

# The Role of Social Support and Perceptual Barriers on the Work-life Balance of Female Employees in Pakistan – A Phenomenological Study

<sup>1</sup>Ibrahim Noorani, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Khurram Shakir, <sup>3</sup>Dr. Nazia Abdul Rehman, <sup>4</sup>Bushra Umerdin, <sup>1</sup>Department of Public Administration, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University Lyari, Karachi, <sup>2,3,4</sup>Benazir School of Business, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University Lyari Karachi, Email: <sup>1</sup>[ibrahimnoorani@gmail.com](mailto:ibrahimnoorani@gmail.com), <sup>2</sup>[khurramshakir@yahoo.com](mailto:khurramshakir@yahoo.com), <sup>3</sup>[nzshakir@gmail.com](mailto:nzshakir@gmail.com), <sup>4</sup>[bushraumerdin@gmail.com](mailto:bushraumerdin@gmail.com)

The study attempted to examine the lived experiences of female employees on the lines of support system, and perceptual barriers they face during their career progression and how that influences the management of their dual roles at both the workplace and at home. A phenomenological approach is adopted to carry out this research, through designed conversational interviews drawn from a sample of 12 working women from different organisations in Karachi, Pakistan. The study investigates various support systems upon which women depend to fulfill their multiple roles and have found husbands, parents, mothers-in-law, and bosses, along with sound management policies to be of significant importance. The study also identified greater acceptance of working women and found that there streams a positive attitude about their work from their social constructs. The findings of the study may help to improve management policies at workplaces, allowing them to alter their strategies while dealing with female workforce.

**Keywords:** *Working Women, Social Support, Perceptual Barriers, Work-life Balance, Phenomenological Study.*

## **Introduction:**

The concept of balancing family life and work life has become an area of interest because the number of women has increased in labour force and women are pursuing careers and jobs while having family responsibilities. The aim of this chapter is to examine related to issues of the female labour force that they face in balancing their family life and professional life.

According to some experts, organisational roles are diverse. Mintzberg (2013) defined organisational roles as “sets of behaviour”. And Covey (2013) defines them as avenues where a person invests energy and time on a regular basis. According to him, all persons have many roles in their life, so all can play multiple roles or dual roles. According to Rosaldo & Lamphere (1990), as the dual roles are cultural dualism, the concept of public circle and domestic circle, although with women and men both dual roles can be performed.

Traditionally in Pakistan, the role of women is considered mainly to remain at home and look after the family. However, in recent times, women also assume dual roles as care takers of the family, as well in various field of work. This statement is supported by the 2017-18, report published by World Bank’s Global Economy section ([www.theglobaleconomy.com](http://www.theglobaleconomy.com)), that the female workforce in Pakistan has increased to 25.12% of the overall labour force in Pakistan.

Increased awareness and improved education have changed the scenario over the years. It can be said that situation is coming to a crossroads in Pakistan for working women, however, contrary to this trend, women still face quite a few barriers in contrast to men, while progressing through their careers. They often undergo harassment, discrimination, and other underlying rules and regulations. This is pronounced through a number of international agencies such as the Thomas Reuters Foundation in 2018, which declared Pakistan to be amongst the top six worst countries for women.

Likewise, Hausman, Tyson & Zahidi (2012) have claimed a low score for Pakistan amongst all developing countries in gender gap, availability of healthcare to working mothers, female education, political empowerment, economic participation and growth opportunities for women.

Various authors such as Frone et al., (1992); Noor (2004); Welter, (2004), Guendouzi (2006); Shelton (2006), are all of the view that the increase of women in labour force has made work-life balance a challenging issue. Wentling (2003), states that the dual roles of primary care giver at home and an office employee, which women are supposed to exhibit, causes conflicts and tensions because of the social structure is predominantly male oriented.

According to Bird (2006), balancing work life and family life is more difficult for women as compared to men, because of the burden of the family responsibilities. Cross & Linehan (2006) revealed that dealing with childcare and responsibility of other domestic duties have left women with an unequal distribution of resources, which becomes a major problem in their career progression.

Crompton, R., Hantrais, L., & Walters, P. (1990), suggest that family and career conflict is a source of stress for working women, as working mothers place more importance on being available for their children more often. They found that not being available to spend time with their children infused a great amount of guilt in working mothers. Most women shared that

they have to sacrifice their own leisure time or they have to compromise on their sleep so that their children don't feel harmful consequences for having a working mother.

Noor (2012) upheld that work-life often confronted with family related issues, leisure time, social security, personal wellbeing, working time and so forth. Likewise, authors such as Carlson & Kacmar, (2000); Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, (2002); Winslow, (2005); Voydanoff, (2005); Cinamon, (2006); Carlson, Gyzwacz, & Zivnuska (2009), explored work-life balance being achieved when the relationship between the work and family is good, the contrary would result in a work-family conflict.

