

**RESEARCH PAPER****Work Life Balance and Job Satisfaction as Functions of Work Stress in Employees during Covid-19****¹Dr. Rabia Mushtaq, ² Dr. Sajid Iqbal Alyana* and ³ Omama Hashmi**

1. Assistant Professor, Institute of Clinical Psychology, University of Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, National University of medical Sciences (NUMS), Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan.
3. MPhil Scholar, Institute of Clinical Psychology, University of Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan

***Corresponding Author:** Sajid.alyana@numspak.edu.pk**ABSTRACT**

The present study was aimed at finding the predictive relationship between workplace stress, work life balance and job satisfaction among employees during Covid-19. After literature review following hypotheses were made, Work life balance would be significantly predicted by workplace stress in employees; Job satisfaction would be significantly predicted by workplace stress in employees; There would be gender differences in the scores of workplace stress and work life balance in employees. The sudden outbreak of pandemic covid-19 posed a lot of health and psychosocial challenges. The era of Work-from home, not only changed employee's workplace but also their life styles were impacted in terms of managing work life from personal space. It also lead to attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. By using a purposive sampling strategy, 60 employees of public and private sector organizations were recruited from Karachi, Pakistan. The sample included employees from diverse range of industries and professions and from mid to senior level. In order to check these hypotheses, standardized measures of Work place stress scale, Work life balance self-assessment questionnaire and job satisfaction scale were employed along with a demographic data sheet. Findings revealed a significant relationship between work place stress and work life balance [$r=.674$; $R^2=.455$, $F(1, 58) = 48.389$, $p<.001$]. Gender differences revealed more work place stress experienced by women and also the work life balance was poorer in them. Following the empirical study, we found that a state of balance between professional and personal life generates satisfaction, a higher degree of work stress, decreased performance, and reduced employees' job satisfaction.

KEYWORDS Job Satisfaction, Pandemic, Work-Life Balance, Workplace Stress**Introduction**

In the early 1900's, the economic political crises due to World War I formed the impetus for industrial and organizational revolution and development, wherein chaos and unrest laid the foundations of revolutionary future in every field of human life. Similarly, the recent pandemic, the outbreak of Covid-19 Virus, posed lots of challenges to humans all over the world belonging to every walk of life, the organizational cultures and workplace environments also needed new reforms to adjust in the post-pandemic world. The advancements in the field of technology not only favored mankind in navigating through this phase, but also gave rise to various challenges related to managing the demands of work and family life simultaneously (Yaseen, Jathol, & Muzaffar, 2020). Work-from-home became the new norm and at the same time, source of a new stressor as well, whereby the fine line between work-life and home-life became a bit more blurred.

Work-Life balance refers to upholding and managing a balanced coordination between two major facets of employee's life namely occupation and personal life. The extent of balance achieved and maintained between both roles not only affect employee well-being but also performance (Khan, Yaseen, & Muzaffar, 2020). Thus work life balance refers to

optimal functioning and satisfaction at work and management of personal life with minimal role-conflict. Although balance and coordination is the key to all universal processes, it is especially important for humans to have a balance among personal time, paid work and unpaid work for smooth running of employment and life. Work life balance act as the power which can be utilized to enhance productivity and efficiency in different areas of work and life for optimal functioning of individual and making good decisions (Abdullah et al., 2022). Just like work-life balance is strongly correlated with positive outcomes in terms of job performance and commitment, in the same manner, work life imbalance has its emotional and behavioral repercussions which include burnout, decreased organizational commitment, job dissatisfaction and eventually turnover (Aslani & Fayyazi, 2015). Among various theories, one notion was about uniform and equal distribution of time, energy and commitment to achieve balance in one's personal and work life, however, the others are of view that quality of the time allocated to each domain matters. However, the most predominant one, until so far is the subjective assessment of an individual about whether he is able to balance both areas of life or not (Brough et al., 2020).

