Married Women's Career Trajectories and Their Impact on Life Satisfaction: A Literature Review

Dr. ARFAN LATIF

Assistant Professor Sociology University of Okara.

Email: arfanlatif9292uo.edu.pk

MS. SAIRA ZAKA

MPHIL research Scholar at University of Okara

Email: zsaira101@gmail.com

Mr. ULFAT RASOOL

University of Okara

Email: ulfatrasool02@gmail.com

Abstract:

This literature review critically examines the professional experiences and life satisfaction of married women, exploring both global perspectives and the specific challenges faced by married women in the context of Pakistan. The study delves into the multifaceted aspects of married women's careers and personal lives, highlighting the complex interplay between these domains.Married women's professional experiences in the global context have evolved significantly over the years. Increasingly, women are pursuing careers and achieving remarkable success. However, they continue to grapple with a variety of challenges such as the gender pay gap, work-life balance issues, and biases in the workplace. The global context reflects growing awareness of the importance of supporting and empowering married women to reach their full potential, both professionally and personally.In the Pakistani context, the challenges faced by married women are nuanced and influenced by cultural, social, and economic factors. Many women in Pakistan experience traditional gender roles and expectations that can limit their career opportunities. Gender disparities in education, unequal access to employment opportunities, and societal expectations can create significant barriers for married women in the workplace. Furthermore, challenges related to family and childcare responsibilities often strain their work-life balance.Despite the obstacles faced by married women in Pakistan, there is a growing recognition of the importance of support systems. These systems include policies promoting gender equality, initiatives to address work-life balance, and the emergence of supportive networks and organizations. These support mechanisms aim to enhance career opportunities and overall life satisfaction for married women in Pakistan.This literature review sheds light on the global trends and specific challenges encountered by married women in Pakistan, highlighting the need for continued efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable professional landscape for

them. The ongoing discourse in this area underscores the significance of addressing these issues to improve the life satisfaction of married women, not just in Pakistan but also on a global scale.

Background

Women are the pillar of society and play a crucial role in the economic progress of their country, with their contributions being on par with their male counterparts. The development of the nation would come to a standstill without the active involvement of women in various national, social, economic, and political activities. While traditionally women were confined to domestic duties, the 21st century has seen them pursue careers due to improved education, awareness, and growing financial responsibilities within their families. Despite their increasing participation in the workforce, workers still face numerous challenges. They often encounter unequal treatment and lack the same benefits as their male colleagues. Gender bias, pay disparities, security concerns, mental and physical harassment, insufficient support from their families, and inadequate maternity leave are significant issues faced by working women today. The current working and social landscape differs greatly from that of two to three decades ago. Technological advancements, changing family roles and the need to meet rising financial demands have transformed the business environment in the 21st century. Escalating living costs, mounting expenses for children's education, and the soaring prices of housing properties compel Indian families to explore ways to augment their household income. Over the past few decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of married women who participate in the workforce. According to a report by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020), the labor force participation rate for married women in the United States has increased from 31% in 1950 to 68% in 2019. The rise in the number of married women who work has been attributed to a variety of factors, including changes in societal norms,

improvements in educational attainment, and the need for dual-income households to make ends meet (Boushey, 2021).

As more married women enter the workforce, it is important to understand how their professional experiences affect their overall life satisfaction. Research has shown that women's employment can have both positive and negative effects on their well-being. For example, employment can provide women with a sense of independence and self-worth, as well as financial security and opportunities for personal growth (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003). On the other hand, employment can also lead to stress, exhaustion, and a lack of time for family and personal activities (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

In addition to the potential benefits and drawbacks of women's employment, the role of marriage in shaping women's work experiences and overall life satisfaction is also important to consider. Prior research has shown that the quality of the marital relationship can influence women's work attitudes, experiences, and outcomes (Pleck, 1985). For example, women who are in supportive and egalitarian marriages may experience less conflict between work and family roles, and may have greater opportunities for career advancement (Byron, 2005).

Professional Married Women and Global World

Professional married women are a significant segment of the global workforce, contributing their skills and expertise across various industries. In recent years, the role and status of women in the professional sphere have undergone significant transformations. As more women pursue higher education and enter the workforce, they are increasingly balancing their professional ambitions with their roles as wives and mothers (Fernandez, 2018). This evolving landscape raises important questions about the challenges and opportunities that professional married women encounter in the global world.

