Work Life Balance: Satisfaction of University Teachers Working from Home

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Abstract

Work from home has become a new normal in this global pandemic situation. Exploration of work life balance in this new context has become imperative to deal this critical situation. This study intends to explore work life balance (WLB), family and work conflicts, work and family demands, satisfaction and challenges related with work from home and assessing their interrelationships and effects. It also measures the group differences based on demographic variables and the mediation effect of work family conflicts, and challenges of work from home in the relationship between WLB and satisfaction with work from home. The sample of the study was university teachers teaching from home to undergraduate and postgraduate classes during COVID-19. Data was collected using a self-developed questionnaire, administered online. Results suggest that majority of the respondents were balancing their lives with work from home and were satisfied with it but were facing work and family demands and conflicts while dealing family and work at a time under the same roof. The results revealed significant positive correlation between WLB and satisfaction with work from home, and negative association of, family and work conflict and demands and challenges of work from home with teachers' satisfaction and WLB. Females, single and young teachers, with more work load were facing more work demands while staying at home as compared to males, married and senior teachers with less workload. The results indicated that the work family conflict and challenges of work from home had significant effect on satisfaction of university teachers' work from home and were partially mediating the association between work-life balance and satisfaction with work from home. It was suggested that employees should make arrangements such as domestic help and rational distribution of time for both the roles to be more effective while working from home.

Keywords: Work life balance, Family and work conflicts, Work and family demands, Satisfaction and challenges of work from home

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Introduction

Maintaining a healthy balance between work and family is a challenging task that only a few are able to master. Balancing and harmonizing time spent on work and personal life is work-life balance (Abioro, Oladejo, & Ashogbon, 2018). Lockwood (2003) explains work-life balance as push-pull process between family responsibilities and work obligations. This balance when achieved, reduces role-conflict, work-life lopsidedness and is closely associated with satisfaction and effective functioning in life. The term "work-life balance" became popular in the 1980s when more females entered the workforce. This leads organizations to seek and study family-friendly employment opportunities, working from home, and work-life balance (Delecta, 2011; Felstead, Jewson, Phizacklea, & Walters, 2002). Guest (2002) explains there is sufficient and ample time to meet demands and commitments of work and home. Work-life balance is gained in a healthy and supportive work environment, enabling employees to handle work and their personal responsibilities and thus improving performance (Dhas, 2015).

Work-life balance sustains happiness and achievement (Wolor, Solikhah, Fidhyallah, & Lestari, 2020) and an imbalance results in many undesirable consequences, not only for the individual but also for family, organization, and society at large. Work-family conflict arises as a result of competing demands between the personal and professional roles. Sociologists, organizational scholars, and social scientists from many fields have been keen interest in exploring interdependencies between the personal and work lives of individuals. One reason for this interest was the accelerated rate of women's participation in the labor force, which brought about significant changes in the traditional gender roles. This shift has resulted in many changes in the way in which individuals balance their work and family lives (Omara, Ahmada, & Ismaila, 2016), which has affected roles of men and women in the workplace and at home.

Existing research suggests that increasingly large number of people are struggling to maintain a balance between their work and family life. The challenges faced by these workers who are involved in such balancing acts have given rise to growing body of research at intersection of home and work (Allen et al., 2000; Kossek & Ozeki,1998). There are two types of conflicts that arise between family and work life, i.e. work-family conflict (WFC) results from work that is obtrusive with family obligations, like long working hours and excessive work demands. The second type of conflict is family-work conflict (FWC) where excessive family responsibilities hinder the effectiveness of the performance on a job. This is especially a challenge for women who have to take care of children and other home related responsibilities at home as part of their gender role obligations. However, in dual earner families, male workers also face problems in maintaining work-life balance (Byron, 2005).

The existing literature suggests that gender is one of the most important predictors of the work-life conflict due to persistent cultural norms that support the breadwinning –caregiver model. Research shows that gender inequalities in work life balance during pandemic have amplified as more and more people have shifted to work from home (Bernhardt et al., 2022). There are competing perspectives about the gendered nature of work-family conflict. Existing models of employment are based on the premise that work and family are two separate spheres, each with its own demands and obligations. Pleck (1977) suggests boundaries between WFC and FWC are asymmetrically permeable and their overlap often leads to dissatisfaction with work and family resulting in increased occupational burnout, job stress, lower job performance, and ill-health.