Job satisfaction has been a widely researched construct in the recent years and various definitions of the construct have been put forth. However, the simplest of all, as suggested by Spector (1997) is the extent to which an employee likes his job or feels contented with (as cited in Booyesen, 2008). It has been argued that job satisfaction is not a single-dimensional term but rather encompasses workers' opinions about their occupations and their workplaces as a whole (Alyana, Fatima, Farwa & Saeed, 2022). It is considered as an employee attitude, although the implications and facets of this attitude are wide enough. Therefore, Spector defines nine facets of job satisfaction which are satisfaction with pay rates, promotion, attitude of supervisor, benefits, contingent rewards, operating conditions, coworkers, nature of work and communication (Lamond & Spector, 1999). It is associated and affected by numerous personal and organizational factors such as age, gender, education, working hours and the size of the organization (Abdullah et al., 2022).

Among various factors which influence the extent of employee's satisfaction with his job, role within the organization and overall organizational environment, workplace stress is the most significant one. Job stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Job stress has its emotional and physical on employee's health and can lead to chronic ill-health and even injury. The demands of work place transform from challenges to stress when assigned tasks remain unaccomplished, relaxations becomes exhaustion and burnout, and satisfaction becomes dissatisfaction. Stress at workplace is also indicated (according to the Centre of Disease Control and Prevention) by the increased number of sick leaves, poor performance, emotional and psychological distress and increased reporting of physiological symptoms such as body aches, poor appetite and sleep disturbance (Sauter et al., 1999). It not only interferes with employee's health and well-being but is overall detrimental to company's growth as well. On a larger scale it adds cost to a country's economy which alone in Europe is estimated to be more than 4 billion USD in recent years (Frantz & Holmgren, 2019).

Work-related stress is a vital precursor to job satisfaction. Under certain limits it functions as a motivator and enhances creativity, performance, efficiency and quality at work. Hence, results in more satisfaction and consequently lessens boredom and mundanity. However, the same workplace stress if perceived as overwhelming, leads to aggression and low job satisfaction and functions as a negative factor (Huboubou et al., 2017). A substantial amount of researches have explored the relationship of work life balance, job satisfaction and workplace stress among the employees belonging to different fields.

Trivellas et al. (2013) evaluated the impact of job stress on job satisfaction among Greek Nurses, and the results revealed that some aspects of workplace stress including work

burden, conflict and lack of autonomy on the part of employee are negatively associated with overall job satisfaction. In addition to it, feedback and access to information is positively correlated with worker's satisfaction with rewards and job security.

Aslani and Fayyazi (2015) studied the moderating effect of continuance commitment as function of relationship between work life balance and turnover intentions among employees of an Iranian industry. Findings were in accordance with other studies, and Work life balance has a significant positive correlation with job satisfaction, and consequently a negative association with turnover intention. Besides, job satisfaction mediated the relationship between the other two. The most important of all was that continuance commitment was found to be the moderator between job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

Hoboubi et al. (2017) discovered that job satisfaction has a significant positive relationship with productivity at work. Moreover, productivity was significantly correlated with role insufficiency and role ambiguity, the two aspects of work-related stress. It was also found to be related with the supervisor support in terms of job satisfaction. In addition to the significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and work life balance another variable was identified which was responsible of causing a substantial amount of variance in job satisfaction other than work life balance, was management support (Jyothi et al., 2020).

Tavassoli and Sunyer (2020) suggested that there are positive relationships between work-life balance and job satisfaction and negative relationships between work life balance and burnout. It was also seen that work life balance has positive impact on organizational commitment which in turn improves job satisfaction thus partially mediating the relationship between work-life balance and job satisfaction.

Similarly, Rashmi and Kataria (2021) studied the mediating role of work life balance between three kinds of job resources including autonomy, coworker support and supervisor support. Data was collected during Covid-19 pandemic from nurses in India. Structural equation modeling revealed Positive relationship between the three job resources and work life balance however it only partially mediated the relationship between two of them (autonomy and supervisor support) with job satisfaction.

