

## **Women and Work: Changing Legal Norms and Practices**

### **Experiences and Challenges of Qatari Women in Achieving Work-Family Balance**

(Based on **DIFI's Study on:**  
**Work-family balance: challenges, experiences and implications for families in Qatar**)

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# Objectives

- **Brief overview of DIFI**
- **Overview of the Study**
  - Framework
  - Key findings
  - Key recommendations

## Who we are

Doha International Family Institute (DIFI) is a global policy and advocacy Institute working to advance knowledge on Arab families and promote evidence-based policies.

## How we started

DIFI was established by Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development in 2006, and is an integral part of the Foundation's efforts to foster healthy, educated societies underpinned by strong cohesive families in Qatar and the region.

# Vision

DIFI's vision is to become a global knowledge leader on issues facing the Arab family through research, policy and outreach.

# Mission

DIFI's mission is to support the aims of the 2004 Doha Declaration on the Family by:




- ✪ Contributing to the global knowledge base on current issues facing the Arab family through the development and dissemination of high-quality research,
- ✪ Encouraging knowledge exchange on issues related to the family across an international and interdisciplinary network of researchers, policymakers, and service providers,
- ✪ Making family issues a priority for policy-makers through advocacy and outreach at the national, regional and international levels.
- ✪ Building an international network of regional experts.

# ***‘Work-family balance: challenges, experiences and implications for families in Qatar’***

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## Overview of the Study – Theoretical Framework

### Approaches

**1- Low conflict & high enrichment approach**

**2- Equality between roles approach**

**3- Social approach – Role partners' contribution is essential.**

### Work-Family Balance Definitions?

Combination of **low work-family conflict** and **high work-family enrichment** (Frone, 2003)

“equality” component of the work-family balance metaphor, and  
  
Work-family balance as **equally engaging in both work and family roles** (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003).

Work-family balance must be understood as **a socially and relationally constructed concept rather than an individual appraisal of environmental demands and resources** or personal performance.  
  
**role-partners' contribution is essential.**  
(Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007).

# Methodological Framework

## Qualitative

- In-depth interviews with 20 Qatari working adults (10 males & 10 females)
- Thematic analysis

## Quantitative

- Survey done by SESRI on 807 Qatari working adults
- Statistical analysis

Demographics	<u>Men (n=478)</u>		<u>Women (n=329)</u>	
	M or %	S.D.	M or %	S.D.
Age	39.3	12.4	36.8	9.5
Married	75%		66.7%	
college degree and above	37.4%		52.3%	

# Key Findings

1. Financial need is a main driver for work.
2. Work-family balance is a non-possible ideal.
3. Women suffer more than men to achieve work-family balance.
4. Role-Partner's support is crucial to achieving work-family balance.
5. There's lack of knowledge of legislations supporting work-family balance.
6. There's a need for more work-family balance supportive policies in terms of:
  - 🔄 Flexible work arrangements
  - 🔄 High quality childcare facilities at work place

# 1- Financial Need

While men described themselves as the main breadwinners, women commented that men's income isn't not enough. Um Abdulaziz said:

During that time, because I knew my husband's circumstances and that his monthly salary was not enough, there was an agreement that I would work as this was a foundational period during which we were establishing our family and our home. So, I had to work and help him. Why was all this necessary? I could have stayed home and not helped him, but that would have made it take a longer [period] to build our house nicely as he would have had to do that...due to the societal pressure around us, we had a greater urgency to work to ensure we had more resources so that we could be able to travel and have a better car.

She added:

You can't cover all your expenses, the expenses of a home, the children, and the domestic workers. When you can do that, then women can stay home...I am forced to work. Yet, the first opportunity that I have, I will stop work for the sake of my children.

## 2- Work-family balance is a non-possible ideal.

A female participant said:

Generally, there isn't any balance. For working women, there isn't any balance – just an attempt to accommodate between here and there.

- only about 8 out of 100 working Qatari women and men were excelling in balancing work and family.
- Fully one-third of men were “minimally passing” or “failing” to balance work and family, and nearly half of women were “minimally passing” or “failing.”

