

Research Paper:

Female Managers' Experiences of Work-family Enrichment Realization: A Grounded Theory Study



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ABSTRACT

Background: Challenges created by the simultaneous management of family and work among working women, especially married female managers with children are serious issues affecting all human societies, including Iran. Accordingly, the present study aimed to explore the realization of work-family enrichment based on the experiences of married female managers working in Parsian Bank.

Methods: This qualitative study was conducted using the grounded theory approach. The study participants were 22 female managers who were selected using purposive and theoretical sampling methods from the staff of Parsian Bank, in 2019. The necessary data were collected by semi-structured interviews. The collected data were analyzed using Strauss & Corbin open, axial, and selective coding method through constant comparison in MAXQDA.

Results: The obtained results indicated that female managers employed several strategies, including instrumental strategies, problem-solving management strategies, emotion-related strategies, behavioral measures, and measures to improve personal development and growth for work-family enrichment. The factors facilitating work-family enrichment were self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, support, and environmental network. However, other factors, including socio-cultural characteristics, the challenges of family cultural context, the non-supportive culture of the organization, and the cultural challenges of society were barriers for work-family enrichment. This process led to job satisfaction and satisfaction with marital life among the examined female managers. The core variable manifested as "the multidimensional use of self to enrich work and family".

Conclusion: The insights from this study added to the knowledge of work-family enrichment among female managers. Female managers and officials can use this model to better understand and manage family and work, concurrently.

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Highlights

- Challenges of family-work conflicts among working women, especially the married female managers with children are serious issues affecting all human societies, including Iran.
- Female managers used instrumental strategies, problem-solving management strategies, emotion-related strategies, behavioral measures, and measures to improve personal development and growth for work-family enrichment.
- The factors facilitating work-family enrichment were self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, support, and environmental network.
- The challenges of family cultural context, the non-supportive culture of the organization, and the cultural challenges of society were barriers to work-family enrichment.

Plain Language Summary

Conflicts between work and family in employee women impact their entire life. Work-family enrichment creates a new opportunity for women to fulfill their dual roles as mothers and managers. The collected results indicated that the female managers were using several strategies, including instrumental strategies, problem-solving management strategies, emotion-related strategies, behavioral measures, and measures to promote personal development and growth for work-family enrichment. This process led to job satisfaction and satisfaction with marital life among the female managers.

1. Introduction

The role of women has dramatically changed in recent years (Xuanru et al. 2020). Women, like men, seek to play a role beyond their family-related responsibilities (Beham et al. 2017). However, a large number of women who enter the labor market as workers are mothers and expected to integrate their maternal role with their job responsibilities (Koekemoer & Olckers 2019). Besides, they are expected to concurrently play the roles of a mother, a wife, and an employee. Working women have a family life and a working life and have to manage both (Marais et al. 2014). However, sometimes it is difficult for women to concurrently maintain a satisfying personal life and successfully perform the job due to the complexities of these roles (Koekemoer & Olckers 2019). In particular, managing the family and engaging in a highly demanding job, like those involving managerial roles expose women to some challenges (Lin, et al. 2020). If these challenges remain unsolved, they can affect the health and quality of life of working mothers; thus, such conditions could lead to irreparable harm to the family, organization, and community (Oren & Levin 2017).

Studies that have generally addressed the interaction of family and work roles have mainly focused on the nega-

tive aspects of this interaction, like the conflict between home and work (Heskiau & Mccarthy 2020). Most of the studies conducted in Iran have taken this conflict for granted and only addressed the relationship between work and family (Khodabakhshi-Koolaei et al. 2015). However, recent studies have addressed the need to use effective methods to balance different aspects of life and reduce conflicts that occur due to the interaction between home and work responsibilities. These studies revealed that individuals attempt to manage family and work and take advantage of one domain to maintain and improve the other (Maqsood 2019). These studies have highlighted the significance of positive synergies of life roles in individuals' performance and health (Heskiau & McCarthy 2020). They consider engagement in several roles as a positive trend and refer to it as work-family enrichment (Koekemoer & Olckers 2019). Work-Family Enrichment (WFE) is defined as the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in another (Chen et al. 2018). Family Work-Enrichment (FWE) improves the two essential parts of the family and work through a positive and fruitful link and increases the quality of family and work-life (Koekemoer, Olckers & Nel et al. 2020). WFE is a two-way concept; work-to-family enrichment suggests that work can enrich the family and FWE indicates that the family can enrich the work (Lin et al. 2020; Ollier-Malaterre et al. 2013).

