



Work–life balance, well-being and work engagement: The case of working mothers in Namibia



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Orientation: Working mothers play a key role in an organisation's success. However, with conflicting responsibilities from the work and home contexts, their well-being and work engagement usually suffer. It is against this background that the relationship of work–life balance (WLB) on well-being and work engagement of working mothers in Namibia is investigated.

Research purpose: To investigate the relationship between WLB and well-being (emotional, psychological, social and career well-being) among working mothers in Namibia, as well as the relationship between WLB and the work engagement of working mothers in Namibia.

Motivation for the study: Working mothers in Namibia customarily carry the sole responsibility of child rearing; they must balance two responsibilities, negatively affecting their well-being (emotional, psychological, social and career well-being) and their work engagement. An imbalance can discourage optimal performance and decreases efficiency and productivity.

Research approach/design and method: The study utilised a quantitative approach with a correlational research design with a sample of 166 working mothers in the Khomas and Otjozondjupa regions in Namibia.

Main findings: The correlation results reveal that when work life balance is low, working mothers well-being and their work engagement is also negatively affected. Work/personal life enhancement (WPLE), one dimension of work life balance, was uncovered to have a significantly positive relationship with all dimensions of well-being.

Practical/managerial implications: Recommendations geared towards combined efforts from working mothers, managers and their employing organisations to enhance the WLB of working mothers are made.

Contribution/value-add: The findings provide organisations with foundational information that is crucial for interventions development catered towards work life balance for employees.

Keywords: working mothers; work–life balance; well-being; work engagement; Khomas; Otjozondjupa; Namibia.

Introduction

In the past, men were the sole providers for their families, while women had to stay home to take care of the children and do house chores (Giele, 2008; Wilkinson, 2013). However, times have changed; women work outside their homes and continue to maintain their responsibilities of taking care of children (Gridiron, 2017; International Labour Organization [ILO], 2016). According to Jayita and Murali (2009), a working mother is defined as a woman who works or has a job and has the responsibility of raising one or more children. A working mother can combine a career with the added responsibility of raising a child. According to Zalatimo (2023), working mothers have the capacity to form bonds with people, communicate clearly with others and navigate challenging circumstances with dignity and sensitivity. These traits are especially crucial in today's multicultural and dynamic workplace, where success depends on having the capacity to interact with individuals from various backgrounds (Zalatimo, 2023).

Giele (2008) defines a good mother in contemporary society as a child-centred, full-time, stay-at-home mother. However, women are now also a source of income for the home or family (Omori & Smith, 2010; Rani et al., 2022). Women work outside their homes and continue to maintain

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their responsibilities of taking care of children (Gridiron, 2017). It is important for mothers to be able to find a balance because it is just as crucial for mothers to have a connection with their children and be able to work and provide for their families (Sayer et al., 2004). Working mothers should develop abilities to raise a family while simultaneously gaining financial stability (Jayita & Murali, 2009). Both these tasks can be quite demanding, and yet one should try to do justice to both. However, this is not always possible; working mothers' work roles, such as working all day from the morning until late, having to take work home and, in some cases, having to travel with work, can have a negative bearing on the work-life balance (WLB). Work-life balance, according to Hill et al. (2001), is the degree to which a person can simultaneously balance the emotional, behavioural and time demands of both paid work and personal and family responsibilities.

A poor WLB can negatively affect working mothers' well-being (emotional, psychological, social and career well-being) and their work engagement. Studies show that when there are increased work hours and workloads, working mothers feel increased pressure and decreased satisfaction in WLB (Hilbrecht et al., 2008). A working mother can be overloaded with responsibilities such as childcare, elderly care and other household work (Sundaresan, 2014). Sundaresan (2014) further posits that working mothers are also expected to carry out some other social obligations. As stated by Wood (2018), these roles drain their energy, thereby causing a strain. Providing a healthy WLB can demonstrate an employer's concern for employees' welfare. Most scholars believe that WLB-supporting practices help employees better juggle the demands of both work and extra-work demands (Wood, 2018).

