

Work-Life Balance and Supervisory Satisfaction of Subordinates in Relation to the Gender of the Supervisor

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Abstract:

Gender Differences have found to be playing an important role at workplace. Satisfaction with the supervisor in turn results in job satisfaction and higher productivity. The research aimed to analyze how subordinates' work-family conflict and supervisory satisfaction would affect in relation to the gender of their supervisors. The study further explored as to see how the difference in gender of the supervisors and the subordinates affect the subordinate's work-family conflict as well as the subordinate's satisfaction towards their supervisor. To study the phenomenon, 240 participants were approached using purposive sampling technique. The instruments used in the study were Work-Family Conflict (WFC) Scale by Bu Carlson et al (2000), and the Satisfaction-With-My-Supervisor Scale (SWMSS) by Scarpello & Vandenberg, (1987). A significant difference was found on the SWMSS in relation to the same and opposite gender of the supervisors as well as on difference between the male and female supervisor on SWMSS. Whereas, no significant difference could be found on work-family conflict with relation to gender of the supervisor. The findings reveal the changing gender roles in our society where female work force has increased in considerable number and with that the gender roles in family and work setting are also gradually changing.

Keywords: Gender Difference, Work-family Conflict, Supervisory Satisfaction.

I. Introduction

Gender dynamics can never be denied in personal, social and vocational settings. Every society has defined gender roles and norms which, in turn, affect people's beliefs and values. These beliefs and values further determine the individual interaction with fellow beings. Gender roles can have drastic effects on the personal lives of people, it is ought to have an equally adverse effect on the work life of an individual as well. In every organization a certain level of diversity does exist in the workforce (Mousa, Massoud, & Ayoubi, 2020). Earlier, the word diversity was linked to differences in the gender, ethnicity, and socio-cultural aspects of the people working in the organization.

Though, now, it includes the socio-cultural aspects, education, lifestyle, religion, physical appearance and abilities, sexual orientation, etc. (Raewf & Mahmood, 2021; Wentling & Palma Rivas, 2000).

In societies universally, gender roles and division of labor are often conducted on the basis of stereotypes, and the traits people believe they possess due to their whole biological makeup, (Lindsey, 2020). These stereotypes are often the result of the socialization men and women have gone through since a very early age. They also move forward and express the idea that most of the stereotypes related to gender roles are learnt during communication, and affected by interactional or socio-cultural factors, which also play a very key role as agents of socialization (Grau & Zotos, 2016).

The fact that the primary socialization that an individual goes through, or learns from, is the family; the family itself is where the gender roles and social roles are basically assigned and etched in the minds of individuals (O'brien et al., 2000). In light of these notions, the current study presents the gender aspect of a person's work life, especially the one that is determined and affected by their gender, and how the difference of gender in supervisory roles affects the performance and satisfaction of the following subordinates.

In recent times, the relationship of a subordinate with their supervisors has gained a lot of attraction since organizations nowadays, are working towards building supervisor-subordinate relationship, despite of the gender discrimination. This is being done to increase the morale of subordinates and, in turn, make the working life of the subordinates better and productive (Reb, Narayanan, & Chaturvedi, 2014). If the supervisor is able to demonstrate the given values and follow ethical set of standards in which he/she values their subordinates, it helps them to keep their subordinates satisfied and building a strong connection with them (Sollitto et al., 2016; Ambrose, Schminke, & Mayer, 2013). If a supervisor ensures a positive environment and motivated subordinates by putting in the value and beliefs in subordinates they tend to increase the overall productivity of the working place in contrast to abusive behavior by a supervisor. Gender difference in supervisor and subordinate has found to be an important factor which determines the quality of their relationship. It has been found that this gender difference increase the likelihood of underperformance and conflicts (Mawritz, Dust, & Resick, 2014; Avery, et al., 2013). It is also said that the difference in gender is mostly triggered because of the difference of the personality which means that every person holds traits that they have encountered or observed while working and hence they try to follow them. Females tend to be more sympathetic and supportive whereas, males tend to be more work focused and expects as per the ability of the subordinates (Doughty & Leddick, 2017; Achour, Khalil, Ahmad & Yusoff, 2017).