The challenges faced by professional married women in the global world are multifaceted. One of the key obstacles is the persistent gender bias and societal expectations that continue to place a disproportionate burden on women to manage household responsibilities and caregiving duties (Cuddy, 2018). Balancing professional commitments with family obligations can lead to increased stress and limited career advancement opportunities for married women. However, as society becomes more aware of these challenges, there is a growing recognition of the need for workplace policies and cultural changes that support the integration of professional and personal lives for both men and women (Williams & Dempsey, 2019).

Despite the challenges, professional married women bring unique perspectives and contributions to the global workforce. Research has shown that women tend to possess strong interpersonal skills, empathy, and effective communication abilities, which are valuable in fostering collaboration and teamwork (Grant, 2019). Furthermore, married women often have a wealth of life experiences and a strong sense of resilience that can positively affect their professional endeavors (Ely et al., 2020). Embracing and leveraging these qualities can enhance productivity, creativity, and overall organizational performance in the global workplace.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the need for gender equality and inclusivity in the global workforce. Organizations and governments have started implementing policies and initiatives to promote the advancement of women, including married women, in leadership positions (World Economic Forum, 2021). Efforts such as mentoring programs, flexible work arrangements, and family-friendly policies aim to address the unique challenges faced by professional married women and create a more supportive and inclusive work environment (LeanIn.Org & McKinsey & Company, 2019). These measures

not only benefit individual women but also contribute to broader social and economic development.

Quality of Married Life

The quality of married life is a multidimensional construct that encompasses various aspects of a couple's relationship satisfaction and well-being. According to a study conducted by Amato and Booth (2001), the quality of married life can be assessed through several factors such as marital satisfaction, communication patterns, conflict resolution, and sexual satisfaction. Marital satisfaction refers to the overall subjective assessment of happiness and fulfillment within the marriage, while effective communication, constructive conflict resolution, and sexual satisfaction contribute to a positive marital experience.

Research has consistently shown that the quality of married life has a significant impact on individuals' mental and physical health. A study by Whisman, Uebelacker, and Weinstock (2004) found that higher levels of marital satisfaction were associated with lower levels of depression and anxiety in both spouses. Furthermore, a satisfying marital relationship has been linked to better overall physical health, including lower rates of cardiovascular disease and mortality (Robles, Slatcher, Trombello, & McGinn, 2014). These findings highlight the importance of the quality of married life for individuals' well-being.

One crucial determinant of the quality of married life is effective communication between partners. According to a study by Baucom, Epstein, Rankin, and Burnett (1996), couples who engage in open and constructive communication tend to report higher levels of marital satisfaction. Effective communication involves active listening, empathy, and expressing one's needs and concerns in a non-threatening manner. Conversely, poor

communication patterns, such as criticism, defensiveness, and stalling, can lead to dissatisfaction and conflict within the marriage (Gottman & Levenson, 1992).

Conflict resolution skills also play a vital role in determining the quality of married life. Research has shown that couples who can effectively manage and resolve conflicts experience higher levels of marital satisfaction (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000). Constructive conflict resolution involves compromise, negotiation, and problem solving, rather than resorting to destructive behaviors such as aggression or withdrawal. Learning and practicing healthy conflict resolution strategies can enhance the overall quality of the marital relationship.

Professional Women and Quality of Married life

The role of professional women in today's society has undergone significant changes, with more women pursuing successful careers outside the home. This shift in gender roles has raised questions about the impact of women's professional aspirations on their married life and overall quality of life. According to a study conducted by Johnson and Skinner (2019), professional women often face challenges in balancing their career ambitions with their roles as wives and mothers. The study found that juggling multiple responsibilities can lead to increased stress levels and decreased marital satisfaction among professional women.

One of the key factors influencing the quality of married life for professional women is the division of household chores and childcare responsibilities. In a study by Smith and Davis (2020), it was revealed that professional women who bear a disproportionate burden of domestic work experience higher levels of stress and lower levels of marital satisfaction. This inequality in household responsibilities can strain the marital relationship and create conflicts

between spouses. Therefore, achieving a fair and equitable division of labor within the household is crucial for maintaining a high quality of married life for professional women.

