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معهد الدوحة الدولي للأسرة
Doha International Family Institute

البحوث لدعم السياسات الأسرية
Research to advance family policies

عضو في مؤسسة قطر
Member of Qatar Foundation

Work-Family Balance: Challenges, Experiences and Implications for Families in Qatar

WORK

FAMILY



WORK-FAMILY BALANCE: CHALLENGES, EXPERIENCES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FAMILIES IN QATAR



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DOHA INTERNATIONAL FAMILY INSTITUTE (DIFI)

The Doha International Family Institute (DIFI), a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF), was established in 2006. The Institute works to strengthen the family through the development and dissemination of high-quality research on Arab families, encouraging knowledge exchange on issues relevant to the family and making the family a priority to policy makers through advocacy and outreach at the national, regional and international levels. Among the Institute's most important initiatives are the Annual Conference on the Family and the OSRA Research Grant in collaboration with the Qatar National Research Fund, an annual research grant which encourages research related to the Arab family and family policy. The Institute has special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

To know more about the Doha International Family Institute, please visit www.difi.org.qa.

To know more about Qatar Foundation, please visit www.qf.org.qa.

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FOREWORD

Over the past two decades, Qatari society has witnessed an unprecedented increase in women's education, which has translated into some of the highest rates of women's employment and economic participation found across the region. As the contribution of Qatari women to the national labor force continues to expand, an increasing number of women are faced with the challenges of balancing work and family life, particularly as professional and domestic commitments multiply throughout years of family formation and childrearing. In addition, as employees who live in family households in general comprise a significant portion of the national labor force, work-family balance has come to the forefront as one of the main challenges facing Qatari families today – a matter that has long lasting effects not only on the well-being of individuals but also on the family unit and society as a whole. Indeed, the ability of individuals, and women in particular, to balance the demands of work and home and maintain a healthy separation between these two life spheres significantly affects their ability to nurture personal relationships, participate actively in family life, and invest in community activities.

Similarly, current research on work-family balance suggests that working women report higher levels of work-family conflict, role overload, and caregiver strain than working men, due to a number of factors, including devoting more hours per week than men to non-work responsibilities, such as child or elderly care, and receiving less support for their careers than their male counterparts. As mothers play a key role in maintaining the strong, happy families required for continued socio-economic growth at the national level, there is a great need for a national base of evidence on the topic of work-family balance and its effects on the close interconnections between the two worlds of work and family within Qatari society. Thus, the Doha International Family Institute is pleased to contribute to the critical mass of research on work-family balance by presenting this comprehensive study of the meaning of work-family balance within Qatar, its implications for individual and family health and well-being, and work-family challenges and solutions.

Through conducting Qatar's first qualitative study and national survey on work-family balance, which highlights the lived experiences of Qatari working parents, DIFI aims to contribute to the evidence base for informing both the refinement of current family-friendly policies and the introduction of additional measures. This study supports the aims of the Second National Development Strategy of the State of Qatar (NDS 2018-2022), which calls for an integrated approach to sound social development and a focus on family cohesion as a core component of Qatari society. Ultimately, the study recommends ways not only to reduce work-family conflict and its negative effects on individuals and their families, but also to contribute to a sustainable national workforce, characterized by engaged employees who exhibit a high level of positive energy, collaborative involvement, and commitment within their home and work lives.



Noor Al Malki Al Jehani
Executive Director
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A key objective of the study of work-family balance detailed in this report was to build an evidence base to inform policy creation or refinement targeting work-family balance and related implementation standards to ensure the protection and preservation of Qatari families. Two complementary projects were designed and implemented to achieve this key objective. The first project was a qualitative study involving in-depth interviews with 20 Qatari working adults (10 males and 10 females). The interviews were designed to learn the meaning of work-family balance among Qataris, identify the factors shaping work-family balance or the lack thereof, and collect firsthand detailed information on the use and value of policy-relevant work-family balance supports for working Qataris. The second component was a survey designed to describe work-family balance among working Qatari adults, determine potential health and well-being consequences of poor work-family balance, and characterize Qataris' use of and preferences for new work-family balance supports.

The data from the qualitative interviews tell a very clear story of work-family balance among Qataris. Work-family balance is primarily viewed as working adults' ability to meet responsibilities in both the work and family domains. Although work-family balance was valued and sought after, participants viewed work-family balance as an idyllic goal that is unattainable. Indeed, when individuals were asked about the last time they experienced balance, the most common response was "during my last vacation or extended holiday." The challenge of achieving work-family balance was equally shared by males and females, although the challenge was heightened for females. Qataris recognized that "work" was essential to securing or providing a desirable family life; that is, work provided the financial wherewithal to obtain the features and comforts of contemporary family life in Qatar. However, the cost of this financial wherewithal was work hours and a psychological toll characterized as "long" and "exhausting" which left workers with insufficient time and energy for the family. Participants commented on the absolute necessity of paid maternity leave for work-family balance, and suggested it be expanded. Participants also discussed the importance of high-quality childcare, and the need for greater flexibility for attending to family responsibilities during the working day.

Data from the quantitative national survey reinforce the results from the qualitative interviews. Work-family balance is a challenge for most working adults: if work-family balance were given scores like academic grades in school, the majority of both males and females would earn a "C" or lower (average, minimal pass or failure). As intimated in the qualitative data, working females' work-family balance is statistically poorer than that of males. Poor work-family balance is associated with poorer physical and mental health, with particularly strong negative associations with depression. It appears the Human Resource Law of 2016 was effective in raising awareness of and access to paid maternity leave. However, a substantial minority of working Qataris lack access to work-family balance supports from their employer, and the supports that are provided by employers do not meet the expectations of the average Qatari worker.

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

1.1. Work-Family Balance

Work-family balance is valued by individuals and families, and it is increasingly recognized by organizations across the developed nations as a strategy for attracting and retaining key talent in the workforce (Kossek, Valcour, & Lirio, 2014; Corporate Voices for Working Families, 2006). The growing awareness of employees' desire for work-family balance and the undesirable outcomes that accompany poor work-family balance has sparked substantial research and policy discussions around the world (Hill, Yang, Hawkins, & Ferris, 2004; Kossek et al., 2014). Although some countries, like Singapore and Germany, are concerned that poor work-family balance is contributing to declines in fertility and population replacement, other countries, like the United States and Australia, are concerned with the public health implications of poor work-family balance.

Underlying organizational and governmental discussions of work-family balance is a substantial diversity of understanding as to what it means. This diversity of views on the meaning of work-family balance is scientifically valuable because it allows scrutiny of this important experience from different points of view, thereby allowing researchers to arrive at the best way of understanding work-family balance. However, while scientists engage in this scrutiny, individuals trying to act on the experience for the sake of real people in the real world are left with inconsistent and sometimes confusing results from research, which ultimately creates barriers to effective policies that support the wide and diverse needs of working families.

A separate but related source of ambiguity in developing solid policy recommendations for work-family balance is the absence of cross-cultural attention to the concept. For example, work-family research in Arab cultures is uncommon. This oversight creates substantial potential for culturally biased understanding of a concept that transcends cultures (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018).

Qatar provides an interesting and compelling comparative culture for understanding work-family balance. Its distinctive characteristics of industrialization and rapid economic development provide a valuable **comparison** to experiences in Western countries. Qatar has experienced a substantial economic expansion since the 1940s due to rising global oil demand. This economic expansion, like others around the world, has inevitably been followed by inflation and rising costs of living. The housing market provides a salient illustration because, in modern times, owning a home is near impossible for a single-earner family (Stepney, 2016). In response to both labor needs and rising costs of living, the Qatari government has decided to prioritize work participation by all its citizens (Mitchell, Paschyn, Mir, Pike, & Kane, 2015). This has led to a dramatic increase in the percentage of Qatari women and men who joined the labor force: a phenomenon observed across Western societies.

Qatar also brings an important cultural **contrast**, essential to developing a strong understanding of work-family balance, because of its Arab origins and the corre-

sponding influence of Islamic beliefs. Values pertaining to “family,” “motherhood,” family decision-making, and what constitutes “appropriate” social behavior in both private places like the home and public places like the workplace are inevitably shaped by faith traditions, regardless of how they are practiced.

Qatar's compelling similarities with, and differences from, Western societies thus provide a scientifically and practically useful context for studying work-family balance. Given the strong economy that increasingly relies on women, and corresponding growth in costs of living, Qatar offers a good comparison to Western cultures for understanding work-family balance. However, given potential differences in the salience of “family,” and broader cultural values like collectivism and gender egalitarianism that likely follow from the influence of Arab culture and Islamic beliefs more broadly, Qatar also provides a meaningful contrast to Western societies for understanding work-family balance. The fundamental meaning of “work” and “family,” as separate spheres or means to ends, as well as “acceptable” divisions of labor by gender and expected behaviors for women and men, are widely held to be essential for understanding work-family balance.

1.2. Theoretical Foundations of Work-Family Balance

Despite longstanding and wide interest, work-family balance is an elusive concept with several competing conceptualizations. Drawing on a rich body of research on work-family conflict, one of the earliest conceptualizations of work-family balance was simply the absence of work-family conflict (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001), or workers' relative freedom from having employment responsibilities interfere with family life or family responsibilities interfere with paid work. Drawing on growing interest in the concept of work-family enrichment, or the idea that work and family can synergistically benefit each other, Frone (2003) conceptualized work-family balance as the combination of low work-family conflict and high work-family enrichment. Other researchers around that same time emphasized the “equality” component of the work-family balance metaphor, and conceptualized work-family balance as equally engaging in both work and family roles (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003). Voydanoff (2005) proposed work-family balance as a status wherein both work and family demands are met by resources available through the work and family domains. Valcour (2007) suggested that work-family balance might be an indicator of hedonic well-being when she defined it as the subjective evaluation of one's degree of success in meeting work and family demands. Greenhaus and Allen (2011) defined work-family balance as a fit of role effectiveness and satisfaction with one's life priorities.

Each of the working definitions of work-family balance in the preceding paragraph shares a common feature: they all view work-family balance as an individual experience. When work-family balance is defined as the absence of work-family conflict or the absence of work-family conflict and the presence of work-family enrichment, the issues at play are whether the individual's responsibilities in one domain are helped or harmed by that individual's responsibilities in another domain. Work-family balance in terms of equality focuses on the amount of time and energy an individual invests in both work and family. The demands-resources perspective focuses on the work

and family resources available to an individual for accommodating work and family demands. Finally, the meaning of work-family balance revolving around effectiveness and satisfaction focuses on the individual's appraisals of "success" in each domain. All of these definitions overlook the inherently social underpinnings of work-family balance – the fact that other individuals in the family (e.g., spouses, parents, children) and the workplace (e.g., supervisors and coworkers) create and share any individual's experience of work-family balance.

Work-family balance must be understood as a socially and relationally constructed concept rather than an individual appraisal of environmental demands and resources or personal performance. Although an individual is the "balance" beholder, underlying the connotation of work-family balance is the assumption that other role-partners are involved. If role-partners are not involved, whose needs and expectations place demands upon the individual and from whom resources are obtained, what criterion is being used to determine "success," "effectiveness," or "satisfaction" in the work and family domains? Separating an individual's experience and perspective from social contexts wherein stakeholders have a clear voice impedes an accurate understanding of work-family balance (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007).