Marshall (2009) found that the personal benefit of women working is that they have the ability to provide enhanced quality of life to their children. It is observed that professional women see personal satisfaction when their children express pride in their working mothers. Marshall also identified benefits that professional women derive from having a career. Respondents in this study stated they like their profession because it is helpful for them to become more compassionate, understanding, sensitive, and transforms them into better mothers. They also defined career as important in their lives, because by helping others they can inculcate more positivity. In short, they feel proud of being professionals and also loving mothers.

Armstead (2015), while explaining theory of social expectations, argued that in modern days it is important for women to be successful in their personal and professional lives. However, this is not easy for them to handle responsibilities of work and family simultaneously. They are not able to fulfil both roles at a time, ultimately compromising both. The author concluded that women face barriers in their work setting because gender stereotypes appeared.

An earlier study in Pakistan by Rehman & Azam (2012), explored work-life balance issues of women entrepreneurs and argued that the numbers of women in the labour force have increased, which has also brought challenges for them to maintain a balance of work and family life. A convoluted situation exists for women due to their stereotypical domestic responsibilities, cultural values and norms and religious partitions. They face overreaching problems in maintaining a balance in a patriarchal religious community, containing the elements of gender bias, family responsibility and cultural norms. Their study explored that if women have their own businesses, they have time flexibility and freedom to prioritise their schedules accordingly and so can effectively cater to family needs. However, this is not similar to problems faced by organisationally employed women, as they are likely to experience more issues in maintaining a balance between their work and family lives.

Furthermore, Sarwar A & Imran MK (2019) explored female employment in Pakistan and emphasised individual, organisational and societal barriers that women faced during career progression along with the intervention and outcomes. Nonetheless, role of social support and perceptual barriers faced by working women in their lives have been neglected.

Therefore, the key motivation for this study is to come from examining the lived experiences of working women, the role that support systems play in managing work-family conflicts, and perceptual barriers that influence the balancing of work and family simultaneously.

### **Research Problem**

With the increase of working women in the labour market, it is common for women to be employed almost in every profession. However, women are still supposed to be the caretaker of family responsibilities. They are expected to look after children, take care of family and household affairs as well. On the other hand, work overload, work schedule and expected work duties fill their time, leaving them too exhausted to carry out motherly responsibilities. This poses deep challenges for women in their career lives as well as family lives and that leads to problems such as:

- Balancing between family care and paid employment.
- Work family related problems faced by working women.
- Stereotypes faced by working women.
- Barriers in career progression due to primary role as homemakers.
- Support systems in term of organisational and personal factors.

### **Research Question**

The following question forms the basis for this research:

“How are the support systems deemed by women in their personal and professional lives and what perceptual barriers do they have to face from society and during their career progressions at work places?”

### **Research Objectives**

The aim of this study is:

- To identifying issues of working women in Pakistan which they are facing in balancing work-life, professional life and bring difficulties in family responsibilities, in work settings and in their career advancement.
- To gain knowledge about the problems that are faced by working women at workplaces.
- To identify feasible solutions for the problems that may help to overcome issues of working women at their respective workplaces.



In this study, qualitative approach to data analysis is used so that various aspects of the lives of working women can be explored. The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of working women in balancing their personal and professional lives.

### **Justification for the Study**

This study would help to understand the status of working women and the problems they face in balancing their work-life and personal-life. Some solutions can be offered for working women to help create awareness about equal importance of women and men in society.

### **Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study ranges wide enough to all personnel working in a professional environment. The results of this study may help to improve management policies at workplaces, allowing them to alter their strategies while dealing with females in the workforce. The study may also help in understanding in depth of problems and difficulties while women are managing work life and family life.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Social Support***

According to Brough & Pears (2004), social support can be defined in two terms such as family related support and organisational related support. Organisational related support is where employee's works derive support from the members of the organisation, such as supervisors, colleagues and bosses. And family support is related with the backing that is derived from parents, spouses, children, and fellows.

However, a study by Crowley & Kolenikv's (2014) explored that support from the husband or partner at home reduces the challenges for women and those without a partner at home experience a negative effect on their career.

Marcinkus et al (2006) identified that women received more support from their families rather than organisational support. They also found that personal support was positively associated with organisational commitment and job satisfaction, while work related support was positively associated with organisational commitment, career accomplishment and job satisfaction. Erdwins et al (2001) also revealed that supervisor's and spousal support play important roles in dealing with work-family conflict.

Baral & Bhargava (2011), identified that support of family is positively associated with both work-family and family-work enrichment. Likewise in an earlier studies done by Gordon & Whelan Berry (2004) and Ray & Miller (1994), support from a husband or partner relates

positively in increasing satisfaction for working women and also identified that different social support is likely to reduce work-family conflict.

Tomazevic, Kozjek & Stare (2014) stated that conflicts in work-life balance have consequences as employees experience stress related outcomes such as general mental strains, hopelessness, burnout, disappointment in family relations, and that it has a negative impact on job satisfaction. Amstad et al (2011) discussed family interference with work is less associated with family related outcomes than work related outcomes.