Xie et al. (2021) examined the relation between work related stress and job satisfaction and sleep quality, and the findings revealed that psychological capital (hope, optimism, self-development and growth) plays mediating role between stress and job satisfaction. It also mediated the relationship between work stress and sleep quality among the workers. Another study revealed that employees who were more satisfied with their job and were performing better were those who experienced less stress at work. However, the ones who experienced more stress in terms of workload were least satisfied with their job. (Jafaar et al., 2021).

Aruldoss et al. (2022) explored the relationship between work life balance, job stress, job satisfaction and job commitment. It was revealed that work life balance was negatively related to job stress and positively related to job satisfaction. Moreover, training and development were found to be moderators between job stress and job satisfaction, and job commitment and job satisfaction. Similar findings were reported by Abdullah et al., (2022) that work life balance is related to enhanced job satisfaction and productivity at work among the hotel employees. Susanto et al. (2022) explored the relationship of work life balance with job performance with job satisfaction as a mediator between the two among enterprises employees. Results showed that work life balance has a strong relationship with job performance however, job performance only partially mediated the relationship.

Therefore, the above sighted literature gives substantial evidence of strong associations between the environmental aspects of workplace and attitudinal and affective consequences evoked in employees.

Hypotheses

- 1) Work life balance would be significantly predicted by workplace stress in employees.
- 2) Job satisfaction would be significantly predicted by workplace stress in employees.
- 3) There would be gender differences in the scores of workplace stress and work life balance in employees.

Material and Methods

Participants

By using a purposive sampling strategy, 60 employees of public and private sector organizations from Karachi, Pakistan were approached. Out of 60, 40 respondents were male and 20 were female (n=76, Males=66.66%, Females=33.33%), aged 20-67 years (\bar{x} =29 years, SD=9.5). The sample included employees from diverse range of industries and professions and from mid to senior level.

Inclusion criteria was kept flexible for this study:

- Employees of both public and private sector were included.
- Both males and females were included.
- Employees from mid to senior level posts were recruited.
- Employees working for at least three months were included in the study.

Measures

Demographic Form

A demographic form including the demographic information related to age, gender, industry, years of working was administered.

Work life balance Self-Assessment Questionnaire (Neal Whitten Group, 2015)

A 45-item Likert type self-rating scale was employed to assess the harmony and integration between the work life and personal life.

Workplace Stress Scale (The Marlin Company, 2009)

The workplace stress scale (WSS) was developed by the Marlin Company, USA, and the American Institute of Stress. An eight item Likert type scale to examine workplace stress was employed which categorizes intensity of stress based on individual's scores in five categories ranging from relatively low to severe. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was 0.80 for the entire scale (Soltan et al., 2020).

Job Satisfaction Scale (Spector, 1985)

A 36 item self-rating questionnaire which assesses job satisfaction on nine dimensions. The reliability, Cronbach alpha of overall scale among different populations ranges over .70 to .90 (Lamond & Spector, 1999).

Procedure

The study was initially planned by collecting data physically, however due to sudden outbreak of Covid-19 and lockdown in the country, it was converted into mode and data was collected online. After the development of demographic sheet and selection of questionnaires, permissions were sought from the authors, and then participants were recruited via purposive sampling, those who fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Written consent for the participation was obtained and questionnaires along with demographic form were administered via google forms.

