Impact of Work-family Support on Work-family Conflict and Work-family Enrichment: A Study in the Service Sector of Pakistan

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Changing demographics have triggered a need for organizations to facilitate the modern workforce and ensure their retention by addressing work-family concerns. Firms usually provide formal work-life benefits as a mere window dressing without ensuring that employees utilize these benefits. Along with the availability of family-friendly policies, it is essential to ensure their accessibility through social support practices. In the past, research has focused on the provision of work-family policies; this research explores the execution of work-family policies by identifying how informal work-family social support contributes to employees' work-family balance by explicitly examining the constructs of work-family conflict and work-family enrichment.

Keywords: *Work-family support, work-family balance, social support, work-family conflict, work-family enrichment.*

Introduction

The changing contemporary workforce comprises demographics like increasing dual-earning couples, single parents, employees who are primary or secondary caregivers for older people, etc. Along with juggling work and family responsibilities, these employed adults must deal with dynamics like mobility in jobs, increased workload/ workplace stress, and rise in work hours, thus emphasizing quality of work and quality of life. Yunita et al. (2023) presumed that young employees must balance their work and family lives. Recognizing these dynamics, organizations now must ensure that employees do not have to make trade-offs for quality of work and quality of life and that there is a supportive system at the workplace to ensure work-life balance. During the past three decades, research on the work-family subject has explored several ways in which the roles in work and roles in family impact one another. Nowadays, to attract and retain the modern workforce, employers consider the work-family flexibility arena by formulating formal work-family strategies and shaping supportive, informal behaviors. Wiens et al. (2023) state that organizations offer work-family flexibility solutions to employees to create a more satisfied workforce. Though the availability of formal work-family policies is

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a significant factor in achieving that result, a social support system must ensure that employees utilize those work-family policies and reap maximum benefits. Managers and supervisors can be influential agents in encouraging and providing social support to make an organization family-friendly. Researchers have comprehensively studied work-family balance, but it is still a fairly broad term. To gauge work-family balance properly, it is imperative to understand the positive and negative spillover effects, i.e., work-family enrichment and work-family conflict (Lamovšek et al., 2023). Work-family enrichment and conflict provide a more rational approach to understanding the work-family literature. Work-family conflict arises when a stressful work environment leads to a stressful family life by causing strains allied with work, making it difficult for employees to manage multiple work and family responsibilities simultaneously (Nicklin et al., 2022; Kahn et al., 1964). Work-family enrichment, however, is a positive spillover where gain in work-related resources instrumentally improves performance in family life (Chen et al., 2024; Carlson et al., 2006).

Literature Review

Researchers have repeatedly investigated formal work-family-related HR policies (Shafique et al., 2015). However, a novel arena that has recently come into the limelight is the employee perception of the social support offered by supervisors/managers.

Social Support Theory

Organizations investing in a family-supportive organizational culture reap benefits from their formal work-family programs (Allen & French, 2023). According to Wadsworth and Owen (2007), social support at work, or family-supportive supervisor behavior, is a trade of positive emotional resources between an employee and supervisor or co-worker. If this trade is positive, it may help the employee cope with demanding roles at work and in family life and reduce the possibilities of work-family conflict (Anderson et al., 2002). Social support is hard to measure in operational terms as it varies among individuals and organizations, so researchers tend to depict it as a "perceptive" construct. Support can be identified as informational support (advice), instrumental support (tangible resources or services), appraisal (support in understanding and resolving issues) or emotional support (compassion). The unavailability of managerial support has been linked significantly with higher work-family conflict (Anderson et al., 2002). In contrast, informal support or a family-supportive work environment is more connected to enrichment than formal practices (Matei & Vîrgă, 2023; Wayne et al., 2006) and individual task performance (Farooqi et al., 2022).

Work-Family Conflict

In one of the earliest examinations on the work-family conflict, Greenhaus and Beutall (1985) established that individuals' work and family roles simultaneously require time and effort, and the strain caused by involvement in one role renders it challenging to fulfil responsibilities in the other. In their study, a model proposed that factors like work schedule, having a partner/spouse, and their work type and number of dependents contribute to pressuring employees into substantial involvement in family roles. It is essential to address that "family" in the work-family construct is a broad term covering spouse or de facto partners, dependents (children and elderly), as well as single individuals who are caregivers for close relatives (Kelly et al. 2008). Aycan (2008) and Yucel and Chung (2023) compared the work-family conflict of countries with conservative gender role perceptions with egalitarian societies and concluded that developing countries with traditional perceptions of gender, usually where women are perceived as primary caregivers and men are perceived as primary bread-winners, have a higher work-

family conflict ratio then developed countries with somewhat neutral perceptions regarding gender roles.