COVID-19 has forced many to work from home adding pressures to confront home demands while working at the same time. In such times it is crucial to investigate how work and family commitments are carried out affecting satisfaction. Anwer (2020) asserts people are losing grip over conventional life-work balance (WLB) because boundaries between life and work are becoming blurred during the pandemic lockdown especially for university teachers teaching remotely from home. This study looks at this sample and

1. Explores relationships among work life balance (WLB), family-work conflicts (FWC), work-family conflicts (WFC), work demands (WD), family demands (FD), challenges of work from home (CWH) and satisfaction with work from home(SWH).
2. Measures demographic differences for the study variables.
3. Finds the effect of all subscales of WLB on satisfaction with work from home.
4. Evaluates the mediation effect of WFC, and CWH in the relationship between WLB and satisfaction with work from home.

Research Methodology

Population and Sample

The population of study comprised of university teachers of the Punjab who were engaged in online teaching due to pandemic. An online tool was emailed to faculty members, teaching online classes at graduate and post-graduate level. One hundred and thirty-two (Males = 41, Females = 91) participants with an age of about 30 years or above took part in this study; all of them were at least MPhil, and were lecturers and assistant professors (see Table 1 for details).

Table 1
Demographics Details of the Sample

Sr. No		Category	N	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	41	31.1
		Female	91	68.9
2	Designation	Lecturer	95	72.0
		Assistant professor	20	15.2
		Associate professor	9	6.8
		Professor	8	6.1
3	Qualification	BS/MSc	47	35.6
		MS/MPhil	51	38.6
		PhD	34	25.8
4	Age	25 to 30	23	17.4
		30 to 35	52	39.4
		35 above	57	43.2

Measuring Instrument

Demographic Questions. Twelve demographic questions were posed to all participants about their age, gender, educational qualifications etc.

Work-life Balance Scale (WLBS). A survey with 26 items was designed on basis of extensive review of relevant literature (Agha, Azmi, & Khan, 2017; Delecta, 2011; Omara, et al., 2016; Pattusamy, & Jacob, 2016; Sharma, S., Gangwani, & Fryan, 2019; Sheikh el al., 2018), named WLBS with seven subscales that measured work-life balance (WLB, 8 Items), family-work conflicts (FWC, 2 Items), work-family conflicts (WFC, 3 Items), family demands (FD, 3 items), work demands (WD, 3 Items), issues and challenges of working from home (CWH, 2 Items), and the satisfaction with work from home (SWH, 5 Items) measured on 5-point Likert scale from *strongly disagree*(1) to *strongly agree*(5) and one open ended question. The instrument had high face validity (expert opinion) and high reliability. The reliability was measured through the cronbach alpha coefficient for internal consistency. The alpha values are given in table 2.

Design and Procedure

The population of study included university teachers of the Punjab who were involved in online teaching due to COVID-19. An online tool was emailed to faculty members, teaching online classes at graduate and post-graduate level. Two hundred university teachers, were sent an email to participate in this study with the following link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1l_SaEmVQCA9qJjjAn3ItXspb1MmvTXL4XNLBUnB 2odc/edit?ts=5f049a39&gxids=7628) and complete WLBS. They were asked to read (and sign) the consent form and then complete their demographic information and WLBS. The data received from one hundred and thirty-two participants, were analyzed using Pearson

Product Moment correlation, *t*-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Moreover, regression analysis was employed to assess the causal effects and Process Macro (Hayes, 2013) for mediation effects of WFC and CWH on the relationship between WLB and SWH.

Results

Psychometric Properties of WLS

Table 2 displays psychometric properties of WLS, all subscales have moderate to moderately high reliabilities (α = .76 to .90). Means for all subscales were higher than middle average rating except FWC, suggesting that work and family conflicts on average were lower than other measures. The WLB subscale correlated negatively with WFC (r = -.58, p < .01), FWC (r = -.27, p < .01), WD (r = -.34, p < .01), FD (r = -.37, p < .01), CWH (r = -.33, p < .01), but positively with SWH (r = .69, p < .01). This suggests that when work and life are in balance, satisfaction in working from home is also high. Other subscales with higher mean values negatively associated with WLB and SWH. All other subscales that measured conflicts between work and life associated positively with each other (see Table 2).

