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## Social Support in the Times of Social Distancing: Learnings from the South Asian Context

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### Abstract

This study will examine the relationship between social support from the work and family domains, referred to as multiple social network ties (MSNT), and employees' job and family-related performance outcomes during the COVID-19 crisis. The study also demonstrates the importance of employees' work-family balance (WFB) in moderating the association between MSNT and job and family-related performance. A two-wave design was used to collect data from 320 managerial level personnel in Pakistan's textile sector. The path analysis technique of structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to analyze the responses. In times of crisis, social support mechanisms could potentially replace organizational support mechanisms for employees dealing with work and family obligations, according to the study. The findings of this study show that work-family balance is a significant partial mediator between MSNT and employees' job and family-related outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to a best-fit model. This research supports the pragmatic view of MSNT's action mechanism in generating jobs for employees and family-related results, especially in uncertain situations. According to the findings, employees who have a positive work-life balance are happier and more productive in both work and personal life. It has major implications for human resource management (HRM) research and practice.

**Keywords:** Work-Family Balance, Employee Outcomes, Multiple Social Network Ties, Textile Sector, Pakistan, COVID-19 Pandemic

**JEL Classification Code:** M12, M1, M14

### 1. Introduction

The deadly coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had a significant impact on work and family relationships, extending employees' roles in both work and family domains and causing an unprecedented imbalance in work-family boundaries. The continuous crises have shattered

the work-family balance, especially in developing nations, where employees are more vulnerable to unforeseen circumstances due to a lack of financial, physical, and emotional security. As a result of these shifting work and family circumstances, work and family boundaries, as well as their management tactics, must be reevaluated (Haar et al., 2019). The quality of an individual's work and family performance is largely determined by how well the organization supports the employee in striking a balance between both areas (Kossek et al., 2012).

Employees in developing countries' collectivist societies, where support network ties are already, in most cases, individual driven and non-monetary (Kumar et al., 2019), must deal with work-family balance (WFB) issues proactively to improve their work and family-related outcomes, particularly in the current pandemic situation. Employees' lack of instrumental support in the workplace may have an impact on how wisely efficient they perform and how much energy and time they need to devote to both their personal and professional lives (Ferguson et al., 2012). This lack of organizational support is particularly obvious in Pakistan's textile industry (our study site), where employees

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are said to be experiencing behavioral and health concerns as a result of disrupted WFB (Uddin et al., 2020; Wolor et al., 2020).

Work environments in most of Pakistan's manufacturing industries are marked by long work weeks and occupations that are both hard and competitive. Due to cutbacks in numerous firms during the COVID-19 epidemic, the workload in these industries is mostly increasing (Nauman et al., 2020; Nguyen & Nguyen 2021). Employees are compelled to cooperate with each other at work, seek help from their supervisors and peers, and turn to their family and friends to generate resources and build strong network ties. These network ties provide employees with the capacity to cope with the emergent work and family demands in the face of pandemic, particularly, in the absence of organizational support such as the WFB drives (Crain & Stevens, 2018; McMullan et al., 2018).

To date, only a few studies have focused on individual-driven strategies/initiatives for balancing work and family life. As a result, our initial goal is to see how individual-driven initiatives, such as individual-driven support network linkages from a variety of sources in the work and home domains, affect employee interaction in both contexts.

Individual-driven social support from family domain network ties, on the other hand, includes support from spouse, parents, in-laws, and friends, with the goal of balancing overlapping and conflicting demands from both domains, and thus positively influencing one's functioning (performance) in both important spheres of one's life. Our second goal is to broaden the work-family literature to include the family domain and to identify strategies that can help people improve their performance in both domains. Another purpose of this study is to evaluate how MSNT helps employees function in both domains during a crisis.

We discovered that social support, i.e., social network linkages, makes it easier for employees to balance work and family duties, particularly in instances where work demands and pressures are high and organizational support is lacking. Erdirençelebi (2020) underlined the importance of developing multiple social networks through good communication. We also show that employees' WFB acts as a powerful mediator in the relationship between social network ties and employees' job and family performance. The findings of the study lead us to believe that social support systems could potentially replace organizational support for employees dealing with work and family obligations.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Based on the conservation of resource (COR) theory, we believe that MSNT can help employees achieve more noticeable WFB, hence improving individual performance at work and home. Employees, according to the COR theory,

will keep up with their current resources while also looking for the new ones, because of their instrumental importance in obtaining other resources, such as good work settings, assistance, support, individual capacities, and applicable energy. Employees are eager to maintain their interests and increase their pleasure at work, according to the conception of COR theory. Employees seek to acquire and conserve resources that are valued to them, and resource scarcity has a significant psychological influence. Employees use MSNT as a purposeful effort to develop networks of support from both work and family contexts in the absence of family-friendly policies on the part of the firm to amass resources by retaining existing ones and chasing new ones.

