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Women's Work-life Balance Experiences, Challenges & Coping Strategies During COVID-19 within the Pakistani Context

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the Pakistani economy worldwide. This research was purposed to explore experiences, challenging factors, and coping strategies of female employees' work-life balance during a pandemic. For this research qualitative research design was used. To gather information Interviews were conducted. The semi-structured interview protocol was used for conducting interviews. Four participants were selected through purposive sampling. Participants were selected from the public and private sectors of education sectors and multinational companies. Transcribed interviews were analyzed by thematic analysis. The study findings showed that participants faced social mobility restrictions during a pandemic and those females who got family support faced a lack of children interruption while working. The workload on females increased both in personal and professional life. Moreover, employees had to learn new skills to continue their work from home for example teachers learned different software to deliver lectures. Initially, they faced many issues like technology-related issues, irresponsible behavior of students, and lack of maternal policies. This study would help understand issues faced by female employees to maintain work-life balance so that in the future if the situation is processed or continues then organizations can help their employees by giving them better maternal policies and devise strategies to minimize household burden on the employees.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance, Workplace, Pandemic, Employees, Experiences, Maternal Policies.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many barriers in every sphere of life. It has affected hundreds of thousands of people across the world. It has a very unfavorable

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impact on the socio-economic status of our society. The uneven effect of COVID-19 has exposed the gender inequalities in Pakistan. According to a recent record (UN, 2020) the gender elements of COVID-19 said that the pandemic has a strong adverse effect on the livelihoods of vulnerable agencies and pre-existing gender inequalities in developing countries like Pakistan. Working domestically is one of the biggest assignments that personnel are confronted with, at some stage in COVID-19 due to the truth a domestic place of business is a very different environment to its common counterpart. Such as employees have to manipulate their group members, and they have to preserve a work-life balance.

According to Prasad et al., (2015); Samantha (2018); Asgary et al. (2020) & Eggers (2020), humanitarian crises including epidemic disease and other issues badly affected commercial enterprises and their stability. The COVID-19 pandemic has spread to more than 200 countries and has caused public panic (Huang & Zhao, 2020). Many countries have implemented complete Lockdowns by taking social distancing measures to prevent the chain of transmission. This outbreak has led to many health-related diseases including stress, anxiety, and depressive disorders (insomnia, denial, anger, and fear) worldwide (Torales et al., 2020).

The effect of COVID-19 on the global economic system can be considered the shutdown all over the world, social mobility restrictions, tour bans, airline suspension, and the critical slowdown of the economic system (World Economic, 2020). The new principles and SOPs in all divisions during the pandemic caused work-life equilibrium even more difficult to maintain. The burden of domestic and work duties in lockdown has been increased.

Mahi Uddin's (2021), qualitative research was conducted on working women to explore work-family conflicts in the district of Bangladesh's socio-cultural context. This study showed that in comparison to men Bangladeshi active women are being affected badly as they got less pay, lessened their savings, held lack of job security, and faced more work-family constraints (McNall, Nicklin & Masuda, 2010). Research also indicated that in the span of having work satisfaction and domestic work balance since Covid-19 emerged the lives of women have become quite more challenging. The findings showed that gender-based stereotypes as well as marital institutions, are a major issue in balancing work and family together as marriage imposes a tremendous burden on managing work and household responsibilities together (Uddin, 2021).

According to Alqahtani (2020), research indicated that healthy work-life balance plays an important role in women's professional and personal lives. This study exhibits that an improper balance between work and family of an individual holds a negative impact on

them whereas a better work-life balance creates a healthy and positive impact on individuals as well as for the organizations (Alqahtani, 2020).

This exploratory study pursuits to find the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on women at their place of work and in their family institutions. The world has been facing this crisis for more than one year. It has affected the world economy. Organizations across the world took steps to minimize the effects of the pandemic on their production rate and profit rate like they started working with fewer employees, working from home, and reducing salaries of employees, etc. (Bukowska, Tyranska & Wisniewska, 2021). Similarly, in Pakistan women employees also faced multiple issues in their personal and professional lives, it is necessary to explore the issues that women employees faced during this time. This will help to devise strategies to minimize the economic and household burden on active women.

