

Work/Life Conflicts and Desired Work Hour Adjustments: Banking Perspective in Pakistan

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This study reframes the traditional view of male breadwinner-female homemaker model in Pakistan and further explores the desired and preferred work hour choices by bankers. It further assesses the impact of Work Life Balance and Desired Work Hour Adjustments on employees well being. Employees may be willing to achieve a more integrated balance between paid work and leisure/family/community interests to lead a balanced healthier life. This paper presents a qualitative analysis of work-to-life and life-to-work conflicts and work hour adjustments. Interview method was used as a prime research instrument. Non-probability convenience sampling technique was employed. A total of 80 interviews were administered in 17 different banks of twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi and the results reported significant increases in work–life imbalance and lack of social support. Long working hours has also become a usual norm in banking industry. In order to be accomplished, employees continuously strive for excellence and skills second to none. The implication of the present study is to enable the organizations, to recognize the heterogeneity and multiple obligations of the contemporary and diversified future workforce.

Field of Research: Human Resource Management

1. INTRODUCTION:

Rapid industrialization and economic investments have given Pakistan an exposure to better and improved life styles and living standards. Information blast has unveiled many previously neglected spheres of better, healthier and longer lives. At the same time, the line dividing family life and work life has gradually blurred. Pakistan being a collectivist country, has always shared the norms and values of male-breadwinner/female-homemaker model. Cultural norms and values are fast facing the changes like women entrants in work force, both parents working, more broken homes etc resulting in intensification of the need to integrate work and family life as a part of every day's reality and a bitter one too. Undeniable is the fact that sometimes employers forget employees have lives outside the workplace, and it's not uncommon nor necessarily a weakness if employees can't leave their troubles at home

Keywords: Work–Life Balance, Working Hours, Work Hour Adjustments.

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It shall be realized that a balance between work and family life can only be promised via an integration of energy and practices of a full set of institutions affecting work and family life. The new global economy, with its focus on 24/7 availability and long work hours, only worsens the problem generated by the lag in the organizations of paid works, as if workers were without personal interests or domestic care concerns (Moen, 2001).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Work/family research has identified both synergies and trade-offs between the realms of home and work (e.g., Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000).

Gendered-Division of Labor

Gender plays an important role in shaping our lives as even the attitudes and social structures are gendered (Fox & Murry, 2000). In Pakistan, the bread winner-home maker model is the fundamental principle of any household. Pakistani society greatly believes on the gendered division of labor. Men's and women's preferences are strongly influenced by the interplay between their own gender and the nature of the social structures they encounter (Moen & Yu, 2000). System of domesticity that relies on male breadwinners and female home-makers is largely intact (Williams, 2000). A substantial minority of U.S adults still believe that men and women should have different work and family responsibilities (Brewster & Padavic, 2000).

Work-Life Conflicts

Work-life conflicts exist when the line separating the work and personal/family activities becomes diffused and blur. This work-life conflict can originate in the home or in the work environment (Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997). Work-life conflict is often the result of having too many things to do and too little time in which to do them (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Voydanoff, 2002) since work schedules tend to be less flexible than personal schedules Eagle, Miles, & Icenogle (1997). Consequently Greenhaus & Parasuraman (1999) found work is more likely the cause of work-to-life conflicts. Work and life can not be treated as separate domains. Changes in one almost always affect the other. Spending more time with family, for instance should require spending less time working. The above situation becomes grimmer when according to some writers irrespective of the antecedents of the work-life and life-work conflicts; an increase in one typically leads to an increase in the other (Frone et al. 1997).

Constituents of Work Life Conflicts:

Organizational Culture: The quality of the social environment in the workplace is associated with stress Cooper & Marshall (1976). The above review of literature suggests that healthier culture makes work more enjoyable instead of strenuous thus leading to a trivial desire to reduce work hours.

Hypothesis 1: *Family Friendly Organizational Culture leads to insignificant desire to reduce work hours.*

Hypothesis 2: *Family Friendly Organizational Culture leads to insignificant desire to adjust work hours.*

In particular, organizations can make it easier for employees to combine work and family if they have family-friendly cultures and supervisors and offer flexible work hours (Glass & Estes, 1997) or job autonomy (Berg, Kalleberg, & Appelbaum, 2003). These benefits can help eliminate the desire for fewer hours of work indirectly by making work and family responsibilities more compatible.

Hypothesis 3: *Family Friendly Policies may help to reduce the desire to adjust work hours.*

Work Hours: Work hours can be defined as, “the result of the interplay of three factors: hours per week demanded by the employer, hours per week desired by the worker and the institutional and legal environment”. Long work hours may impair personal health and jeopardize safety both directly and indirectly (Spurgeon, Harrington and Cooper, 1997).