Employees use MSNT as a tool to expand and improve their resource bank, energies, and abilities, as well as to supplement organizational assistance. A bad WFB may lead employees to believe that they are underperforming in both domains, motivating them to invest more in their work and family resources to maintain peace. Individuals seek multiple sources of support from both the work and family domains to strengthen ties, such as assistance from a colleague, a boss or supervisor in the work domain, assistance from family, parents, or spouse in domestic chores or child care in the family domain, and amity with friends in the family domain.

Based on this understanding of MSNT, we theorize in this study that MSNT builds resources that improve the human ability to interact effectively in both domains and fulfil their dual role responsibilities. Instrumental support, emotional concern, amenities, and information accessibility are all elements of social support that are intended to improve employee performance in both areas (Giauque et al., 2019).

In the evaluation of work-family domains, work-family conflict, work-family enrichment, and WFB are all investigated (Erdirençelebi, 2020). WFB is based on competition and work-family enrichment ideals (Ferguson et al., 2012). These dimensions are all intertwined, but they are distinct (Carlson et al., 2009). Work-family conflict, also known as interference, and work-family enrichment are both concerned with how one domain's participation affects the other domain's functioning, either favorably or adversely. WFB, on the other hand, is a strategy for effectively managing both domains' numerous responsibilities (Ferguson et al., 2012).

### 2.1. MSNT and Employees' Performance

The term "performance" refers to individuals' capacity to complete the activities, obligations, and positions that have been assigned to them, as well as expected behaviors from people who desire to do a decent job and provide for their families. To be successful at work and home, people need a lot of resources (time, effort, energy, health, etc.). According to COR theory, one way for employees to amass resources is

to obtain MSNT support, which can include assistance from coworkers, managers, and/or family members. Employees' MSNT builds resources to maintain a balance between conflicting and competing needs of both domains, according to the job demand resource model and role balancing theory (Michel et al., 2010; Mustapa et al., 2018). The most commonly researched social support resource in the work-family literature is work domain (coworker or supervisor) support, which employees obtain to meet their competitive job expectations, integrate their work and life, and manage their boundaries, all of which improve their WFB experience (Barnett et al., 2019). However, just a few studies have looked into the impact of co-worker support, one of the social network links sources, on employees' performance in both domains.

Employees' coworkers are the sole organization entity with whom they engage often and daily. Co-worker support, according to Zhou and George (2001), occurs when coworkers assist one another in completing a task by sharing their knowledge (instrumental assistance) or encouraging one another (emotional support). Employees seek to accrue resources through coworker support that they can use later, according to COR theory. Ferguson et al. (2012) investigate when and how social support, which includes assistance from coworkers and family, improves employees' workplace and family functioning (performance). Employee task performance is improved by coworker instrumental support, such as assisting a colleague in completing his or her job assignment and meeting deadlines (Nagami et al., 2010)

Similarly, Ferguson et al. (2012) found that co-worker emotional support energizes employees, whereas instrumental support enhances their productivity (task performance). Hence, based on COR theory, we may hypothesize that social support from a co-worker is positively associated with job performance:

**H1a:** *Employees' job performance is positively influenced by their co-workers' work-family support.*

Employees who are caught in a role conflict just do the bare minimum. This statement is consistent with role balance theory, which states that an individual with less role conflict and more WFB experience can function effectively in both family and work situations (Derks et al., 2016). Furthermore, Odle-Dusseau et al. (2016) found that supervisors' supportive approach has a significant positive impact on workers' job performance. Supervisory support could take the form of showing care and concern for subordinates' family responsibilities by tolerating late arrival or early departure on a regular basis, sharing work tasks to assist subordinates with their family commitments, and demonstrating tolerance for late arrival or early departure on a regular basis (Crain & Stevens, 2018).