Table 2
Correlation Among Subscales their Means, SDs and Reliabilities

Subscale	WFC	FWC	WD	FD	CWH	SWH	Mean	SD	a
WLB	-.58**	-.27**	-.34**	-.37**	-.33**	.69**	3.44	.69	.86
WFC		.45**	.38**	.49**	.41**	-.57**	3.16	.96	.91
FWC			.29**	.60**	.47**	-.40**	2.71	.95	.76
WD				.42**	.40**	-.38**	3.74	.79	.88
FD					.46**	-.40**	3.26	.91	.82
CWH						-.44**	3.40	.93	.79
SWH							3.32	.71	.82

Note. Work-Life Balance = WLB, Work-Family Conflict = WFC, Family-Work Conflict = FWC, Work Demand = WD, Family Demand = FD, Challenges of Work from Home = CWH, Satisfaction with Work from Home = SWH

**p< .001

Gender

A *t*-test analysis was conducted for gender differences in study variables. It was determined that there existed significant gender differences in teachers' views and females were facing more work demands t (130) = -1.993, p = .048, Male: M=10.609, SD=2.56, Females: M=11.483, SD=2.22, while staying at home. Female were experiencing less work-life balance, more work family conflicts, family demands and challenges of working from home and they were less satisfied while working from home as compared to their male counterparts, although all these mean differences were non-significant.

Marital Status

The *t*-values indicated that challenges of work from home were greater for single teachers $t(130)=2.217$, p $= 0.028$, Single: M=7.175, SD=1.69, Married: M=6.46, SD=1.97. It was determined that there existed significant group differences in teachers' views and single teachers were experiencing more issues and challenges while staying at home. Married people were more satisfied while working from home and they were having more work-life balance, although these differences were non-significant.

Teacher Rank

There was a significant main effect of teacher rank for WLB $F(3,128) =9.47$, $p<.000$, such that mean WLB for lecturer ($M = 29.78$, $SD = 5.56$) was not significantly ($p> .05$) different from assistant professor ($M = 30.55$, $SD = 7.46$) but was significantly ($p< .004$) lower than associate professor ($M = 35.87$, $SD = 2.17$) and professor ($M = 39.11$, $SD = 4.59$). For WFC there was a significant main effect for teacher rank $F(3,128) = 4.99$, $p<.003$, such that mean WFC for lecturer ($M = 6.63$, $SD = 1.81$) was not significantly ($p> .05$) different from assistant professor ($M = 6.15$, $SD = 1.87$) but was significantly ($p< .043$) greater than associate professor ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.83$) and professor ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 2.01$)($p< .001$).

There was a significant main effect of teacher rank for WD $F(3,128) =11.39$, $p<.000$, such that mean WD for lecturers ($M = 11.72$, $SD = 1.81$) and assistant professors ($M = 11.05$, $SD = 1.73$) was significantly ($p> .05$)greater than associate professors ($M = 9.12$, $SD = 2.90$) and professors ($M = 8.00$, $SD = 4.33$). There was a significant main effect of teacher rank for CWH $F(3,128) = 4.83$, $p< .003$, such that mean CWH for lecturer ($M = 7.15$, $SD = 1.62$) was significantly ($p> .05$) greater than assistant professor ($M = 6.10$, $SD = 1.73$) and professor ($M = 5.33$, $SD = 2.95$). There was a also a significant main effect for teacher rank for Mean SWH $F(3,128) =6.04$, $p<.001$, such that mean SWH for lecturer ($M = 15.97$, $SD = 3.34$) was not significantly ($p> .05$) different from assistant professor ($M = 16.85$, $SD = 2.79$) but was significantly ($p< .004$) lower than associate professor ($M = 19.87$, $SD = 2.35$) and professor ($M = 19.55$, $SD = 4.87$). (See Figure1).