Various researchers have provided solutions in demand to reduce work and life conflict. According to Beutell & College (2010), to maintain work-life and family, life supervisor support is important. Nadeem, M. & Abbas (2009), discussed that vigilant supervisory management reduces work conflicts by developing well defined strategies for maintaining a balance between career and personal lives. Accordingly, Hill et al (2001), maintained that for work-life balance, flexibility in timing and location of work is important. Hutcheson (2012) found that the key success of maintaining work-life and professional-life is keeping the work environment flexible and attractive.

### Perceptual Barriers

According to Ali et al (2005), in Pakistani society female employment is not only disapproved of but also powerfully discouraged. A collective social attitude is that husbands and fathers feel employment for daughters and wives as dishonourable. These attitudes discourage many qualified women from joining numerous vocations.

Khan & M. Jalal-ud-din (2008) exploring the Pakistani societal system and division of labour among men and women, identified that men are required to work in the public domain and women are supposed to be responsible for household duties. This cultural taboo makes it difficult for women's employment in Pakistan.

Asghar, K (2006) discussed that familial attitudes and setups play an important role in the entrance of women in the workforce. There exists a common perception amongst both males and females in the family that outside the house women are not safe. Likewise, in a previous study, Eagly, C. & P. Carcau (2002) pointed out that families discourage women in participating in the workforce, and male colleagues don't applaud female efforts that often, and women frequently face negative comments from them. Women encounter less appreciation in term of their abilities and accomplishments, even with equal qualifications and achievements compared with male counterparts. That stereotype also hinders women in terms of selection and promotion.

Another barrier discussed by Blair & Loy (2003) in their qualitative study argued that employers tend to discriminate against mothers and favour single women over them. Hoobler, Wayne, & Lemmon (2009), supported this notion that perception about married women is less



suitable compared to single women, as the latter is deemed to be more committed. Earlier surveys conducted by Anderson, Binder, & Krause (2003) and Budig & England (2001) revealed that working mothers earn lower wages compared to women without children.

According to Benard & Correll (2010), parental status did not affect men. This study found that when mothers show potential and are highly committed to their jobs, they discriminate evaluators in an employment.

Researchers such as Feyerherm & Vick (2005); Ashraf (2007); and Hicks (2012) found that salary inequality is an example of gender inequality and discrimination and also prevents career progression for women. Consequently, women feel that their organisation don't take them seriously, do not provide challenging opportunities and that they don't receive positions based on their ability.

Numerous theories advocate that women are found to be more suitable in performing job roles at a lower position in the organisation's hierarchy rather than at an upper level position. For example, Heilman (2001) argues for congruity theory to suggest that the role of females is more care oriented, since they are soft in nature and so organisational leadership does not fit with such character as it is a more masculine phenomenon. Schein (1975), championing the cause of Gatekeeper theory, advocated that greater emphasis and due consideration is paid in hiring male employees as compared to women employees, consequently there is less female representation in the organisation. Tallerico (2000) maintained that there exists a Glass Ceiling which refers to non-natural obstacles faced by female managers, which constrains qualified women from reaching higher level positions in their respective organisations.

These studies show that despite an increased number of women in the workforce, the general perception toward working women ceases to be very positive. Women are still perceived as subordinate to men and employment is considered to be an extra responsibility and not a primary role. These perceptual barriers make it difficult for women in balancing their personal and professional lives.

Therefore, this reading deliberated to fill the literature gap. The aim of this is to explore the lived experiences of working women in Pakistan and intends to identify the role of social support systems and structural barriers faced by them during their career progressions that ultimately influence the balancing of work and life domains.

## **Research Methodology**

### Research Design

This study incorporates the norms of social constructs and uses interpretivist philosophy which focuses on the reality to be socially constructed and thus should be understood in the context



of participants' experiences. Phenomenology provides the epistemic roots to this research study.

Phenomenological research methods aim to discover the deep rooted meanings of lived experiences to derive an essential understanding of the phenomenon under study. Qualitative phenomenological methods attempt to seize an in-depth analysis of the lived experiences of respondents, brought to life through insights, interactions and interpretations. Phenomenological analysis is used to help understand the experiences about a particular phenomenon.

This study is of explanatory nature and wants to explain the effects of perceptual barriers and social support, faced by working women, especially working mothers, on maintaining a balance between their personal and professional lives.