Research conducted by Voydanoff (2002) Clarkberg & Moen, (2001); Jacobs & Gerson, (2000) conclude that if employees experience work to life conflicts, they try to reduce it. At the same time, other authors hold the view that work-life conflicts encourages some people to flee family life and work even more hours (Hochschild, 1997, 2002). Thus an individual's attitude towards conflict management may vary. A major research theme relates the changing nature of work and workplaces, including trends work intensification and long working hours (Brannen & Moss 1998)and the long hours culture in many occupations (Bond, Hyman et al. 2002).

Hypothesis 4: *Number of Extra Work Hours per week are directly related to the desire of reduced work hours.*

Hypothesis 5: *Nature (Paid/ Unpaid) of Extra work Hours contributes to Work Life Conflicts directly.*

Goal Clarity: Lack of clarity on the part of an employee regarding his own job or the overall mission of his location will have significant negative consequences Maher & Piersol (1970). Lack of communication and clarity regarding the job increases uncertainty and decreases employee's perceptions of management trustworthiness (Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991) thus making the job strenuous and further increasing Work-Life Conflicts.

Hypothesis 6: *Lack of Goal Clarity attributes Work-Life Conflicts.*

Hypothesis 7: *High Goal Expectancy increases Work-Life Conflicts.*

Constituents of Life-Work Conflicts:

Family Characteristics: Some studies have focused on the well-being of social systems, including families (Zubrick, et, al., 2000). Workers may desire a reduction in work hours if they have a partner who is also employed. It is primarily married workers (Jacobs & Gerson, 2000), especially women whose husbands work many hours (45 hours or more a week), who want to work less (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001). According to Coltrane (2000), women typically do a greater share of the household labor than men and that additional work at home partially restricts the time women can spend in paid work (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999; Rothbard & Edwards, 2003). Inequalities in the workplace further lower women's organizational commitment (Marsden, Kalleberg, & Cook, 1993), reduce the importance they place on promotion (Cassirer & Reskin, 2000), and make them less likely than men to identify work as their central priority (Bielby, 1992).

Hypothesis 8: *Women desire reduction in work hours more than men.*

Elder & Child Care: Leaving children at day care or home while parents work may result in serious concerns like safety, health, learning, supervision and nurturance. The findings of Bailyn et al., (n.d.) suggested that families alone cannot change the structure of careers nor alter the availability of child care. And when families experience crises, whether financial or personal, external supports are needed.

It is widely believed that workers with preschool or grade school children will be especially interested in reducing their hours, particularly if they (like many women) are responsible for child care and household tasks. On the contrast, the desire for fewer work hours of is only weakly related to having children (Clarkberg & Moen, 2001; Jacobs & Gerson, 2000; or an employed spouse (Jacobs & Gerson, 2000).

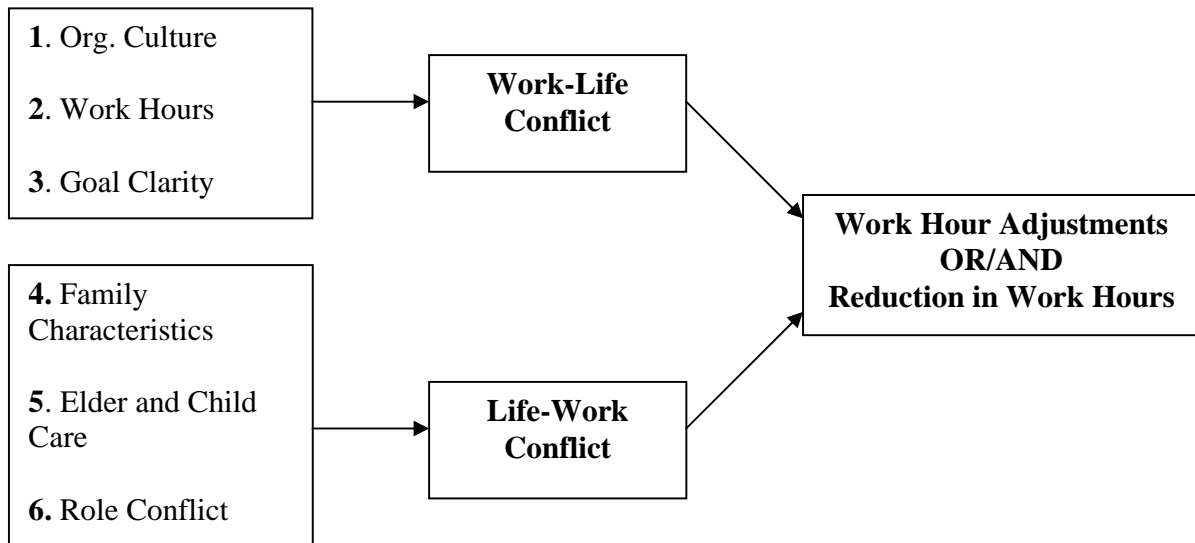
Hypothesis 9: *Dual working couples with children have high life-work conflicts and ultimately a high desire to reduce work hours.*

Hypothesis 10: *Dual working couples with children have high life-work conflicts and ultimately a high desire to adjust work hours.*

Role Conflict: Scarcity hypothesis suggests that time allocation decisions are a zero-sum game (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). More work will leave lesser time to be devoted to family and socialization resulting into role conflict and ultimately life-work conflicts. Bringing work home is another such example of Role Conflict.

