Research

# WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AND CAREER ORIENTATION AMONGST EMPLOYED WOMEN IN BANKS AND HOSPITALS

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## Abstract

*The changing environment of banking and health care business is altering the demands of organizations regarding female employees' performance and expectations. Consequently, this has led into believing that female employees need to be as apt and productive as their male counterparts. Questing for productivity, banking and hospital organizations expect from these female employees their full-time availability through organizational commitment. They often overlook the truth that female employees have a family to cater to and have simultaneous roles to play. This initiates the most commonly observed problem of Work-family conflict (WFC) amongst female full time banking and hospital employees in Pakistan. The study employed the survey methodology comprising 131 randomly selected full-time female banking and hospital workers through self-administered questionnaire. The study finds that there is no significant difference in the opinions of the employed female hospital and banking officials pertaining to their experienced level of work-life conflict.*

**Keywords:** Work-life conflict, career-orientation, full-time female employees

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With strong family orientation and rooted family relations, Pakistan is one of those countries where family acts as a nucleus and is considered as a source of contentment and peace in life. The concept of family organization is based on "Male bread winner-Female home maker concept" (Komarraju, 2006). With an increased rate of professional education, economic crisis, lack of employment, ever increasing inflation and poverty, competition and a thirst to enhance living standards, people in Pakistan have started realizing the need to share this responsibility equally between the men and women in family. Owing to this enigmatically demand-led scenario in family orientation, women are not merely the life partners. Rather, they are the business partners who assist their husbands and fathers in maintaining the family too (Domenico& Jones, 2006).

Pakistani employed women on full-time job status in banks and hospitals experience many hardships through the course of their working life economically and morally with an overwhelming emphasis on working hours, child care, professional duties and creatively balancing work and family (Ansari, 2006).

Although different aspects of work family conflict and career orientation among women in the west have been identified through research (Ahmad, 2008; Hakim, C., 2006; Domenico& Jones, 2006; Bailyn, L., 1974; Komarraju, 2006; Bhowon, 2013), more research into this direction is essentially required in context of Pakistan (Anwar &Shahzad, 2011). Through research, this has been observed that the social values and norms practiced in Pakistan are significantly different from the west (Anwar &Shahzad, 2011). This research is aimed at observing and exploring the relationship between the two constructs of career orientation of full time employed females in banks and hospitals and the WFC from the perspective of Pakistani culture and its consequences. The research is carried out in the banking sector as well as the hospitals of Karachi where female employment ratio is increasing as it offers a challenging environment for females to work.

**Review of Literature**

*Work Family Conflict*

Work family conflict is identified as an added stressor in a professional's life (Logue &Ayman, 2009; Ahmad, 2008) which may lead towards negative outcomes including improper functioning of family in the form of neglected children, high reporting rate of broken families, complaints from life partners for spending less time with them, family quarrels and psychological distress and disorders. Greenhauss and Beutell (1985) defines work- family conflict as a form of inter role conflict that arises due to mutual incompatibility of roles a person has to play in work and family domains. Women working in the banks and hospitals have simultaneous associations with the respective organizations and their families where the focal person may play the role as an employee, mother and a wife (Kahn, et al, 1964). The imbalance between the multiple roles in work and family may result into work family conflict (Greenhauss & Beutell, 1985). According to Scarcity Hypothesis, individuals have limited time and energy and they have to devote this limited resource among work and family equally which initiates this imbalance (Ahmad, 2008). It results into difficulties for participation of the person in the work role and the family role together (Greenhauss & Beutell, 1985; Ahmad, 2008; Kahn, et al, 1964).

Research has shown that the work family conflict may have different predictors (Ahmad, 2008) which could be job related such as work time commitment and job involvement. The individual related factors also comprise gender role orientation (Ahmad, 2008). Each of these predictors has their own unique impact and severity on work family conflict. This research is particularly centered towards full time employed women's career orientation and their respective consequences on WFC.

*Career Orientation*

Career orientation has proved to be a strong relationship with WFC (Greenhauss and Beutell; Hakim, C., 2006; Bailyn, L., 1974). According to Arthur and Lawrence (1984), career is defined as a sequence of attitudes, activities or behaviors associated with work roles of individuals during the course of their life time (Gerber, et al, 2009). This definition comes up with the fact that career has two important dimensions, one as objective elements i.e. visible activities and other as subjective elements i.e. attitudes and orientations (Gerber et al, 2009). Therefore, career orientation can now be defined as attitudes expressed by super ordinate intentions of an individual that will influence career related decisions (Gerber, et al, 2009). This definition encompasses the notion that an individual, through career orientation, may exhibit behaviors that reflect serious connotation towards job, organization and career rather than family. Arnold & Cohen (2008) & Sullivan, (1999) assert that career orientation has two forms. The traditional one is the organizational career which focuses on the progressive series of steps upward in a hierarchy to positions of ever increasing authority and responsibility (Brousseau et al., 1996; Gerber, et al, 2009). 'New forms' of career comprise many other types; the most prominent examples are the 'boundary less career' (Arthur, 1994; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) and the 'protean career' (Hall, 2004).

