

GENDER ROLES AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE: A
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF RURAL AND URBAN
AREAS OF RAWALPINDI



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CERTIFICATE

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ABSTRACT

Despite women performing outside the domestic sphere and other roles, which were associated with men historically, responsibilities within the household are still primarily, linked to women. The specification of gender roles extensively prevails in the societal structure of Pakistan, which is creating various difficulties; including a lack of achieving work-life balance and psychological well-being. The study assumes that women, perform ample responsibilities, resulting in role overload, and conflict, which enhances stress, emotional and mental tiredness for them. Thirty-five married working-women from rural and urban areas of Rawalpindi were, selected for in-depth interviews. Results reveal that gender roles and struggles with work-life balance massively prevails in both of the areas however, women in urban areas have technological ways, role switching, nuclear family structure, and better infrastructure which provides them with relief from households chores occasionally and help them in balancing between work and family commitments. Along with this, women belonging from urban areas experienced more enhancements of responsibilities during Covid-19, and in comparison; rural women were more, benefited with the closure of offices, schools, and a break from professional work. Time management, prioritization of tasks, and goal setting are the widely, used strategies by married working-women in balancing work and life while enhancing their psychological and physical wellbeing. Importantly, a series of individual and government level efforts are required which can revise gender roles, specified for men and women in Pakistan and can holistically facilitate them to achieve ideal work-life balance and, greater well-being.

Key words: Gender roles, work-life balance, role overload, psychological and physical wellbeing

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------|---|
| CIAR | Collaborative Interactive Action Research |
| FGDs | Focused Group Discussions |
| FWC | Family Work Conflict |
| IPA | Interpretive Phenomenological Approach |
| LFPR | Labor Force Participation Rate |
| SET | Science, Engineering and Technology |
| WFC | Work Family Conflict |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Pakistan experiences series of issues, which are hindering its social, economic, technical, and political development. Throughout history, policies were made for achieving gender equality, women empowerment, and higher labor force participation; however, their proper implementation and success always remain uncertain due to prevailing cultural and religious factors. Women in many areas of Pakistan are negatively, affected by the prevailing patriarchal societal structure, as they are restricted from participation in higher education, employment, politics, and sports. The situation gets worse when it comes to rural areas of Pakistan where regressive cultural practices are performed like honor killing where women, in particular, are the targets. (Ali, Latif, & Zafar, 2020)

Moreover, while talking about the Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in Pakistan, it is one of the lowest in South Asia. Pakistan is ranked 151 in the overall global gender gap index and on 150 out of 153 in economic participation and opportunity in the 2020 Global Gender Gap Report with a female labor force participation rate (LFPR) of 25.2 % as compared to 84.5% of men (Forum, 2019). Moving forward, gradually with globalization, the influence of mass media and slight changes in cultural dynamics women are now attaining higher education and through skills enhancement, they are now engaging in the labor market and have become entrepreneurs through running a small-scale business from home. Besides facing extensive social pressures, financial

burdens, and infrastructure problems one of the key issues faced by women in Pakistan are specifications of 'Gender Roles' that are attributed to men and women differently in the societal structure of Pakistan. Men, on one hand, are considered the breadwinners and are responsible to perform the entire tasks outside domestic spheres, whereas, women are responsible to perform all the domestic work and are restricted within homes.

Gender roles are positions that women and men are more likely to fill based on their gender. Women are traditionally, believed to be more caring than males in many western civilizations. As a result, the conventional conception of the feminine gender role indicates that women should act in caring ways. One method in which a woman might participate in the traditional gender role is to nurture and care for her family by being present and attentive at home rather than working in the labor market. On the other hand, men as supposed by existing gender roles are considered as leaders rather than followers. Furthermore, the conventional understanding of the masculine gender role indicates that males are the primary breadwinners in the household and are in charge of providing financial support to the family, which further provides them the opportunity to take important decisions with in family (Blackstone, 2003)

However, as more and more women are now involved in the labor market or are running their small-scale businesses these gender roles should have been revised. However, unfortunately, these gender roles are still present and extensively prevail in our society. In particular, due to cultural dynamics and lower education levels, gender roles are much persistent and specified in rural areas as compared to urban. Women besides performing 9-5 hectic jobs in the labor market and other tasks outside the home just like men are still responsible for performing a majority of the households' chores. At the same time, societal beliefs perceive women as primary caregivers. As a result, to fulfill these expectations, women have taken ample responsibility to

simultaneously, perform in the labor market while serving as the ideal domestic caregiver (Rehman & Roomi, 2012). From cooking to cleaning to child-rearing most of the tasks are still primarily performed by women. Important reasons for reinforcement of these gender roles are the cultural norms and wrongly perceived religious values, which have obligated women to perform all the domestic roles solely. This distinct cultural environment is particularly prevalent in Pakistan, where women's lives are dominated by family traditions and beliefs. (Morris, Miyasaki, Watters, & Coombes, 2006)

Another, debate that arises from the specification of gender roles in the case of working women in Pakistan is work-life balance. Previously this has been primarily a western concept but it is the dire need of the time to consider and discuss in our societal setup as more and more women are currently playing their role in the labor market and at the same time are performing multiple responsibilities in both domestic and non-domestic ranges. Women have taken ample responsibilities to fulfill the tasks of 'ideal women' within the domestic sphere. It is necessary to eliminate conflict between work and family responsibilities as work-life balance is essential to diminish stress-related outcomes including psychological distress, emotional tiredness, depression, and anxiety (Gagnano, Simbula, & Miglioretti, 2020).

Even though, the work-life balance is affected by series of factors for instance, an employee having chronic illness will solely be influenced by their health circumstances. However, in the social setup of Pakistan, women having extensive responsibilities are influenced by numerous factors and most important are the households' responsibilities, which are obligated on them primarily because of gender roles specified by our culture. Massively prevailing gender roles along with non-domestic work stress can lead to role conflict and role overload. This further not

only overburdens women in Pakistan but also creates psychological pressures, which in return affect their performance within and outside the home.

Furthermore, while considering married women according to (Agarwal, Mishra, & Dixit, 2015) married working women are unable to spend more hours in the office in comparison to their male counterparts because of various reasons. As they experience objections from family and social disapproval. Women also have many household duties that married men do not have, which compels them to prioritize their time between job and family.

Gender roles in the dynamic of work-life balance is one of the issue, which requires ample attention but unfortunately are not considered being relevant and significant. It is mainly because of the societal structure prevailing in Pakistan and the norms, which have been engraved among us, which do not allow us to think out of the spectrum. It is also relevant to consider lack of interest at the government level, which is resulting in no proper policy formation, which can benefit working women and can contribute towards their facilitation. As (force, 2011) identify a lack of commitment, consistency, and interest among the legislators in Pakistan, which results in the formation and presentation of bills without considering the indigenous needs and dynamic of the society. Hence, leading to a lack of formation of affective policies, that can facilitate working women and can enhance their wellbeing.

Furthermore, while keeping in view the current situation of the globe and particularly Pakistan, Covid-19 has affected some sectors of the economy massively. With lockdown throughout the country, non-domestic work is, performed within households with offices allowing their employees to 'work from home'. Hence, it would be of keen relevance to view gender roles and work-life balance while, considering the Covid-19 situation, which provided men and women the

opportunity to share responsibility and perform the tasks while staying at home. This will further provide a new dimension to the research under consideration and will allow evaluating the extent to which gender roles are prevalent in the societal structure of Pakistan.

At the same time, because the Covid-19 pandemic is forcing a large number of employees to work from home, this disruptive event is likely to have a long-term impact on work arrangements in many businesses. An increased availability of individuals from home may give an opportunity for women to connect and catch up with their male counterparts. During the COVID-19 lockdown, however, the necessity to concurrently, care for families and children may endure, reviving conventional gender roles. Moreover, with the emergence of global lockdown and spread of Covid-19, schools and day care are being close and office work has been initiated from home. This has increased the nonpaid care work, which has significantly affected the women both indirectly and directly. Hence, it can be concluded that an unfair share of the burden of nonpaid care work due to Covid-19 is harming women directly and is further deteriorating their psychological well-being (Fortier, 2020)

1.2 Statement of Problem (SOP)

To examine how gender roles are specified in societal structure of urban and rural areas of Rawalpindi and difficulties these gender roles creates for working women in achieving work-life balance. At the same time, to evaluate the psychological pressures these gender roles create for women while keeping in view the current Covid-19 situation.

1.3 Research problem

Based on the narrative of SOP as stated in the preceding text, I am narrowing my research problem into “Gender roles and work-life balance: A comparative study of rural and urban areas of Rawalpindi” and have operationalized my topic into the following research questions and objectives.

1.4 Research question

1. How does gender roles vary and are specified in rural and urban areas of Rawalpindi and what, difficulties these gender roles create in achieving work-life balance?
2. How Covid-19 situation has influenced prevailing gender roles with businesses taking work from the home initiative?
3. How does the combination of family roles and work affect women's psychological well-being?
4. What coping strategies do women use to overcome these hurdles and to achieve work-life balance?

1.5 Research objectives

1. To evaluate the way gender roles vary and are specified in urban and rural areas of Rawalpindi and the hindrance this creates in achieving work-life balance.
2. To analyze the effect of gender roles on women and work-life balance while keeping in view the Covid-19 situation and countrywide lockdown.
3. To study how family roles and work affect the psychological well-being of women.

4. The coping strategies women use to overcome the difficulties in achieving work-life balance.

1.6 Explanation of the key terms

Gender roles are distribution and learning of roles by a person determined by societal norms, which are considered suitable for each gender (UNESCO, 2003). While keeping in view the cultural setup of Pakistan women are still obliged to perform domestic work even though they are engaging in labor force activities extensively. This further creates difficulties in managing work-life balance.

Moving forward, multiple responsibilities keeping in view the time and other resource constrain leads to various issues including role overload and role conflict. Role conflict takes place when two or more societal responsibilities are incompatible or unsuited and overlap each other. Conflict occurs as performance of one role hinders with the enactment of another. Role conflict at the same time can be behavior-based, time bases or even strain-based. Whereas, role overload happens when a person take place multiple responsibilities simultaneously and lacks financial, time or other resources to perform them. Therefore, it can evolve from both ample psychological demands and time demands (Creary & Gordon, 2016). Specification of gender roles with combination of role conflict and role overload can affect women's psychological well-being. As women are responsible for numerous tasks they can experience emotional and mental tiredness along with excessive stress and anxiety, as propose by social role theory, discussed in later part of the study.

1.7 Units of data collection

Units of data collection are the entity which one aims to study and which, are considered as the prime focus of the research and eventually will help in the collection of data (Faculty, n.d.). As gender, roles majorly affect women with excessive responsibilities and overburdening, women will be the prime attention of this research. Furthermore, the study primarily focuses on married working women of urban and rural areas of Rawalpindi to analyze how gender roles are influencing their work-life balance and the way they are managing and performing multiple responsibilities. At the same time, married women are the focus of this research that are both having and not having children as their responsibilities vary and are excessive in comparison to unmarried women. This will help in evaluating the extent to which gender roles vary, prevails, and are engrained in developed and developing areas and the way they have been influenced by the current pandemic situation.