FWE refers to how work roles benefit from family roles through developmental resources, positive affect, and gains in efficiency derived from family involvement (Beham et al. 2017). Family and work life are not always in conflict; however, these roles can enrich each other with the resources and rewards inherent in both (Baral & Bhargava 2011). The multiple roles that women have to play can lead to enrichment rather than failure or conflict. This is because these roles can provide further opportunities and resources for women to succeed in the optimal management of multiple roles; accordingly, they experience a better sense of self, family, and work-life. This, in turn, leads to women's empowerment and they can have greater control over their lives (Boixados et al. 2010). Greenhaus and Powell (2006) argued that family-to-work outcomes are significantly richer than those of the work-to-family. They also declared that family achievement and their associated outcomes can lead to increased performance in the workplace by developing positive emotions at home. Mishra (2015) documented that family resources are essential for experiencing family-to-work enrichment. These resources aid individuals to more easily and efficiently manage their family and work functions. Besides, when such positive family experiences are transferred from the family to the work, they improve individuals' job performance and lead to WFE. Beham et al. (2017) stated that in line with traditional gender roles, women reported higher enrichment than men. Moreover, women may have more opportunities due to further family attachment and participation in household activities to transfer knowledge, skills, and feelings from the family to work.

In a recent study, Mangni et al. (2020) examined the effects of FWE during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic on the anxiety of educational workers who were mostly women and forced to work from home. Lin et al. (2020) stated that enrichment and positive family events are recognized as predictors of managers' behaviors. Ten Brummelhuis et al. (2014) argued that the beneficial effects of the family to work in managers can be associated with positive behaviors, like supporting subordinates and co-workers in the workplace.

Nicklin and Mcnall (2013) emphasized that given the differences between the Eastern and Western cultures, further research on the indigenous cultures of each country is essential. Such measures could help to further understand the differences in the perception of enrichment in various cultures. This is because the cultural values of each country can affect employees' experiences of WFE. Moreover, Iran is a family-oriented society. Historically, family orientation in Iran has been among the indica-

tors of the values of the cultural system. In this system, strong emotional ties are established between family members; the family plays an essential role in creating interpersonal relationships (Hajian Moghadam 2014).

Balancing family and work is a major health problem for married working women. Besides, organizational development, i.e., the key to a healthy and efficient society, depends on women's ability to successfully manage family and work; however, the issue of the balance between the family and work has received less attention (Koeckmoer & Olckers 2019; Burke & Richardsen, 2019).

Most studies conducted in Iran on work-family interaction and issues related to married female managers have focused on the negative aspects of work-family interaction. Such studies disregarded the positive aspects and benefits of engaging in family roles for women. The present study aimed to develop a grounded theory about the WFE based on the personal experiences of married female managers working in the branches of Parsian Bank in Tehran City, Iran.

2. Materials and Methods

This qualitative study was conducted using a grounded theory approach in the branches of Parsian Bank in Tehran City, Iran, in 2019. The present research aimed to explore FWE based on the personal experiences of married female managers working in these banks. The grounded theory is a qualitative research method, i.e., used to study social processes in human interactions and the factors underlying these processes. It examines phenomena in a natural context; thus, the grounded theory is the best choice for formulating a theory or model about a given phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin 1998). Therefore, the present study was conducted using the ground theory. The study participants were selected using the purposive sampling method and from female managers working in Parsian Bank in Tehran City, Iran, in 2019. The inclusion criteria of the study included female gender, working as a manager with ≥ 4 years of work experience and ≥ 3 years of managerial service records, being married for ≥ 3 years, having at least a BA degree, having 1-2 children, and 30-45 years of age. The study participants with FWE experience and a high score on the Work-Family Enrichment Scale (Carlson et al. 2006) were purposively selected. The researcher did not know the study participants in advance; thus, she asked the female managers to introduce other female managers. WFE was measured using the multidimensional 18-item scale developed by Carlson et al. (2006). This scale measures both WFE and FWE, with 9 items per direction. Cronbach's alphas coef-

ficient for WFE and FWE are 0.94 and 0.95, respectively (Carlson et al. 2006). After choosing two study participants who met the inclusion criteria, data collection continued with theoretical sampling. Sampling continued until reaching data saturation.