The following figure (Figure 1) reflects the mean scores of all subscales having significant effect of teachers rank for all subscales except for work demands. The mean scores of professors and associate professors were high for satisfaction with work from home and work life balance. Mean scores of lecturers were high for work family conflict. Junior teachers were having high means compared to the seniors, hence facing more challenges and demands. Professors and associate professors were having better WLB and were more satisfied with work from home.
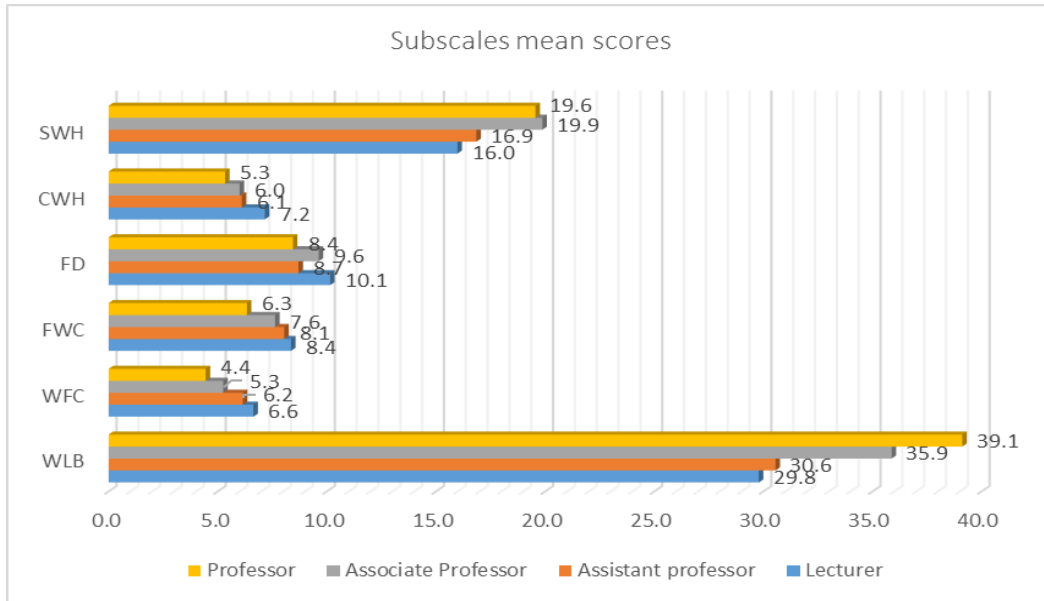
Figure 1. *Teacher Rank and Mean Scores of Subscales*

Workload

There was a significant main effect for number of credit hours taught for WLB F (2,129) =5.879, p =0.004, such that mean WLB for 0-6 credit hours teaching (M = 30.45, SD = 7.39) was not significantly (p> .05) different from 6-9 credit hours teaching (M = 32.96, SD = 5.91). The mean WLB for 6-9 credit hours teaching was significantly (p< .001) greater than 10 or more credit hours teaching (M = 29.21, SD = 5.85). There was a significant main effect for number of credit hours taught for SWH F (2,129) 4.725, p =0.010, such that mean SWH for 0-6 credit hours teaching (M = 15.72, SD = 3.90) was not significantly (p> .05) different from 6-9 credit hours teaching (M = 17.66, SD = 3.58). The mean SWH for 6-9 credit hours teaching was significantly (p< .001) greater than 10 or more credit hours teaching (M = 15.81, SD = 3.21).It revealed that according to the perception of teachers, those who were having less workload as compared to heavy workload were experiencing better work-life balance and satisfaction with work from home. (see Figure 2). There were no main effects for number of credit hours taught for WFC, FWC, WD, FD and CWH.