Hypothesis 11: *Role Conflict attributes Life-Work Conflicts.*

Figure 2.1: Theoretical Framework representing association between Work-Life-Work Conflicts with Work Hour Reduction and Adjustments



3. METHODOLOGY

The research design was fragmented into two major phases; theory building and theory testing. In the first phase, it was tried to develop eleven hypotheses based on provided constructs and get support from literature review. These hypotheses collectively supported theoretical model. In the theory testing phase, an exploratory study was conducted and findings were empirically investigated to justify base hypotheses. Structured interview (with both open-ended and close-ended questions) was designed as research instrument. A total of 80 interviews were administered in 17 different banks of twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. All interviews have been accounted for findings. Due to the minimal interference at the banks, the study was conducted in a natural environment, and therefore, can be coined as non-contrived setting or field study. As far as choice of bank for survey is concern, non-probability convenience sampling was used. Within that convenience sample, a purposive random sample method was employed in order to cover heterogeneity and diversity. Sample of 20 was taken from each group out of four basic clusters as shown in table 4.1.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:

Descriptive data analysis regarding age, experience, work-hours patterns and gendered division of labor is shown in the table 4.1. The study has accounted for the number of extra hours the employees were putting per week, and learned that they were not paid for those extra hours.

Table 4.1: Demographic variables and data analysis

	Single Males	Single Females	Married Males	Married Females
N	20	20	20	20
Avg. Age	30	25	37	27

Work Maturity(yrs)	4.5 yrs	3 yrs	13.5	3.7
Present Job-Duration(yrs)	3.8 yrs	3 yrs	6.0	2.7
Current Work-Hours/Week	55	49	54	47
Desired Work-Hours/Week	50	45	48	41.25
Additional Work-Hours/Week	05	04	06	05.75
Support-of-Gendered Division of Labor	56%	22%	67%	33%

Work-Life Conflicts:

The results of Hypothesis 1, 2 and 3, in general, reflect upon the desire of work-hours adjustments and the provision of the family friendly policies, rather than the reduction in the work hours. This confirms the occupational maturity and career orientation of the respondents of banking sector where long work hours is one of the occupational norms, at the same time clearly pointing to the writing of the wall i.e., work hour adjustments is needed now more than ever before. The desire to reduce work hours shows significant deviance in married (78%) and unmarried (only 48%) women accounting to the various roles associated with married women.

It is a common knowledge that career-oriented individuals desiring a reduction in work hours even in the presence of family friendly policies, is quite a remote possibility, thus the Hypothesis 3 was constructed as; the desire to adjust work hours via family friendly policies led to a sharp contrast in single and married men. Though 73% of single men agreed, only 40% of married men accepted the proposition. The responses of single and married women, on the other hand showed a meager difference.

Majority of the respondents agreed to Hypothesis-4, that an increase in extra hours-per-week will surface in the form of increased desire to reduce this imbalance and maintain the equilibrium between work and life. The analysis reflects that the desire to reduce work-hours is highest in married males (76%) that is second to married females (i.e., 86%).

Hypothesis 4 reflects the same above trend in married females, that the more the work hours without payment, the higher will be the desire to reduce work hours (86% of the married women). The ultimate outcome can be predicted in the form of work-life conflict if extra hours are constantly required and they do not add to any financial gain to the employee, at the same time consumes the time for child/elder care and self-well being.

Though 59% unmarried male employees agreed that extra work hours may be a source of conflict, in Hypothesis 5, however, remained quite unaffected by the very nature (paid/unpaid) of work hours as work is the way of life for them. Alternatively, married males find themselves tied up in the struggle to juggle between work and family, raising the conflicts.

Lack of goal clarity attribution to work-life conflict is highest in married males, followed by married females and single male employees respectively. Another source of work-

life conflict is also high goal expectancy and all strata of data are shown to affect from it. More of the male employees (single and married respectively) confirmed the fact that high benchmark is what make the work life strenuous and often leads to workplace incivility. Employees remain under constant work pressures to fulfill their targets making the work life tougher and tougher every day.