Review of the Literature

Historical Perspective of Work-Life Balance

The concept of work-life equilibrium came out in the year of 1980 and since then achieving work-life balance has become the goal of concern of every business organization. In the mid-1970s, employers scrutinized that for working mothers work-life was mainly an issue who struggled with the demands of their jobs and the upbringing of their children together. Work-life balance is the essence of leading a successful life by the employees. It plays a crucial role in all working females not only in teaching as well as in various technical institutions. Many studies showed that people avoid their family and personal life because of their tough working schedules. In the modern world, people have to give more time to work to earn money due to which their personal life gets ignored.

According to Shinu Shukla (2016), research conducted on working women in India explained the work-life balance concept as the effort of employees to crack their time and strength between work and other crucial livelihoods. This study indicated that work-life balance is necessary to encounter stress by assuring both individual as well as company success. This study also revealed that most of the working women struggled to maintain equilibrium between their work and household duties such as child caring as well as family members with a disability or elderly parents. The findings of the study showed that the optimum level of stress including distress indicated disappointment, inadequacy, and helplessness among women (Shukla, 2016). The previous research suggested that work-life balance opportunities should be given by employers to their employees such as flex schedules and paid time off policies etc. The present research fills this gap by identifying the ways of enriching proper practices of work-life balance among employees.

Covid-19 and Work-Life Balance

Covid-19 has been spreading rapidly globally since its outbreak in Wuhan as well as in China. Covid-19 has changed the mode of work as well as it has adversely affected individual work activities, health as well as personal relationships. Conserving a work-life equilibrium even during regular times is a difficult task. The new SOPs in all divisions during the pandemic have made work-life balance even more ambiguous. The drift of household duties and work duties in lockdown got bigger. According to Dr. Sachi Gupta (2016), research conducted on the work-life balance impacts the performance of women employees and their family members' support. This study indicated that work-life balance is a burning issue because it affects the personal life of an individual as well as the productivity of the organization. The researcher for this study gathered data through married female wage earners employed in technical institutions of the Moradabad Region. This research found that family support is the key strategy to achieving a work-life balance and those women who got family support were satisfied with their jobs and it made a good impact on their work-life balance (Gupta, 2016). The previous research stated that organizations should implement work-life management policies such as maternity leaves, and other flexible working hours facilities to solve work-life balance problems that cause high absenteeism rates. In correspondence with the previous research, the current study explored organizational interventions such as employee training, reward systems, coworker relationships, and work environment during a pandemic. It has analyzed the familial support impact on women employees during a pandemic.

Begum & Shafaghi's (2022) explanatory research based on positivist philosophy was conducted to study the job insecurity impact on the work-life balance of employees during the pandemic in India. This research aims to determine the employee's fear of losing a job and the work-life balance components such as work time, work demand, family time, and family demand. The study findings showed that job insecurity affects employees' job performance badly as well as it leads to work-life conflicts and it mediates health issues among employees. This study showed that as job insecurity increases it leads to a reduction in family demands and family time, which as a result enhances health issues and work-life contradictions while decreasing job performance (Begum & Shafaghi, 2022). The previous study stated that organizations' and supervisors' support as well as the support of family during the pandemic can reduce the negative effects of job insecurity. The current research filled the gap by exploring the job insecurity factors and their impact on their work and family demands. It emphasized the importance of strong policies towards employee engagement in various organizations in Pakistani society.

On the other hand, the present study identifies the commuting patterns during COVID-19 to their workplace as it also highlights the invisible and unrecognized nature of unpaid work that is borne by women in Pakistan. The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the world's work phenomenon. Previous research conducted in various regions such as Moradabad, Oman, Scotland, and Bangladesh stated that females were affected badly during the pandemic situation as they couldn't maintain a good work-life balance in that period. The job insecurity factors were high among married women employees. The present research explores the individual's perceptions or experiences regarding work and family roles within Pakistani society. The present research also focused on analyzing the socio-cultural gender roles as well as Pakistani women's career paths that help women maintain a balance between work and family. The findings of the previously conducted studies also showed that women faced many gender disparities that negatively affected their work performance and their family demands. The present study explores the challenging factors that affect women in both phases of their lives in work and family during COVID-19.

