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The Role of Problem-Solving Ability in Work-Life Balance and Job Stressors in Employed Women

Mohammadreza. Choupani[1*], Parisa. Akbari[2], Sahar. Taghavi[3], Mahdieh. Tabatabaee Mohseni[4], Ghazaleh. Tarnas[5]

[1] Master's Degree in Positive Psychology, Sari Branch, Islamic Azad University, Mazandaran, Iran
[2] Master of Clinical Psychology, West Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
[3] Master of Clinical Psychology, Behshahr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Behshahr, Iran
[4] Master's Degree, Family Counseling, South Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
[5] PhD in Health Psychology, Department of Psychology, Karaj Branch of Islamic Azad University, Karaj, Iran

*** Corresponding author email address**: amooreza.sari@yahoo.com

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A B S T R A C T

Objective: This study examines the role of problem-solving ability in managing work-life balance and job stressors among employed women.

Methods and Materials: The present study is applied and descriptive-correlational in nature. Data were collected from a sample of employed women using the Heppner Problem-Solving Inventory (1987), the Work-Life Balance Scale by Wang and Kou (2009), and the Job Stressors Scale by Staines (2000). Statistical analysis was performed using multiple regression analysis with a simultaneous method. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 23.

Findings: According to the data from the present study, problem-solving ability significantly predicts work-life balance in women. The dimensions of problem-solving explain 2.23% of the variance in work-life balance among employed women, with personal control having the greatest impact. Additionally, problem-solving ability significantly predicts women's job stressors. The dimensions of problem-solving explain 1.18% of the variance in job stressors among employed women. Confidence in problem-solving, approach-avoidance style, and personal control significantly predict women's job stressors, with the approach-avoidance style having the greatest impact.

Conclusion: The results showed that problem-solving ability plays an important role in managing work-life balance and dual pressures among employed women. Women with higher problem-solving ability experienced greater improvement in work-life balance and were better able to cope with job stressors.

Keywords: *problem-solving ability, work-life balance, job stressors, employed women*

1. Introduction

In today's world, women, as active and essential members of society, undertake multiple roles in various communities. With social and cultural advancements, women's participation in the labor market and economy has significantly increased. These changes have altered women's needs and exposed them to various challenges and pressures, such as work-life balance and dual pressures (Dadmand & Raeis Al-Sadati, 2023).

Work-life balance refers to an appropriate equilibrium between the time and energy an individual dedicates to work and personal life. This balance is considered a fundamental factor for individual and family satisfaction and well-being (Akanji et al., 2020; Gautam & Jain, 2018). On the other hand, dual pressures refer to the psychological and social stressors exerted on an individual from two different sources, such as family and work, which may have negative impacts on an individual's mental and physical health (Sundaresan, 2014; Yadav & Yadav, 2014). Work-life balance is a self-diagnosed phrase achieved by individuals capable of managing responsibilities in both work and family domains, maintaining physical and mental health by preventing the onset of sorrow and other adverse effects in life (Akanji et al., 2020).

Ahmad et al. (2023) defined work-life balance as having sufficient time for all experiences: work, family, friends, community, and leisure (Ahmad et al., 2023). Work-life balance involves creating and maintaining supportive and healthy work environments that enable employees to balance work responsibilities with personal responsibilities, enhancing employee loyalty and productivity (Akanji et al., 2020). Therefore, in the absence of work-life balance, conflict arises in life, and employed women, as significant contributors to societal goals, are no exception. They simultaneously face various role demands at work and home, including being a caring mother and wife, child-rearing, and related roles. However, women bear more responsibility for family obligations compared to men ((Dadmand & Raeis Al-Sadati, 2023).

If women, as half of the human capital of society, are excluded from decision-making, numerous issues related to this influential group and other societal groups will inevitably arise. Consequences of low work-life balance include depression and anxiety, leading to reduced productivity, lower work quality, increased absenteeism, and employee turnover (Sundaresan, 2014; Yadav & Yadav, 2014). Occupational stressors in different countries are often a subset of increased work stress. In the demand-control model, job stress is characterized by high psychological demands coupled with reduced decision-making scope (Sundaresan, 2014). Mainert et al. (2019) emphasized the impact of job stress on increasing stress, depression, and reducing mental quality of life (Mainert et al., 2019).

