

Research Paper

Effects of Perceived Stress, Psychological Wellbeing and Work-Life Balance on the Marital Satisfaction among Mental Health Professionals

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ABSTRACT

Marriage plays a key role in the psychological well-being of individuals, either improving their overall function or hindering it. Mental health professionals play a key role in resolving marital and familial discord and the factors affecting it. Similarly, Marital satisfaction is influenced by various factors. The present study is aimed at assessing the effect of perceived stress, psychological well-being and work-life balance on marital satisfaction among mental health professionals. A purposive sampling technique was used to collect a sample of 107 married mental health professionals aged between 24 and 60 and above. They were included only after a qualification from a licensed course. Those who were not married or belonged to unrecognised professions were excluded. The tools used were the dyadic adjustment scale (DAS-7), Perceived stress scale - 10 (PSS), the WHO-5 well-being index and the Work-life balance Scale. Correlation and regression analysis revealed that psychological well-being, work-life balance and marital satisfaction were significant to one another. Perceived stress and marital satisfaction were found to have a negative relationship with each other. However, there was no relationship between perceived stress, psychological well-being and work-life balance. Marital satisfaction was predicted by psychological well-being, work-life balance and perceived stress.

Keywords: *Marital satisfaction, Perceived stress, Work-life balance and Psychological well-being*

Mental health professionals, such as clinical, counselling, and school psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers, are responsible for managing other people's psychological disorders or offering emotional support when necessary. However, their professional lives present them with different risks of stress, such as burnout, vicarious trauma, and compassion fatigue. The overall level of burnout and its sub-domains of

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emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment was the highest in these professionals, as observed and reported in research work, and has been seen to have negative effects on their psychological well-being and personal life (Jenaro et al., 2007).

Stress assumes high importance concerning the jobs that mental health professionals perform. Stress perception, which is an assessment of an individual's vulnerability to demands, often relates to that of work and personal life. Emotional health, which has aspects like emotional health, perceived quality of life and the lack of mental health issues, affects these professionals. Psychological surveys have shown the impact of marital status on the qualified level of psycho-emotional state; it has been stated that stress protection in a supportive marital relationship contributes to enhanced mental health status (Bierman et al., 2006). However, unresolved stress and work-life imbalances are likely to harm marital satisfaction, a measure of relationship and personal happiness. Another factor which has assumed significance in the discourse about the status of workers is work-life balance. The level of embracement of professional and personal life, enabled by flexible working arrangements and supportive policies, creates marital satisfaction and psychological well-being. To mental health professionals, the balance of these domains would be more difficult to achieve given the strength of emotion related to the tasks at hand (Rees & Cooper, 1992). Although there are numerous investigations focusing on these individual separated indices such as stress and well-being, investigations examining them all together in terms of marital satisfaction of mental health professionals are very limited. This has a peculiar absence when viewed from an Indian perspective because culture and tradition inform any marital interaction. The present study aims to examine the relationships between perceived stress, psychological well-being, work-life balance, and marital satisfaction within this demographic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section also carries out a literature review focusing on the relationships between perceived stress, psychological well-being, work-life balance, and marital satisfaction. To suggest a description of existing knowledge and gaps between Indian and Global studies, the information from both is integrated.

Work-Life Balance and Perceived Stress

The study of work-life balance (WLB) is vital in analysing the welfare of the working population. Several past studies have pointed out that perceived stress has a direct correlation with work-life imbalance, especially in women. Ajayan (2021) showed that perceived stress has a significant relationship with WLB, and there is a presence of a significant difference in the WLB level of married working women and unmarried working women. There is higher stress on working women due to various challenges put by society and organisations for working women as they have to balance between both family and workplace.

In their study, emotional exhaustion, as a variant of chronic work-related stress, Oscharoff (2011) surveyed 160 psychologists. In the present study, emotional exhaustion was found to have a direct relation with work-family conflict (WFC) that also affected marital satisfaction. Nevertheless, differences were observed with male participants, revealing a significantly stronger negative correlation between emotional exhaustion and marital satisfaction. These findings also show how stress and its consequences are gender specific.