### Research Propositions

- P1. Support systems they deem to be helpful in their personal and professional life.
- P2. Perception barriers are likely to influence the balancing of personal & professional life.
- P3. Barriers faced by working women in career progressions are likely to prioritise family over work and vice versa

### Population and Sampling Method

The population for this study is comprised of working women with a particular focus on working mothers, who are currently employed in the corporate sector of in Pakistan. The sample size for this research incorporates 12 working women from varying backgrounds, working in different organisations, ranging from various sectors in Karachi. Due to the nature of this study, non-probability and convenient sampling is used for data collection. The demographic detail of the participants is given in table 1 below: (P stands for participants)

Table 1: Sample Demographics

<b>P</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Marital status</b>	<b># of children</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Work Experience</b>
<b>P1</b>	33	MBA	Married	1	Shipping	General Manager	More than 10
<b>P2</b>	32	M.A	Married	1	Defence (Forces)	Admin Officer	7
<b>P3</b>	26	B.E	Married	None	Engineering	Asst. Manager	More than 2
<b>P4</b>	38	MBA, M.A	Married	1	IT	Head of HR	13
<b>P5</b>	38	B.A	Married	2	Sales	Sales Director	15
<b>P6</b>	35	B.A	Married	3	Sales	B.D.M	5
<b>P7</b>	38	M.A	Single	-	Banking	Team Manager	16
<b>P8</b>	33	M.COM	Married	2	Banking	Branch Manager	10
<b>P9</b>	46	MPA	Married	2	Service (Hospital)	Asst. Manager	More than 10
<b>P10</b>	26	MBA	Single	-	Service (Hospital)	HR Officer	2.5
<b>P11</b>	40	MBA	Married	4	Service (Hospital)	Sr. Officer	9
<b>P12</b>	24	MPA	Married	None	Service (Hospital)	Officer	2

The entire sample is comprised of working women and all participants have bachelors or above for their qualification. Three participants belong to the age group of 24 to 26 years, eight participants 32 to 40 years and only one is above 40 years. Two participants are unmarried, while the rest are married. Eight participants have children, out of which two have independent children in their early 20s, while six have dependent children, ranging from the age groups 4 months to 5 years. 4 participants are from the service industry, 2 from banks, 2 from the sales industry, 1 in shipping, 1 in armed forces, 1 in IT and 1 from the engineering sector. All participants have experience of more than 2 years to more than 10 years.

### Data Instrument

Conversational interviewing is the method for data collection and for this purpose unstructured interviews have been used, where additional questions were also asked when required.

### Data Analysis

Since this study incorporates an interpretive philosophy, a phenomenological approach towards data analysis has been used. For this purpose, unstructured interviews are conducted to collect qualitative data. Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework was used, which suggested that based on qualitative data, a 3 step process should include: data reduction, data display, and drawing the conclusion.

Through interview process, qualitative data was obtained where three themes emerged. Details are as under:

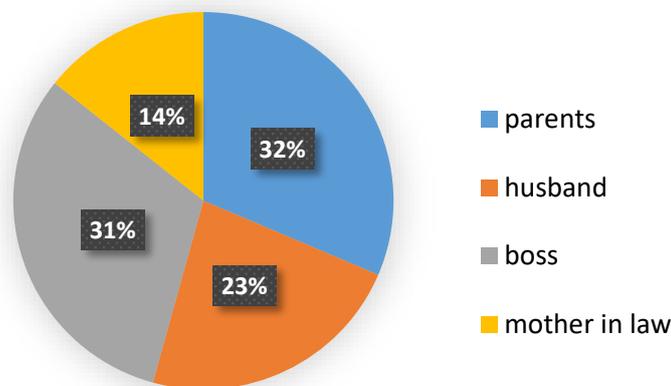
Table 2: Domains and Themes

Domain #1: Social support systems	
Parents	11 Statements
Husband	8 Statements
Boss	11 Statements
Mother in-law	5 Statements
Support system they need from work:	
Day care	8 Statements
Rest room	3 Statements
Medical facilities	4 Statements
Pick & Drop	3 Statements
Domain #2: Perception about working women	
Acceptance of working women	8 Statements
Domain #3: Barriers faced by working women in career progression	
Total Statements	70

### Theme 1: Social support systems

The first part of the research question asked “what social support they believe to be helpful in their personal life and professional life?” Participants of this study deemed parents, husbands, bosses, spouse’s parents, joint family members, and colleagues as their support system. Four themes emerged under the domain of support systems: parents (n = 11 statement), husband (n = 8 statement), boss (n = 11 statement), spousal relations such as mother in law & sister in law (n = 5 statement).

Figure 1: Support systems



Source: Primary data

#### Husband

Eight participants out of ten stated that their husbands are the greatest support system in their lives. Husbands understand their situations and help out a lot with their household duties. One of the participants shared her views as follows:

*“My husband is the pillar of my support; even after my marriage, I have been working for 7 years and my husband is so caring and supporting, that relieves me from the guilt of not being there for our daughter, at times due to work engagements. Even when I am too exhausted from work or asleep or busy with office assignments, he takes care of our daughter and I face no difficulty.”*

#### Parents

Eleven participants out of twelve stated that their family, particularly parents, are the biggest support in their career advancement. One of the participants shared her views as follows:

*“I’m blessed I have a good family and also good parents. It is not because of financial problems, that I do this job, but the reason is that my parents got me to complete the education and qualification I have and so they wanted me not to go to waste. My parents supported me very much; they never differentiated between me and my brothers. We had our aims and goals to achieve, and those objectives were valued at home; if it weren’t for the family support, I might not have flourished the way I have in my field being a woman.”*