1.8 Organization of the study

The study is organized into seven main chapters, which significantly evaluates and explain the research topic and data collected. Chapter 1 introduces the topic initially and then explains the research objectives and research questions of the study. Chapter 2 on the other hand, evaluates the existing literature on the topic while, discussing the global and national perspective on the topic under consideration. Chapter 3 includes explanation of theoretical and conceptual framework while, linking them to the research objectives. Moreover, Chapter 4 explains the methodology, which has been used in collecting the research data. Chapter 5 focuses on analyzing and explains the data collected. Along with this, Chapter 6 includes discussion based

on the findings discussed in the previous chapter and then provides conclusion and recommendation on the topic. Chapter 7 finally discusses ‘The working women bill’ and is linked to the overall topic of the study.

1.9 Significance of research

In Pakistan due to prevailing cultural norms, gender roles are, specified for women, which are not changing despite women performing in the labor market and outside the domestic sphere. Hence, this study is designed to provide a comprehensive perspective of women who are fulfilling both of their responsibilities simultaneously. Moreover, due to cultural dynamics and variation in literacy rate these gender roles are more engrave in rural areas. Therefore, a comparison will be, drawn between rural and urban areas of Rawalpindi to keenly, examine this issue while considering the current pandemic situation. At the same time, it is important to analyze how these gender roles affect women personally and creates obstacles in achieving work-life balance. In addition, the strategies women are using to overcome these hurdles and performing multiple tasks smoothly.

Research can be further helpful in policy formation, which can enhance the involvement of men in the domestic sphere in Pakistan by making paternity leaves mandatory for men. At the same time, as women now are simultaneously performing multiple tasks both in domestic and non-domestic sphere, it is extremely important to provide them with a work environment that can reduce their burden and can enhance their well-being. This can be, done through women-centric policies especially at work place with provision of daycare facilities at both private and public offices.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter of the study focuses on reviewing, and analyzing the existing literature relevant to the topic. It is important to review the available literature to have an in-depth introspection and knowledge on the phenomenon under consideration while, providing the current research a new dimension. Literature is organized by initially analyzing the existing literature on gender roles and work-life balance on global and national level while, evaluating the influence ample responsibilities have on women wellbeing. Moreover, study further discusses the way Covid-19 has influenced gender roles and work-life balance and the way women around the world are managing, their family and professional lives.

2.2 Global and national perspective on gender roles and work-life balance

Many economies throughout the world are experiencing uncertainty due to a number of economic, environmental, and social challenges. In the midst of the chaos, entrepreneurs are seen as essential drivers who can help to push the economy out of instability (Adom, Asare-Yeboah, Quaye, & Ampomah, 2017). Ghana being a sub-African and undeveloped country has one of the highest entrepreneurial rates in the world despite extensive challenges of credit, infrastructure and political instability for the entrepreneurs. The research was, conducted to evaluate how work, family lives and gender roles influence the business performance of female entrepreneurs with focus on income, employees' recruitment and establishment of outlets. The study employed a sample of 25 active female working-women for participant observation as part of qualitative

research, along with in-depth interviews and multiple case study strategy to measure females' business performance. The result of the study depicted that majority of the women experienced that their family lives, associated with gender roles at home, and responsibilities have a negative effect on their business performance. As all of these factors creates psychological challenges, which, further hurdles their creativity and productivity, however, the same factors positively affects their willingness to hire more employees to delegate work. Furthermore, the study concludes that these women prioritize their family lives over their professional advancement. As a result, the study suggests that for female entrepreneurs to do better in business, the quality of their family life and the allocation of responsibilities at home are critical.

Pakistan being a patriarchal society is experiencing gender inequalities for many years, which, are further reinforced by prevailing gender roles (Ali, et al., 2011) The study was conducted in various urban areas of Karachi through Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) which, included women from various socio-economic strata. Two major themes emerged from the extensive discussion including, 'Repetition of Gender Roles' and 'Agents of Change'. Moreover, the first theme clearly indicated about the subordination of women by providing men the higher role and position inside home and even outside. At the same time, specification of task for men and women also varied, strengthened by cultural and other social factors including role of extended family. The second theme, on the other hand, offers a glimmer of hope, since it was discovered that education and the media might play an important role in eliminating gender disparities and promoting women's empowerment. According to the study, the younger age is more optimistic about modernizing gender norms than the elder generation. However, researchers concluded that serious gender inequalities are present in societal structure of the country, which, are enforced

based on culture, and even religion, which can be overcome through women's access to higher education.

Increased female labor force participation has posed a number of problems for women, including balancing work and family life. Due to gender norms, tradition, and erroneously perceived religious importance, the situation gets more difficult in male-dominated cultures like Pakistan. (Rehman & Roomi, 2012). Authors studied different influencing variables in women's work-life roles utilizing the Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA) in light of Pakistan's current cultural and socio-economic structure. The researchers used IPA, which is a psychological qualitative research technique, to analyze the problems women entrepreneurs have in combining work and personal life, as well as successful strategies for multitasking and regulating their routine. Results showed that gender biases, insufficient time, socio-cultural norms and family responsibilities create hindrance in achieving balance. However, delegation of tasks, strategic planning, time management, effective organizing helps women in carrying out their social responsibilities easily and creates work-life balance.

Even though, with time, women are engaging in paid and non-domestic work, female labor force participation is lowest in Pakistan as compared to other countries. It is mainly because of 'modest women' image prevalent in Pakistan during the era of 1970s, which had a considerable impact on working women activities (Grünenfelder, 2013). The research aims to explore official state discourses forged between work and women since, the years of 1940s to the late 2000s. Firstly, through analyzing the existing literature author argues that women outside work has been conceptualized in three ways including, women's role as a contributor towards economic development, as a threat to country and most importantly as insignificant. According to the writer, diversified identities of working women on state level might lead to destabilization of

gender gap in labor force and gender stereotypes. The article further concludes, that women non domestic work, working in mixed gender, and image of ideal women have been reinforced during the times when religious fundamentalists were at peak including the era of Zia-ul-Haq and even after 9/11. However, women role in labor force, their image, and their worth in development were much important during independence and 1990's. Most importantly in recent times and after 2010 state discourses have imagined working women as acceptable mainly because women political role was considered a key factor in country's development.

According to (Roomi & Rehman, 2021), increase women's engagement in the labor field makes it more difficult for them to manage work and family commitments. Due to women's traditional household duties, cultural values and conventions, and religious prescriptions, the situation becomes more complicated in patriarchal cultures such as Pakistan. The study's goal is to uncover numerous influencing effects on women's family and work responsibilities in the unique cultural and socioeconomic context of Pakistan. According to the researchers, the research analyses data regarding the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in achieving work-life balance, as well as an insight into some of the effective strategies and techniques that women use to balance family and work obligations, using the interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA). Furthermore, the findings suggest that, among other motivating factors for starting a business, achieving work-life balance is one of the most important. Women who own their own companies have more flexibility, independence, and control, which allow them to balance their social and family obligations. The most major obstacles women experience in achieving work-life balance in a traditional and patriarchal Islamic society include gender prejudice, a lack of appropriate time, cultural and societal standards, as well as family duties. At the same time, the most

successful techniques women employ to overcome and manage with competing duties of family and career includes organization, strategic planning, and delegating tasks.

Furthermore, recent studies have found that unfavorable psychosocial work circumstances, such as effort–reward mismatch and job pressure, differ among developing nations and welfare state regimes. A poor work–life balance is another work-related issue that may have an impact on health. According to the authors (Lunau, Bambra, Eikemo, Wel, & Dragano, 2014) the study seeks to identify the link between poor health and bad work–life balance in various European nations, as well as to investigate the differences in work–life balance across the selected European countries. Data from the European Working Conditions Survey of 2010 with a sample size of 24096 employees from 27 European countries were utilized for this purpose. An investigation of the link between family or social responsibilities and working hours was used to assess work–life balance.

Moreover, the WHO-5 well-being index and self-reported general health are considered as the health indicators. Simultaneously, research examines logistic multilevel models and analyzes the relationship between work–life balance and health indicators, as well as the inter-country correlation of poor work–life balance. Employees who reported a poor work–life balance had greater health problems, according to the findings of the study. Furthermore, the relationships between men and women were extremely similar. At the same time, working time laws, working hours and welfare state regimes can explain a significant portion of the between-country variance in work–life balance. Importantly, Scandinavian women and men have been identified as having the greatest and most acceptable overall work–life balance. In conclusion, the research provides some holistic evidence on impact of public health on poor work–life balance and that welfare

state along with working time regulations and features can influence the work–life balance of employees.

Work-life balance of working women in the Information Technology (IT) sector is becoming increasingly essential in highly debated subjects. Work–family and family–work conflict are more likely to exert negative impacts in the family domain, resulting in increased internal conflict and decreased life satisfaction. The study goes on to examine the influence of different variables such as the age of the children, the size of the family, the degree of social support, and job hours on Family work conflict and Work family conflict. Furthermore, despite all of the obligations and pressures they face at work, working women have achieved great levels of success in their families and careers. It is equally critical to evaluate the impact and implications of these factors on working women's well-being and sufferings. Moving ahead, research by (R.Balaji, 2014) seeks to investigate a variety of aspects that might lead to a more holistic and in-depth understanding of stress and work-life balance among female employees. It is also crucial to look at what women go through in their careers as they balance family duties and job demands. Workplace stress management is considerably more essential than other factors, since it necessitates a great deal of job management, time management, housing management, and child management. It is critical for work and family research to fully, understand the circumstances, under which the married women experience conflict between their work and family roles.

Work–Family Conflict (WFC) and Family–Work Conflict (FWC) are more likely to have negative impacts on the family domain, resulting in higher internal struggles and disputes within the family and poorer life satisfaction, according to (Reddy, Vranda, Ahmed, Nirmala, & Siddaramu, 2010). Researchers have also discovered a number of factors that influence the

degree and intensity of FWC and WFC. WFC and FWC experiences are influenced by a variety of factors such as the age of the children, the size of the family, work hours, and social support. These factors, however, have been abstracted as a need of WFC and FWC; it is equally important to evaluate the impact these variables have on working-health women's and psychological discomfort. The research will also look into a variety of factors that may influence work-family conflict and family-work conflict among married working women. For data collection, 90 married, working-women between the ages of 20 and 50 were selected. Working women's WFC and FWC are measured using the FWC and WFC scale. Inferential and descriptive statistics were used to examine the collected data. The correlation between the various variables was determined using Carl Pearson's Correlation. The study's findings revealed the necessity for clear rules for the administration and management of WFCs at the organizational level, which are linked to employee performance and work satisfaction.

Moreover, research by (Hassan, Abdullah, & Ismail, 2017) determines whether married working-women in the government sector are able to sustain work-life balance and to incorporate their suggestions and opinions on the support system required to enhance and improve their work-life balance. Study further adopts a quantitative method to collect data, and for this purpose, surveys were used as the central tool to collect data from seventy-six working-women from various public sectors in Komplek Tun Abdul Razak (KOMTAR) in Malaysia. Moreover, the research discovers that generally, married working-women in public sectors are able to sustain their work-life balance quite efficiently. The significant support is from their spouses who occasionally help the wives with daily household chores. However, most of the housework is, done majorly during weekends because of the inadequate time during the working days. The respondents further agreed that because of this they are also able to devote good quality time with their families.