The required data were collected by semi-structured interviews conducted with 22 married female managers. Each interview was initiated with the following general question: "What does it feel like to be a married working woman?" The interview proceeded with other questions, such as: "How do you balance the family and work when family interests conflict with your professional interests?" Depending on the responses provided by the research participants, other questions could have been asked to clarify the issue and remove any possible ambiguities. The interviews were recorded and immediately transcribed after each session. The average interview time was 48 minutes. Upon completing each interview, its content was immediately transcribed word by word and concurrently analyzed. Data analysis was performed using a constant comparison approach (Strauss & Corbin 1998).

The transcript of each interview was read several times to understand its content. Besides, the related statements were identified and a code was assigned per statement. All interviews were coded using the same method. To this end, the data extracted from the interviews were coded in 3 steps of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. In open coding, the transcripts of the interviews were reviewed several times. Besides, the significant statements were extracted and codified based on the research participants' accounts and the conceptual codes developed by the researcher. Similar codes were merged into categories. Then, the categories were compared with each other concerning similarities and differences. Next, the categories and subcategories with the same theme were merged into an axial category around a common axis. Finally, in the last coding stage -selective coding- the extracted codes were merged and revised. Besides, by referring to the text of the interviews and identifying the relevant themes, the relationships between the extracted categories and subcategories were revealed. Furthermore, the category most frequently repeated in the data that could relate the identified categories to each other was discovered. The final data analysis has led to the emergence of the core category, i.e., a multidimensional use of self to enrich work and family. The trustworthiness criteria, including credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (based on Guba & Lincoln 1994) were applied to present the rigor of the study. To ensure credibility, the categories were presented to the study participants. Accordingly, they were re-

quested to express their opinions for further clarification. To ensure the dependability of the data, the coding and analysis procedures were controlled by peer debriefing. To ensure the transferability of the findings, the contexts of the research were well described. Additionally, the decisions made in the research process were recorded; thus, others could use the present research findings in similar situations. Eventually, to ensure the confirmability of the finding, the researchers used an audit trail. All raw data, analysis, notes, and processes were presented to the auditors and their approval was received.

3. Results

All 22 women participating in the interviews were the managers of the branches of Parsian Bank in Tehran City, Iran. All female managers were married and had children. Table 1 presents the study participants' demographic characteristics.

The obtained data from 22 interviews were analyzed and repetitively compared; the relevant findings were summarized in 6 main categories and 20 subcategories. All the categories identified through axial coding were related to each other; these data helped to understand the shared experience of married female managers of FWE. Table 2 lists the categories, subcategories, and themes identified in the present study.

The raw data collected from the interviews were analyzed and codified in the form of themes, categories, and subcategories. Afterward, the identified subcategories were summarized in the form of a core category that accounted for the phenomenon in question. The core category clarified the links between all categories and subcategories, leading to a model. The extracted model could answer the research questions and was a source for generating new questions. To this end, all the main categories were merged into causal conditions, contextual conditions, intervening conditions, action/interaction strategies, and outcomes. Then, the model was plotted around the core category. This theoretical model could account for the FWE process based on the personal experiences of married female managers (Figure 1). Examples of the study participants' statements were also presented for further clarification.

Causal conditions

Family social support

All study participants acknowledged that family support is a major contributor to FWE. They also declared that family

Table 1. The study participants' demographic characteristics

| Interviewee | Age, y | Educational Level | Work Records | Managerial Service Records | Duration of Marriage | Number of Children |
|-------------|--------|-------------------|--------------|----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | 45 | MA | 22 | 8 | 16 | 2 |
| 2 | 37 | BA | 14 | 5 | 14 | 1 |
| 3 | 39 | PhD | 16 | 8 | 15 | 1 |
| 4 | 39 | MA | 15 | 5 | 12 | 1 |
| 5 | 35 | MA | 12 | 3 | 5 | 1 |
| 6 | 37 | MA | 13 | 7 | 12 | 1 |
| 7 | 36 | BA | 14 | 5 | 11 | 2 |
| 8 | 36 | BA | 12 | 3 | 8 | 1 |
| 9 | 40 | MA | 15 | 7 | 11 | 1 |
| 10 | 38 | MA | 12 | 4 | 10 | 1 |
| 11 | 37 | MA | 14 | 4 | 7 | 1 |
| 12 | 38 | MA | 13 | 5 | 13 | 1 |
| 13 | 37 | BA | 13 | 4 | 7 | 2 |
| 14 | 36 | BA | 12 | 3 | 12 | 1 |
| 15 | 36 | MA | 13 | 5 | 10 | 1 |
| 16 | 37 | PhD | 14 | 5 | 15 | 1 |
| 17 | 41 | MA | 17 | 4 | 6 | 1 |
| 18 | 40 | MA | 17 | 6 | 13 | 1 |
| 19 | 40 | MA | 15 | 5 | 13 | 1 |
| 20 | 35 | MA | 10 | 3 | 4 | 1 |
| 21 | 42 | MA | 21 | 6 | 20 | 2 |
| 22 | 40 | BA | 17 | 6 | 13 | 1 |