**H1b:** *Supervisors' social support significantly affects employees' job performance.*

Workplace resources, according to Greenhaus and Powell (2006), will help people perform better at home. Employees try to gather resources from as many sources as possible, according to COR theory. Employees' resource accumulation, which is aided by both domain social network linkages, improves employee engagement and performance in the family domain. According to studies, social network linkages and instrumental support have a significant impact on task performance, while emotional support has a positive impact on the strength of a relationship. Derks et al. (2016) observed that using a smartphone for work is an intelligent strategy for effectively integrating work and family life and maximizing off-the-job time, which improves employees' family-role performance. We propose that employees' accounts in the family domain are positively associated with work domain social support, such as co-worker and supervisor support, based on COR theory.

**H2a:** *Individual-driven organization network ties, i.e., supervisor and co-worker support, positively affect employees' family performance.*

We also believe that the support from spouse, parents/in-laws, and family friends will have a direct impact on employee's view of family performance by allowing to share the load of family issues or concerns. Several studies have demonstrated that family domain support has a substantial impact on employee work behaviors such as job performance, well-being, and commitment, as well as family satisfaction. As a result, we expect that employees who can rely on their spouse, parents/family, and friends to assist them in meeting their family commitments will have a more positive perception of effective family functioning, which is consistent with the COR theory.

**H2b:** *Individually driven family support ties significantly affect employees' performance in the family domain.*

## 2.2. MSNT and WFB

According to existing studies, coworker assistance helps employees maintain a balance between work and home obligations (Lu et al., 2009; McMullan et al., 2018). In all arenas, coworkers, in particular, play a vital role in settling problems. Coworkers, for example, may either encourage or obstruct an employee who has to take time off work to visit his or her sick child or care for ailing parents. In the ideal situation, a coworker can assist the employee by taking on his high-priority responsibilities while he is away. In the worst-case scenario, he or she may refuse to take over the employee's

responsibilities or, even worse, notify management of the employee's absence. As a result, it may be difficult for the employee to take a long vacation or take a leave of absence from work. Apart from giving instrumental assistance, a co-worker may also provide emotional assistance by listening to a colleague's difficulties, suggesting solutions, or offering advice on work-family balance issues.

Ferguson et al. (2012) show that coworker assistance can help an individual successfully manage many competing work and family obligations, resulting in increased WFB satisfaction. As a result, we anticipate supporting coworkers becoming recognized as a workplace resource that enables people to successfully balance work and home obligations while also meeting tough job demands.

**H3a:** *Individual-driven co-worker social support positively affects WFB.*

As COR theory suggests, supervisors, like coworkers, can help their employees emotionally and practically deal with competing work and family duties (Nagami et al., 2010). Employees who are aware that their superiors are unsupportive and uninterested in their WFB issues may avoid discussing the company's work-life balance policies and initiatives in public for fear of portraying a negative image of themselves to their supervisors (Adisa et al., 2017). Overall, supervisors play a critical role in providing comfort to their employees and assisting them in achieving a better work-life balance while executing numerous domain tasks (Kossek et al., 2011). Furthermore, helpful supervision is a sign that an employer values the work-life balance of its people (Giauque et al., 2019). Therefore, based on these assertions, we hypothesize that supervisor support is positively associated with employees' WFB.

**H3b:** *Supervisor's social support ominously and positively affects employees' WFB.*

Women's experiences are similarly controlled at home by personally motivated social support networks to deal with work and family responsibilities such as dependent care and housekeeping tasks (Uddin et al., 2020). The research on social support for WFB of women at work is contradictory. Several studies have found that individual-driven social support ties from a spouse or family greatly improved women's WFB experiences, while workplace social support is more important for men (Crain & Stevens, 2018; McMullan et al., 2018), although few studies have shown that social support ties from both domains are necessary for individuals to balance work and family life, regardless of gender. Therefore, in line with COR theory, we may hypothesize that:

**H3c:** *Individual-driven support from partners, family, and friends significantly and positively influence the WFB of employees.*

Several studies have looked into and identified a positive relationship between numerous social support network ties, WFB, and employee outcomes (Barnett et al., 2019). According to the literature, many social network linkages and employee job outcomes have a substantial relationship because various types of support help employees improve their work-life perception (Barnett et al., 2019; Bray et al., 2018; Odle-Dusseau et al., 2016). Furthermore, this research implies that creating a support network in both domains is a work-family segmentation technique for overcoming barriers in juggling multiple work-family roles and successfully managing both work and family domains (Derks et al., 2016; Kossek et al., 2011; Sirgy & Lee, 2018; Watanabe & Falci, 2016).

Furthermore, this research suggests that building a support network in both domains is a work-family segmentation approach for overcoming obstacles associated with juggling multiple work-family roles and successfully managing both work and family domains (Barnett et al., 2019; Crain & Stevens, 2018; Whiston & Cinamon, 2015).

