

Do Single and Married Females Have the Same Standard of Work – Family Balance? Case Study of Frontline Employees in Macau

Grace Chan Suk Ha*, Yun Kit Ip, Fei Fei Lin and Hong Zhi Zhuo

Faculty of International and Tourism Management, City University of Macau, Macau

Abstract

A high-quality work–family balance (WFB) can enhance job satisfaction and superior task performance, as well as reduce absenteeism and turnover rate, thereby enabling organisations to improve the effectiveness and commitment of their employees. This research investigates the features of quality WFB for female employees in a casino hotel in Macau. Many female employees continue to face the double burden of their careers and families. Long working hours, shift duties, demanding customers and stressful environment have become neglected phenomena in the casino business and could lead to an unbalanced WFB. Female employees experience disappointments and frustrations when work prevents them from providing care to their families. Previous studies have determined that male employees have better WFB than female employees. In particular, male employees know how to deal with their emotions, face responsibilities, take action and solve problems. By contrast, females are challenged to achieve WFB.

Over the past decades, practitioners in the main hospitality industry have become increasingly interested in the female workforce. The high levels of family responsibility and shift work that females handle may cause them to experience high levels of work-family roles. Compared with male employees, female employees display lower levels of shift work tolerance but report more fatigue and sleepiness whilst working in a risk-exposed environment.

This qualitative study involves face-to-face interviews with 30 female casino hotel employees (e.g., dealers, service staff, supervisors and managers) from 8 large major casino hotels. These respondents include single and married female frontline employees. Content analysis is performed to elaborate the female employees' perception of WFB and identify their challenges in achieving such balance. Recommendations are provided for HR practitioners in terms of the appropriate policies and strategies to improve WFB of female casino hotel employees. Therefore, the proper approach will enable casino hotels to retain the best talents and increase the productivity and competitiveness of their organisation.

Keywords: Frontline employees; Work-family balance; single and married female; Macau

Introduction

Organisations that provide employees with a good work–family balance (WFB) can derive benefits, such as enhanced service performance and reduced turnover rate and absenteeism. Moreover, a good WFB can increase organisational effectiveness and commitment [1]. WFB refers to the perception of an individual on the degree to which he/she experiences positive relationships between work and family roles. In this situation, the relationship is viewed as compatible and at equilibrium with each other. Thus, work and family systems are interconnected [2]. However, family life can interfere with work life and the latter can interfere with the former. WFB is a phenomenon that is ideally observed in a work–family relationship and has led to the emergence of a new research stream. Research on WFB can be characterised as being organised along competing positive and negative perspectives [2-4]. Previous studies have assumed a 'win-lose' relationship between family and work by focusing on the work–family conflict based on individuals who have limited time and resources to allocate to their many life roles [5]. Other studies [3-6] have reported that WFB is pursued to resolve the work–family conflict, which can be regarded as the opposite of WFB.

Over the last decade, the changing society has determined the factors that generate job satisfaction, which are crucial knowledge for HR practitioners to enhance their policies and practices that affect employees. Accordingly, achieving WFB for employees can facilitate organisational productivity and attract skilled employees who may have responsibilities to balance their work with their family roles.

The hospitality sector experiences rapid turnover, which is a problem of retaining professional employees. Generally, turnover rate in the hospitality industry ranges from 32% to 300% and the major reasons for leaving include low pay, low job satisfaction, poor working environment and lack of motivation. The internal reasons of employees that lead them to quit their jobs could include work life interfering with family life. For example, parents may experience family interference with work when their child is sick, when they are preoccupied at home with problems at work or when work schedules prevent them from attending family functions because of night-shift schedules. WFB is important for hospitality employees, particularly female employees, and a work–family conflict for hotel employees may cause them to leave or even avoid entering the industry.

A proper practice of WFB can achieve a 'win-win' situation by creating job loyalty and reducing the turnover intention of employees. In turn, employees who stay in an organisation can enhance its service quality and productivity.

***Corresponding author:** Grace Chan, Suk Ha, Faculty of International Tourism and Management, City University of Macau, Macau, Tel: (853) 85902539; E-mail: gracechan@cityu.mo

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Problems

The hotel industry is one of the major economic pillars of Macau. Since the liberalisation of the gaming license in 2002, Macau has attracted many international chain companies (e.g., Las Vegas Sands, Wynn Resort, MGM Resorts and Starwood) to establish their businesses in this profit-generating territory. The casino hotel businesses are large businesses because of the large employment opportunities created for frontline staff or casino dealers. However, working at casino hotels often necessitates night shifts or duties during public holidays. Given the lack of research on WFB in an increasingly important industry for various cities in the Asia-Pacific region, the present research attempts to identify WFB among frontline hotel employees in Macau.

