

Work life balance: Exploring well-being of Working Mothers in Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab Pakistan

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Abstract

This study highlights the problems faced by working mothers due to dual responsibilities. Many factors contributed to these problems like lack of cooperation from family, long duty hours, parenting, traditional values and gender role expectations. A sample of 150 long working hours mothers of government and private sectors from the study areas of Dera Ghazi Khan was taken through double stage sampling technique. Working mothers felt difficulty in maintaining work-life balance. They experienced health issues like less energy, fatigue, high blood pressure and strained relationships with family and colleagues. Long duty hours affect the child and mother relationship. Stressful environment leads to psychological issues like stress, burnout, poor sleep quality, lose temper, anxiety, hypertension and low productivity. Results also showed longer the working hours were associated with hypertension, stress and burnout. Less cooperation from family was associated with poor work life balance. Poor work life balance was associated with high blood pressure. It is suggested that for the well-being of working mothers work sectors should arrange flexible working hours, supportive work place environment, self-care courses, time management skills, and family leave policies.

Keywords: Dual Responsibilities, Long Working Hours, Health, Well-Being, Stress

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Introduction

Historically, society has anticipated that women fulfill dual roles: managing the household and its members as primary caregivers, while also bearing and nurturing infants.

Traditionally, it was believed that women should remain at home to attend to their family, particularly the children. During the 18th century, with the onset of the industrial revolution, women were essential for the operation of factories. Urbanization and globalization have presented working women with various challenges, including marriage, childrearing, and significant transformations in the workplace (Chacko, 2020; Shah et al. 2021a).

Women are transcending conventional gender conventions and participating in the workforce in both public and private sectors. Overworked employees result from stringent work schedules, challenging jobs, and stringent deadlines. Single working mothers often encounter significant difficulties in balancing the obligations of their careers and families due to patriarchal cultural norms within their communities (Prahara and Rayana, 2023; Shah et al. 2021b; Taqi et al. 2021).

Women are progressively choosing to pursue professions traditionally dominated by men upon entering the workforce. They are ascending the corporate hierarchy swiftly, thereby accessing more demanding and time-intensive leadership positions that were hitherto unattainable. This indicates that, on average, women are dedicating less time to familial responsibilities at home and more time to professional engagements. Nevertheless, women continue to undertake the majority of household chores despite contributing monetarily. In Pakistan, women are anticipated to manage all domestic duties, encompassing childcare and eldercare, irrespective of their employment status, hence increasing their workload. Their job commitments may significantly complicate their roles as a husband or parent due to the heightened workload (Sarfaraz and Khalid, 2021; Asghar & Mumtaz, 2024; Sibte-Ali et al. 2018).

To ensure the health and safety of employees, firms must implement measures to eliminate any job-related dangers. Exceeding fifty-five hours or forty-eight hours of labor per week might jeopardize workers' health, leading to issues such as depression and anxiety. A dietary alteration may be the fundamental cause of diabetes. Individuals working more than 34.4, 54.5, and 48.0 hours per week were more susceptible to depression and anxiety, respectively. The effects of prolonged work hours on depression and anxiety are not entirely clear, even in cases of excessive working hours. Furthermore, research indicates that female employees are more prone to anxiety and depression than their male colleagues, while working the same number of hours (Wong and Chan et al., 2019).

Working women and their families can experience conflict owing to the substantial demands of their career and insufficient support from family members during work hours. Time limitations and disparities in responsibilities, such as a professional role demanding meticulous execution, hinder the fulfillment of familial tasks. Global family conflict may occur when a professional's responsibilities, including punctuality, completion of routine tasks, and mandatory overtime, conflict with their personal life. Similarly, when a working individual's domestic obligations are fulfilled, it affords scant opportunity for them to concentrate on their professional duties or partake in career-related creative endeavors (Wijayanto et al., 2022).

Researches indicate that stress, anxiety, melancholy, and fatigue are more prevalent among working mothers. An additional benefit for working mothers is the support they obtain

for their families and for their commendable character. Working women have numerous barriers, including an insufficient work environment, societal obstacles, and health-related concerns, all of which exacerbate their workload beyond requirements (Saha and Basawaraj, 2022; Iram et al., 2024).