The following figure (Figure 2) reflects the mean scores of WLB and SWH having significant effect of teachers' workload. The mean scores of 6-9 credit hours teaching were high for work life balance and satisfaction with work from home. It revealed that teachers who were having less workload as compared to heavy workload were experiencing better work-life balance and more satisfaction with work from home.
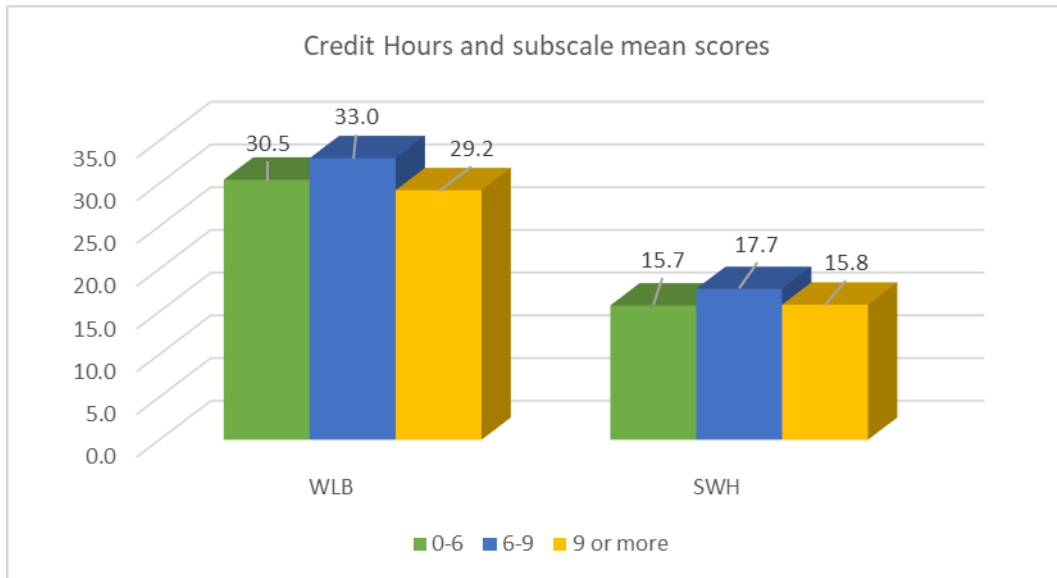
Figure 2. *Workload and Mean Scores of WLB and SWH*

Constructs affecting Teacher Satisfaction

Table 3 shows multiple linear regression that analyzed satisfaction of teachers that worked from home. The results indicated WLB (β = .51, $t(130)$ = 6.76, $p <$ .000) significantly predicted the dependent variable, which accounted for approximately 56% of the variance. All other factors WFC, FWC, WD FD and CWH did not predict satisfaction.
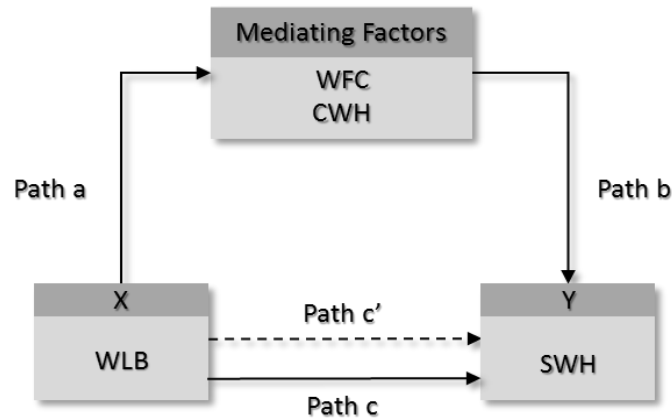
Table 3
Effect of Conflicts, Demands and Challenges on Satisfaction with Work from Home

Variables	*B*	Std. Error	β	*t*	Sig.
(Constant)	13.348	2.275		5.868	.000
WLB	.286	.042	.505	6.768	.000
WFC	-.287	.150	-.156	-1.923	.057
FWC	-.146	.097	-.119	-1.506	.135
WD	-.104	.104	-.070	-1.007	.316
FD	.027	.106	.021	.251	.802
CWH	-.246	.138	-.130	-1.785	.077
R^2 =.558, Adjusted R^2 = .536, *F* 26.249 (6,125)					

Note. Work-Life Balance = WLB, Work-Family Conflict = WFC, Family-Work Conflict = FWC, Work Demand = WD, F with Work from Home = SWH, Dependent Variable: Satisfaction with work from home

Figure 3
Framework of Proposed Model

Note. Direct effect (unmediated) c' = c-ab
      Indirect effect (mediated) c – c' = ab
      Total Effect (X on Y) c = c'+ ab.

Work-Life Balance = WLB, Work-Family Conflict = WFC, Challenges of Work from Home = CWH, Satisfaction with Work from Home = SWH

Table 4 shows the direct, indirect and total effect of mediation of WFC correlating between WLB and SWH. The results showed significant positive direct effect of WLB on SWBβ = .29, with a 95% CI = [.21, .37]. The bootstrapped standardized indirect effect of WLB on SWH through WFC (β = .06, with a 95% CI = [.02, .13] was significant, because the bootstrap CI was above zero and explained indirect effect of mediation due to WFC, when WLB goes up by 1 standard deviation, SWH goes up by .06 standard deviation. Overall significant results of indirect effect indicated partial mediation of work family conflicts in the relationship between WLB and SWH at $p < .05$.

