

Between Home and the Blackboard: Marital Satisfaction, Spousal Expectations, and the Work-Life Struggle of Teachers

Dr. Saima Riaz

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Gujrat, Hafiz Hayat Campus, Pakistan Email: saimariaz@uog.edu.pk

Amna Khalid Qazi

PhD Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Gujrat, Hafiz Hayat Campus, Pakistan Email: amna.khalid.qazi@gmail.com

Madiha Ayub*

Department of Psychology, University of Gujrat, Hafiz Hayat Campus, Pakistan
Email: ayubmadiha21@gmail.com

Kainat Bibi

MPhil, Department of Psychology, University of Gujrat, Hafiz Hayat Campus, Pakistan Email: kinatbibi0@gmail.com

Abstract

Objective: This paper has investigated the connection between spousal expectations, marital satisfaction, and work-life balance (WLB) among a group of teachers, who often have to face personal and professional stress nearly at the same time.

Research Design: The study utilized correlational design and a sample of 400 teachers was purposely selected. The respondents were asked to take the Measure of Expectations for Partner (MEP), ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale, and the Work Life Balance Scale. The analysis of data was performed with the help of descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, regression analysis, t-test, and the analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Results: A review of the results showed that the spousal expectations and work-life balance had significant impact on marital satisfaction and explained 16% and 3% of the variance, respectively. There were no substantial gender differences but ANOVA showed that there were significant age groups differences. The mediation analysis revealed that worklife balance had a great impact on marital satisfaction that is mediated by spousal expectations.

Conclusion: The findings highlight the need to assist teachers to reconcile the work obligation with personal relationships. By enabling educators to have clarity with regard to spousal expectations, it would be possible to positively impact marital satisfaction and wellbeing.

Introduction

Pakistani teachers, similar to numerous colleagues around the world, work under the conditions of significant pressure and stress. These educators take on challenging roles in the society especially when it comes to the scope of conventional gender roles. This is mostly high among married women. The accumulating needs of the work place and family life create intense emotional trauma that is hard to overcome. Regardless of the growing body of evidence, the vast majority of research has analyzed these factors as discrete entities work–family conflict, marital satisfaction, or emotional stress without considering the integrated framework of teaching professionals in Pakistan. For instance, Bashir Khan (2022) and Ahmad and Masood (2011) explored the conflicts and stressors of women educators, while Mirza and Jenkins (2004) studied the mental health of married women more broadly. There is a significant lack of empirical research that blends together spousal expectations, work–life balance (WLB) and marital satisfaction within one framework. Furthermore, married female educators working at universities—often as the dual-role professionals and family caretakers are usually absent from large-scale psychological research conducted in Pakistan.

The objective of this research is to clarify how spousal expectations impact the relationship between WLB and marital satisfaction, in the context of teaching professionals working in higher educational institutions in Punjab.

Khan et al. (2021) examined elementary female teachers at Karachi school, with a focus on female teachers, which showed a strong burnout due to the extra demands of professional and household duties. These unrelenting demands to meet home and work requirements often led to high levels of emotional burnout, thus making them unable to develop meaningful personal relationships. According to Saeed and Rehman (2022), emotional reciprocity has been found as a protective buffer. When the teachers were offered the regular spousal emotional support, they were able to cope better with occupational stress and this also enhanced marital satisfaction. Jahangir et al. (2023) focused on the effect of household typology on female teachers. Women in joint families had a greater share of domestic responsibility which negatively impacted work life balance and marital satisfaction. On the other hand, nuclear family members were reported to experience more autonomy and excellent emotional wellbeing. Ahmad and Masood (2011) also studied factors that lead to marital dissatisfaction by reporting the work family conflict among women instructors in Pakistani universities. Their findings showed that role strain and relational strain were worsened due to poor emotional support as well as unequal distribution of domestic labor, which is based on traditional gender roles. Khan et al. (2025) underlined that flexible working arrangements contribute to the improvement of emotional well-being and work-life balance. Their inquiry of the private-sector workers in Pakistan disclosed that women who were given the permission to adjust their schedules manifested high relationship maximum and lesser household clash. The study by Safdar (2019) revealed the impact of occupational stress on the processes of relationships, and the author found that the transfer of work-related stress into the family environment resulted in a significant decline in the quality of relationships.