Table 4.2: Hypotheses based on Work –Life and Life-Work Conflicts and their data analysis

Work-Life Conflicts				
H1: Family Friendly Organizational Culture leads to insignificant desire to reduce work hours.	65%Agree-8%-Indifferent	78%Agree-5%-Indifferent	35%Agree-8%-Indifferent	48%Agree-16%-Indifferent
H2: Family Friendly Organizational Culture leads to insignificant desire to adjust work hours.	70%Agree-5%-Indifferent	82%Agree-3%-Indifferent	78%Agree-3%-Indifferent	88%Agree-3%-Indifferent
H3: Family Friendly Policies may lead to an insignificant desire to adjust work hours.	73%Agree-7%-Indifferent	82%Agree-4%-Indifferent	40%Agree-7%-Indifferent	90%Agree-2%-Indifferent
H4: Number of Extra Work Hours per week are directly related to the desire of reduced work hours.	59%Agree-6%-Indifferent	71%Agree-8%-Indifferent	76%Agree-9%-Indifferent	86%Agree-2%-Indifferent
H5: Nature (Paid/ Unpaid) of Extra work Hours contributes to Work Life Conflicts directly.	33%Agree-4%-Indifferent	57%Agree-8%-Indifferent	79%Agree-7%-Indifferent	91%Agree-4%-Indifferent
H6: Lack of Goal-Clarity attributes Work-Life Conflicts.	38%Agree-8%-Indifferent	25%Agree-12%-Indifferent	83%Agree-3%-Indifferent	48%Agree-9%-Indifferent
H7: High Goal-Expectancy increases Work-Life Conflicts.	78%Agree-4%-Indifferent	46%Agree-3%-Indifferent	69%Agree-12%-Indifferent	57%Agree-8%-Indifferent
Life-Work Conflicts				
H8: Women desire reduction* in work hours more than men.	72%-Agree-9%-Indifferent	71%-Agree-8%-Indifferent	76%-Agree-9%-Indifferent	86%-Agree-2%-Indifferent
H9: Dual working couples with children have high life-work conflicts and ultimately a high desire to reduce work hours.	Void	Void	25%-Agree-30%-Indifferent	65%-Agree-5%-Indifferent
H10: Dual working couples with children have high life-work conflicts and ultimately a high desire to adjust work hours	Void	Void	75%-Agree-5%-Indifferent	93%-Agree-1%-Indifferent
H11: Role Conflict attributes Life-Work Conflicts.	10%-Agree-41%-Indifferent	45%-Agree-8%-Indifferent	67%-Agree-9%-Indifferent	78%-Agree-5%-Indifferent

NOTE: H 9 and H10 were posed only to married males whose spouse was working. The number of these respondents was 12 out of 20 married males with 11 couples having children.

Life-Work Conflicts:

Majority supports the fact that the desire of work hour reduction is more in women than men. These findings are in congruence to the findings of Coltrane (2000) that women typically do a greater share of the household labor than men. Females are more likely to be involved in family socialization, elder care, child care and nurturance etc. the job list remains almost infinite for women, thus the desire is highest in married women. The

difference in married and unmarried women displays the fact that the nature of household activities is different for the two subjects. Present study confirms the findings of Bailyn et al., (n.d.) that families alone cannot change the structure of careers nor alter the availability of child care. Dual working couples with children were expected to experience more of a life-work conflict and hence increased desires to reduce work hours, but a few results are otherwise, thus raising serious concerns in short and long terms about their own emotional and physical well-being. The result is an increase in long work hours accompanied by an unchanged dependency on women as home-maker and care-giver has dramatically increased Role Conflicts for both genders.

Despite life-work conflicts in married men and women with children, the desire to adjust work hours repeatedly stands out significant. Whereas, only 65% mothers wanted a work-hour-reduction, 93% supported the work-hour adjustment as a preferable choice. Similarly, 75% married men desired adjustment, which if couldn't be provided by the employer, the last resort will be the reduction of work hours(25%), even those who cannot fail to do so, will suffer more of Life-Work and ultimately Work-Life conflicts. Interestingly, only 10% single men attributed role conflict to Life-Work Conflict as opposed to 67% married men. The same trend is repeated in married and single women comparison under Hypothesis 11. It is safer to infer that married subjects are caught I between a diversity of roles. Bringing work home is another example of Role Conflict and hence a cause of Life-Work Conflict.

5. CONCLUSION:

Work-Life and Life-Work conflicts evolved as a symbol of failure to maintain the line separating the two spheres of an employee. Employers fail to recognize that employees need provisions for family care resulting in a care dilemma. Increasing work force diversity coupled with intensification of work life changes calls for effective and immediate mechanisms of Work Hour Adjustments.

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Malik & Khalid

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