

The Impact of Work-Family Balance on Iranian Working Mothers' Job Satisfaction: A Collectivistic Perspective

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Abstract

The current study assesses the influence of work-family balance on job satisfaction of Iranian married, working mothers who had at least one child under the age of 18 years old. The data for the study comes from self-report surveys, adopted from Bohlen and Viveros-Long (1981) answered by 130 Iranian working mothers. The hierarchical multiple regression analysis results revealed that the number of working hours and the number of children negatively impacts working mothers' job satisfaction. Father involvement in childcare and household tasks was not a significant predictor of job satisfaction, whereas working mothers' parental satisfaction levels positively contributed to their job satisfaction. Finally, family role conflict was the most significant predictor of job satisfaction. The results are interpreted based on the cultural undercurrents of the participants. Implications are explored and practical suggestions for the future studies are represented.

Keywords: Work-family conflict, job satisfaction, working mothers, Work-family role strain, cultural dynamics

For many years across the globe, men primarily played the instrumental role of breadwinner, while women were in charge of the household responsibilities and nurturing the children (Abbott, Wallace, & Tyler, 2005). However, due to industrialization, economic revolution, and feminist movements globally over time, the social reality of gender role expectations has drastically transformed. Concurrently, women's involvement in the work setting has boosted cross-nationally, which has significantly affected family dynamics (Davidson & Burke, 2004). Their participation in paid labor has determined the dramatic increase of dual-earner families, which currently perceived as a form of norms and social reality in both developing and industrial societies.

Like Western societies, Iranian society has gone through a socio-demographic change in the labor force (Karimi & Nouri, 2009). Since the 1979 Iranian revolution, more women have pursued formal education and entered the workforce (O'Shea, 2003). From 1956 to 1986, nine percent of Iranian women hired at different workplaces. In 2004, the Iranian Statistical Bureau documented that 14% of women were employed, which increased to 31.9% in 2009. This increase in formal employment of Iranian women is more likely due to the increased amount of highly educated women and economic necessity of contributing to the family due to increase rate of life in Iran rather than being representative of any cultural transition from traditional to non-traditional gender role expectations (Karimi & Nouri, 2009).

In traditional collectivistic cultures, such as that of Iran, a sharp gendered division of labor and roles is prevalent, with men holding the primary function of breadwinner and women taking more responsibility for childcare and the household. For instance, Rastegarkhaled (2004) noted that not only must Iranian women meet their traditional gender role as housewives, they also must fulfill additional responsibilities as an employee outside the home. Additionally, research has revealed that cultural context plays a seminal role in how women and men experience work-family conflict (Ruppner and Huffman, 2013). Also, Iranian researchers such as Karimi and Nouri (2009) report that Iranian female employees endure higher inter-role conflicts while attempting to manage family obligations and demands from work simultaneously. This result is congruent with the current body of knowledge on work and family conflict in the Western individualistic society; for example, Leineweber et al., (2013) indicated that female employees experience higher work-family interferences and conflict compare to their male counterpart.

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The abundance of studies in the body of literature on work-family conflict has discovered that employed individuals stated that their work demands and family obligations affect each other (e.g., Voydanoff, 2005; Yildirim & Aycan, 2008; Nomaguchi, 2009), resulting in lower job satisfaction (Frone, Barnes, & Farrell, 1994), family and life satisfaction (Carlson, KacMar, & Williams, 2000), and lower marital satisfaction (Coverman, 1989).

Recently, however, there has been a paradigm shift in the research regarding family and work, which has led scholars to conceptualize the work-family intersection not merely from a deficit-based perspective in which work-family intersections cause conflict, but rather from a strength-based lens to understand balance and enrichment (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007).

Making that shift has created numerous epistemological dilemmas for researchers in establishing conceptually sound theoretical distinctions among work-family constructs (work-family conflict, work-family balance, work-family facilitation, work-family spillover, etc.), and there are very few empirical investigations to verify whether these theoretical distinctions are true (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). In contrast to the results of work-family conflict-oriented studies, applying a work-family balance perspective, researchers have found that work-family intersections do not always lead to conflict and dissatisfaction in either domain.