The Protean career refers to career self-management and loyalty to oneself rather than the organization (Gerber, et al, 2009). But the choice of individual's career is dependent on the factors valuable to them. An individual with a high concern for hierarchical progression and job security may proceed for traditional career while another highly committed to task orientation may be motivated for an independent form of career (Gerber, et al, 2009). But due to the increasing number of dual career orientation, for female professionals with more concern for social values, economic conditions, advancements in technology, the boundaries between work and family are blurred and demand to maintain a balance increase. Therefore, the third form of career

orientation is now reported that prefers to have a balance between work and family and is adaptive in nature (Gerber, et al, 2009).

For this particular reason, now organizations have a pressure to offer family-friendly benefits, working hour adjustments, more control over work responsibilities and effective management of the work overload (Bailyn, L., 1974; Hakim, C., 2006; Bhowon, 2013). Not only the organizations, but the families also require providing the continuous social support, flexibility in attitudes and responsibility sharing to manage with the WFC (Ansari, 2006; Kalliath, et al., 2014). The same notion is upheld by Parasuraman and Greenhauss (1993) who emphatically assert this is the actual challenge to combine work and family (Bhowon, 2013). One major problem commonly observed in Pakistani society is the general misconception of people to take women employment for granted.

They consider women full-time jobs to be organized in a discontinuous manner or on a part time basis, trying to fit job around the family life. Here, it is important to be considerate about a fact that not all jobs can be domesticated to deal with the WFC. There are certain types of jobs which require frequent travelling for long or short periods, unexpected long-hour meetings, unpredictable time tables, late-night business-related social events and meeting lots of people which can never be family-friendly. The examples may be of banks, airline and travelling jobs, news reporting, customer relations. Other occupations, like artistic work, may be organized on a part time basis, but the competitive industrial philosophies demand full-time devotion and dedication of employees to be high achievers (Hakim, C., 2006).

*Career Orientation amongst Women and WFC: Scenario in Pakistan*

Researchers have identified that career orientation among women and WFC have a significant relationship (Gerber, et al., 2009; Greenhauss & Beutell, 1985; Ahmad, 2008; Domenico& Jones, 2006;

Hakim, C., 2006; Ansari, 2006; Bailyn, L., 1974; Allen, T., 2001; Mukarram, et al., 2012). Based on the work of previous research, when Pakistani society is scrutinized, many of the implications of career orientation among full-time employed women and WFC are observed (Ansari, 2006; Mukarram, et al., 2012; Anwar &Shahzad, 2011; Malik & Khalid, 2008). This conflict incurs a heavy cost to the organizations, individuals, families and collectively to the society. As a result of WFC, the organizations bear cost in terms of lower productivity, absenteeism, higher turnover and decreased profitability. Women, due to this conflict, suffer from moderate to high degrees of financial, social, cultural and emotional problems resulting in low productivity on the job. As discussed earlier, the typical Male bread winner-female home maker concept (Komarraju, 2006) is somewhat re-engineered (Ansari, 2006; Mukarram, et al., 2012). Careful observation and study of current Pakistani society reveals a number of problems among employed women in banks. This includes professional women including single, married, never married, divorced, widows or married with kids (Malik & Khalid, 2008; Ansari, 2006; Mukarram, et al., 2012).

The banking sector of Pakistan offers a working environment that is famous for career development and family-friendly benefits to its employees (Malik & Khalid, 2008). Such benefits include opportunity for career progression, attractive compensation packages, working hour adjustment (Malik & Khalid, 2008). On the other hand, typical men folk in Pakistan do not appreciate banking jobs and consider them inappropriate for women (Mukarram, et al., 2012). Consequently a number of WFC incidents are observed. Similarly, women who are working in hospitals are required to work in day and night shifts per the schedule of duties assigned. The doctors may have emergency calls at nights or even at important events like festivals or any of the family functions which make it nearly impossible for them to be available for the family all the time (Anafarta, N., 2011; Rehman & Waheed, 2012; Akram & Hassan, 2013). This results into a detachment of such females from their families resulting into chaos and conflict at home.