**H4a:** *WFB mediates the relationship between individual-driven co-worker support and employee performance at the job.*

**H4b:** *WFB mediates the relationship between supervisor support and employee performance at the job.*

**H4c:** *WFB mediates the relationship between individual-driven family/friends support and employee performance at the job.*

In the family domain, several researchers have discovered a link between employee performance and social support relationships, and family resources (Chen et al., 2014). Surprisingly few studies have looked at the role of work family enrichment in MSNT and employee performance in the family domain, as opposed to studies looking at the WFB as a mechanism for leveraging workplace resources to boost job performance (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Kumar et al., 2019). So, we expect MSNT to give overall support to promote employee WFB and employee functioning in the family domain, based on the COR theory (Figure 1).

**H5a:** *WFB mediates the relationship between individual-driven co-worker support and employee functioning in the family domain.*

**H5b:** *WFB mediates the relationship between supervisor support and employee functioning in the family domain.*

**H5c:** *WFB mediates the relationship between individual-driven family/friends support and employee functioning in the family domain.*

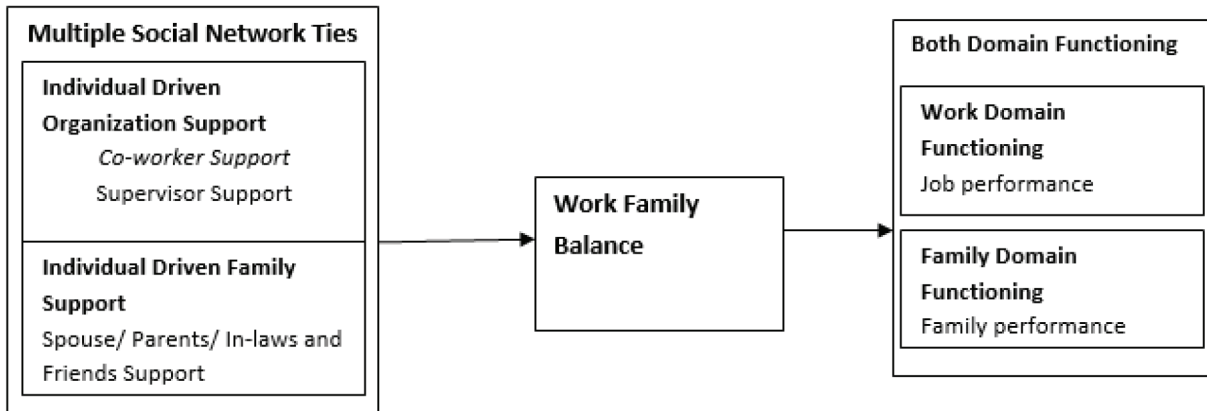


Figure 1: Hypothesized Model of Mediation Between MSNT and Employee Both Domain Functioning

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Sampling Procedure

This research employed a self-administered questionnaire to collect data from managers working in textile companies located in Faisalabad, Lahore, and Karachi – the main cities of Pakistan—during the COVID-19 pandemic. Textile companies based in these cities account for over 80% of all textile companies in Pakistan (APTMA, 2018). Pakistan due its unique historical conditions of colonization and strategic geopolitical circumstances provides an interesting setting for research in developing countries (Ali & Brandl, 2018). The sample was chosen in two steps using the probability sampling technique. The original sampling frame consisted of 67 companies with at least 5000 managers who were located at least 20 kilometers outside of the city. The human resource department or each company’s website was used to compile a list of middle managers based on the following criteria: (i) working parents with infants and preschoolers, and (ii) three years of experience in the workplace. At the first stage, a Sample of 35 organizations was selected by simple random sampling method using MS Excel 2007 built-in function RANDBETWEEN. In the second stage, a stratified random selection technique was employed to choose 400 individuals from a list of middle managers. The chosen employees were requested to take part in the survey, and 335 people readily consented. The goal of the study was explained to the participants and assured them that the data collected would be kept completely confidential and used purely for academic purposes.

We avoided common method bias by collecting data at two distinct times. At the outset, selected employees were sent questionnaires to rate their attitudes toward multiple

support network ties (e.g., supervisors, coworkers, spouse, family members, and friends support) and their work-family balance via email, personal visit, and through the respective organizational HR department. At the second point, four weeks later, the same employees were given the same questionnaire to score their performance in both work and personal areas. Thus, in total, the data were collected from 323 respondents, yielding a response rate of 81%. The detail of the study sample is presented in Table 1.

