

PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT, WORK FAMILY CONFLICT, SUBJECTIVE HAPPINESS AND CHILD PARENT RELATIONSHIP AMONG WORKING FATHERS AND MOTHERS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined gender differences in perceived organizational support, work family conflict, subjective happiness and child parent relationships among working parents in Karachi, Pakistan. A quantitative, cross sectional comparative design was used. The sample comprised 300 working parents employed in public and private organizations, including 150 working fathers and 150 working mothers. Participants were aged between 25–44 years and had at least one child aged between 3–12 years. Data were collected using the 8-item Perceived Organizational Support Scale, the 5-item work to family conflict subscale, the 4-item Subjective Happiness Scale and the 15-item Child Parent Relationship Scale (Short Form). Independent-sample t test was used to compare fathers and mothers. No significant gender difference was found in perceived organizational support, $t(298) = 0.83$, $p = .324$, subjective happiness, $t(298) = 1.57$, $p = .118$ and child parent relationship, $t(298) = -0.33$, $p = .738$. Significant difference emerged for work family conflict, $t(298) = 2.57$, $p = .011$. Working fathers reported higher work family conflict than working mothers. The findings indicate that gender differences in this sample were outcome specific rather than uniform across workplace, wellbeing and family domains. The results support the importance of including both fathers and mothers in research and organizational initiatives addressing work and family experiences.

I. INTRODUCTION

Balancing employment and family responsibilities is an important challenge for working parents as both roles require considerable time, energy and emotional involvement. When demands from work interfere with responsibilities at home parents may experience work family conflict, stress, emotional exhaustion and difficulties in maintaining family relationships. Work family conflict can occur through time based, strain based and behavior-based incompatibilities between work and family roles (Netemeyer et al., 1996; Nohe et al., 2015). Changes in contemporary working arrangements, including greater digital connectivity and flexible or home-based work have further changed the boundaries between professional and family life (Pak et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2024). The literature included in the present study also indicates that prolonged work and family pressures can affect the

wellbeing and family experiences of working parents (Leach et al., 2021; Olivieri et al., 2024). Although both fathers and mothers experience the demands of employment and parenthood these experiences may not necessarily be the same. Gender roles continue to influence expectations regarding paid employment, household responsibilities and childcare. In dual earner families' mothers may continue to perform a substantial proportion of household and caregiving responsibilities alongside paid employment. Consequently, gender has become an important consideration in understanding how working parents experience the interaction between their professional and family roles. Sahni et al. (2025), for example, highlighted continuing gender-based divisions in paid and unpaid work while Aarntzen et al. (2023) demonstrated that internalized gender stereotypes can contribute to different experiences of work family guilt among working mothers and fathers.

One workplace factor relevant to these experiences is perceived organizational support, which reflects employees' perceptions that their organization values their contributions and is concerned about their wellbeing. Organizational support may be particularly important for working parents who are simultaneously managing professional and family responsibilities. Supportive supervisors, flexible working arrangements and family supportive organizational practices can provide employees with resources for managing competing role demands. Previous literature has associated organizational support with reduced stress and improved employee wellbeing (Eisenberger et al., 2020; Jaswal et al., 2024) while Kossek et al. (2011) and French et al. (2018) emphasized the relevance of workplace and social support to work family experiences. Gender may also be relevant to how organizational support is experienced. Men and women may occupy different occupational roles and simultaneously face different expectations outside the workplace. Therefore, similar organizational policies do not necessarily imply identical experiences of organizational support. Mascarenhas et al. (2022) examined perceived organizational support and employee outcomes from a gender-based perspective highlighting the importance of considering gender when studying employees' perceptions and workplace experiences. Examining perceived organizational support separately among working fathers and working mothers can therefore provide a clearer understanding of whether the two groups perceive comparable levels of support from their organizations.

