

RESEARCH ARTICLE

WORK-LIFE BALANCE STUDY FOCUSED ON SAUDI WORKING WOMEN

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Abstract: Work-life balance is a term used to describe the balance between an individual's professional and personal life. A healthy work-life balance assumes great significance for working women particularly in the current context in which both, the family and the workplace have posed several challenges and problems for women. This study was conducted to investigate, and understand issues related to work-life balance for working- women in Saudi Arabia. This work was done based on quantitative method. Survey questionnaire was used for data collection. The survey results showed that women highly consider their children security as their first problem when they are at work. Majority of women do not consider working overtime as they prefer more time to be spent with the family. Flexible working hours and reduced work pressure were also found to have an important role for Saudi women overcoming work-life imbalance. Result showed that the Saudi working woman are not obsessed with any of the factors affecting their work except their children.

Keywords: Working women, obstacles, work-life balance, challenges, personal life.

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INTRODUCTION

Women's growing interest in the workforce is hampered by a number of issues. Managing work and family responsibilities is one of the most significant challenges that women encounter, among other things (Bharucha, 2016).

In an effort to increase work-life balance, women are starting to work for themselves in order to gain flexibility and control over their personal and professional lives. Because of the uneven weight of family responsibilities, women typically have more difficulty juggling work and family obligations than do men (Toffoletti and Starr, 2016).

Women's Work-Life Balance in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia PJAEE (2021) Women experience unequal access to childcare and other household responsibilities, which can seriously impede their ability to advance in their careers (Subramaniam *et. al.*, 2015). In a culture centered on men, where women are expected to share the heavy burden of family care, supervising work and family for career

women can be extremely challenging (Silbermann, 2015). Additionally, due to the widely held belief that men should be considered "providers" and women should be considered "house creators," stereotypes about gender orientation in the workplace and family care are typically formed (Silbermann, 2015). In this way, women's parenthood is less controversial than men's parenthood due to the social development of gender.

Despite the challenges that working women face in their personal and familial lives, cultural norms and beliefs also reveal a greater emphasis on women in both developed and developing countries. In public, people associate particular traits and preferences with a person's gender jobs with clear orientation. These traits and aspirations frequently affect women's career decisions. Moreover, cultural beliefs regard women as indispensable caregivers (Lappegard *et. al.*, 2017).

The concept of work-life balance is no longer a marvel limited to the West. Even though the majority of the research conducted here is focused on western contexts, globalization, which has a huge impact on authoritative settings worldwide, is also causing research to expand toward eastern cultures (Perrons, 2016).

Several studies on women's work-life balance have been published. The best strategies used by women to adjust to the competing demands of work and family are crucial organizing, categorizing, and assigning, according to research by Karkoulian *et. al.* (2016), which looked into a variety of factors that affect women's work-family balance.

When Hawker (2016) looked into the challenges of work-life balance for female doctors, she discovered that each person's ability to maintain their own work-life balance depended on the allocation and cooperation of a variety of resources, including time, money, the degree of basic leadership, and physical, passionate, and social resources.

Gherardi (2015) investigated the problems with work-life balance that businesswomen faced and discovered that the main factors affecting work-life balance are job overload, concerns about subordinate consideration, wellbeing, time management, and the lack of appropriate social support. When Agarwal and Lenka (2015) assessed the work-life balance of female entrepreneurs, they discovered that the problem of job struggle among women is a result of both their potential jobs and expanding family responsibilities.

Thriveni and Rama (2012) examined the relationship between work-life parity and statistic factors like place of origin and discovered a significant relationship between work-life balance and statistic factors. The gender differences in multisource assessments of work-life balance for managers were examined by Lyness and Judiesch (2014).

They discovered that directors' perceptions of representatives' work-life balance differed depending on the country and gender orientation, which has significant implications for the work-life hypothesis and practical implications for global businesses.

Priya (2017) examined the work-life balance of female educators and discovered a significant difference in the work-life balance of female educators based on age and years of service. It's comparatively different in Saudi Arabia, where decisions about women's employment are more influenced by sociocultural factors and religious beliefs. Family is the most important thing to Saudi women. Therefore, they will undoubtedly choose family over work if forced to make that decision. Women's Work-Life Balance for Women In Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (Alfarasani and Mohammad 2021).

