

# Perceptions of Parents of Young Children Regarding Work-Life Balance

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## Abstract

Historically, parents both took part in giving care and parenting in the early years of human civilization, and familial connections were close and strong. However, men dominated the workplace as society progressed, while women assumed homemaking and child-rearing responsibilities. This cross-sectional survey aimed to explore the struggles and practices of working parents and the impact of managing a household and professional career with children on women's wellness. Hundred and thirteen participants were included in the study. The results showed that a significant proportion of participants perceived that their work obligations interfere with their ability to spend time with their families (54%) and do not have enough time after work for leisure activities at home (nearly 69%). Almost 44% of the participants reported experiencing irritability and a short temper due to work-related factors. These findings highlight the challenges faced by working parents and suggest the need for further research and interventions to support their well-being and work-family balance.

**Keywords:** Perceptions of parents, Work life balance, Young Children

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## INTRODUCTION

The relationship between a parent and child, as well as the closely related idea of parental sensitivity in interaction, were originally this term was used for the relationship between parent-child interactions.<sup>1</sup> Through various research and practice, it has become clear that the central tenets apply in similar ways to fathers and other caregivers. However, the definition of work-life balance narrows down for couples from middle-class families where men are the sole breadwinners in the family making their paternal role limited to that only.<sup>2</sup> Aspects of these early interactions, such as contingency, sensitivity, and predictability of reactions from caregivers, allow the young child to construct a mental model (referred to as an internal working model) on which he or she develops and predicts future relationships. This model is created in the initial months of life based on a parent or caregiver's routines of caring for the infant, but as a child grows older, other relationships and other factors come into play. The role of parents is fundamental at all stages of life but is pivotal during the early years of life.<sup>3</sup>

From a historical perspective, in the early years of human civilization, both parents were involved in providing care and parenting, and family bonds were close and strong. However, as societal advancements took place, men dominated the workplace while women took on the responsibilities of homemaking and child-rearing.<sup>4</sup> Globally, there are policies that support such things but in the global south, particularly in Pakistan, there are lack of policies and interventions. The global marketplace shows greater interest in personal lives, and an adaptable workforce has prompted serious thought about the concept of work-life balance.

Kellogg Company implemented six-hour shifts four days per week, rather than the traditional eight-hour shifts three days per week, which apparently enhanced worker morale and efficiency.<sup>5</sup> *Work and Family in the United States: A Critical Review and Agenda for Research and Policy*, written by Rosabeth Moss Kanter and released in 1977, focused attention on the topic related to organizational research. The term "work-life balance" was established in 1986, and throughout the 1980s and 1990s, firms offered work-life balance programs catering mostly to working women with children.<sup>6</sup> In a study, Ezzedeen, S. R., and Swiercz, P. M. (2002) discovered that employees who are frequently engaged with work, when not working, and when in the company of loved ones and relatives. Are unable to be meaningfully involved in non-working domains. According to,

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<sup>1</sup> Chantal Lau, Marie R. Turcich, and J. Kennard Fraley. "Mediational models of maternal stress in neonatal intensive care units." *Pediatric Medicine (Hong Kong, China)* 5 (2022).

<sup>2</sup> Mustafa F. Özbilgin, T. Alexandra Beauregard, Ahu Tatli, and Myrtle P. Bell. "Work-life, diversity and intersectionality: A critical review and research agenda." *International Journal of Management Reviews* 13, no. 2 (2011): 177-198.

