



A Socio-Psychological study on the impact of work-life and the family balance towards the family institution

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ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka, as a developing country, faces significant work-family balance challenges due to globalization, technological advancements, and infrastructure development. Long working hours, in particular, contribute to increased stress and negatively impact employees' health, leading to dissatisfaction with work-life balance and adverse personal consequences. As a result, work-family balance has become a key topic in academic discussions. A study was conducted to explore the impact of family balance on work life and the family institution in Sri Lanka. The main goal was to identify factors influencing work-life and family balance, while also investigating their positive relationship with work-family balance. The research covered two divisions: 496 A – Kottawa East and 432 – Avissawella GNDs. Data was gathered from 200 households through questionnaires and interviews. The findings showed that professionals juggle multiple responsibilities, including work, childcare, housework, volunteering, spousal duties, and elderly care, causing stress for individuals and families. A multiple regression analysis revealed a significant correlation between time spent at home and work-life balance ($p\text{-value} = 0.006$), with families spending more time at home facing fewer marital issues. Additionally, a significant relationship was found between work-life balance and decision-making ability within the family ($p\text{-value} = 0.010$), demonstrating the importance of work-life balance in family decision-making processes.



1. Introduction

As social beings, humans require time to address personal needs, family obligations, and social responsibilities. In contemporary society, the typical workday exceeds eight hours, with additional time consumed by commuting and social interactions, leaving minimal time for self-care (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Modern competitive environments demand extended work hours, continuous learning, and adaptation to evolving business landscapes. The quality time individuals spend with family, friends, or in solitude contributes significantly to relaxation, improved concentration, and enhanced performance, potentially benefiting organizational productivity (Clark, 2000).

Work-life balance encompasses the appropriate prioritization between career aspirations and lifestyle elements, including health, happiness, leisure, family relationships, and spiritual development. Wijekoon and Prasad (2020) note that while competitive business environments seek employees who actively engage in both professional and family domains, today's financially driven society often leads people to prioritize income generation at the expense of family time. This imbalance triggers various problems across different societal levels, with many individuals struggling to establish boundaries between work and family responsibilities.

Inefficiency in performing work roles due to family obligations and reduced family participation because of excessive job demands constitute what researchers define as work-family conflict. Conversely, active participation in both work and family roles represents work-family balance. Work-family imbalance significantly impacts job performance, satisfaction, career advancement, and family enrichment, generating strong interest in understanding conceptual relationships between work and family domains to achieve success in both areas (Carlson et al., 2009).

Consequently, work-life balance (WLB) has emerged as a critical factor in balancing employees' professional responsibilities with home and personal life obligations. Clark (2000) defined work-family balance as "the extent to which individuals are equally involved and satisfied with work and family roles." Kirchmeyer (2000) characterized a balanced life as achieving fulfilling experiences across all life domains. The capacity to manage professional and personal commitments has become increasingly challenging due to factors including increased workforce participation, technological advancements,



changing generational attitudes, and globalization. Previous research indicates that improved work-family balance mitigates the negative effects of work-family conflict (Frone, 2003).

Contemporary organizations in developed nations have implemented work-family balance strategies to maximize employee potential and prevent negative consequences of work-family conflict. While the structure of work-family balance problems is now well understood, insufficient empirical research exists investigating methods and strategies employed by working individuals to manage these challenges. Although Western literature has extensively documented positive and negative effects of work-family balance, the underlying factors behind work-family balance and imbalance warrant further investigation (O'Driscoll et al., 2006).

The concept of Work-Life and Family Balance has been defined variously by scholars. Some researchers have proposed comprehensive definitions encompassing multiple work and family dimensions, while others note this concept has received limited research attention. Despite considerable research highlighting definitions of Work-Life and Family Balance with popular conceptual models, these definitions lack consistency. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) characterize work-non-work interference as inter-role pressures from work-family domains that are mutually incompatible, while Wijekoon and Prasad (2020) describe it as equilibrium or maintaining overall harmony in life.

Substantial international literature addresses work-family balance in various cultural contexts. However, limited research exists on work-family balance challenges within Sri Lanka's specific sociocultural environment. Furthermore, previously conducted empirical studies require revalidation due to evolving work practices and changing definitions of work itself. Few research initiatives focusing on work-family balance have specifically examined professional employees, and existing findings remain inconclusive. Most Human Resource Management research is based on Western contexts or newly industrialized countries, highlighting the need for locally relevant studies. This research contributes to work and organizational psychology literature while raising theoretical and conceptual issues pertinent to Sri Lankan contexts.