Well-being is the combination of feeling good and functioning well, the experience of positive emotions such as happiness and fulfilment, the development of one's potential, having some control over one's life, having a sense of purpose and experiencing positive relationships (Ruggeri et al., 2020). Health and productivity are linked to well-being. Studies show that working mothers who experience good physical, mental and emotional health are more likely to deliver excellent performance in their workplace than working mothers who are not (Kelliher et al., 2019). According to Hamar et al. (2015), working mothers who are healthy and happy have a much greater chance for a good quality of life, a lower risk of diseases and injury, a greater degree of productivity and are more inclined to contribute to their communities than working mothers with poorer well-being.

A positive mental state related to one's work that is characterised by feelings of vigour, commitment and absorption is called work engagement (Katou et al., 2021). If an employee's well-being and engagement are negatively affected, this affects the efficiency and performance of the employees (working mothers), thereby compromising their work. Engaged employees have the capacity and motivation to concentrate exclusively on the tasks at hand (Leiter & Bakker, 2010; Murangi & Bailey, 2022).

Employees play an important role in the organisation and its development. Employees support the organisation to reach its highest potential, aid in increasing productivity and contribute effectively towards the successful functioning of the organisation (Rajhans, 2012). Scholarios and Marks (2004) suggest that WLB has major consequences for employees' attitudes towards their organisations as well as for the lives of employees. The imbalance may occur because working mothers may be required to work long, exhausting hours, may have to leave the country sometimes for training and may be required to take work home because of deadlines that should be met. Mothers may not always be there to take care of their families (Gridiron, 2017). This becomes difficult, having to balance two responsibilities, and could be argued to negatively affect working mothers' well-being (emotional, psychological, social and career well-being) and their work engagement. If there is no balance, it will discourage optimal working hours that basically increase efficiency (Muthukumar et al., 2014). Information from this study may lead employers to understand how important it is to have a good WLB for their employees, and it adds to the very limited literature database on the WLB, well-being and work engagement of working mothers in the Namibian context.

Research objectives

The research objectives were:

- To investigate the relationship between WLB and well-being (emotional, psychological, social and career well-being) among working mothers in Namibia.
- To investigate the relationship between WLB and work engagement of working mothers in Namibia.

Literature review

Conceptual literature

Work-life balance

Work-life balance, according to Muthukumar et al. (2014), entails striking a balance between professional work and other activities to reduce conflict between work and personal life. Work-life balance improves productivity because it boosts efficiency, improving satisfaction in both the professional and personal spheres of life. Clark (2000) presents a slightly different perspective, that WLB encompasses satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with minimum role conflict. According to Clark (2000), achieving personal goals in both the work and personal domains is the core of a healthy WLB. For this study, the definition by Muthukumar et al. (2014) is used, which states that WLB entails striking a balance between professional work and other activities to reduce conflict between work and personal life.

Well-being

When discussing well-being, we focus on four domains: emotional, psychological, social and career well-being. The term well-being is surrounded by all the ways in which

people experience and evaluate their lives positively (Tov, 2018). This study adopts a notion that well-being pertains to all the ways in which people experience and evaluate their lives positively (Tov, 2018).

Emotional well-being is defined as a positive balance of positive to negative effects and a cognitive assessment of overall life satisfaction (Keyes, 2003). It consists of a cheerful disposition and high self-esteem. *Psychological well-being* is the absence of factors that could undermine human experience, such as sadness, anxiety, wrath and fear and the presence of allowing one's positive feelings, meanings, good relationships, involvement and self-actualisation. It alludes to having good mental health (Seligman, 2011).

Social well-being is an individual's evaluation of one's own circumstances and social functioning (Keyes, 2003). Lastly, *career well-being*, according to Kidd (2008), is the knowledge that one's career will be positively impacted.

Work engagement

Work engagement is a term used to describe how an individual feels about their job (Schaufeli, 2013). Schaufeli et al. (2002) refer to work engagement as a positive and fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption.