Work-Family Enrichment

There is a disagreement between researchers that managing multiple roles only leads to adverse outcomes. According to the role expansion theory (Nordenmark, 2004), actively participating in numerous social roles can directly affect the individual's well-being. Greehuas and Powell (2006) determined that a positive spillover effect occurs when employees receive extensive support in one role, facilitating their performance in the other. This concept was validated by Carlson et al. (2006) by conceptualizing the extent to which the support and resources in one domain improved the performance and behavior in another domain. The provision of work-related resources that aid employees in tackling their work and family enhances their ability to deal with their responsibilities in both domains (Matei & Vîrgă, 2023; Odle-Dusseau et al., 2012). This directly leads to better work performance, resistance to stress, job satisfaction, and enhanced organizational engagement. Enrichment is the only construct in the work-family interface with a positive connotation. As enhancement and facilitation respectively depict an improvement and aid in the positive spillover effect, enrichment builds on effective performance in one role due to the resources gained in the other (Humphrey et al., 2024). For example, conflict resolution skills learned at work may help employees deal with conflicts with their spouse, children or other family members.

Methodology and Analysis

Informal work-family support of the supervisor or the family-supportive supervisor behaviors was measured by the scale developed by Hammer et al. (2009), clarifying that family-specific support differs from general supervisor support. The construct of work-family conflict was measured by the multidimensional measure of WFC Carlson et al. (2000). Items were taken from the scale developed by Greenhaus and Powell (2006) to measure work-family enrichment. Also, some items will be taken from the multidimensional scale of perceived work-family positive spillover developed by Hansen et al. (2006). The answers were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale with the endpoint of strongly agree to strongly disagree.
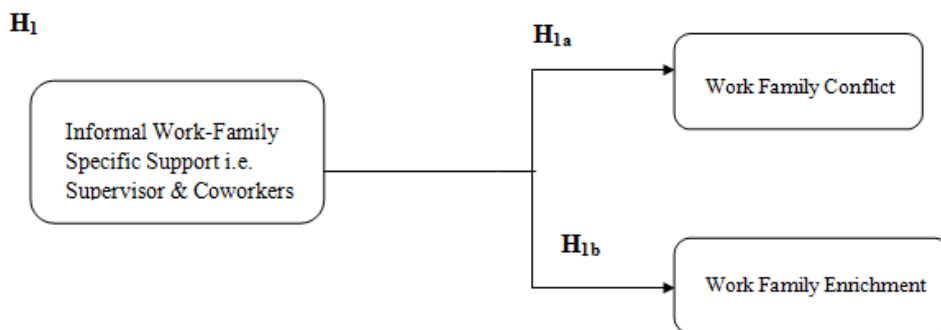
H_1

H_{1a}

Informal Work-Family Specific Support i.e. Supervisor & Coworkers → Work Family Conflict

H_{1b}

→ Work Family Enrichment

Figure 1: Research Model

The study was conducted in Pakistan's service sector, which included organizations from the Telecom and Banking sectors. The pace of development has been the highest in these subsectors, and formal work-family support was provided to the employees. The target population comprised all the employees utilizing family support at the time of the research.

Table 3.1
Measurement Scale

Variable	Original Author	Scale	No. of Items
Informal work-family support	Hammer et al. (2009)	Likert	15
Work-family conflict	Carlson et al.'s (2000)	Likert	8
Work-family enrichment	Greenhaus and Powell (2006)	Likert	4

Reliability

Carmines and Zeller (1979) postulated that research instruments with a Cronbach's alpha of greater than 0.80 are highly reliable. To the contrary, Hair et al. (2023) proposed a different threshold indicating that one should expect a Cronbach's alpha of at least 0.7 for reliable constructs; above 0.8 is good, although above 0.9 should be excellent.

Table 3.2
Reliability Analysis

Constructs	Cronbach alpha
Informal work-family support	0.931
Work-family conflict	0.785
Work-family enrichment	0.755

Each model dimension was assessed separately for reliability using coefficients alphas and composite reliabilities, where both figures were expected to be greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2023). Table 3.2 shows reliability, source of scale, and Cronbach alphas by considering different variables: Informal work-family support, work-family conflict, and work-family enrichment reliability test. The test results indicated that Cronbach's alpha values of the independent variable were computed at 0.931, and the Alpha coefficients for the dependent variable were 0.785 and 0.755, respectively.

Correlation

Before conducting the primary investigations, the Pearson product-moment associations aimed at every intangible capricious hip the learning stood studied. The seamless adverse association is -1, whereas a seamless constructive association is +1. We must check its significance level to see if it lies between these two. The results showed that informal work family was positively correlated to work-family conflict and work-family enrichment.

Table 3.3
Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Analysis

Variables	Mean	SD	Informal Support	Work-Family Conflict	Work-Family Enrichment
Informal Support	3.60	.76	1		
Work-Family Conflict	3.61	.82	.700**	1	
Work-Family Enrichment	3.85	.77	.492**	.597**	1

The average score was found to be 3.60, which is approximately 4. It shows that the majority of the respondents tend to agree, and the 0.764 standard deviation indicates a 74% variation of responses. Additionally, it is also found to be positively and significantly correlated to work-family conflict and work-family enrichment (r = 0.700**, 0.492**), respectively.

Regression Analysis

Regression inquiry is similarly directed towards investigating the facts and attaining modest purposes, such as checking the affiliation of work-family conflicts and work-family enrichment with Informal work-family-specific support, checking the normalcy of facts, and classifying even if the planned archetypal is superlatively suitable or not.