Bahkali (2013) states that the most difficult things for Saudi women to think about when looking for a job are transportation, health insurance, and culture and religion. However, the majority of Saudi working women are thought to share a common set of issues that include children, working hours, and home help. All of these problems, though, may make life unbalanced for Saudi women in the workforce.

As a result, research on this subject is still ongoing in Saudi Arabia, and there are still no satisfactory answers or appropriate understandings for the challenges Saudi women face in juggling their personal and professional lives (Shakil Ahmad *et. al.*, 2011). Thus, the purpose of this study was to learn more about the problems Saudi working women in Jeddah face in trying to balance their personal and professional lives. This study aims to go farther in analyzing the variables influencing Saudi working women's ability to strike a work-life balance and to offer solutions for issues they may have encountered (Powell, 2018, Speirs *et. al.* 2015).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research investigates the connection between work-life balance initiatives and female employees' job satisfaction in Saudi Arabia's education sector.

Methods

Both a quantitative and a qualitative approach were used in this study. The quantitative approach uses primary data to generate statistics about the demographics of female employees, the amount of work-life balance features offered, the level of support offered, and the proportion of women who associate work-life balance with the caliber of

their job performance. However, the qualitative approach gives survey respondents a chance to voice their opinions and collects data through a review of the literature that yields descriptive findings about the causes of female employees' job dissatisfaction.

Data Sources

Survey questions served as the primary source and literature reviews served as the secondary source in the scientific data collection process. The primary data were gathered by distributing survey questionnaires to female employees in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's education sector. The survey has been thoughtfully designed to give specific information about the respondents, their jobs, the organization's work-life balance initiatives, the support of families and the community, and the overall impact of these initiatives on participants' job satisfaction and performance.

In order to ensure participant understanding-since some may only understand Arabic as expected-it was also provided in both Arabic and English. In order to analyze the various factors and gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives, the survey gave participants the opportunity to share their thoughts and recommendations.

The secondary sources come from a review of the literature on the relationship between work-life balance initiatives and overall organizational performance, as well as studies regarding the impact of work-life balance on gender. The literature shows how work-life balance initiatives, which optimize an organization's overall performance, contribute to employees' commitment to the company they work for. Additionally, it offers proof of the significant impact the company's

work-life balance initiatives have on employee turnover rates.

Procedure and Sample

Participants had to be female because this study explores work-life balance from a female perspective. The sample was selected based on participant gender and place of employment. The study's goal was to have at least one hundred participants. Among the participants' geographic backgrounds were working women in a range of occupations. Both emails were used to distribute the surveys. Participants received the survey at a convenient time. Additionally, the survey distribution process made sure that the random sample of women employed in a variety of sectors satisfied the required criteria.

Hypothesis

- Factors affecting the nature of job based on Age
- Factors affecting the nature of job based on Qualification
- Factors affecting the nature of job based on Marital Status
- Taking work home and Age

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant relation between Nature of business and business problems like money, labor shortage, material shortage, technical know-how (technology) etc.

Alternate Hypothesis: There is significant relation between Nature of business and business problems like money, labor shortage, material shortage, technical know-how (technology) etc.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Table 1: Relation between age and factors affecting work

		Which among the following is really affecting your work?										Total	
		No factors affect my work life		Poor family support		Poor society support		Thinking about my children safety and security if I am not at home		Unable to take independent decisions being a women		No.	%
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Age	20-25 years	4	30.8			4	30.8	2	15.4	3	23.1	13	100.0
	26-30	6	37.5			4	25.0	4	25.0	2	12.5	16	100.0

	years												
	31-35 years	14	34.1	4	9.8	2	4.9	17	41.5	4	9.8	41	100.0
	36-40 years	10	33.3	4	13.3	2	6.7	12	40.0	2	6.7	30	100.0
Total		34	34.0	8	8.0	12	12.0	35	35.0	11	11.0	100	100.0