Empirical literature

The relationship between work–life balance and well-being

Researchers across the globe investigated WLB and well-being in different populations and sectors, emphasising the importance of the constructs. A study by Yudianti and Istiningtyas (2022) investigated the relationship between WLB and well-being for female lecturers at the University of Islam Negari Raden Fatah Palembang in Indonesia. Their findings indicate that 8.1% of the well-being of female lecturers is influenced by WLB. While 8.1% could be regarded as a smaller proportion, it is vital to understand that even an 8.1% could be considered, at a practical level, by the female lecturers.

Another study conducted by Smith et al. (2022), which was informed by a social constructionist approach, explored 10 women's experiences of WLB and well-being alongside a higher education (HE) study through semi-structured interviews. The research, based in the North of England, found that the formation of a third sphere of commitment to HE study disrupted WLB and created some disequilibrium, which impacted women's well-being. Rahim et al. (2020) used the partial least squares (PLS) method to examine the effect of WLB on individual well-being (psychological well-being) on staff members of an Open Distance Learning (ODL) university. The results showed that this institution's staff members' well-being was negatively influenced by their WLB (Rahim et al., 2020). Similarly, a study demonstrated that certain areas of psychological well-being are negatively impacted by a lack of WLB (Frone, 2000; Higgins et al., 2010). In another study

conducted by Wilkinson (2013), it was found that there was a substantial link between work-family stress, job overload and global well-being. There was also a significant link between family satisfaction and work balance as well as between work overload and balance (Wilkinson, 2013).

A study by Singh and Koradia (2017) compared the psychological well-being and WLB of working women in four sectors, that is, information technology, banking, schoolteachers and college lecturers. The study's findings showed that compared to women who work for colleges and information technology (IT) firms, those who work for banks and schools had a higher overall WLB because they were psychologically more stable. The study highlights the significance of upholding a WLB and one's psychological well-being. The study points to the diversity of work environments in which working women find themselves and how demands inherent in such environments could negatively impact well-being.

Saraswati and Lie (2020) investigated the contribution of determinants such as WLB and work pressure in predicting the level of employee well-being. The researchers posit that employees who experience happy feelings at work are believed to perform better at their jobs. Therefore, it is crucial for any firm to safeguard the well-being of its employees by fostering and/or removing variables that could have an impact on it. The findings indicate that both WLB and work pressure have a significant impact on well-being. The same researchers found that well-being is strongly and dominantly impacted by WLB.

Given this discussion, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- H1:** There is a significant relationship between work–life balance and well-being in working mothers in Namibia.
- H2:** Work–life balance has a significant positive relationship on emotional well-being among working mothers in Namibia.
- H3:** Work–life balance has a significant positive relationship on psychological well-being among working mothers in Namibia.
- H4:** Work–life balance has a significant positive relationship on social well-being among working mothers in Namibia.
- H5:** Work–life balance has a significant positive relationship on career well-being among working mothers in Namibia.

The relationship between work–life balance and work engagement

If a firm wants to increase productivity and generate profit, it must sustain and value its human capital. More so, any organisation must strive to enhance WLB. Mohamed and Zaki (2017) conducted research concerning the relationship between WLB, supervisor support and work engagement among flight attendants in Egypt. The findings indicate that both WLB policies and supervisor support were positively correlated with the work engagement of the Egyptian flight attendants.

Björk-Fant et al. (2023) undertook a research project to investigate the association between WLB and work engagement across a wide range of European welfare

states. The study used data from the 2015 European Working Conditions Survey. Work engagement was measured using an ultra-short version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, while WLB was examined with a question on the fit between working hours and social commitments. The findings indicated a positive association between WLB and work engagement across the European workforce.

De Kort (2016) looked at the process by which employee development activities were undertaken because of WLB, and results showed that there was a substantial link between work engagement and WLB. Additionally, workers who experienced reduced levels of WLB were less engaged at work and more likely to not partake in employee development initiatives. Similarly, a study conducted by Larasati and Hasanati (2018) on the millennial generation to uncover the effects of WLB on employee work engagement found that 14.3% of employees are engaged when there is a WLB. Additionally, a study on work engagement among Sri Lankan employees by Amarakoon and Wickramasinghe (2010) found that WLB has a positive influence on work engagement. They argue that as work-life elements like concern for employees, putting employees' interests first and flexibility are predictors of engagement, a suitable balance between work and personal responsibilities is a prerequisite for employee engagement. Similarly, a study conducted by Siregar et al. (2022) on employees concluded that WLB has a positive and significant impact on employee/work engagement based on the analysis and discussion outcomes. The effective contribution of the WLB variable is 49.5% to work engagement.