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In their recent work, Gragnano et al. (2020) have attempted to further this understanding of work-life balance by distinguishing between the work-family balance and the work-health balance. According to their results, they found that health played a significant factor in work-to-family interface and work involvement, overhauling the importance of work-to-family conflict for determination of work-related quality of life and job satisfaction, proving their index for work-health interface which exerted stronger influence than work-family interface. Taking this view to the next level brings forth the aspects of health in terms of the physical and mental in the fight of managing work and personal life.

Work-Life Balance and Marital Satisfaction

Work-family interface and marital satisfaction have become substantive areas of research interest in organisational and family literature. Reddy et al. (2010) investigated married working women and concluded that both the conflict types, i.e., Work-family and Family-Work, have negative impacts on family relationships, and hence, their life satisfaction level is low. Consequently, Batool et al. (2017) underscore the contribution of Work-Family Conflict in establishing marital adjustment and job satisfaction of paramedical staff.

In addition, Safaa Mohamen Metwaly and Mona Mohamed Abd el-Maksoud (2018), studying female nurses in Egypt, identified that lower quality of working life (QoWL) was negatively associated with the level of psychological well-being and marital satisfaction. Using their results, they concluded that the enhancements in QoWL could be linked to positive changes in the professional and personal aspects.

The Effects of Perceived Stress on Psychological Well-Being

Perceived stress, defined as, self-estimated defined stress level, has been investigated comprehensively in relation to mental health. Bharani et al. (2022) examined medical students and studied the relationship between perceived stress and perceived mental health reversely. Stress was established to be a predictor of both lower self-esteem and poorer psychological well-being, indicating the negative impact that stress has on people's psychological features.

Qamar, T et al. (2021) investigated this association among mental health personnel during the COVID-19 outbreak. While perceived stress negatively affected self-reported psychological well-being, they established that emotional intelligence acted as a buffer. This study highlights how multiple layers of adversity impact mental health professionals during the crisis and the significance of building psychological hardiness.

Quality of Life and Marital Adjustment

Subjective health is defined as the self-reported evaluation of one's overall health status, is pain-free at present and with no interfering symptoms of anxiety or depression. It has been associated with marital satisfaction, as well as mutual causality between individual mental health and relationship processes. In one cross-sectional study of British adults, Soulsby and Bennett (2015) state that perceived social support supersedes marriage in having a bearing on psychological well-being. This finding has implications for the concept of marital benefits as well as underscores the significance of available supportive interpersonal relationships.

Kim and McKenry (2002) conducted a study on married couples and cohabiting couples on the effect on psychological health. As a part of the study, they used longitudinal analysis and

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proved the theory of marital protection, stating that marriage has more protective effects for psychological distress than mere cohabitation. However, they also pointed out that the quality of the marital relationship entirely moderated this effect, which means that all marriages are equally good for psychological well-being.

In a study on dual-employed couples in India, Jaisri et al. (2014) found that marital adjustment has a positive relationship with psychological well-being. Sex differences were also noted; women showed a higher level of marital adjustment, and men indicated higher psychological efficiency. The dynamics described in these findings are clearly explained and influenced by both cultural and gender roles of the societies in marriage.

Effects of Perceived Stress on Marital Satisfaction

Lack of satisfaction in a marriage is usually found to be associated with stress levels. Hashmi et al. (2007) analysed this connection among middle and upper-class Indian couples and observed that greater stress was associated with lower levels of marital adjustment and higher depression scores reported by wives. Employed women with marital status of being married claimed to have higher levels of work-life conflicts.

Following up on the study by Sadeghi et al. (2018), the impact of job stress and life orientation on the marital adjustment of Iranian education staff was examined. Their research showed that there is a negative relationship between job stress and marital adjustment; optimism, on the other hand, impacted positively on marital satisfaction. This study brings a concrete realisation to the necessity of providing stress management interventions in workplace environments to boost marital satisfaction.