#### 3.2. Measures

The 5-point Likert scale was used to assess all constructs indicated in the theoretical model.

Co-worker support for work and family: We adopted five items from a multidimensional scale of perceived social support of Zimet et al (1988) to measure ‘co-worker support for work and family. “Really tries to help me for job and family issues” is one of the adapted and rephrased items.

Supervisor support for work and family was assessed using a 5-item scale by Hammer et al (2009). An example of the items included in the scale is, “My supervisor is willing to listen to my problems in juggling work and non-work life.”

For spouse and family/friends support for work and family, we adapted some items from Thomas and Ganster’s (1995) scale ‘domestic and child care support.’ We used items as “My spouse helps me out by doing chores around the house and running errands.”

Work-Family Balance: Valcour’s (2007) scale was used to measure WFB. “How satisfied are you with the way you spend your time between work and personal or family life?” was one of the sample items.

Job Performance: To assess work performance, we employed Williams and Anderson’s (1991) 7-item scale.

**Table 1:** Sample Description

Category	Options	Frequency	% Age
Gender	Male	203	63
	Female	120	37
Job Position	Manager	143	44
	Sr. Manager	99	31
	G.M	67	21
	Other	14	4
	5–10 years	132	41
	10–15 years	87	27
	Over 15 years	59	18
Work Responsibilities After Office Hours	Yes, Often	103	32
	Yes, Infrequent	201	62
	No	19	6
Spouse Work Status	Yes-Full-Time	134	41
	Yes-Part-Time	189	59

Sample items measuring job performance were “*My supervisor is generally satisfied with my job performance.*” Family performance was measured with the help of a 14-items scale developed by Chen et al (2014). A sample item measuring task performance was “*Do household chores,*” and a sample item measuring relationship performance was “*Spend quality time with family members.*”

### 3.3. Data Analysis

Initial data screening (i.e., outliers, missing values, and a test of normality) and descriptive (Mean, Standard Deviation, Correlations, and Cronbach’s Alpha) measures of all research variables were performed using SPSS 21 as used by Pallant and Manual (2007). Before moving on to the next step, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using AMOS to check the data’s reliability and validity.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Measurement Model

CFA was employed using AMOS to measure the suitability of used scales. CFA was done with six constructs, i.e., supervisor support, co-worker support, spouse and family/friends support, satisfaction with work-family balance, job performance, and family performance. The results show that the data best fit the estimation model considering the general recommendations of Hair et al. (2013) i.e.  $\chi^2 = 1846.472$ ,

( $p < 0.05$ );  $\chi^2/df = 1.985 (<2)$ ; TLI = 0.90 ( $\geq 0.90$ ); CFI = 0.917 ( $>0.90$ ); RMSEA = 0.056 ( $<0.08$ ).

### 4.2. Reliability and Validity

To assess the internal consistency of all the measures employed in the study, reliability tests such as Cronbach’s alpha were run on SPSS 21. For the metric measures on the Likert scale of the questionnaire, Cronbach’s alpha is used. The results show that all of the scales have a high degree of internal consistency, with the lowest being 0.80. (Peterson, 1994). The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ s for all the constructs are given in Table 2.

To confirm the scales’ validity, both convergent and discriminant validity must be measured (Hair et al., 2013). The test results (Table 2) indicate that all indicators on each construct loaded significantly above the lowest threshold value, indicating that convergent validity was achieved because all item-total correlations above the suggested requirement of 0.40 and loaded unambiguously on their associated variables (Hair et al., 2013). Furthermore, the average variance extracted (AVE) was also well above 0.5 except for job performance close to 0.5 with a minor difference (0.03), the minimum value to be met.

Furthermore, each latent variable’s construct reliability (CR) score was abnormally high, exceeding the 0.7 criteria. As a consequence, all of the notions fulfilled the convergent and discriminant validity criteria. All variables are moderately connected, according to the results of the

correlation study. As a result, there is a rare possibility of instances of multicollinearity.

### 4.3. Hypotheses Testing

After CFA, Path analysis was performed in AMOS using the maximum likelihood method. Using latent variables, we used the AMOS bootstrap approach to test our proposed hypotheses. Table 3 shows the results of direct effects, whereas Table 4 shows the results of indirect effects.

CMIN/DF is 0.746; GFI = 0.999, CFI = 0.998 & NFI = 0.999 are closer to 1, RMR = 0.003, and RMSEA is 0.000. Path analysis of the hypothesized model revealed satisfactory fit, CMIN/DF is 0.746; GFI = 0.999, CFI = 0.998 & NFI = 0.999 are closer to 1, RMR = 0.003, and RMSEA is 0.000. All of these fitness index values indicate that the model is very well fitted (Hair et al., 2013).