A study by Shafie et al. (2020) looked at the level of WLB, including the work involvement of non-academic employees of higher learning institutions in Malaysia. It additionally looked at how WLB affects individual work involvement. The findings illustrate the significant relationship between WLB and work involvement of non-academic employees. Similarly, Ren and Caudle (2016) state that when employees experience a work-life imbalance, it becomes the primary source of stress in their lives. As a result, it is beneficial for organisations to look at the levels of WLB among their staff if they want to foster a productive and active workforce (Sweeney, 2018). When employers demonstrate their concerns for employee well-being by striking a healthy WLB, it is regarded as competent leadership by staff members (Mousa, 2018).

Given this discussion, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H6: There is a significant relationship between work-life balance and work engagement of working mothers in Namibia.

Research design

Participants and setting

The study applied a quantitative approach with a correlational research design. The target population of the study was

working mothers in Namibia, specifically across the Khomas and Otjozondjupa regions only, to enable a sample of at least 120–150 working mothers. The final sample, selected through purposive sampling, was made up of 166 working mothers with distinct work positions in different workplaces, selected through a purposive sampling technique.

Measuring instruments

Work-life balance scale

The scale used to measure WLB in this study was the 15-item scale adapted from an instrument developed by Fisher-McAuley et al. (2003). Their original scale consists of 19 items, designed to assess three dimensions of WLB, namely work interference with personal life (WIPL), personal life interference with work (PLIW) and work/personal life enhancement (WPLE). These three dimensions attempt to capture two opposing theories commonly used to explain the work and family link: the conflict approach and the enrichment approach (Dolai, 2015). Reliability for the scale, estimated using the Cronbach alpha coefficient, was 0.91 for WIPL, 0.82 for PLIW and 0.67 for WPLE.

Well-being scale

Rautenbach and Rothmann (2017) developed the Flourishing at Work Scale-Short Form, which measures flourishing in the workplace. This scale has 21 items that measure participants' emotional, psychological and social well-being. The reliability coefficient of this scale ranges from 0.77 to 0.95, indicating acceptable reliability.

Work engagement

Work engagement was measured with three items from Rautenbach and Rothmann (2017) flourishing scale. The Flourishing at Work scale consists of twenty-one items that convey the construct on a six-point scale ranging from 1 (never) to 6 (always) (every day). Rautenbach and Rothmann (2017) obtained reliability coefficients ranging from 0.77 to 0.95, indicating acceptable reliability.

Career well-being scale

The career well-being scale (CWS) developed by Coetzee et al. (2020) measures three states of career well-being: positive affective career state (6 items), state of career meaningfulness (4 items) and career networking/social support state (4 items) (Coetzee et al., 2020). The 14 items are rated on a seven-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree).

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of Namibia, Department of Psychology and Social Work Ethics Committee (No. PS-SoAHS-FHSVM-2023/02). Various organisations that employ working mothers in the Khomas and Otjozondjupa regions were approached. Informed consent was obtained from

participants in the form of a document stipulating their voluntary status to participate in the study as well as their complete freedom to withdraw from the study at any point without incurring any negative consequence. Confidentiality and/or anonymity were utilised in the sense that participants were not required to provide any personal identifying details, for instance, their names, on the questionnaires. Additionally, the participants were assured that their responses would not be specifically linked to them and would be reported as aggregates. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time they deemed fit, as participation was entirely voluntary. No negative consequences were incurred for terminating participation. Lastly, all sources used in the study were referenced to ensure integrity and to avoid plagiarism. The collected data were stored on a password-protected computer, with access available to only the researchers. All hardcopy questionnaires were stored in a locked cabinet, with access to only the researchers.