The empirical studies within the scope of work-family balance to this point is limited, compared to work-family conflict research; the results indicate that marital and family satisfaction, are both, associated with greater work-family balance (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Clarke, Koch, & Hill, 2004) and healthier family functioning (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1997). Furthermore, additional studies have also found that work-family balance is associated with job satisfaction positively (Virick, Lilly, & Casper, 2007), parental satisfaction (Matis, Ferreira, Vieira, Cadima, Leal, & Matos, 2017), a higher degree of psychological and physical well-being physical (Brough et al., 2014), and career accomplishment (Aryee, Srinivas, & Tan, 2005; Carlson, Grzywacz, & Zivnuska, 2009).

Despite dramatic global industrialization, cultural changes, and gender-based norm transformations in most Eastern societies, limited research has been carried in those countries, such as Iran, to explore the work-family interaction and its impact on employees' subjective experiences. Researchers have also reported that the current body of literature is saturated with studies conducted in Western industrial societies, which has limited researchers' conceptualization of work-family conflict or balance in developing nations (Ollier-Malaterre, Valcour, Den Dulk, & Kossek, 2013). Karimi (2008) argues that academic researchers' concentration on studying the effect of work-family dynamics in Western societies has created a theoretical gap to understand employee's experiences of work-family interferences from a cross-cultural national approach. Furthermore, research outcomes completed in industrialized countries may not be generalizable to developing nations due to different belief systems and cultural appraisals around family and work (Aryee, 1992; Grzywacz et al., 2007).

To address the literature gap, this study explores associations among job satisfaction and work-family balance for Iranian working mothers. It is grounded in the theoretical concepts of demands, resources, and the assessment of an individual's level of functioning while juggling work and family obligations, which is central to work-family balance (Grzywacz & Carlson 2007; Hirschi, Shockley, & Zacher, 2019; Voydanoff, 2005). More specifically, it examines how differing work-family obligations (working hours and the total number of children) and work-family resources (education, parental satisfaction, father involvement) can impact working mothers experiences in areas including family role conflict, family-work role strain, and job satisfaction (Hirschi et al., 2019).

Study results are interpreted within the respondents' cultural context because researchers have discovered that individuals' experience of work-family interferences is correlated with cultural beliefs, values, and norms (Lobel, 1991; Aycan, 2008). In fact, Hofstede (1984) claimed that individualism and collectivism are scopes that can help recognize the connection between tradition and work-family issues. These distinct cultural dynamics impact employees' work-related mindsets and actions (Triandis, 1996; Wagner, 1995). Generally speaking, those with individualistic beliefs are typically more independent and less group-oriented, focusing more on personal priorities and goals (Lynch & Hanson, 2006; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). They perceive that family demands impede their own goals, for example, being successful in the workplace. In contrast, people with collectivistic beliefs define themselves by a sense of belonging and group involvement (e.g., family, country), and highlight group rules, objectives, and values (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1990). A collectivistic culture de-emphasizes career ambitions and competition with co-workers to achieve career promotion compared to those from individualistic cultures.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Despite the extensive application of work-family balance in many empirical studies, it is an underdeveloped notion with little agreement on its conceptual or operational definition (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Maertz & Boyar, 2011). The theoretical development of work-family balance evolved out of the work-family conflict research; it initially was conceived, implicitly, or explicitly, as the lack of work-family conflict. Since work-family conflict is characterized as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77), an initial example of a work-family balance definition was that of Clark (2000)

Who proposed work-family balance as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict” (p. 751). Frone's (2003) definition was quite similar in describing work-family balance as a condition in which a person's work and family life interface with minimal struggle and plentiful facilitation.

In 2004, Voydanoff added conceptual precision by conceptualizing work and family role characteristics as either demands or resources. She defined demands as role requirements that necessitate physical or mental effort and resources as role-based assets that promote the performance or decrease demands. Then in 2005, Voydanoff conceptualized work-family balance as “a global assessment that work resources meet family demands, and family resources meet work demands such that participation is effective in both domains” (p. 825).