Objectives

1. To determine the factors affecting work-life and the family balance in the family institution of Sri Lanka



2. To investigate whether these factors are positively and significantly related to work-family balance.
3. To identify the positive relationship between work-life and family balance.
4. To find out methods to mitigate the negative effects of work-life and family conflict

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Study Area

The nature of work and the challenges faced by individuals differ significantly between rural and urban areas. As a result, focusing on just one of these areas in a study can impact the reliability of the findings. To address this issue, the study will encompass both rural and urban areas within the Colombo district.

For this purpose, two Grama Niladhari Divisions have been selected:

- 496 A – Kottawa East
- 432 – Avissawella

Colombo District, located in the Western Province of Sri Lanka, covers an area of 699 km². As of the 2012 census, the district had a population of 2,309,809. It is known for having the highest population distribution and density in the country. The majority of the population is Sinhalese (76.69%), followed by Sri Lankan Moors (10.51%), Sri Lankan Tamils (10.01%), Indian Tamils (1.18%), and other ethnic groups (1.61%).

Colombo is the economic hub of Sri Lanka, home to the international seaport, industrial zones, and key educational, healthcare, and administrative facilities.

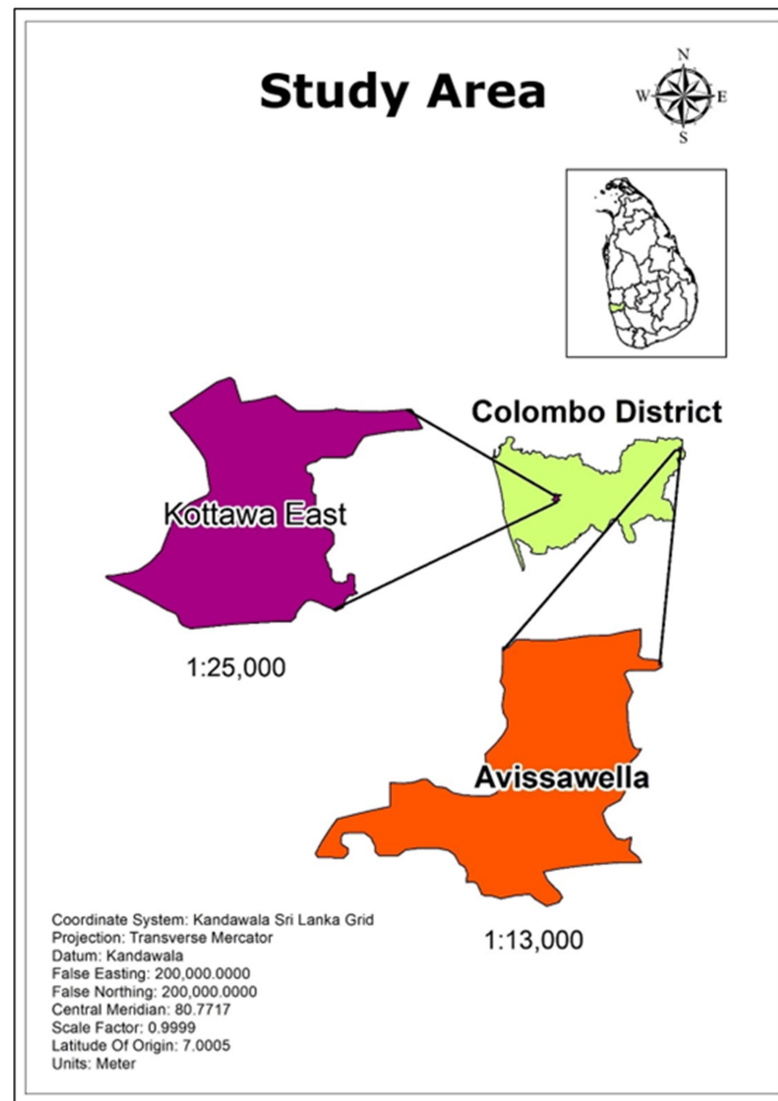
2.2 Research Methods

Both quantitative and qualitative methods are used under both positivist and interpretive paradigms.

The Following are the analytical methods used in the study:

1. Analysis of descriptive statistics
2. Regression analysis
3. Chi-square analysis
4. Case Study

Figure 2.1: Colombo District - Two Grama Niladhari Divisions



2.3 Sampling procedure

Data contributors have been selected from two GNDs under a judgmental sampling method for this study.