A study by Hershcovis and Barling (2010) revealed that the one of the main reasons for depression, emotional and psychological exhaustion, interpersonal problems and organizational deviance, along with employee turnover, lower job satisfaction and commitment issues to work, all are attributed to workplace aggression, and depends mainly on the relationship that exists between supervisors, their subordinates, the coworkers and outsiders, who, together make up the work environment in any organization.

Powell and Greenhaus (2006) and Fujimoto, (2011) brings forth the idea that work has an impact on family life as well, and the more satisfaction and relaxation a person feels at work, he or she depicts the same behavior at home as well. Thus, both these factors combined, result in quality improvement of life, and a proper work-life balance, overall. The research objectives of this study were:

- To see how the difference in gender of the supervisors and the subordinates affect the subordinate's work-family conflict.
- To see how the difference in gender of the supervisors and the subordinates affect the subordinate's satisfaction towards their supervisor.

II. Literature Review

There are various significant factors in the role of the supervisor which can make him powerful. These factors include the fact that the supervisors need to have an understanding and professional approach to the way they work and interact with their subordinates. They need to understand how to deal with individuals/groups in certain ways, how to train them, need to understand each of their subordinates and give them the kind of support and facilitation to build a strong foundation, which will lead to a strong bond between them. . This would not only help the subordinates understand their work in a better way, but will also add on to maximum productivity, output, and an overall better performance leading to organizational success, (Ryan, & Gottfried, 2017).

A. Supervisor-Subordinate Satisfaction

Satisfaction with their supervisor is considered a very important aspect when shaping or assessing the affective commitment of subordinates towards their work or boss, (Mathieu, et al., 2016). According to (Powell, 2011), this satisfaction can be achieved when the subordinates feel that their work is being valued by their supervisor and that their supervisor truly cares about their well-being too (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2017). Supervisors-subordinate interaction in any organization contribute in the efficiency and motivation level of the subordinates and overall organizational productivity if it is on the positive side (Chun, Choi, & Moon, 2014; Lam, Walter, & Huang, 2017).

B. Women presence at work place

In recent times, there has been a very visible shift towards the inclusion of women in work environment and that too in leading work positions. Lundin (2013) put forward the fact that more women are now open to working since anti-discrimination laws have been introduced, and education and work opportunities for females have increased. This shift in the work roles has also brought about a change in the gender roles of the past, where there is now a decrease in the economic dependency of females on their male partners. The equality between the work acumen of men and women have led to a diversity within the workforce that is primarily based on gender, and this kind of diversity can now be seen in hiring decisions around the globe (Rice & Barth, 2017).

C. Gender dynamics in employee handling

There are studies that show the differences in how men and women differ in the way they handle the workforce, such as that women are better problem solvers, and tend to resolve conflicts easily (Campion, 2014). Campione further assesses this claim and presents the findings that females can resolve conflicts better because they have better

understanding of personality traits and can understand the diverse personalities of the workforce in a better way than males. Studies established that (Gorman 2005, 2006) women may prefer women in hiring, promotions and wages. (Brass 1985; Ibarra 1993; Konrad, Kramer, & Erkut 2008) found out that women give their own gender subordinates more opportunities of mentoring, networking and career-enhancement, and there is also a lower level of gender stereotyping when females are seen in higher positions, (Bates, Kaye, Pennington & Hamlin, 2019; Ely 1994). Bagues et al., (2014) found that some women in supervisory positions may also have negative effects if they are the kind that uses their power to stop other women in the organization from progressing, or gaining any bonuses.

Archer, (2004) applied the sexual selection theory and explained the difference between the two in the form of aggression, where he proposed that, generally, men engaged more in the intense competitions at work, especially where risks are high, in comparison to women, who tend to be lesser inclined towards risky and violent aggression at work, or to stay alive. He further emphasized on the fact that men tended to be more physically aggressive, as well as verbally aggressive than women, and that women would, at par, listen and quiet down, rather than retaliating most of the times.