Additionally, other scholars expanded the description of work-family balance as an individual's self-judgment of value and fulfillment with their work and family life (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Additionally, Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) indicated that one of the main propositions of work-family balance theory includes an “accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his/her role-related partners in the work and family domains” (p. 458). A self-assessment of work-family role strain and family role conflict are used in this study to measure role-related effectiveness that can impact the level of satisfaction that Iranian women experience with their jobs.

Based on this theoretical proposition, work-family balance is potentially achievable despite the occurrences of work-family conflict. This proposition rejects the previous work-family conflict proposition that stated that incompatibility in family and work domains leads to an experience of conflict. The work-family balance perspective rejects such deterministic and deficit-oriented approach and argues that that in order to attain work-family balance, an individual does not require the simultaneous experience of a high level of efficacy and performance across both familial and professional contexts (Carlson et al., 2009). Its core premise is that work-family balance is attained based on the success in which an individual can negotiate and utilize available resources to meet demands and function effectively across multiple assigned roles without becoming immensely overwhelmed or experiencing role conflict and burn out. Investigating this premise for Iranian working women is this study's focus.

Review of the Literature

From Role Conflict and Role Strain to Work-Family Balance

Work-family balance emerged out of the theoretical expansion of role theory. Early research on social role conflict (e.g., Goode, 1960) assumed that the many demands of multiple social roles contribute to role conflict and role strain for individuals due to the limited availability of resources to meet these demands. From this perspective, people find it challenging to meet the needs of their several social roles (Marks & MacDermid, 1996). Barnett (2004) suggested that an underlying assumption within that perspective is that the responsibilities of wife and mother are not stressful, as they are “natural” roles for women.

In contrast, an employee role is perceived as “unnatural” for a woman, and consequently is highly demanding. However, Miller and Rose (1995) proposed that work is no longer perceived as a restraint but rather a constructive part of the enterprising individual's search for self-realization and self-improvement across demographics. Regardless of where work fits into conceptualizations of self, Buffardi and Erdwins, (1997) claimed that it appears the very continuous attempt to satisfy the tasks of parent, spouse adequately, and employee frequently results in a sort of inter-role conflict. Goode (1960) explained role strain as “the felt difficulty in performing role obligations” (p.483), and the “scarcity hypothesis” proposes that individuals have energy and resources as a fixed commodity that is limited. It is such that individuals participate in a zero-sum game when available resources depleted in one domain, either family or work, it reduces an individual's level of productivity and functionality in the other domain (Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991).

An alternative perspective, role enhancement, suggests that a large number of roles offer a sense of fulfillment, expanding personal resources, and facilitating role functioning (Marks, 1977). Finally, based on role balance theory, researchers postulate that successfully meeting tasks required by specific roles can benefit both individual and macro-social system (Carlson et al., 2009). For instance, a working mother who can meet her multiple role demands successfully experiences more satisfaction and healthier functioning across the roles of worker, mother, and spouse.

Job Satisfaction and Work-Family Balance

Locke (1976) describes job satisfaction as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job” (p. 1300). Previous research has discovered that work-family balance positively correlated with job satisfaction (Virick, Lilly, & Casper, 2007).

These findings are theoretically consistent with a core proposition of the work-family balance theory (Frone, 2003). It states that when individuals experience less conflict in juggling work-family demands, control is created “over work and family roles may enhance performance leading to self-esteem and receipt of valued material rewards and, ultimately, job satisfaction.” (Aryee et al., 2005, p. 142).

Demands Affecting Work-family Balance

Research shows that different role demands affecting work-family balance, including the number of children and the number of working hours (e.g., Press & Fagan, 2008). Studies have revealed that having young children at the household impact working mothers’ experience of work-family balance (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Additionally, employed mothers stated less experience of work-family balance due to lengthy work periods and overtime needs (Dilworth, 2004; Voydanoff, 2004). However, working part-time provided extra time for individuals to gain resources such as family support (e.g., Luk & Shaffer, 2005), which enhances the process of managing work and family demands and consequently obtaining a more stable sense of work-family balance.

Resources Affecting Work-Family Balance

In current study, a woman’s education level is viewed as a work resource because it facilitates, in part, the type of work that a woman might obtain as well as the income that might be derived from that work which further creates a further stock of resources from which to manage work-family demands. Additionally, education level has been correlated to an individual’s capability to attain work and family successfully; women with higher education indicated more effective in terms of reaching to tend to be able to better balance work and family demands (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000).