The phenomenon of stress and psychological pressure is an inevitable part of professional life, originating from job experiences. High levels of stress have significant consequences, the most important of which is job burnout. Research results show that a considerable percentage of individuals in active organizations suffer from this condition (Yadav & Yadav, 2014). One of the effective factors in managing these challenges and pressures is problem-solving ability. Problem-solving ability, as one of the key life skills, plays a crucial role in addressing emerging issues and finding appropriate solutions (Ahmad et al., 2023). This ability can help women better manage work-life balance and cope with dual pressures. Problem-solving skills are methods individuals can use when planning to deal with life's problems, serving as a shield against the negative impacts of stressful life events. Individuals who have strengthened this ability experience less frustration and can better think about other aspects of problem control (Galeazzo & Furlan, 2021).

This study focuses on the role of problem-solving ability in managing work-life balance and dual pressures among employed women. Given the importance of this topic and the need for effective methods to manage these challenges, this research seeks to examine the relationship between problem-solving ability and work-life balance and dual pressures in employed women.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study design and Participant

The present study is applied and descriptive-correlational in nature. Data were collected from a sample of employed women using the Heppner Problem-Solving Inventory (1987), the Work-Life Balance Scale by Wang and Kou (2009), and the Job Stressors Scale by Staines (2000). Statistical analysis was performed using multiple regression analysis with a simultaneous method. The statistical population included employed women in Tehran (aged 25 to 45 years). A multi-stage cluster sampling method was used to select the samples. Initially, 10 clusters were selected from various companies and organizations in Tehran. Then,

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30 employed women were randomly selected from each cluster, totaling 300 participants for the study.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Problem-Solving Ability

Heppner and Krauskopf (1987, as cited in Larson, Pentra, & Nested, 1995) define problem-solving as a series of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional responses aimed at adapting to internal and external challenges. This questionnaire consists of 35 items and 3 subscales, scored on a 6-point Likert scale. The problem-solving questionnaire has been adapted and tested with multiple samples. It has relatively high internal consistency with alpha values between 0.72 and 0.85 for subscales 0.72 PC, 0.84 AA, and 0.85 PSC, and 0.90 for the overall scale (Heppner & Petersen, 1982). Validity tests indicated that the tool measures constructs related to personality variables and is significantly correlated with locus of control (Heppner & Petersen, 1982). Test-retest reliability for the total questionnaire score over two weeks ranged from 0.83 to 0.89, indicating the problem-solving questionnaire is a reliable tool for measuring problem-solving ability. This questionnaire was translated by Rafati and guided by Khosravi in 1996 and used in Iran for the first time (Khosravi et al., 1998). Cronbach's alpha obtained in Khosravi, Darvizeh, and Rafati's study (1998) was 0.86, and in Bazl's study (2004), it was 0.66, indicating acceptable reliability. In Rastgoo et al.'s study (2010), test-retest reliability of the questionnaire over two weeks ranged from 83% to 89% (Mainert et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2020). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for confidence in problem-solving were 80%, for approach or avoidance of problem-solving activities were 79%, and for emotional and behavioral control during problem-solving were 75%.

2.2.2. Work-Life Balance

The Work-Life Balance Assessment Questionnaire by Wang and Kou (2009) was designed with 7 components and 26 items to assess employees' perception of work-life balance. The questionnaire items are scored on a five-point Likert scale from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The components include sufficient leisure time, loyalty to work, workplace support for work-life balance, flexibility in work schedules, life orientation, maintaining work and profession, and voluntarily reducing work hours to meet personal needs (Ahmad et al., 2023). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire was 0.80.

2.2.3. Dual Pressures

The Job Stressors Scale by Staines measures stressors in three dimensions: physical, organizational, and content-related, consisting of 90 questions. Each dimension includes stressors relevant to that level. The response options are four-point Likert scale items (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree), indicating the level of agreement or disagreement with the statement (Ahmad et al., 2023; Yadav & Yadav, 2014). In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for the questionnaire was 0.79.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 23 and multiple regression method.

3. Findings and Results

The mean age of the participating women was 38.45 years (SD = 8.72), with the highest frequency (52%) in the age range of 35 to 40 years. Of the participants, 15.1% had associate degrees, 48.4% had bachelor's degrees, and 36.5% had master's degrees or higher.