Statistical Analyses

After the completion of data collection, descriptive analyses was performed to understand the demographics of sample whereby percentages and frequencies of participant characteristics were calculated. Moreover, linear regression analysis was performed to examine the predictive relationship between workplace stress, work life balance and job satisfaction and t-test was employed to find out the gender difference in the mean scores of study variables.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Frequencies and Parentages of Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants

Participant Characteristics	<i>f</i>	%
Gender		
Male	40	66.66
Female	20	33.33
Age		
20-30 Years	41	68.3
31-40 Years	13	21.6
41-50 Years	2	3.33
Above 50 Years	4	6.66
Duration of Job		
3-6 months	16	26.7
7-12 months	9	15.0
1-3 years	18	30.0
4-6 years	8	13.3
7-10 years	1	1.7
Above 10 years	8	13.3

Table 2
Summary of Linear Regression Analysis with Workplace Stress as a Predictor of Work Life Balance in Employees

Predictor	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	df	F	Sig	Durbin Watson
Workplace Stress	.674	.455	.445	1,58	48.389	.000	2.539

Note. N=60, P<.001; Workplace Stress (Predictor); Work Life Balance (Dependent Variable)

The research findings in Table 2 and Table 3 present significant predictive relationship between workplace stress and work life balance in employees [$r=.674$; $R^2=.455$, $F(1,58)=48.389$, $p<.001$]. Findings indicate that workplace stress is statistically significant predictor of work life balance in employees and it explains 45% variance in scores of work life balance.

Table 3
Coefficient of Linear Regression of Workplace Stress as a Predictor of Work Life Balance in Employees

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		t	p
	B	SE	Beta			
Constant	193.362	7.888			24.514	.000
Workplace Stress	-2.553	.367	-.674		-6.956	.000

Dependent Variable: Work Life Balance, P<.001

Table 4
Summary of Linear Regression Analysis with Workplace Stress as a Predictor of Job Satisfaction in Employees

Predictor	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	df	F	Sig	Durbin Watson
Workplace Stress	.003	.000	-.017	1,58	.000	.984	1.802

Note. N=60, P<.001; Workplace Stress (Predictor); Job Satisfaction (Dependent Variable)

The research findings in Table 4 and Table 5 present insignificant predictive relationship between workplace stress and job satisfaction in employees.

Table 5
Coefficient of Linear Regression of Workplace Stress as a Predictor of Job Satisfaction in Employees

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient		t	p
	B	SE	Beta			
Constant	131.178	7.960			16.479	.000
Workplace Stress	.008	.370	.003		0.020	.984

Dependent Variable: Job satisfaction

Table 6
Difference in mean scores of Workplace Stress and Work Life Balance of male and female employees

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
Work place stress						
Males	40	19.7	5.99	-1.572	58	0.12
Females	20	22.35	6.29			
Work life balance						
Males	40	142.05	22.28	.598	58	.552
Females	20	138.05	25.81			

N=60, P<0.5

Discussion

The present study aimed at finding out the predictive relationship between workplace stresses, work life balance and job satisfaction among employees during the pandemic Covid-19. Our main findings are in accordance with the previous literature and revealed that workplace stress is negatively related to work life balance (Aruldoss et al., 2022) and is also a significant negative predictor of it. This implies that the more is

workplace stress, individual's well-being and balance between work and personal life gets compromised (Teasdale, 2006). Alternatively, the increase in workplace stress affects the harmony between career and personal life, thereby making it difficult for the employee to achieve the state of equilibrium and mental relaxation of living balanced and fulfilled life. As discussed above, workplace stress is predictive of various emotional, physical and psychological repercussions. It not only interferes with performance at work but also the emotional exhaustion, fatigue, mental burden contributed by it affects the overall well-being of employee. Thus, personal life also get affected in turn. When job demands exceed an employee's realm of capabilities, first of all he struggles to manage and meet the requirements and deadlines. However, failure to conform those standards of performance not only brings disappointment, frustration and aggression but also enhances a sense of ambiguity and impaired autonomy as an employee.