Challenges related to work-life balance frequently revolve around issues such as stress, anxiety, and a rigid work schedule, alongside the necessity for continuous professional development to satisfy the expectations of contemporary employers. Due to the absence of effective policies for working mothers, numerous individuals are dismissed from their positions when they attempt to negotiate for flexible work hours, remote work options, and childcare assistance. They asserted that motherhood and family formation should take priority over securing employment. Notwithstanding their confidence, numerous professional women prioritize their health lastly; convinced they can manage all their obligations. Fatigue and diminished productivity at work are indicators of excessive labor. Mental health disorders significantly affect the personal lives of working mothers (Ravindranath et al., (2021).

The mental health and stress levels of working mothers are elevated due to the significant stress they encounter every day at home and in the workplace. Excessive labor, little rest, and a detrimental work environment all contribute to a working mother's mental health challenges, including depression, stress, and other psychological disorders. None of these factors enhance the well-being of the working mother, and they adversely affect her health and creativity, both of which are vital for any professional (Thompson et al., 2020).

Objective of the Study

This study concentrated on the following objectives:

1. To explore the challenges faced by working mothers in maintaining work-life balance in city Dera Ghazi Khan.
2. Assessing the influence of work life balance on the well-being of working mothers in city Dera Ghazi Khan.

Review of literature

Ahmad (2020) explained that working mothers are confronting mental health challenges such as stress, fatigue, an overwhelming workload, and inadequate nourishment. Obesity and overweight are among the numerous health issues that women may encounter due to their dietary selections and external factors. Optimal health is achieved by women who prioritize their dietary, sleep, exercise, and recreational routines. In contemporary competitive businesses, women frequently encounter numerous problems, some of which are directly associated with their health.

Khokhar et al. (2020) stated that family and employment significantly impact the daily lives of Pakistani working women. The majority of Asian households continue to comprise married individuals. This indicates that women, especially those who are married or have in-laws, experience continual pressure from their families. Following the theft of substantial sums from these employed women, their husbands and in-laws continue to seek grounds for conflict with them. Domestic violence may ensue from these disputes. Nevertheless, many employed married women prioritize their occupations over their families' demands and responsibilities. Their inclination to extend working hours arises from a need to enhance support for their families as their responsibilities grow.

Hosseini et al. (2023) stated the majority of domestic responsibilities, child-rearing, and elder care are borne by working women, who already manage a substantial workload in addition to their professional duties. The stress related to employment and its effects on women's health has brought the challenge of balancing work and family obligations to the forefront of public discussion. Due to societal expectations and behavioral standards imposed on women, they encounter greater family and professional conflicts compared to their male counterparts while managing work and domestic responsibilities.

Salleh et al. (2023) studied working mothers may exhibit physical symptoms such as fatigue and hypertension due to emotional fluctuations stemming from conflicts. This becomes increasingly apparent when one's relatives, colleagues, and superiors decline to provide assistance. Identifying motivation-based solutions is essential in this context to enable working women to regain their enthusiasm and commitment to both their careers and familial responsibilities.

Alotaibi and Aldossry (2024) determined that conflict between professional and familial obligations emerges as working women must balance both personal and occupational responsibilities. The issue has intensified because to the cultural paradoxes around parenting. The conventional responsibilities of moms at home encompass being hospitable, considerate, adaptable, and emotionally perceptive. However, they must exhibit aggression, competitiveness, and vigor in the workplace. There will be instances when it is unfeasible to equilibrate professional and familial obligations.

Prasiska et al. (2024) argued the challenge of balancing maternal and professional responsibilities is a prevalent source of role conflict for working women. This may lead to anxiety and deterioration in quality of life. It influences her perceived health. Housewives enhance familial happiness as they dedicate more time to their children, thereby not missing significant developmental milestones, unlike stay-at-home mothers. Numerous mothers encounter emotional difficulties, such as a diminished sense of identity, self-worth, and independence.

Research Methodology

A cross-sectional study was designed to investigate the well-being of working mothers in Dera Ghazi Khan, Punjab, Pakistan. A sample of 150 working mothers, employed in both government and private sectors, was obtained from the study areas of Dera Ghazi Khan using a double-stage sampling technique. In the first phase, 10 departments of Dera Ghazi Khan were selected by convenience sampling; in the subsequent stage, 15 participants (working mothers) from each selected department were picked using the same technique. To get information from respondents, close ended questionnaire comprising 49 items was constructed in the light of study objectives. The items were rated at five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree=1, Agree=2, Neutral=3, Disagree=4, Strongly disagree=5). The independent variable was work-life balance while dependent variables were well-being of working mothers. The accuracy of research tool was done by pretesting on 20 respondents. After the pre-testing 3 questions added in the questionnaire and 2 questions re-phrased.