An empirical study conducted in Romania, revealed that work-life balance has a significant impact on individual personal and professional life satisfaction as well as it increases a high degree of motivation among employees (Claudiu et al., 2023). A former study associated work-life balance with individual satisfaction in their roles. This study focused on three prospects balance in terms of time, commitment, and satisfaction to fulfill these roles (Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw, 2003). Research revealed that work-life balance occurs when both personal and professional life do not invade as a career does not interfere with family life and the same case is with a career (Urszula, Małgorzata & Sylwia, 2021). According to the research, some interpersonal actions can significantly impact work-life balance, pay level, and employee performance in an organization (Boeri, 2022). The study findings revealed that an imbalance between professional work and domestic work affects employee performance or productivity at the workplace (Konrad, 2000).

Research indicated that three elements played a pivotal role in creating work-life balance family factors, environmental factors, and organizational policies (Patel, 2018). As per the 2020 survey, 58% of respondents faced difficulty in balancing their personal and professional lives. Furthermore, 45% of respondents faced difficulty in working from home. The research focused on work-life balance variables and measured their impact on individual life with time (Smeltzer et al., 2016). Studies revealed that work-life conflicts such as time, duties, and stress or anxiety can impact women's personal or professional lives (Schieman et al., 2021). In 2010 review-based study indicated that family satisfaction and job satisfaction impact individual mental health positively. Research findings revealed that organizations used a hybrid model during the pandemic to make work lives more productive but working from home also created challenges for

employees especially, had a great impact on their family time (Palumbo, 2020). Many scholars as well as managers assume that remote work will facilitate working mothers but on the other hand, it created a disruptive work environment for females at home as well as impacts their productivity as well (Wang et al., 2020).

Some studies revealed that flexible working hours played a significant role in work-life balance satisfaction as it allows employees to take control over their work management (Allen, 2001; Fana et al., 2020; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Moreover, study findings revealed that flexible work can only be handled by highly talented intellectuals (Barbieri et al., 2021; Sostero et al., 2020). In the UK in 2021, the range of activities such as exercising, reading books, volunteering in student circles, gardening, and meditation was increased (Bu, Steptoe, Wan Mak & Fancourt, 2021). The gender disparity also increased during the pandemic such as in terms of the pay gap, unequal household work distribution among men and women, and women have to do part-time work without any consent (Marra, 2014; Bonacini, Gallo & Scicchitano, 2021).

The previous studies also revealed that marriage institutions and gender stereotypes a key issues in work-life balance as marriage imposes a tremendous burden on women to regulate work and household duties together. The previous research also indicated that family and husband support also play a pivotal role in improving women's overall quality of life. The present study explores the Pakistani marriage institution's roles towards women's work performance in the pandemic situation. The findings of previous studies reported that flexi working as work from home is a key issues that have a great influence on women's ability to enrich their work-life balance during COVID-19.

Research Questions

This research aimed to find out the answers to the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of Pakistani married working women in achieving work-life balance in the duration of a pandemic?
2. How pandemic affected active women's professional and personal lives?

Research Methodology

The interpretive school of thought was used in this study as it is scientific and based on the uniqueness of human beings as well as one that can capture human social life. The interpretive method undertakes a version of the social reality constructionist view. This view indicates that the social life of humans is based much less on objective, hard, factual actuality than on the ideas, beliefs, and perceptions that humans keep about reality. Previous research conducted was explanatory research in nature and based on positivist

philosophy (Begum & Shafaghi, 2022). So, this study favors an idiographic shape of explanation and uses inductive reasoning.

Research Design

The qualitative research design was used while investigating the phenomenon. Many researchers indicated that qualitative research methodologies refer to theories so that they can also vary the qualitative lookup design. The qualitative lookup research needs to be coherent to analyze the lived experiences' meanings as well as organize the data in a meaningful way. The phenomenological approach was used to have a better understanding of work-life balance amongst married female employees in Pakistan during a pandemic. According to Denzin (2003), a qualitative method is epistemologically associated with an interpretive paradigm as it may also support the requirement of a suitable research method approach to delineate the situation of human beings' social lives. Consequently, it needs to be understood and appreciated.

Participants

The participants for this study were four married working women who belong to the public and private sectors of Pakistan in Lahore. This study provides an in-depth understanding of the ways via which people manage their situation during a pandemic. A purposive sampling technique was used in the data collection process. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling that is selected based totally on the attributes of a population and the objective of the study. Purposive sampling is additionally regarded as subjective sampling (Crossman, 2020).