Table 2: Shows that there is no significant relationship between age and the factors affecting the job

	Value	df	Prob.	Sig.
Chi-Square	17.076	12	.147	Ns

Critical value: 21.026

Ns – No Significance

0.05 – Significant at 5% level

0.01 – Significant at 1% level

Table 3: Relation between qualification and factors affecting Work of Saudi women

		Which among the following is really affecting your work?										Total	
		No factors affect my work life		Poor family support		Poor society support		Thinking about my children safety and security if I am not at home		Unable to take independent decisions being a women		No.	%
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Qualification	Schooling	2	22.2			2	22.2	2	22.2	3	33.3	9	100.0
	Bachelor's degree	20	30.8	4	6.2	8	12.3	27	41.5	6	9.2	65	100.0
	Master's degree	12	46.2	4	15.4	2	7.7	6	23.1	2	7.7	26	100.0
Total		34	34.0	8	8.0	12	12.0	35	35.0	11	11.0	100	100.0

Table 4: Shows “there is no association between the variables Qualification and Factors affecting the work

	Value	df	Prob.	Sig.
Chi-Square	12.451	8	.132	Ns

Critical value: 15.507

Table 5: Relation between marital status and various factors affecting work of Saudi women

		Which among the following is really affecting your work?										Total	
		No factors affect my work life		Poor family support		Poor society support		Thinking about my children safety and security if I am not at home		Unable to take independent decisions being a women		No.	%
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Marital status	Married	18	26.9	8	11.9	8	11.9	29	43.3	4	6.0	67	100.0
	Unmarried	16	48.5			4	12.1	6	18.2	7	21.2	33	100.0
Total		34	34.0	8	8.0	12	12.0	35	35.0	11	11.0	100	100.0

Table 6: shows that the calculated value (15.630) is greater than the table value 13.277 at 1% level of significance. Hence the Null hypothesis, “there is no association between the variables Marital status and Factors affecting the work is rejected

	Value	df	Prob.	Sig.
Chi-Square	15.630	4	.004	0.01

Critical value: 13.277

Table 7: Relation between age and frequency of carrying work home

		How often do you take work home?						Total	
		Don't carry work home		Everyday		weekly one or two days		No.	%
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Age	20-25 years	7	53.8			6	46.2	13	100.0
	26-30 years	6	37.5			10	62.5	16	100.0
	31-35 years	17	41.5	4	9.8	20	48.8	41	100.0
	36-40 years	6	20.0	8	26.7	16	53.3	30	100.0
Total		36	36.0	12	12.0	52	52.0	100	100.0

Table 8: Shows that the calculated value (13.180) is less than the table value 16.812 at 5% level of significance. Hence the Null hypothesis, “there is no association between the variables Age and Carrying work at home is accepted

	Value	df	Prob.	Sig.
Chi-Square	13.180	6	.040	0.05

Critical value: 16.812

Table 9: Relation between age and missing a personal event due to work

		Have you missed a personal event because of work?				Total	
		Yes		No		No.	%
		No.	%	No.	%		
Age	20-25 years	9	69.2	4	30.8	13	100.0
	26-30 years	14	87.5	2	12.5	16	100.0
	31-35 years	35	85.4	6	14.6	41	100.0
	36-40 years	24	80.0	6	20.0	30	100.0
Total		82	82.0	18	18.0	100	100.0

Table 10: Shows that there is no significant relation between the variables “Age” and “missing a personal event because of work”.