Work family conflict represents another important aspect of working parenthood. It occurs when pressures associated with work and family roles become incompatible making participation in one role more difficult because of demands arising from the other (Netemeyer et al., 1996). Work family conflict has been associated with stress, burnout, absenteeism, turnover intentions and difficulties in family functioning while organizational and social support may help employees manage competing demands (French et al., 2018; Nohe et al., 2015). More recent literature has also linked work family imbalance with emotional exhaustion and poorer wellbeing and family outcomes (Yang et al., 2024). Gender is particularly relevant when examining work family conflict because fathers and mothers may encounter different work and family expectations. Although mothers have traditionally been expected to assume greater responsibility for childcare and domestic work fathers may also experience increasing pressure to participate actively in family life while maintaining employment responsibilities. Gender norms may therefore shape not only the amount of work and family responsibility experienced by parents but also how conflict between these roles is perceived. Aarntzen et al. (2023) found that internalized gender stereotypes were related to different levels of work-family guilt among working mothers and fathers. Similarly, research concerning gendered divisions of work and family responsibilities indicates that mothers and fathers may experience and respond to work family pressures differently (Sahni et al., 2025).

A further outcome relevant to working parents is subjective happiness. Subjective happiness concerns individuals' overall evaluation of themselves as happy or unhappy and is influenced by both individual characteristics and life circumstances (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). Happiness and wellbeing can be affected by contextual factors including family dynamics and working conditions while positive wellbeing may contribute to stronger coping and resilience during challenging circumstances (Gestoso et al., 2020; Sousa & Carvalho, 2022). Gendered work and family experiences may also be relevant to subjective happiness. Different allocations of paid work, unpaid work and caregiving can shape the amount of time and psychological resources available to working fathers and mothers. Giménez-Nadal and Velilla (2024) reported gender differences in time allocation and subjective wellbeing in the context of home-based work illustrating how work arrangements may be experienced differently by men and women. Likewise, the greater work family guilt identified among working mothers by Aarntzen et al. (2023) provides further reason to examine whether fathers and mothers differ in their subjective wellbeing. These

findings do not establish that one gender will necessarily experience greater subjective happiness; instead, they demonstrate the importance of testing such differences empirically. The child parent relationship is another important domain in the lives of working parents. The quality of this relationship is influenced by parents' emotional availability, responsiveness, warmth and ability to engage positively with their children. Work related strain may reduce the psychological and emotional resources parents have available for family interactions. Previous research cited in the present study indicates that work related stress and parental strain can reduce warmth and increase conflict in interactions with children (Chung et al., 2022; Koerber et al., 2023).

Gender may influence the child parent relationship because mothers and fathers can differ in their patterns of caregiving and involvement. Fingerman et al. (2020) documented gender differences in intergenerational ties and noted the substantial involvement of mothers in relationships with offspring. Driscoll and Pianta (2011) also examined mothers' and fathers' perceptions of conflict and closeness in parent child relationships. Such findings provide a basis for comparing working fathers and mothers while avoiding the assumption that different parental roles will necessarily result in differences in overall child parent relationship quality. The question of whether these differences are reflected in relationship scores therefore remains an empirical one. Despite growing international attention to gender, work, wellbeing and family life evidence concerning these issues remains comparatively limited within the Pakistani context. The literature indicates that research in Pakistan has addressed aspects of work family imbalance and employee wellbeing but gender-based differences across perceived organizational support, work family conflict, subjective happiness and child parent relationship remain underexplored particularly among working parents in metropolitan settings such as Karachi. Cultural expectations regarding employment, parenting and family responsibilities make it particularly important to investigate fathers and mothers within this context rather than assuming that findings from other cultural settings will apply directly. Therefore, the present study compares working fathers and working mothers in Karachi in terms of perceived organizational support, work family conflict, subjective happiness and child parent relationship. Rather than assuming that gender differences will occur consistently across all areas the study examines each variable separately.

Objective

- The objective of the study was to compare working fathers and working mothers in perceived organizational support, work family conflict, subjective happiness and child parent relationship.

Hypotheses

- H1: There is a significant difference in perceived organizational support between working fathers and working mothers.
- H2: There is a significant difference in work family conflict between working fathers and working mothers.
- H3: There is a significant difference in subjective happiness between working fathers and working mothers.
- H4: There is a significant difference in child parent relationship between working fathers and working mothers.

II. METHOD

Participants

A quantitative, cross sectional comparative design was used. Participants were working parents employed in public and private organizations in Karachi, Pakistan. The final sample consisted of 300 participants, equally divided between working fathers ($n = 150$, 50%) and working mothers ($n = 150$, 50%). Participants were aged between 25–44 years. Purposive sampling was used to recruit eligible working parents. Participants were required to be employed, to be between 25 and 44 years of age, and to have at least one child aged 3–12 years. Individuals who were not parents, were not currently employed, had children outside the specified age range or provided incomplete or invalid responses were excluded.