The full-time employed single unmarried women may face fewer problems than married women, but still their problems appear in terms of late marriages and various health issues like fatigue, stress, depression, apathy and anxiety. (Greenhauss & Beutell, 1985). The complexities of WFC are more serious incase of married women and more particularly with children (Mukarram, et al., 2012; Domenico& Jones, 2006; Malik & Khalid, 2008; Ansari, 2006). Such women have to share the economic and social responsibility of home management with their spouse (Domenico& Jones, 2006). The degree of conflict depends on the number of children, age of youngest child, nature of family system, dependent care responsibilities, spouse career dissimilarity and spouse support or responsibility sharing (Greenhauss & Beutell, 1985; Domenico& Jones, 2006; Malik & Khalid, 2008; Ansari, 2006; Ahmad, 2008; Komarraju, 2006).

Research in the social science supports the fact that a high number of young children cause most of the WFC amongst families that experience incompatibility in Pakistani context (Ahmad, 2008; Domenico& Jones, 2006; Mukarram, et al., 2012). To manage child care, mothers now prefer to leave their children in day care centers while at work. They have to manage time to look after the academic performance of their children. Although joint family system is reportedly supportive for WFC management (Anwar &Shahzad, 2011; Mukarram, et al., 2012), but sometimes due to family members' inflexible attitude problems intensify. Another source of conflict in case of married women is spouse career dissimilarity. The difference of couples in career occupations may lead to generate difference in functional beliefs which ultimately produces stress (Greenhauss & Beutell, 1985). Working women, unlike their husbands, working at managerial positions with strategic responsibilities may sometimes need to travel, or work in late hours to meet the deadlines and attend business-related social events (Hakim, C., 2006). If a woman is working in a hospital, she may have to stay there for long hours even at nights too or may have to leave home lately depending on the schedule as well as the need. This usually becomes unendurable for the egoistic

males who do not perceive this act as socially and culturally appropriate.

The most obvious role in management of this conflict is played by the husband where he is expected to offer ongoing social and moral support to wife and share the household responsibilities to carry out daily tasks (Ansari, 2006; Ahmad, 2008). If the husband is not supportive in this regard, the loads of responsibilities increase solely on woman leading her towards unhealthy lifestyle (Ansari, 2006; Greenhauss & Beutell, 1985). Another factor that has a major impact in management of work-family conflict is the joint family system in Pakistan where the lack of support from husband can be compensated through the support and cooperation of other family members which somehow neutralizes the intensity (Anwar &Shahzad, 2011).

**Methodology**

*Research Design*

The study employed survey methodology with the help of questionnaires. A survey design is used to evoke relatively larger sample where opinions of participants matters in terms of developing a newer phenomenon. Data elicitation technique in a survey design comprisesthoughts, concepts, ideas, feelings and opinions using a tool to collect data. In the said study, a questionnaire was used to do so. This survey methodology also generates data from a wider source and is likely to be more pragmatic and practicable. The study used survey research as it could be able to fetch the required information from the population of interest including full-time women in the two selected sectors.

*Sampling*

The sample comprised n=131 employed women in banks and hospitals in Karachi through  simple random sampling including respondents from different cadres of banks and hospitals ranging from top management to first level management and non-management

employees to collect the practical information regarding the issue. The respondents ranged from ages 20 and above having the marital status never married, married, married with kids, separated, divorced or widow. Deliberation technique was employed to estimate the views of working women and their respective opinions about work-family conflict.

*Instrumentation*

First section of the questionnaire was based on demographic information where items related to the factors of age, type of organization, department, working hours and tenure of employment were included. Since this study hypothesizes about the career and family orientation, the information regarding marital status of employed women, number and ages of children, the nature of family system either single or joint family system, responsibility of elderly members in the family, if any, and their respective reasons for employment were also included. This information was collected for the sake of better understanding of the factors that are prevailing in the Pakistani society causing women to work and shape the demands for managing work and family together.