The involvement of fathers in household and family work is another resource to address work-family demands (Fagan & Press, 2008). However, the amount of hours women devote to housework has lessened over recent years (Gershuny & Harms, 2016), more men contribute to housework (Bianchi et al., 2000), yet women continue to do most of it regardless of marital status (South & Spitze, 1994) or the number of paid work hours (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018; Rebecca et al., 2017).

Previous research has also studied the influence of fathers’ childcare on mothers’ views on marital quality (Simonelli, Parolin, Sacchi, De Palo, & Vieno, 2016; Barnett, 2004). However, most studies have overlooked the importance of the effect of fathers’ childcare involvement on mothers’ ability to balance work-family interferences (e.g., Dilworth, 2004). Yet, interestingly a research study conducted by Press and Fagan (2006) indicated that there is a positive relationship between fathers’ contribution to childcare and mothers’ view of spousal support for their paid work. Furthermore, Fagan and Press (2008) suggested that fathers’ involvement must be conceptualized as an important source of support to working mothers in their attempts to achieve work and family balance. Such findings might be even more applicable to this research on Iranian working mothers, considering their strong cultural emphasis on traditional gender role expectations. Fathers’ involvement could decrease job-family role strain and improve working mothers’ job satisfaction as opposed to the Western cultural context in which the egalitarian division of childcare is relatively more common.

Theoretically consistent with work-family balance propositions, studies have shown that parents who are most pleased with their childcare undergo less work-family conflict (Blair-Loy, 2001). However, more consideration has been given to the effect of work-family conflict on family satisfaction versus the more precise role of parenting (e.g., Hughes & Parkes, 2007). Studies have revealed that work-family conflict for working mothers tends to be positively related to higher marital dissatisfaction, depression, physical illnesses, exhaustion, and distress (Frone et al., 1997; Van Steenbergen, Kluwer, & Karney, 2014; Zhang et al., 2017).

Additionally, other researchers discovered that mothers felt less competent as parents if they were experiencing more work-family conflict (Cinamon et al., 2007). Employed mothers with higher work-family conflict consequently endure a diminution in their familial role (e.g., parental, marital) and life satisfaction in general because of their inability to perform the socially expected role of "good" mothers with a sense of competency (Hays, 1996).

Research Hypotheses

Based on the work-family balance theory, and the review of the literature, the subsequent research hypotheses have been proposed. Within the hypotheses, work-family demands are measured by the number of children and working hours, work-family resources are measured by education, father involvement, and parental satisfaction, and role-related effectiveness is measured by work-family role strain and family role conflict.

Hypothesis 1: Work-family demands will have a negative effect on job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Work-family resources will have a positive effect on job satisfaction over that explained by work-family demands.

Hypothesis 3: Role-related tensions will have a negative effect on job satisfaction over that explained by work-family demands and resources.

Method

Sampling Procedures and Description

This study used secondary data collected in 2014 from working mothers living in Iran's capital city of Tehran to examine the impacts of daily stressors for working mothers living in a large metropolitan city. Working mothers who had at least one child under 18 and were married were eligible for study participation. A survey was completed by working mothers over a three-day period at various times in a centrally located park in Tehran to obtain a sample of working, middle, and upper middle-class mothers. The park was constructed for women only; it includes many facilities such as exercise equipment, volleyball, basketball, and tennis courts, and paths for walking and jogging. Two hundred and fifty women were approached during the 3-day period: on a Wednesday from 6 am to 1 pm to find women who were exercising before going to work; on a Thursday from 1 pm to 8 pm to catch women after work; and on a Friday from 10 am to 5 pm to catch mothers with their children and families. Out of 250 women recruited, 90 did not meet the study eligibility (36%). Thirty surveys were partially completed and were excluded from the data analysis for a final sample of 130 working mothers.

The age range of respondents was from 18 to 65, with almost half of the participants being between the ages of 26 to 35 (Table 1). All respondents had obtained at least a high school degree; half of the sample had at least a college or advanced degree. The majority of the sample held administrative jobs (52%); the remaining held positions within educational (22%) or technical (11%) fields or were self-employed (12%). Most respondents had one (45%), or two children (37%), and the remaining had three or more children. About 34% of respondents worked part-time, 51% of participants worked full time, and 15% worked more than 40 hours a week.