In H1a and H1b, the direct effect of individual-driven organization support (co-worker and supervisor) on employee functioning (performance) at the job was

**Table 2:** Cronbach's Alpha, CR, AVE's and Correlations

	Constructs	A	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	FP	0.911	0.937	0.514	0.717					
2	SS	0.865	0.845	0.522	0.320	0.722				
3	CWS	0.879	0.915	0.643	0.379	0.312	0.802			
4	FSF	0.867	0.867	0.522	0.445	0.324	0.508	0.723		
5	WFB	0.906	0.907	0.662	0.542	0.509	0.694	0.665	0.814	
6	JP	0.839	0.875	0.467	0.439	0.366	0.354	0.464	0.536	0.684

Notes: FP: Family performance; SS: Supervisor Support; CWS: Co-worker Support; FSF: Family, Spouse, and Friends Support; WFB: work-family balance; JP: Job Performance. Significance at 0.05 level.

**Table 3:** Measurement of Direct Effects

Sr #	Variables	WFB		Job Performance		Family Performance	
		Point Est. ( $\beta$ )	p-value	Point Est. ( $\beta$ )	p-value	Point Est. ( $\beta$ )	p-value
1	Supervisor Support	0.289	0.000	0.419	0.000	0.057	0.101
2	Co-worker Support	0.542	0.000	0.041	0.459	0.067	0.092
3	Spouse/ Family & Friends Support	0.484	0.000	0.076	0.141	0.668	0.000
4	WFB	–	–	0.112	0.022	0.107	0.004

**Table 4:** Measurement of Indirect Effects

Effects	Point Estimate ( $\beta$ )	BC 95% CI	
		Lower	Upper
<b>Indirect Effect</b>			
Supervisor Support → WFB → Job Performance	0.034	0.002	0.076
Supervisor Support → WFB → Family Performance	0.004	0.009	0.062
Coworker Support → WFB → Job Performance	0.04	0.003	0.126
Coworker Support → WFB → Family Performance	0.005	0.017	0.107
Spouse/Family & Friends Support → WFB → Job Performance	0.035	0.016	0.094
Spouse/Family & Friends Support → WFB → Family Performance	0.005	0.016	0.094

proposed. The results do not support hypothesis H1a ( $\beta = 0.041, p > 0.000$ ) and support H1b ( $\beta = 0.419, p < 0.000$ ). Likewise, in H2 (a & b), the direct effect of individual-driven organization support (co-worker and supervisor) on employee functioning (performance) in the family domain was examined. The results do not support H2a ( $\beta = 0.076, p > 0.000$ ) & H2b ( $\beta = 0.057, p > 0.000$ ) whereas H2c which measured the effect of individual driven spouse/ family & friends support on employee functioning (performance) in the family domain was supported ( $\beta = 0.668, p < 0.000$ ). Furthermore, in hypothesis H3 (a & b), the direct effect of individual-driven organization support (co-worker and supervisor) and H3c, the direct effect of individual-driven spouse/family and friends support on employee satisfaction with work-life balance was investigated. The results of H3a ( $\beta = 0.542, p < 0.000$ ), H3b ( $\beta = 0.289, p < 0.000$ ) and H3c ( $\beta = 0.484, p < 0.000$ ) was supported.

Furthermore, the result for H4a, i.e. mediating role of WFB between individual driven organization co-worker support and employee functioning (performance) at the job was supported ( $\beta = 0.040, \text{ULCI} = 0.126, \text{LLCI} = 0.003$ ) with  $p < 0.05$ . As ULCI and LLCI values do not have a zero in between, this confirms that WFB mediates the relationship between individual-driven organization co-worker support and employee functioning (performance) at the job. Similarly, the result for H4b, i.e. mediating role of WFB between individual-driven supervisor support and employee functioning (performance) at the job was supported ( $\beta = 0.034, \text{ULCI} = 0.076, \text{LLCI} = 0.002$ ) with  $p < 0.05$ . As ULCI and LLCI values do not have a zero in between, this confirms that WFB mediates the relationship between individual-driven organization supervisor support and employee functioning (performance) at the job. Moreover, H4c results, i.e. mediating role of WFB between individual-driven spouse family/ friends support and employee functioning (performance) at the job was supported ( $\beta = 0.035, \text{ULCI} = 0.094, \text{LLCI} = 0.016$ ) with  $p < 0.05$ . As ULCI and LLCI values do not have a zero in between, this confirms that WFB mediates the relationship between individual-driven organization spouse family/friends support and employee functioning (performance) at the job.

