal of qualitative methods, 16*(1), 1-13. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

Noy, C. (2008). Sampling knowledge: The hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *International Journal of social research methodology, 11*(4), 327-344. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570701401305

Ollier-Malaterre, A., & Foucreault, A. (2017). Cross-national work-life research: Cultural and structural impacts for individuals and organizations. *Journal of Management, 43*(1), 111-136. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316655873

Phillips, M. R., & Pearson, V. (1996). *Coping in Chinese communities: The need for a new research agenda*. USA: Oxford University Press.

Rehman, S., & Roomi, M. A. (2012). Gender and work-life balance: a phenomenological study of women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. *Journal of small business and enterprise development, 19*(2), 209-228. doi:https://doi.org/10.1108/14626001211223865

Ren, X., & Caudle, D. (2016). Walking the tightrope between work and non-work life: strategies employed by British and Chinese academics and their implications. *Studies in Higher Education, 41*(4), 599-618. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.942277

Ren, X., & Caudle, D. J. (2020). Balancing academia and family life: The gendered strains and struggles between the UK and China compared. *Gender in management: an international journal, 35*(2), 141-165. doi:https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-06-2019-0093

Ren, X., & Foster, D. (2011). Women's experiences of work and family conflict in a Chinese airline. *Asia Pacific Business Review, 17*(3), 325-341. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/13602380903462159

Roomi, M. A., Rehman, S., & Henry, C. (2018). Exploring the normative context for women's entrepreneurship in Pakistan: a critical analysis. *International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship, 10*(2), 158-180. doi:https://doi.org/10.1108/IJGE-03-2018-0019

Shockley, K. M., & Singla, N. (2011). Reconsidering work—family interactions and satisfaction: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Management, 37*(3), 861-886. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310394864

Sirgy, M. J., & Lee, D.-J. (2018). Work-life balance: An integrative review. *Applied Research in Quality of Life, 13*(1), 229-254. doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-017-9509-8

Somech, A., & Drach-Zahavy, A. (2007). Strategies for coping with work-family conflict: The distinctive relationships of gender role ideology. *Journal of occupational health psychology, 12*(1), 1-19. doi:https://doi.org/10.1037/1076-8998.12.1.1

Taiji, R., & Mills, M. C. (2020). Non-standard schedules, work–family conflict, and the moderating role of national labour context: Evidence from 32 European countries. *European Sociological Review, 36*(2), 179-197. doi:https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcz048

Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., & DeVault, M. (2015). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource*: John Wiley & Sons.

Timms, C., Brough, P., O'Driscoll, M., Kalliath, T., Siu, O. L., Sit, C., & Lo, D. (2015). Positive pathways to engaging workers: work–family enrichment as a predictor of work engagement. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources, 53*(4), 490-510. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/1744-7941.12066

Tims, M., & Bakker, A. B. (2010). Job crafting: Towards a new model of individual job redesign. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 36*(2), 1-9.

Tims, M., Bakker, A. B., & Derks, D. (2012). Development and validation of the job crafting scale. *Journal of vocational behavior, 80*(1), 173-186. doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2011.05.009

Tlaiss, H., & Kauser, S. (2011). The impact of gender and family on career advancement: Evidence from Lebanese women. *Gender in management: an international journal, 26*(1), 8-36. doi:https://doi.org/10.1108/17542411111109291

Tlaiss, H. A., & Mendelson, M. B. (2014). Predicting women's job satisfaction with personal demographics: evidence from a Middle Eastern country. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 25*(3), 434-458. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2013.792859

Valcour, M. (2007). Work-based resources as moderators of the relationship between work hours and satisfaction with work-family balance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 92*(6), 1512-1523. doi:https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.6.1512

Voydanoff, P. (2005). Toward a conceptualization of perceived work-family fit and balance: A demands and resources approach. *Journal of marriage and family, 67*(4), 822-836. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2005.00178.x

Waqar, S., Hanif, R., & Loh, J. (2021). Invisibility not invincibility: Pakistani women and the lack of career ascendance. *Gender in management: an international journal, 36*(6), 731-744. doi:https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-10-2020-0299

Warr, P. (2011). *Work, happiness, and unhappiness*: Psychology Press.

Waters, J. (2015). Snowball sampling: A cautionary tale involving a study of older drug users. *International Journal of social research methodology, 18*(4), 367-380. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2014.953316

Wayne, J. H., Butts, M. M., Casper, W. J., & Allen, T. D. (2017). In search of balance: A conceptual and empirical integration of multiple meanings of work–family balance. *Personnel Psychology, 70*(1), 167-210. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12132

WDI, W. B. (1995). labor force participation rate for females. Retrieved from https://data.worldbank.org

Wong, K., Chan, A. H., & Teh, P.-L. (2020). How is work–life balance arrangement associated with organisational performance? A meta-analysis. *International journal of environmental research and public health, 17*(12), 1-19. doi:https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17124446

Wood, J., Oh, J., Park, J., & Kim, W. (2020). The relationship between work engagement and work–life balance in organizations: A review of the empirical research. *Human Resource Development Review, 19*(3), 240-262. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484320917560

Wrzesniewski, A., & Dutton, J. E. (2001). Crafting a job: Revisioning employees as active crafters of their work. *Academy of management review, 26*(2), 179-201. doi:https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2001.4378011

Xiao, Y., & Cooke, F. L. (2012). Work–life balance in C hina? Social policy, employer strategy and individual coping mechanisms. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources, 50*(1), 6-22. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-7941.2011.00005.x

Yaghi, A. (2016). Is it the human resource policy to blame? Examining intention to quit among women managers in Arab Middle Eastern context. *Gender in management: an international journal, 31*(7), 479-495. doi:https://doi.org/10.1108/GM-11-2015-0094