Moreover, individual conceptualizations of work-family balance lead to an overly static view of daily work and family life. Work-family balance is undoubtedly a dynamic concept, subject to a myriad of factors ranging from the regular (e.g., ebbs and flows in work cycles; social cycles instituted in school schedules and breaks), to the irregular (e.g., children's sickness; changes in team membership at work) to the erratic and unpredictable (e.g., computer snafus in the office; unexpected death of a family member). Moreover, individuals – both solely and in partnership with role-partners – are undoubtedly involved in actively creating work-family balance, whether it is simple life management activities like preparing meals for the week on the weekend, joint negotiation of work schedules between worker and spouse or worker and supervisor, or more complex life changes such as changing jobs to secure greater flexibility. Any understanding of work-family balance that does not accommodate such a relational and process orientation is likely flawed.

Only one of the existing definitions of work-family balance purposefully captures both the inherently social underpinnings of the concept and acknowledgement that work-family balance is actively pursued. Grzywacz and Carlson defined balance as **"accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains"** (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007, p. 458). This definition highlights balance as a process of sharing and negotiating expectations with role-related others residing in the shared social space of everyday work and family life, thus capturing both elements. Although this definition is seeing growing support in scientific research, those studies – like all studies of work-family balance – remain exclusively focused on Western societies. Research that evaluates the merits of this definition and its associated theoretical ideas in a similar yet distinctive cultural context like Qatar would provide needed insight into the potential global appropriateness of this model of work-family balance.

1.3. Study Objectives

The overall goal of this project was to establish a foundation for understanding work and family life among Qatari families. To achieve this goal, the Doha International Family Institute developed a partnership to conduct a study entitled **Work-Family Balance: Challenges, Experiences and Implications for Families in Qatar**. The primary objectives of the study were to delineate variation in the priority family, personal, and work outcomes sensitive to work-family balance; to develop a validated DIFI Work-Family Balance instrument to serve as a surveillance instrument for monitoring work-family balance in Qatar; and to build evidence-based information to inform policy creation or refinement targeting work-family balance and related implementation standards to ensure the protection and preservation of Qatari families.

The **Work-Family Balance: Challenges, Experiences and Implications for Families in Qatar** study was designed with two distinct but complementary components. The first component involved in-depth interviews with Qatari working women and men at different stages of the life course. The primary focus of these qualitative data was to obtain a fine-grained understanding of work-family experience among Qataris – we wanted to understand the meaning and experiences of work-family balance in their own words. The second project component was a structured survey administered to Qatari working women and men in randomly selected households in Qatar. The primary focus of these quantitative data was to generate estimates of the relative success experienced by working Qatari women and men in achieving work-family balance; to document the potential threat to Qataris of poor work-family balance; and to identify potential policy targets for protecting individuals and families.

1.4. Methodological Overview

1.4.1. Qualitative study

After obtaining IRB approval, the research team contacted prospective working adults in Qatar and invited them to participate in individual interviews, and 20 agreed to schedule an interview. Twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted across a period of time spanning from 35 minutes to 90 minutes. Most interviews were tape-recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim. For the small number of participants who refused to allow the interview to be tape-recorded, detailed notes to participants' responses were taken by the interviewer during the process of the interview.

After signing a consent form, each participant was asked to respond to the questions covering characteristics of the participant and their family, their perceived meaning of work-family balance and their subsequent experiences, their perceived causes and consequences of work-family balance and imbalance, and their comments on work-family balance-related policies, such as paternity leave, nursing hours, on-site childcare facilities, and work flexibility. As the participant's narrative proceeded, probes and sub-questions were used to encourage additional detail.

1.4.2. Quantitative study

The project fielded a survey, with the goal of recruiting a representative sample of working Qatari adults (aged 18 and older) living in residential housing units in Qatar. The sample frame, or list of households that could be used to identify all elements of the target population, was developed by Qatar University’s Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) with assistance from the Qatar Electricity and Water Company (Kahramaa). Within this sample frame, all housing units in Qatar are listed with information about the housing address and information to identify if residents in the housing units are Qataris or expatriates.

Prior to fielding the survey, the sample frame was divided first by municipality zone (1-12), and by blocks within each municipality zone. Systematic sampling implies proportionate stratification, as a block containing a given percentage of Qatari housing units in the frame would be represented by the same percentage of the total number of sampled units. Based on previous surveys, SESRI has documented variation in response rates across different zone-block areas. Therefore, over-sampling was used to make up for lower response rates in some zone-block areas.

A two-stage selection design was used in this survey. In the first stage of the selection, households were randomly selected to ensure good representation across the zone-block areas, with over-sampling to accommodate lower response rates in some areas. When contact was made with these randomly selected households, one adult over the age of 18 who was currently employed was selected from that household. If there was only one working adult in the household, that person was the respondent for the household. If more than one study-eligible adult was present in the household, SESRI deployed a randomization scheme used in a previous project to ensure a valid probability sample of working Qatari adults.

All data were collected via computer-assisted personal interviews conducted by trained, professional interviewers. The content of the survey was guided by an integrated framework that was informed by existing research on work-family balance, and by preliminary results from the qualitative component of the project to ensure relevance to the Qatari population (Figure 1.1). Sample weights were constructed to enable the creation of estimates reflecting the entire population of working Qataris.

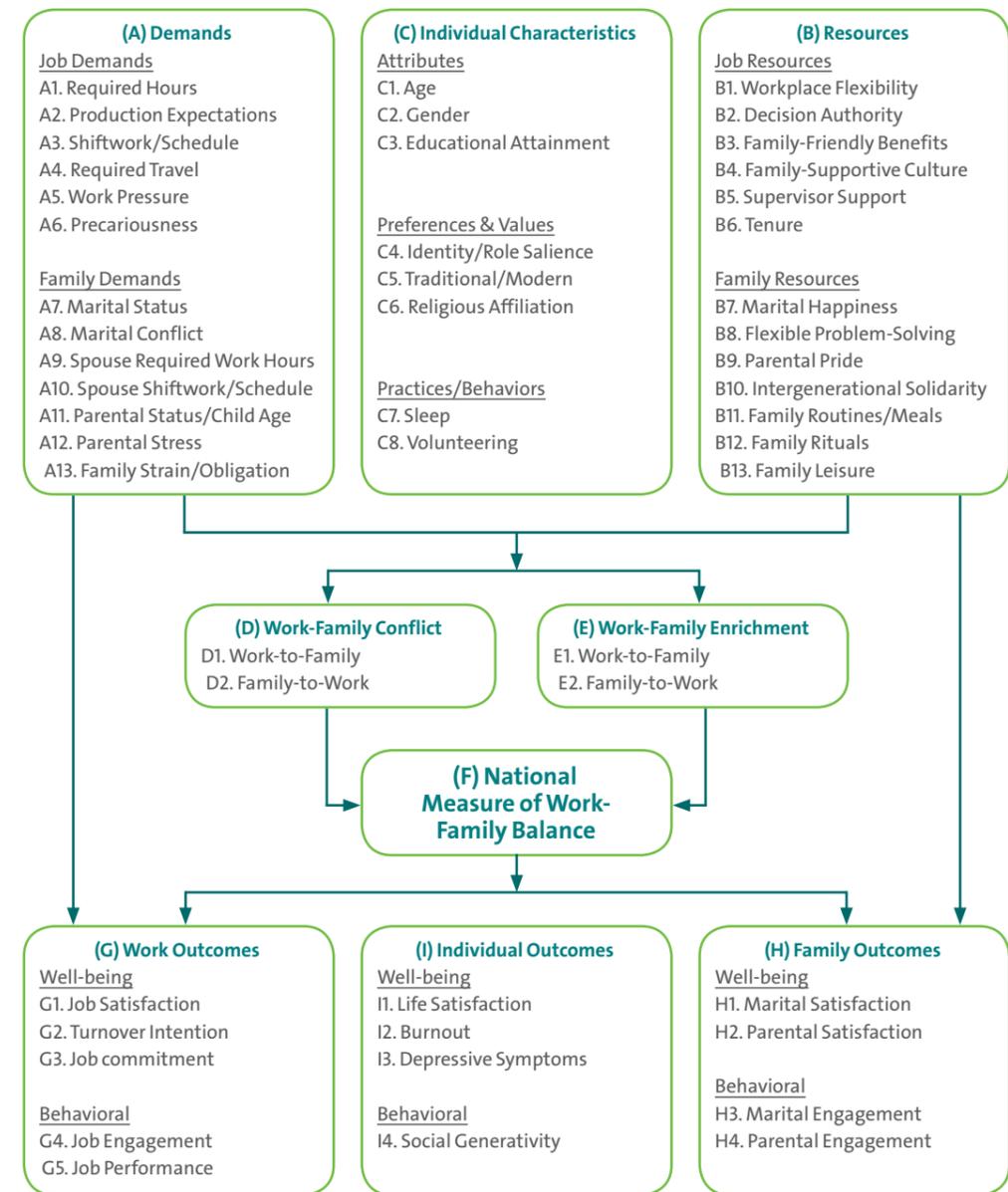


Figure 1.1. Conceptual Framework Underlying Work-Family Surveys

CHAPTER TWO: WORK-FAMILY BALANCE AMONG QATARI ADULTS – A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

2.1. Sample and Analytic Strategy

2.1.1. Sample

The final sample consisted of 20 married Qatari working adults, 10 males and 10 females; all were working full-time jobs. Participants' ages ranged from 25 to 55, with a mean age of 38.4 (SD=9.1). Working years in the current position ranged from 3 months to 26 years (M =10.2; SD = 7.3). Ten participants (50%) held a bachelor's degree, 4 (20%) held a Ph.D. or master degree, and 6 (30%) held a high school diploma. Their children ranged in age from 4 months old to 30 years old (M=11.2; SD=8.1) with an average of 3 children per family. Almost all participants were working in Qatari governmental sectors, covering receptionists, administrators, public prosecutor, aviator, clerical writer, business management, nurses, security, museum researcher, event specialists, treasurer, mechanic, and academic faculty.

2.1.2. Procedure

Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and uploaded into MAXQDA 2018 for analysis. Interview data were coded and analyzed using a grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), a structured analytical approach designed to explain and develop a conceptual framework for a social phenomenon of interest. A grounded theory approach was selected because of the lack of knowledge regarding the specific elements and element relationships that comprise the meaning and process of obtaining work-family balance.

In the open coding phase, codes revolving around “work-family balance” were created, including the meaning of work, family, and work-family balance to participants, and participants' recent experiences of work-family balance and work-family imbalance, as well as their perceived causes and consequences of balance and imbalance. Each transcript was independently coded by a primary and a secondary coder, and discrepancies were resolved through discussion with a third party familiar with the project. In the axial coding phase, themes were identified using a theoretical coding approach by linking the codes based on constant comparison and cross-examination among codes. In the final selective coding phase, the most relevant themes on work-family balance were integrated to form a theoretical framework. This framework reflects the central theme that work-family balance is an idealized goal, describing how participants framed the meaning of work-family balance, how they experienced it, why they thought it was an idealized goal, and how they strived to achieve the balance goal.