D. Work-family conflict

Another important aspect of this study is the work-family conflict, which is found to be less of a problem in the Asian continent, as in most countries; there is a collectivist culture, which is known to give a higher priority to family and the fulfillment of social responsibilities (Hofstede 2016; Rathi & Barath, 2013). In these places, work is seen as a duty as a means to support the family, (Sharma, 2015), unlike the west where work is a central part of a person's life (Snir & Harpaz, 2006). Work-family conflict reflects on work life balance as individuals carry their family related stressors to work place which makes it further difficult for them to maintain balance between the two. It further impact employees' relationship and working arrangements in 21st century (Kelliher, Richardson, & Boiarintseva, 2019).

Furthermore, how effectively and nicely the communication is being carried out by the supervisor helps in developing the trust and hence subordinate is then able to communicate his/her problems, challenges related to work and family life and when there is mutual understanding and goal between the supervisor and the subordinate, a strong relationship a work-family conflict balance is maintained (Birkenmeier, 2016; Leaper & Friedman, 2007). The large amount of days' time is spent on communicating with subordinates whether its work related communication or non-work related; both impact the relationship (Nifadkar, Wu, & Gu, 2019).

III. Method

A. Research Design

The study was designed to determine whether work-family conflict and supervisory satisfaction is related to the gender of the supervisor or not. Taking the quantitative approach, a survey questionnaire was developed having a consent form and a demographic information section, the questionnaire had The Work-Family Conflict (WFC) Scale by Carlson, Kacmar & Williams, (2000) having 18-items; the scale reported Cronbach's coefficient alpha $\alpha = 0.89$. And The Satisfaction-With-My-Supervisor-Scale (SWMSS) by Scarpello & Vandenberg (1987) having 18-items, reported Cronbach's

coefficient alpha ranged from .95 - .96. Following hypotheses were formulated in the light of the literature review:

- H1: There will be a significant difference on work-family conflict of the subordinate with the same and opposite gender supervisor.
- H2: There will be a significant difference in supervisory satisfaction level of the subordinate the same and opposite gender supervisor.
- H3: There will be a significant difference in supervisory satisfaction of the subordinate and the work-family conflict with respect to the gender of the supervisor.
- H4: There will be a significant difference with respect to the number of years of subordinate with the supervisor and the marital status of the subordinate on work-family conflict and supervisory satisfaction level.

B. Sample characteristics & sample size justification

The participants were selected using convenient sampling method, working in different organizations in Pakistan. A total of 240 participants were administered with the questionnaire.

Sample inclusion criteria

It was important that the participants have a total of three years of working experience, and should necessarily have minimum of one year of experience with the current supervisor. Other inclusion factor in the criteria while choosing the sample was that subordinates should have permanent employment status.

Sample size justification

Assuming that the population is infinite, we targeted the sample of 240 as it will make us 95% confident of our results within the range of ± 7 . Participants for this investigation were selected through purposive convenient sampling, 240 in number. Participants were ensured and briefed that no identified risks/dangers and interests were related to this study. In addition to this, no participant was asked to provide any personal details through which they could be individually identified or contacted. The participants were made sure that the results would remain confidential and that participation was purely on voluntarily basis. The data confidentiality was maintained.

Participant's profiling

The participants' distribution was 120 for each gender, totaling to 50% of each gender. The male supervisors were 123 (i.e. 49%) vs 117 (i.e. 51%) female supervisors. To be more precise, the sample had 120 female participants (subordinates), out of which 66 had female supervisors (55%), and 54 had male supervisors (45%). The sample had a further 120 male participants (subordinates), out of which 51 had female supervisors (42.5%), and 69 had male supervisors (57.5%).

The mean age of the participants reported as 28.2 years, having a mean of 4.8 years of total experience, and a mean of 2.5 years of working under the same supervisor. The sample had about 32.4% Married and 63.9% Single participants. 64% of participants were living in nuclear family set up and 36% in joint family.