Finally, with  $p < 0.05$ , the findings of H5a, namely the mediation impact of WFB in the family domain between individual-driven organization co-worker support and employee functioning (performance), were supported ( $= 0.005, \text{ULCI} = 0.107, \text{LLCI} = 0.017$ ). Because ULCI and LLCI values do not have a zero in between, WFB mediates the relationship between individual-driven organization co-worker support and employee functioning (performance) in the family domain. H5b, i.e., the mediating effect of WFB in the family domain between individual-driven supervisor support and employee functioning (performance), was similarly supported ( $= 0.004, \text{ULCI} = 0.062, \text{LLCI} = 0.009$ )

with  $p < 0.05$ . Because the ULCI and LLCI values do not have a zero in between, WFB mediates the relationship between individual-driven organization supervisor support and employee functioning (performance) in the family domain. Furthermore, H5c findings ( $= 0.005, \text{ULCI} = 0.094, \text{LLCI} = 0.016$ ) with  $p < 0.05$ . Corroborate the mediation impact of WFB in the family domain between individual-driven family/friends support and employee functioning (performance). Because there is no zero between the ULCI and LLCI values, WFB mediates the relationship between employee family domain functioning (performances) and spouse family/friends support.

## 5. Discussion

The textile industry's work environment is highly traditional and restrictive, and companies are located distant from urban areas, limiting time and space flexibility. Furthermore, few studies have been conducted in Pakistan's manufacturing sector to address the issue of work-life balance, particularly in the textile sector, which is Pakistan's largest manufacturing sector. Textile industry in Pakistan is Asia's eighth largest exporter, contributes 9.5 percent to GDP, and employs 15 million people, which is 30 percent of the country's total workforce. One-third of studies analyzing the influence of workplace supervision on WFB and employee outcomes have been published in the recent three years, according to Crain and Stevens's (2018) literature analysis, highlighting the topic's significance.

Another reason is that businesses in developing countries confront several challenges, including global competition, resource restrictions, maintaining a competitive edge, and consumer loyalty. Because organizations' first attention is always on environmental difficulties to maintain their existence, employees' WFB strategies are either disregarded or overlooked in human resource policy-making or in their early stages (Kumar et al., 2019; Sanyal et al., 2020). Employees in these circumstances are forced to rely on a support networks to manage their boundaries and improve their WFB experience.

Some experts think that deciding on a work and family boundary approach and behavior is an individual duty and choice (Kossek et al., 2012). Others believe that it is the job of the firm to provide diverse family-oriented work-family policies to enable employees to effectively balance conflicting demands from both the work and family domains (Ollier-Malaterre & Rothbard, 2015). Several recent studies have looked at the direct influence of organizationally driven family-oriented policies and WFB programs on employee attitudes and behaviors (Lu et al., 2009). Family supportive supervision (Crain & Stevens, 2018), perceived organizational support (Kumar et al., 2019), teleworking and work-family culture (Haar et al., 2019), perceived



time and location flexibility, schedule control, and child and parent care arrangements (Sirgy & Lee, 2018), are organizations' resources and tactics to deal with difficulties in both the work and home domains, as mentioned by the job demand and resource model. Due to the current pandemic crisis, organizations have been forced to slash investment in all areas, including staff development and well-being. Employees, particularly in developing nations like Pakistan, lack organizational support for work-life balance as a result. In the absence of organizational support for work-life balance, employees are obligated to seek social support from both work and non-work domains on their own.

The impact of MSNT on employee functioning (performance) in the job (H1) and family domains (H2) is investigated in this study, as well as the mediating role of WFB (H4 & H5) between MSNT and employee functioning (performance) in both domains. In contrast to the mainstream literature, H1c's findings imply that family/friends support has no direct effect on employee job performance. This finding contradicts prior research in which the researcher examined the positive impact of family domain social support on female job success in a variety of settings.

As a result, one crucial implication is that the generalizability of family and friends support may not be justified. It can be interpreted and understood in a variety of ways, especially in times of crisis, like the current Pandemic. This finding is innovative and fascinating since it explains the role of intermediaries in improving employee performance, such as the mediating impact of WFB in our study (Watanabe & Falci, 2016). Another reason for this surprising conclusion could be that the bulk of the study's participants are men. According to prior studies, the family in our study had little exposure to job challenges and a lack of other job opportunities (Burnett et al., 2010).