The second part of the questionnaire addressed items that gauge information related to professional and personal lives of full-time employed women on a Likert scale ranging from 1= Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Don't Know 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree. Work-family conflict, as a stressor (Logue &Ayman, 2009) has been measured through the following 2 items: "My life is full of stress and it affects my family and job" and "My job is the reason for stress in my life." The relationship between career orientation and work-family conflict (Greenhauss & Beutell, 1985; Ahmed, 2008; Hakim, C., 2006; Bailyn, L., 1974) have been gauged through three items leading further towards the negative outcomes of work-family conflict through following statement:

*Procedure*

The consent letter requested the authorities to cooperate in carrying out the procedures. The investigators, upon agreement, went to the field for data collection. Some organizations preferred to respond through emails and so the questionnaires were administered through their preferred source. For the rest, self-administration technique was employed. For the sake of respondent's ease, items 5, 8 and 11 were re-phrased to elicit valid and precise responses. A total of n=131(60 from banks and 71 from hospitals) forms from both banks and hospitals were collected from full-time employed women. The investigators also sent the participant organizations a letter of gratitude at the end for their cooperation and participation.

## Results

**Table 1:**

*Perception Scores of Employed Women*

| Group Statistics | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Group of Employed Women | N | Mean | Std. Dev | S.E.M |
| Perception Scores of Employed Women | Women in Banks | 60 | 58.48 | 12.75 | 1.64 |
| | Women in Hospitals | 71 | 59.73 | 11.03 | 1.30 |

The study comprised n=60 women employees in banks and n=71 employed women in hospitals with a mean of 58.48 and 59.73 respectively. Their corresponding standard deviations were 12.75 and 11.03 respectively. Their standard errors of mean were 1.64 and 1.30 respectively.

## Discussions

The study focuses the impact of career orientation on work-family conflict amongst full- time employed women in banks and hospitals of Pakistan. The results of the study reveal the fact that although there is no difference between the perception of employed women in banks and hospitals regarding work-family conflict, it is a

fat that the professional woman in Pakistan does suffer from this nature of conflict to some extent. The findings of this study are also consistent with the previous researches (Gerber, et al., 2009; Greenhauss & Beutell, 1985; Ahmad, 2008; Domenico& Jones, 2006; Hakim, C., 2006; Ansari, 2006; Bailyn, L., 1974; Allen, T., 2001; Mukarram, et al., 2012). This shows the trend of more women career orientation which has a negative impact on their family orientation (Rehman & Waheed, 2012).

Since banking and hospital sectors were considered in the study, the findings revealed that women in both the sectors are suffering from the same levels of conflicts (Rizvi, L., 2013; Anafarta, N., 2011). Therefore, the burden of keeping a balance in personal and professional life falls over women. In order to assure more productivity, commitment and well-being of women employees, organizations must offer such benefits like flex hours, fair and attractive compensation package, child care facility, and appropriate number of leaves, transportation and a relaxing working environment where women can perform up to the mark (Malik & Khalid, 2008). The lack of facilities and support from organization is a very strong precursor of work-family conflict among women employees in banks and hospitals.

### Limitations

The present study is carried out on a limited scope of banks and hospitals only operating in Karachi. The results of this study cannot be generalized beyond the specified samples in other organizations and cultures. The variables brought under discussion in this research are all restricted to Pakistani society and the cultural norms and values practiced here. The study is also limited as it depended on the literature available to the researchers. More recent literature in the local context in banking and health care sector could have elaborated the significance of the study. This limitation sets a boundary of generalization in this direction only. The researchers

also experienced the limitations in the study in the form of allocated funds, travel grants and access to technical resources.

## Future Implications

The findings of the current study can serve as predictor for future trends in Pakistani banking and health care sectors in terms of family orientation and managing work-family conflict. The hospital and banking organizations may also be aided in designing the policies regarding facilities and benefits that shall be necessarily provided to the employed women. This will help to create a culture where both the women employees and the organizations can minimize the probability of work-family conflict and lead to a better, healthy and productive lifestyles.

## Conclusion

The relationship between work-family conflict and career orientation among Pakistani women in banks and hospitals indicate the future strategic considerations and subsequent trends. The global phenomenon of work-family conflict unleashes the reality of increasing demand of women employment in Pakistani organizations. The socio-economic factors, as discussed in the study, invite the attention of stakeholders particularly the organization heads to restructure their organizational policies and strategies to facilitate women employees in banks and hospitals so they can work for longer hours, fulfill their professional responsibilities and satisfy their career intentions. Pakistan is going to be one of such countries where skilled women will be holding strategic positions and leading the organizations. It is the high time for banking and health care organizations to resolve this blazing conflict by reshaping policies that facilitate employed women progressing in their careers and balancing their families effectively without compromising their professional commitments, personal relations with regard to family matters, health and professionally-enriched obsessions. Observing and exploring the relationship between

the two constructs of career orientation of full time employed females in banks and hospitals will be beneficial in future to strategize actions that require higher female skilled potential as part of national move to augment the service sector in the context of GDP and GNP of the country.

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