The emotional welfare of people is subject to a certain strain because of work-life imbalance which is inherent in two-earner families. As far as educators in higher education are concerned, the intersection of spousal expectations, work-life balance, and marital satisfaction has most certainly not been studied enough with a unified model approach. In the case of Pakistani college and university teachers, this is the relationship they aim to explore.

In South Asian societies such as Pakistan, teachers are professionals while simultaneously having to juggle the roles of caregivers and spouses. Increasingly over the years, research highlights the crucial role of spouse expectations, marital satisfaction, and work-life balance in personal well-being for educators. Pakistani research has shown that expectations of spouse-role, especially in terms of emotional support and household chores, have a direct correlation with a woman's marital satisfaction. Nawaz (2022) studied married female teachers in Sialkot and noted that women whose husbands did not fulfill the agreed-upon domestic chores showed high levels of stress and emotional disconnection. Saleem et al. (2023) pointed out that absent emotional participation both in parenting and decision-making was a major contributor to conflict. Yet, marital satisfaction significantly improved when couples discussed expectations with each other. This strengthens the international literature reporting that role conflict is a key contributory factor to marital dissatisfaction. Ahmad and Masood (2011) analysis showed that the perpetuation of unequal burden of responsibilities in a relationship as imposed by the sociocultural construction of gender is problematic. Their study with women university teachers in Pakistan suggested that work-family conflict negatively impacted job satisfaction, emotional connection, and relationship quality at home.

Attention to work-life balance is fairly recent. Studying working women in Lahore, Safdar (2019) found that negative work-to-family spillover significantly impacted family functioning while positive spillover enhanced family emotional closeness. Teachers who operated within firm boundaries and who had effective support systems displayed stronger relationships and lowered tensions. Bashir and Khan (2022) undertook a qualitative case study with women academics in Lahore. They found emotional burnout due to work-life imbalance stemming from a lack of personal time, role ambiguity, and rigid institutional boundaries. Increased emotional wellbeing was noted for women who adjusted schedules or received practical support from spouses. Bagherzadeh et al. (2016) in Iran noted that both work-interference-with-family (WIF) and family-interference-with-work (FIW) were predictors of low marital satisfaction and high emotional burnout. Their findings, which are applicable to many women educators across the region, were cited to support the existence of parallel lived realities. Shah et al. (2024) noted that there are differences in the Pakistani faculty by generation. Older, married faculty reported a greater sense of job satisfaction which is perhaps due to well established support systems, while married younger faculty, particularly those from joint families, reported persistent role conflicts.

Similar insights are offered by other global studies. Yucel (2017) showed that physical and mental health mediates the relationship between Work-Life Balance (WLB) and marital satisfaction, suggesting that emotional resilience serves as a

protective buffer. In China, Wei et al. (2025) noted that the family communication improves the job stress and relationship satisfaction linkage moderation among the faculty members in higher education.

A global study by Yucel (2017) has shown that physical and mental health was a complete mediator in the relationship between work-life balance (WLB) and marital satisfaction. The study also showed that work-family conflict did not directly impact negatively on marital happiness; its harmful impact was only felt by reduction in overall wellbeing thus supporting the role of emotional resilience as a protective agent. In an empirical study by Wei et al. (2025) on faculty members in Chinese institutions of higher education, they found that job stress and role overload had a significant negative relationship with marital satisfaction. Notably, the strengths of this association were tempered by the extent of family support and the quality of communication hence offering further empirical evidence to the dynamic relationship between expectations of the spouses and WLB.

Though strong data have been presently available to associate these constructs individually, studies that integrate spousal expectations, work-life balance, and marital satisfaction are low, particularly in the Pakistani environment. The vast majority of the existing research takes these variables as independent or beyond the sphere of education. Besides, the experiences of male teachers, who are at the same time supposed to be breadwinners and emotionally supportive spouses, have been poorly represented in the national literature.

The literature review highlights the urgent need to conduct combined studies, including the proposed one, which challenge the combined effect of work-life interaction and spousal demands on marital satisfaction, especially in the teaching profession. Such a study is timely and cannot be done without in the Pakistani socio-cultural context that is marked by a strong integration of domestic and professional lives.