After bootstrapping the data standardized indirect effect of WLB on SWH through CWH (β = .04, with 95% CI = [.01, .08] was significant, because the bootstrap CI was above zero, which explained indirect effect (mediation) of CWH, and when WLB goes up by 1 standard deviation, SWH goes up by .03 standard deviations. Overall significant results of indirect effect indicated partial mediation of CWH in the relationship between WLB and SWH at $p < .05$. The combined effect of both the mediators was also significant (β = .10, with 95% CI = [.04, .18]. The total effect of WLB through direct and indirect paths was significant (c= .39, with 95% CI = [.38, .46], $t(130)$ =10.77, p = .000). These results have also been reflected in figure 4.

Table 4

Mediation of WFC and CWH between WLB and SWH

Path	Effect	[LL, UL]	SE	t	p	R^2
Total Effect (c)						
WLB → SWH + WLB → WFC →SWH + WLB →CWH → SWH	.39	[.32, .46]	.04	10.77	.000	.56
Direct Effect (c′)						
WLB → SWH	.29	[.21, .37]	.04	6.89	.000	.47
WLB → WFC	-.18	[-.22, -.14]	.02	-8.11	.000	.34
WLB → CWH	-.09	[-.15,.-05]	.03	-4.00	.000	.11
WFC → SWH	-.37	[-.65, -.09]	.14	-2.65	.009	.33
CWH → SWH	-.35	[-.60, -.10]	.12	-2.81	.005	.19
Indirect Effect (a*b)						
WLB → WFC → SWH	.06	[.02, .13]*	.03*		Sig	
WLB → CWH → SWH	.04	[.01, .08]*	.02*		Sig	
WLB → WFC+CWH → SWH	.10	[.04, .18]*	.03*		Sig	

Note. Work-Life Balance = WLB, Work-Family Conflict = WFC, Challenges of Work from Home = CWH, Satisfaction with Work from Home = SWH, *Bootstrapped values
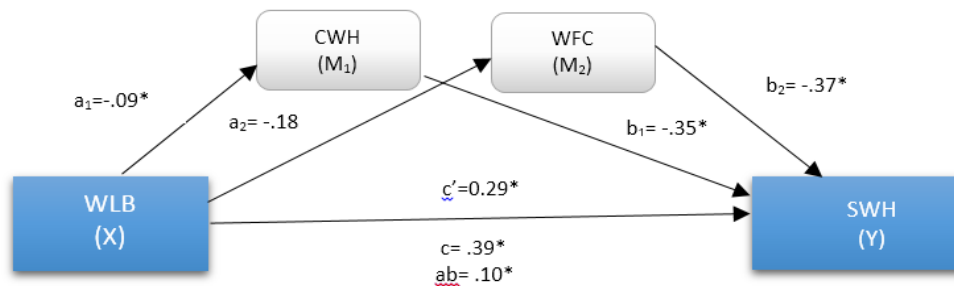

Figure 4. *Direct and Indirect Paths of WLB and SWH*

Discussion

The findings reveal a majority of university teachers working from home were satisfied with it but faced a number of WD, FD, FWC and WFC during COVID-19. However, working from home was a preferred choice because more time could be given to the family, home and the issues associated with them. This result is not different from a study that suggests that only a minority (25%) of employees experience high work-family conflicts when work and family commitments are intermingled (Lowe, 2005); and they experience greater stress and poor quality of life (Delecta, 2011).

The results of current research revealed significant positive correlation between WLB and SWH similar to Saeed and Farooqi (2014) where WLB shared a moderate positive relationship with job satisfaction. In addition, Mas-Machuca, Berbegal-Mirabent, and Alegre (2016) found supervisor WLB support and autonomy positively associated with employee WLB, organizational pride and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction, Fleetwood (2007) suggests is due to flexible working demands which can be completed in a flexible manner. Several countries advocate flexible working arrangements for balancing work and family commitments, which reduces work-life conflict (Gregory & Milner, 2009). The associations between WLB and FD, WD, FWC and WFC were negatively significant, aligned with two previous studies that found significant negative relationships between WLB and WFC, WD and home demand (Naz, Awan & Noureen, 2021; Sheikh, Ashiq, Mehar, Hasan & Khalid, 2018).