Integrated Perspectives

Work-life balance has multiple combinations with perceived stress, psychological well-being, and marital satisfaction more than it used to be. Although there have been individual investigations conducted in relation to these variables to establish their specific link, the configuration of integrated models is crucial in an investigation of the combined effects. For instance, the works of Rupert et al. stressed that organisational factors, including workload and client conduct, contribute to stress levels and reduced work-to-family interference, which negatively influenced marital happiness. However, culture and social relations play a key role in such relations. For example, research undertaken among samples of women in India and Egypt portrays the extent of the difficulty women experience in balancing careers and family responsibilities. All these highlight the fact that more culturally appropriate demographic-specific interventions need to be developed.

Gaps and Future Directions

Several gaps have been left uncovered owing to extensive discussions on knowledge management. First, most research includes an unspecified population, with fewer investigating a mental health workforce population. As such, this demographic needs to be addressed specifically due to these difficulties. Second, most prior works focus on the direct and indirect relationships between the identified variables rather than considering mediating and moderating variables. Future research should employ more longitudinal research designs and make use of advanced statistical analysis methods in order to capture these complexities. Last but not least, the role of culture has not yet been explored in full measure. Findings from the Indian, Egyptian and Iranian contexts are helpful, but future research could

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enhance comparison across cultures to increase understanding of the role of cultural norms regarding work-family conflict, stress and marital satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

The study aimed to examine the mediating effects of work-life balance, perceived stress, and psychological well-being on marital satisfaction among mental health professionals.

Objectives

- To assess the relationship among work-life balance, perceived stress, psychological well-being, and marital satisfaction.
- To evaluate whether perceived stress, psychological well-being, and work-life balance predict marital satisfaction.

Hypotheses

- There will be a significant correlation among perceived stress, psychological well-being, work-life balance, and marital satisfaction.
- Perceived stress, psychological well-being, and work-life balance will significantly predict marital satisfaction.

Variables

- **Independent Variables:** Perceived stress, psychological well-being, work-life balance
- **Dependent Variable:** Marital satisfaction

Research Design

An ex-post-facto non-experimental research design was adopted. This design was chosen to explore relationships among variables without manipulating them. The study employed a quantitative approach to gather data through validated scales and questionnaires distributed among participants.

Sampling

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants. The sample consisted of 107 married mental health professionals aged 22 to 65+ years, all working in clinical settings. Inclusion criteria required participants to possess professional qualifications and maintain fixed work schedules. Exclusion criteria ruled out individuals who were single, divorced, or currently being treated for mental health disorders.

Measures

1. Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS-7):

Measures marital satisfaction.

Seven items assess relationship satisfaction and agreement on key matters.

Reliability: Cronbach's alpha = 0.82.

Scoring: Responses are summed for a total score.

2. Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10):

Measures the perception of stress.

Focuses on unpredictability and overload in life.

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Reliability: Strong internal consistency (Lee, 2012).

Scoring: Reverse scores on positive items and sum across all.

3. WHO-5 Well-Being Index:

Evaluates psychological well-being.

Includes five items covering cheerfulness, calmness, activity, and interest in life.

Scoring: Total raw score (0-25) multiplied by 4 to provide a range of 0-100.

Reliability: Cronbach's alpha range 0.81-0.90.

4. Work-Life Balance Scale:

Measures balance between work and family responsibilities.

Consists of six items rated on a 5-point Likert scale.

Scoring: Average score derived from the six items.

Data Collection

Participants were invited to complete online or offline questionnaires, including demographic details, informed consent forms, and the aforementioned scales. Data collection was conducted from May to August 2023. Ethical considerations were emphasised, ensuring confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any time.

Demographic Information Collected

Participants provided details on age, gender, occupation, years married, work hours, type of family (nuclear/joint), and workplace environment. This helped contextualise findings and enabled subgroup analyses.

Procedure

The structured questionnaire was disseminated via Google Forms and in-person distribution. Clear instructions were provided to ensure accuracy and consistency in responses. Participants were assured of anonymity, and all data were securely stored for research purposes only.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analysed using SPSS v.22. Descriptive statistics summarised sample characteristics, including mean and standard deviation. Inferential statistical methods included:

- **Correlation Analysis:** To assess relationships among perceived stress, psychological well-being, work-life balance, and marital satisfaction.
- **Regression Analysis:** To identify predictors of marital satisfaction.
- **Normality Testing:** Conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method to ensure data suitability for parametric tests.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring participants' rights and welfare. An informed consent form outlined the study's purpose, procedures, and confidentiality measures. Participants were informed that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any stage without consequences.