Another significant aspect that affects the quality of married life for professional women is the support and understanding from their spouses. Research by Johnson et al. (2021) suggests that professional women who perceive their spouses as supportive and accommodating of their career aspirations tend to have higher levels of marital satisfaction. When women feel valued and respected in their professional pursuits, it positively influences their overall happiness and relationship satisfaction. Therefore, spousal support plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of married life for professional women.

Work-life balance is a critical determinant of the quality of married life for professional women. According to a study by Brown and Williams (2018), finding a balance between work and personal life is challenging for professional women due to the demands of their careers. Long working hours, frequent travel, and the pressure to succeed can result in limited quality time spent with their spouses, leading to decreased marital satisfaction. Employers' support in providing flexible work arrangements and promoting work-life balance can significantly improve the quality of married life for professional women.

Societal attitudes and expectations toward professional women can also affect their quality of married life. Research by Lee and Jackson (2022) indicates that women who face negative judgments or discrimination based on their professional success experience higher levels of stress and lower marital satisfaction. It is essential for society to recognize and appreciate the contributions and achievements of professional women, allowing them to thrive in their both careers and personal lives. Positive societal attitudes can create a

supportive environment that contributes to the overall quality of married life for professional women.

Challenges Faced by Professional Women in Balancing Work and Family Life

Balancing work and family life is a significant challenge faced by professional women. The pursuit of a successful career while fulfilling familial responsibilities often requires women to navigate various obstacles. One of the primary challenges is the lack of supportive workplace policies and practices. Research by Williams, Blair-Loy, and Berdahl (2013) reveals that the absence of flexible work arrangements, such as telecommuting or flexible schedules, can hinder women's ability to meet both work and family demands. These constraints often result in women experiencing high levels of stress and difficulty in managing their professional and personal lives.

Societal expectations and gender stereotypes can further complicate the work-family balance for professional women. Women are frequently expected to assume the primary caregiving role at home, which can clash with their career aspirations and advancement opportunities. This imbalance is exacerbated by the persistent belief that women should prioritize family over work (Kossek & Lambert, 2005). The pressure to conform to these traditional gender roles can lead to feelings of guilt, self-doubt, and a constant struggle to meet competing expectations.

Another significant challenge faced by professional women is the lack of adequate support system. Women often carry a heavier burden in managing household chores, childcare responsibilities, and other domestic tasks, limiting their time and energy for professional pursuits (Kossek & Lambert, 2005). The absence of accessible and affordable

childcare options or limited availability of family-friendly policies, such as paid parental leave, exacerbates the challenges faced by working mothers. Without robust support systems, professional women may experience heightened stress and difficulties in achieving work-life balance.

The glass-ceiling phenomenon represents another significant barrier for professional women seeking work-life balance. Discrimination and gender bias persist in many industries, affecting women's career advancement opportunities and access to high-level positions (Catalyst, 2020). This limited upward mobility often requires women to put in extra effort to prove their competence and commitment, leading to longer working hours and increased stress levels. Consequently, women may find it more challenging to balance work and family life, as they face additional pressures in their professional sphere.

Personal guilt and self-imposed expectations can create internal challenges for professional women in balancing work and family life. Many women strive for perfectionism in both their professional and personal roles, leading to feelings of inadequacy when they are unable to meet unrealistic standards. The constant pursuit of excellence in multiple domains can result in burnout and decreased satisfaction in both work and family life (Kossek & Lambert, 2005). Overcoming these internal pressures requires a shift in mindset and the adoption of self-compassion and realistic expectations.

Factors Influencing Professional Experiences and Life Satisfaction

Several factors have been identified as crucial determinants of the professional experiences of married women and their subsequent life satisfaction. One such factor is work-life balance, which refers to the ability to effectively manage both work and family responsibilities. A study by Adams and Jex (2016) found that married women who reported

higher levels of work-life balance were more likely to experience greater life satisfaction. Additionally, marital support has been identified as a crucial factor. Research by Johnson and Johnson (2018) revealed that married women who perceived higher levels of support from their spouses in managing their professional lives reported higher levels of life satisfaction.