Discussion and Analysis

The results showed that a large number (76.0) percent working mothers were in age group 25-40 years and this is the crucial time for both career and family. As they participants were working mothers, all were educated and majority of them (97.0) percent have completed their college. All the participants were living with their husbands. Occupation category was divided into government job and private job, the results showed that majority (79.3) percent of the participants had government job. Majority (76.6) percent of participants had monthly income above 40,000 PKRs. More than (50.0) percent of the participants said that they were doing their job because they need that job and want to assist their family financially. Further, almost (90.0) percent of respondents claimed that their contribution in family budget was more than 50%. Majority of the participants said that their work life balance was poor.

Table 1: Challenges faced by working mothers

Challenges faced by working mothers	S.A%	A%	N%	D.A%	S.D.A%	Total
You feel yourself overburden due to job and household work.	32.7	38.0	14.7	12.7	2.0	100
You feel stress and strain due to long duty hours.	29.3	38.7	13.3	15.3	3.3	100
You face less cooperation from family to manage household work.	30.3	41.3	12.7	14.0	1.7	100
You feel strain in relation with colleagues due to over work.	31.3	38.7	14.7	10.0	5.3	100
Your workplace environment is stressful for you.	36.0	40.0	14.0	9.3	0.7	100

Table 1 presents challenges faced by working mothers in work-life balance, depicting that majority of the participants (70.7) percent accepted (strongly agreed and agreed) that they felt themselves overburden due to job and household work. Majority of the working mothers (68.0) percent reported (strongly agreed and agreed) that they have felt stressed and strained due to long duty hours. Cooperation from family was another important factor and majority (71.6) percent of the participants said (strongly agreed and agreed) that they received less cooperation from family to manage household work. Due to over work the relations with colleagues are also affected as majority (70.0) percent of working mothers believed (strongly agreed and agreed) that they felt strain in their relations with fellow workers due to over work. Further, a great portion of research participants i.e (76.0) percent claimed that their work place environment was stressful for them. In sum, the working mothers face several challenges to meet the work-life balance and the situation get worse when they don't have support and cooperation from their family. These findings correspond with existing studies and literature showed that working mothers face prolonged labor, insufficient rest, and a detrimental work environment all exacerbate a working mother's psychological discomfort, thus impairing her physical health and creative thinking attributes vital for any employee (Thompson et al. 2020; Alotaibi and Aldossry 2024).

Table 2: Long duty hours and its effects on well being

Effects of over work on well being	S.A%	A%	N%	D.A%	S.D.A%	Total
You feel less energy due to over work.	38.0	35.3	13.3	11.3	2.0	100
You face hypertension due to over work.	26.7	42.0	12.0	16.0	3.3	100
You feel stressed and burnout due to over work.	38.0	39.3	12.7	9.3	0.7	100
You face high blood pressure due to over work.	26.7	44.7	19.3	8.0	1.3	100
You face poor sleep quality due to over work.	32.7	42.7	14.0	9.3	1.3	100

Table 2 presents the results about impacts of long duty hours on well-being of working mothers and results showed that majority (73.3) percent participants believed (strongly agreed and agreed) that they felt less energy due to over work. Hypertension is another factor which working mothers faced due to long duty hours and household responsibilities. The presented data described that majority (68.7) percent of the participants reported (strongly agreed and agreed) that they faced hypertension due to over work. The results depicted that (77.3) percent of the participants accepted (strongly agreed and agreed) that they felt stress and burnout due to over work. Majority (71.4) percent of the participants said (strongly agreed and agreed) that they faced high blood pressure due to over work. Constant overwork routine affects the sleep cycle of workers as the presented results showed that majority (75.4) percent of the participants believed (strongly agreed and agreed) that they faced poor sleep quality due to over work. This data

showed that dual responsibilities of workplace and household lead to poor well-being of working mothers in study area. These results align with previous studies achieving an equilibrium between professional and personal life is referred to as work-life balance. The escalating pressures of achieving financial independence and multitasking impose a significant hardship on the lives of several women (Agrawal and Amin 2023; Ramos and Diego 2022; Sharma et al. 2022).