The support system recommended by the respondents to promote work-life balance comprises of flexible working hours, leave policies, nursery room and childcare centers facilities at workplaces. Respondents also suggested that policies including counseling services, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and sequence of trainings sessions for public sector employees in providing knowledge and skills is beneficial to enhance work-life balance. The study has revealed that in general married working-women who are employee of public sector are not experiencing extreme struggles with work-life conflict.

This further became the part of the findings as according to the writers most of the respondents agree that they are able to stabilize their family and work life. Hence, the main reason is that their spouses often relief them with their housework. The respondents are further also having excellent quality time with their families. Which is, reflected through their steady attendance to any school or family events, and their children hardly complain that they did not spent quality time with them. Moreover, facilities, services and social supports recommended by respondents to increase their work-life balance are, flexible working hours, leave policies as well as information and support services.

In case of India, entrepreneurship was initially, related to men solely. However, with changing socio-economic environment, more education and skills enhancing opportunities along with NGOs support, women have realized their talents and are now establishing their own small-scale businesses (V.Mathew & Natarajan, 2011). At the same time, these women are experiencing psychological, social pressures and excessive workload due to prevailing gender roles at home, which is creating difficulties in work-life balance. Hence, a validate tool was selected to illustrate work-life balance of women entrepreneurs in South India which led to collection of data on basis of cluster sampling through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The data was further

analyzed through regression, factor analysis and t-test. The study revealed that the healthcare quality, role overload, lack of social and financial support along with lack of time management are the major factors that are creating hindrances for female entrepreneurs to achieve smooth work-life balance. Moving further, all these factors also vary between the respondents in terms of their degree or intensity while considering the age, family structure and financial background of them. Research concluded, with several recommendations and policy formation for management consultant, academia, women entrepreneurs themselves and human resources specialists for issues related to work-life balance faced by female entrepreneurs in South India.

In spite the administrative and government efforts to advance sexual orientation balance in the working environment, women are still, underrepresented in the executives' positions in India. According to the author, women confront a variety of challenges, including divorce, sexual orientation stereotypes, unfair limitations, and work/family conflict. The purpose of this study was to see how women in executive positions combine work and family commitments. To explore the experiences of women in board positions, the study took a subjective exploration method and used several contextual studies. The investigation included women in the higher and managerial positions at Nkangala District in Mpumalanga (Mahasha, 2016). Investigations uncovered those women in the executives positions face strife between their work job and family obligations. Members additionally showed that they dealt with the contention through cautious organizing and arranging of their exercises, organizing their obligations and designating a portion of their obligations. Members likewise demonstrated that they required help from life partners, families, managers, bosses and associates to adapt to their different jobs. Research further suggests that associations (bosses) may create arrangements that empower women in the executive's positions to accomplish work-life balance.

Moreover, research by (force, 2011) investigates the legislative efforts between year 2008 to 2010 with respect to women work and family balance. Research identify that legislative approaches does not consider the indigenous issues, needs and dynamic of the society which is resulting in lack of proper policies and flawed bills. At the same times, lack of commitment and consistency is missing among the legislators, which results in presentation of bills without proper research and knowledge of the issues. This further depicts lack of the interest and professionalism among the legislators on issues related to women.

A survey of 486 banking workers from Pakistan and the Netherlands was undertaken to compare work-life balance (Syed, Arain, Schalk, & Freese, 2015). The study's main goal was to look at the influence of personal and professional life conflict on employees' psychological well-being. Research showed that however, Dutch employees had lesser working hours in comparison to employees in Pakistan they still experience more work interference with family life. At the same time, work interference and household work overload was stronger among 359 respondents in Pakistan. Moreover, research identifies positive association between employees psychological contract breach and work-family intervention. Study further suggests practices according to the cultural setups of developing and developed countries.

Work-life balance is defined as an individual's ability to effectively divide their energy and time between work and other important elements of their personal lives. In addition to the pressures imposed by the labor market, work-life balance is an ongoing endeavor to make time for community engagement, family, friends, spirituality, self-care, and other personal interests. Gradually with passage of time, women are engaging in education, sports and labor market. However, women is still in charge of home tasks and must perform her primary role of child bearing, rising, and all other care-giving responsibilities. As a result, combining work and family

life for women who are actively engaging in the labor market is becoming increasingly challenging. The study focuses on the factors that affect women's work-life balance, organizational policies that address women's work-life balance, and the impact of demographic characteristics on work-life balance (Agarwal, Mishra, & Dixit, 2015).

Furthermore, the most significant obstacles women experience in achieving balance in their personal and professional lives include gender prejudice, a lack of appropriate resources, cultural and societal standards, as well as family obligations. Furthermore, delegating and organizing, as well as strategic planning, are the most effective techniques women employ to balance work and family responsibilities. Work-life balance and demographic factors of female employees have a significant link. The relationship between employee work-life balance and demographic characteristics will be critical in developing appropriate policies for employees to handle work-life balance issues.

Work-life balance describes the harmony that exists between a person's personal and professional lives. A healthy work-life balance is extremely important for working women, especially in the current climate, when both the family and the workplace have presented women with a number of challenges and concerns. The features of the workplace have placed a significant burden on working women, as they must adjust to two separate daily activities - one at work and one at home. This study investigates the factors that influence work-life balance among working women, as well as the consequences of poor work-life balance. Information was gathered through a structured survey of 125 randomly selected working women from various groups and institutions in Bangalore. According to the findings of the study, a significant number of working women are having difficulty in balancing work and family life due to excessive job pressure, little time for themselves, and the need to meet others' demands for them. Work overflows into

the house for the majority of workers, as they are required to work longer hours. (Sundaresan, 2014).

2.3 Gender roles and work-life balance in view of Covid-19

(Reichelt, Makovi, & Sargsyan, 2020) According to the researchers, changes in mobility along with Covid-19 have changed occupational relationship across the globe and studies have been showing that women will have an effect by these changes massively. While considering numerous respondents from US, Germany and Singapore research shows that transition to changes in working hours, unemployment and work from home have been more frequent for women in comparison to men. Research further demonstrates that among the couples who have been employed at the start of pandemic, men showed more egalitarian behavior in comparison to women who showed traditional attitudes if their partner become unemployed. Hence, results concluded that gender roles attitude might adapt to the existing realities and in long-term experiences of women and men will determine how they perceives the employment shifts as economies will recover.

Moreover, prevalence of pandemic has led to closure of schools and daycares globally and has increased the care giving duties of the parents within home. This has further led to changes in working hours and timings among the individuals (Collins, Landiva, Ruppanner, & Scarborough, 2020) Research was conducted while using panel data from current US population to examine the changes in working hours of parents during the time period of February 2020 to April 2020. Study evaluated that mothers of young children have decreased their working hours four to five times more than the fathers. As a result, of this gender gap in work hours have increased to 50

percent from 20 percent. Authors concluded that research indicates yet another downward trend of Covid-19 on gender equality and identified the challenges it has posed on women employment and working hours.

(Fortier, 2020) Discussed that women have been negatively, affected by various socio-economic challenges and the current situation of Covid-19 has made it worse. Around the world majority of women are engaged in jobs, which are, given less importance including various part time jobs, low paid and less secure jobs hence, the care giving responsibilities are mainly, linked to women. This poses threats of short and long run instabilities, financial constraints and reduction in wellbeing of women and the case gets worse if a single parent runs the household, which is mainly the mother. Authors argues that state needs to play its role in evaluating and mitigating the impact of pandemic on working women while keeping in view the variations in responsibilities obliged on men and women differently. Furthermore, the onset of worldwide pandemic COVID-19 has hindered progress toward gender equality and, instead, has exacerbated existing gender disparities across a range of sectors, from economic stability to gender division of labor. The authors of this study focus on some of the most visible gender inequalities that have arisen and have been amplified as a result of COVID-19, as well as how several social, psychological research and theories, such as work on gender roles, stereotypes, and precarious masculinity, can help to describe the engrave roots of these inequalities. The researchers accomplish so by employing a thorough explanation of gender and taking into account key identity links. Finally, the research outlines three major problems for gender inequalities faced by women, including the necessity for social psychologists to extend the scope of gender disparities research. Second, in the aftermath of COVID-19, to question binary gender

conceptualizations and, lastly, to use an intersectional perspective to confront structural inequities. (Fisher & Ryan, 2021)

Nonetheless, COVID-19 has had an increasing glass impact on gender inequality, identifying gaps in numerous domains, including gender roles, stereotypes, and incorrectly perceived expectations, which are not sustainable and can cause undue harm, particularly during pandemics and crises. Moving forward, social psychologists must contribute and understand what is needed to level the gendered playing field, while also ensuring that they question binary gender conceptualizations, extend their focus across gendered groups, and adopt an intersectional approach to their research.

In addition, research by (Carli, 2020) intends to examine the current literature on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on work roles and gender to see if COVID-19 has harmed women's pay, status, and advancement or has provided possibilities to reduce gender disparity. The author reviewed the existing literature on the impact of COVID-19 and its aftermath on gender equality, focusing on job loss, increased domestic responsibilities of women and men as a result of the closure of social services and schools, the effects of being in critical professions on well-being and health, and the effects of home-working on gender roles. According to the findings, the pandemic has posed significant obstacles for women's development. Women have lost more employment than males; more women than men work in vital tasks that expose them to infection and psychological stress; and women have experienced greater work interruption than men due to increased parenting and other obligations. Telecommuting, on the other hand, has boosted men's childcare obligations, and this has the potential to enhance men's childcare responsibilities in the long run, lowering the gender gap in household chores and promoting gender equality.

2.4 Research Gap

The existing literature provides a deep analysis on gender roles and work-life balance however, in case of Pakistan vast data is not available regarding the influence gender roles have on work-life balance of working women while, considering the unique cultural setting of the country. Moving forward, the existing literature provides a generic view on gender roles and work-life balance without considering the cultural settings, infrastructure and jobs availability, which varies from one area to another, which is keenly considered in this particular research. At the same time, literature further lacks to provide a comparison between rural and urban areas. As it is important to view gender roles and work-life balance according to the cultural setting, societal norms, infrastructure and importantly education level vary between urban and rural areas, which are the focal point of this research and hence, differentiate it from the existing literature and researches.

It is also relevant to consider variations among areas, for policy recommendation and formation of women centric policies. Moving forward, while considering the prevailing Covid-19 situation this specific research not only provides a new dimension to the research but it is also beneficial in identifying the distinct problems, which, have influenced and emerged because of pandemic. Therefore, provides a comprehensive view of Covid-19 from gendered lens. Most importantly, this research provides a comprehensive view in identifying and explaining the psychological pressures women experiences as a result of gender roles, multiple responsibilities and work-life balance while, considering the pandemic situation which is not provided by the literature already present.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Social role theory

Social role theory by Alice Eagly, which was first presented in 1987, argues that gender categorizes and stereo types are formed by gender division of labor, which are primarily categorized by the society. According to the theory, the allocation of women and men into social roles within their community causes similarities and disparities. Furthermore, the existing division of work is typically maintained by women and men's actions, which are formed through gender roles development and later socialization. For instance, social roles are organized in a way that women in comparison to men are associated with homemakers and are primary caretakers of the children. On contrary, men are more likely than, women to be primary family providers and hence, undertake full-time roles in the labor market, which may also require leadership skills, assertiveness, and physical strength. (Eagly & Wood, 2016).