Table 1 reports the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis of the research variables.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Work-Life Balance	41.75	14.588	-0.056	-1.184
Job Stressors	62.93	16.455	-0.416	-0.465
Problem-Solving Confidence	16.27	7.857	0.361	-1.331
Approach-Avoidance Style	80.65	25.207	0.149	-0.950
Personal Control	198.82	62.866	-0.041	-1.073
Problem-Solving (Total)	41.75	14.588	-0.056	-1.184

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To examine the assumption of univariate normality, the skewness and kurtosis values were evaluated. According to Kline (2016), the assessment of skewness and kurtosis indicators in Table 1 shows that the univariate data distribution in this study is normal since the skewness and kurtosis indices of none of the research variables are beyond the ±2 range.

To examine the assumption of univariate normality, the skewness and kurtosis values were reviewed. The variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance coefficient were evaluated to assess the collinearity assumption.

Table 2

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance Coefficient

Criterion Variable	Predictor Variable	Tolerance	VIF
Work-Life Balance	Problem-Solving Confidence	0.877	1.141
	Approach-Avoidance Style	0.878	1.139
	Personal Control	0.991	1.010
Job Stressors	Problem-Solving Confidence	0.877	1.141
	Approach-Avoidance Style	0.878	1.139
	Personal Control	0.991	1.010

Considering the results in Table 2, which show that the variance inflation factor is less than 10 and the tolerance coefficient is higher than 0.10, collinearity among the research variables did not occur. The correlations between the research variables are reported in Table 3.

Table 3

Correlation Between Research Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
Work-Life Balance	1					
Job Stressors	0.453**	1				
Problem-Solving Confidence	0.292**	0.233**	1			
Approach-Avoidance Style	0.246**	0.343**	0.346**	1		
Personal Control	0.381**	0.253**	0.184**	0.276**	1	
Problem-Solving (Total)	0.412**	0.403**	0.765**	0.707**	0.377**	1

*p < .05, **p < .01

The findings indicate that the relationship between problem-solving and work-life balance (r = 0.412) is positive and significant at the 0.01 level. The correlation between problem-solving and job stressors (r = 0.403) is also positive and significant at the 0.01 level. (Given the scoring of the Job Stressors Scale, where lower scores indicate higher stressors related to work, this relationship indicates that increased problem-solving ability reduces job stressors). Multiple regression analysis was used to determine the extent to which problem-solving ability predicts work-life balance and job stressors in employed women (Table 4).

Table 4

Multiple Regression Analysis for Predicting Work-Life Balance Based on Problem-Solving Ability

Predictor Variable	F	p	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	b	SE	β	T	p
Constant			0.481	0.232	0.224	32.916	5.908		5.572	.001
Problem-Solving Confidence	29.752	.001				0.366	0.094	0.212	3.389	.001
Approach-Avoidance Style						0.224	0.083	0.146	2.069	.008
Personal Control						1.129	0.164	0.352	6.872	.001

According to Table 4, the model is statistically significant, and problem-solving ability significantly predicts work-life balance in women at the 0.01 level (p < .01, F(3, 299) = 29.752). The multiple correlation coefficient indicates that the value of the multiple correlation coefficient (R^2) is 0.232. This indicates that problem-solving

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dimensions explain 23.2% of the variance in work-life balance among employed women. The t-test significance for problem-solving confidence (p = .001, β = 0.212), approach-avoidance style (p = .008, β = 0.146), and personal control (p = .001, β = 0.352) is significant at less than 0.01. Personal control has the highest unique contribution to predicting work-life balance in employed women.