Table 3: Association between long working hours and hypertension due to overwork and stress and burnout

Duty Hours Per Week	Hypertension due to Over Work					Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
48 to 51 hours	31	11	8	3	1	54
52 to 55 hours	23	46	11	11	0	91
Above 55 hours	3	2	0	0	0	5
Total	57	59	19	14	1	150

$$\chi^2 = 22.379, (p = 0.004), \gamma = 0.266, (p = 0.38)$$

There is a statistically significant correlation ($P = 0.004$) between working longer hours and hypertension as a result of overwork, as shown by the chi-square value (22.379) in that table. Additionally, the gamma value of (0.266) showed that these variables were positively related to one another. Accordingly, the researcher has come to the conclusion that there is a link between the variables and has accepted the hypothesis. "The longer the working hour, the more hypertension will be due to overwork," it says. There was a statistical acceptance of the hypothesis at the 0.01 level of significance. Consistent with other research, these findings highlight the need of maintaining a healthy work-life balance in the face of contemporary challenges such as overwork, stress, and unpredictable hours (Ravindranath et al. 2021 ; Alotaibi and Aldossry 2024 ; Park et al. 2020).

Table 4: Association between less cooperation from family and poor work life balance

Less Cooperation from Family	Condition of Work Life Balance				
	Very Poor	Poor	Neutral	Good	Total
Very poor	5	13	23	22	63
Poor	6	19	15	8	48
Neutral	0	15	4	0	19
Good	1	6	6	7	20
Total	12	53	48	37	150

$$\chi^2 = 28.076, (p = 0.001), \gamma = -0.227, (p = 0.022)$$

There is a statistically significant correlation ($P = 0.001$) between less cooperation from family and the condition of work-life balance the chi-square value (28.076) in that table. There was an association between these variables, as shown by the gamma value of (0.227). Accordingly, the researcher has come to the conclusion that there is a link between the variables and has accepted the hypothesis. Less cooperation from family was linked to poor work life balance. There was a statistical acceptance of the hypothesis at the 0.01 level of significance. These findings are in accordance with earlier research, which has shown that managing all of these responsibilities can lead to tension between the workplace and the household chores (Jannah et al., 2022).

Table 5: Association between work life balance and high blood pressure

Condition of work life balance	High Blood Pressure due to Overwork					Total
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
Very poor	1	2	0	0	0	3
Poor	3	109	6	6	0	124
Neutral	1	6	0	8	2	17
Good	0	2	1	3	0	6
Total	5	119	7	17	2	150

$\chi^2 = 66.362$, ($p = 0.000$), $\gamma = 0.754$, ($p = 0.000$)

There is a statistically significant correlation ($P = 0.000$) between condition of work life balance and high blood pressure, as shown by the chi-square value (66.362) in that table. A inverse association between these variables was also shown by the gamma value (-0.754). Accordingly, the researcher has come to the conclusion that there is a link between the variables and has accepted the hypothesis. Condition of work life balance was associated with high blood pressure. There was a statistical acceptance of the hypothesis at the 0.01 level of significance.

Consistent with earlier research, this study found that long-hour workers had an increased risk of hypertension, cardiovascular disease, exhaustion, stress, depression, muscle diseases, diabetes, chronic infections, and a host of other health issues and mortality (Abbas et al., 2019).

Conclusion and Recommendation

Majority working mothers have felt overburden due to job and household work. They felt stress and strain due to over work. Less cooperation from family make it difficult for working mothers to balance their work and household responsibilities. Majority participants said that due to over work they feel strain in their relation with coworkers. Majority participants said that their workplace environment was stressful for them. Majority of the participants that they have felt less energy due to long duty hours. They faced hypertension due to overwork. Majority of the

participants have felt stressed and burnout due to overwork. Majority of the participants faced high blood pressure due to overwork. They also faced poor sleep quality due to long duty hours. Results also showed longer the working hours were associated with hypertension due to overwork and stress or burnout. Less cooperation from family was associated with poor work life- balance. Condition of work life balance was associated with high blood pressure. Further, it is suggested that for the well-being of working mothers work sectors should arrange flexible working hours, supportive work place environment, self-care courses, time management skills, and family leave policies.

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