<sup>3</sup> J.P. Shonkoff, D.A. Phillips (Eds.), *From neurons to neighborhoods: the science of early childhood development*, National Academies Press (US), Washington, DC (2000)

<sup>4</sup> M.H Bornstein (Ed.), *Handbook of Parenting*, , New York, NY, Psychology Press (2012)

<sup>5</sup> Esther Kadarko Dizaho, Rohani Salleh, and Azrai Abdullah. "Achieving Work Life Balance through Flexible Work Schedules and Arrangements." *Global Business & Management Research* 9 (2017)

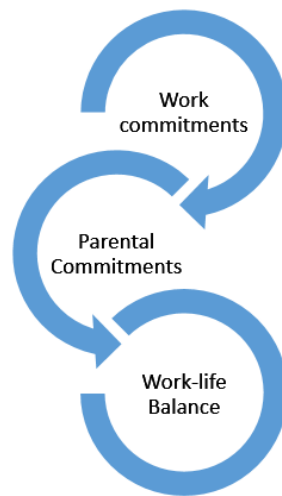
<sup>6</sup> Babatunde Akanji, Chima Mordi, Hakeem Ajonbadi, and Olatunji Adekoya. "The impact of COVID-19 on the work-life balance of working mothers: evidence from Nigerian academics." *Personnel Review* ahead-of-print (2022)

modern work has taken over individuals' minds as they strive to become more intellectual and literate, hence think of work all the time.<sup>7&8</sup>

Furthermore, section 4207 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was amended in 2010 to include a provision for lactation breaks in the workplace. Firms provide premises and job-protected breaks for mothers to express milk. Although efforts to establish breastfeeding-friendly workplace environments, implementation varies by employer. As a result, maternal perceptions of workplace assistance may be a valuable predictor of workplace policy. Given the high proportion of mothers in active employment in the United States, understanding employer support's implications on breastfeeding results is a critical public health a higher priority.<sup>9</sup> Balancing work and family responsibilities can be a significant challenge for working parents, especially those with young children. The need to fulfill multiple roles simultaneously can create a significant burden, resulting in feelings of stress, guilt, and exhaustion. However, there is also a gap found in the literature to explore parental perception regarding work-life balance. This cross-sectional survey aimed to explore the struggles and practices of working parents and the impact of managing a household and professional career with children on women's wellness.

### Objectives

The study aims to explore parental perceptions of working parents of young children regarding work-life balance, the impact of their work on their family time, and how family time affects their work.



**Figure 1:** Theoretical Framework

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<sup>7</sup> S.R.Ezzedeen and P. M. Swiercz. "Entrepreneurship: Development and validation of the cognitive intrusion of work scale (CIWS)—A dissertation research proposal." In *Proceedings of the 2002 Eastern Academy of Management Meeting*. 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Iram Akhtar, Qamar Ali, and Khaliq Ur Rehman Cheema. "Barriers for entrepreneurial ventures in Pakistan." (2013): 1-7.

<sup>9</sup> Jordyn T Wallenborn, Robert A. Perera, David C. Wheeler, Juan Lu, and Saba W. Masho. "Workplace support and breastfeeding duration: The mediating effect of breastfeeding intention and self-efficacy." *Birth* 46, no. 1 (2019): 121-128.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Question**

- What are the parents' perceptions regarding the potential conflicts between their work and family commitments?
- How does family time affect the life of working parents?
- What are the experiences of parents regarding work-life and child-rearing?

### **Research Hypothesis**

- There will be a positive perception of parents regarding potential conflicts between their work and family commitments.
- There will be a negative impact of working on family time of working parents?
- There will be a positive impact on parents regarding work-life commitments on child-rearing?

A cross-section study design is applied in this study to explore parental perceptions of working parents of young children regarding work-life balance the impact of their work on their family time and how family time affects their work. Non-probability convenience sampling was employed. A total of 113 Participants completed the form. The training seminar "Women and Wellness: Woes and Wows of Working Parents" provided the information. The link to the survey form was made available before the session via Google Drive. Parents were informed of the research's ethical issues as well as the information that the data would be used to share the findings anonymously and in a group setting. Data was collected using a working parent's survey along with the consent form and the demographic information addressing the education level, household income, number of family members, and the professional background of the parent.