Furthermore, according to (Harrison & Lynch, 2005) Conferring to social role theory, collective roles are accepted based on gender, which is connected to labor allocation, and they predict how men and women behave differently. Historically, men and women were assigned work duties that were well suited to their physical features owing to social, environmental, and technical factors. Moving forward, social roles established by the society have led to specification of gender roles that varies between men and women particularly in cultural setting of Pakistan. Women within the household are primarily responsible for domestic chores from cooking to

cleaning to washing. Whereas, their responsibilities further amplify when they are working and are having children which increases their household duties due to time constraints and multiple responsibilities. At the same time, conflict develops between women's many roles, such as mother, intellectual, and manager, according to social role theory. (Rosette, Tost, & Plunkett, 2010). Hence, it is assumed that performing multiple roles can over-burden women and therefore their performance at work may suffer because of their family commitments.

3.2 Conceptual framework

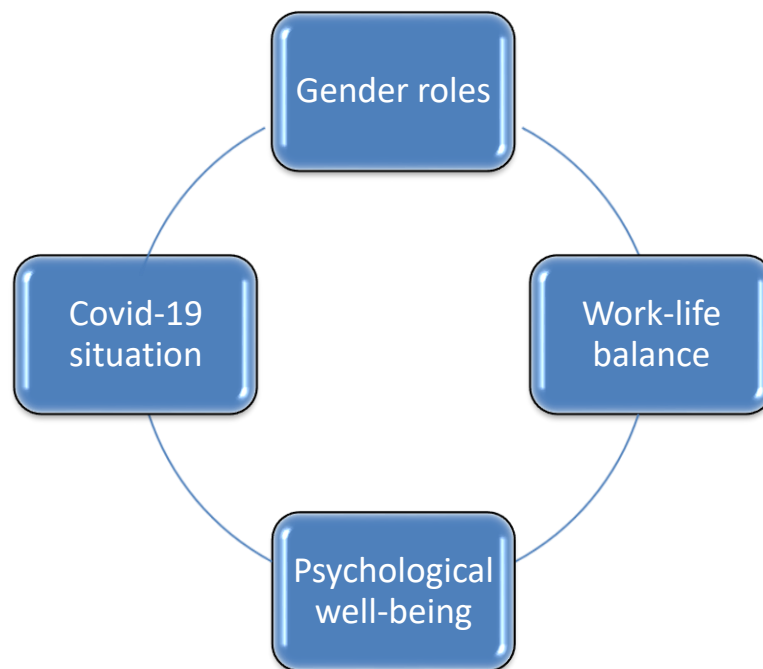


Figure 3.1: Conceptual Framework

Prevailing gender roles in the societal structure of Pakistan is the main theme of this research and hence, of conceptual framework. As despite women performing massively in labor market are

still responsible to perform majority of the household chores and spend ample time in doing them in comparison to men due to high societal expectations and ideal women image. It is vital to evaluate how these gender roles are further affecting working women work-life balance as excessive performance of duties and work over load can have a major impact on both domestic and non-domestic work performed by them. This can be, evaluated and is further, indicated through job satisfaction level and performance at both workplace and home.

At the same time, gender roles along with overburdening of responsibilities can further lead to affect women's psychological well-being, which is a combination of functioning efficiently and living a well-satisfied life (Huppert, 2009). However, overloading can enhance anxiety, stress levels and negative emotions, which are the focal indicators of psychological wellbeing in this research. Moreover, to give the research a new dimension issue of Covid-19 is, considered in evaluating how the situation of the pandemic has transformed gender roles and has influenced women's work performance with businesses introducing work from home policy. At the same time, with the closure of schools and day cares, caregiving responsibilities of women are further increased which in return might have hindered women in achieving work-life balance.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This part of the research provides a detailed view regarding the way research has been organized and the methods through which, data has been collected and then evaluated. For this purpose, four important components are being discussed which deeply discusses the design and strategy of the research while, further explaining the methods and approach through which, data has been collected.

4.2 Research strategy

The study provides a comprehensive insight regarding the specification of gender roles that majorly prevails in Pakistan, where women are over-burdened by responsibilities equally in domestic and nondomestic sphere. Moving forward, focus of the research is married women (both having and not having children) who are performing multiple tasks and have prime responsibility of rearing children, and looking after their families. For this purpose, primary research is done through qualitative means.

According to (Ahmad, et al., 2019) qualitative research is a kind of realistic investigation that aims to gain a thorough knowledge of social phenomena in their natural environment. It also emphasizes the "why" rather than the "what," and depends on firsthand accounts and experiences of individuals. Qualitative analysis further uses various systems of inquiry for the study of

natural setting and human phenomena including case study, ethnography, historical analysis and discourse analysis. As qualitative research provides a detail idea about individual perspective, practices and nature it has helped in evaluating the in-depth perception of married women regarding gender roles and work-life balance, and the way it has been influenced by the Covid-19 situation.

4.3 Research approach and design

While, considering an explanatory research design, which focuses on the question ‘why’ while trying to identify the cause and reason of a phenomenon study tends to investigate the extent in which gender roles prevail in societal structure of Pakistan. Explanatory research attempts to explain and clarify how and why relationship, interdependence or association between two or more aspect and situation (Sheppard). This has helped in identifying and explaining the hindrance married women experience in achieving work-life balance and the way women psychological wellbeing is influenced by gender roles and societal expectations. At the same time, through using qualitative approach data gathered is more in-depth and specific, which has further assisted in answering the research questions appropriately and proper evaluation of the data.

4.4 Methods of data collection

In-depth and unstructured interviews allow interviewer to ask open-ended questions related to a specific topic and permits respondents to, comfortably explain their opinions. Such interviews are often categorized as discovery interviews, which allow questions to be more flexible while

increasing their validity by letting interviewer to probe for deeper understanding (McLeod, 2014). As the research required deep insight and investigation of the issue hence, in-depth interviews (unstructured interviews) were conducted from the married women working in various sectors of rural and urban areas of Rawalpindi to gather information. This further helped in evaluating women perception about prevailing gender roles and the hindrance they experience to achieve optimal level of work-life balance. However, while keeping in view the prevailing pandemic scenarios some of the interviews were, conducted through voice calls.

4.5 Sampling strategy

As Female Labor Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) is around 25% hence, it was impossible to conduct the research on entire population. Therefore, for this research convenience sampling technique is used while considering time and resource constrain. According to (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2015) convenience sampling is used where, members of the target population who fulfill certain practical requirements, such as desire to participate, availability, and geographic closeness, are included in convenience sampling to gather data. It also refers to population study participants that are conveniently available to the interviewer and match the investigation's stated objectives. Thus, 35 married women from rural and urban areas of Rawalpindi were selected for interviews, which, further helped in obtaining insightful data and then generalization of results.

4.6 Locale of the study

This part of the research provides description regarding the areas under consideration, which, are rural and urban areas of Rawalpindi from where the data was collected. The study primarily

focuses on the Rawalpindi region of Pakistan while, considering the ongoing pandemic situation and time constraints. Furthermore, as women are the prime focus of the study it is also relevant to keep in view the diverse cultural setting of the country. Societal and cultural norms vary extensively from area to area therefore, it was important to consider urban and rural dimensions while, investigating the problem.

For this purpose, rural and urban areas were identified as mentioned in Pakistan population census of 2017. For this purpose, different urban and rural areas were identified under the section of ‘selected housing characteristic of urban and rural localities’ of Rawalpindi district from the population census. Moving forward, for the interviews from the rural areas 3 Tehsils were the prime focus naming; Murree hills, Kotli Sattian and Kallar Syedan whereas, urban areas were selected from the Tehsils of Rawalpindi and Taxila. As rural and urban areas differ in demographics and cultural dynamics it was essential to evaluate how gender roles vary in urban and rural areas and the difficulties created for women in achieving work-life balance. As research is also considering the situation of Covid-19 hence, comparison of diverse cultural settings provides a comprehensive insight.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

5.1 Background

The qualitative research was done through interviewing 35 married working women from urban and rural areas of Rawalpindi. Moreover, the data collected from the interviews was analyzed through formation of various themes and subthemes, which, are primarily linked to the objectives of the research. Three main themes have been extracted and analyzed from the data collected through interviews. The first part of the data analysis focuses on evaluating the connection and prevalence of gender roles and work-life balance in rural and urban areas of Rawalpindi. While, the second part of the analysis evaluates the roles of Covid-19 on work-life balance and gender roles and the way it has amplified or reduced the responsibilities of women, with country wide lockdown and businesses taking work from home initiatives. Moving forward, later part of this chapter further analyzes the struggles women experiences while performing multiple responsibilities simultaneously and the coping strategies women use to balance between work and professional life while, improving their wellbeing.

Table 5.1: Themes and Subthemes

| Themes | Subthemes |
|--|---|
| Gender roles and work-life balance | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inter-connection between gender roles and work-life balance• Prevalence and variation of gender-roles in rural and urban areas of Rawalpindi |
| Transformation of gender roles and work-life balance in view of Covid-19 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhancement of responsibilities• Beneficial impact of pandemic on work-life balance• Financial implication of covid-19 |
| Struggles with managing work and family life simultaneously | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Over-burdening of responsibilities• Well-being• Satisfaction level |
| Coping strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Time management• Setting priorities• Setting weekly goals |

5.2 Qualitative Analysis

Research was conducted through collecting primary data from 35 working-women from rural and urban areas of Rawalpindi. Twenty in-depth interviews were, done from women belonging and working in urban areas whereas, fifteen interviews were done from the workingwomen of rural areas of Rawalpindi. This qualitative analysis further helped in doing detail thematic analysis of the data collected and for this purpose series of themes and subthemes have been identified, which are discussed under this section.

5.3 Gender roles and work-life balance

The main purpose of this research was to analyze the extent gender roles prevail in our societal structure and the way it affects work-life balance, and wellbeing of working women who are simultaneously performing series of tasks, and fulfilling multiple responsibilities. For this purpose, series of questions were asked from the women including how covid-19 has transformed their responsibilities and work-life balance. At the same time, how their well-being is, impacted with many tasks and responsibilities to be timely fulfilled.

5.3.1 Inter-connection between gender roles and work-life balance

Women were asked about the prevalence and interconnection of gender roles and work-life balance in urban and rural areas. The below graph entails the list of questions, which, were asked from the interviewees:

Table 5.2: Prevalence and interconnection of gender roles and work-life balance

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | What is your understanding of gender roles? And according to you how extensively they prevail in cultural setting of Pakistan? |
| 2 | How do gender roles and work-life balance are inter-linked and affect each other? |
| 3 | According to you, do gender roles vary in rural and urban areas? If yes how? |
| 4 | How much time do you spend between performing tasks within and outside domestic sphere? |

When women were asked about their opinion on to what extent gender roles and work-life balance are interlinked all of, the interviewees answered that there is high connection between both of them. According to the respondents, interconnection between gender roles and work-life is the influence both has on each other which, further influence women performance both at work and at home. Excessive responsibilities resulting from obligation of gender roles influence their focus, attention, and performance at work. Even, when women are performing their

professional work, they are still worried about their children or other household chores they have to perform while reaching home.