Participants, males and females, universally viewed family as being more important than work. Nevertheless, participants also understood that families need income to

secure food and care, and achieve social and cultural expectations of a “good family life.” Uniformly, participants realized work-family balance is an idealized goal – essentially mission impossible. Indeed, in most cases, balance was only possible while on vacation or holiday. The demanding nature of work – particularly the temporal demand of work – rendered working adults unable to allocate the amount of time, energy and patience to meet family expectations. Consequently, participants generally believed family is sacrificed, even though work – as the only option to generate income – is essential to family. Even though work-family balance was understood to be an unattainable ideal, participants nevertheless expressed actively working to achieve balance. The remainder of this section elaborates these basic themes.

2.2. Main Themes

2.2.1. Theme 1: Employment (and work) is driven by family financial needs

Men referred to themselves as the primary source of income for the family. Nevertheless, both women and men commented on the importance of women's working because, as they explained, men's income alone is not enough for the family to attain the living standards of contemporary Qatar. Some participants also acknowledged that the economic boon and increased desire to acquire a more affluent lifestyle for the family played a role in their decision to participate in the workforce. As Um Mohamed disclosed:

During that time, because I knew my husband's circumstances and that his monthly salary was not enough, there was an agreement that I would work as this was a foundational period during which we were establishing our family and our home. So, I had to work and help him. Why was all this necessary? I could have stayed home and not helped him, but that would have made it take a longer [period] to build our house nicely as he would have had to do that...due to the societal pressure around us, we had a greater urgency to work to ensure we had more resources so that we could be able to travel and have a better car.

Keeping up with the rapidly changing economy and shifts in labor production is particularly challenging for migrants in Qatar, who constitute a large proportion of the Qatari workforce. As Um Abdelaziz, a Qatari married to a non-Qatari, described, her husband's migrant identity made it difficult to obtain a mortgage, so she started working to enable the process of obtaining permanent housing:

Our financial situation is fine...but it is not possible to live on one salary per family because of the rising costs of living. My husband is not Qatari so if we want to get a house, we have to wait for the government to grant us something and until now it hasn't happened. For example, currently I am thinking about buying a house by myself, but this would take a long time – 10 or 20 years of work. And I can't wait for 20 years to pass by. After all, how old am I now?

Um Abdelaziz further commented on family financial need as a motive pushing Qatari women to work. She said:

You can't cover all your expenses, the expenses of a home, the children, and the domestic workers. When you can do that, then women can stay home...I am forced to work. Yet, the first opportunity that I have, I will stop work for the sake of my children.

2.2.1.1. Work with dedication for the sake of family

Although participants, especially women, expressed they were pushed into work by financial “need,” it is equally clear that dedication to work is interpreted as a form of sacrifice for the family. Indeed, work is to be taken seriously and with integrity so that the salary earned is well deserved. Abu Abdel Karim summarized this position well by stating:

The main reason for working is one's family. You are working for the sake of your family, your wife and your children. But it is not appropriate for you to perform your work in a way that is unfit and according to your own ideas. You should be successful at your job and effective...work is a trust and this has to be your foundation and reference point at work. This shows values and morals...family is the most important part. You should do your work well and proficiently as it is bound to have a positive effect on your family too.

Although less elaborately, Abu Nuwaf articulated similar sentiments:

Work means carrying out our tasks and job duties because that is required of us. And that should be done with dedication. We have to serve the [individuals in type of work performed] because it is our duty and we have to put all our effort and dedication into our work.

Conversely, it was understood that working without dedication could produce problems for the family. As Um Amel explained, if a person does not work to a specified standard,

...[h]er work responsibilities will be given to other employees. Of course, the other employees are not happy with her and the administration is not happy. So, her job appraisal is poor. She will face a bad situation at work...and a psychological state where one is constantly thinking, worrying, and it will affect one's emotional state at home.

Work is clearly articulated as an essential means for securing a desired life for the family. Nevertheless, consistent, albeit less strong, sentiments of employment as a form of individual development were also expressed. Men articulated this self-development as a form of competition and an opportunity for recognition. As Abu Yousuf said:

For me, work means that you do your required work and go beyond it because this is what is important. And that the person has a drive to develop and develop oneself. A person should just not attend his work but he must produce more and develop himself in his career field - that is what is important.

For women, self-development in the workplace was related to learning new things and developing social relationships. As Um Amel expressed it,

...my personality would start to diminish...I will become isolated from what is happening in the world.

2.2.2. Theme 2: Work-family balance is a non-possible ideal

When asked what work-family balance meant, most participants expressed it in a functional manner, wherein they are able to meet their role-related expectations in both the work and family domains. For example, Abu Nuwaf said:

Work-family balance encompasses being successful at both – success at work and reaching higher levels and being promoted and also success in your family when I see that my children are successful and their needs are met.

Abu Abdel Karim and other participants further explained that compromising either work or family would bring negative consequences:

Balance means that you stay balanced without compromising or failing. The negative effect of compromising is simple. But failing is the greatest danger because its negative effect is greater. Balancing family and work doesn't allow you to compromise one of those.

However, such a definition of balance – meeting both work and family expectations – was clearly expressed as an idyllic and unattainable goal in the reality of daily life. Markedly, almost all participants attached comments like “...this is difficult to do,” “there isn't any complete balance,” and “this can't happen” to their definitions of work-family balance. These sentiments were elaborated by Um Abdelaziz, a working mother of three, who stated:

Generally, there isn't any balance. For working women, there isn't any balance – just an attempt to accommodate between here and there.

Work-family balance was equally challenging for men. Abu Torki, for example, explained:

I find that work-family balance must be achieved, but it is because there are children, studies, home commitments and duties, and family all the time. It is difficult for you to experience balance under the circumstances of the lives that we are living. So, we have to make an effort to balance [work and family]...it is difficult for that to happen.

Participants were asked to describe the last time they experienced work-family balance; the vast majority of participants said “on vacation or long leave,” and “sometimes on weekends.” As Abdulrahman described it:

The time that I [last] experienced balance was during my vacation periods... when I felt relaxed and my family was relaxed because I wasn't losing my temper or tense. That period ended when my vacation is over.

2.2.2.1. Demands of work make balance difficult

Family financial need is the primary driver of employment, and family is the clear priority of working Qataris; nevertheless, family is typically sacrificed for work in the form of insufficient time with family and difficulty taking care of children and extended family. Participants ascribed their inability to meet family expectations to the demanding nature of their work and unsupportive employers. Most frequently reported were “long work hours,” followed by “work requires a lot of effort” and “work pressure.” Commutes before and after work were also noted, as were “unjust expectations from employers,” and “managers don't take (my circumstances) into consideration.” Abu Yousuf, a father of two children, working as a public prosecutor, captured several of these points:

Experiencing balance means giving to work and family, but most of the time, because of the circumstances of my work, my family sacrifices because my time is not my own... the nature of my work requires me to come to work at any time. And that is something that bothers me and causes me stress.

For women, the challenge of work-family balance and its implications was notably stark. As Um Mohamed, who works as an event manager, commented:

Balancing work and family means that the mother or woman must completely sacrifice all of her time, and especially if she has work like mine because I devote all my time – either to work or home, I give all my time for the sake of family...Work for mothers is a form of sacrifice...We were supposed to be the queens of our household instead of becoming slaves to work.

The inability to allocate sufficient time, energy and patience to family was a primary sign of imbalance between work and family and corresponding manifestations of how family became “sacrificed” to work. For example, Abu Turki, a father of four children, working in the procurement field, commented:

Work requires great effort from a person and work hours are very long, and one returns home exhausted and tired. Time flies and work takes all his effort and energy. So, we go home, we are exhausted, and we are not in the mood or have the energy to give to our family or our children.

Um Abeer, a mother of five children, gave another example of how work exhausted her patience and created the potential for ill-tempered exchanges with family members.

There are tasks that require a designated employee to invest all energy to the point [that] it affects their home and their husband or wife and children. For example, for me, the [specific work task that spans a period of time] is very tiring and I go home unable to deal with anything from anyone. Although I am a calm person, sometimes I am like a volcano that could blow up in anyone's face. That is from all the stress and exhaustion of work.

Participants expressed a variety of sentiments paralleling the ideas elaborated by Abu Turki and Um Abeer; some commented that they “...struggled to provide the needed love, attention and kindness to the family”; others expressed concern that their “...neglect of family would cause a problem in the upbringing of the children.” Others felt guilty for “...losing [their] temper with family during stressful days,” or expressed fear that “...family connection would diminish and family would come apart.” For example, Abu Marri, a father of five children, reflected on his own life:

I do not help much with my boys' schoolwork although I like to study with them, but they tell me that I come late and tired and they cannot wait for me. So, they study either by themselves or with their mother. My children noticed that I come tired and exhausted and that even if they chat with me I will be thinking of work. This is not quality time. Quality time means to spend enough and valuable time with your family and your mind is clear from work.

2.2.2.2. Changing family life is a challenge

Besides work demands, changes in family life make work-family balance difficult to obtain. Abu Turki commented:

Work-family balance is very difficult in our current era because work hours are long. At the same time, the needs of my family are increasing and this increases my duties and responsibilities related to my family because the children need many things and their needs are increasing.

Meanwhile, mothers highlighted they constantly worried about young children being alone with domestic workers while they were working, and some emphasized child upbringing was more difficult in the current era. As Um Abdelaziz discussed:

Raising children nowadays is extremely difficult when leaving children with domestic workers is highly criticized. No one knows that the children are with domestic workers because of your job and that I am helping my husband. There is no mention of that...Every day I discover something new about my daughter's personality. She acquires it either from school or from other children around. When I am not present, the domestic servant can't monitor the children as needed as they are not her children, and she gives them whatever they want without any supervision.

Um Abdelaziz introduces a concern expressed by several women, wherein working mothers find themselves in a precarious position. Specifically, they commented on how the increased need for women to work (for a family's financial wherewithal) was not being matched by supports to facilitate quality parenting. Um Mohamed expressed it this way:

When all the responsibility for children falls on her [the mother], anything [that goes] wrong with the children's character/personalities is her [the mother's] fault because she is unable to be there for them [the children] all the time. While he [the father] may be unable to handle their upbringing and unfit to be a role model for his children, he [the father] will say the mother is at fault for any damages, isn't that so? Experiencing balance isn't based on one person. I can't force my director to be fair, so how can I have balance if he gives me lots of work but not the rest of the employees?"

2.2.2.3. Negotiation and work-family balance

Although work-family balance was viewed as idyllic and not possible, all participants indicated steps to actively pursue such balance. As Um Abdallah put it:

Being successful and maintaining balance doesn't just happen automatically. I have to work hard to maintain balance so that it isn't one-sided but multisided – [including] my husband, and my children.

Negotiation with role-related partners was a common strategy for pursuing work-family balance. Abu Mazin expressed this sentiment directly: "[balance depends] on 'the shaping of the other party's feelings.'" He went on to say that "...one's partners should understand and realize the positive effect of longer work hours," suggesting that sometimes it is the thoughts and feelings of spouses that require shaping. Others talked about how they negotiated with managers. Um Mohamed, for example, recounted an exchange with her manager:

...So when I would be late to work when there was lots of traffic...there would be a discussion between my manager and me about being late, as he didn't accept it. So, I told him that if [he didn't accept it], I would turn in my resignation because I am a wife and mother first before I am an employee...He should respect me for knowing this. And, if not, then he can get another employee who will arrive on time but doesn't have her priorities straight. So, my manager changed his mind and agreed that I should be committed to my home. Then, he looked at the matter positively.