Survey Instrument

Demographic characteristics were gathered via a questionnaire, which included educational background, ethnic and racial heritage, marital status, type of job, amount of children, and amount of working hours. Participants were also asked to complete a 42-item self-administered questionnaire. Bohlen and Viveros-Long originally used the instrument in 1981 while assessing flextime implementation, or flexible work schedules, into the jobs of working mothers. The instrument was translated to Farsi and was distributed to Iranian working mothers, using a translation-back method (Dana, 1993; March, 1967). First, a bilingual Iranian who had learned English in the United States translated the sentences from English to Farsi. Then, an English translator who had learned English in Iran reviewed the English-to-Farsi translation and also back-translated the questionnaire from Farsi into English. Then, two bilingual Iranian marriage and family therapists reviewed the survey to see if the questionnaire items were relevant to Iranian cultural expectations, experiences, and family relationships.

Variables

Dependent variable.

Job Satisfaction. Working mothers' level of job satisfaction was measured by a five-item Likert scale, which included mothers' satisfaction in regards to various aspects of her job, such as their pay and work schedule. Sample items were: "How satisfied are you with your job in general?", "How satisfied are you with your pay?" and "How satisfied are you with the number hours of your work?"

Participants responded on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= very satisfied to 5 = very dissatisfied). Scores were reversed coded in which a higher score indicates higher job satisfaction. Cronbach Alpha study was 0.71.

Independent Variables.

Demands. The number of children and the amount of working hours were continuous variables. The number of children represented family demands and the number of working hours represented work demands.

Resources-Education. Education level was coded as less than high school degree, high school degree, college degree (bachelor), and graduate school degree. This variable represented a work resource because higher education creates opportunities for jobs that generate more income.

Resources-Father Involvement. Two questions were asked that indicated father involvement in household tasks and childcare. For childcare, the question was, "In your family, who has the main responsibility for the day-to-day arrangements and care of the children?" The response choices were "I have the main responsibility," "My spouse and I share the responsibility", and "My spouse has the main responsibility". The same format was used to ask about household tasks.

In order to create a father involvement construct, responses were dummy coded and summed for use in a regression model. If the father was involved as a partner with main responsibility or shared responsibility in childcare and household tasks, it was coded as 1. If the mother was solely responsible for both domains, it was coded as 0. Descriptive statistics indicate that almost 60% of fathers were somehow involved in childcare and household tasks.

Resources-Parental satisfaction. Parental satisfaction was determined using a single-item global measure created by Near, Rice, and Hunt (1978). For this category, a five-point Likert scale was used to capture responses ranging from not satisfied (1) to extremely satisfied (5). The mean score was 3.86 with a SD of .98.

Role-related tensions-Work-Family Role Strain. An 18-item measure capturing internalized emotions such as self-doubt, guilt, fulfillment, contempt, self-respect, and balance related to the individual's sense of obligations about family and work was used. Participants were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from always (1) to never (5), the regularity with which they felt that one role imposes on the time necessary to fulfill the other role. For example, "My job keeps me away from my family too much," "I worry whether I should work less and spend more time with my children." Five items were reverse scored with higher scores indicating higher levels of role strain. The mean score was 57.25 with a SD of 7.50. Bohlen and Viveros-Long (1981) determined test-retest reliability ($r = .71$). Cronbach's Alpha for the Iranian sample was 0.72.

Role-related tensions-Family Role Conflict. A 21-item Likert scale was used to measure an individual's feelings of difficulty or ease in handling family activities, considering the time limitations imposed by their work (Bohlen & Viveros-Long, 1981). It taps respondents' feelings about the logistics of family life in terms of how easy or difficult it is to accomplish certain activities that involve interactions with school, health services, stores, and various other institutions or individuals in the social environment with which the family interacts. Respondents indicated on a five-point Likert scale, whether it was very easy (1) to very difficult (5) to make time for specific family activities. For example, "To take your children to and from school," and "To have meals with your family." Items were reverse coded; higher scores signified greater difficulty in managing family activities. The mean score was 58.77 with a SD of 13.65. Test-retest reliability ($r = .91$) and content validity was determined through consultation with a panel of experts in the field of work-family interaction (Bohlen & Viveros-Long, 1981). Cronbach's Alpha for the Iranian sample was 0.85.