Ethical considerations

Every participant was provided with an informed consent form highlighting the purpose of the research and how their contribution will add to the body of the knowledge. The data confidentiality was maintained by ensuring participants of confidentiality of the information shared. The information will only be used anonymously and for research purpose only. The participants were told about their right of withdrawal at any point of the study.

C. Procedure

The respondents were approached via in person and Google Forms distributed through various social media sites. All participants were briefed about the research that was being carried out prior to their participation in the study. Participants filled the questionnaire and submitted, they were thanked for their time and contribution in the research.

D. Statistical analysis and Results:

The data was compiled on Microsoft Excel sheet. For data analysis, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 21.0 was used to calculate descriptive and inferential statistics to organize, obtain, summarize and interpret the results. Correlation and independent sample t-test was used to find out the relationships and the differences that exist between the variables. Cronbach alpha values were calculated to assess internal consistency of the scales.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic Variables		Frequency	%
Gender of the respondent (subordinate)	Male	120	50
	Female	120	50
Gender of the supervisor	Male	123	48.5
	Female	117	51
Age	20-29 Years	174	72.5
	30-39 Years	55	22.8
	40-49 Years	11	4.6
Total number of work experience	3 – 7 years	202	83.8
	8 – 12 years	30	12.4
	13 – 20 years	8	3.3
Total number of work experience with the current supervisor	1 – 5 years	226	93.8
	6 – 10 and above years	14	5.8
Marital Status	Married	86	36.1
	Single	154	63.9
Family Orientation	Nuclear	155	64.3
	Joint	85	35.3

n=240

Table 2: Reliability Analysis of the measures

Measure	No. of items	α
WFC	18	.90
SWMSS	18	.96

(n=240)

Table 2 showing Cronbach alpha for Work-Family Conflict Scale (WFC) and Satisfaction With My Supervisor Scale (SWMSS). α value is high which indicates scales have found to be reliable with the current sample.

Table 3: The Mean Difference between Same Gender and Opposite Gender groups on WFC and SWMSS

Measure	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
WFC	Same gender	135	52.88	2.014	1.170	149	.020*
	Opposite Gender	105	39.91	.88451			
SWMSS	Same gender	135	66.28	.695231	2.198	149	.000*
	Opposite Gender	105	31.90	.783654			

(n=240)

Table 3 shows mean difference between same gender and opposite gender groups for WFC scale and SWMMS. For SWMSS significant difference was found (t= 2.198, sig= .000), whereas for WFC scale, the results were not found significant enough (t= 1.170, sig= .020).

Table 4: The Mean Difference between Male and Female Supervisor on WFC and SWMSS

Measure	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
WFC	Male Supervisor	123	52.88	.47656	1.170	128	.587*
	Female Supervisor	117	53.91	.54126			
SWMSS	Male Supervisor	123	58.25	.231054	2.198	128	.002*
	Female Supervisor	117	31.55	.65412			

(n=240), *p<.05

Table 4 indicates the mean difference for male and female supervisors on SWMMS and WFC. Significant difference is found on SWMSS (sig= .002) whereas for WFC no significant difference could be found (sig= .587).

Table 5: The Mean Difference between Same Gender and Opposite Gender groups on WFC and SWMSS with number of years with current supervisor, marital status and family orientation.

Number of years of experience with the current supervisor							
Measure	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
WFC	Same gender	135	49.02	.42976	-2.874	201	.580*
	Opposite Gender	105	47.58	1.0585			
SWMSS	Same gender	135	63.85	.6578	2.198	201	.000*
	Opposite Gender	105	50.08	.2580			
Marital Status							
Measure	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig.
WFC	Same gender	135	33.88	.5891	2.862	157	.002*
	Opposite Gender	105	50.82	.4085			
SWMSS	Same gender	135	60.68	.9891	1.529	157	.243*
	Opposite Gender	105	61.87	.6541			

(n=240), *p<.05

Table 5 provides t-test values on three demographic variables: number of years with current supervisor and marital status. For the number of working years with current supervisor, results came statistically significant values were obtained for SWMSS (sig= .000), while no significant difference was found for WFC.