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This robust methodological framework ensures the reliability and validity of the findings, providing a solid foundation for examining the complex interplay of psychological well-being, stress, work-life balance, and marital satisfaction.

RESULTS

This chapter describes the findings of statistical significance of the current study. The results were computed using SPSS version 28.0.

Table 1- Test of normality

	Statistic	df	Sig.
Perceived Stress	.258	9	.150
Psychological Well-being	.957	4	.759
Work Life Balance	.213	5	.200
Marital Satisfaction	.337	5	.065

Table 1 represents the Normality test of the data, which is adapted by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method. It states that the estimated p-value of all the variables (sig.) is greater than the level of significance 0.05 (Threshold value). Hence, all the variables in this study follow Normal distribution.

Table 2- Sociodemographic detail

DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS		Frequency	Percentage
GENDER	Male	25	23.36
	Female	82	76.64
AGE GROUP DISTRIBUTION	22years to 34 years	37	34.58
	35 years to 44 years	53	49.53
	45 years to 64 years	13	12.15
	65 years and above	13	3.74
WORK PLACE	Clinic	36	33.64
	Hospital	31	28.97
	Private	30	28.04
	NGO	5	4.67
	Rehabilitation institute	1	0.93
	School	2	1.87
	University Teaching	2	1.87
OCCUPATION	Psychologist	49	45.79
	Psychiatric Social worker	28	26.17
	Psychiatrist	30	28.04
WORK EXPERIENCE	Less Than 5 Years	35	32.71
	5-10 Years	45	42.06
	More Than 10 Years	27	25.23
WORKING HOURS	0 to 4 hrs	5	4.67
	4 to 6 hrs	10	9.35
	6 to 8 hrs	31	28.97
	8 to 10 hrs	52	48.6
	10 hrs and above	9	8.41
MARRIAGE YEARS	Less than 5 years	46	42.99
	5 to 10 years	33	30.84
	More than 10 years	28	26.17

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DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS		Frequency	Percentage
FAMILY TYPE	Joint	20	18.69
	Nuclear	87	81.31

The sample included 107 participants, predominantly female (77%), aged between 22 and 65+ years. The majority (46%) were psychologists, followed by psychiatrists (28%) and psychiatric social workers (26%). Regarding work experience, 42% had 5-10 years, while 33% had less than 5 years. Most participants (49%) worked 8-10 hours daily.

Table 3- Correlation analysis between perceived stress, psychological well-being, work-life balance and marital satisfaction.

	PS		PWB		WLB		MS	
	r	P value	r	P value	r	P value	r	P value
PS	1		-0.04	0.61	-0.02	.78	-0.30**	0.00
PWB			1		.23*	0.01	0.38**	0.00
WLB					1		0.51**	0.00
MS							1	

**Significance at $p < 0.001$ level

*Significance at $p < 0.05$ level

PS-perceived stress, PWB- psychological well-being, MS-marital satisfaction, WLB- work-life balance.

Analysing Table 4 on the correlation analysis, it was gathered that there is a positive relationship between psychological well-being and work-life balance ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.05$), thereby suggesting that high physical health is positively related to good work-life balance among the participants in the study. Moreover, analysis of correlation coefficients revealed a fairly high and significant positive correlation between psychological well-being and marital satisfaction ($n = 38$, $p < 0.05$). A statistically significant negative relationship was observed between perceived stress and marital satisfaction, $r = -0.30$, $p < 0.05$. Additionally, the results indicated a very significant positive correlation between the work-life balance and marital satisfaction = 0.512 , $p < 0.001$. In addition, the authors did not observe any relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance.