### 3- Women suffer more than men in their pursuit of WFB.

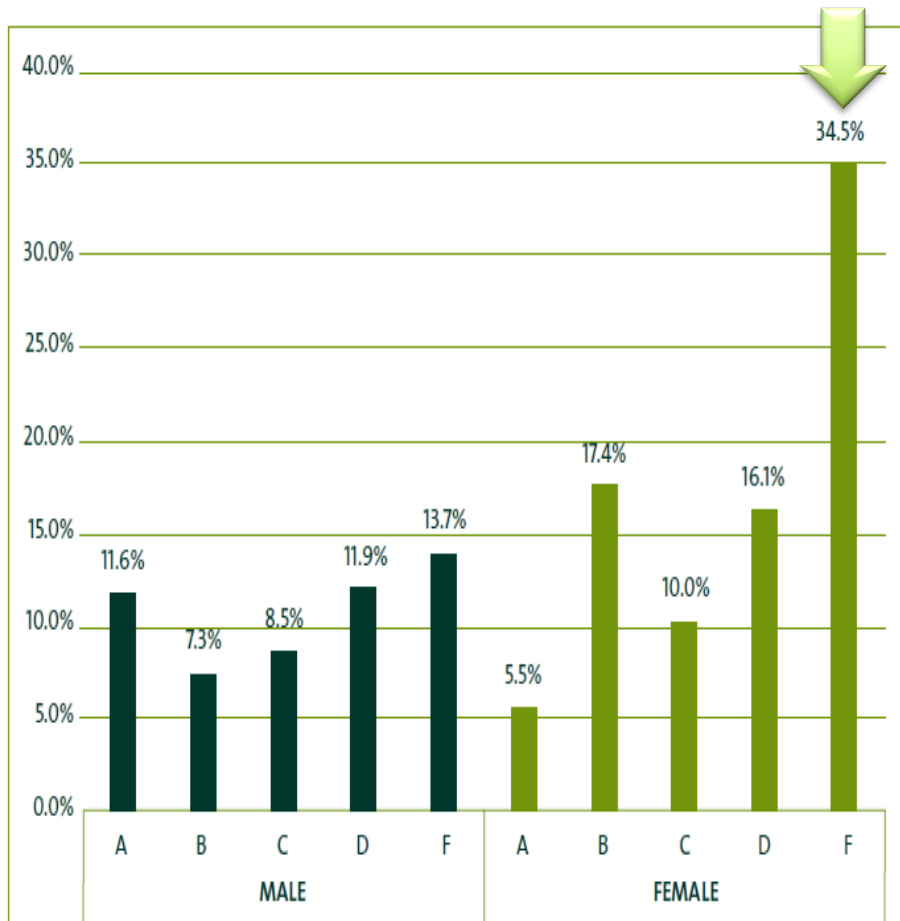


Figure 3.4b. Percentage of Individuals with Fair/Poor Health, by Work-Family Balance Grade and Gender