There, 2 Grama Niladhari Divisions have been selected from Colombo district,

1. 496 A – Kottawa East
2. 432 – Avissawella

And 100 people have been randomly selected from each GND.

2.4 Data collection

Primary data is collected from the selected areas using a structured questionnaire and also through discussions with respondents and key informants.

Table 2.1: Data Collection Summary

	Sample	Data Collection Method
Colombo District	200	2 -Case studies
496 A – Kottawa East	100	Questionnaire
432 – Avissawella	100	Questionnaire
	200	

This research was done by distributing a questionnaire and also used interview method to gather relevant information. The seven-page questionnaire consisted of 7 question parts and took 15-20 minutes for the respondent to complete.

Secondary data was collected through both institutional and non-institutional sources in the country.

2.5 Data Analysis

There are primarily two forms of data analysis: quantitative and qualitative. MS Excel and SPSS applications are used to analyze quantitative data. Manual methods are used to analyze qualitative data.

2.6 Limitations

Data collection and analysis for the study may not be precise and accurate due to the following limitations not considered by the researchers.

- Some respondents could not provide the required answers due to a lack of awareness about family-work balance.
- Some of the respondents were not too keen to comment on their personal matters.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

Table 3.1: Gender

	Count	N %
Gender Male	169	91.5%
Female	31	8.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field research data (2022)

As illustrated in the table above, men represent 91.5% of the population, while women account for 8.5%. This gender distribution is important for the study, as men are typically the primary income earners and play a central role in household decision-making, particularly in matters related to family finances and well-being.

Table 3.2.Types of Marriage

	Count	Column N %
Types of Marriage love affair	119	59.5%
marriage proposal	81	40.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field research data (2022)

Considering the type of marriage, according to the above data, 59.5% of the respondents were married through a love affair, and 40.5% were married through a marriage proposal.

Table 3.3: Employment status of the respondents

	Count	Column N %
Employment status of yes	200	100.0%
the respondents no	0	0.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field research data (2022)

The table indicates that all of the respondents are employed, as 100% of the participants reported having jobs. This suggests that employment is a significant characteristic of the sample population in the study.

Table 3.4: The time respondents leave from the home

		Count	Column N %
The time respondents leave for a job	4 -5 a.m.	40	20.0%
	6 -7 a.m.	29	14.5%
	8 -9 a.m.	110	55.0%
	9-10 a.m.	0	0.0%
	no exact time	21	10.5%
	Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field research data (2022)

Analysis of the departure time data reveals that the majority of respondents (55.0%) leave for work between 8-9 a.m., aligning with conventional office hours, while a significant portion (20.0%) departs very early between 4-5 a.m., suggesting long commutes or employment in sectors requiring early starts. The intermediate group (14.5%) leaves between 6-7 a.m., while 10.5% report no fixed departure time, indicating flexible work arrangements. Notably, no respondents reported leaving after 9 a.m., demonstrating that all participants with scheduled employment begin their workday by 9 a.m. at the latest, highlighting varied work schedules across the sample that likely impact their work-life balance experiences.

Table 3.5: The respondents leave the office.

		Count	Column N %
The respondents leave from the office	3-5 p.m.	44	22.0%
	6-8 p.m.	98	49.0%
	9-11 p.m.	2	1.0%
	after 11 p.m.	18	9.0%
	not exact time	38	19.0%
	Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field research data (2022)

The data on office departure times reveals a diverse pattern of work schedules among respondents, with nearly half (49.0%) leaving their workplace between 6-8 p.m., suggesting extended working hours

beyond the traditional 9-5 schedule. A significant portion (22.0%) departs earlier between 3-5 p.m., potentially representing standard office hours or flexible arrangements. Notably, 19.0% report no fixed departure time, indicating variable work patterns or job types with irregular schedules. Concerning a work-life balance perspective is that 10.0% of respondents work very late hours, with 9.0% leaving after 11 p.m. and 1.0% between 9-11 p.m., suggesting demanding work commitments that likely encroach significantly on family time and personal activities, potentially contributing to work-family conflicts experienced by these individuals.

Table 3.6: Does your spouse have a job?