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social support and support resources are critical to experiencing FWE. Family social support was divided into 3 subcategories, including instrumental social support, emotional social support, and social information support.

Instrumental social support

The first subcategory was instrumental social support that covered issues, such as family engagement, financial care, and services received from the family. The research participants considered the equitable distribution of tasks in families where both spouses are working as an unavoidable matter. For example, one of the study par-

ticipants stated, "My husband and I are both employed. So, we have to divide the household chores. Of course, the important matter is to reach an agreement to perform the chores according to a schedule" (Participant #5).

Emotional social support

Emotional social support as a subcategory of family support refers to the psychological and intangible support an individual receives from their family members. Emotional social support was subdivided into emotional attention, psychological rewards, and meeting psychological-emotional needs. Emotional attention indicates

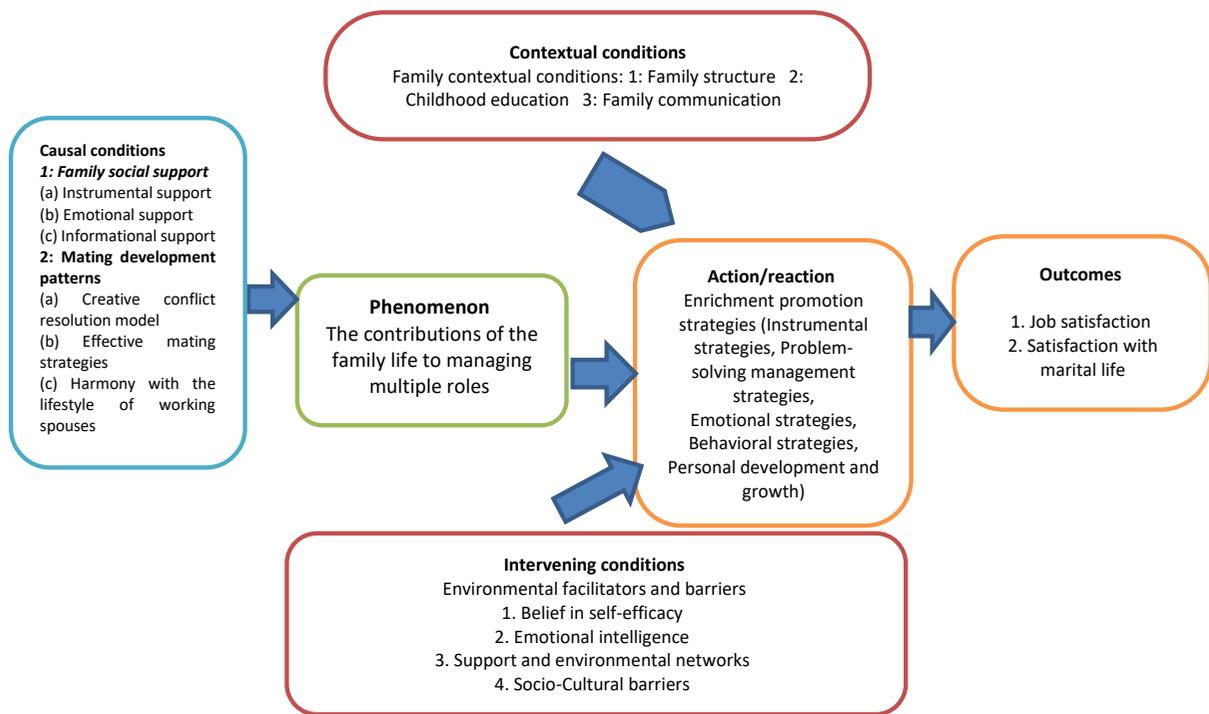


Figure 1. The conceptual model of multidimensional use of self to enrich work and family

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that family members pay attention to an individual by expressing empathetic feelings, listening to and understanding their problems, and encouraging her. The research participants pointed to their family members' empathy. For instance, a study participant stated: "If your husband is there for you in the face of problems and he can put himself in your shoes and does not take the wrong side, you can cope with your problems much more easily" (Participant #1).