Demographic Profile

Occupation	Qualification	Number of Participants	Average Year of Experience	Number of Children	Number of Family Members
Assistant Professor	Master’s in city and regional planning	1	15	3	5
Lecturer	Master’s in clinical psychology	1	10	3	5
HR Manager	Master's in Organizational Psychology	1	6	1	6
School Teacher	Master’s in history	1	14	3	7

Data Source

In this research semi-structured interview protocol was used for data collection. The semi-structured interview protocol is a qualitative method Given (2008), in which the members are asked a series of predetermined but open-ended questions (Lisa, 2008).

Procedure

To conduct this research, semi-structured questions were prepared for interviews. By using a purposive sampling technique participants were selected and contacted through telephones. Before starting the interview participants were assured that the provided information would only be used for research purposes. The nature of the study was explained to them and after their consent data was collected. All the interviews were recorded after obtaining permission from the participants. The interview duration was about 15-20 minutes. After the collection of data, a transcript of each interview was made with the help of recordings. Once it was done, the transcript of each interview was read again and again and then codes were drawn as well as then each was analyzed and findings were concluded. This article aims to offers practical arguments to support research validity. It provides clear and straightforward explanations to help researchers better understand and utilize this important statistical technique (Van Ginkel et al., 2019).

Data Analysis

Data collection from the participants was analyzed by using thematic analysis. The thematic analysis was narrated as inductive in this study. A precondition for the analysis as it incorporates data on lived experiences such as interviews. The analysis begins with a search for meaning and goes on with different meanings being identified and associated with each other. The analysis recognizes the elaboration of meanings in the data as an alternative and then measures the frequency. It includes researcher involvement in the data as well as in the analysis. The analysis incorporates meanings of the search for patterns being further explored and finding out how such patterns can be organized into themes. Moreover, analysis needs to be guided through openness. Thus, the method of analysis is similar to the phenomenological approaches focusing on the insights and descriptions of meaning-apprised themes (Sundler et al., 2019).

Findings

The present study explores the factors that affected active women's personal and professional life equilibrium during the pandemic in Pakistani society. The study results exhibit five key themes that came out from the thematic analysis relating to the active women's work-life balance experiences, challenges, and coping strategies during

COVID-19 within the Pakistani context 1) Organizational Strategies during the Pandemic, 2) Participants' Professional Life Experience During Pandemic, 3) Participants Personal Life Experience During Pandemic,4) Challenges Faced by Participants and 5) Coping Strategies for Work-Life Balance (table 1).

Table: 1 Themes and Subthemes of Active Women Work-life balance

Main Themes	Sub-Themes
Organizational Strategies During Pandemic	● Work from home ● Compliance with Government SOPs for COVID-19 ● Downsizing ● Launch Web T.V
Participants Professional Life Experience During the Pandemic	● Online Mode of Work ● Job Security ● Lack of maternal policy ● Field Work problems
Participants' Personal Life Experience During the Pandemic	● Family support ● Family Time ● Interpersonal Relationships ● Uncertainty of the situation
Challenges Faced by Participants	● Workload ● Children Behavior ● Social Mobility Restrictions ● Lack of Concentration Towards Work
Coping Strategies for Work-Life Balance	● Time Management ● Strategic Planning and Implementation ● Leadership Skills ● Managerial Skills

Organizational Strategies During Pandemic

The first theme that emerged from the study findings was organizational strategies during the pandemic that clearly showed that organizations changed their working hours, and work mode, and reduced their workforce during the pandemic showed compliance with Government policies to cope with the pandemic situation. According to the study the proper workable schedule should be made while working from home as well as technological advancement should be increased as everyone should have a good hand in technological use (Kaushik, 2020). As one participant revealed:

> *"As organization showed compliance with Government policies to cope with the pandemic. At the start of the pandemic schools closed for some time to make proper planning regarding online teaching and there was limited staff as well as organization fired the lower staff as they were not able to provide them with salaries. So, some visiting teachers get fired too……(P-4, School Teacher)."*

Participants Professional Life Experience During the Pandemic

The second theme that emerged from the study findings was the participants' professional life experience during the pandemic that indicated participants had economic stability but they faced fieldwork problems due to working from home and have lack of maternal policies as well as they faced some professional deficiencies too such as electricity issues, technological issues in the pandemic. According to study conducted on working women in India indicated that work-life balance opportunities should be given to employers to their employees such as flex schedules and paid-off policies (Shukla, 2016). As one participant said that:

> *"There was work from home so, being HR I was leading a team of 8 members and working on business development at that time. I was pregnant at that time and my third trimester was going on but my office did not give me any increment. I got to leave without pay. When I was done with the procedure they said you can come but we will not give you any kind of increment. I am a very career-oriented person so I resume my job. Then I got promoted to HR manager. We are linked with a USA company so the situation of Foreign was much worse than our country. People over there started buying products in bulk after hearing about the lockdown. In online mode, you are a 24/7 employee. It increases the workload on the entire staff. As an employee did not face that much as I got my salary but initially when I resumed my job after delivery my husband was also a business man so in the first three months he faced low productivity so we resisted my income just……..(P-3, HR Manager)."*

Participants' Personal Life Experience During the Pandemic

The study findings indicated another theme related to the participant's personal life experience during the pandemic it showed that the participants who spent quality time with family as well as who had family or spouse's support, faced a lack of children interruption and those who got family support enables them to maintain better work-life balance. Another research revealed that family support is the key strategy to achieve

work-life balance and those women who got family support were satisfied with their jobs and it made a good impact on their work-life balance (Gupta, 2016). The participant revealed that:

> *"Fearful situation as people shared their stories on the internet. Due to working from home spend quality time with family. Strong bond develops with family as in physical work it was difficult due to shortage of time with family…I have three kids and two of them are school-going my younger daughter was 6 months old at that time so it was difficult to manage. My husband didn't help me in child care as he is a lecturer and working in the administrative department too so due to his busy schedule he couldn't do so. Initially, I don't understand how to manage things …. (P-2, Lecturer)."*

Challenges Faced by Participants

The fourth theme that emerged from the research findings was the challenges faced by participants it clearly shows that the participants faced a lack of concentration towards work due to household responsibilities and also due to the presence of family members while working at home as well as due to social mobility restrictions children got frustrated and made a noise that leads to confusion regarding their work strategy. On the other hand, those participants who had a lack of family or spouse support couldn't pay their full attention to work which creates difficulties in managing work and household responsibilities together. According to the research conducted on working women to explore work-family conflicts in the district of Bangladesh socio-cultural context findings of the study showed that in comparison to men Bangladeshi active women are being affected badly as they face more work-family pressures. The study also indicated that in terms of work satisfaction and domestic work balance since Covid-19 emerged the lives of women have become quite more challenging (Uddin, 2021). As one participant revealed:

> *"My children made noise when I did my work. We were not able to bring our children outside for outing and playing…They stay at home and sometimes become frustrated. Working at home in the presence of family members prevents you from paying 100% attention to work….When I called students by name in online classes many of them didn't respond. Students didn't take classes due to the lack of electricity. Professional as well as domestic responsibilities increase as having no helper at home (P-2, Lecturer)."*

Coping Strategies for Work-Life Balance

The last theme of this study's results was coping strategies for work-life balance it clearly shows that participants manage their time between personal and professional life through implementing strategic planning as well as leadership skills and good managerial skills that helped them to maintain work-life balance. According to the research indicated that healthy work-life balance plays an important role in women's professional and personal lives. This study exhibits that better work-life balance creates a healthy and positive impact on individuals as well as on organizations (Alqahtani, 2020). One participant revealed that:

> *"I manage my work and life together due to having time management skills…I almost worked 5 hours and the rest of my time I spent with my family….Due to my family's support in my professional life and personal life, I get some time for myself too……It also plays an important role in my self-development which enables me to solve my problems by myself without discussing them with others (P-1, Assistant Professor).*

Discussion

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many obstacles in all walks of life. It has affected hundreds of thousands of people all over the world. It has a very negative impact on the socio-economic level of our society. The uneven impact of COVID-19 has exposed gender disparities in Pakistan. According to recent research (United Nations, 2020), the gender factor of COVID-19 indicates that the epidemic has a strong negative impact on the livelihoods of vulnerable institutions and the preexisting gender inequality in developing countries such as Pakistan. This current study looked at the effect of COVID-19 on female employees' work-life balance. This study was purposed to explore the factors that affected female employees' personal and professional lives during the duration of the pandemic. In this research, after data analysis study showed that the organizational strategies during the pandemic the organizations showed compliance with Government policies to cope with the pandemic. The current study found that organizations changed their working hours, and work mode, and reduced their workforce during the pandemic as showed compliance with Government policies to cope with the pandemic situation. According to Shinu Shukla (2016), research conducted on working women in India indicated that work-life balance opportunities should be given to employers to their employees such as flex time schedules and paid-off policies (Shukla, 2016).