Our other findings however, are not in line with previous literature, as work place stress has no significant impact on job satisfaction. Whereas the previous researches suggest both variables to have a strong negative association (Hoboubi et al., 2017; Jaafar et al., 2021; Xie et al., 2021). This could be due various reasons. First of all, the data was collected during pandemic Covid-19. Being an underdeveloped country, Pakistan has several challenges to face when the virus outbreak occurred. One of the most serious threat was directed towards the unstable economic conditions. Under such circumstances, shifting to work-from-home strategy was the only suitable option for organizations. However, since the use of this technology was new and working online from home became more demanding as of the psychosocial impacts of pandemic. The boundaries of family life and work life overlapped which resulted in a significant increase in workplace stress. However, the unimpacted job satisfaction might be due to the fact that this was situational stress and that's why didn't impact the overall job satisfaction of employees. These findings are novel of their own kind, as they are also indicative of employee's perception towards stressful life situations and overall psychological capital which is established as a mediator between stress and job satisfaction (Xie et al., 2021).

It can also be seen that there are gender differences among the scores of participants, as the effect of workplace stress is stronger on female gender. This is also in accordance with previous literature (Solanki & Mandaviya, 2021). Similarly, the scores on work-life balance also suggest more imbalance in the lives of females as compared to male gender. This can explained in terms of sociocultural context of Pakistani society whereby more women are entering the work force and contributing to expenses on familial level, however, the basic family structure and dynamics are still traditional where most of the housework is expected to be done by the women of the family. This poses an extra burden on them as they have to manage the work responsibilities as well as household ones.

Recommendations

The present study has its limitations in sample size as it was kept small, due to the hurdles of online data collection and approaching potential participants for study right after the first lockdown was announced in the country. Thus for future studies the sample size can be kept large with equal number of employees from each level of organizational hierarchy. Moreover, a comparison based on marital status can also be included for future studies. It may also be recommended to add other variables, such as psychological capitals, religiosity, social support, and working conditions to get more in depth exploration related to this important population, and to work on policy making for enhancing their work-life satisfaction, productivity and overall mental well-being.

References

- Abdullah, H., Kabia, S. K., & Pandey, P. (2022). Impact of work life balance on job satisfaction. A study of Chhattisgarh. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(8), 126-135.
- Alyana, S. I., Fatima, U., Farwa U & Saeed, R., (2022). Psychological distress and job satisfaction among health care professionals in post covid-19 era. *Pakistan Journal of Psychology*, 53(02).
- Aruldoss, A., Kowalsji, B. K., Travis, L. M., & Parayitam, S. (2022). The relationship between work life balance and job satisfaction: Moderating role of training and development and work environment. *Journal of Advances in Management Research*. 19(2), 240-271. ISSN: 0972-7981. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JAMR-01-2021-0002>
- Aslani, F., & Fayyazi, M. (2015). The impact of Work life balance on employee's job satisfaction And turnover intention. A moderating role of continuance commitment. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, 51, 33-41. <https://d-nb.info/1191321118/34>
- Booyesen, C. (2008). *A study of the relationship between job satisfaction experienced by employees within a retail company and their organizational citizenship behavior*. [Masters' Thesis: University of the Western Cape].
- Brough, P., Timms, C., Chan, W. X., Hawkes, A., & Rasmussen, L. (2020). Work-Life Balance: Definitions, Causes, and Consequences. In: Theorel, T. (eds) Handbook of Socioeconomic Determinants of Occupational Health. *Handbook Series in Occupational Health Sciences*. 1-15. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-05031-3_20-1
- Frantz, A., & Holmgren, K. (2019). The work stress questionnaire (WSQ); reliability and face validity among male workers. *BMC Public Health*, 19, 1580. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-019-7940-5>
- Hoboubi, N., Choobineh, A., Ghanavati, K. F., Keshavarzi, S., & Hosseini, A. A. (2017). The Impact of Job Stress and Job Satisfaction on Workforce Productivity in an Iranian Petrochemical industry. *SafHealth Work*, 8(1), 67-71. doi: 10.1016/j.shaw.2016.07.002. PMID: 28344843; PMCID: PMC5355527.
- Jaafar, S. B., Hasan, H. M., & Zambi, N. M. (2021). The relationship between stress and job Satisfaction. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 5(1), 8-12. doi: 10.26666/rmp.ijbm.2021.1.2
- Jyothi, P., Sonia, C., Rajasekar, B., Krishnamoorthy, D., & Ramanathan, S. (2020). Does Work-Life Balance Affect Job Satisfaction? Evidence from Faculty Members. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/ Egyptology*, 17(9), 4098-4108.
- Khan, I. U., Yaseen, Z., & Muzaffar, M. (2020). Exploring The Role of Employees impediment In Determining The Employees Performance, *Academic Journal of Social Sciences* 4 (2), 173-186
- Lamond, D., & Spector, P. E. (1999). *Taking the stock of the job satisfaction survey: its validity and reliability in different time and place*. Selected paper for 5th IFSAM World Congress. 1-11. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236111545>
- Rashmi, K., & Karatria, A. (2021). The mediating role of work life balance in relationship job resources and job satisfaction. Perspectives from Indian Nursing professionals.