Informational social support

Informational social support was subcategorized into advisory support and data collection. The study participants addressed the intellectual assistance and support received from their family members. This kind of support can be referred to as advisory support. The study subjects stated that they received assistance and advice to solve their problems. One study participant stated: "Whenever I face a problem I tend to draw on my father's experiences, who has worked in such an environment for numerous years and use his advice to solve my issues" (Participant #2).

Spousal growth patterns

The research participants believed that spousal growth patterns are also significant in experiencing FWE. These patterns cover creative conflict resolution model, effec-

tive spousal strategies, and adherence to the lifestyle of working spouses as discussed below:

The creative conflict resolution model

The creative conflict resolution model covered issues, such as concluding bilateral contracts, constructive confrontation, and compromise. The research participants stated that they agreed with their husbands to perform some tasks jointly. One study participant stated: "We agreed that I would help our child with his school homework and assignments and my husband would make arrangements for the child's school attendance and his language and swimming courses" (Participant #8).

Effective spousal strategies

Effective spousal strategies were subdivided into financial skills, role modeling, and mature experiences. The study participants mentioned that they used a common treasury system. For example, one research participant declared: "We are financially transparent and we have a common account. We deposit all our income in it and spend it all together. We pay equally for the house, the car, the land, and anything else. This makes my husband support me in our life" (Participant #19).

Table 2. A summary of the coding results

| Subcategories | Categories | Themes |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Family engagement, financial care, services received from the family | Instrumental support | Family social support |
| Emotional attention, psychological rewards, emotional needs | Emotional support | |
| Advisory support, data collection | Informational support | Spousal growth patterns |
| Concluding bilateral contracts, constructive confrontation, and compromise | Creative conflict resolution model | |
| Financial skills, role modeling, and mature experiences | Effective spousal strategies | |
| Managing the role demands and spousal empathy | Adherence to the lifestyle of working spouses | |
| The type of structure, role function | Family structure | Family contextual conditions |
| Parenting styles, childhood development experiences | Childhood education | |
| Positive family interactions, positive thinking | Family interactions | |
| Self-Efficacy in home and work management, social self-efficacy | Belief in self-efficacy | Environmental facilitators and barriers |
| Intrapersonal factors, interpersonal factors, adaptation, stress management | Emotional intelligence | |
| Access to cultural and educational centers, as well as social relationships and ties | Support and environmental networks | |
| The challenges of family cultural context, the non-supportive culture of the organization, the cultural challenges of society | Socio-Cultural barriers | |
| Managing housework, managing children’s affairs, rewarding oneself | Instrumental strategies | Enrichment promotion strategies |
| Acquiring information, strategic problem solving, seeking social support, negotiation | Problem-Solving management strategies | |
| Dividing boundaries, re-framing, sympathy with spouse, spiritual appeal, participating in enjoyable activities, having fun with family | Emotional strategies | |
| Practicing exercise, relaxation techniques, asking friends for help | Behavioral measures | |
| Personal analysis and exploration, going beyond one’s needs | Measures to personal development and growth | |
| Feelings of liveliness at work, having interest and desire to work, feelings of inner satisfaction, the expression of ideas, feelings of progress at work | Job satisfaction | Enrichment outcomes |
| Positive feeling to the spouse, feeling emotional security in the relationship, understanding the needs and sensitivities of the spouse, positive attitude to the relationship, love, and affection for the spouse | Satisfaction with marital life | |

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Adherence to the lifestyle of working spouses

This category was subcategorized into managing the role demands and spousal empathy. The study participants addressed the importance of adaptation to work-family conflict: “In the beginning, my husband and I discussed work a lot, but we found it affecting our relationship. We controlled this issue; over time, we decided that none of us discuss work at home as much as we can” (Participant #5).

Contextual conditions

Family contextual conditions

The research participants outlined 3 factors constituting the context for experiencing FWE as family context con-

ditions. This category includes 3 subcategories; family structure, childhood education, and family interactions.