Work-Family Enrichment

Our first hypothesis suggests that work-family enrichment is significantly related to informal work-family-specific support. The results indicate a solid constructive association between work-family enrichment and informal work-family-specific support as a reliant capricious. R square spectacles entire discrepancy hip dependent capricious described thru his undeviating affiliation using independent capricious. It will similarly signpost the goodness of suitability. Gamble, the worth of "d" is more significant than 2, and this one worth here is adverse autocorrelation. 1.497 < 2 means constructive autocorrelation in work-family enrichment as an autonomous capricious and IM as a reliant capricious.

Table 3.4 Regression Results

Variables	Beta	SE	T	Sig.
Constant	22.023	.1461	15.077	.000
Informal Support	.680	.043	3.880	.010

Note: Dependent Variable: Work-Family Enrichment

The constant in this regression indicates the baseline value of work-family enrichment when all predictors are zero. The t-value (15.077) and p-value (0.000) show that the constant is statistically significant. Informal support has a positive and statistically significant effect on work-family enrichment. A 1-unit increase in informal support is associated with a 0.680 increase in work-family enrichment. The p-value (0.010) indicates that this relationship is statistically significant at the 1% level. The model results suggest that informal support significantly contributes to work-family enrichment, with the constant and informal support variables showing strong statistical significance.

Work-Family Conflict

Our first hypothesis suggests that work-family conflict is significantly linked with informal work-family-specific support. The results indicate a solid constructive association between work-family conflict and informal work-family-specific support as a reliant capricious. R square spectacles entire discrepancy hip dependent capricious described thru his undeviating affiliation using independent capricious. It will similarly signpost the goodness of suitability. R square remains near to close, and the archetypal remains the best fit. R square = .031 shows a 3.1% variation in Informal Work family-specific support described through work-family conflicts. Gamble, the worth of "d" is more significant than 2. This one worth here is adverse autocorrelation. 1.217 < 2 that one means there is constructive autocorrelation in work-family conflicts and Informal work-family-specific support as a dependent variable.

Table 3.5
Regression Results

Variables	Beta	SE	t	Sig.
Constant	7.701	.587	13.121	.000
Informal Support	.066	.017	3.831	.000

Note: Dependent Variable: Work-Family Conflict

The constant represents the baseline level of work-family conflict when all predictors are zero. The t-value (13.121) and the highly significant p-value (0.000) indicate that the constant is statistically significant. Informal support has a positive and statistically significant effect on work-family conflict. A 1-unit increase in informal support is associated with a 0.066 increase in work-family conflict. The p-value (0.000) shows that this relationship is highly significant. While informal support has a positive effect on work-family conflict, its magnitude is smaller compared to its effect on work-family enrichment (from Table 3.4). Both variables are statistically significant, highlighting that informal support influences both dimensions but with different magnitudes.

Conclusion

The emerging need for work-family balance in modern-age employees has called for exploring work-family policies. This study identifies whether the existing work-family policies and practices accomplish their intended aims. Though organizations provide formal family-friendly benefits like childcare support, parental leave, flexible work hours, etc., they are not entirely beneficial if not utilized. Managers/supervisors should act as role models to de-stigmatize the use of these policies by encouraging a family-supportive work environment. In the current study, the researcher addressed an emerging issue of work-family conflict, work-family enrichment, and informal support provided by supervisors and colleagues. To accomplish this objective, the researcher developed a comprehensive model and formulated two research questions to investigate the phenomenon of family-related informal support among employees and their supervisors.

The results indicated that informal social support and supervisor behavior are predictors of work-family conflict and work-family enrichment. A possible explanation for this significant relationship may be the contextual change of employees in Pakistan, indicating that a family-supportive supervisor relates positively to employees' perceptions of work-family balance, lessening work-family conflict and enhancing work-family enrichment. The study suggests that work-family-related supervisor support is a resourceful tool to avoid employee work-family conflict. This study, by extension of Kossek et al.'s research, is consistent with the argument that positive resource gains in the work domain of an individual lead to positive resource gains in the family domain of an individual, thus establishing the optimistic enrichment (positive spillover) concept. Findings also imply that work-family conflict and enrichment are unrelated research streams. Organizations nowadays are hiring a mounting number of employees with rising family stipulations, and this scarce pool of workforce has family-related needs that need to be addressed by family-supportive trained supervisors. Social support and family support Behavior is a cost-effective tool that modern organizations must utilize to the full extent to retain employees. The findings of this study have significant practical implications for work-life practitioners and modern-day HR managers.

This study can be a potential springboard for probing into the specific types of supportive behavior related to work-family conflict and enrichment. Future researchers can focus on the impact of social support throughout an employee's career cycle, as this study was cross-sectional.

Only the present stage of an employee's career cycle was considered. Implications of other unmeasured mediating variables can also be considered in forthcoming research, and the discussion on the family-to-work conflict and enrichment dimension can also be probed in depth, as it was omitted in our study.

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