Moreover, according to them, the prevailing social values of the society have imposed ample responsibilities on women, which have a direct influence on their work-life balance. As working women needs to, simultaneously perform tasks both within home and in labor market, which, sometimes make difficult for them to manage. While creating this balance they sometime have to forgo their personal needs and make a tradeoff between their personal requirement with their family, and professional demands. While talking about gender roles and work-life balance one to the respondent said:

‘Women have very specified roles in managing the household tasks, and raising the children, and if they have a career then keeping work and family life balance is a real problem’

At the same time, in certain cases time has to be, prioritized between work and home according to the prevailing requirements. However, the women responded that if the society would not have made the roles and responsibilities gender specific it would have helped them in creating an ideal work-life balance. Moving forward, according to respondents working women needs to create a balance between their family and professional life, which will further help them in attaining a respectable position in the family.

5.3.2 Prevalence and variation of gender roles in rural and urban areas of Rawalpindi

Moving forward, respondents were further asked about how extensively gender roles prevail and vary according to the area they are living in. While addressing this question woman from rural areas stated that gender roles extensively prevail in rural areas due to two main reasons. Firstly,

there access to jobs, opportunities and education is restrictive which allows them to choose limited profession whereas; this restriction is not present in case of men. Secondly, in rural areas societal norms are keenly followed and women are obliged to behave, dress and act in a certain way. Women on the other hand primarily perform households' chores and men completely play no role in performing them. This is mainly because of the societal setup, family structure, upbringing and lack of empathy, which has led to restrict domestic chores to women solely. All of the women interviewed from rural areas agreed that gender roles more persistently prevail in rural areas as compared to urban areas. According to one of the respondents:

'Our family and societal structure has brought up men and women differently and their respective roles have been taught to them since childhood. It is likely impossible for men in our area to perform domestic chores'

Women from rural areas thought that association and connection of gender roles and work-life balance was much stronger in rural areas in comparison to that of rural areas. This is because the prevailing societal structure and cultural norms that restricts and consider women to be the prime caregivers in the family. One of the respondents of rural area said:

'Gender roles are highly linked to work-life balance as in rural areas women are solely responsible for maintenance of house and household chores. In addition, men do not play any part within domestic sphere other than decision making which amplifies responsibilities of the women. At the same time, women living in rural areas experiences infrastructural constrains which further makes difficult for them to work efficiently at workplace.'

Moreover, respondents from urban areas agreed that gender roles also extensively prevail here but due to education, sharing of responsibilities among spouses, and change in family setup by

emergence of more nuclear families in urban areas roles can be switched to certain extent occasionally. As one, the respondent from urban area stated that:

'In urban areas switching of gender roles is seen sometimes but, in rural areas patriarchal system dominates massively and switching of roles there is considered inappropriate and difficult'

At the same time, some interviewees stated that domestic problems and gender roles are experienced by working women in a similar manner in both of the areas. However, in urban areas women are now having technological ways to perform their domestic work efficiently which, provides them with quick solutions, saves time and reduces their burden to certain extent.

5.4 Transformation of gender roles and work-life balance in view of Covid-19

Emergence of pandemic has influenced every aspect of human life. With countrywide lockdown, initially people were entirely restricted to homes. Therefore, to provide the research a new dimension aspect of covid-19 was also, considered while collecting data. According to the some interviewees' pandemic contributed beneficially in work-life balance and gender roles but in other cases it led to enhancement of responsibilities. While, other interviewees thought that pandemic did not change any circumstances in terms of gender roles and work-life balance.

Table 5.3: Gender roles and work-life balance in view of Covid-19

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | How Covid-19 situation has influenced the prevailing gender roles in our society? |
| 2 | How difficult it is to manage both work and family life during pandemic situation? |
| 3 | How responsibilities within home have been transformed with closure of schools and offices? |

The above table mentions the series of questions which, were asked from the respondents related to gender roles and work-life balance with emergence of pandemic. Moreover, there results are mentioned in the pie chart which, depicts the percentages of the answer.

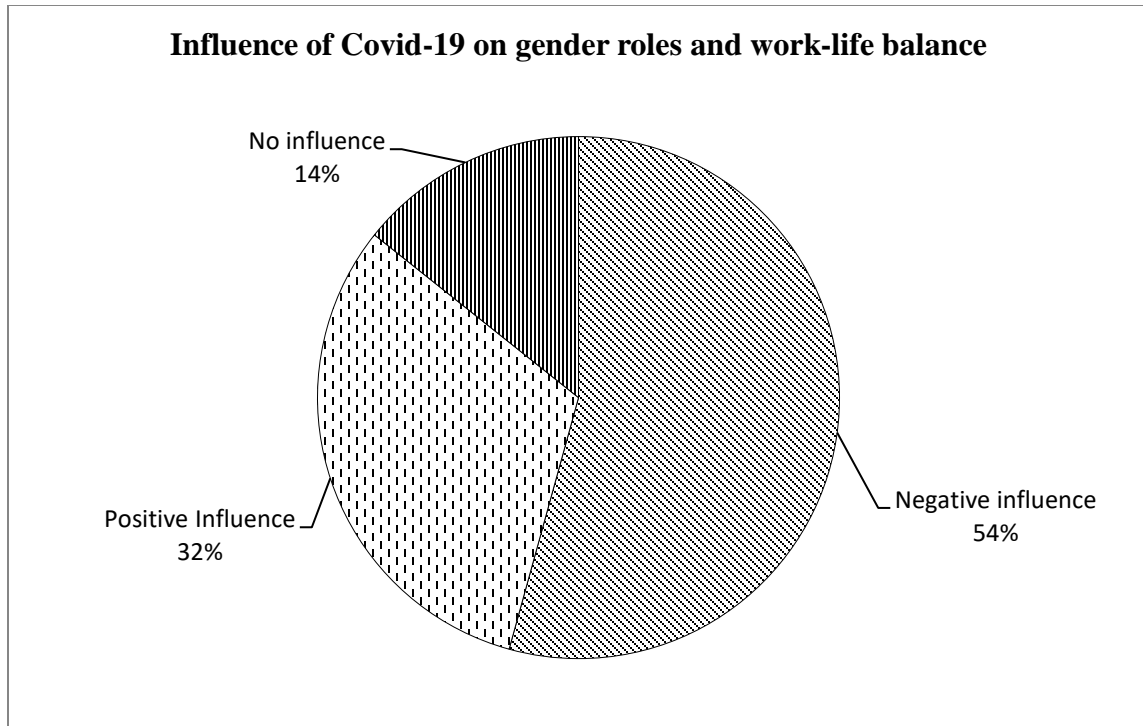


Figure 5.1: Gender roles and work-life balance in view of Covid-19

5.4.1 Enhancement of responsibilities

While discussing Covid-19 influence 54% of the women responded that it had a negative effect on both gender roles and work-life balance. Majority of the respondents claiming that belonged from urban areas and were continuing with their professional work despite partial lockdown. Along with this, respondents specified that as responsibilities were, amplified and hence, women without any help of male counterparts still primarily performed majority of the household chores. This led one of the respondents to state that:

‘Covid-19 has further strengthen the prevailing gender roles as responsibilities were enlarged due to complete presence of family members at home’

As with countrywide lockdown and closure of offices, families were restricted to homes primarily. With children at homes and their online classes led to amplify the responsibilities of women as children required continuous attention and guidance even during school timings. At the same time, care-giving duties also increased massively with children staying home for the entire day but also because of following strict SOPs of the pandemic. As one of the respondent stated:

'Covid-19 doubled the responsibilities of majority of the mothers. As it was necessary to keep a check on hygiene requirement including washing hands, sanitization, and never ending laundry'

This amplification of tasks within homes due to pandemic led to influence work-life balance of women. As women stated that with excessive responsibilities, they were not able to give proper time and attention to their professional life. Many of the tasks allotted were sometimes, submitted late because of continuous family demand and attention. This further led to affect their wellbeing, as doing everything timely required a lot of efficiency and time management.

5.4.2 Beneficial impact of pandemic on gender roles and work-life balance

Moving forward, 32% of the respondents considered covid-19 to be highly beneficial for gender roles and work-life balance. Businesses taking work from initiative allowed men and women to perform their professional work from home, which led to adjustment of tasks and duties according to the availability of time and individual ease. As one of the contender identified:

'With covid-19 both male and female were at home, which made it convenient to alter household chores'

At the same time, work-life balance also improved significantly according to the respondents as work from home initiative reduced their hectic professional life. As pandemic situation dismantled 9-5 office timings, which reduced their traveling time, minimized hectic routine, and helped women to spend more time with the family. Hence, this ease and alteration of work helped women to have an ideal balance between work and family life.

‘Work from home has provided a break from my chaotic life which involved a lot of traveling and has helped me to manage my professional and family life easily’

Moreover, it is to be noted that few respondents working in government schools mentioned that closure of schools and absence of online teaching facilities provided them with a much-needed break from their hectic life. This provided them with the opportunity to focus on their children and family more properly than before. As one of the respondents belonging from a rural area said:

‘I’m a government teacher and going to school requires a lot of traveling. At the same time, due to lack of proper infrastructure in my case lack of road access to school my traveling time is much more enhanced. But, with closure of schools I had the opportunity to have a break from my hectic routine and spend time at home’

5.4.3 Financial implication of Covid-19

One of the important aspects of Covid-19, which emerged during the data collection, was the financial implication of the pandemic, which influenced both gender roles and work-life balance. Few of the respondents working in the private sector stated that with closure of offices over a few months led to salary deduction of their husbands and themselves. This all led to a reduction in their individual financial

contribution and hence, created a budgetary constrain on the family. As one of the respondent mentioned:

‘Me and my husband both experienced salary reduction and hence, to find online jobs was the dire need of the time’

Another interviewee said:

‘My husband did freelancing for few months during initial months of lockdown in covid-19 which doubled my responsibilities within home’

Importantly while viewing the responses, it is vital to understand that with financial problems being, created by pandemic women in few cases started doing alternative jobs, which created extra burden on them to manage their professional and personal life along with maintaining their livelihood. At the same time, pandemic further strengthen gender roles as women focused more on giving attention to their household chores while men doing alterative jobs or freelancing to fulfill their responsibilities of head of the family. This again reestablished the roles, which are primarily linked to men and women in our society.

In conclusion, women belonging from urban areas experienced enhancement of responsibilities and reinforcement of gender roles due to pandemic. However, majority of the women from rural areas thought pandemic to be beneficial as, it allowed them to have a break from their professional life. This is not because of changes occurring or transforming gender roles and household responsibilities but because of break from their professional work.

5.5 Struggles with managing work and family life simultaneously

One of the major problems that emerge from multi-tasking and engrained roles for women is to create an ideal balance between professional and family life, however, in doing so women experience series of challenges, which result in deterioration of their well-being and satisfaction level. Women were asked about the challenges they experience which are discussed below in detail.