Family structure

The structure of the family consists of the type of structure and the function of the role. The type of family structure refers to the size of the family. The size of the family could be small, like the nuclear family, or large, like the extended or joint family. The study participants stated that they received further support in extended families. For instance, a study participant stated: “I always receive help and support from my uncle’s wife and her family members who are our neighbors. They help me. On the days when the children have English classes and I go to work, my uncle takes them to the class and my uncle’s wife cooks for them” (Participant #17).

Childhood education

Childhood education was conceptualized into issues, such as parenting styles and childhood development experiences. The research participants pointed to the authoritative parenting style. One of the participants stated: “I speak and act decisively in the workplace and it roots in my childhood when my father taught us to act and behave with self-esteem” (Participant #14).

Family interactions

Family interactions accounted for issues, such as positive family interactions and positive thinking. The research participants reported the existence of a good relationship between family members: “Having a good relationship with our family members helps us to establish a better relationship with others, like our co-workers” (Participant #6).

Intervening conditions

Environmental facilitators and barriers

Environmental facilitators and barriers in the present study were identified as intervening conditions. The participants referred to individual, family, organizational, and social characteristics, as the facilitator or inhibitors of FWE. Intervening conditions were divided into 4 categories, as follows: belief in self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, supportive and environmental networks, and socio-cultural barriers.

Belief in self-efficacy

Belief in self-efficacy covered issues, like self-efficacy in family and work management and social self-efficacy. When an individual believes that she is capable of managing tasks and activities and coping with challenges and overcoming them, she feels self-efficacy in managing family and work. The study participants signified the importance of self-confidence: “Self-confidence is critical for an individual; accordingly, she can consider herself as capable of fulfilling the responsibilities assigned to her and accept herself and be confident in the decisions and actions she takes” (Participant #14).

Emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence was categorized into intrapersonal factors, interpersonal factors, adaptation, and stress management. Intrapersonal factors refer to individuals' mental skills. The study participants considered the motivation to progress as essential. One of the study partici-

pants stated: “I am not satisfied with small things in life and I feel I can do great things. I have set some goals to make progress, and I am trying to achieve them” (Participant #11).

Support and environmental networks

The study participants believed that support and environmental networks provide access to cultural and educational centers and improve social relationships and ties. The research participants stated that they could receive support from daycare centers, like kindergartens to care for their children: “Luckily, I found a kindergarten whose manager is a psychologist and spends a lot of time educating and training children. Since I have inadequate time to meet all my child's needs; thus, I can receive help from the kindergarten to take care of my child and I would be helpless if I was not supported by the kindergarten” (Participant #9).

Socio-cultural barriers

The identified socio-cultural barriers included challenges in the cultural context of the family, the non-supportive culture of the organization, and cultural challenges in the community. The research participants reported that the traditional context of the family leads to some cultural challenges. One of the study participants stated: “Some colleagues who live in more traditional contexts have a greater burden. This is because of their commitment to the traditional maternal and marital roles” (Participant #17).

Action and reaction

Enrichment promotion strategies

The obtained data revealed that the female managers adopted various strategies to improve enrichment. These strategies were categorized as enrichment promotion strategies. This category was further divided into 5 subcategories; instrumental strategies, problem-solving management strategies, emotion-oriented strategies, behavioral strategies, and personal development.

Instrumental strategies

Instrumental strategies included strategies, such as managing household chores, handling children's affairs, and rewarding oneself. The participants reported that sometimes they used practical methods and tools to manage daily activities and temporarily solved the problems caused by family and working issues. These strategies helped them to control the situation and manage house-

work activities. For instance, they used to hire a worker to perform housework: “I hire a worker to do some tasks, i.e., time-consuming, like cleaning the house, and I read in my leisure time” (Participant #22).

Problem-solving management strategies

To further empower themselves, the explored participants reported that they used rational approaches and techniques to solve life challenges. This helped them to manage and solve problems by improving their abilities. These techniques are called problem-solving strategies. One study participant highlighted the significance of the receipt of education and information. One of the examined participants stated: “The only issue that can make me obsessed at work is my children’s problems. For example, a few months ago, my daughter had a problem and I was preoccupied with it. As I did not want it to affect my life, I enrolled in a workshop called competent parenting workshop. It gave me a lot of information and changed my attitude” (Participant #7).