International Journal of Organizational Analysis. 31(5), 1316-1342.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-04-2021-2722>

- Sauter, S. Murphy, L., Colligan, M., Swanson, N., Hurrell, Jr, J. Scharf, Jr. F., Grubb, R. S. P., Goldenhar, L., Alterman, T., Johnston, J., Hamilton, A., & Tisdale, J. (1999). *Stress at work. Centre for disease control and prevention*. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), 99-101.
- Solanki, S., & Mandaviya, M. (2021). Does gender matter? Job stress, work-life balance, health and job satisfaction among university teachers in India. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 22(7), 121-134.
- Soltan, M. R., Al-Hassanin, S. A., Soliman, S. S., & Gohar, S. F. (2020). Workplace-related stress among oncologists: Egyptian single-centered observation study. *Middle East Current Psychiatry*, 27(19) 1-7. <https://mecp.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s43045-020-00026-z>
- Spector, P. E. (1997). *Job Satisfaction: Application, assessment, causes and consequences*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452231549>
- Spector, P. E. (1985). Measurement of Human Service Staff Satisfaction: Development of the Job Satisfaction Survey. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 13(6), 693-713. DOI: 10.1007/BF00929796
- Susanto, P., Hoque, M. E., Jannat, T., Emely, B., Zona, M. A., & Islam, M. A. (2022). Work-Life Balance, Job Satisfaction and Job Performance of SME's Employees: Moderating Role of Family Supportive Supervisor Behaviors. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13: 906876. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.906876. PMID: 35800926; PMCID: PMC9253617.
- Tavassoli, T. & Sunyer, A. (2020). Employee work life balance, satisfaction and burnout in Iran and Spain. *Humanities and Social Sciences Reviews*, 8(3), 779-791. <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2020.8384>
- Teasdale, E. L. (2006). Workplace stress. *Psychiatry*, 5(7), 251-254. doi: 10.1053/j.mppsy.2006.04.006
- Marlin Company & the American Institute of Stress (2009). *"The Workplace Stress Scale: Attitudes in the American Workplace VII"*. <http://americaninstituteofstress.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/2001Attitude-in-the-Workplace-Harris.pdf>
- Trivellas, P., Reklitis, P., & Platis, C. (2013). The effect of job related stress on employee's Satisfaction: A survey in health care. *Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 73, 718-726. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.02.110>
- Xie, Y., Tian, J., Jiao, Y., Liu, Y., Yu, H., & Shi, L. (2021). The Impact of Work Stress on Job Satisfaction and Sleep Quality of Couriers in China: The Role of Psychological Capital. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.730147>
- Yaseen, Z., Jathol, I. & Muzaffar, M. (2020). Covid-19 and its Impact on South Asia: A Case Study of Pakistan, *Global International Relations Review*, III(1), 20-26.