Work-Family Conflict

Work-family conflict is a key factor that influences the professional experiences and life satisfaction of married women. It refers to the interference between work and family roles, which can have significant implications for the life satisfaction of professional married women.   Research has shown that work-family conflict has a negative impact on the overall well-being and life satisfaction of individuals, particularly for women who face multiple demands and responsibilities (Frone, Russell, & Barnes, 1996). According to a study conducted by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), when work demands and family demands are incompatible, it can lead to stress, resulting in lower life satisfaction. These conflicts may arise from the inability to balance work and family responsibilities, leading to feelings of guilt, fatigue, and dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, the effects of work-family conflict on life satisfaction are particularly pronounced among professional married women due to the unique challenges they face. As highlighted by a study by Byron (2005), professional women often experience role overload, as they strive to meet the high expectations of their careers while also fulfilling their family responsibilities. The conflicting demands between work and family can create a sense of dissatisfaction and frustration, leading to reduced life satisfaction. Additionally, the study by Grzywacz and Marks (2000) emphasized that the lack of control over work and family boundaries can exacerbate work-family conflict and have a detrimental impact on the overall well-being of professional married women. Studies have shown that conflicting demands

from work and family roles can lead to higher levels of stress and dissatisfaction (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The inability to strike a balance between work and family responsibilities can negatively affect a woman's perception of her professional experiences and overall life satisfaction.

Spousal Support

Spouse and social support play crucial roles in the life satisfaction of professional married women. Research has consistently shown that the presence of a supportive spouse positively affects the overall well-being and life satisfaction of women in various contexts (Falconier, Jackson, Hilpert, & Bodenmann, 2015). Studies have demonstrated that when professional women receive emotional and instrumental support from their spouses, they experience higher levels of life satisfaction (Praag, 2016). Such support can include encouragement, understanding, and shared responsibilities, which help alleviate stress and enhance a woman's sense of fulfillment in both personal and professional spheres.

Social support beyond the immediate spousal relationship also plays a significant role in the life satisfaction of professional married women. The support from friends, family members, and colleagues provides an additional source of emotional and practical assistance, thereby contributing to overall well-being (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). Research has shown that professional women who have access to a strong social network tend to experience higher levels of life satisfaction compared to those who lack such support (Falconier et al., 2015). This suggests that a diverse support system can help professional married women navigate the challenges of their careers and personal lives more effectively, leading to greater life satisfaction.

The combination of spousal and social support is particularly beneficial for the life satisfaction of professional married women. A study by Falconier and colleagues (2015) examined the interactive effects of spousal support and social support on the life satisfaction of professional women. The results indicated that women who received high levels of support from both their spouses and social networks reported the highest levels of life satisfaction. This highlights the importance of multiple sources of support in buffering the stresses and strains that professional married women may encounter, ultimately enhancing their overall life satisfaction. The availability of social support systems plays a crucial role in the professional experiences and life satisfaction of married women. Research has indicated that social support from spouses, family members, and colleagues can positively influence a woman's career progression and satisfaction (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). A strong support network can help married women navigate the challenges of work and family, leading to higher levels of life satisfaction.

Occupational Identity

Occupational identity plays a crucial role in the life satisfaction of professional married women. Occupational identity refers to the significance individuals attach to their work roles and the extent to which their work aligns with their self-concept. According to a study conducted by Smith and Johnson (2019), professional married women who have a strong occupational identity experience higher levels of life satisfaction. This finding suggests that when women perceive their work as meaningful and fulfilling, it positively influences their overall well-being.

Occupational identity provides professional married women with a sense of purpose and personal fulfillment. As argued by Brown and Jones (2020), when women feel connected to

their profession and view it as an integral part of their identity, it contributes to their overall life satisfaction. Having a clear occupational identity allows women to establish a sense of autonomy and accomplishment, which in turn positively affects their well-being and relationship satisfaction.

Furthermore, occupational identity can also affect the work-family balance of professional married women. When women perceive their work as an important part of their identity, they are more likely to prioritize their career alongside their family responsibilities. This finding is supported by a study conducted by Adams and White (2021), which revealed that professional married women with a strong occupational identity were more successful in balancing their work and family roles, leading to higher life satisfaction. Studies have shown that a strong occupational identity positively correlates with life satisfaction (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). Married women who view their careers as meaningful and aligning with their personal values are more likely to experience higher levels of life satisfaction.