Results

Descriptive statistics

The WLB measure developed by Fisher-McAuley et al. (2003) yielded Cronbach's alpha of 0.83, while the measure by Rautenbach and Rothmann (2017) used to assess psychological, social and emotional well-being yielded Cronbach's alpha of 0.91. Lastly, the career well-being measure by Coetzee et al. (2020) yielded Cronbach's alpha of 0.95. The reliability statistics reveal that the measures are reliable for use in the Namibian context.

Further, on demographics, the majority of participants (34.5%) were between the ages of 30–40 years old. In terms of qualification, most participants had acquired a degree (29.5%). Most participants (30.1%) had 1–2 dependents. The rest of the demographics are depicted in Table 1.

Correlation analysis

Data were analysed and computed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 29. The study found a statistically significant negative relationship between WLB and well-being ($r = -0.34, p < 0.05$; medium effect).

On the subsets of well-being investigated in the study, a statistically significant negative relationship between WLB and emotional well-being is reported ($r = -0.41, p < 0.05$; medium effect). A statistically significant negative relationship between WLB and psychological well-being is observed ($r = -0.30, p < 0.05$; medium effect). Further, a statistically significant negative relationship between WLB and social well-being is found ($r = -0.29, p < 0.05$; small effect). The results of the study indicate that when WLB combined (i.e. work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work and work/personal life enhancement) decreases, then well-being, inclusive of its dimensions, will increase.

On the career well-being of working mothers, a statistically significant negative relationship between WLB and career well-being is also reported ($r = -0.19, p < 0.05$; small effect). In addition, a statistically significant negative relationship between WLB and work engagement is reported ($r = -0.27, p < 0.05$; small effect).

Further analyses were conducted on the relationship between dimensions of WLB and the various constructs in the study. A statistically significant negative relationship between WIPL and well-being is observed ($r = -0.42, p < 0.05$; medium effect). The study found a statistically significant negative relationship between PLIW and well-being ($r = -0.29, p < 0.05$; small effect). A statistically significant positive relationship between WPLE and well-being is demonstrated ($r = 0.28, p < 0.05$; small effect). A statistically significant negative relationship between WIPL and career well-being is found ($r = -0.29, p < 0.05$; small effect). The study also found a statistically significant negative relationship between PLIW and career well-being ($r = -0.20, p < 0.05$; small effect). A statistically significant negative relationship between personal life interference and work engagement was detected ($r = -0.033, p < 0.05$; medium effect). In addition, a statistically significant positive relationship between WPLE and career well-being is reported ($r = 0.34, p < 0.05$; medium effect). Lastly, a statistically significant positive relationship between WPLE and work engagement was uncovered. These correlation analyses are depicted in Table 2.

Discussion

Findings of the study

The study found a negative significant relationship between WLB and well-being (emotional, psychological, social and career well-being) in working mothers in the Khomas and Otjozondjupa regions, Namibia. A similar study by Bakari et al. (2020) observed that there was a significant relationship between employees' WLB and their well-being. It is more probable that a working mother will do poorly at work when her well-being is unstable. Given that employees comprise the organisation, working mothers need to be in the best mental state to enhance the organisation's performance.

TABLE 1: Biographical details of sample ($N = 166$).

Demographic	Grouping	<i>n</i>	%
Age group (years)	20–30	47	28.3
	31–40	31	34.3
	41–50	39	23.5
	51–60	20	12.0
	60+	3	1.8
	Missing values	-	0.9
Highest qualification	Grade 12	44	26.5
	Certificate	29	17.5
	Diploma	27	16.3
	Degree	49	29.5
	Master's degree	13	7.8
	PhD	4	2.4
Number of dependents	0–2	82	49.4
	3–4	55	33.1
	5 or more	29	17.4

PhD, doctor of philosophy.

TABLE 2: Correlations of the scales.

