

Gender and work-life balance: a phenomenological study of women entrepreneurs in Pakistan

# Gender and work-life balance: a phenomenological study of women entrepreneurs in Pakistan

Sumaira Rehman (Management School, Superior University, Lahore, Pakistan)

Muhammad Azam Roomi (Centre for Women's Enterprise, Business School, University of Bedfordshire, Luton, UK)

Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development

ISSN: 1462-6004

Publication date: 11 May 2012

## Abstract

### Purpose

Increased participation of women in the labor force creates challenges for them to balance work and family obligations. The situation becomes more complicated in patriarchal societies such as Pakistan due to women's stereotypical domestic roles, religious prescriptions as well as cultural norms and values. This study aims to explore different influencing factors on women's work and family roles in the unique Pakistani socio-economic and cultural environment.

### Design/methodology/approach

Based on the interpretive phenomenological approach (IPA), this study explores different influencing factors on women's work and family roles in the unique Pakistani socio-economic and cultural environment. The methodology helped to analyse data about challenges faced by women entrepreneurs to achieve work-life balance as well as to have an insight about some of the techniques and effective strategies they use to balance work and family obligation.

### Findings

The results show that among other motivational drivers to start their own businesses, achieving work-life balance is one of the most significant ones. Their own businesses give them flexibility, control and freedom to juggle with their family and social responsibilities. Lack of sufficient time, gender bias, social and cultural norms as well as family responsibilities are the most significant challenges women face to achieve balance in a patriarchal Islamic society. Strategic planning, organising and delegating are the most effective strategies women use to cope with competing roles of work and family.

### Originality/value

This ground-breaking work in Pakistan on women entrepreneurs' work-life balance may also inspire other women who want to start their entrepreneurial career.

## Keywords

Gender Women entrepreneurs Social values Cultural norms Work-life balance Islamic society Pakistan

### Citation

Rehman, S. and Azam Roomi, M. (2012), "Gender and work-life balance: a phenomenological study of women entrepreneurs in Pakistan", *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, Vol. 19 No. 2, pp. 209-228. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14626001211223865>

[Download as .RIS](#)

Publisher: Emerald Group Publishing Limited

Copyright © 2012, Emerald Group Publishing Limited

To read the full version of this content please select one of the options below

You may be able to access this content by logging in via Shibboleth, Open Athens or with your Emerald Account.

To rent this content from Deepdyve, please click the button.

If you think you should have access to this content, click the button to contact our support team.

This study is based on women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. Objectives of the Study. To find out the underlying factors responsible for gender-based discriminatory problems faced by working females. Gender and work-life balance: A phenomenological study of women entrepreneurs in Pakistan. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 19(2), 209-228. Ross, E. (2008), Employment relations. Study on work-life balance of women entrepreneurs – review and research agenda. Sucheta Agarwal and Usha Lenka. Downloaded by Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee At 22:49 02 October 2015 (PT). Sucheta Agarwal is Research Abstract. women in entrepreneurial activities, maintained the balance between work and family. This paper reviews extant literature on women entrepreneurship to exhibit how women have contributed to their entrepreneurial success by maintaining work-life balance. Review on work-life balance of women entrepreneurs. Need for maintaining work-life balance has been widely acknowledged by both employees and managers as it affects their performance (Bird, 2006). Since 1970s, women have entered in workforce. Our study finds that women entrepreneurs employ a number of flexible work practices, such as choosing where to work, when to work and with whom to work as well as managing their roles within the family. This study concludes that entrepreneurship may not be a panacea for achieving work-family balance. We offer some suggestions for how entrepreneurs may better achieve work-family balance. Arulappan, M (2003) When it's work...and not life: Work-life balance: A critique. <http://www.employersforworklifebalance.org.uk/debate/international.htm>. Accessed 25 March 2006.