### Mother-in-law

Five participants out of ten stated that their mother-in-law was the greatest supporter in their life. One participant shared her views as:

*“My mother-in-law proved out to be the greatest help for me beyond my expectation. I do not have to be under pressure of domestic chores or that I have to reach home right after work or that I have to look-after the dinner arrangements and all”.*

Two women also identified their sister-in-law to be a substantial supporter of their work. It could be because the said women were also working

### Boss

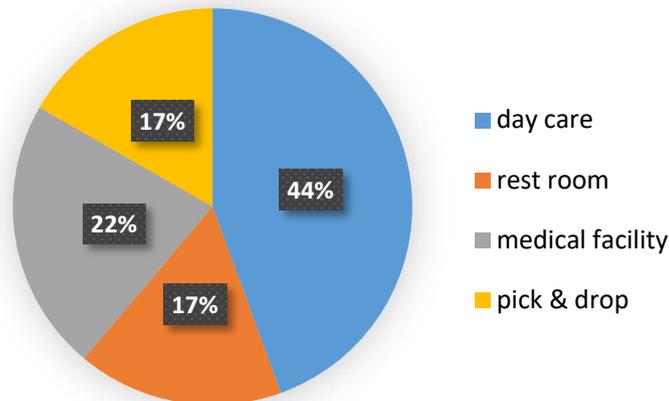
Eleven participants out of twelve stated that their bosses provide support and flexibility with their day to day needs; they understand if they need to leave early or need help with their work, and provide a supportive environment, medical concessions, and arrange transportation facility. One participant shared her views as:

*“My boss is very supportive; regarding official issues, he’s very flexible, if I need something or has a family emergency, he understands my predicament. Since I have little kids at home and also have to deal with their school issues, my boss understands my problems and sanctions short leaves sometimes when I need, so there is no such issue in our department.”*

### Support systems they need from work

When asked “is there any other social support do you wish were there?” Participants included day care, rest rooms, medical facilities, leave with pay, transportation facility and post-maternity leave. Four themes emerge from this: day care (n = 8 statements), rest room (n = 3 statements), medical facilities (n = 4 statements), pick up & drop off (n = 3 statements) under the domain of support system they need from work.

Figure 2: Support systems they need from work



Source: Primary data

For e.g. Day care:

All eight participants who had children voiced that there is a greater use of day care facilities for working women. One of the participants shared her views as:

**P4 – IT Manager:** *“I have a daughter she is 4 months and I understand that day care is necessary in every organisation. In our institution we have this facility that’s why I have no problem. I have permission from my office, I can go to see her, so that it is easy for me to concentrate on my job; if my office would not have provided this facility, I would not be able to concentrate on my work and I would get rid of this job without giving a second thought.”*

**P9 – Assistant Manager:** *“Before my last baby, I could easily manage my work. I was satisfied with my work life. But now my baby since my baby is 2.5 years old, even at work I am constantly worried about my baby even-though my family is taking care of him. If my organisation would provide me with a day care, I could at least relax that he’s here close to me”*

Theme 2: Perception about working women

The second part of the research question asked “what type of perception is faced by working women in the context of Pakistan?” Under this finding one theme emerged under the domain of perception about working women: Acceptance of working women (n = 8 statements).

Acceptance of working women in society:

Almost all the participants of this study indicated that previously there was too much resistance for women to be working outside of the home, however, this perception is now changing and

women are now being accepted more and more at their workplaces in particular, as well as in society in general. Some of the most common responses are as follows:

**P1 – General Manager:** *“Previously it was not considered as positive but now I am observing that peoples’ mindsets have changed and now they don’t mind it and even value my work to be honourable; perhaps it’s all because of the education, as education is becoming common, peoples’ mentality also seems to be shifting positively”.*

When asked what it meant by ‘not being considered as positive’ the respondent narrated her life story as to how her brother defined the outside world as not fit for a female, as they are likely to be exploited. His exact words, as she stated, were, ‘*outside world is not for women*’.

**P2 – Admin Officer:** *“Peoples’ behaviours and attitudes are very good and supportive; they acknowledge my work and seem impressed by me that how I am able to manage work and family side by side and their behaviour is really encouraging for me.”*

**P6 – BDM:** *“Peoples’ responses are positive towards me. I have found that women who are contributing financially towards the household and supporting their husbands, are deemed respectfully in their societies. My in-laws value my contribution to the household and my mother-in-law also encourages my daughters to be independent as well, because in modern times women must learn to share household expenses mutually.*

### Theme 3: Barriers for working women in career progression

The third part of the research question dealt with whether working women face barriers during their career progressions which are likely to influence women in prioritising their family over work or work over family. Ten participants out of twelve discussed that indeed barriers do exist for females that are likely to encourage or discourage them to value their work as much as their families. Some of the common responses are as follows:

**P7 – Team Manager:** *“Girls are not being given good opportunities as compared to the males, if a woman is promoted, she is still being not given team leader status, or even if somehow she is promoted, it is just a nomenclature for us without any substantial seriousness; and she is not given any responsibility associated with the role to lead. Moreover, I have observed that males don’t like that a lady may lead them or give them instructions”.*

**P5 – Sales Director:** *“There is a problem with our system for a girl; she must be smart that’s a one thing, but she’s required to be well maintained, having graceful personality; they start evaluating us from head to toe, we are required to wear makeup even if we don’t want to. Since I work in the sales & marketing, I have to live up to this pressure of maintaining myself or else I would be replaced”.*

**P8 – Branch Manager:** *When I entered in this professional life, at first I suffered as well; regarding the interview everything used to go perfect but no selection. And now after my baby my boss thinks that I am not reliable enough to be put on important and high-profile tasks that my work efficiency is reduced but I feel my efficiency has increased manifolds. In-fact, now I'm working with twice the horsepower to remain competitive both at work and home.*

**P1 – General Manager:** *“If I would have been married at the initial stage of my career then probably it would have been a tough time for me to climb up the professional ladder, because children are deemed as anchor pulling you back in your professional life, but now since I am at a very senior position, even with my 2-year-old baby, I don't see anything stopping me from professionally successful”*

### **Analysis & Interpretation**

Contrary to the general perception as stated by Khan & M. Jalal-ud-din (2008), the female workforce is found to be adequately supported, not only as far as the family is concerned but also at the organisational level. It can be said with conviction that working women find their parents, spouse, in-laws and bosses to be highly supportive with their professional careers. Not only their work is valued by these supporters, but they are also actively contributing towards the financial well-being of their families. Their family lives tend to become more pleasant as the members of their family share their sense of pride along with them. Moreover, almost all participants stated that they would not be able to maintain their household responsibilities and career responsibilities without such support.

In agreement with the scholars who have dealt with the issue of support systems, as discussed above, such as Marcinkus et al (2006), Erdwins et al (2001) and Baral & Bhargava (2011) etc. support from family and peers tends to play a very positive role, increasing the commitment levels and working efficiency of women both at work and at home.

However, participants also identified that particularly at the organisational level, provision of day care, proper restrooms, post-maternity leave and commutation facilities play a significant role for women in deciding to value their work just as much as their families. As day care emerged to be the most important facility which working women required to be more mindful at work.

In contrast to the popular beliefs, a sound shift is also experienced in the perceptions at both the societal and organisational fronts. Participants acknowledged that working women are now deemed to be a valued part of the society and a positive trend has emerged towards female employment.

It can be implied from this that in earlier days, women working outside of their homes were not considered to bear good moral character. A common perception that existed was that

working women are easy targets and vulnerable towards unwanted advances. One respondent who is working as a saleswoman implied that working women at many a times are depicted as objects of sale rather than the product they are selling. Such negative perceptions prevailed in the past, however these perceptions are being altered with the passage of time and women now feel that they are being admired more by the people in their surroundings for being able to carry out so many obligations with such efficiency.

Moreover, the changing economic scenarios have allowed the added income brought into the family to be considered as a valuable support, which allows the family to be able to afford things that they could previously not do. Thus, it is observed that a huge shift has occurred in the perceptions of women working side by side with men.

Lastly, the majority of the respondents appreciated the roles of their bosses in understanding their home and family situations, especially in allowing them short leave or days off whenever there is a family emergency. However, they did complain that a perception nevertheless prevails amongst the bosses that such working women are not reliable enough to be put on important and high profile tasks and at times are not even taken seriously by their male counterparts. Bosses undermine their competency levels and instead of evaluating their abilities, they judge them on their family obligations, thus exhibiting non-professionalism towards them.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study it can be concluded that family support, particularly the support of spouse and in-laws, plays a crucial role for women in balancing work and family obligations with increased efficiency. This study expounded husbands to be the most influential support for a married working woman. In agreement with Crowley & Kolenikov's (2014), the study also revealed that with having support of a partner at home, women who even experience negative effects in their professional life, tend to be resilient in both the roles simultaneously. Secondly, women who participated in this study seem to generally receive positive attitudes about their work from general people, colleagues, friends, and family and have found the urban Pakistani society to be respectful of their efforts. A shift in the perception has occurred and women in Pakistan are now very much being accepted in dual roles as caretaker of the family as well a valued organisational employee. This study found the attitude of people towards working women changing in Pakistan and they are accepted in traditional as well non-traditional professions.

Lastly however, the study concludes that female workers in Pakistan are still treated as second rated employees compared to males and are likely to face barriers at the work place that limit their chances of career progressions, ultimately discouraging them to value work just as much as their family obligations. In agreement with Sarwar A & Imran MK (2019), the study also revealed several barriers that women faced during career progression at their workplaces and



emphasised the most important factor was gender discrimination that lead to inadequate chances of career progressions for women in employment in Pakistan.