With respect to Marital Status, a significant difference was found on the WFC scale (sig= .002), while a slight significant difference was found on the SWMSS (sig= 0.243).

Figure 1

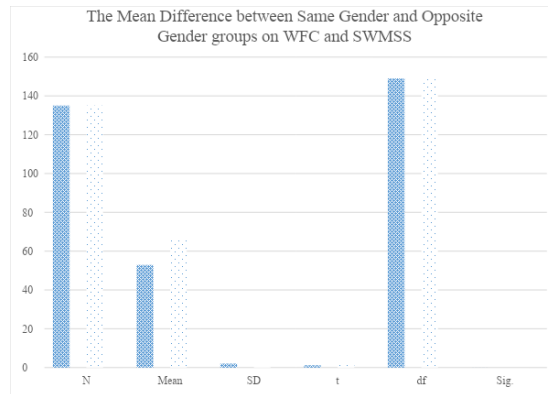
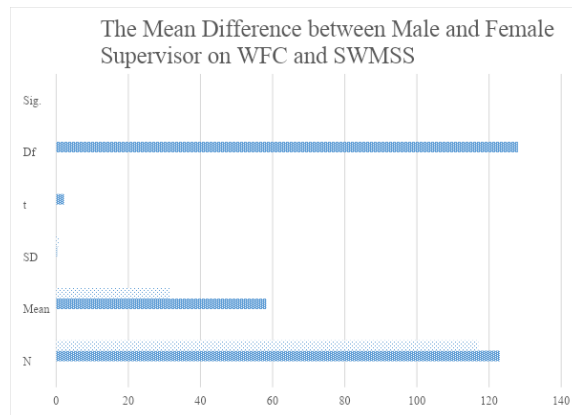


Figure 2



IV. Hypotheses Testing & Discussion

The study focused on the prevalent factors that most subordinates, of either gender face at their workplace every day. These factors can be related to the different aspects of one’s motivation at work, most importantly supervisor or job satisfaction, which is considered as vital in the assessment of mental health, well-being, and the severity of psychological distress that employees feel at their workplace. Ashkzari (2017) presents the idea that these organizational attitudes can positively affect or change one’s overall mental stability, and bring improvement in their personal life and marital satisfaction as well, no matter the gender.

Skitmore and Ahmad (2003) and White et. al. (2003) proposed a theory that quality of life can easily be achieved when people strike a balance between their work life and family life, giving both equal time, and this is, in fact, related to one’s supervisor and the way and amount of work they delegate to their subordinates. Greenhaus and

Beautell (1985) stated that if one aspect, either family or work is given priority, the other is definitely neglected, or the individual then suffers. Individuals hold work-life ideologies about how work and life are related and can determine his work-life preferences (Leslie, King, & Clair, 2019).

Table 1 shows the demographic distribution of the sample taken for this study, there were 240 respondents, and the gender ratio was 1:1 (50% or 120 respondents of each gender). 36.1% of them were stated married, 63.9% single, where 64.3% were living in nuclear family, and 35.3% in joint family setup. The results of this study coincide with other studies on the fact that the gender of the supervisor has a significant impact on the subordinates' work-family life, and also affects their supervisory satisfaction level. The findings are in sync with the results we have derived from the data, except one hypothesis.

H1: There will be a significant difference on work-family conflict of the subordinate with the same and opposite gender supervisor.

The sample is divided into two groups: same gender and opposite gender subordinate-supervisor duos. According to the results, SWMSS ($p = .000$) provides statistical evidence that there is a significant difference on work-family conflict when it comes to the gender of the supervisor and supervisory satisfaction. Studies have provided evidence that there is higher quality work presented and relations established when the supervisor is of the same gender as opposed to opposite genders (Fix & Sias, 2006; Varma & Stroh, 2001).

H2: There will be a significant difference in supervisory satisfaction level of the subordinate towards the same and opposite gender supervisor.