	Value	df	Prob.	Sig.
Chi-Square	2.160	3	.540	Ns

Critical value: 7.815

Table 11: Relation between salary range and missing a personal event due to work

		Have you missed a personal event because of work?				Total	
		Yes		No		No.	%
		No.	%	No.	%		
What is your income (salary range)?	< 4000 SAR	9	81.8	2	18.2	11	100.0
	4000-8000 SAR	12	75.0	4	25.0	16	100.0
	8000-10000 SAR	22	84.6	4	15.4	26	100.0
	>10000 SAR	39	83.0	8	17.0	47	100.0
Total		82	82.0	18	18.0	100	100.0

Table 12: Shows that there is no significant relation between the variables “Salary” and “missing a personal event because of work”

	Value	df	Prob.	Sig.
Chi-Square	.682	3	.877	Ns

Critical value: 7.815

Table 13: Relation between age and balance between personal life and work life

		Are you able to balance your personal life and work life?				Total	
		Yes		No		No.	%
		No.	%	No.	%		
Age	20-25 years	7	53.8	6	46.2	13	100.0
	26-30 years	10	62.5	6	37.5	16	100.0
	31-35 years	23	56.1	18	43.9	41	100.0
	36-40 years	24	80.0	6	20.0	30	100.0
Total		64	64.0	36	36.0	100	100.0

Table 14: Shows that there is no significant relation between the variables “Age” and “personal and work life balance”

	Value	df	Prob.	Sig.
Chi-Square	5.042	3	.169	Ns

Critical value: 7.815

Table 15: Relation between age and working overtime

		How often do you work overtime?						Total	
		Do not prefer Overtime		Everyday		Very rare		No.	%
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Age	20-25 years	6	46.2	3	23.1	4	30.8	13	100.0
	26-30 years	8	50.0	2	12.5	6	37.5	16	100.0
	31-35 years	16	39.0	9	22.0	16	39.0	41	100.0
	36-40 years	22	73.3	6	20.0	2	6.7	30	100.0
Total		52	52.0	20	20.0	28	28.0	100	100.0

Table 16: Shows that there is no significant relation between the variables “Age” and “working overtime”

	Value	df	Prob.	Sig.
Chi-Square	11.848	6	.065	Ns

Critical value: 12.592

Table 17: Relation between marital status and working overtime

		How often do you work overtime?						Total	
		Do not prefer Overtime		Everyday		Very rare		No.	%
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
Marital Status	Married	38	56.7	13	19.4	16	23.9	67	100.0
	Unmarried	14	42.4	7	21.2	12	36.4	33	100.0
Total		52	52.0	20	20.0	28	28.0	100	100.0

Table 18: Shows that there is no significant relation between the variables “Marital status” and working overtime

	Value	df	Prob.	Sig.
Chi-Square	2.135	2	.344	Ns

Critical value: 5.991

FINDINGS

The major concern about the working women is about her thoughts on the safety and security of her children. Irrespective of any age category and qualification it was found that Saudi working women focus more on her children’s safety apart from any factors that hinders her growth in work life.

- The study also found that married women at work focus more on the children safety as pointed earlier and the majority of “unmarried working women” says that they are not affected by any of the factors in their work life. This shows the independence and the dedication towards their work.
- It was also found that majority of women say that weekly one or two days they carry their work home. For some it is not necessary to take work at home.

- The Research also found that majority of working women loose some of their personal events in the family due to the engagement in work. This factor is common with every women working irrespective of their salary.
- Majority of the Saudi women agreed with the factor that they are able to balance their personal life and work life smoothly. Nearly 80% of women aged between 36-40 years agreed of having a good balance in their work life and personal life.
- It was found that majority of working women in Saudi arabia is highly not interested in Overtime workload irrespective of their Age and Marital status.

CONCLUSION

The work-life balance analyses in this study aim to comprehend the variables influencing

working women's work-life balance as well as the effects of having a poor work-life balance.

Women are still primarily in charge of their families, and they are rarely given priority in their careers. The main things affecting working women's work-life balance are the weight of excessive work, the need to live up to others' expectations, and a lack of personal time. Women consequently face high levels of stress and anxiety at work, burn out from their jobs, are unable to reach their full potential, and do not have harmonious family lives. Informal interviews with working women showed that those with flexible work schedules and family support schedule enjoyed better work life balance.

The aforementioned results have implications for women in the workforce in terms of developing a better understanding of the variables influencing work-life balance and the effects of inadequate work-life balance. It also offers guidance on how to come up with ways to preserve a positive work-life balance. The study makes it abundantly evident that it is the responsibility of working women to attain a balanced and harmonious life in both domains.

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