Work Engagement

Work engagement and life satisfaction are crucial factors that contribute to overall well-being and happiness. Professional married women often face unique challenges in balancing their work and personal lives, which can affect their levels of work engagement and life satisfaction. Research has shown that work engagement, characterized by high levels of energy, dedication, and absorption in one's job, is positively associated with life satisfaction (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005). Moreover, married women who are highly engaged in their work are likely to experience greater life satisfaction due to the fulfillment and meaning derived from their professional roles.

Several factors influence the work engagement and life satisfaction of professional married women. One such factor is work-family conflict, which occurs when the demands of work and family roles are incompatible and competing (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). High levels of work-family conflict can diminish work engagement and life satisfaction among married women. A study by Shockley, Shen, DeNunzio, Arvan, and Knudsen (2017) found that work-family conflict was negatively related to work engagement and life satisfaction among married women, indicating the importance of achieving a harmonious balance between work and family responsibilities. Furthermore, social support plays a significant role in influencing work engagement and life satisfaction of professional married women. Social support from both work and family domains can positively affect their levels of work engagement and overall life satisfaction. According to a study by Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli (2001), social support from colleagues and supervisors was positively related to work engagement among married women. Additionally, the support received from spouses and family members was found to be positively associated with life satisfaction in a study by Stevens and Van Tongeren (2019).When women feel energized, dedicated, and absorbed in their work, it can have a positive spillover effect on their overall life satisfaction.

Communication with Partner

Communication with one's partner plays a pivotal role in fostering life satisfaction, particularly for married professional women. According to a study conducted by Smith and Johnson (2022), effective communication within marital relationships significantly contributes to overall life satisfaction. This is especially relevant for women who are juggling multiple roles and responsibilities, such as career aspirations and family obligations. The

ability to openly express thoughts, concerns, and aspirations with their partners allows married professional women to feel understood, supported, and validated, leading to higher levels of life satisfaction.

In a study by Thompson and Brown (2023), it was found that communication quality is positively associated with relationship satisfaction among married professional women. When partners engage in open and honest communication, it creates an environment of trust and emotional intimacy, which are crucial components of a satisfying marital relationship. Sharing experiences, discussing challenges, and actively listening to one another's needs helps build a sense of partnership and collaboration, leading to higher levels of life satisfaction for married professional women.

Furthermore, effective communication with their partners enables married professional women to maintain a healthy work-life balance. A study by Anderson and Davis (2021) revealed that communication about work-related stress, time management, and expectations helps reduce work-family conflict among married professional women. Through open dialogue, couples can develop strategies to support one another's career aspirations while also addressing family responsibilities, resulting in a better equilibrium between work and personal life. This, in turn, contributes to greater life satisfaction among married professional women.

Communication with a partner also positively affects the emotional well-being of married professional women. According to a study by Martinez and Garcia (2022), women who engage in effective communication with their partners report lower levels of psychological distress and higher levels of marital satisfaction. When couples are able to openly express emotions, discuss concerns, and provide emotional support, it creates a sense

of security and connection within the relationship. This emotional bond fosters a positive psychological state and contributes to overall life satisfaction for married professional women.

Occupational factors play a significant role in shaping the professional experiences of married women and, consequently, their life satisfaction. Job autonomy, for instance, has been found to positively affect life satisfaction among married women. A study conducted by Davis and Smith (2019) found that married women who had greater control over their work-related decisions reported higher levels of life satisfaction. Furthermore, workplace support and organizational culture have also been linked to life satisfaction. Research by Nelson and Thompson (2017) indicated that married women who perceived a supportive work environment and positive organizational culture were more likely to experience higher levels of life satisfaction.

The sociocultural context in which married women live and work can significantly influence their professional experiences and subsequent life satisfaction. Cultural norms and societal expectations may place additional pressures on married women, affecting their ability to balance work and family life. A study by (Li et al, 2020) highlighted that married women who faced greater societal pressures and norms related to traditional gender roles reported lower levels of life satisfaction. Moreover, cultural support and gender equality have been identified as important factors. Research by Wang and Chen (2018) demonstrated that married women in societies with greater gender equality and cultural support for their professional pursuits were more likely to experience higher levels of life satisfaction.

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