So active negotiation, for both Abu Mazin and Um Mohamad, was needed with role-related partners in the work and family domains. In both cases, participants realized that meeting all current expectations was impossible, so they sought to adjust the expectations of others. As Abu Ibrahim also described it:

...but I think it is just the only way to be fair is to tell somebody: listen, I have to do these things this week and this is going to take away from your time, and this is the reality of this. You cannot meet all your obligations all the time, or you cannot meet everybody's expectations all the time, so maybe part of the balance is managing people's expectations.

Similarly, Um Amel noted:

[Balance] really depends on whether I receive support from the members of my family, my husband, my children, or from my managers at work, on whether they understand/take into consideration that I have gotten married and have my own home. They take into consideration my circumstances. When a woman is pregnant, her circumstances are not the same as your regular young woman...so both sides have to take this into consideration.

2.2.3. Theme 3: Structured supports are needed for work-family balance

Interview participants were virtually unanimous in expressing the importance of well supported and enforced policies for promoting work-family balance. Nearly every participant agreed that maternity leave is essential for work-family balance. However, all but one person believed that the amount of time given for maternity leave was not enough. The majority of participants commented in the interview that maternity leave should be extended from two to three months.

In contrast to the unanimity expressed over paid maternity leave, participants had mixed views regarding the importance of paid paternity leave. Several female interviewees felt that paternity leave would exaggerate rather than solve challenges with work-family balance. By contrast, most males and several females stated that paternity leave was very important, and that it should be paid by the employer. One male and one female expressed the view that paid paternity leave should depend upon the family and what was most needed for the family.

Childcare was enthusiastically endorsed by interview participants. Every participant expressed the view that childcare should be provided for working parents, and most believed that paid childcare should commence with women's return to work at the end of maternity leave. The majority of the males and half the females believed that the cost of daycare should be covered by the employer. Two females believed that the cost should be covered by the employee, and one female believed that the cost should be shared. Interestingly, at least half of the interviewed females talked about the importance of ensuring quality of care in any policy initiative addressing childcare, whereas only one male discussed childcare quality.

Two other policy strategies were discussed by participants. Both women and men embraced the importance of a policy to enable continued breastfeeding of infants after mothers returned to work. Participants commented that allowing nursing hours at the beginning or end of the working day would enable work-family balance. Similarly, nearly three-quarters of the interviewees mentioned the importance of

workplace flexibility, particularly with regard to hours, or time flexibility. Participants expressed that employers, rather than employees, should be setting the standard for flexible time alternatives.

2.3. Summary of Qualitative Results

The results from the qualitative data tell a fairly simple story of an economy in transition. That story begins with a strong value for family and the desire to create a family life that offers as much as possible. Adult members of Qatari households must acquire the financial wherewithal to achieve that desired family life, and for most men and the vast majority of women that means entering the labor force. The data clearly showed that employment is a “means to an end,” and the valued end point was a better family life. Ironically, while work is viewed as the only viable way to achieving the desired family life, family is frequently – in the terms of several participants – “sacrificed.” The long work hours required in the contemporary economy, along with the demands of work and long commute, leave working Qataris with little time and energy to tend to family. For participants in the qualitative component of the study, work-family balance, or the ability to meet role-related expectations both at work and in the family, is an idyllic non-possibility. Nevertheless, most working adults work to secure some semblance of work-family balance by actively negotiating with role-related partners in the family (e.g., spouses, older children) and the workplace (e.g., managers) to shift expectations – to make expectations more reasonable given the context.

The sentiments expressed by participants were similar for women and men. Both women and men commented on the importance of work for achieving the desired family life in Qatar. Both women and men expressed concerns that the increasing demands of work – particularly in terms of work hours and the “nature of the work” – made work-family balance impossible. Both women and men expressed the view that work-family balance was only possible during times of vacation or extended leave. Women and men agreed that policies that extend the duration of maternity leave, that financially and structurally support childcare (through on-site programs), and that enabled continued breastfeeding after maternity leave – perhaps through flexible working hours arrangements – would be valuable for promoting work-family balance. Finally, both women and men commented on the changing needs and dynamics of family life, in terms of rising consumerism and the stress accompanying the increasing participation of women in the workforce. However, only women pointed out a potential source of jeopardy for working mothers. That is, because the success (or lack thereof) of childrearing is ultimately attributed to mothers, the challenge of meeting expectations in both work and family (i.e., work-family balance) is particularly difficult for working women. Further, if children “turn out bad,” working women will shoulder the consequences of individual children’s indiscretions and possibly the aggregate consequences of any negative social trends involving children.

CHAPTER THREE: WORK-FAMILY BALANCE AMONG QATARI ADULTS – A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

3.1. Demographic Characteristics of Working Qatari Adults

The sample obtained from the **Work-Family Balance: Challenges, Experiences and Implications for Families in Qatar** study (Table 3.1a), weighted to generate population estimates, is primarily male (63.7%), which is consistent with estimates from the World Bank of the female to male labor participation ratio in Qatar in 2017. Qatari working females are generally younger than working Qatari males. Although there is a greater percentage of males than females in the 18-24-year-old age group (i.e., 20.2% versus 12.5%), there are more females than males in the 25-34-year-old and 35-44-year-old age groups (41.5% versus 34.9% and 28.0% versus 22.1% respectively).

Table 3.1a. Age Distribution of Working Qatari Adults, by Gender

	Total Sample		Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
18-24	17,758	17.3	13,145	20.2	4,613	12.5
25-34	38,068	37.1	22,755	34.9	15,314	41.5
35-44	24,698	24.1	14,368	22.1	10,330	28.0
45-54	17,044	16.6	11,312	17.4	5,732	15.5
55-64	3,770	3.7	2,932	4.5	838	2.3
>65	721	0.7	611	0.9	110	0.3

Survey participants were generally well-educated, with fully 4 of 10 working Qataris having completed a bachelor’s degree or higher. Nevertheless, there were notable differences in educational attainment between males and females (Table 3.1b). Proportionately speaking, more than twice as many males (18.5%) as females (7.4%) reported less than a post-secondary education. Comparable percentages of males and females completed secondary education, but about 50% more females (47.3%) than males (31.9%) reported having graduated from university with a bachelor’s degree.

Table 3.1b. Working Qatari Adults’ Educational Attainment, by Gender

	Total Sample		Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
< Post-secondary	14,826	14.5	12,089	18.5	2,737	7.4
Secondary (including w/diploma)	45,196	44.1	30,299	46.4	14,897	40.0
University graduate (BA/BCOM/BSC)	38,424	37.5	20,818	31.9	17,606	47.3
Post-graduate degree	4,058	4.0	2,089	3.2	1,969	5.3

There were notable differences in household income between males and females (Table 3.1c). Weighted estimates indicated that twice the percentage of females

(15.4%) than males (7.9%) reported household earnings less than 20,000 Qatari riyals per month, and about 20% more females (31.6%) than males (25.2%) reported household income between 20,000 and 39,999 Qatari riyals. By contrast, over three times the percentage of males (13.9%) than females (4.3%) reported household income over 100,000 Qatari riyals.

Table 3.1c. Working Qatari Adults' Household Income, by Gender

	Total Sample		Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
< 20,000	10,476	10.2	5,037	7.9	5,439	15.4
20,000 – 39,999	27,111	26.4	15,971	25.2	11,140	31.6
40,000 – 59,999	26,598	25.9	16,669	26.3	9,929	28.1
60,000 – 79,999	14,662	14.3	9,793	15.4	4,869	13.8
80,000 – 99,999	9,479	9.2	7,109	11.2	2,370	6.7
100,000+	10,349	10.1	8,824	13.9	1,525	4.3

Gender differences in household income were mirrored by gender differences in satisfaction with current personal income (Table 3.1d). In terms of percentages, weighted estimates indicated three times as many females (6.3%) as males (1.7%) reported being “not at all satisfied” with their current income. Similarly, four times as many females (11.5%) as males (2.7%) reported being “not too satisfied” with their current income. A greater percentage of males (63.2%) than females (48.9%) were “very satisfied” with their current income.

Table 3.1d. Working Qatari Adults' Satisfaction with Personal Income, by Gender

	Total Sample		Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Satisfaction with current income						
Not at all satisfied	3,483	3.4	1,131	1.7	2,352	6.3
Not too satisfied	6,014	5.9	1,749	2.7	4,265	11.5
Somewhat satisfied	33,240	32.4	20,856	31.9	12,385	33.3
Very satisfied	57,457	58.0	41,250	63.2	18,207	48.9

3.2. Family Characteristics of Working Qatari Adults

There are several differences in family life reported by working Qatari males and females (Table 3.2a). Weighted estimates indicated a smaller percentage of working Qatari females (58.3%) than males (64.8%) are currently married, with correspondingly more females than males in the formerly married (i.e., separated, divorced, widowed) category (11.4% versus 4.7%).

Table 3.2a. Marital Status of Employed Qatari Adults, by Gender

	Total Sample		Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Married	63,995	62.4	42,310	64.8	21,685	58.3
Separated/formerly married	7,334	7.2	3,087	4.7	4,247	11.4
Never married	31,175	30.4	19,898	30.5	11,277	30.3

A smaller percentage of working females than males reported being childless (43.4% versus 45.1%, respectively), and a correspondingly greater percentage of working Qatari females than males reported having one or more children (56.6% versus 54.9%, respectively) (Table 3.2b). A greater percentage of working females than working males (15.3% and 11.5%, respectively) reported having an infant in the home; otherwise, a greater proportion of males than females reported having school-aged or adolescent children in the home. The average household size of working males (M=7.9, SD=4.5) was smaller than that of working females (M=8.3, SD=4.8), but working males reported having more co-resident children (M=2.9, SD=2.5) than working females (M=2.6, SD=2.2).

Table 3.2b. Parental Status and Presence of Children in Specific Age Groups of Employed Qatari Adults, by Gender

	Total Sample		Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Parental status						
>1 children	56,877	55.5	35,819	54.9	21,058	56.6
Of households w/children						
>One < 1 year	13,194	12.9	7,518	11.5	5,676	15.3
>One aged 1-5	32,671	31.9	21,025	32.2	11,646	31.3
>One aged 6-12	41,251	40.2	27,064	41.4	14,187	38.1
>One aged 13-18	26,715	26.1	17,323	26.5	9,392	25.2

Spouse working status varies by gender, such that working males' spouses are largely not employed, but if males' spouses did work, they primarily worked full-time (i.e., 41.6%) (Table 3.2c). Working females' spouses are largely employed full-time, but about 15% of working females' spouses were not working and 7.3% worked part-time. Wives of participants are reported to work an average of 31.2 (SD=15.1) hours/week, whereas husbands of participants are reported to work 31.4 (SD=13.7) hours/week. The percentage of spouses whose jobs require overnight travel also differs by gender. About one-in-five (20.8%) spouses of females have jobs that require overnight travel, whereas only 6.5% of spouses of males have jobs that require overnight travel.