		Count	Column N %
Does your spouse have a job?	No	52	26.0%
	Yes	148	74.0%
	Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field research data (2022)

The data regarding spousal employment status reveals that a substantial majority (74.0%) of respondents' partners are employed, indicating that dual-income households predominate in the study sample. This high percentage of working spouses suggests that most families in the study are navigating the complexities of balancing two careers alongside family responsibilities, potentially creating both opportunities and challenges for work-life balance. The remaining quarter (26.0%) represents households with a single income earner and a non-employed spouse, who may provide greater support for household management and family care but contribute less financially. This distribution reflects contemporary economic realities where dual-income households have become increasingly common, requiring coordinated strategies for managing professional obligations, household duties, childcare, and personal time, a significant factor in understanding the work-family balance dynamics observed in the broader study results.

Table 3.7: Satisfaction of respondents about the spouse's occupation

		Count	Column N %
Satisfaction of respondents with the spouse's occupation	yes	61	41.2%
	no	87	58.8%
	Total	37	100.0%

Source: Field research data (2022)

The above data indicated the level of satisfaction among respondents regarding their spouse's occupation. According to the data, a significant majority—58.8%—of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with their partner's job, while only 41.2% reported being satisfied. This indicates a notable gap in occupational satisfaction within relationships, which could potentially reflect broader concerns such as financial insecurity, long working hours, lack of family time, or perceived imbalance in household responsibilities. The high rate of dissatisfaction may also suggest underlying strains in the work-life dynamic that could influence overall family harmony and emotional well-being.

Table 3.8: Are you satisfied with your income?

		Count	Column N %
Are you satisfied with your income?	yes	36	18.0%
	no	164	82.0%
	Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field research data (2022)

The aforementioned statistics show that 82.0% of respondents are not happy with their salary. However, 18.0 percent show that the income received is adequate, and the gap between the two is enormous.

Table 3.8: Do you collaborate when managing the household expenses?

		Count	Column N %
Do you collaborate when managing the household expenses?	yes	191	95.5%
	no	9	4.5%
	Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field research data (2022)

The data reveals a strong trend of financial cooperation within households, with 95.5% of respondents reporting that they collaborate with their spouse when managing household expenses. This high level of joint decision-making suggests a shared sense of responsibility and transparency in financial matters, which can contribute positively to marital harmony and mutual trust. In contrast, only 4.5% of respondents indicated that one partner handles financial decisions independently, which could point to potential imbalances in communication or control within those relationships. Overall, the overwhelming

rate of financial collaboration reflects a healthy dynamic in most households, aligning with the principles of partnership and shared accountability in family life.

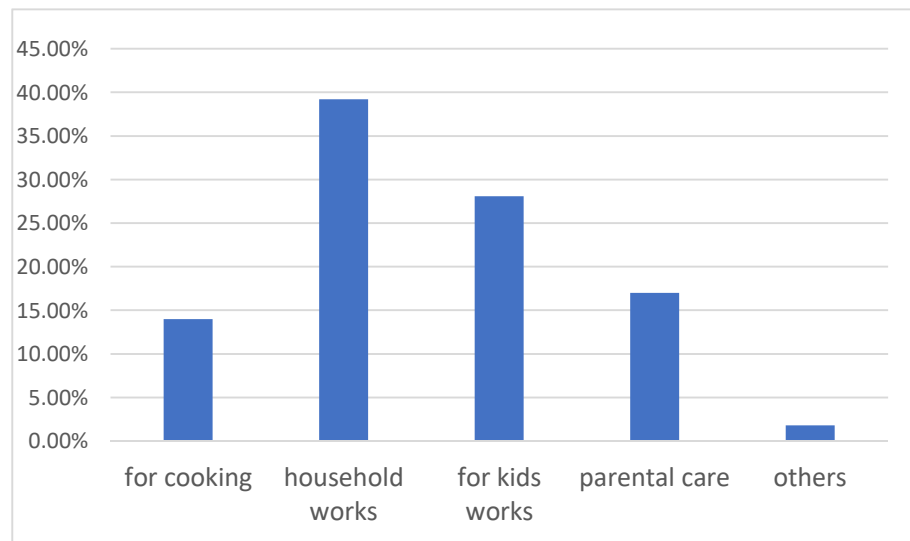
Table 3.9: Does your partner support the household work?

		Count	Column N %
Does your partner support the household work	no	41	20.5%
	yes	159	79.5%
	Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field research data (2022)

It is indicated that the support of partners for home duties, 79.5 percent of respondents get support from their spouse for household work. Only 20.5 percent of couples do not get support from their spouse.