### **Data Analysis**

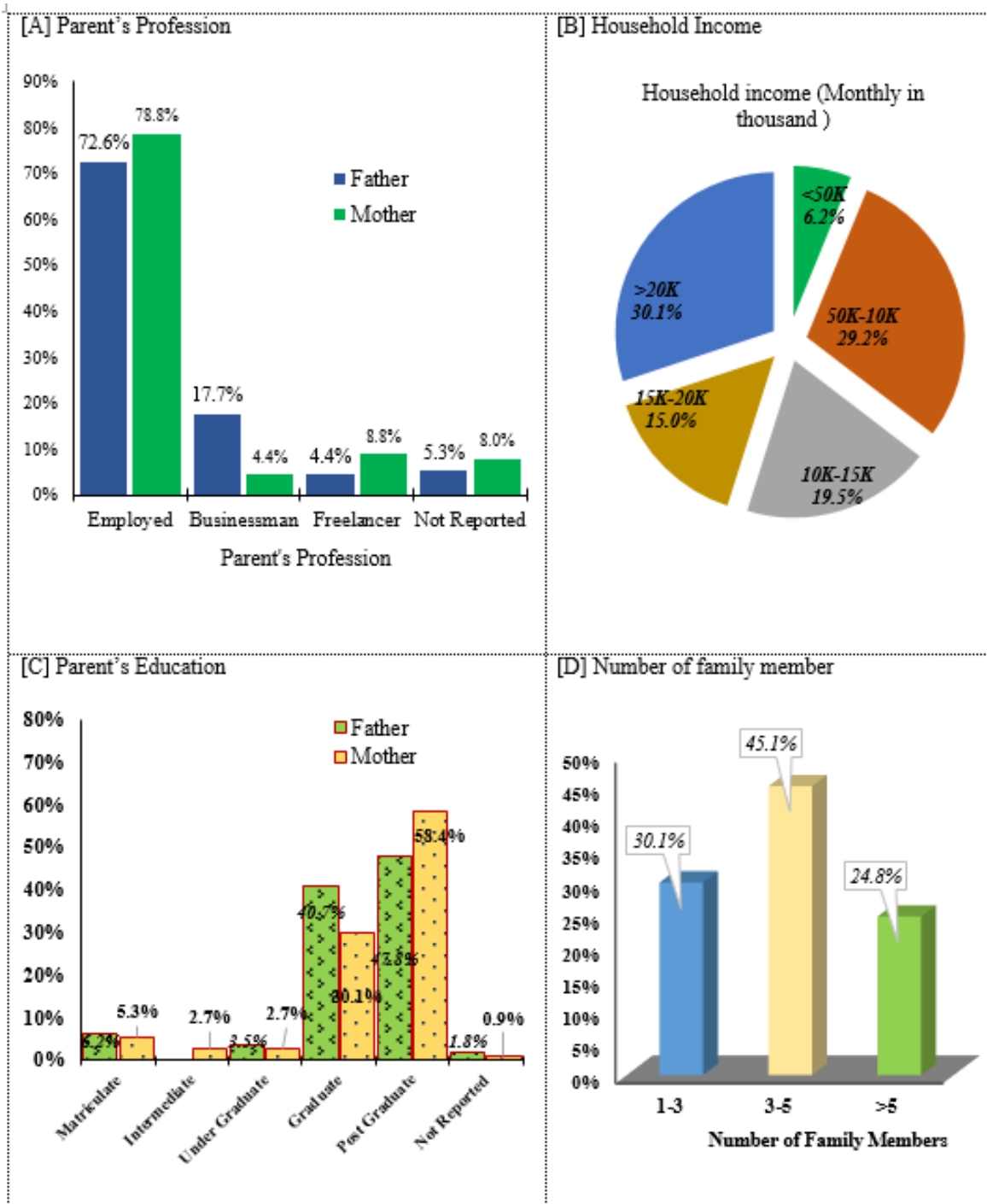
The study made use of IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences, Version 19. Descriptive statistics are the subject of reports. Continuous variables are presented using mean and standard deviation, whereas frequency and proportions explain categorical variables. An interval with a 95% confidence level and a p-value less than 0.05 is considered statistically significant. The confidentiality and anonymity of the data were explained to the participants. Since an internet survey was used to obtain the data, an exemption from the ethics review committee was requested. In response, the authorization number 2021-5887-15504 was provided.