The results revealed female university teachers faced greater WD work while staying at home. This was similar to Hjálmsdóttir and Bjarnadóttir (2021) where they suggested, females, especially mothers, working from home in the pandemic invested greater mental work and experienced greater emotional labor keeping their family members calm and safe. A recent British study discovered that working mothers were experiencing 40 percent more stress and frustration than the average people (Chandola, Booker, Kumari, & Benzeval, 2019). In an ILO report about women health workers Pozzan and Cattaneo (2020) have expressed their concern over increased time spend on unpaid work and it is clearly mentioned that even before pandemic women spend more than four hours per day completing domestic work compared to males who were spending one hour and 23 minutes only (Pozzan & Cattaneo, 2020). Female in the present study were experiencing less work-life balance, more work family conflicts, family demands and challenges of working from home and they were less satisfied while working from home as compared to their male counterparts as was the case in a recent study by Naz et al., (2021). Traditionally, women always face challenges for attaining a satisfactory role balance due to disproportionate domestic roles and responsibilities (Uddin, 2021). According to a survey, females are responsible for 75 percent of total household chores (mentioned in Uddin (2021). Gender research on household distribution of care work confirms overall increased involvement of women in childcare work despite their active participation in labour market (Perry- Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020).

Single university teachers experienced greater issues and challenges while working from home than married teachers; WLB was greater in this later cohort, and family matters were better managed than before the pandemic. In addition senior university teachers with light workload (0-6 or 6-9 credit hours) were more satisfied and had better WLB compared to those junior teachers with heavy workload (10+ credit hours). One reason that could explain dissatisfaction and poor WLB in young teachers could be longer hours of work as learn to teach better compared to senior faculty that are more experienced and can achieve many tasks in short time.

The results indicated that the work family conflict and challenges of work from home had significant effect on satisfaction of university teachers' work from home. These results led the researchers to look for the mediating effect of these two variables. Lowe (2005) confirms that imbalance in work and life disturbs the overall well-being of workers causing dissatisfaction, prolonged sadness and stress. Wolor et al. (2020) assert that there is sufficient evidence that WLB positively affects the employee performance and motivation. In a study by Delecta (2011)the amount of time spent on job was the strongest predictor of work-life conflict. Lack of a separate and demarcated work space at home affects family life negatively because workers were facing more difficulty in separating themselves from work (Hill, Miller, Weiner, & Colihan, 1998; Taşdelen-Karçkay & Bakalım, 2017).

Since WFC and CWH significantly and negatively mediated between WLB and SWH with a variance of 53.2%, these mediators represented the larger component of total variance resulting from all other factors. Confirmed by other studies, WFC mediated negatively among work demand, home demand, and WLB (Sheikh et al., 2018), or student-related, instructor-related and institution-related demands degraded satisfaction of university teachers (Bolliger & Wasilik, 2009). Pattusamy and Jacob (2016) reported work and family conflicts and satisfaction with work and family was partially mediated by WLB. Interestingly, organizational pride positively mediates employee WLB and job satisfaction (Mas-Machuca et al., 2016).

Lowe (2005) reports, imbalance in work and life disturbs well-being of workers causing dissatisfaction, prolonged sadness and stress. Similarly, Delecta (2011) suggest the amount of time spent on job was the strongest predictor of work-life conflict. Lack of a separate and demarcated work space at home affects family life negatively because workers face greater difficulty in separating themselves from work (Hill, Miller, Weiner, & Colihan, 1998; Taşdelen-Karçkay & Bakalım, 2017).

Conclusion

A majority of university teachers were satisfied with working from home because there was good balance between their work and family responsibilities. Females, single and young teachers, with greater workload faced greater demands and conflicts compared to males, married and senior teachers. It was established, WFC and CWH negatively mediated satisfaction between WLB and SWH.

Recommendations

We suggest university teacher should employ domestic help and specify their work hours to engage in job-related activates and family-related activities, married teachers might involve partners by negotiating a greater share of domestic duties. Teachers should use effective strategies and mark clear boundaries between job duties and family responsibilities and should adhere to it; they should be more sensitive to work and family demands, should avoid conflicts for minimizing imbalance between their job and family responsibilities.

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