Data Analysis

The statistical software IBM SPSS Version 23 was used to conduct the analyses. Preliminary analyses included frequencies and correlations. Zero-order correlations were calculated to examine the correlations among each of the variables and to determine any issues with multicollinearity. After preliminary analyses were completed, a 3 step hierarchical regression analyses were performed to test the hypotheses. Job satisfaction was regressed on demands in the first step to test hypothesis 1, followed by resources in step 2. Finally, work-family role strain and family role conflict were entered in the third step. The statistical power was set at .80, at a .05 criterion level, and our sample size would enable us to detect an effect (Cohen, 1992).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Pearson correlations were computed to examine the intercorrelations of the variables. Table 2 shows that five of seven pairs of variables were significantly correlated. Parental satisfaction was negatively correlated with father involvement, $r = -.2, p < .05$, work-family role strain, $r = -.18, p < .01$, and family-role conflict $r = -.45, p < .01$. Also, work-family role strain and family role conflict were positively correlated $r = .33, p < .001$. Working mothers' level of education, number of children, and the amount of working hours did not indicate a significant relationship with other variables. These preliminary analyses also indicated no problem with multicollinearity.

Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Hypothesis 1: Work-family demands will have a negative effect on job satisfaction. Both the number of children $\beta = -.22, p < .05$, and the number of working hours $\beta = -.16, p < .05$ were statistically significant in step 1. The higher the number of children of these working women and the higher the number of hours that they worked, the lower their job satisfaction. The variance accounted for (Adjusted R^2) with the work-family demand variables was .07, which was significantly different from zero $F(2, 126) = 3.58, p < .05$. Seven percent of the variance in Iranian working mothers' job satisfaction was predicted by family and work demands. Hypothesis 1 was supported statistically.

Hypothesis 2: Work-family resources will have a positive effect on job satisfaction over that explained by work-family demands. In step 2, the level of education, father involvement, and parental satisfaction were added to the model as work-family resource variables. The addition of resources variable significantly improved the model, $F(5, 123) = 6.62, p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .23$. Step 2 variables significantly predicted job satisfaction over the variance predicted by the work-family demand variables; however, only parental satisfaction was a significant predictor of job satisfaction $\beta = .33, p < .001$. When working mothers were satisfied with their parenting, they were also satisfied with their jobs. Adding parental satisfaction explained an additional 16% of the variance in Iranian working mothers' job satisfaction over that explained by the work-family demand variables. Thus, hypothesis 2 was partially supported. When the work-family resource variables were added to the model, the demand variables were no longer significant.

Hypothesis 3: Role-related tensions will have a negative effect on job satisfaction over that explained by work-family demands and resources. In step 3, family role conflict and work-family role-strain (role-related tension indicators) were introduced into the model. The full model significantly predicted job satisfaction $F(7, 121) = 13.60, p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .44$. When the work-family role-related tension variables were added to the regression model, 21% more of the variance in job satisfaction was explained by work-family demands and resources. When work-family role strain and family role conflict were high, job satisfaction was lower. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported. Furthermore, none of the work-family demand or resource variables remained significant after the role-related tension variables were introduced into the model. Family role conflict ($\beta = -.46, p < .001$) was a stronger predictor of job satisfaction compared to work-family role strain ($\beta = -.18, p < .01$).

Discussion

This study's results contribute to the support of the core premise of work-family balance theory; they also add some further conceptual precision to the premise. That premise states that work-family balance is attained based on the success in which an individual can negotiate and utilize available resources to meet demands and function effectively across multiple assigned roles without becoming immensely overwhelmed. Findings indicate that self-appraisal of demands and resources available to meet those demands are critical as indicated by Voydanoff (2004), but it is the self-appraisal of success and satisfaction with their functioning at the spillover effect of job demands and home responsibilities (Greenhaus & Allen 2011; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007) that explains the greatest variance in job satisfaction of Iranian working mothers.