5.5.1 Over-burdening of responsibilities

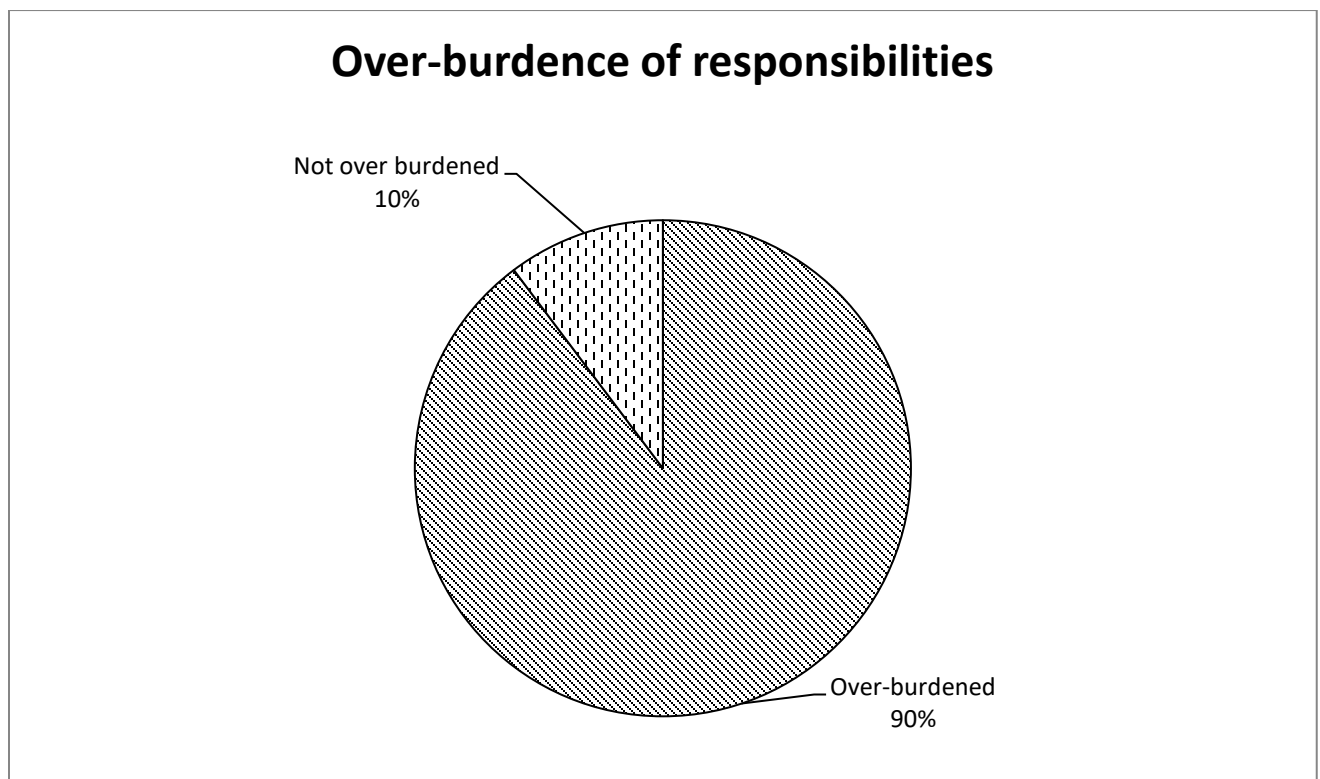


Figure 5.2: Over-burdening of responsibilities

When women were, asked about their management of responsibilities and struggle they experience in balancing their work and family life 90% of the responded said that they feel over-burdened due to the gender roles, which have been imposed on them by societal norms.

One of the responded stated:

'Most of the time I feel over-burdened while performing various responsibilities because as a women I bear a heavier burden when it comes to balancing work and family life'

Balancing work and family life equally is a daunting task, which women experience majority of the time. Women are primarily performing the entire tasks within household while keeping up with societal expectations and family demands. From fulfilling care giving duties of the children to keeping a check on their upbringing to finally performing efficiently in the labor market women experience role over-load and amplification of responsibilities. This was further enhanced with covid-19 according to few interviewees as care giving duties increased along with financial problems, which amplified the prevailing roles designated for men and women.

At the same time, it is vital to consider that work or role over-load in certain cases may not only result from prevailing gender roles in our society. Professional life and extensive work in labor market can also disturb ones' personal life and hence, work-life balance. With organizations getting extensively profit-oriented, demands their employees to work timely, efficiently, and progressively. This adds up to the pressure of managing and completing work effectively. It is accurate in a certain way as organizations are paying their employees so can they can contribute towards organizational goals. However, in doing so it is vital to consider perspective of employees as fulfillment of too many responsibilities with time pressures leads to have a negative impact on individuals' physical and psychological wellbeing. As one of the respondent said:

‘Majority of the time I’m working even after working hours of the office and sometimes bringing work at home which makes very difficult for me provide the due time to family which I should’

It is important to consider that responsibilities at home vary among men and women and so does the societal expectations. Women in societal structure of Pakistan in many cases cannot stay at office for longer time; they have to reach back home safely, and timely. Whereas, women have to perform major duties within home hence, this can influence their performance at work too.

5.5.2 Well-being

Moving forward, while balancing work and family life women also had trouble in managing their both physical and psychological wellbeing. For this purpose, questions on wellbeing, overabundance and satisfaction level were asked from the women, that are mentioned in the table below and percentages of the answers are represented in the pie charts.

Table 5.4: Wellbeing and satisfaction levels

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | How do you define psychological wellbeing? |
| 2 | Have you ever felt over-burdened while performing multiple responsibilities? |
| 3 | How does the combination of family roles and work affect women psychological well-being? |
| 4 | How happy and satisfied you are with your current routine and life? |
| 5 | With multiple tasks and responsibilities, do you manage to have time for yourself? |

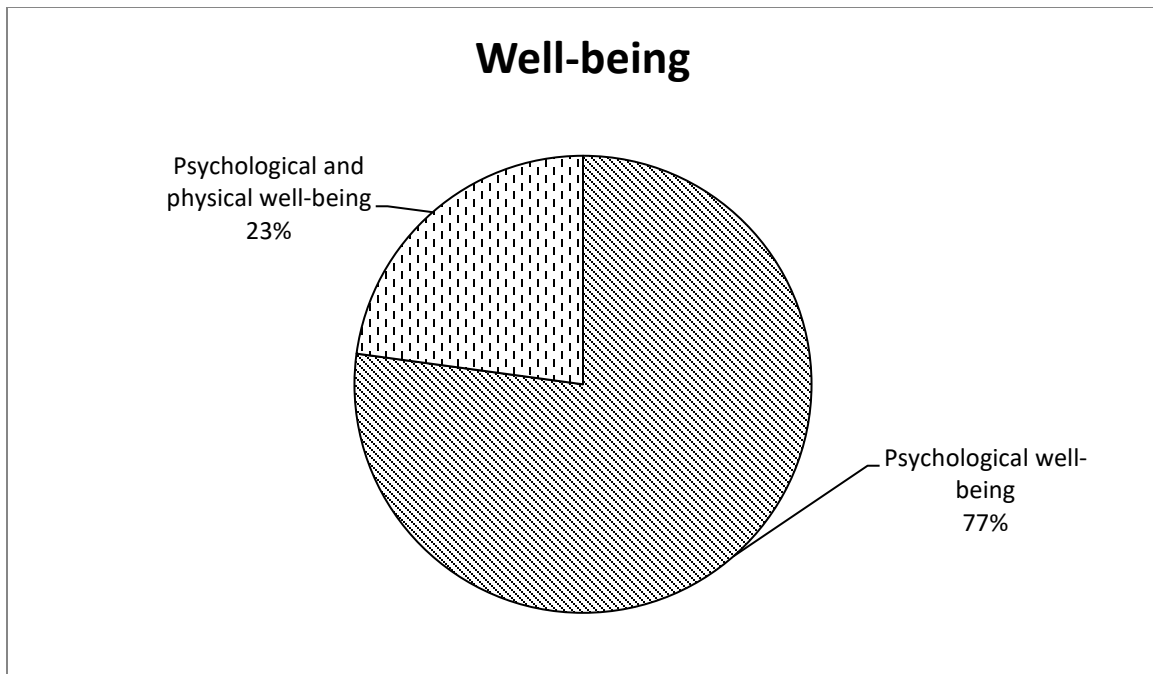


Figure 5.3: Well-being of married women

While considering, the issue of wellbeing in connection to gender roles, because of multiple responsibilities and excessive societal demands 77% of women stated that, their psychological wellness is affected by role overload and excessive tasks. One of the respondents explained:

'I feel pressurized most of the time while doing household chores because managing family and fulfilling needs of the children is my extreme priority. However, most of the time I experience perceived stress, anxiety and panic while looking after family and professional work'

Another respondent said:

'Women are much, affected psychologically while performing roles and jobs duties. They have to keep striking a balance between the two ends that influence their mental health and sometime are prone to psychological disorders'

It is vital to evaluate that gender roles along with professional life leads to role conflict and both of the works require mental and physical effort along with time to be completed efficiently. Women feel pressurized and overburdened while balancing their family roles and life at work, which naturally affect their psychological wellbeing. Stress, pressure, anxiety, anger displacement, time management and panicking were among the common struggles, which influence women well-being. Nevertheless, despite all of these issues women still have to carry on with multiple tasking, which can be damaging for their long-term wellness.

Moving forward, 23% of respondents stated that along with psychological wellbeing their physical wellbeing is also extremely affected while, managing work and family life simultaneously. It is to be noted that majority of the women belonging from rural areas identified this issue as one of the women said:

'Responsibilities of family demands a lot of physical and time efforts and for completing household chores in time can only be done through allotting enough time before and after coming from the job which makes me extremely tired and exhausting'

Another respondent said:

My job requires a lot of traveling and when I come back home I have to perform all the duties that have been conventionally assigned to women within household. This makes me extremely physically exhausting and tired sometimes.

Furthermore, even while prioritizing and managing time excessive responsibilities can make you feel over-burdened. Mothers being solely responsible of managing, looking after their children, and house sometimes have to sacrifice their own comfort, sleep, and in some cases diet just to

fulfill their family requirements which ultimately have an impact on their physical and psychological wellbeing.

5.5.3 Satisfaction level



Figure 5.4: Satisfaction levels of married working-women

However, interestingly when women were, asked about how satisfied they are with their current life and routine 74% of the respondent stated that they are satisfied. As one of the respondents said:

'Despite of the hectic routine that I have, being grateful for the blessings can help me to have mental peace'

Another interviewee said:

'To operate efficiently one need to have a positive thinking therefore it is essential to enjoy life little things rather than being in a complaining mood for the things that we don't have'

Importantly respondents claimed that despite the roles which have been allotted to women in specific gender roles, which needs to be revised and changed drastically, it is extremely necessary to value your family and blessing you have in your life. Hence, rather to consume your energy in worrying about work and family, it is vital to prioritize and set goals, which can enhance your happiness and gratitude level. At the same time, women also claimed that their busy routine helps them to stay active and to work timely and efficiently. Moreover, women in rural areas were more, satisfied, happy, and were experiencing higher level of gratitude with their lives in comparison to women of rural areas as majority of the women from 76% belonged to rural areas.

At the same time, 26% of the women wanted slight changes in their lifestyle with fewer amounts of stress, pressure, workload and panic which is certainly affecting their satisfaction level negatively. According to one woman:

'My hectic routine at work along with family responsibilities is having a direct impact on my mood and positive energy due to which I feel unsatisfied in most of the day'

It is important to consider that despite the infrastructural, cultural and family structure differences women from rural areas were less unsatisfied in comparison to those of urban areas and had higher level of gratitude.