## **RESULTS**

The present survey aimed to explore the experiences of working parents and a total of 113 participants were included in the study. The results indicated that a substantial proportion of both fathers (73%) and mothers (79%) were employed. Additionally, a relatively small percentage of fathers (18%) and mothers (4.4%) reported running their own businesses, while some participants

## Perceptions of Parents of Young Children regarding Work Life Balance

worked as freelancers or did not disclose their occupations (see Figure 1A). Regarding educational background, the majority of parents held graduate or postgraduate degrees (Figure 1B). Regarding household income, the data showed that 34.5% of parents earned between PRs. 10K to 20K, 36.3% earned between PRs. 20K to 50K, and 29.2% earned more than PRs. 50K (Figure 1C). Furthermore, the majority of participants (45.1%) reported having three to five family members, while 24.8% reported having more than five family members (Figure 1D).



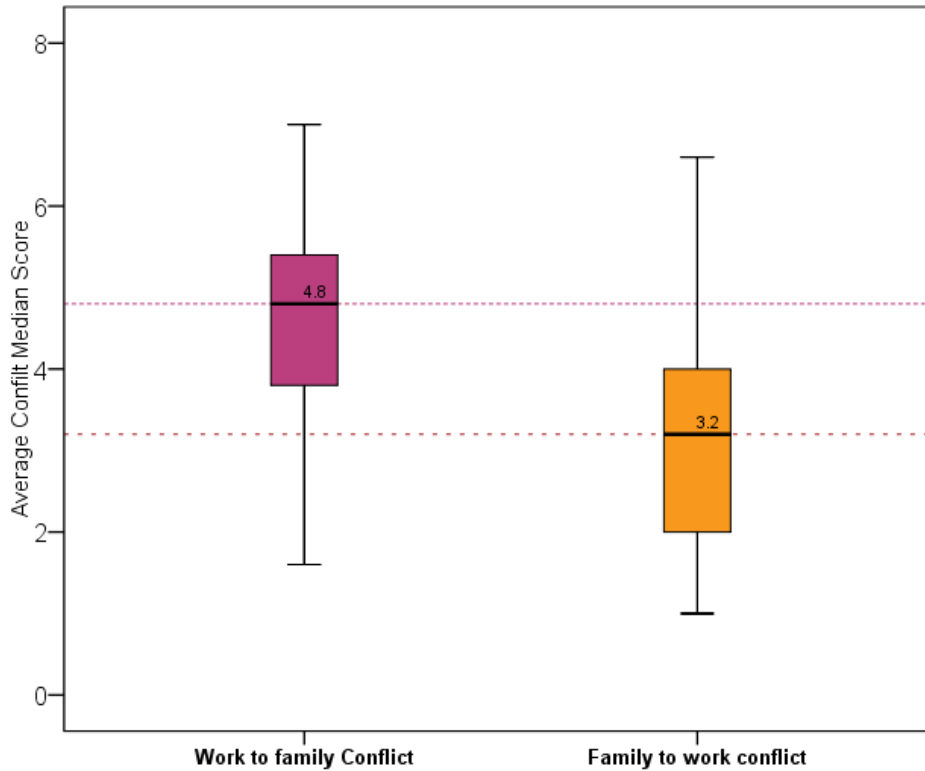
**Figure 2:** Participant's characteristics (n=113)

**Table**

Participants response regarding the experiences of working and child rearing (n=113)