The first hypothesis was that work-family demands have a negative effect on job satisfaction. Results showed that there is a significantly negative correlation between the number of working hours and the number of children (demand indicators) with job satisfaction. This discovery is consistent with previous research (Berger, 2018; Press & Fagan, 2006) that found that increase of working hours were positively connected with the higher report of job-family conflict and consequently decrease in one's sense of job satisfaction.

The second hypothesis was that work-family resources would affect job satisfaction positively over that explained by demands. Study results indicated that in contrast to previous research in Western countries, which revealed that education positively impacted working mothers' work-family balance and satisfaction (Press & Fagan, 2006), yet it did not exhibit itself as a statistically significant contributor to the Iranian working mothers' job satisfaction. An explanation for this result might be due to existing patriarchal domination and inequality of job promotion for Iranian women based on their educational level and qualification.

Parental satisfaction, however, was positively and significantly correlated to their job satisfaction. Similarly, other research by Wickrama, Conger, Lorenze, and Matthews (1995) discovered that mothers found it more tangible to balance between family and work demands due to reported good physical health when they felt satisfied with their parenting.

The third indicator of resources was father involvement in the household tasks did not contribute to Iranian working mothers' job satisfaction. This result is contrary to the findings of Stevens (*et al.*, 2007) and Wilkie (*et al.*, 1998), who found that those mothers who reported more unjustness and inequity regarding division of household tasks claimed less success in managing job and family demands. A contextual, cultural consideration might provide more clarification about these findings. Fagan and Press (2008) studied the father's influence on employed mother's family-work balance. Notably, working mothers who adhered and identified with traditional gender role ideology indicated a lower level of difficulty in terms of work-family balance than working mothers who believe in non-traditional gender role ideology. Interestingly enough, Karimi (2008), the leading work-family Iranian researcher, found similar discrepancies in her comparison of Iranian female employees and those in Western countries.

A plausible explanation is that despite the steady increase of women in the workplace and a noticeable increase of dual-earner couples, yet women are bound to traditional gender role ideology and gender role expectations. (Karimi, 2008). Like much collectivistic society, Iranian women have to juggle through the balancing of socially expected gender roles (e.g., mother, spouse, housekeeper) and work-related demands (O'Shea, 2003). In Iran, household responsibilities traditionally fall on women's shoulders regardless of their employment status. Motherhood is one of the most profound and significant forms of identity where "the status of 'mother' is the most critical, challenging, and rewarding calling that must be understood in all its historical and cultural complexity" (Dickerson, 1995, p. 16). It appears that the sense of fulfillment that Iranian working mothers receive for their primary childcare and household roles has become an emotional resource that enhances their work demands. They experience higher job satisfaction than Iranian working mothers whose spouses are more in charge of family responsibilities or have an egalitarian division of childcare and household tasks. Such phenomena inquires to contextualize the impact of division of gender role within the cultural context of Iranian collectivistic society as Martinez and Paterna (2009) discuss since in particular cultural context where for women household task are determining factors of their gender-role identity and is perceived as a form of self-efficacy in the family. Sharing equal division of labor can be perceived as a form of limited power and inadequacy, and thus it's not desirable for women to have less involvement in the family division of labor. Nevertheless, in such a context where men's primary gender role identity is identified by paid employment, they would not exhibit any issue for being less involved and responsible in the household tasks.

The third research hypothesis indicated that role-related tensions, in the form of work-family role strain and family role conflict, would be a more significant predictor of job satisfaction over and above that explained by work-family demands and resources. The results revealed that both forms of role-related tensions (role strain and role conflict) had a negatively significant effect on job satisfaction. Accordingly, other Iran-based research by Karimi (2008) showed when Iranian working mothers reported higher experience of work-family interferences, and it also decreased their level of job satisfaction. The study results were similar to previous studies conducted in Western countries (e.g., Frone et al., 1994; Burke, 1988; Hill, Yang, Hawkins, & Ferris, 2004).