5.6 Coping strategies

Multi-tasking while making an effort to enhance personal wellbeing requires various strategies, which one can incorporate in their daily routine and can help them in performing responsibilities efficiently and timely. When women were, asked about the various strategies they use to create a balance between work and family life three main tactics were identified by them including time management, setting priorities and weekly goals. However, it is to be noted that certain interviewees identified more than one strategy, which helps them in with keeping up with family, professional and societal demands.

Table 5.5: Strategies used by women to balance between family and professional life

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | How do you manage work and family life successfully? |
| 2 | What strategies do you use to manage work-life balance while achieving psychological wellbeing? |

The above table represents the questions asked from the respondents related to coping strategies, which are helping women in balancing their personal and professional life. In addition, the strategies mentioned by them are mentioned in the pie chart.

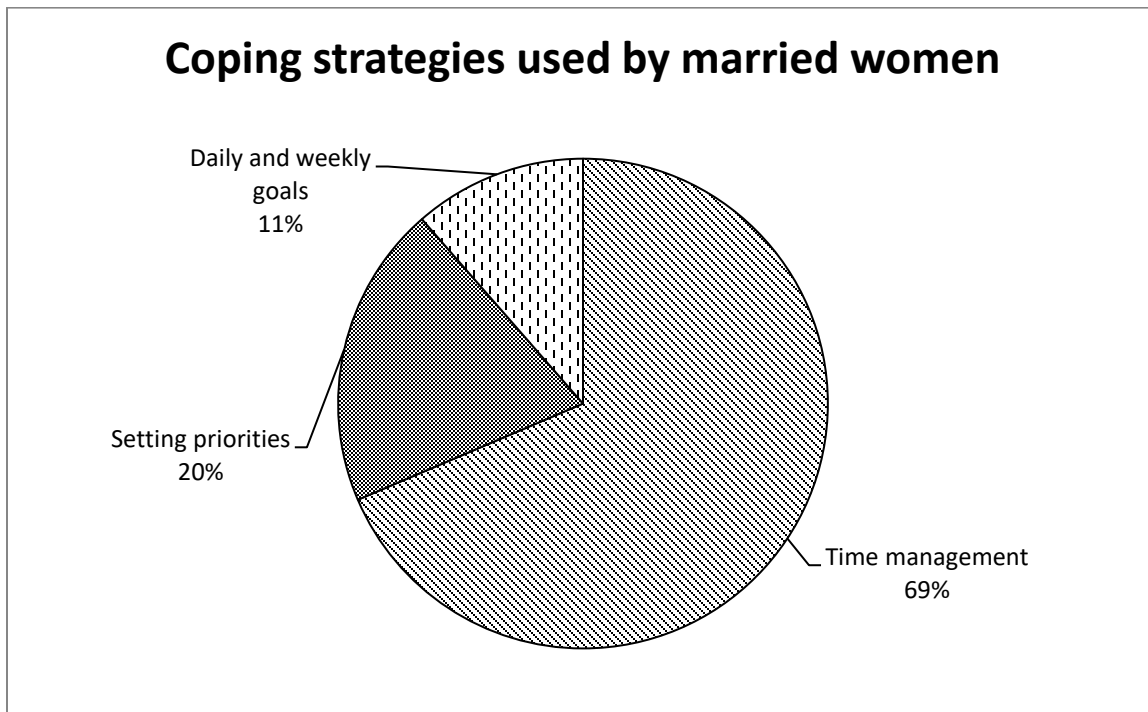


Figure 5.5: Coping strategies

5.6.1 Time management

The most important and highly effective strategy according to the women is time management, which, is highly beneficial in completing tasks efficiently while, creating a balance between work and family life. As gender roles along with professional commitments puts a burden on women to fulfill tasks quickly hence, allotting time according to the demand is necessary and the best solution. Moving forward, for management of time women identified one of its key aspects, ‘tracking time’ as one of the respondent said:

‘Time tracking is the most important strategy which I use to manage and allocate time according to my family and professional demands’

Another respondent said:

'I set time for completion of my tasks both at work and within home'

Tracking of time involves allocating and setting time in a manner, which helps in completion of tasks within the defined set of time. This strategy helps women in staying active while, performing and completing tasks timely and efficiently. For instance, many of the women stated that they set time for household chores like cleaning and cooking and make sure that their work is completed within the set time e.g. two hours. This provides them with the opportunity to have ample quality time with their children and family.

At the same time, within time management one of the other approaches used by a lot of working women is of 'prioritizing time' especially while completing family commitments. This means to complete work in accordance to their importance and to provide more time to a tasks, which demands high consideration and needs to be, dealt urgently. As one of women said:

'I make sure to manage my time according to the significance of the task for instance if my children require more of my attention or let's say guidance in their academics so I give my time to them rather than engaging myself in household chore like cleaning or laundry'

Prioritizing and tracking time are two beneficial tools of time management, which, are readily used by married working women in both rural and urban areas. This helps them in fulfilling their family and work commitments while creating a balance. This further helps them in maintaining their physical and psychological wellbeing.

5.6.2 Setting priorities

Moving forward, 20% of women also responded that along with managing time one of the other important strategies they use in balancing work and family life is to define and set priorities. As doing all of the work simultaneously is sometimes difficult to handle hence, by identifying which of the task are most important should be settled first is an easy way to create balance in life. In doing so one can easily identify the due importance a task, require, without making a compromise on ones' health, wellbeing and efficiency. One of the respondents from rural area working in government sector said:

'Family and children are my first priority however, professional life also demands excessive time and efforts. We are, allowed to take rest and re-creational leaves for 2 weeks a year. I often take them after I have been too much busy in office and I have neglected my family a little for sometimes. This not only helps me in spending quality time with family but also provide me with a much needed break'

Another woman said:

'Sometimes, my professional life needs more of my attention and then sometimes my personal life. Therefore, I identify which of the commitments require most of my attention and then work accordingly'

Setting priorities is essential in making life decision while keeping a track on the responsibilities that women have especially within household and even in professional life. As women experiences stress, over-burdening and anxiety while doing work simultaneously, it is a beneficial way in identifying what is most important rather than what is imposed on them by

family, professional life and even society. This power of decision-making is helping working women to create balance between work and family life.

5.6.3 Setting daily or weekly goals

Another and most interesting strategy that was identified by working women of urban areas in specific, was setting of goals. 11% of the respondent stated that setting goals on daily and weekly basis helps them in completing tasks easily, timely and efficiently without making one exhausting and stressful. As one of the women said:

'I identify which tasks I have to complete in week days and which task I have to complete on weekends. This really helps me in keeping peace in my life with excessive responsibilities at home and office'

One of the other interviewee stated:

'I do cleaning on daily basis and making food only on the weekends. This saves a lot of my time and energy. At the same time, I make sure to complete my office tasks within the time defined rather than postponing them to the next day'

Setting of goals, is an absolutely amazing coping strategy which helps individuals in completing their tasks imposed by the engraved gender roles and of ones' professional life without compromising on their physical and psychological well-being. One of the respondent shared her interesting habit of journal writing within, which she writes down all the important tasks required to be completed on daily and weekly basis. This process involves on identifying and writing the most important tasks that needs to be completed within a defined time for instance, paying of utility bills and then delaying those tasks which can be done on weekends like deep cleaning of

the house. This interesting, strategy along with general goal setting is helping women to prioritize their tasks and then completing them within the defined time. Hence, an ideal way to fulfill societal and family responsibilities along with creating a balance between work and family life.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Background and discussion

This part of the study focuses on discussing and analyzing the data collected and linking it with the research objective, questions and conceptual framework. It provides a deep introspection regarding gender roles and work-life and the way it is influencing working women wellbeing in both rural and urban areas. Moreover, gender roles is one of the social issues, which is not widely discussed and is not given due relevance because of the prevailing structural norms engraved in our personalities and imposed by the society. However, it is vital to consider, how gender roles extensively prevail and the influence they have on working women. For this purpose, data was collected from 35 married working-women from rural and urban areas of Rawalpindi. According to the data gathered gender roles massively prevails in societal setup of Pakistan and are not changing despite women actively participating in the labor market.

Gender roles being the key component has been widely addressed and the way gender role varies in urban and rural areas have also been clearly identifies. At the same time, gender roles further influence women work-life balance and psychological wellbeing through multiple responsibilities resulting role overload and role conflict. Importantly, all three aspects including gender roles, work-life balance and psychological wellbeing have been viewed in terms of Covid-19.

While considering the cultural differences between rural and urban areas it vital to consider that in rural areas gender roles are more prevalent and are strictly followed in comparison to urban

areas as stated by 100% of the respondents. In urban areas however, most the tasks are still, performed by women but role switching is possible occasionally. At the same time, women living in urban areas have technological or other house help, which provides them with relaxation from household chores and enable them to complete tasks more efficiently. Nevertheless, in rural areas women have limited access to job and education, which restricts them to obtain certain professions solely. At the same time, joint family set-up and engraved cultural norms forces women to perform all household chores without involvement of men. It is also essential to consider that 100% of respondents including rural and urban areas agreed that gender roles extensively prevail with certain variations, which has forced women to take multiple responsibilities and perform all household work solely despite working in labor market and even earning higher than men in certain cases.

While managing many things and completing massive tasks simultaneously with a never ending ‘to do list’ creates burden on women, which leads to role overload, over burdening and enhancement of stress and anxiety levels. It is also vital to consider that amplification of work both at home and labor market requires a lot of time management, and neglecting any of the responsibilities is not possible. This further burdens women and hence, has an impact on their physical and psychological well-being. Therefore, creates difficulties in managing work and family life properly.

Moreover, research further focuses on viewing gender roles and work-life balance with emergence of Covid-19 situation. Mixed opinions were, obtained over this; 10% of the respondents claimed that pandemic had no impact on gender roles and work-life balance. At the same time, 54% of the women considered covid-19 as enhancement of responsibilities in specific women from urban areas. As it led to increase in care giving duties for their children and

managing their office-work has been quite difficult with online classes of the children. Along with this, in some cases women experienced loss of jobs or salary deduction, which further created financial constraints on the families. This forced, them to take online jobs, which further led to over-burden them and created difficulties in managing work and family life. Hence, it further led to amplification of gender roles, which forced women to carry and fulfill all of their household chores solely.

However, in certain cases covid-19 has been beneficial for women as it allowed them to stay at home and look after their families in a better way as stated by 32% of the interviewees. Work from home initiatives allowed women especially in rural areas to alter time between office and household work, which provided them with the opportunity of time relaxation, and completing their both of the tasks according to their ease and time preferences. Moreover, some women had the opportunity to focus on their families in particular children more wisely and appropriately.

As pre pandemic required a lot of traveling between work and office and their tough routine created time constraints on them, which did not allow ample family time. It is essential to consider that women in urban areas in comparison to rural areas experienced more amplification of responsibilities during Covid-19. Majority of the women from rural areas consider pandemic to have no impact on gender roles or to be beneficial for them as they were no longer, amplified with their professional work and had more time to spend it with their family.