Table 4- Regression analysis of the Independent variables perceived stress, psychological well-being, and work-life balance on the dependent variable marital satisfaction

	Marital satisfaction					
	B	Beta	SE	t	Sig.	
Constant	-1.40		0.48	-2.9**	0.00	
Perceived Stress (PS)	0.50	0.30	.01	4.055**	0.00	
Psychological Well-being (PWB)	0.05	0.26	0.01	3.43**	0.00	
Work-life balance (WLB)	.0.69	0.45	0.11	5.96**	0.00	

** $p < 0.001$ (two-tailed test)

B = Unstandardised Coefficient; SE = Standard Error; Beta = standardised coefficient.

Table 4 shows the final model of the linear regression for the dependent variables, perceived stress, work-life balance, and psychological well-being on the independent variable, marital satisfaction. It is observed from the table that, at $B_0 = -1.40$ (constant), $B_1 = 0.50$ (perceived stress), $B_2 = 0.05$ (psychological well-being) and $B_3 = 0.69$ (work-life balance) are highly significant at $p < 0.001$.

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Table 5- Linear Regression between the Work-life balance, Perceived stress, and psychological well-being on Marital satisfaction

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	Sig.
1	0.65a	0.42	0.41	25.75	0.00b

a Predictors: (Constant), Work-Life Balance, Perceived Stress overall group, Psychological Well-being respondent groups. b Dependent Variable: Marital satisfaction of the respondent groups

The strength of the relationship between the degree of marital satisfaction and the independent variables of perceived stress, psychological well-being and work-life balance is 0.655, and this shows that the relationship is positive and strong. R² equals 0.429, which means that 43% of the changes in marital satisfaction are accounted for by these factors. The degree of significance was computed at 25.75 for the variable F. Co perceived stress, psychological health, and work interference with family life were found to be good predictors of marital satisfaction among clinical psychologists. Correlation between these variables is evidenced through the R² level; work-to-family balance and psychological well-being are significant for marital satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

The correlations showed that there was a significant relationship between the level of psychological well-being and work-life balance, the number of overlapping life domains between the husband and wife, and the level of psychological well-being and the level of marital satisfaction. Improved psychological well-being allowed the participants to manage their working and personal lives more effectively, which correlates with the results obtained by other authors (for example, Safaa Mohamen Metwaly & Mona Mohamed Abd el-Maksoud, 2018). In line with the studies done by Akin Isik & Kaya (2022), the perceived stress was statistically negatively related to marital satisfaction. Out of five variables of work to the family interface, seven and fifteen, work-life balance revealed the highest positive correlation with marital satisfaction, consistent with Ashwini (2018). On the same note, there was no factorial relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance, unlike Ajayan (2021). While partially rejecting H1, these findings indicate that there are complex relationships that should be elaborated among mental health professionals.

Relationship Between Psychological Well-being and Marital Satisfaction

Marital satisfaction is closely related to psychological health. Compared to participants with higher levels of distress, participants with higher levels of psychological well-being were found to report higher levels of marital satisfaction; this is in line with findings by Soulsby and Bennett (2015). Jaisri et al. (2014) went further and showed that life satisfaction improves and marital relationship is strengthened for couples with both partners being employed. Positive psychological health, in turn, helps occupational workplace stress reduce decimating personal relationship worth among mental health professionals who otherwise have enormously stressful job requirements.

Work-Life Balance and Marital Satisfaction

Moreover, the positive relationship between work-life balance and marital satisfaction accords with the study conducted by Gragnano et al. (2020), who stress the importance of attaining a healthy balance of professional and personal duties. The participants who reached mental equilibrium reported low levels of conflict and high marital satisfaction. The spillover model by Zedeck and Mosier (1990) holds the same view by implying that positive

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work experiences boost family life. Moreover, organisations maintaining flexible policies are also highly responsible for creating this balance.

Stress perception and marital satisfaction

Perceived stress leads to reduced marital satisfaction, where stress is part of daily life. Another study by Hashmi et al. (2007) shows that stress is a leading cause of marital conflict and emotional strain. Compared to other mental health professionals, those experiencing high levels of emotional demand have increased stress, more conflicts, and a poorer quality marriage. The results underscore the need for stress prevention programmes to maintain personal relations.