Questions	Very Strongly disagree to Very strongly agree						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My work prevents me spending sufficient quality time with my family	2.7%	1.8%	16.8%	23.9%	23.9%	16.8%	14.2%
There is no time left at the end of the day to do the things I'd like at home	0.9%	5.3%	7.1%	20.7%	19.5%	23%	26.5%
My work has a negative impact on my family life	15%	19.5%	15.9%	17.7%	19.5%	5.3%	6.2%
Working often makes me irritable or short tempered at home	6.2%	10.6%	21.2%	16.8%	13.3%	18.6%	12.4%
My work performance suffers because of my personal and family commitments	18.6%	14.2%	15.9%	21.2%	14.2%	10.6%	5.3%
Family related concerns or responsibilities often distract me at work	15%	13.3%	15%	20.4%	15.9%	14.2%	6.2%
If I did not have a family I'd be a better employee	37.2%	12.4%	11.5%	15%	7.1%	2.7%	12.4%
My family has a negative impact on my day to day work duties	32.7%	23.9%	14.2%	20.4%	5.3%	2.7%	0%
It is difficult to concentrate at work because I am so exhausted by family	28.3%	16.8%	19.5%	16.4%	7.1%	8.8%	2.7%

The results of the study indicate that a considerable proportion of participants strongly agree that their work obligations interfere with their ability to spend time with their families (54%). Moreover, a significant proportion of respondents (nearly 69%) indicated a strong agreement with the notion that they do not have enough time after work to engage in leisure activities at home. Conversely, the majority of participants disagreed that their family life has a negative impact on their work-related outcomes. Nevertheless, a noteworthy proportion of the participants (almost 44%) reported that their work frequently causes irritability and short temper. Additionally, a majority of participants perceived that their work-related outcomes such as work performance, commitment, and concentration were not influenced by their family life or structure.



**Figure 3:** Median conflict score of candidates for work-to-family conflict and Family work conflict

The present study employed a box plot analysis (Figure 2) to examine participants' perceptions regarding the potential conflicts between their work and family commitments. The median score for perceived work duration and commitment conflicting with family quality and time was 4.8, indicating that participants leaned toward agreement with this statement. In contrast, the median score for family commitment conflicting with work was 3.2, suggesting a tendency towards disagreement with this statement. These findings suggest that participants perceive their work efficiency is not affected by family commitments; however, conflicts may arise due to work-related factors such as duration, timing, or mode of work.

### Discussion

The aim of this research study was to explore the perceptions of working parents regarding work-life balance. The focus was to explore parental perceptions of working parents of young children regarding work-life balance the impact of their work on their family time and how family time impacts their work. The results of the study indicate that a considerable proportion of participants strongly agree that their work obligations interfere with their ability to spend time with their families (54%). Moreover, a significant proportion of respondents (nearly 69%) indicated a strong agreement with the notion that they do not have enough time after work to engage in leisure activities at home. Conversely, most participants disagreed that their family life has a negative impact on their work-related outcomes. Nevertheless, a noteworthy proportion of the participants (almost 44%) reported that their work frequently causes irritability and short temper. Additionally, many participants perceived that their work-related outcomes such as work performance, commitment, and concentration were not influenced by their family life or structure.

Work-life balance plays a vital role in every individual's personal and professional life. Moreover, it is a pressing issue faced by all in the workforce more so by working parents. Our study found that balancing work and family responsibilities is a significant challenge, especially for working parents with young children. It further affirmed that work obligations interfere with parents' ability to spend time with their families, including leisure activities Scholarios 2004 endorses that work-life balance plays a critical role in shaping employees' attitudes towards their organizations and towards their lives. Khalil in 2015 also reported the same and attributed the imbalance to increased workload and role conflict. Moreover, organizations having a culture of work-life balance culture report lower levels of overload, conflicts, and work-to-family interference.<sup>10</sup> Another study reports that individuals who manage to balance family and work life are more satisfied with their lives, which positively influences their mental and physical health.<sup>11</sup>

However, most of our study participants did not believe that family life had a negative impact on their work-related outcomes. Hybholt et al. found that middle-aged women who exercised successfully cut back on work (e.g., taking earned time off, being more flexible, and delegating household tasks, such as cooking, grocery shopping, and being present) and delegated household chores. Women, however, have to manage their emotions to prioritize their personal leisure time

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<sup>10</sup> Daulat Marpaung, Ida Aju Brahmasari, and Ida Aju Brahma Ratih. "Effect of Organizational Culture on Burnout, Organizational Commitment, Work-Life Balance and Employee Performance of Bank Btn in East Java." *Resmilitaris* 12, no. 4 (2022): 596-610.