Moving forward, one of the important aspect derive from the data collected is that along with psychological wellbeing physical wellness of women is also effected with managing both work and family life which was identified by 23% of the women. While, talking about psychological wellbeing, women have to complete series of responsibilities timely, which makes difficult for them to focus on themselves. This overburdening of tasks while making sure that none of the

work is given less relevance takes a lot of energy, time and efficiency of women. This creates pressure on women, which enhances stress level, anger displacement, panic attacks and anxiety hence, affecting their overall psychological wellness as stated by 77% of the women. However, women identified how ample responsibilities can be extremely exhausting and take a lot of their mental and importantly physical energy. As while taking care of their children women sometimes neglect their personal necessities including food, self-care and sleep, which deteriorate their physical health. At the same time, respondents from rural areas stated that a lot of traveling, time management and increase in stress level along with physical tiring work within home leads to create health problems for them including frequent headache and back or joint pain. It is also vital to consider that both mental and physical health closely relates to each other hence, deterioration in one of them has vital chances of effecting the other.

Furthermore, as women are successfully fulfilling their responsibilities efficiently it was vital to identify some of the strategies that have been helpful for them in achieving ideal work and family balance. Women both at work and within home apply these strategies to complete their tasks efficiently and timely. Strategies identified by women are, categorized into; time management, identifying priorities and setting goals. These strategies are helping working women to allocate their time according to significance of the task and are helping them to choose wisely between work and family life. At the same time, setting goals and making check lists of the tasks helps them in keeping a track of their work especially at home and further allows them to complete all of the responsibilities timely and appropriately while fulfilling family, work and societal demands. Women from rural areas mainly identified the strategy of time management however; working women from urban areas identified other strategies like goal setting and time prioritization along with management of time.

Along with this, as stated by social role theory gender division of labor and stereotypes are mainly categorized by the society, which are further reinforced by social and cultural structure and hence, is depicted in the results from the in-depth interviews. Women especially from rural areas stated that women perform responsibilities within home despite their enormous presence in labor market as these roles have been identified by the social norms and cannot be changed despite changes in other social and economic dynamics.

At the same time, respondents also argued that multiple responsibilities further influence their work-life balance and psychological wellbeing through enhancing stress and anxiety levels. This identifies another key aspect of social role theory which is 'role conflict' as women while managing their professional and personal life experiences overabundance which can further affect their performance in any of the role that they undertake and can also affect their physical and mental health.

6.2 Conclusion

Within home women are obliged to perform majority of the households' chores, which have been associated with them historically despite their active presence in the labor market, and even doing work, which was associated with men previously. Women despite playing an active role outside the home are still required to take care of every minor to major work inside home. This is further affecting both of their physical and psychological wellbeing along with the added pressure of fulfilling all the societal demands while keeping everyone around them happy even at the cost of their own necessities, peace, energy and sanity. The data collected for this study

clearly reflects the intensity with which gender roles are prevailing in our society in specific rural areas, which are creating difficulty for women to achieve work-life balance.

In conclusion, it is dire need of the time to identify and understand the pressures women are experiencing in our society and the negative influence it has on their personal lives. At the same time, gender roles should be revised through a process of 'self-evaluation' where both men and women need to stop burdening each other with ample responsibilities, duties and expectations imposed by society solely based on gender. However, it is vital for us to understand the implication these can have on the coming generations and hence, actions need to be taken on individual basis while identifying between wrong and right and being more empathetic and kind towards each other. Government on the hand needs to play an active role in formation of women centric policies and need to facilitate working women at workplace.

6.3 Recommendations

This part of the study provides various recommendations based on the research conducted and data analyzed which, are also beneficial for policy recommendation. At the same time, the suggested recommendations are identified while, keeping in view the cultural dynamics prevailing in rural and urban areas of Rawalpindi and are applicable on both micro and macro level.

Firstly, individual efforts are required to change and transform the societal norms, which, are suppressing women and reinforcing gender roles. Women and men both need to challenge the prevailing roles established by the society which are solely designed to meet societal criteria.

This can be done through making slight changes at one's own home and by sharing of responsibilities by men and women with mutual acceptance and empathy towards each other.

Government efforts are also required to facilitate women and to enhance men involvement with in the household. This can be done through allowance of paternity leaves at least for 20 days which, will lead to sharing of responsibilities between men and women. It will further reduce the burden from women of taking care of the child and will provide the mother with a much-needed mental and physical rest.

At the same time, government and employer need to ensure that women are facilitated at the workplace by introducing childcare facilities, staff and prayer rooms along with psychological centers. This will be a key component in helping married women to balance their work and family life while, enhancing their wellbeing and will further reduce their burden and stress levels resulting from role overload and role conflict.

Most importantly, government of Pakistan needs to evaluate the aftermath of Covid-19 and the way it has influenced both men and women in terms of financial constraints, job loss and burden. It will be beneficial in analyzing the affects so that prior arrangement can be made for any future hazards and to settle the current problems.

On a holistic level, Pakistan needs to start making women centric policies with comprehensive consideration of ground realities. Without, consideration of cultural knowledge, needs and honest efforts, polices will turn out to be flawed. As Pakistan is diverse in cultural and social norms therefore, policies need to be made both on central and provincial level while incorporating the dynamics and needs of the area, which can be applicable in both rural and urban areas.

CHAPTER 7

EVALUATION OF GOVERNMENT POLICY/BILL OR ACT

7.1 Introduction of The Working Women bill

This part of the study evaluates any government level effort including policy, act or bill which is interlinked and relevant to the research topic. However, unfortunately no policy is available related to gender roles or work-life balance hence, an act is being evaluated which focuses on the working women and the facilities they need to have at work place. ‘The Working Women’ (Protection of Rights) act was introduced in 2020 with the aim to provide protection and rights to women at workplace, which can enable women to have access to employment without any gender discrimination. At the same time, bill aims at facilitating women in both public and private sector while, ensuring to provide the desire significance to women work, which have been systematically undervalued. Main components of the bill include:

- Prevention on discrimination in employment:

Bill states that employers must recruit workers without any discrimination on basis ones’ sex and marital status. At the same times, offices need to ensure that no discrimination is taking place against women in recruitment process and within office sphere.

- Equal allowance and pay:

Other component of bill states that pay and allowances should be provided to men and women according to their work value and designation irrespective of their gender.

- Equal opportunities for promotion, training, progression:

According to the bill employer is obliged to provide promotion, training and progression to women equal to that of men.

- Maternity and Paternity leaves:

Female employee need to avail 90 days of maternity leaves with pay. Additional 30 days leave can also be, provided to women if they need but without pay. Whereas, male employees also needs be provided, with 10 days of paternity leaves.

- Other conveniences:

Moreover, bill further impose responsibility on employers to make changes in the workplace, which can facilitate women. This includes provision of washrooms, prayer room and separate staff room along with childcare sections. At the same time, bill further impose responsibility on employer to provide female employees with reserve seats in public transport.

7.2 The Working Women bill and its link with gender roles work-life balance

Bill was introduced in senate of Pakistan to facilitate working-women while, ensuring to achieve sustainable development goals and to obtain gender equality, which is lacking in societal structure of Pakistan. As women in Pakistan already, experience hindrances in achieving job opportunity bill has provided a ray of hope, as it demands to prevent discrimination of women at workplace along with equal pay and allowances to women according to the services they are providing.

As because of gender roles women experiences role overload and have to fulfill multiple tasks simultaneously hence, it is essential to provide them with a work environment, which can

improve their physical and psychological wellbeing. As women have to look after their children and families therefore, bill states to provide childcare facilities both in public and private offices, which can enable them to focus on their office work without the interruption and worry of their children. This can further help them in completion of office work timely, efficiently and accurately. At the same time, with facilities such as prayer room and separate staff room for the women can help them to have physical and mental break, which can be beneficial for them both at work and home.

Most importantly, as gender roles have imposed ample responsibilities on women to meet family and societal demands it is necessary to increase involvement of men in household. For this purpose, bills incorporate paternity leaves for men of 10 days, which can allow them to help and support their wives and family. This is extremely essential to enhance men role in households' chores as because with deterioration of wives health men can take responsibilities of work within home leading to role-switch for, certain days. At the same time, along with 3-month maternity leaves, which is already applicable in public offices and is mandatory for private employers to provide to their female employees. Moreover, 1 month extra leaves should also be, provided to women in case of urgency. Both paternity and maternity leaves are extremely essential for both men and women. As it allows them to have a break from their office work and go through difficult times without worrying about office workload. At the same time, break from office work and division of responsibilities can lead to discontinuation of gender roles for some time.

7.3 Critical analysis on The Working Women Bill

Even though bill incorporates series of components, which are vital to facilitate women at workplace still bill is not holistic in nature and require series of amendments to further comprehensively achieve gender equality and help women in achieving ideal work-life balance. Firstly, to enhance men involvement in household it is required to increase number of days for paternity leaves. For this purpose, 20-30 days of paternity leaves can allow men to increase their participation at home and perform household duties until the time their spouse become stable.

Moreover, most importantly Pakistan lacks major women centric policies, which are hindering it to achieve gender equality. Legislators' flaws, delayed passing of bills, fewer women representation and involvement along with lack of holistic approach and interest is restricting in formation and then implementation of policies focusing on women. According to (force, 2011) lack of commitment, consistency and interest among the legislators in Pakistan is resulting in formation and presentation of bills and polices on women without considering the indigenous needs and dynamic of the society. This is an important aspect of policy formation as for a policy to be comprehensive and inclusive it needs to incorporate and focus on various aspects and interest of the society. Policies in Pakistan lack inclusivity and does not consider grass root level problems. As in the case of this bill, it is only targeting certain group of individuals for instance, it lacks focus on women from different areas with diverse cultural setting and societal norms. Along with this, it also lacks perspective of employer, as infrastructure restriction may not allow offices to provide women with various facilities including staff rooms and prayer rooms.

Moving forward, despite some of the flaws identified above in the bill it is still a way forward in achieving gender equality and can facilitate women in achieving work-life balance. However, even after one year, the bill has not been passed by senate, which depicts lack of interest from legislators end. Recent example of 'domestic violence bill', which has become talk of the table nowadays support this assumption of lack of interest on higher level. As bill is objectified and opposed by religious parties, which, hurdled its approval and again depict absence of commitment of government on issues related to the women.

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Appendix A

Interview guide

Gender roles and work-life balance: A comparative study of rural and urban areas of Rawalpindi

Name:

Age:

Area:

Years of experience/working:

Question regarding gender roles and work-life balance?

1. What is your understanding of gender roles? And according to you how extensively they prevail in cultural setting of Pakistan?
2. How do you perceive work-life balance?
3. According to you how gender roles and work-life balance are inter-linked and affect each other?
4. According to you, do gender roles vary in rural and urban areas? If yes how?
5. How much time do you spend between performing tasks within and outside domestic sphere?

Question related to covid-19 situation while keeping in view gender roles:

1. How Covid-19 situation has influenced the prevailing gender roles in our society?
2. How difficult it is to manage both work and family during pandemic situation?

Questions of psychological well-being:

1. How do you define psychological wellbeing?
2. Have you ever felt over-burdened while performing multiple responsibilities?

3. How does the combination of family roles and work affect women psychological well-being?

Questions of coping strategies and satisfaction level:

1. How do you manage work and family life successfully?
2. What strategies do you use to manage work-life balance while achieving psychological wellbeing?
3. With multiple tasks and responsibilities do you manage to have time for yourself?
4. Finally, how happy and satisfied you are with your current routine and life?