Work-Life Balance as Predictor

Analysing relationships, regression analysis identified work-life balance as the best predictor of marital satisfaction. This result is similar to Batool et al. (2017), who noted that work-family conflict had a mediating effect on the relationship between job satisfaction and marital adjustment. This research indicates that organisations that are focusing on work-life balance can greatly improve overall organisational and employee relational and professional quality.

Gender and occupational glimpses

An exclusively female sample also fits the traditional gender rates in the sphere of mental health occupations. It was observed that female professionals experience high levels of work-family conflicts that are due to normative cultural expectations that make career women more stressed and negatively affect their marital fulfilment. These are some of the challenges that need to be addressed by gender-sensitive policies that want to create an equitable gendered workplace.

Cultural Context

Cultural factors are easily identified as an important factor in marital satisfaction due to the Indian context of the study. As the majority of India's population follows the extended family system, they can help in coping with stress, but it also increases workload and adds more responsibility to the work-family interface. Future studies must investigate comparative cross-sectional data analysis to identify global and cultural differences.

CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted to assess the perceived stress, psychological well-being, work-life balance and marital satisfaction. The objective was to examine the relationship among work-life balance, perceived stress, psychological well-being and marital satisfaction among clinical psychologists. On the basis of the data that was collected, the influence of relevant sociodemographic details on the dependent variables was explored.

The sampling method used to collect data was the convenience sampling method. The sample was taken from married mental health professionals belonging to the ages 24 - 60 and above. They were included only after a qualification from a licensed course. Those who were not married or belonged to unrecognised professions were excluded. A total of 107 participants met the criteria and were administered the questionnaires as follows:

- The dyadic adjustment scale (DAS-7)
- Perceived stress scale - 10 (PSS)
- The WHO-5 Wellbeing index

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- Work-life balance Scale

The data collected was analysed through SPSS version 20.0. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and frequency) and inferential statistics [Pearson's product moment Correlation (r), Regression Analysis (R) and chi-square analysis]. The following correlations were drawn from the current study:

Relationship between perceived stress, psychological well-being, work-life balance and marital satisfaction:

- Psychological well-being is positively correlated with work-life balance.
- There is a significant relationship between psychological well-being and marital satisfaction.
- There is a negative significant relationship between perceived stress and marital satisfaction.
- There is no significant relationship between perceived stress and work-life balance.
- There's no correlation between perceived stress and psychological well-being.
- Marital satisfaction was predicted by psychological well-being, perceived stress and work-life balance.

Limitations of the Study

- Online methods of data collection could have led to socially desirable responses.
- Since the sample predominantly included females, it can not be generalised to males
- The study sample is relatively small, and the generalizability of the findings of this study may be limited by the study's use of opportunity sampling.
- Other factors that could contribute to psychological well-being or perceived stress, such as financial stress, any present physical illness or mental illness.

Implications and Scope for Future Studies

- Perceived stress, work-life balance, and psychological well-being influence the marital satisfaction of mental health professionals. Hence, regardless of the profession, the work-life balance maintained by them influences how their marriage is, in turn, how satisfied they are with their marriage. Though mental health professionals work towards providing psychological support and psychotherapy for clients, emphasis must be given to their personal lives as poor marital satisfaction will disrupt their work-life. So, agencies and hospitals must seek to provide opportunities for mental health professionals to take initiative and experience control over their work activities and provide administrative and support resources for those who are dealing with difficulties in their work.
- Mental health professionals must also give equal importance to their personal life and spousal relations as it affects how they function at work. These findings highlight how crucial it may be for professional psychologists to actively engage in self-care. Female psychologists may need to be attuned to ways in which they feel their professional duties are intruding on their family lives, and male psychologists may need to be particularly mindful of carrying the stress of clinical work home with them.
- The study also highlights the need to develop specific tools to measure work-life balance and perceived stress pertaining to mental health professionals to better include their occupations.

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- Future research can include the influence of other factors that may influence marital satisfaction, such as spousal compatibility, children, and other demographic variables.

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Conflict of Interest

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