Emotional strategies

Individuals attempt to use methods to reduce their stress and manage their emotions. These methods are called emotion-oriented strategies. One of the strategies pointed by the study participants was the division of family and work boundaries. One of the participants stated: “This helps me not to think of children’s issues and other matters because I believe that the family problems should be solved at home and they should not interfere with work. This way, I only focus energy on my work” (Participant #5).

Behavioral strategies

Women try to cope with stressful situations by using physical measures, i.e., called behavioral strategies. One of these strategies, as pointed out by the research participants, is to exercise: “Every time I feel exhausted, I know that the best solution is to practice some exercise. I have some pieces of workout equipment at home and I exercise with them” (Participant #18).

Personal development and growth

Efforts to promote and elevate the personal domain in life put the individual in a position to induce personal growth. The study participants addressed self-exploration as a technique for personal development: “If you know yourself, your capabilities and the goals you are pursuing in your personal life, you will be motivated and find that you can better align your children, husband, and

family with your work and pursue the goals you have set for your career” (Participant #5).

Outcomes

Enrichment outcomes

The outcomes of enrichment were identified as the consequences of the paradigmatic model. These outcomes were categorized into job satisfaction and satisfaction with marital life.

Job satisfaction

The research participants stated that after experiencing FWE, they had pleasant feelings and emotional experiences towards work. These feelings and experiences can be referred to as job satisfaction. The study participants also referred to the feelings of inner peace: “Sometimes, I think I could not have this satisfying feeling if there was no one to help me. It was my family members who helped to get promoted in my job. When I look back and consider the path I have taken to reach this position, I feel very good” (Participant #18).

Satisfaction with marital life

When individuals experience FWE in their lives, the positive experiences of marital life helps them with their jobs; thus, they feel satisfied with their marital life. A positive feeling towards the partner was recognized as an FWE achievement. One of the study participants stated: “I have a positive feeling towards my husband. He encouraged me to continue my studies and helped me with my job promotion” (Participant #11).

4. Discussion

The present study identified 3 types of family support resources in Iranian working woman, as follows: instrumental support from the husband and other family members in performing various household chores; emotional support from the husband and family members by sharing various job-related stresses with them, and informational support from the husband and other family members about various job issues. These support resources provide facilities, services, tools, and solutions for women; they also help them to control the challenges of playing multiple roles for the optimal management of family and work. Similarly, [Maqsood \(2019\)](#) argued that social support from family and relatives is an essential predictor; it can help individuals to adopt coping strategies to balance family and work. Accordingly, it leads to FWE.

The present study data also indicated that in a marital relationship, a working couple can help with spousal development and use creative and constructive conflict resolution strategies and policies to more effectively manage their roles. In line with these findings, [Lavner, Karney and Breadbury \(2016\)](#) documented that useful marital conflict resolution patterns and positive marital relationships are associated with marital satisfaction in couples. Likewise, [Sinval et al. \(2019\)](#) found that working couples who adopt more effective coping patterns not only feel more satisfied with their marital relationship but also present a higher quality of working life.

The present study findings also indicated that engagement in family roles affects work roles and leads to family-to-work enrichment in two ways. Firstly, resources supporting the family role directly affect job performance. Similarly, [Greenhaus and Powell \(2006\)](#) argued that WFE can occur through instrumental and emotional pathways. Furthermore, [Lin et al. \(2020\)](#) suggested that positive family events and satisfying the supportive needs of managers in the family environment can motivate them; thus, they are more likely to use these motivational mechanisms in the form of prosocial motivations in their professional role to benefit others. This also encourages the individual to listen and respond to requests from colleagues in the workplace.

The participants reported different experiences of enrichment due to differences in familial contextual conditions. Similarly, [Mishra \(2015\)](#) demonstrated that individuals' experience of family support can change with the size of the family. This is because individuals who live in large and extended families receive some additional support benefits than those living in small families.

The obtained data indicated that emotional intelligence is an important and effective intervening condition; in addition to accelerating the occurrence of WFE, it can significantly contribute to using diverse and adaptive strategies by women to manage family and work challenges. In line with these findings, [Maqsood \(2019\)](#) revealed a positive relationship between social support and WFE. Additionally, [Sergio, Dungca, and Ormita \(2015\)](#) identified that individual levels of emotional intelligence positively impact the management of family and work and reduce family-work conflicts. [Burhanudina et al. \(2020\)](#) determined a positive relationship between self-esteem and WFE. Individuals with self-esteem can overcome family and job challenges and reap the benefits of one role in favor of another. Positive personality traits, such as hardiness and resiliency are greater in employed

women, compared to their unemployed counterparts ([Khodabakhshi-Koolae 2020](#)).