Table 3.2c. Spouse Employment Status among Employed Qatari Adults who are Married, by Gender

	Total Sample		Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not employed	25,964	40.8	22,761	54.1	3,203	14.8
Works part-time	3,395	5.3	1,809	4.3	1,586	7.3
Works full-time	34,304	53.9	17,483	41.6	16,821	77.8

Survey participants were asked a series of questions about the sufficiency of time spent with parents and other family members, their spouse, their spouse's family, and their children, as well as time with friends and time for self. Participants could respond "not enough (1)," "enough (2)" or "too much (3)" time for each item. Responses were recoded such that "not enough" was coded -1, "enough" was coded 0, and "too much" was coded 1. The items were summed to calculate the overall sufficiency of time with family, such that values below zero indicate greater insufficiency across different aspects of family and values above zero indicate greater sufficiency across different aspects of family. On average working Qatari adults have insufficient time with family (M=-1.14, SD=2.2) (Table 3.2d). Gender comparisons indicated that females have greater time insufficiency (M=-1.88, SD=2.3) than do males (M=-0.73, SD=2.1).

Table 3.2d. Family Time and Activities among Employed Qatari Adults, by Gender

	Total Sample		Men		Women	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Family time	-1.14	2.22	-0.73	2.10	-1.88	2.24
Family activities						
Meals	4.16	1.11	4.16	1.11	4.16	1.09
Leisure	3.39	1.58	3.72	1.44	2.80	1.65

Survey participants were asked a series of questions about how frequently they engaged in different activities with family members like eating meals together and engaging in leisure. Participants could respond "daily (6)," "several times a week (5)," "weekly (4)," "several times a month (3)," "monthly (2)," "yearly (1)," and "never (0)." On average, working Qatari men and women had values of 4.2 for eating together, which equates to "weekly." Finally, the average working Qatari adult reports engaging in leisure activities with family "several times a month," but again there are noteworthy gender differences such that males report more frequent leisure with family than do females.

3.3. Work Characteristics among Working Qatari Adults

Occupations among working Qatari adults systematically varied by gender (Table 3.3a). Occupational classification was different for males and females. Relative to females, males were over-represented in "Manager, director and official" occupations (14.5% and 8.5% for men and women, respectively), "Armed forces or police" (36.2% and 2.9% for men and women, respectively), and "Other occupations" (17.0% and

16.4% for men and women, respectively). By contrast, women are over-represented in "Professional" (26.7% and 10.8% for women and men, respectively) and "Clerical" (45.5% and 21.5% for women and men, respectively) occupations.

Table 3.3a. Occupational Classification among Employed Qatari Adults, by Gender

	Total Sample		Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Manager, director, official	12,590	12.3	9,422	14.5	3,167	8.5
Professional	16,946	16.6	7,020	10.8	9,926	26.7
Clerk	30,925	30.2	13,996	21.5	16,930	45.5
Armed forces/police	24,617	24.0	23,521	36.2	1,096	2.9
All others	17,170	16.8	11,081	17.0	6,089	16.4

Likewise, there are clear gender differences in the industries where working adults find employment (Table 3.3b). Males are over-represented in oil and gas (8.1% and 5.7% for men and women, respectively), construction, manufacturing and transportation (3.9% and 1.3% for men and women, respectively), and government (55.6% and 21.2% for men and women, respectively). Females are over-represented in education (31.7% and 6.1% for women and men, respectively) and health care and social work (15.0% and 3.7% for women and men, respectively) and "Other industries" (15.8% and 12.9% for women and men, respectively). The average working Qatari adult has been with their current employer for 10.7 years (SD=9.6), but males have longer employment tenure (M=12.1, SD=10.5) than do females (M=8.3, SD=7.2).

Table 3.3b. Job Characteristics among Employed Qatari Adults, by Gender

	Total Sample		Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Oil and gas	7,375	7.2	5,266	8.1	2,110	5.7
Construction, utilities, manufacturing	3,018	3.0	2,519	3.9	499	1.3
Education	15,738	15.4	3,975	6.1	11,763	31.7
Healthcare and social work	7,938	7.8	2,378	3.7	5,560	15.0
IT, finance, insurance, real estate and technical	9,779	9.6	6,324	9.7	3,455	9.3
Government and public administration	44,128	43.1	36,166	55.6	7,862	21.2
All others	14,272	14.0	8,413	12.9	5,859	15.8

The temporal structure of Qatari adults' jobs varies by gender (Table 3.3c). Although nearly the entire sample (95.6%) self-reported being employed full-time, more males (96.5%) than females (93.9%) reported full-time employment with corresponding higher rates of part-time employment among females than males. Finally, workers' typical work schedule differs for males and females. Whereas women are over-represented in regular daytime work schedules (87.9% and 71.9% of women and men, respectively), males are over-represented in jobs requiring rotating shifts (18.7% and 8.7% of men and women, respectively), and irregular or other shifts (8.4% and 2.3% of men and women, respectively).

Table 3.3c. Temporal Structure of Employed Qatari Adults' Jobs, by Gender

	Total Sample		Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Employment						
Part-time	4,508	4.4	2,251	3.5	2,257	6.1
Full-time	97,748	95.6	62,796	96.5	34,952	93.9
Typical work schedule						
Regular daytime	79,462	77.7	46,756	71.9	32,707	87.9
Regular evening or night	1,044	1.0	661	1.0	383	1.0
Rotating shifts	15,389	15.0	12,144	18.7	3,245	8.7
Irregular or other shifts	6,360	6.2	5,486	8.4	874	2.3

Most working Qatari adults are “very satisfied” (49.4%) with their working hours, but this strongly differed by gender (Table 3.3d). Over half of males (55.6%) and just over one-third (38.4%) of females were “very satisfied” with their working hours. By contrast four times as many females (8.8%) as males (2.2%) were “not at all satisfied” with their working hours. Similarly, nearly three times more females (15.6%) than males (5.7%) were “not too satisfied” with their work hours.

Table 3.3d. Satisfaction with Work Hours among Employed Qatari Adults, by Gender

	Total Sample		Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not at all satisfied	4,692	4.6	1,404	2.2	3,288	8.8
Not too satisfied	9,463	9.3	3,677	5.7	5,786	15.6
Somewhat satisfied	37,613	36.8	23,780	36.6	13,833	37.2
Very satisfied	50,488	49.4	36,186	55.6	14,302	38.4

The survey collected diverse data on psychosocial features of the workplace relevant to work-family balance. The sample reported working 5.1 (SD=0.6) days/week, 7.7 (SD=2.35) hours/work day for a total of 39.1 (SD=10.5) hours/week (Table 3.3e). Males and females report comparable work days/week, but males work more hours each day (M=7.9, SD=2.5) than females (M=7.3, SD=2.0) leading to about three hours per week more for males than females.

Table 3.3e. Psychosocial Features of Work Relevant to Work-Family Balance among Employed Qatari Adults, by Gender

	Total Sample		Men		Women	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Hours worked/week	39.07	10.53	40.10	10.38	37.28	10.55
Psychological demands	10.48	1.16	10.53	1.12	10.40	1.22
Family→work interference	2.04	0.79	1.93	0.74	2.23	0.84
Threats to work-family balance						
Lack of coworker/supervisor support	4.13	1.69	3.98	1.65	4.40	1.73

Poor flexibility	4.70	1.93	4.59	2.00	4.88	1.81
Insufficient family supports	4.51	1.84	4.32	1.74	4.84	1.94
Nature of the work/workload	6.61	1.16	6.53	1.15	6.75	1.18
Corporate culture						
Supervisor responsive to need	3.46	0.70	3.49	0.68	3.42	0.74
Support from coworkers	2.53	0.96	2.57	0.94	2.47	0.99
Senior management support	2.95	0.92	3.06	0.85	2.73	1.00
Work-first culture	5.15	1.82	5.16	1.78	5.13	1.89
W-F policies known and used	3.03	0.88	3.10	0.85	2.90	0.90
W-F policies known, reluctant	2.53	0.93	2.49	0.91	2.59	0.95

Although both males and females report experiencing psychological demands at work “often” to “always,” the raw frequency of psychological demand is higher for males (M=10.5, SD=1.1) than females (M=10.4, SD=1.2). The typical Qatari reports that family responsibilities “seldom” interfere with work, but the raw frequency is greater for females (M=2.2, SD=0.8) than males (M=1.9, SD=0.7).

Overall, working adults reported that various workplace strategies like supervisor support, flextime programs, work at home, and dependent care only “seldom” created threats to work-family balance. Nevertheless, females consistently reported that lack of coworker and supervisor support (M=4.4 & 4.0, SD=1.7 & 1.7 for women and men respectively), flexible work arrangements (M=4.9 & 4.6, SD=1.8 & 2.0 for women and men respectively), and human resources programs like dependent care services and paid leaves (M=4.8 & 4.3, SD=1.9 & 1.7 for women and men, respectively) were greater barriers to work-family balance than did men. The “nature of the work” in terms of needing to be physically present at work was a greater threat to work-family balance for females (M=6.8, SD=1.2) than for males (M=6.5, SD=1.2).

The final set of psychosocial attributes of the workplace dealt with corporate culture. Overall, survey respondents “somewhat agreed” that supervisors were responsive to workers’ needs and that work-family policies were both known and used. Responses to other components of corporate culture like “support from coworkers,” “senior management support of work-family balance,” and the view that “work must come first” were more tempered, averaging between “somewhat disagree” and “somewhat agree.” Across all elements of work-family corporate culture, except two, males had more favorable impressions of their corporate culture than did females. The first exception was the view that “work must come first” – males endorsed significantly stronger agreement (M=5.2, SD=1.8) with these types of statements than females (M=5.1, SD=1.9). The second exception was that males endorsed significantly stronger disagreement (M=2.5, SD=0.9) with the item tapping employees’ reluctance to use work-family policies and programs than did females (M=2.6, SD=1.0).

3.4. Distribution of Work-Family Balance

The ability to balance work and family is challenging for Qatari adults (Figure 3.4a). If work-family balance were considered on an academic grading scale of “A” to “F”,

where “A” is the highest possible score and “F” is the lowest possible score indicating “failure,” the average Qatari would receive a “C” indicating “average” or “satisfactory” performance. The distribution of work-family balance “grades” systematically differs for females and males. The modal “grade” (36.6%) for males was “C,” one-in-five men had a minimal passing grade (“D”) and 11.2% had a failing grade. When these estimates are weighted to generate population estimates, 23,086 men had a “C,” and over 19,000 men had a minimal passing (n=12,647) or failing (n=7,055) grade. Turning to females, nearly one-in-three (29.1%) had a minimal passing grade (“D”) and nearly one-in-five (17.9%) had a failing grade. Weighted population estimates are that over 16,000 women had a minimal passing (n=10,373) or failing work-family balance grade. Fewer than 10% of males (n=5,043, 8.0%) and females (n=2,768, 7.8%) had an “A” for work-family balance.