<sup>11</sup> Qiqi Chen, Mengtong Chen, Camilla Kin Ming Lo, Ko Ling Chan, and Patrick Ip. "Stress in balancing work and family among working parents in Hong Kong." *International journal of environmental research and public health* 19, no. 9 (2022): 5589.

since they cannot fulfill societal obligations during the time-consuming exercise intervention. Furthermore, the study showed that women's leisure activities are determined by their emotional state. Finally, the study suggested that women need to be aware of their emotional states in order to balance their priorities and obligations.<sup>12</sup>

Many of our study participants reported feeling irritable and experiencing stress due to work-related factors. Chen 2022 also reports that individuals having children and elderly relatives at home to take care of have a significantly higher level of work–life stress compared to those who have no care duties.<sup>13</sup> Further research and interventions are necessary to support the well-being and work-family balance of working parents.

## CONCLUSION

Family and work-life balance are essential aspects of a person's overall well-being and quality of life. Striking the right balance between professional roles and personal relationships fosters a healthy, productive, and fulfilling life. This balance facilitates individuals to nurture meaningful relationships, manage stress, and maintain both physical and mental health.<sup>14</sup> Good family life provides emotional support, love, and a sense of belonging, which are fundamental for personal development and happiness. Spending quality time with family members strengthens bonds and brings greater meaning to life. A healthy work-life balance ensures that individuals can attend to their family needs while simultaneously excelling in their careers. In contrast, an imbalanced work-life dynamic can lead to burnout, increased stress, and strained relationships. This imbalance has long-term consequences, such as decreased job satisfaction and a decline in overall well-being.<sup>15</sup>

Institutions and schools play a critical role in promoting and supporting work-life balance. They can implement various measures to help individuals achieve this balance:

- Flexible work hours or, in recent times - due to Covid-19 - remote work options facilitate individuals to manage their time effectively and prioritize family commitments.<sup>16</sup>
- Providing resources and workshops on time management, stress reduction, and work-life balance strategies can empower individuals to take control of their lives.
- Offering family-friendly benefits such as parental leave, childcare assistance, and employee assistance programmes can ease the financial and emotional burdens of raising a family while working.

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<sup>12</sup> Maria Hybholt, Laila Susanne Ottesen, and Lone Friis Thing. "Exercise in the time bind of work and family. Emotion management of personal leisure time among middle-aged Danish women." *Leisure Studies* 41, no. 2 (2022): 231-246.

<sup>13</sup> Op.Cit. Qiqi, Chen, Mengtong Chen, Camilla Kin Ming Lo, Ko Ling Chan, and Patrick Ip. "Stress in balancing work and family among working parents in Hong Kong."

<sup>14</sup> Inese Abolina, and Andzela Veselova. "Work-life balance in the context of remote work." *Scientific Programme Committee* (2022): 23.

<sup>15</sup> Attia Aman-Ullah, Hadziroh Ibrahim, Azelin Aziz, and Waqas Mehmood. "Balancing is a necessity not leisure: a study on work–life balance witnessing healthcare sector of Pakistan." *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration* ahead-of-print (2022).

<sup>16</sup> Lina Vyas, "'New normal' at work in a post-COVID world: work–life balance and labor markets." *Policy and Society* 41, no. 1 (2022): 155-167

## Perceptions of Parents of Young Children regarding Work Life Balance

- Schools can establish cross-curricular activities and after-school programmes that align with working parents' schedules, reducing the stress of coordinating care and transportation.
- Public sector institutions and hospitals, together with schools and other stakeholders, advocate mindful living, and healthy habits to lead a successful life, and increase awareness about mental health and family well-being issues.

By promoting family and work-life balance, institutions and schools contribute to the holistic well-being of their employees and students. This balance ultimately leads to a more productive, satisfied, and emotionally healthy community.

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