Graph 3.1: Types of assistance made by partners



Source: Field research data (2022)

The bar chart illustrates the distribution of respondents' participation in various domestic responsibilities. The highest percentage, approximately 40%, is involved in general household work, indicating a strong emphasis on shared duties such as cleaning, organizing, and maintaining the home. Following this, around 28% contribute to tasks related to child care, showing a considerable level of engagement in nurturing and supporting children's needs. Parental care, likely referring to caring for elderly parents or dependents, accounts for about 17%, reflecting a notable but less dominant area of

responsibility. Cooking, at approximately 14%, suggests a moderate level of involvement, possibly influenced by traditional role perceptions or time constraints. A very small proportion, roughly 2%, is attributed to ‘others,’ signifying minimal engagement in tasks outside the listed categories. Overall, the chart highlights a relatively balanced distribution of household responsibilities, with a notable prioritization of essential domestic and caregiving roles.

Table 3.10: If your partner is unsupported in your work, is that a barrier to your family's happiness.

	Count	Column N %
If the partner yes	171	85.5%
unsupported for you, is no	29	14.5%
that a barrier to family's Total	200	100.0%
happiness		

Source: Field research data (2022)

The above data show how the happiness of the family is depending on it, 85.5 percent of respondents believe that the partner's support is important for the happiness of the family. However, 14.5% of respondents claimed that it has no negative impact on family satisfaction.

Table 3.11: Who makes the decisions at home?

	Count	Column N %
The decision maker of own	6	3.0%
the family me and the	194	97.0%
partner		
by parents	0	0.0%
by children	0	0.0%
others	0	0.0%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field research data (2022)

In families, 97.0 percent of respondents claim that both the respondent and partner make decisions together. Only 3.0 percent of respondents said that they make their own decisions without concerning partner involvement.

Table 3.12. Are you happy with your family life?

		Count	Column N %
Are you happy with your family life	Very satisfying	16	8.0%
	Satisfying	70	37.0%
	Moderate	58	29.0%
	Unsatisfying	45	22.5%
	Very unsatisfying	11	5.5%
	No idea	0	0.0%
	Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field research data (2022)

The happiness of the family is a critical aspect in finding a balance between job and family life. The success of the work-life is directly impacted by how well the family life is managed. The aforementioned chart demonstrates whether the responder has a good family life. This chart demonstrates that roughly 45.0 percent of respondents are content with their family life. Of these, 22.5 percent are dissatisfied with family life, and 29.0 percent have a moderate attitude toward it. 5.5% of respondents said they are extremely dissatisfied with family life.

Table 3.13: Impact of the job life on the family life

		Count	Column N %
Impact of the job life on the family life	highly influence	128	64.0%
	generally, influence	58	29.0%
	lowly influence	10	5.0%
	no influence	3	1.5%
	no idea	1	0.5%
	Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field research data (2022)

This table shows that 64.0% of respondents claim that work-life balance significantly affects family life. However, 29.0 percent of respondents claim that family life is generally impacted by employment.



Additionally, 5.0% predicted it can have little effect, and 1.5% claim work-life balance does not affect family life. Additionally, 0.5% of respondents say they have no idea.

Table 3.14: Priorities of the life

		Responses	
		N	Percent
What areas do you focus on?	Job	121	17.5%
	Family	155	22.4%
	Financial Status	81	11.7%
	Freedom	103	14.9%
	Religious Activities	52	7.5%
	Health	180	26.0%
Total		692	100.0%

Source: Field research data (2022)

The data reveals that respondents prioritize various aspects of life, with health emerging as the most significant focus, accounting for 26% of total responses. This suggests a growing awareness of personal well-being and its impact on overall life quality. Family follows closely behind at 22.4%, highlighting the importance of familial relationships and responsibilities in respondents' lives. Jobs and careers are the next key focus at 17.5%, reflecting the relevance of work in shaping identity, stability, and daily structure. Freedom, cited by 14.9%, suggests a desire for autonomy and personal choice, which may relate to broader life satisfaction. Financial status, at 11.7%, remains a concern, though not the top priority, possibly indicating that while money matters, it is not the sole driver of decision-making. Religious activities, though the least cited at 7.5%, still hold value for a segment of the population. Overall, the data underscores a balanced yet health- and family-centered perspective on what matters most in respondents' lives.

Table 3.15: Which qualities are essential for successful family life?