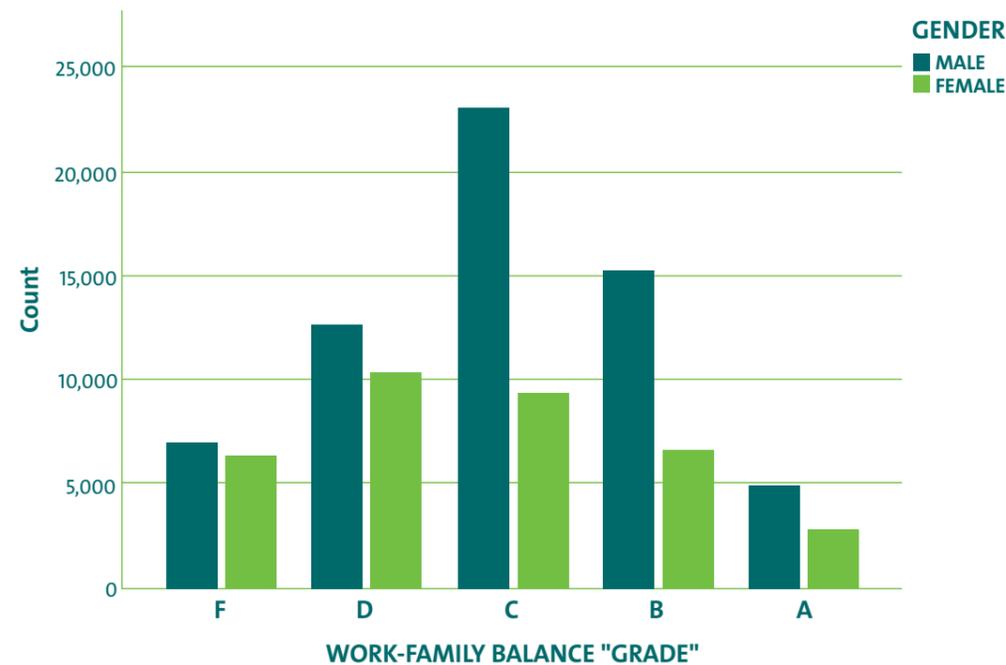


Figure 3.4a. Work-Family Balance “Grade,” by Gender

3.4.1. Work-family balance and health

As has been observed in other countries, there is a clear association between work-family balance and human well-being. Considering physical health, survey participants were asked to rate their overall physical health ranging from “poor,” “fair,” “good,” to “excellent.” For both males and females, the trend is that fewer individuals who have an “A” in work-family balance as compared to “minimal passing” (i.e., “D”) or “failure” (i.e., “F”) report “poor” or “fair” physical health (Figure 3.4b). This pattern is particularly striking for females, where there is nearly a 6-fold difference in the percentage of females reporting “poor” or “fair” physical health: among females with a work-family balance grade of “A” only 5.5% reported “poor” or “fair” physical health, whereas over one-third (34.5%) of females with a work-family balance grade of “F” reported “poor” or “fair” physical health.

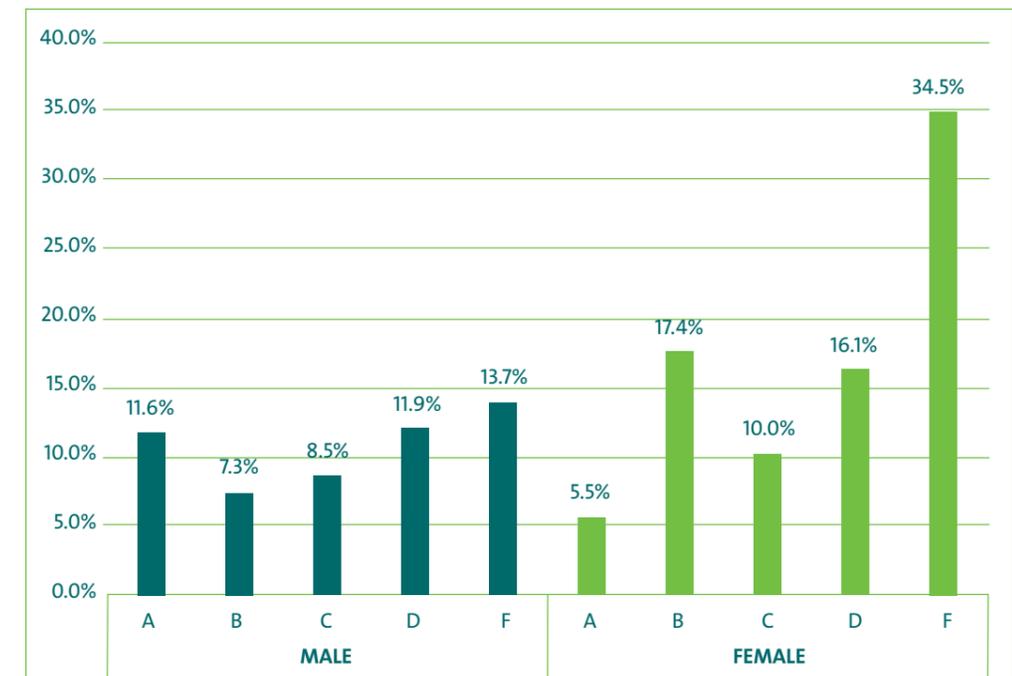


Figure 3.4b. Percentage of Individuals with Fair/Poor Health, by Work-Family Balance Grade and Gender

A similar pattern is apparent for depression where a clear linear pattern is observed for both males and females, such that lower work-family balance is linked with reporting “being bothered by feeling down, depressed or hopeless” either often or always (Figure 3.4c). For both males and females there is an over 4-fold difference in the rate of depression between those with a work-family balance grade of “A” and those with an “F”. Among males with a work-family balance grade of “A” only 6.1% reported feeling down, depressed or hopeless often or always, whereas over one-quarter (28.1%) of males with a work-family balance grade of “F” reported regularly feeling down, depressed or hopeless. Even more strikingly, among females with a work-family balance grade of “A” 16.1% reported feeling down, depressed or hopeless regularly (i.e., often or always), whereas nearly two-thirds (65.1%) of women with a work-family balance grade of “F” reported regularly feeling down, depressed or hopeless.

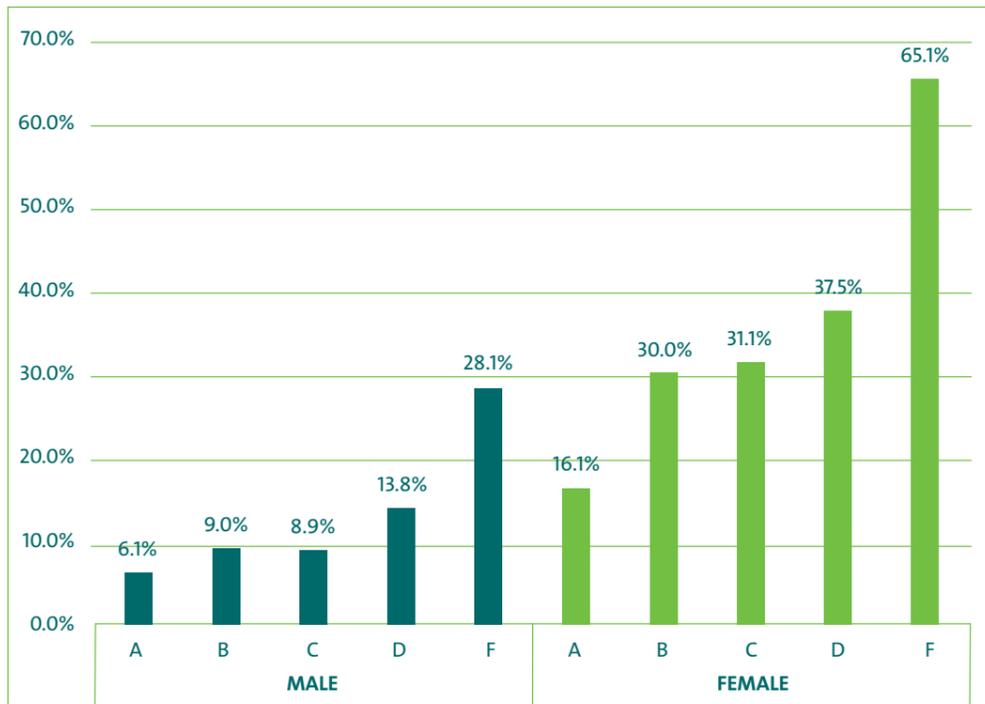


Figure 3.4c. Percentage of Individuals with Depression, by Work-Family Balance Grade and Gender

3.5. Work-Family Policies

Qatari adults' understanding of work-family balance provisions inherent in national policies differed notably by specific provision and the year in which that provision was offered (Table 3.5a). Considering first the Human Resources Law of 2016, the vast majority of adults (70%) considered themselves fully aware of the provision of 60 days of paid maternity leave, although more females (82.1%) than males (63.0%) reported full understanding of this provision. An even larger majority of adults (75%) considered themselves fully knowledgeable of the provision for two hours/day for two years to support mothers' nursing of infants, with more females (85.3%) than males (68.5%) reporting full understanding of this provision. About one-half of adults (46.2%) were fully aware of the provision of 90 days of paid maternity leave in the instance of birthing twins, and just over half (54.7%) were fully aware of paid leave for mothers to accompany sick children during medical treatments. For each of these provisions, more females than males reported greater understanding of these benefits. Just more than one-third (37.7%) of adults reported fully understanding the availability of 5 years of paid leave for mothers of children with a disability, and again more females (51.6%) than males (29.5%) reported full understanding of this provision.

Understanding of provisions of the 2004 Labor Law was more modest. Slightly less than half (45.7%) of Qatari working adults expressed full understanding of the provision for 50 days of paid maternity leave, with more females (62.5%) than males (35.5%) being fully aware. Just over two-thirds (66.1%) of Qataris were fully aware of the provision of 1 hour for maternal nursing for two years, with more females (80%) than males (57.6%) being fully aware.

Table 3.5a. Knowledgeable of Work-Family Legislation for the National Sample and by Gender

	Total Sample			Women			Men		
	Fully N (%)	Somewhat N (%)	Not at all N (%)	Fully N (%)	Somewhat N (%)	Not at all N (%)	Fully N (%)	Somewhat N (%)	Not at all N (%)
Human Resources Law of 2016									
60 days paid maternity leave	61,910 (70%)	15,491 (17.5%)	10,941 (12.4%)	26,889 (82.1%)	3,634 (11.1%)	2,218 (6.8%)	35,021 (63%)	11,857 (21.3%)	8,723 (15.7%)
90 days paid maternity leave (twins)	40,878 (46.2%)	18,704 (21.2%)	28,761 (32.6%)	19,621 (59.9%)	3,962 (12.1%)	9,159 (28.0%)	21,257 (38.2%)	14,743 (26.5%)	19,601 (35.3%)
5-year paid leave for mothers of disabled child	33,279 (37.7%)	18,043 (20.4%)	37,021 (41.9%)	16,888 (51.6%)	5,340 (16.3%)	10,515 (32.1%)	16,391 (29.5%)	12,703 (22.8%)	26,506 (47.7%)
Paid leave for mothers to accompany a sick child during treatment	48,313 (54.7%)	15,073 (17.1%)	24,957 (28.2%)	19,721 (60.2%)	3,432 (10.5%)	9,590 (29.3%)	28,591 (51.5%)	11,641 (20.9%)	15,367 (27.7%)
2 hrs/day for two years for nursing	66,009 (74.7%)	10,512 (11.9%)	11,822 (13.4%)	27,931 (85.3%)	2,399 (7.3%)	2,412 (7.4%)	38,078 (68.5%)	8,113 (14.6%)	9,410 (16.9%)
Labour Law of 2004									
50 days of paid maternity leave	5,139 (45.7%)	2,661 (23.6%)	3,457 (30.7%)	2,656 (62.5%)	1,033 (24.3%)	561 (13.2%)	2,483 (35.5%)	1,627 (23.2%)	2,896 (41.3%)
1 nursing hour for a period of two years	7,438 (66.1%)	1,511 (13.4%)	2,308 (20.5%)	3,401 (80%)	419 (9.9%)	431 (10.1%)	4,037 (57.6%)	1,093 (15.6%)	1,877 (26.8%)

Survey participants were asked to rate the importance of 12 potential strategies for promoting work-family balance. For each strategy, participants were asked to characterize its importance using one of four response options: **Not at All Important** (1), **Not Important** (2), **Somewhat Important** (3), and **Very Important** (4) (Figure 3.5a). Both males and females rated paid maternity leave, flexible working hours after maternity leave, prenatal leave, flexible work hours to care for dependents, and financial assistance for childcare at home as **Very Important**. Females reported on-site childcare facilities, part-time and other reduced-hour job options (e.g., job sharing), flexible work location (e.g., telecommuting or working from home), parental paid leave for both mothers and fathers to care for their children, and on-site breastfeeding rooms were more important than did males. By contrast, males reported sport and gym memberships and paid paternity leave as more important than did females.