Measures

[I] Perceived Organizational Support: Perceived organizational support was assessed with the 8 items short version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support developed from Eisenberger et al. (1986). Internal consistency in the present sample was $\alpha = .772$. **[II]** Work–Family Conflict: 5 items work to family conflict subscale developed by

Netemeyer et al. (1996). Only the work to family direction was used because the study focused on interference of work with family. Internal consistency was $\alpha = .861$. [III] Subjective Happiness: Subjective happiness was measured using the 4 items Subjective Happiness Scale developed by Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999). Internal consistency was $\alpha = .703$. [IV] Child Parent Relationship: The 15 items Child Parent Relationship Scale (Short Form) was used to assess parents' perceptions of closeness and conflict in their relationship with a child aged 3–12 years (Driscoll & Pianta, 2011). Internal consistency was $\alpha = .784$.

Procedure

Data collection began after formal ethical approval. Eligible participants were approached through online platforms, personal contacts and professional networks. Before participation the respondents received an informed consent form explaining the study, eligibility criteria, expected completion time, voluntary participation, confidentiality and the right to withdraw. Standardized self-report questionnaires were administered through Google Forms. IBM SPSS Statistics 25 was used for analysis. Frequencies and percentages described the demographic characteristics of the sample. Means were used to summarize the four study variables. To address the gender focused hypotheses independent-sample t test was used to compare working fathers and working mothers on perceived organizational support, work family conflict, subjective happiness and child parent relationship. Statistical significance was evaluated at $\alpha = .05$.

III. RESULTS

The sample was evenly divided by gender: 150 working fathers and 150 working mothers. Independent sample t test was conducted for each study variable.

Table I: Independent Sample t-test comparing Working Fathers and Mothers on Organizational Support, Work Family Conflict, Happiness and Child Parent Relationship

Variables	Fathers	Mothers	<i>t</i> (298)	<i>p</i>
Perceived Organizational Support	27.93	27.60	.32	.74
Work Family Conflict	13.77	11.94	2.56	.01
Subjective Happiness	16.62	15.83	1.56	.11
Child Parent Relationship	30.69	31.02	-.33	.73

Perceived organizational support did not differ significantly between working fathers ($M = 27.93$) and working mothers ($M = 27.60$), $t(298) = 0.324$, $p = .746$, $MD = 0.33$, 95% CI [-1.67, 2.34]. Therefore, the hypothesis predicting a gender difference in perceived organizational support was not supported. A significant difference was found in work family conflict between working fathers ($M = 13.77$) and working mothers ($M = 11.94$), $t(298) = 2.567$, $p = .011$, $MD = 1.83$, 95% CI [0.427, 3.23]. Working fathers reported higher work family conflict than working mothers. Therefore, the hypothesis predicting a gender difference in work family conflict was supported. Subjective happiness did not differ significantly between working fathers ($M = 16.62$) and working mothers ($M = 15.83$), $t(298) = 1.566$, $p = .118$, $MD = 0.791$, 95% CI [-0.203, 1.78]. Therefore, the hypothesis predicting a gender difference in subjective happiness was not supported. No significant difference was found in child parent relationship scores between working fathers ($M = 30.69$) and working mothers ($M = 31.02$), $t(298) = -0.335$, $p = .738$, $MD = -0.322$, 95% CI [-2.214, 1.57]. Therefore, the hypothesis predicting a gender difference in child parent relationship was not supported.

IV. DISCUSSION

The study examined whether working fathers and working mothers differed in perceived organizational support, work family conflict, subjective happiness and child parent relationship. The findings showed that gender differences were not consistent across the four variables. A significant gender difference was found only for work family conflict, whereas perceived organizational support, subjective happiness and child parent relationship did not differ significantly between working fathers and working mothers. No significant gender difference was found in perceived organizational support. Working fathers ($M = 27.93$) and working mothers ($M = 27.60$) reported