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Essentials for life	correct understanding	147	23.0%	73.5%
	harmony	67	10.5%	33.5%
	avoid alcohol	29	4.5%	14.5%
	good living	125	19.6%	62.5%

	trustworthy	81	12.7%	40.5%
	patience	63	9.9%	31.5%
	decision-making ability	39	6.1%	19.5%
	economic wellness	34	5.3%	17.0%
	respect for other's ideas	53	8.3%	26.5%
Total		638	100.0%	319.0%

Source: Field research data (2022)

The data presents a wide range of life values considered essential by respondents, with “correct understanding” ranking highest at 23% of responses, representing 73.5% of cases. This suggests that empathy, communication, and mutual comprehension are foundational qualities in maintaining a fulfilling life. “Good living” follows closely at 19.6% (62.5% of cases), indicating the importance of overall life satisfaction and comfort, possibly tied to emotional, physical, and material well-being. Trustworthiness (12.7%) and harmony (10.5%) are also prominent, emphasizing the value of integrity and peaceful coexistence in both personal and social spheres. Traits such as patience (9.9%) and respect for others’ ideas (8.3%) reflect the significance of emotional maturity and openness. Meanwhile, practical life skills like decision-making ability (6.1%) and economic wellness (5.3%) are acknowledged, though slightly less emphasized. The lower percentage for avoiding alcohol (4.5%) may reflect that while some view it as a moral or health-related issue, it is not a central life priority for most. Overall, the responses highlight a balanced emphasis on moral values, emotional intelligence, and practical life skills as pillars of a meaningful life.

4. Findings

High Levels of Work-Life Conflict

A substantial portion of respondents indicated that their work life significantly affects their family life. Specifically, 64% reported a high level of influence from work on family, confirming that long working hours, early departures, and late returns reduce family interaction and harmony.

Prevalence of Dual-Income Households



Approximately 74% of respondents' spouses are also employed, suggesting that most families are navigating dual-income dynamics. This presents both opportunities for financial stability and challenges in coordinating time for household and childcare responsibilities.

Low Satisfaction with Income and Spousal Occupation

The study found that 82% of respondents are dissatisfied with their income, and 58.8% are not satisfied with their spouse's occupation. This dissatisfaction may stem from financial strain, job-related stress, or a perceived imbalance in household responsibilities.

Strong Financial Collaboration

An overwhelming 95.5% of respondents reported collaborating with their spouse on household expenses, indicating a strong trend of joint financial decision-making that promotes trust and partnership in family life.

Spousal Support in Domestic Duties

79.5% of respondents receive help from their partners with household work. The bar chart analysis shows significant involvement in general household work (40%), childcare (28%), and parental care (17%), reflecting active participation in family responsibilities.

Family Happiness Linked to Spousal Support

A striking 85.5% of respondents stated that lack of spousal support negatively impacts family happiness, suggesting that emotional and practical involvement from both partners is vital for maintaining a fulfilling family life.

Joint Decision-Making is Common

In 97% of households, decisions are made jointly by both spouses. This shared decision-making process correlates positively with family satisfaction and reduced conflict, as evidenced by the regression analysis in the study.

Mixed Levels of Satisfaction with Family Life



While 45% reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their family life, a notable 28% were dissatisfied to varying degrees, and 29% expressed only moderate satisfaction. This highlights the varying impact of work-life dynamics on personal and familial well-being.

Health and Family as Core Life Priorities

Among various life priorities, health (26%) and family (22.4%) were rated highest by respondents. This emphasizes the value placed on physical well-being and close relationships in the context of a balanced life.

Essential Life Values

The most commonly identified essentials for a successful family life were correct understanding (23%), good living (19.6%), trustworthiness (12.7%), and harmony (10.5%). These qualities reflect the importance of empathy, communication, and mutual respect in achieving balance and satisfaction in family life.

The following suggestions are made to maintain a balance between professional life and family life, considering the study's findings.

- * Studying time management, developing organizational skills, and stress management approaches (e.g., relaxation techniques).
- * Spend time with family and friends participating in activities that promote harmony and cooperation.
- * Spend time with your children and the sick, even if you are only at home for a short time. Disconnect from social media and your phone.
- * Limiting job-related activities even after arriving home from work.
- * The religion advises engaging in religious activities that support mental freedom as often as is practical. It's important to avoid participating in time-wasting activities.
- * Allowing the partner to exercise their independence and make decisions as necessary.
- * Make sure your spouse knows you are always there for them in everything.



- * It is important to find a good way to relieve job strain (ex- singing, playing fun games, meditating).
- * During the time spent at home, support your spouse as much as you can.
- * Deciding to work on projects that you find most appealing and pleasurable.
- * Developing the qualities of listening and patience.

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