Methodology

This study used a correlational type of research design to examine the interdependence between spousal expectations, marital satisfaction and work-life balance (WLB) in a population of married teachers in Pakistan. Since the aim was to establish naturally occurring associations between variables as opposed to experimentally manipulating variables, a correlational framework was deemed as the most fitting one.

A total of **400 married teachers** (132 men and 268 women) participated. They were employed at **colleges and universities in Lahore and Gujrat**. Teachers were selected using **purposive sampling**. Participants were eligible if they were married, at least 18 years old, and actively teaching.

Most participants worked in **private institutions (70.5%)**, while others were in government setups. About **55% lived in nuclear families**, and the rest in joint family systems. Marital duration ranged from 1 to 20 years, and years of employment varied from 1 year to over 13.

9-item scale by McNulty & Karney (2004) “Measure of Expectations for Partner (MEP)” measures what individuals expect from their spouse, like communication, support, and shared responsibilities. Responses were recorded on a 9-point Likert scale. The scale showed good internal reliability ($\alpha = 0.805$).

The ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (EMS) is a 15-item measure created by Fowers and Olson (1993), which assesses marital satisfaction in three areas of relationship quality, communication, and traditional beliefs. This study showed that the instrument was internally consistent (0.667).

The 15-item scale of work-life balance (WLB) developed by Hayman (2005) was used to measure both types of interference, in either way, and mutual enhancement of the work and personal life. The respondents responded to questions using a 5-point Likert scale and the scale had a high degree of reliability in the current sample (.813).

Procedure

Both paper and online survey were used to collect data. The objective of the study was made known to all participants and they gave written consent. Research ethics were observed since the participation was voluntary and confidentiality was ensured during the procedure.

Data Analysis

The SPSS Version 26 was used to analyze the data. The demographic characteristics were summarized by using descriptive statistics. It was determined that scale reliability was evaluated by computing Cronbach alpha. The relationships between variables were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficients. The multiple regression analysis was carried out to measure the predictive effects. Independent - sample t-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) were used to analyze gender and group differences. Lastly, a bootstrapped mediation analysis according to Preacher and Hayes (2008) was done to estimate whether there is a mediating relationship between work-life balance and marital satisfaction with the mediation of spousal expectations.

Results

Table 1

Normality Statistics for Study Variables (N = 400)

Variable	Skewness	SE	Kurtosis	SE
Spousal Expectation	-0.884	0.122	0.506	0.243
Marital Satisfaction	-0.342	0.122	1.839	0.243
Work-Life Balance	0.324	0.122	0.194	0.243

Note. SE = Standard Error. Skewness and kurtosis values fall within acceptable ranges (-2 to +2 for skewness, -7 to +7 for kurtosis), indicating normal distribution.

Table 2

Reliability Analysis of Scales

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Spousal Expectation	9	0.805
Marital Satisfaction	15	0.667
Work-Life Balance	15	0.813

Note. Cronbach's alpha values ≥ 0.70 are generally considered acceptable for internal consistency, although values slightly below may still be used for exploratory research.

Table 3

Regression Summary Predicting Marital Satisfaction (N = 400)

Predictor	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	F	p
Spousal Expectation	.339	.16	.157	75.37	.000
Work-Life Balance	.167	.03	.026	11.46	.001

Note. All results are significant at $p < .01$.

Table-4

Coefficients for Predictors of Marital Satisfaction

Predictor	B	SE	β	T	p
Constant	36.20	1.608	–	22.516	.000
Spousal Expectation	0.297	0.034	0.399	8.681	.000
Constant	42.47	2.197	–	19.33	.000

Predictor	B	SE	β	T	p
Work-Life Balance	0.154	0.045	0.167	3.385	.000

Note. Multiple regression analysis showed that both spousal expectations and work-life balance significantly predicted marital satisfaction. Spousal expectations explained **16%** of the variance, and work-life balance explained an additional **3%**.