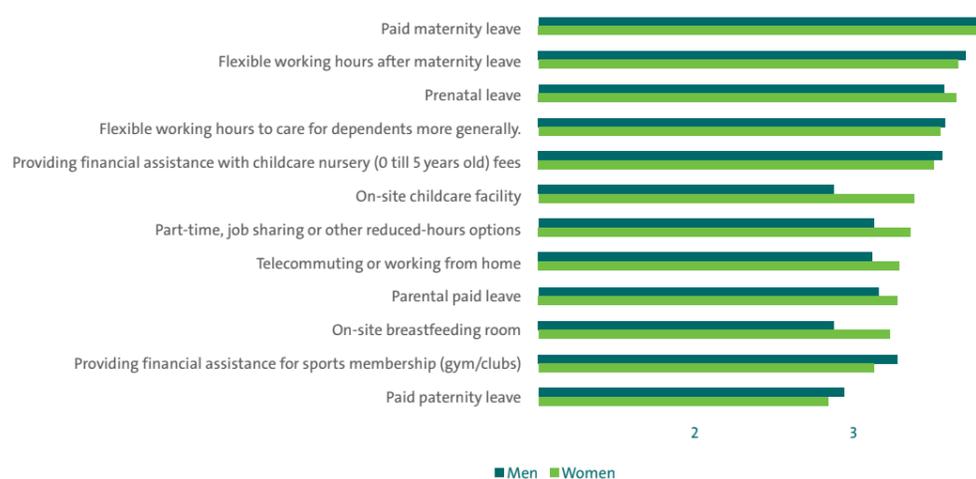


Figure 3.5a. Perceived Importance of Work-Family Supports, by Gender, from Not at all Important (1) to Very Important (4)

Survey participants were asked to rate the extent to which their current employer met their expectations on each of the same work-family supports. The response options for this question set were: **Employer does not offer at all** (1), **Does not meet expectations at all** (2), **Less than expectations** (3), **Meets expectations** (4), and **More than meets expectations** (5). The remainder of this paragraph describes supports that are not available to workers who would benefit from them (e.g., currently have children) based on participants' responses of "Employer does not offer at all" to each of the items. First it is noteworthy that, except for paid maternity leave, flexibility following maternity leave, and the availability of on-site breastfeeding rooms and childcare facilities, a statistically greater proportion of females than males report that each work-family balance support is unavailable from their employer (Table 3.5b). Next, two supports appear as though they are almost universally available (i.e., few Qataris state their employer does not offer them). Fewer than 3% of Qatari adults (2.9% of males and 2.7% of females) indicated paid maternity leave was not available from their employer. Similarly, less than 10% of adults (5.8% of males and 7.2% of females) indicated that flexible working hours after returning from maternity leave were not

available from their employer. The fact that paid maternity leave and paid leave for mothers to accompany a sick child during treatment are mandated by the Human Resources Law of 2016 may account for this near ubiquity. Interestingly, despite the provision of paid leave for mothers to accompany a sick child during treatment in the Human Resources Law of 2016, nearly one-quarter (24.2%) of females and 17.2% of males reported their employer did not provide parental paid leave for mothers (and fathers) to care for their children.

Table 3.5b. Qatari Working Adults whose Employer does not Offer Work-Family Supports, by Gender

	Total Sample		Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Prenatal leave (available prior to the delivery date of a child)	11,127	10.9	5,921	9.1	5,206	14.0
Paid paternity leave (for fathers at the time of the birth of a child)	25,618	25.0	14,508	22.2	11,110	29.9
Paid maternity leave (for mothers at the time of the birth of a child)	2,903	2.8	1,899	2.9	1,004	2.7
Parental paid leave (for mothers and fathers to care for their children)	20,229	19.7	11,230	17.2	8,999	24.2
Flexible working hours after returning from maternity leave	6,449	6.3	3,810	5.8	2,688	7.2
Flexible working hours to care for dependents more generally	19,741	19.3	10,787	16.5	8,954	24.1
Telecommuting or working from home	38,685	37.7	24,169	37.0	14,516	39.6
On-site breastfeeding room	18,575	18.1	11,086	17.0	7,489	20.1
On-site childcare facility	19,653	19.2	12,102	18.5	7,552	20.3
Part-time, job sharing or other reduced-hours options	31,316	30.6	17,936	27.5	13,380	36.0
Financial assistance with childcare nursery (0 till 5 years old) fees	21,138	20.6	11,103	17.0	10,035	27.0
Financial assistance for sports membership (gym/clubs)	39,178	38.2	22,439	34.4	16,739	45.0

The most infrequently offered work-family balance support is financial assistance for sports memberships (gyms/clubs): 34.4% of males and nearly half (45.0%) of females are not offered this support. Telecommuting or working from home is not an option for 37.0% of males and 39.6% of females – 37.7% of the workforce. Part-time, job sharing or other reduced-hours options were also among the least available work-family supports: nearly one-third of the participants (27.5% of males, 36.0% of females) did not have access to this support. The remaining work-family supports like paternity leave, flexible working hours to care for dependents, and financial assistance were not available to 20-25% of workers who might benefit from them.

Next, the extent to which Qatari workers' expectations for work-family supports

are met by their employers is considered, not including individuals for whom their employer does not provide the support (Table 3.5c). First, it is noteworthy that the average response for each support is between “less than expectations” and “meets expectations,” suggesting that employers are, on average, not meeting their employees’ expectations for work-family supports. Indeed, the only item that closely approximates “meeting expectations” is paid maternity leave, something that is mandated by the Human Resources Law of 2016.

The work-family expectation with lowest rating by workers is focused squarely on childrearing for working adults, that is, the availability of on-site childcare and an on-site breastfeeding room. Finally, it is notable that although women were generally more positive about their employers’ meeting their expectations, only two responses reached statistical significance. Females whose employer provided an on-site breastfeeding room reported having their expectations better met than did males. Similarly, females whose employer provided part-time, job sharing or other reduced-hours options reported having their expectations better met than did males.

Table 3.5c. Extent to which Qatari Working Adults’ Expectations for Work-Family Balance Supports are Met, by Gender

	Total Sample		Men		Women	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Prenatal leave (available prior to the delivery date of a child)	2.87	0.72	2.83	0.72	2.97	0.72
Paid paternity leave (for fathers at the time of the birth of a child)	2.44	1.01	2.43	1.02	2.44	0.98
Paid maternity leave (for mothers at the time of the birth of a child)	2.98	0.60	3.02	0.58	2.90	0.63
Parental paid leave (for mothers and fathers to care for their children)	2.58	0.88	2.51	0.89	2.72	0.86
Flexible working hours after returning from maternity leave	2.77	0.70	2.76	0.72	2.77	0.66
Flexible working hours to care for dependents more generally	2.69	0.78	2.68	0.79	2.70	0.78
Telecommuting or working from home	2.66	0.82	2.68	0.79	2.62	0.87
On-site breastfeeding room	2.40	0.88	2.28	0.83	2.68	0.92
On-site childcare facility	2.39	0.91	2.32	0.90	2.53	0.93
Part-time, job sharing or other reduced-hours options	2.47	0.84	2.37	0.83	2.66	0.83
Financial assistance with childcare nursery (0 till 5 years old) fees	2.57	0.88	2.55	0.87	2.60	0.91
Financial assistance for sports membership (gym/clubs)	2.63	0.85	2.61	0.86	2.67	0.82

Response options are: (1) Employer does not offer at all, (2) Does not meet expectations at all, (3) Less than expectations, (4) Meets expectations, and (5) More than meets expectations.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

4.1. Qualitative Findings

4.1.1. What is the meaning of work-family balance in the eyes of Qatari working adults?

Qataris expressed work-family balance in terms of meeting the expectations of role-partners in the work and family domains. This observation held both when participants were asked to define work-family balance in their own terms and when they described circumstances surrounding the last time they experienced balance (or imbalance). Qataris’ “everyday” or “lay” understanding of work-family balance is similar to that offered by Grzywacz and Carlson (2007), who defined work-family balance as “accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains.” However, there is a subtle yet important point of ambiguity in these data. For example, one participant offered a definition of work-family balance: “[w]ork family balance encompasses being *successful* (emphasis added) at both – success at work and reaching higher levels and being promoted and also success in your family when I see that my children are *successful* (emphasis added) and their needs are met (emphasis added)” (see Chapter Two). This participant used an Arabic term that translates into “successful” – which suggests that definitions of work-family balance emphasizing achieving “success” in the work and family domains (e.g., Valcour, 2007; Greenhaus & Allen, 2011) may be useful. However, the individual also self-identified “success” in two different ways. On the work side of the definition, by using a qualifier like “...reaching higher levels and being promoted...” the individual is intimating that “success” means going beyond coworkers’ or supervisors’ expectations. By contrast, on the family side “success” is characterized in terms of making sure that children’s needs are met. This raises a fundamental question: does “success” refer to **meeting** role-partners’ expectations, or does “success” refer to **exceeding** role-partners’ expectations? The dominant theme throughout the interviews is the former (i.e., meeting role-partners’ expectations), but the language and the meaning underlying the terms are not transparent. Nevertheless, these results suggest that work-family balance has comparable meaning outside Western societies, including in Arab countries like Qatar, and they are consistent with the contention that it is valued by working adults across many nations (Lewis & Beauregard, 2018).

Almost all the participants found that obtaining work-family balance was exceedingly difficult, and that work-family balance is largely an idealized goal, in most cases unattainable. Indeed, when individuals were asked about the last time they experienced balance, participants frequently responded with something like “during my last vacation or extended holiday.” This frank simplicity is not unlike results reported by Keene and Quadagno (2004) in their analyses of data from the National Study of the Changing Workforce and the General Social Survey indicating that only about one-third of working US adults experienced work-family balance. Interestingly, while

some researchers have suggested that work-family balance may be more obtainable in collectivistic cultures (Cinamon, 2009; Haar, Russo, Suñe, & Ollier-Malaterre, 2014; Yang, Chen, Choi, & Zou, 2000), this certainly was not evident in these data from Qatar. Moreover, Allen, French, Dumani, and Shockley's (2015) meta-analysis of studies from more than forty countries yielded no evidence that work-family balance is more achievable in collectivistic relative to individualistic cultures. The samples included in Allen and colleagues' meta-analysis adequately represent the beliefs and values of the countries they intended to represent; consequently, the issue of relative ease of achieving work-family balance in collectivistic versus individualistic cultures remains open.