**Limitation and Future Research:**

The main limitation of the study is the lack of cooperation of the respondent so the sample size used in this research was too little. Therefore, we recommend that other researchers should work with a large number of data, as well as another region.



## REFERENCES

- Ali, H., Zafar, M. I., & Hussain, S. (2005). Males attitude towards females' education and employment (A case study in tehsil Darya Khan, district Bhakkar) [Pakistan]. *Journal of Agriculture and Social Sciences (Pakistan)*.
- 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.
- Amstad, F. T., Meier, L. L., Fasel, U., Elfering, A., & Semmer, N. K. (2011). A meta-analysis of work-family conflict and various outcomes with a special emphasis on cross-domain versus matching-domain relations. *Journal of occupational health psychology, 16*(2), 151.
- Anderson, D. J., Binder, M., & Krause, K. (2003). The motherhood wage penalty revisited: Experience, heterogeneity, work effort, and work-schedule flexibility. *ILR Review, 56*(2), 273-294.
- Anderson, S. E., Coffey, B. S., & Byerly, R. T. (2002). Formal organisational initiatives and informal workplace practices: Links to work-family conflict and job-related outcomes. *Journal of management, 28*(6), 787-810.
- Armstead, L. S. (2015). Balancing the life: A case study on single African American working mothers. *Order, (3712038)*.
- Ashraf, M. (2007). Factors affecting Female Employment in Male-Dominated Occupations: Evidence from the 1990 and 2000 Census Data. *Contemporary Economic Policy, 25*(1), 119-130.
- Baral, R., & Bhargava, S. (2011). Examining the moderating influence of gender on the relationships between work-family antecedents and work-family enrichment. *Gender in Management: An International Journal, 26*(2), 122-147.
- Bell, A. S., Rajendran, D., & Theiler, S. (2012). Job Stress, Wellbeing, Work-Life Balance and Work-Life Conflict Among Australian Academics. *E-Journal of Applied Psychology, 8*(1).
- Benard, S., & Correll, S. J. (2010). Normative discrimination and the motherhood penalty. *Gender & Society, 24*(5), 616-646.
- Beutell, N. J. (2010). The causes and consequences of work-family synergy: An empirical study in the United States. *International Journal of Management, 27*(3), 650.
- Billings, A. G., & Moos, R. H. (1981). The role of coping responses and social resources in attenuating the stress of life events. *Journal of behavioral medicine, 4*(2), 139-157.
- Bird, S. R. (2006). Theorizing masculinities: recent trends in the social sciences. *Gender Studies Journal of Eastern Europe, 14*(1), 1-21.
- Blair-Loy, M. (2009). *Competing devotions: Career and family among women executives*. Harvard University Press.



- Brough, P., & Pears, J. (2004). Evaluating the influence of the type of social support on job satisfaction and work related psychological well-being. *International Journal of Organisational Behaviour*, 8(2), 472-485.
- Budig, M. J., & England, P. (2001). The wage penalty for motherhood. *American sociological review*, 66(2), 204-225.
- Carlson, D. S., & Kacmar, K. M. (2000). Work–family conflict in the organisation: Do life role values make a difference? *Journal of Management*, 26(5), 1031-1054.
- Carlson, D. S., Grzywacz, J. G., & Zivnuska, S. (2009). Is work—family balance more than conflict and enrichment? *Human relations*, 62(10), 1459-1486.
- Cinamon, R. G. (2006). Anticipated work-family conflict: Effects of gender, self-efficacy, and family background. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 54(3), 202-215.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design—Choosing among five Tradition*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publication.
- Crompton, R., Hantrais, L., & Walters, P. (1990). Gender relations and employment. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 41(3), 329-349.
- Cross, C., & Linehan, M. (2006). Barriers to advancing female careers in the high-tech sector: empirical evidence from Ireland. *Women in Management Review*, 21(1), 28-39.
- Crowley, J. E., & Kolenikov, S. (2014). Flexible work options and mothers' perceptions of career harm. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 55(1), 168-195.
- Crowley, J. E., & Kolenikov, S. (2014). Flexible work options and mothers' perceptions of career harm. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 55(1), 168-195.
- Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological review*, 109(3), 573.
- Emmons, C. A., Biernat, M., Tiedje, L. B., Lang, E. L., & Wortman, C. B. (1990). Stress, support, and coping among women professionals with preschool children. In *Stress between work and family* (pp. 61-93). Springer, Boston, MA.
- Erdwins, C. J., Buffardi, L. C., Casper, W. J., & O'Brien, A. S. (2001). The relationship of women's role strain to social support, role satisfaction, and self-efficacy. *Family relations*, 50(3), 230-238.
- Feyerherm, A., & Vick, Y. H. (2005). Generation X women in high technology: Overcoming gender and generational challenges to succeed in the corporate environment. *Career Development International*, 10(3), 216-227.
- Folkman, S., Lazarus, R. S., Dunkel-Schetter, C., DeLongis, A., & Gruen, R. J. (1986). Dynamics of a stressful encounter: cognitive appraisal, coping, and encounter outcomes. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 50(5), 992.
- Frone, M. R., Russell, M., & Cooper, M. L. (1992). Antecedents and outcomes of work-family conflict: testing a model of the work-family interface. *Journal of applied psychology*, 77(1), 65.
- Gordon, J. R., & Whelan-Berry, K. S. (2004). It takes two to tango: An empirical study of perceived spousal/partner support for working women. *Women in Management Review*, 19(5), 260-273.