Table 5
Bootstrapped Mediation: Indirect Effect of Work-Life Balance on Marital Satisfaction via Spousal Expectations (N = 400)

Path	β	SE	t	95% CI
Work-Life Balance → Spousal Expectation	-0.1906	0.0611	-3.118	[-0.312, -0.068]
Spousal Expectation → Marital Satisfaction	0.3240	0.0336	9.657	[0.256, 0.391]
Indirect Effect	-0.0618	0.0238	—	[-0.1128, -0.0195]

Note. The analysis of bootstrapped mediation analysis (5,000 samples) showed that spousal expectations mediated the relationship between work-life balance and marital satisfaction partially. The indirect effect was found to be significant, in that the confidence interval was not claimed to include zero. These results suggest that those teachers that have improved work 3 life balance are more realistic or less spousal expectations, which, consequently, improves marital satisfaction.

Discussion

The current paper examined how marital satisfaction depends on the expectations of the spouses and work-life balance of Pakistani teachers, which produced various critical trends with theoretical and practical implications. The high predictive abilities of spousal expectations on marital satisfaction confirm the relational bases of marriage especially in collectivist societies. The results that the expectations of the spouses were a strong predictor of marital satisfaction (0.399, P = 0.001) indicate that marriages tend to be smoother when the expectations of the teachers in the marriage are fulfilled that is, when the expectations are emotional, practical or communicative. This is consistent with the current study by Rashid and Qamar (2023), who pointed

out unfulfilled psychological and role expectations in Pakistani marriages as the primary source of tension and lack of emotional connection.

Work-life balance, though it does not act as a strong predictor as compared to expectations, still plays an important role in marital satisfaction. As it has been seen, teachers who do a good job of balancing between professional and personal roles seem to be more emotionally stable at home. This point is echoed by Soomro and Nawaz (2022), who pointed out that home and career balance among female educators based in urban Pakistan is a crucial factor of marital adaptation and emotional stability.

It is important to note that this work has found partial mediation of the role of spousal expectations between work life balance and marital satisfaction and this confirms a deeper psychology process. When teachers build stronger work-life balance they might have more understanding and lenient expectations of their partners that will make them more satisfied. Although there are not many local studies on this indirect route, the same results were indicated by Saeed and Batool (2021), who discovered that perceived emotional responsiveness and realistic expectations served as mechanisms of work-related strain protection in marriage.

The gender discrepancy in expectations noted, as women expressed much higher spousal expectations than men, is a reflection of current social changes in the educational labor force of Pakistan. The higher the level of professional activity of women, the higher are their demands concerning emotional, home, and parental support. Habib and Jamil (2023) confirm this trend, stating that female educators, especially with a dual-earner family model, require more equity in employment roles, which does not align with the norms.

In addition, age and educational level played a great role in expectations towards spouses and work-life balance, but not in marital satisfaction. More qualified and younger teachers showed more expectations and had a greater motivation towards balance as differences in generational ideals of marriage were observed. According to Iqbal and Shahzad (2022), younger couples tend to be more active when it comes to discussing shared responsibilities and emotional openness even in semi-urban settings. These results are consistent internationally with other studies like the one by Trombetta et al. (2021) who also found parallel mediation effects between job stress and marital outcomes in a sample of European schoolteachers, with job stress affecting marital outcomes through psychological constructs such as emotional expectations. Lee and Kim (2020) reported that in Asia, when work-life balance is disrupted, Korean dual-earner couples were more likely to face increased marital strain, and mediation was carried out by shared expectations regarding family time.

Overall, the evidence shows that the work-life balance sets up the contextual background, whereas the quality and clarity of the expectations held by the spouses have the most direct impact on marital satisfaction. In the case of Pakistani teachers especially women, negotiation of the professional and domestic roles is needed effectively so that the personal wellbeing and relationship can be maintained.

Conclusion

The study investigated how work-life balance and the expectations of the spouse affect the marital satisfaction of Pakistani higher education teachers. The findings show that careful balance is needed: although work-life balance is one of the determinants of marital satisfaction, its influence is mediated by the expectations of spouses. That is, a good work-life balance on its own is not sufficient in case the expectations of the spouse are not achieved.

As the results are analyzed, it can be stated that in such a country as Pakistan where traditional social patterns are being changed, personal and professional worlds balance is reached when the time is organized systematically. What is needed is an idea of reasonable expectations and family support.

Implications

More flexible working hours, remote working, and mental health counseling can help female faculty to be more satisfied with their marital status, better in work-life balance, and generally healthier. These findings support the inclusion of spousal expectation dynamics in marital therapy and premarital counseling sessions.

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