The research showed that participants' professional life experience during the pandemic such as technological use increases, job security, and change in work criteria as well as lack of maternal policies at organizations. The current research found that the participants had economic stability but they faced fieldwork problems due to working from home and have lack of maternal policies as well they faced some professional deficiencies too such as electricity issues, and technological issues during the pandemic. The study also showed the participant's personal life experiences during the pandemic. The research found that participants who spent quality time with family as well as who had family or spouse support faced a lack of children interruption and those who got family support enabled them to maintain a better work-life balance. Another research by Sachi Gupta (2016) found that family support is the key strategy to achieving a work-life balance and those women who got family support were satisfied with their jobs and it made a good impact on their work-life balance (Gupta, 2016). Research further indicated that participants faced various challenges during a pandemic. The study results showed that participants faced a lack of concentration towards work due to household responsibilities and also due to the presence of family members while working at home as well as due to social mobility restrictions children got frustrated and made noise that led to confusion regarding their work strategy. On the other hand, those participants who had a lack of family or spouse support, couldn't pay their full attention to work which creates difficulties in managing work and household responsibilities together. According to Begum & Shafaghi (2022), the study indicated that job security affects the job performance of employees badly as well as it leads to work-life conflicts and it mediates health issues among employees (Begum & Shafaghi, 2022).

However, the final theme that emerges from this study indicated the coping strategies of participants for work-life balance that involves time management. The research found that participants manage their time between personal and professional life through implementing strategic planning as well as leadership skills and good managerial skills helped them to maintain work-life balance. According to the study on "the impact of pandemic Covid-19 in the workplace" work from home (WFH) is challenging as it's not as easy as it seems to be. It demands to focus on a proper work schedule. Time management is another challenge to settle on. Technological advancement should be increased as everyone should have a good hand in technological use. Technological availability is also highly demanded for both male and female employees to fulfill their jobs while staying home. A proper workable schedule should be made while working from home (Kaushik, 2020).

Conclusion

After analysis of the data, the research found that many factors affected female employees at their place of work and in their personal lives during COVID-19. These

factors include organizations changing their work mode during a pandemic. In this research, it was seen that due to the pandemic organizations adopt downsizing as the key strategy to deal with the situation. It leads to an increase in workload and fieldwork problems throughout the pandemic. The study showed that the female's professional life experience as work shifted from home during the pandemic there was limited social engagement and most of the organizations followed proper SOPs. As indicated by this research participant when people heard about the lockdown they bought products in bulk due to which workload was increased and it also led to an increase in production rate. Employees who had family or spouse support faced a lack of children interruption as indicated by the participant's spouse helped her while doing work by engaging children in other activities. Those who get family support enable them to maintain a better work-life balance. On the other hand, those employees who had a lack of family or spouse support couldn't pay their full attention to work which creates difficulties in managing work and household responsibilities together. The participants also faced some professional deficiencies in COVID-19 as the research revealed that employees had to learn new skills initially it was a bit difficult for them to upload things and settle down from on-ground work to online. The research found that participants faced various professional challenges during the pandemic such as they faced technological issues, electricity problems, and confusion regarding their work strategy at the beginning of the pandemic due to this drastic change. The research also found that when participants got used to working from home then they adopted some coping strategies to deal with the situation such as managing time in their personal as well as professional life. The research also showed the participant's interpersonal relations during the pandemic improved as they spent quality time with family due to which strong bonds developed between parents and children. The research also found the organizational strategies during the pandemic such as the organizations showed compliance with Government policies to cope with the pandemic as they changed their work mode, reduced their workforce, and changed their working hours during the pandemic as well as they lack maternal policies and lack increment for their employees.

Limitations

The limitations inherent to this study include:

- Firstly, the researcher couldn't collect data from all over Pakistan due to time constraints and ongoing academic sessions.
- Secondly, the result of this research cannot be generalized to the whole population.
- Thirdly, Covid-19 is one of the drawbacks. It made it difficult to collect data face-to-face from employees.

Recommendations

- Future research is suggested to explore the self-employed women working strategies during COVID-19 to maintain work-life balance.
- Another future research is also suggested to compare the impact of social, Psychosocial, and economic crises between public and private sectors.

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