It is noteworthy to mention that family role conflict is the most statistically significant predictor of job satisfaction, even more than work-family role strain. A possible explanation for this result would be related to the value of family and the significance of the mother role as a priority for Iranian working mothers within collectivistic cultural norms and values. It would appear that when Iranian working mothers encounter greater conflict in their family roles and are unable to meet demands such as "to take children to health care appointments" and "to stay at home with their sick child," it negatively impacts their level of job satisfaction. Work-family balance theory conceptualizes that an individual's ability to successfully negotiate the conflicting demands of work and family is vital to one's sense of job appraisal and job satisfaction.

Limitations

One of the significant limitations of this study is caused by its sampling method. The study employed a convenient sampling. Convenient sampling can potentially skew the sample, which limits the results' generalizability beyond this specific sample. Further, working women's experiences living in a large metropolitan part of the capital city of Tehran with more than an eight million population is very different than the experiences of working women in more rural areas of Iran.

This study did not control for important variables such as age, income, marital satisfaction, which may yield more interesting findings. There were also some limitations to the measures used. In terms of assessment of critical domains such as job satisfaction and parental satisfaction, a more recent, valid, and reliable scale could be used instead of subscales of the Work-Family Conflict Survey (Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981). Self-reported data were collected, which contributes to the consistency bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). Future exploration would benefit by using different approaches such as incorporating more contextual data collection methods, including observations of and interviews with working mothers and their spouses. This would provide an opportunity to include more contextual data, which might provide a broader sense of job-family conflict dynamics and its impact on working mothers.

Implications and Conclusion

This study's findings offer an initial glimpse into the work-family balance for Iranian women. This can begin a conversation to increase awareness of work-family issues. These results may be useful for organizations and companies who want to better understand the working mothers they employ.

Additionally, this study expands the current body of the literature and advances our conceptualization of work-family interference and its impact on working mothers within the socio-cultural context of urban Iran. Even though cultural characteristics of Iranian collectivistic society, specifically in terms of gender-role expectations, have been part of different responses of Iranian working mothers regarding work-family conflict, some of the findings of current study are consistent with other research carried out in Western society. This may justify a more fundamental proposition that "the experience of work-family conflict may be beyond cultural values and concepts" (Karimi, 2008, p. 293). It is very interesting that cross-culturally, women have been socialized to perceive a higher sense of responsibility regarding household tasks and childcare. Even the post-modern trend of egalitarianism has not changed this pattern significantly. Finally, the current edge of knowledge within the discipline of work-family research remains exclusively limited to the Western population. There is an undeniable need for future research in collectivistic societies in order to bridge the gap between existing Western theoretical models and unique collectivistic cultural dynamics. This can shed light on our understanding of working individuals in our multicultural world.

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Table 1. *Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 130)*

Characteristics	n	%
Age		
18 to 21 Years	4	3.1
22-25 Years	17	13.1
26-30 Years	21	16.1
31-35 years	42	32.3
36-40 years	21	16.2
41-50 Years	22	17.0
51-60 Years	2	1.6
61 years and up	1	0.8
Number of Children		
1	58	44.6
2	48	37
3	18	13.8
4	6	4.6
Education		
High School or less	37	28.6
Some College	28	21.5
College Degree	52	40
Advanced Degree	13	10
Type of Job		
Educational	28	21.5
Administrative	68	52.3
Technical	14	10.8
Self-employed	15	11.5
Student	2	1.5
Other	3	2.3
Job Position		
Professional	28	21.5
Administrative	45	34.6
Technical	28	21.5
Clerical	29	22.6

Table 2. *Pearson Correlations (N = 130)*

Measure	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Job Satisfaction	13.39	3.75	—							
2. Number of Children	1.75	0.84	-0.1	—						
3. Number of Working Hours	37.53	13.05	-0.15	0.14	—					
4. Education	2.42	1.02	-0.02	-0.08	-0.09	—				
5. Father Involvement	1.6	.49	-.24**	0.1	-0.11	-0.1	—			
6. Parental Satisfaction	3.9	0.99	.40***	0.11	-0.03	0.06	-0.20*	—		
7. Work-family role strain	57.52	7.5	-.37***	0.03	0.03	0.06	0.11	-0.18*	—	
8. Family role conflict	58.75	13.6	-.52***	-0.05	-0.08	0.1	.27**	.45**	.33**	—

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$