Table 5

Multiple Regression Analysis for Predicting Job Stressors Based on Problem-Solving Ability

Predictor Variable	F	p	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	b	SE	β	T	p
Constant			0.426	0.181	0.173	80.413	15.21		5.287	.001
Problem-Solving Confidence	21.820	.001				0.496	0.242	0.115	2.048	.041
Approach-Avoidance Style						1.094	0.214	0.286	5.100	.001
Personal Control						1.774	0.423	0.222	4.196	.001

According to Table 5, the model is statistically significant, and problem-solving ability significantly predicts job stressors in women at the 0.01 level (p < .01, F(3, 299) = 21.820). The multiple correlation coefficient indicates that the value of the multiple correlation coefficient (R^2) is 0.181. This indicates that problem-solving dimensions explain 18.1% of the variance in job stressors among employed women. The t-test significance for problem-solving confidence (p = .041, β = 0.115), approach-avoidance style (p = .001, β = 0.286), and personal control (p = .001, β = 0.222) is significant at less than 0.01. The approach-avoidance style has the highest unique contribution to predicting job stressors in employed women.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that problem-solving ability is highly important in predicting work-life balance among women. In other words, women with better problem-solving abilities likely have greater capacity for time management and task prioritization, facilitating better work-life balance. There is a significant positive relationship between problem-solving ability and work-life balance among employed women. Women with higher problem-solving ability establish better work-life balance, experience higher job and life satisfaction, and encounter fewer work and family conflicts. Problem-solving ability aids in improving the mental health of employed women by enabling them to face daily challenges effectively and find suitable solutions.

Explaining the results of the present study, it can be stated that problem-solving ability is an essential skill in both professional and personal life, significantly impacting work-life balance, especially in employed women. This skill includes the ability to identify, analyze, and find effective solutions to problems, helping individuals to better cope with various challenges and prevent stress-induced negative outcomes. Problem-solving ability assists employed women in effectively managing work and family stressors. When individuals can solve problems correctly, they experience less stress and can establish better work-life balance. Women with high problem-solving skills can complete their tasks on time and with high quality (Gautam & Jain, 2018). This higher efficiency allows them to dedicate more time to family and personal activities, aiding in work-life balance (Sundaresan, 2014). Problem-solving ability enables employed women to make better decisions. These optimal decisions can reduce work and family conflicts, thus enhancing work-life balance. Problem-solving skills can also strengthen work and family relationships. Employed women with this ability can easily resolve issues and conflicts, improving their relationships, which directly impacts the quality of life and work-life balance. Therefore, training and enhancing problem-solving skills in employed women can be an effective strategy for improving work-life balance and overall satisfaction (Golden & Gajendran, 2019).

The findings of this study also indicate an inverse relationship between problem-solving ability and job stressors in employed women. In other words, women with high problem-solving ability experience the least job stressors. Women with high problem-solving ability usually face fewer job stressors, improving their quality of life and work-life balance. These women are likely more satisfied with their jobs and feel they can effectively handle their job challenges. Therefore, enhancing problem-solving ability in employed women can be an effective strategy for reducing job stressors and improving their quality of life.

Explaining the results of the present study, it can be stated that problem-solving ability in coping with job stressors plays a crucial role in the interaction of employed women

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with these stressors. Women with this ability can experience improvement in managing and controlling job stressors, consequently having a positive impact on their work-life balance and job satisfaction. Women with high problem-solving ability can find the best solutions for managing their time (Xu et al., 2020). This reduces the time pressures of their jobs, allowing them to dedicate more time to personal and family activities. Problem-solving ability helps employed women to effectively cope with job stressors. By identifying and solving the causes of stress, they can reduce stress and prevent its negative impacts. Problem-solving ability increases the creativity of employed women (Yadav & Yadav, 2014). They can find more innovative solutions to problems, improving job conditions and reducing job stressors. Women with strong problem-solving abilities usually make better decisions under high pressure. These optimal decisions can reduce job stressors and increase job satisfaction (Siagan et al., 2019).

Considering similar Iranian and international research, it can be concluded that problem-solving ability and other individual capabilities can significantly impact managing employees' work-life balance. Additionally, managing job stress and coping strategies can also be influential factors in work-life balance. These findings suggest that developing personal abilities and appropriately managing job stress and pressures can significantly improve personal and professional quality of life.

5. Limitations and Suggestions

Finally, it is necessary to mention the research limitations: This study used a specific sample of employed women in Tehran, which may limit the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the tools used to measure work-life balance and problem-solving ability might have addressed the general aspects of these variables without considering their specific and important dimensions. Future research should examine the impact of other individual and organizational variables, such as organizational culture styles and job stress management strategies, on work-life balance and quality of life in both genders and other cities in the country.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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