We also found proof of WFB's role as a mediator between MSNT and employee performance in the job and family domains. This finding is in line with previous research, which revealed that WFB is important for improved performance, especially in working mothers and dual-earner families (Bray et al., 2018; Whiston & Cinamon, 2015). Our findings, on the other hand, emphasize the importance of MSNT for all employees, regardless of gender or spouse working status.

Employees' happiness with work-family balance and their functioning in both domains improves when they receive support from either domain during difficult times because they can deal with unsustainable job and family demands. MSNT is also a significant addition to the current work-family literature, and it is hoped that it will lead to new research avenues. This finding indicates the importance of MSNT in the absence of any human resource WFB strategies or policies. Previous studies have shown MSNT has a significant impact on work domain functioning (Bray et al.,

2018); nevertheless, we believe it may also help to improve family domain functioning.

MSNT's growing importance is also a novel contribution, emphasizing that strengthening employee WFB is crucial for improving employee functioning (performance) in both the work and family domains. Our findings also suggest that family domain network links are equally important in evaluating work-life interaction in a balanced perspective and increasing employee job performance, which has only been investigated in a few studies thus far (Burnett et al., 2010). In addition, in the context of our study, long working hours are widespread, work environments are traditional, and human resource policies are insufficient to meet the various WFB expectations of employees. As a result, the findings of this study are critical in recognizing the importance of forming networks and establishing mutual support within employee communities.

Finally, this study makes a novel addition by emphasizing the importance of network links in high collectivist culture and looking at the MSNT as a valuable individual-driven strategy that can be used in place of organization-initiated family-friendly policies. It also discusses how employees might make the most of their circumstances and perform well in both domains. The results of our study also demonstrate that MSNT may play an important role in boundary management and triggering confidence that one can perform well at both works and in the home.

## 6. Managerial Implications

The findings of this study have a lot of managerial implications. First and foremost, MSNT has good potential for textile enterprises to boost job performance where job needs and resources differ greatly. According to the data, employees respond positively to the support they receive from their managers (supervisors). As a result, supervisors and managers must be cautious in their actions in the workplace. Supportive managerial behavior leads to better employee behavior. According to the findings, managers should model and encourage supportive behaviors among their employees if they wish to increase their employees' performance. Finally, research suggests that workplace support networks will result in other important outcomes such as lower turnover (Kumar et al., 2019), increased marital and life satisfaction, and increased productivity (Peeters et al., 2013).

This research also reveals that an employee's WFB is a key motivator for other important behaviors like satisfaction, work engagement, and employee commitment. It can be accomplished by, superiors and coworkers displaying supportive behaviors at work. Employees should be encouraged to form strong relationships with their coworkers, as these relationships may be the first source of assistance

at difficult times. This can be achieved by either expanding the network of people or by improving existing relationships through supportive behaviors. Hence, MSNT is not just a means of increasing one's WFB, but also a substantial contributor to enhancing employee performance. As a result, one way of increasing employee job performance, which is one of an organization's primary objectives, is that employees should be taught by the human resource department of the company to be supportive of one another and to create strong network relationships.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The current research contributes to a better understanding of the value of various social network relationships in achieving a work-family balance and improving employee performance in both the professional and personal realms. The importance of assistance from spouses, relatives, and friends is also highlighted in this study. Furthermore, the study demonstrates how supporting network relationships can be used in place of family-friendly policies or tactics in the workplace. Given the importance of supportive behaviors, it may be advantageous for businesses to adopt methods (e.g., training, building and promoting supportive family culture, encouraging supportive behavior) to improve employees' social skills in coping with work and family (life) concerns. These activities become even more important and beneficial in times of crisis such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

While interpreting the findings of this study, one should also keep the following limitations in mind. Because the data is cross-sectional, there is a risk of common method bias. Future research could look into a similar approach in a longer-term study to see whether the results can be applied to other situations.

The study focused on textile industries that have a shortage of female personnel (we are not studying gender effect). As a result, the findings of this study are not applicable to all women. In the future, similar studies might be undertaken in the business sector, where women are underrepresented in education, and the banking industry.

This intermediate study method only looks at a balanced evaluation of work and family contact, but future research could look into enrichment and synergy evaluations as well. The goal of this investigation was to determine how MSNT influenced WFB and employee performance. Future research can look into the individual and contextual factors encouraging network relationships.

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