Another requirement that plays a decisive role in intensifying the impact of causal conditions and causes diverse and strategic reactions in women to manage home and work is the belief in self-efficacy. The study participants' belief that they could make the family and the environment more enjoyable and less challenging was crucial to achieving family-work balance. Accordingly, when the women had the personal skills and self-confidence to successfully conduct life responsibilities, they were more motivated and eager to use available supportive resources, such as individual, familial, cultural, and social resources to adopt various strategies in favor of optimal family and work management. Likewise, [Jaenudin et al. \(2020\)](#) documented that higher belief in self-efficacy in family management and work among working women leads to less work-family conflicts and greater marital satisfaction. [Chan et al. \(2015\)](#) also signified that self-efficacy in family and work management can mediate the relationship between WFE and satisfaction and increase job and marital satisfaction. They also suggested that working married individuals' belief in their ability to control their family and work-life plays a facilitating role in helping them achieve balance in life and experience life satisfaction.

This study revealed that support and environmental networks can mediate and influence the WFE experience. Accordingly, [Mishra \(2015\)](#) found that the resources in the community can improve the link between family support resources and family-to-work achievement in two ways. First, the resources available in the community, such as close neighbors, access to kindergartens with desirable facilities, services offered by cleaning companies, etc. support working individuals by performing their home tasks; thus, they reduce their burden in life. Second, community resources can provide working individuals leisure time that gives them peace of mind for conducting various personal activities.

Socio-Cultural barriers stemming from family culture, work environment, and society created problems for the women; accordingly, they restricted their ability for family and work management, preventing the occurrence of enrichment. [Fahlen \(2016\)](#) suggested that in families that adhere to traditional roles for women, working women, especially working mothers are forced to accept a larger share of housework and care for their children and parents. These women are more likely to face family-work conflicts. Accordingly, [Beham et al. \(2017\)](#) declared that if there is less preference for gender equality in a coun-

try, then gender discrimination is among the obstacles to experiencing WFE.

The present study indicated that the outcomes of WFE were a sense of job satisfaction and satisfaction with marital life. Accordingly, Chan et al. (2015) reported that WFE and FWE lead to job and marital satisfaction under the influence of the mediating role of self-efficacy and work-life balance. According to social exchange theory, when the family or organization supports employees, they tend to respond with positive attitudes. Kalliath et al. (2020) also signified that WFE positively influences job satisfaction among social workers. This aim is achieved through the mediating roles of family support and occupational health. Building upon the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions, they have identified that positive experiences improve pleasant personal feelings, leading to the development of intellectual and practical treasury and personal resources. These resources can manage inconsistencies. As a result, employees' emotional health and life satisfaction increase.

The present study explored the experiences of female managers. However, women who do not serve as managers may also have different experiences of life challenges that can be evaluated in subsequent studies. Future studies can analyze WFE from the viewpoints of divorced and single mothers. Besides, exploring the views of single women, compared to married women concerning family and work issues can provide insightful results. Subsequent studies can investigate whether women and men prefer different strategies to cope with life challenges and improve family and work management. Future studies can also assess whether the strategies adopted by dual-career couples differ from those used by single-income families.

5. Conclusion

The current research results suggested that the female managers applied several strategies, including instrumental strategies, problem-solving management strategies, emotion-concerned strategies, behavioral measures, and measures to promote personal development and growth for WFE. The factors facilitating WFE were self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, and support and environmental network. However, other characteristics, including socio-cultural factors, the challenges of family cultural context, the non-supportive culture of the organization, and the cultural challenges of society were barriers to WFE. This process led to job satisfaction and satisfaction with marital life among the female manag-

ers. The core variable manifested as "multidimensional use of self to enrich work and family".

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Sciences and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran (Code: IR.IAU.SRB.REC.1397.179). All ethical principles are considered in this article. The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and its implementation stages. They were also assured about the confidentiality of their information and were free to leave the study whenever they wished, and if desired, the research results would be available to them.

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Authors' contributions

All authors equally contributed to preparing this article.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflicts of interest.

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