- Greenhaus, J. H. (1988). The intersection of work and family roles: Individual, interpersonal, and organisational issues. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 3(4), 23.
- Guendouzi, J. (2006). "The guilt thing": Balancing domestic and professional roles. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68(4), 901-909.
- Hausmann, R., Tyson, L. D., & Zahidi, S. (2014). The global gender gap report 2012, world economic forum.
- Heilman, M. E. (2001). Description and prescription: How gender stereotypes prevent women's ascent up the organisational ladder. *Journal of social issues*, 57(4), 657-674.
- Hicks, J. (2013). Opinion piece: gender transformation in the workplace.
- Hicks, J. (2013). Opinion piece: gender transformation in the workplace.
- Hill, E. J., Hawkins, A. J., Ferris, M., & Weitzman, M. (2001). Finding an extra day a week: The positive influence of perceived job flexibility on work and family life balance. *Family relations*, 50(1), 49-58.
- Hoobler, J. M., Wayne, S. J., & Lemmon, G. (2009). Bosses' perceptions of family-work conflict and women's promotability: Glass ceiling effects. *Academy of management journal*, 52(5), 939-957.
- Hutcheson, P. G. (2012). *Work Life Balance-Book 1*.
- Jalal-ud-Din, M., & Khan, M. (2008). Socio-economic and cultural constraints of women in Pakistan with special reference to Mardan district, NWFP province. *Sarhad Journal of Agriculture*, 24(3), 485-493.
- Levy, I. (2012). *Working Mothers and Their Perceived Work-life Balance*. Erasmus Universities.
- Maan, A., Tanwir, F., Saboor, A., Asghar, K., & Ali, I. (2006). TRACING THE SNAPSHOT OF WORKING WOMEN: A BEHAVIOURAL ANALYSIS OF THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS. *Pak. J. Agri. Sci*, 43, 1-2.
- Marcinkus, W. C., Whelan-Berry, K. S., & Gordon, J. R. (2007). The relationship of social support to the work-family balance and work outcomes of midlife women. *Women in management Review*, 22(2), 86-111.
- Marshall, S. M. (2009). Women higher education administrators with children: Negotiating personal and professional lives. *NASPA Journal about Women in Higher Education*, 2(1), 190-223.
- Nadeem, M. S., & Abbas, Q. (2009). The impact of work life conflict on job satisfactions of employees in Pakistan. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 4(5), 63-83.
- Noor, N. M. (2004). Work-family conflict, work-and family-role salience, and women's well-being. *The Journal of social psychology*, 144(4), 389-406.
- Pearlin, L. I., & Schooler, C. (1978). The structure of coping. *Journal of health and social behavior*, 2-21.
- Ray, E. B., & Miller, K. I. (1994). Social support, home/work stress, and burnout: Who can help? *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 30(3), 357-373.



- Rehman, S., & Azam Roomi, M. (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.
- Reifman, A., Biernat, M., & Lang, E. L. (1991). Stress, social support, and health in married professional women with small children. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 15(3), 431-445.
- Sarwar, A., & Imran, M. K. (2019). Exploring Women's Multi-Level Career Prospects in Pakistan: Barriers, Interventions and Outcomes. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 1376.
- Schein, V. E. (1975). Relationships between sex role stereotypes and requisite management characteristics among female managers. *Journal of applied psychology*, 60(3), 340.
- Shelton, L. M. (2006). Female entrepreneurs, work-family conflict, and venture performance: New insights into the work-family interface. *Journal of small business management*, 44(2), 285-297.
- Suchet, M., & Barling, J. (1986). Employed mothers: Interrole conflict, spouse support and marital functioning. *Journal of Organisational Behavior*, 7(3), 167-178.
- Tallerico, M. (2000). Gaining access to the superintendency: Headhunting, gender, and color. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 36(1), 18-43.
- TheGlobalEconomy.com, the World Bank
- Tomazevic, N., Kozjek, T., & Stare, J. (2014). The Consequences of a Work-Family (Im) Balance: From the Point of View of Employers and Employees. *International Business Research*, 7(8), 83.
- Voydanoff, P. (2005). Work demands and work-to-family and family-to-work conflict: Direct and indirect relationships. *Journal of Family Issues*, 26(6), 707-726.
- Welter, F. (2004). The environment for female entrepreneurship in Germany. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 11(2), 212-221.
- Winslow, S. (2005). Work-family conflict, gender, and parenthood, 1977-1997. *Journal of Family Issues*, 26(6), 727-755.