Correlation path	Coefficient (<i>r</i>)	Statistically significant
Work–life balance – well-being	–0.34	Negative and significant
Work–life balance – emotional well-being	–0.41	Negative and significant
Work–life balance – psychological well-being	–0.30	Negative and significant
Work–life balance – social well-being	–0.29	Negative and significant
Work–life balance – career well-being	–0.19	Negative and significant
Work–life balance – work engagement	–0.27	Negative and significant
Work interference with personal life – well-being	–0.42	Negative and significant
Personal life interference with work – well-being	–0.29	Negative and significant
Personal life interference with work – career well-being	–0.20	Negative and significant
Personal life interference – work engagement	–0.33	Negative and significant
Work/personal life enhancement – well-being	0.28	Positive and significant
Work/personal life enhancement – career well-being	0.34	Positive and significant
Work/personal life enhancement – work engagement	0.27	Positive and significant

The study delved deeper into the four different domains of well-being and their relationships to WLB. The first aspect of well-being includes emotional well-being. As revealed in the analysis, the study found a statistically significant negative relationship between all dimensions of well-being and WLB, indicating that the more work interference with personal life (WIPL) and the more there is personal life interference with work (PLIW) and less work/personal life enhancement (WPLE), all dimensions of well-being are negatively affected. Jagyasi (2019) posits that ensuring the mental and emotional well-being of staff has several benefits for both the company and their homes, directly impacting business operations.

Further, the study found a statistically significant negative relationship between WLB and psychological well-being. This means that if an employee cannot find a balance between work and their personal life, this will negatively affect their mental health, and the employee might become stressed, depressed and anxious. Psychological well-being is crucial to maintain because it makes employees more likely to feel a strong sense of attachment to their employer, which improves work output (Kundi et al., 2020). Furthermore, a study by Yayla and Eskici (2021) uncovered that nurses' psychological well-being was significantly affected by the variable of neglecting life the most, followed by coronaphobia and WLB.

Another aspect of well-being is social well-being. Every individual wants to feel supported and welcomed in their communities, at work and in society at large. One of the strongest 'antidotes' for tough times is the support of others. Given that we dedicate a third of our lives to our jobs, the relationships and exchanges we make with co-workers have an enormous impact on our happiness and level of excitement for what we do (Bakar et al., 2015). Table 2 shows that the study found a statistically significant negative relationship between WLB and social well-being. This implies that inadequate WLB can lead to low social well-being. In the

present study, WLB is conceptualised as interference with personal life (WIPL), personal interference with work (PLIW) and work/personal life enhancement (WPLE).

As such, when there is more work interference with personal life or personal life interference with work, coupled with less personal/work life enhancement to mitigate such interferences, employees social well-being is negatively affected.

The last aspect of well-being is career well-being. In accordance with Ferreira (2019), career well-being is a fundamental pillar of employees' overall well-being, and a misinterpretation thereof can result in a pattern of behaviours and thoughts that leave one feeling overburdened, unengaged and unsatisfied in both personal and professional life. The study found a statistically significant negative relationship between WLB and career well-being. This implies that when dimensions of work life balance are enhanced, career well-being is also enhanced.

Similarly, the study also found a significant negative relationship between WLB and work engagement. The WLB scale is divided into three sections, namely WIPL, PLIW and WPLE. The study correlated the dimensions with well-being and career well-being. As illustrated in Table 2, the study found a statistically significant negative relationship between WIPL and well-being, meaning that when an employee's work interferes with personal life, this influences their well-being negatively. Table 2 shows that the study found a statistically significant negative relationship between PLIW and well-being. This means that when an employee's personal life interferes with work, their well-being is negatively influenced.

The results further indicate that when there is adequate WPLE, employee well-being is influenced positively. The study found a statistically significant negative relationship between WIPL and career well-being, implying that when employee work interferes with personal life, it influences employee career well-being negatively. When an employee's personal life interferes with work, it influences the employee's career well-being negatively. Lastly, as illustrated in Table 2, the study found a statistically significant positive relationship between WPLE and career well-being, suggesting that when there is adequate WPLE, employee career well-being is influenced positively.

This further illustrates that the three dimensions of work life balance are crucial for work engagement. A study by Rajalakshmi and Gayathri (2022) also revealed a significant negative impact of WLB on work engagement. Although teachers with poor WLB were found to be well involved in their work, this may not hold true in the long run. As a result of these findings, more attention should be paid to the WLB of working mothers in order to promote their well-being and increase their engagement at work, both of which will improve the performance of the organisation.