The second hypothesis investigated and findings were that there has been weak significance difference found between the two variable, ($\text{sig} = .020$). Cohen and Huffman (2007) have shown that there may be a link as women are seen more in higher positions nowadays, (Maume, 2011) suggests that women take more advantage of their position, and do not favor their own gender as much as anticipated which contribute in the (dis)satisfaction level of the subordinates.

H3: There will be a significant difference in supervisory satisfaction of the subordinate and the work-family conflict with respect to the gender of the supervisor.

When both aspects, work-family conflict and supervisory satisfaction, have been studied separately in light of the gender of the supervisor the findings were that no significant difference is found. Ramos-Sánchez et al., (2002) found out that there is no significant difference in supervisory satisfaction based on gender if there are negative events in the organization, such as communication barriers between the supervisor and the subordinate, etc. Similarly, gender also does not play a role in the work-family conflict if men stay back and do overtime work, no matter what gender the supervisor belongs to.

H4: *There will be a significant difference with respect to the number of years of subordinate with the supervisor and the marital status of the subordinate on work-family conflict and supervisory satisfaction level.*

This hypothesis focuses on measuring the number of years worked under the same supervisor have any effect on the work-family conflict and supervisory satisfaction of the subordinate, though, no significant difference was found when it comes to work-family conflicts. In fact, (Friedlander and Wade, 1984) gave three different ways a supervisor can deal with his subordinates, and says that the type of supervisory style the supervisor chooses, will determine what kind of personality traits he or she show. There was, however, a significance indicated between the number of years worked and supervisory satisfaction, because the subordinates get used to the way their supervisor is, or behaves, and can understand and deal with them better.

The marital status affects supervisory satisfaction level and work-family conflicts have slightly differing results. The WFC Scale for same gender and opposite gender shows significance between the variables, which is different from the SWMSS result of same and opposite gender showing insignificant result. Amazue, Lawrence and Onyishi, (2015) stated that, at present, marital status is a key component in predicting the work-family conflict rather than predicting supervisory satisfaction level. Moreover, Keeney et al., (2013) suggested that married couples have a higher level of disturbance in work-family conflict and not on the satisfaction of the supervisor.

This study, firstly, brought forth the idea of work-family conflict and supervisory satisfaction with reference to the gender of the supervisor. Secondly, this research study attempts to bridge the gap that exists between the dynamics of supervisor-subordinate relationship at the workplace. The findings of the study can be used to a better understanding of the interaction dynamics between supervisor-subordinate especially in the context of same and opposite gender interactions. Further the findings can pave way to a healthier and positive interactions between the two.

There are few limitations to this research, such as the fact that this was a quantitative study, and no qualitative input has been taken which could have provided a more in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Also, the study was mostly done on organizations based at Karachi which indicate a potential problem of generalizability. The fact that subordinates might have not answered truly i.e. Social desirability effects might have set in. Future studies could consider inclusion of some important factors such as organizational culture, structure or hierarchy, etc. and also more objective measures of the supervisor-satisfaction rather than self-report way.

V. Conclusion

It is clearly seen that where same gender is involved at supervisor-subordinate level, the results did show a significant difference. It shows substantiate results and reckons that between the same gender supervisor and subordinate, the supervisor does tend to lean more towards the same gender subordinate and tends to involve them in functions where a second input is required. For example, a male supervisor-subordinate relationship is seen as much stronger than a male supervisor and female subordinate's relationship. In addition to this, significant results of number of years worked under the same supervisory on supervisory satisfaction was obtained, indicating that the time spent

with the supervisor greatly affect the comfort level developed with their supervisors and this is what this study also proves.

Of course, when WFC is seen having several critiques, it does however play a significant role in obtaining the results we got. If we look at the multiple spheres of work and home along with the several different roles being performed by either of the genders, a clash is expected somewhere or the other. The study might indicate that these factors could have been studied in detail, perhaps the results obtained quicker than it should actually have. Not completely supporting what is stated above, the study could be concluded distinguishing a positive relation of gender of the supervisor with the supervisory satisfaction of the subordinate.

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