



WORK–LIFE BALANCE AND MARITAL SATISFACTION: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND PARTNER SUPPORT

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Abstract

This conceptual paper explores the intricate relationship between work–life balance and marital satisfaction among employed individuals, emphasizing the moderating influence of psychological well-being and partner support. Drawing from established theories—including Scarcity Theory, Social Exchange Theory, Attachment Theory, and Role Theory—the framework highlights how balancing professional and personal domains contributes to emotional health and relationship quality. The paper integrates findings from prior empirical studies to propose a model in which work–life balance serves as a key determinant of marital satisfaction, mediated by work-related stress and time demands, and moderated by partner support, communication, and gender roles. The analysis underscores that individuals who effectively manage occupational and family responsibilities tend to experience greater psychological well-being and marital harmony. The proposed conceptual framework aims to guide future research, counseling interventions, and organizational policy designs that promote employee well-being and marital stability.

Index Terms - Work–life balance, Marital satisfaction, Psychological well-being, Partner support, Gender differences, Work–family relationship, Occupational stress

Introduction

Marital satisfaction is deeply interconnected with how couples balance professional and family responsibilities. In contemporary society, where dual-earner households and changing gender roles are common, individuals frequently face the challenge of maintaining equilibrium between occupational demands and personal life. Long working hours, job-related stress, and time scarcity often strain emotional intimacy and reduce the quality of spousal interactions. While work participation supports financial stability and self-fulfillment, poor work–life balance can lead to work–family conflict, emotional exhaustion, and dissatisfaction within marriage. Marital satisfaction—defined as the level of happiness, fulfillment, and perceived quality within the marital relationship—is influenced by factors such as communication, emotional intimacy, and equitable sharing of domestic responsibilities. Supportive partners who provide empathy, understanding, and assistance help buffer the negative effects of occupational stress, whereas role overload and unequal responsibilities often intensify relationship tension. The conceptual framework of this study draws on major theories including Scarcity Theory (limited resources of time and energy), Social Exchange Theory (perceived fairness and rewards), Attachment Theory (emotional security and responsiveness), and Role Theory (conflict among multiple social roles). Together, these perspectives explain how individuals manage competing role expectations and maintain marital satisfaction under work pressure.

Review of Literature

Previous research consistently shows that work–life balance strongly influences marital satisfaction. Difficulties in balancing professional and domestic responsibilities can lead to work–family conflict, reducing emotional availability and spousal closeness (Lavner et al., 2017; Reddy et al., 2010). Studies indicate that partner support, effective communication, and equitable division of roles enhance marital happiness (Widiningtyas, 2022; Voydanoff, 2009). Psychological well-being and job satisfaction are closely tied to marital adjustment, while chronic stress and poor balance contribute to emotional distress and reduced relationship quality (Hashmi et al., 2007; Tazekand et al., 2013). Although gender differences in role experiences exist, several studies suggest that the quality of balance and mutual support within the relationship are stronger predictors of marital satisfaction than gender alone (Ashwini, 2018; Vinayak et al., 2024). Overall, maintaining a healthy work–life balance promotes emotional well-being, marital adjustment, and long-term relationship stability, underscoring the importance of supportive workplaces and shared domestic roles (Layalin & Huda, 2023; Johnson & Sinha, 2023).

Methodology

Aim

To develop a conceptual understanding of how work–life balance influences marital satisfaction, considering the roles of work-related stress, psychological well-being, and partner support among employed individuals.

Objectives

1. To conceptually analyze the relationship between work–life balance and marital satisfaction among employed individuals.
2. To identify how work-related stress and time demands influence marital satisfaction through work–family dynamics.
3. To examine the moderating role of partner support, communication, and equitable sharing of responsibilities in sustaining marital satisfaction.
4. To explore gender-based variations in the experience of work–life balance and their implications for marital satisfaction.
5. To integrate major theoretical perspectives—Scarcity Theory, Social Exchange Theory, Attachment Theory, and Role Theory—into a unified conceptual framework explaining marital satisfaction in relation to work–life balance.

Procedure

This paper presents a conceptual framework linking work–life balance with marital satisfaction among married, employed individuals. Work–life balance is viewed as the central determinant influencing relationship quality through mechanisms such as time allocation, emotional availability, and stress regulation. Partner support and gender function as moderating variables that shape the intensity of this relationship. The framework draws on **Conservation of Resources Theory** (resource preservation under stress), **Social Exchange Theory** (perceived fairness and reciprocity), **Attachment Theory** (emotional connection and responsiveness), and **Role Theory** (role strain and conflict). Together, these theories explain how external demands and internal resources interact to determine marital outcomes.

Discussion

A balanced work–life dynamic enables individuals to invest adequate time and emotional energy in their marital relationship, strengthening intimacy, communication, and mutual understanding. In contrast, occupational stress and imbalance can lead to withdrawal, irritability, and reduced emotional availability, increasing the likelihood of marital dissatisfaction. Protective factors—such as emotional support, open communication, and shared responsibilities—serve as buffers against stress and enhance relationship satisfaction. Gender may influence how these dynamics are experienced, but balance and support remain the strongest predictors of marital harmony. This conceptual model demonstrates that marital satisfaction is not solely dependent on personal traits but also on how individuals manage role expectations, maintain emotional well-being, and cultivate supportive partnerships.

Conclusion

The proposed conceptual framework positions work–life balance as a central determinant of marital satisfaction, mediated by occupational stress and moderated by partner support and gender. Achieving equilibrium between professional and personal roles enhances emotional well-being and marital harmony, while imbalance leads to strain and dissatisfaction. Supportive relationships and communication strengthen marital resilience, underscoring the value of balanced living for both individual and relational health.

Implications

- **Individuals:** Adopt time-management strategies, prioritize emotional communication, and engage in shared responsibilities.
- **Employers:** Implement flexible work arrangements and employee-assistance programs promoting work–life balance.
- **Counselors & Policymakers:** Develop interventions and workshops addressing work–family integration and marital well-being.

Limitations

- Cultural and occupational variations may limit generalizability.
- Reliance on secondary literature and conceptual assumptions may reduce empirical depth.
- Non-traditional family structures are not fully examined.
- The cross-sectional perspective restricts long-term causal understanding.

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