almost similar levels of perceived organizational support. This suggests that fathers and mothers in the present sample had broadly comparable perceptions regarding the extent to which their organizations valued their contributions and cared about their wellbeing. Although Mascarenhas et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of examining perceived organizational support from a gender-based perspective, the present findings did not indicate a meaningful gender difference in organizational support. A significant gender difference was found in work family conflict with working fathers ($M = 13.77$) reporting higher work family conflict than working mothers ($M = 11.94$). This finding is noteworthy because much of the literature on gender and work family experiences emphasizes the greater domestic and caregiving responsibilities often carried by women. Sahni et al. (2025) highlighted gendered divisions in paid and unpaid responsibilities while Aarntzen et al. (2023) demonstrated that gender related expectations and stereotypes can shape individuals' experiences of work and family pressures. The present finding indicates that in this sample fathers experienced greater interference of work responsibilities with their family life than mothers.

Contrary to the previous analysis, no significant gender difference was found in subjective happiness. Although working fathers ($M = 16.62$) reported a slightly higher mean score than working mothers ($M = 15.83$), the difference was not statistically significant. Therefore, the findings suggest that fathers and mothers in the present sample experienced broadly comparable levels of subjective happiness. Previous research has shown that gendered work and family arrangements may be associated with differences in wellbeing. For example, Aarntzen et al. (2023) reported gender related differences in work family guilt while Giménez-Nadal and Velilla (2024) examined gender differences in time allocation and subjective wellbeing. Similarly, no significant gender difference was found in child parent relationship. Working fathers ($M = 30.69$) and working mothers ($M = 31.02$) reported very similar scores with mothers showing only a slightly higher mean. Previous literature has documented gender related patterns in parental involvement and parent child relationships. Fingerman et al. (2020) discussed gender differences in intergenerational relationships while Driscoll and Pianta (2011) examined mothers' and fathers' perceptions of closeness and conflict in parent child relationships. Despite such gender related patterns reported in previous research the current findings suggest that working fathers and working mothers in this sample did not differ significantly in their overall child parent relationship scores. Therefore, the findings indicate that working fathers reported significantly higher work family conflict than working mothers whereas the two groups showed comparable levels of perceived organizational support, subjective happiness and child parent relationship. These findings highlight the importance of examining each work and family variable separately rather than assuming that working fathers and working mothers will differ consistently across workplace, wellbeing and family related experiences.

Implications

The findings have implications for organizations and researchers concerned with the experiences of working parents. Most importantly the significantly higher work family conflict reported by fathers suggests that family supportive workplace practices should not focus exclusively on working mothers. Working fathers may also experience difficulties in managing competing work and family responsibilities and may benefit from organizational support aimed at improving work family balance. Flexible work arrangements, supportive supervision, manageable workloads and inclusive parental support policies may therefore be relevant for both working fathers and working mothers. At the same time the absence of significant gender differences in perceived organizational support, subjective happiness and child parent relationship indicates that working fathers and mothers had relatively similar experiences in these areas. This shows that gender differences may vary depending on the specific aspect of work and family life being examined.

Limitations and Future Research

The study has several limitations. Its cross-sectional design allows gender differences to be identified but does not explain why these differences occur. All variables were assessed using self-report measures which may be influenced by participants' perceptions and response patterns. In addition, the use of purposive sampling and the inclusion of participants from Karachi only may limit the generalizability of the findings to working parents in other regions of Pakistan. Future research could examine whether the significantly higher work family conflict among fathers is also observed in other samples and geographical settings. Factors such as working hours, occupational demands, income, spouse employment, division of household responsibilities, childcare responsibilities, number

and age of children, flexible work arrangements and social support could be examined as possible explanatory factors. Longitudinal studies could provide a better understanding of how work and family experiences change over time, while qualitative research could provide deeper insight into how working fathers and working mothers personally experience and manage work and family responsibilities.

V. CONCLUSION

The study examined gender differences in perceived organizational support, work family conflict, subjective happiness and child parent relationship among working parents. A statistically significant gender difference was found only in work family conflict, with working fathers ($M = 13.77$) reporting higher work family conflict than working mothers ($M = 11.94$). No significant gender differences were found in perceived organizational support, subjective happiness and child parent relationship. Overall, the findings suggest that gender differences among working parents are variable specific rather than uniform across work, wellbeing and family domains. In particular, the higher work family conflict reported by fathers highlights the importance of including both fathers and mothers when examining the challenges associated with balancing employment and family responsibilities.

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