4.1.2. What is the process of pursuing work-family balance?

Qataris pursue work-family balance through several strategies. Both women and men pursue work-family balance by negotiating expectations with role-partners. Results reported in Chapter Two of this report make it very clear that women and men manage the expectations of family members, including negotiating with children and extended family about how much time off is feasible and how it will be spent. Similarly, working adults actively negotiate work-related demands and expectations with their supervisors to make sure family responsibilities are recognized and honored. These findings are consistent with Grzywacz and Carlson's (2007) premise that adults engage in both role taking and role making: working adults do not simply conform to monolithic socially or culturally prescribed roles, but they take them on and modify them to specific contexts.

However, when asked to comment on the specific definition of work-family balance offered by Grzywacz and Carlson, several participants took issue with the preamble to the definition, that is, **"...the extent to which an individual is able [emphasis added] to meet the expectations of role-related partners in the work and family domains."** Several participants commented that it was not "an individual's ability" but rather specific circumstances that constrained or facilitated work-family balance. The finding is consistent with working adults in the Arab region who reported lower Personal Responsibility for Work-Life Balance (PRWLB) than their counterparts in the Sub-Saharan and Eastern European regions (Allen, Cho, Shockley, & Biga, 2018). Allen and colleagues' findings suggest that Qatari working adults are less likely than their peers in other regions to espouse personal responsibility for work-family balance. Why this may occur is not eminently clear, but the data do offer some potential insight. Specifically, several participants mentioned that spending time with extended family and taking care of elderly parents and relatives were among their family responsibilities, but these types of responsibilities were immutable; they were outside the bounds of possible renegotiation. Therefore, the finding challenges the assumption that individuals have complete agency in modifying expectations with role-partners, but rather their ability to do so is socially and culturally embedded (Lewis & Giullari, 2005). Circumstances that impinge on workers' ability to negotiate expectations with role-related partners include the nature of work, employer practices, family circumstances, and societal values and norms.

4.1.3. Are certain challenges more salient for Qatari working women?

Despite very clear divisions of labor in Qatari households, particularly with regard to childrearing, no clear gendered pattern emerged across any of the identified themes. Both women and men viewed work as an essential means for providing the financial wherewithal for families to live. Although men were clearly viewed by both men and women as the primary income, both women and men agreed that it was virtually impossible to achieve the desired family life off a single income. Both women and men provided definitions of work-family balance in terms of meeting expectations of role-partners in the work and family domains, and both sexes largely viewed work-family balance as idyllic and oftentimes elusive. Nevertheless, work-family balance was pursued by both women and men through negotiation and managing the expectations of others.

4.2. Quantitative Findings

4.2.1. How many Qatari adults achieve work-family balance?

Few Qataris are balancing their work and family lives. If an academic grade of "A" is comparable to excellent, only about 8 out of 100 working Qatari women and men were excelling in balancing work and family. Fully one-third of men were "minimally passing" or "failing" to balance work and family, and nearly half of women were "minimally passing" or "failing." As mentioned earlier, in two independent national probability samples of working adults in the US, only about one-third reported achieving work-family balance (Keene & Quadagno, 2004). Although the assessment strategies cannot be compared directly, these results suggest that work-family balance is more difficult to achieve in Qatar than the US. Even though work-family balance is difficult to achieve in both contexts, several factors may contribute to greater work-family balance in the US than Qatar. First and foremost is the amount of time the US has been working on this issue. Women's labor force participation in the US, particularly that of women with young children, began in the 1970s resulting in most contemporary working adults in the US growing up in a dual-earner household. Consequently, US workers today had role models and lived experiences for drawing strategies on how to pursue work-family balance. By contrast, the influx of women into the Qatari labor force is much more recent, so there are comparatively fewer role models for devising strategies. The US has undertaken several initiatives, including Workplace Flexibility 2010 and the White House Forum on Workplace Flexibility, that were specifically designed to bring regulatory attention to the needs of dual-earner families. Although some policy initiatives have taken hold in Qatar, they remain largely focused on a segment of the workforce (i.e., working mothers) at a particular period (i.e., the transition into motherhood). Finally, the cultural contexts are notably different.

4.2.2. Is there evidence that poor work-family balance poses a threat to the health of working Qatari adults?

Poor work-family balance poses a threat to the health of working Qataris. The analyses suggest that lower work-family balance "grades" are associated with poorer self-

rated health and greater depression. These observations are consistent with a rich and growing body of research from across the globe. Indeed, the literature is now sufficiently mature to have a series of meta-analyses indicating consistent links with diverse manifestations of health. For example, Amstad, Meier, Fasel, Elfering, and Semmer's (2011) meta-analysis reported that work interference with family was consistently associated with more self-reported health problems ($\rho = 0.28$), greater psychological strain ($\rho = 0.35$), elevated somatic symptoms ($\rho = 0.29$), and greater depressive symptoms ($\rho = 0.23$). Most recently, evidence from the US-based Work, Family and Health Network is expanding confidence that working adults' experiences of work-family balance are sensitive to deliberate interventions in the workplace (Moen, Kelly, Tranby, & Huang, 2011), and that these interventions produce subsequent improvements in discrete disease risk outcomes (Berkman, Buxton, Ertel, & Okechukwu, 2010; Moen, Fan & Kelly, 2013). The results of the current report (Chapter Three) are consistent with this broader body of work, and suggest that active attempts to promote work-family balance in Qatar will yield improvements in population health.

4.2.3. How familiar are working Qataris with provisions in national laws intended to support work-family balance?

Overall, Qatari adults considered themselves to be well-informed of work-family balance provisions in national policies that are general in nature, like paid maternity leave and options to promote nursing. Indeed, 7 in 10 working adults considered themselves fully aware of the provision for 60 days of paid maternity leave, and a comparable percentage (74.7%) were fully aware of the provision for 2 hours of leave/day for nursing mothers. Provisions that support more specific situations, like the birth of twins or having a child with disabilities, are less familiar to working Qataris but this is to be expected because these are comparatively rare events that would not cause workers to seek out information on these provisions. Females are uniformly more knowledgeable of legislative provisions than men, but this is likely because women are the primary targets of these policies in keeping with their role as primary caregivers of children. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that only about half of working adults are aware of paid leave to allow mothers to accompany children to medical treatments.

4.2.4. To what extent are Qatari employers providing workers with the supports necessary to achieve work-family balance?

Working Qataris' expectations for work-family balance supports are not being met by their employers. Across the twelve work-family balance supports queried in the survey, the average response was below the value for "meets expectations". Indeed, the only work-family balance support that "met expectations" was paid maternity leave, a provision that is mandated by the Human Resources Law of 2016, and only males rated this support as meeting expectations.

4.2.5. What supports do working Qataris view as being most important for achieving work-family balance?

Survey participants identified five supports as being most important for achieving work-family balance. First and foremost, both males and females rated paid mater-

nity leave as an essential ingredient in achieving work-family balance. The second most important support identified by survey participants was flexible working hours after maternity leave, presumably to allow working mothers an easier reentry into the labor force while also being attentive to the needs of her young child. The availability of prenatal leave and flexible work hours to care for dependents were viewed as having comparable importance for achieving work-family balance. The fifth most important support was financial assistance for childcare at home. Flexible work hours are widely lauded around the globe as a valuable tool for promoting work-family balance.

CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The discussion of the qualitative and quantitative data points to several areas of overlap and consistency, including:

- Work-family balance is not achievable for most working Qataris, and if it is achieved, it is difficult to maintain. Although no clear gender-related pattern emerged in the qualitative data, the survey data clearly pointed to greater difficulty for women than for men in achieving work-family balance.
- Qataris perceive few useful supports from their employers in achieving work-family balance. The focus in the qualitative data on the “circumstances” that hinder work-family balance is consistent with the survey data reporting that employers are not meeting expectations in terms of supports offered.
- Lengthening paid maternity leave and broadening supports to working adults with young children (e.g., flexible schedules to attend child medical treatments, nursing and breastfeeding supports, and childcare supports in terms of either on-site facilities or financial supports) are priorities for Qataris.

These areas of overlap lead to several specific policy recommendations that follow directly from the data summarized in this report (Table 5.1). The collective impact of the recommended policies is that working Qataris will be better supported to achieve work-family balance. In doing so, Qatari families will be better preserved from recent and rapid shifts in the economy, and the overall public health of Qatar will be enhanced.

Table 5.1. Policy Recommendations Based on Evidence Obtained from the Studies of Work-Family Balance among Qatari Adults

Recommendation	Justification or Rationale
Articulate a national goal to enhance work-family balance so that the majority of working Qataris earn a grade of “C” or better.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Over one-third of males and nearly half of females currently have a “D” or “F” for work-family balance (Figure 3.4a, p. 34) 2. Working adults with a work-family balance grade of D or F are more likely to experience depression and poor physical health (Figures 3.4b & 3.4c, pp. 35 & 36).
Expand paid maternity leave under the Human Resources Law of 2016 and Labour Law of 2004 from 60 and 50 days respectively to 90 days.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The majority of participants in the qualitative component of the project voiced a need for longer maternity leave (p. 25). 2. Nearly every employee reported having access to maternity leave, but both males and females rated the support as falling short of their expectations (p. 40).

Clarify the intention of the provision in the Human Resources Law of 2016 allowing paid leave for mothers to accompany a sick child during treatment.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Four-in-ten females and nearly half the males lack full knowledge of the provision (Table 3.5a, pp. 37). 2. Nearly three-quarters of the interviewees mentioned the importance of workplace flexibility, particularly with regard to hours or time flexibility (pp. 25-26).
Expand the Human Resources Law of 2016 provision to allow either mothers or fathers paid time to accompany a sick child during treatment.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One-in-five working Qataris (16.5% of males; 24.1% of females) reported that their employer does not allow flexible schedules for general childcare (Table 3.5b, p. 39). 2. Of working Qataris whose employers provide flexible schedules for general childcare, the average worker indicated their employer’s support does not meet their expectations (Table 3.5c, p. 40)
Limit the workweek in the public sector to a maximum of 30 hours/week, and/or introduce flexible working time in all sectors.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The temporal demands of employment leave Qatari adults stressed and too exhausted to meet their family demands, particularly among working mothers (pp. 31-32). 2. The average Qatari adult reports insufficient time for family, and engaging in family leisure only some weeks out of the month (Table 3.2d, p. 30)
Subsidize high-quality childcare for all children below compulsory education in a manner consistent with financial support of education.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The majority of participants (nearly three-quarters of males and half of females) explicitly stated during the interviews that government or employers should provide high-quality childcare (p. 25). 2. One-in-five working Qataris reported that their employer does not provide on-site childcare (Table 3.5b, p. 39). 3. Of working Qataris whose employers provide on-site childcare, the average worker stated that their employer’s support does not meet their expectations (Table 3.5c, p. 40)

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