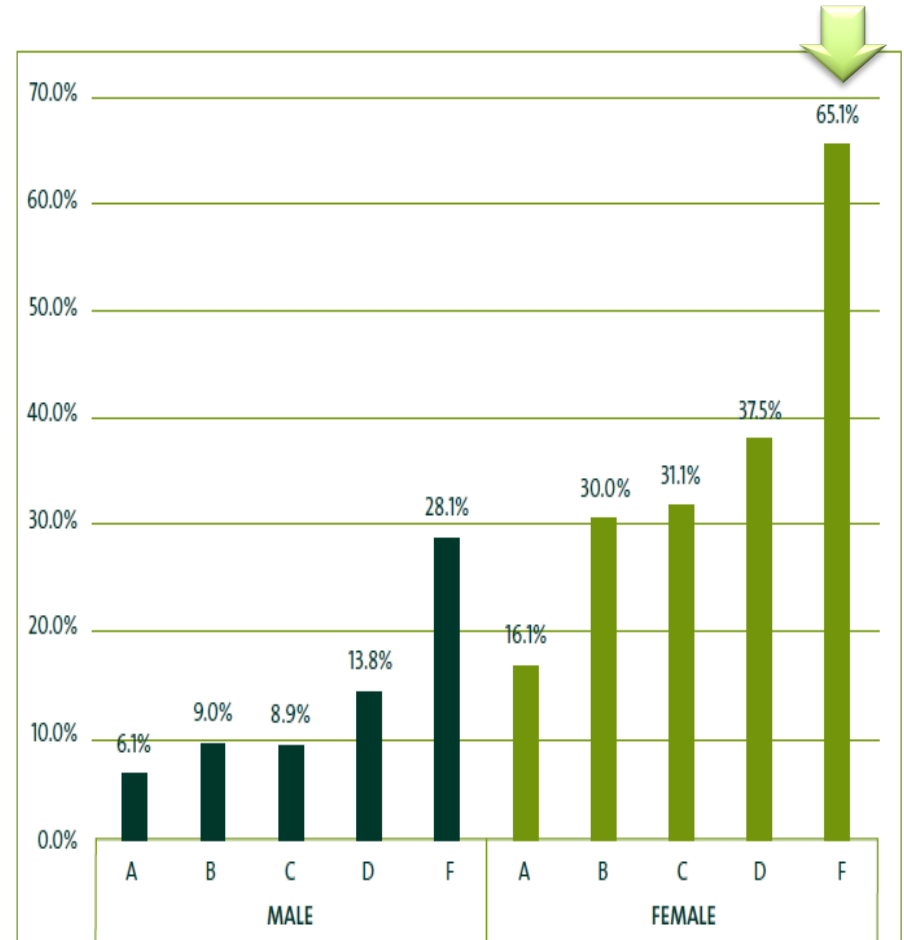


Figure 3.4c. Percentage of Individuals with Depression, by Work-Family Balance Grade and Gender

## 4- Role-Partner's support is crucial to achieving work-family balance.

Describing family role partners' support, **Um Abdullah** said:

Being successful and maintaining balance doesn't just happen automatically. I have to work hard to maintain balance so that it isn't one-sided but multisided – [including] my husband, and my children.

**Um Mohammad** discussed **negotiating WFB** procedures with her **manager**; she said:

...So when I would be late to work when there was lots of traffic...there would be a discussion between my manager and me about being late, as he didn't accept it. So, I told him that if [he didn't accept it], I would turn in my resignation because I am a wife and mother first before I am an employee...He should respect me for knowing this. And, if not, then he can get another employee who will arrive on time but doesn't have her priorities straight. So, my manager changed his mind and agreed that I should be committed to my home. Then, he looked at the matter positively.

# 5- There's lack of knowledge of legislations supporting work-family balance.

أحازة الوضع مدفوعة الأجر وساعات الرضاعة الطبيعية ورعاية الأطفال

Table 3.5a. Knowledgeable of Work-Family Legislation for the National Sample and by Gender

	Total Sample			Women			Men		
	Fully	Somewhat	Not at all	Fully	Somewhat	Not at all	Fully	Somewhat	Not at all
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Human Resources Law of 2016	↓			↓			↓		
60 days paid maternity leave									
90 days paid maternity leave (twins)									
5 - year paid leave for mothers of disabled child									
Paid leave for mothers to accompany a sick child during treatment									
2 hrs/day for two years for nursing	66,009 (74.7%)	10,512 (11.9%)	11,822 (13.4%)	27,931 (85.3%)	2,399 (7.3%)	2,412 (7.4%)	38,078 (68.5%)	8,113 (14.6%)	9,410 (16.9%)
Labour Law of 2004									
50 days of paid maternity leave	5,139 (45.7%)	2,661 (23.6%)	3,457 (30.7%)	2,656 (62.5%)	1,033 (24.3%)	561 (13.2%)	2,483 (35.5%)	1,627 (23.2%)	2,896 (41.3%)
1 nursing hour for a period of two years	7,438 (66.1%)	1,511 (13.4%)	2,308 (20.5%)	3,401 (80%)	419 (9.9%)	431 (10.1%)	4,037 (57.6%)	1,093 (15.6%)	1,877 (26.8%)

# Key Recommendations of the Study

Articulate a **national goal** to enhance work-family balance.

**Expand** paid **maternity leave** under the Human Resources Law of 2016 and Labour Law of 2004 from **60 and 50 days** respectively to **90 days**.

**Clarify** the **intention** of the provision in the Human Resources Law of 2016 **allowing paid leave for mothers** to **accompany a sick child during treatment**.

**Expand** the Human Resources Law of 2016 provision to **allow either mothers or fathers paid time** to accompany a sick child during treatment.

**Limit the workweek** in the public sector to a **maximum of 30 hours/week**, and/or **introduce flexible working time** in all sectors.

**Subsidize high-quality childcare** for all children below compulsory education in a manner consistent with financial support of education.

# Key Policy Recommendations DIFI Started Advocating

Policy Recommendations that were discussed with and submitted to MADLSA in **DIFI Research Forum** on 26 & 27 February 2019

- Making procedures and paper work easier for establishing day care centers at work for the provision of quality childcare needed by working mothers
- Providing proper environments for breast feeding for the babies of working mothers
- Developing educational guides for working parents on WFB supportive policies and legislations
- Developing community awareness raising programs on promoting WFB, with special focus on men's roles in achieving WFB

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# Thank you