Limitations of the study

This study only looked at three variables, namely WLB, well-being and work engagement. At the same time, there could be other variables that may influence well-being and work engagement, such as stress, work environment, job design and rewards. All these are relevant variables that future studies can conduct research on.

Furthermore, the study was carried out covering two regions only, which were Khomas and Otjozondjupa in Namibia; future studies should extend to more regions or even the entire country of Namibia. Moreover, the study focused on working mothers only. Therefore, future studies should focus on fathers as well, because some children are raised only by working fathers.

Additionally, the sample size of the study was 166 working mothers, which is a rather small sample size. Future studies should increase the sample size to have a better and more accurate study that can be generalised to a broader population.

Practical implications

Mothers who work have obligations to both the company and their children. Thus, striking a balance between work and life is crucial for the working mother. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways – ultimately, working mothers should prioritise self-care. Establishing self-care time is essential for working mothers. It is advisable that they plan regular pauses, partake in enjoyable and calming activities and make sure they receive adequate sleep. Being well taken care of enables one to be more focused and effective both at work and at home (Sundaresan, 2014).

Further, organisations must take cognisance of the different roles of working mothers and strategise on how to offer support accordingly. Consequently, organisational goals pertaining to working mothers' well-being should be centred around fostering a supportive work environment. The wellness department of organisations could offer counselling services to working mothers to assist them in navigating their work and personal responsibilities efficiently. Integrating work-based counselling services could provide working mothers with a safe space to share their struggles and develop positive coping mechanisms.

Moreover, employers could also impose a policy that prohibits workers from taking work home; for instance, unless a time-sensitive deadline needs to be met, taking a work laptop home should be banned. Company emails could also be disabled on employees' personal phones to avoid distraction at home. Unfortunately, the working mother will have to find a balance in an organisation where the aforementioned policy is not achievable. For instance, she may choose to devote some hours to work and other hours to personal matters.

A study by Kinman and Jones (2008) strongly implies that a worker's well-being is likely to increase in a setting that helps people maintain a balance between their professional and personal lives. Therefore, organisations, in an effort to accommodate mothers with young children (between the ages of 0 and 3 years), could consider adopting a working-from-home policy. Remote working encourages mothers to perceive their jobs as meaningful, enhancing work engagement.

Furthermore, organisations may benefit from creating high organisational welfare through co-worker support. Co-worker support can be achieved by encouraging employees to become acquainted with each other through team-building activities or informal interactions (such as in-group hikes or barbecues). This could dismantle any communication barriers which will in turn make it easier for employees to ask each other for or offer support. By imposing this, working mothers will feel connected to other people in the organisation. This study advocates that organisations encourage co-worker support because working mothers will feel a sense of belonging to the organisation and will be more willing to engage in their work.

The effectiveness of the above-mentioned largely depends on supervisor support. When working mothers observe genuine concern from their managers about their personal lives, it improves their perception of their company. This fosters strong work engagement and organisational citizenship behaviour which ultimately improves the success of the organisation. A combined effort from working mothers, managers and the organisation is required.

Conclusion

Long-standing Namibian social roles have been undergoing a metamorphosis in recent years. Working mothers no longer stay at home to rear children but also have to work to make ends meet for their families. For many, it has now become an economic necessity. Consequently, working mothers' well-being and work engagement are of crucial concern in the workplace. The study, therefore, proposes that working mothers practice self-care, establish healthy sleep patterns and hire caretakers to ease their load. It is vital for organisations to enquire about working mothers' needs, adjusting the organisation's practices to ensure that mothers are catered for. Work-from-home policies could also be implemented to improve working mothers' well-being and work engagement. By enhancing the working mothers' well-being and work engagement, they are more likely to be more productive and efficient.

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Authors' contributions

I.T. collected the data and was involved in the writing of the original manuscript. A.M. conceptualised the study, the methodology and formal analysis. W.R.P. was involved in refining the methodology and formal analysis as well as proofreading the manuscript.

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Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, A.M., upon reasonable request.

Disclaimer

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