WFB and quality of life are the most important domains in a person's life and the interface of these two aspects is a popular topic for research worldwide. Given the special need of employees to balance and integrate their family needs and career requirements, research on the work–family interface has increased substantially over the past decades [2,4]. The findings indicate that work–family relationship is a major concern in society.

The casino hotel business in Macau is highly competitive and is booming in the Asia–Pacific Region. Macau was freed up as a tourist and gambling destination for the mainland Chinese a decade ago. The labour force of Macau has increased because of the large-scale casino hotels in the region. The local human resource landscape has also changed completely with new gaming operators rivalling one another for a share of the local gaming market [7]. Competition among casino hotel operators has raised the demand for skilled and qualified workers to create customer satisfaction. Consequently, the demand for quality customer service to attract and retain customers has increased. Customers should be provided satisfactory service to assure their continuous patronage of the casino hotel. However, long working hours, shift duties and demanding customers have become neglected phenomena of working in the casino business. Consequently, many employees work for long hours and do overtime work in a stressful environment amidst demanding customers, thereby possibly leading to an unbalanced WFB. A brief review of the literature shows that casino hotel employees experience high levels of work stress [8,9], increased psychological stress [10], low commitment [11] and work withdrawal. Many female workers complain regarding how rotating shifts or other irregular patterns result in excessive amount of work that prevents them from spending adequate time with their family and children. Accordingly, a few employees may experience a disruption in their relationship with their spouse or children. This stress creates a demand on the individual to make a decision on WFB. MacInnes argued on the limited relationship amongst workers' family situations and their preference to work for a few hours. However, numerous other cases have suggested that quality work–life balance assists in the retention, productivity and recruitment of good staff members [12,13]. Customer satisfaction has also been determined to be associated with employee satisfaction. Hence, management should understand how casino hotel employees can achieve WFB and quality of life. The reason is that a good WFB can reduce employee turnover and improve productivity in an organisation.

Although many studies have highlighted work–life balance in the Western context [14], research that focuses on WFB in the hospitality sector is limited. Moreover, minimal discussion has been provided on casino hotel employees in Macau because the nature and environment of the work in this city are relatively different from those in other cities. Over 50% of the Macau labour force are females. Out of the

57,757 full-time employees in Macau, females accounted for 31,854 or approximately 55.2% of job posts, a high percentage of which are labour forces in casino hotels. Macau has 25,752 dealers who earn an average of MOP 18,000 per month. Although the pay was good, many new recruits in the last quarter of 2014 left their employment. Work stress could incur immense economic costs in the form of decreased productivity, absenteeism and high turnover rates, thereby creating various challenges for casino hotel management. Females include single and married employees, which are two groups that may lack the same WFB standard. Married employees should care for the family and children, whereas single employees may drive for personal achievement in their career path. Single female employees may sacrifice family life over her career. Given that these two groups' WFB has yet to be comprehensively analysed, the present research intends to fill in this research gap.

Female workforces in the hospitality industry

Over the past decade, female workforces have attracted the interest of practitioners in the main hospitality industry. Macau has many casino hotels that provide gambling services. Male gamblers prefer female frontline staff members to serve them. Hence, casinos are motivated to recruit female employees for their organisation. Female employees need to earn a living whilst assuming the roles of looking after their family and children. The major concerns of many female hotel employees include overnight shifts, job security and income insecurity. In the majority of casino hotels, work schedules for the following week are posted at most a week in advance, thereby enabling workers with extremely limited time to balance their work with their social and family responsibilities [15]. Employees should also balance a variety of areas, such as earning for the family and caring for the extended family. Traditionally, the work–family interface has been dominated by conflict perspectives that focus on negative effects, such as stress. These issues can cause potential harm to the female employees and their families. Limited research into this issue has resulted in an urgency for investigation. The present study aims to pursue the following objectives:

- Investigate the perceptions of female hotel employees on WFB;
- Study the challenges that female hotel employees face in real life;
- Compare the main differences between the single and married females regarding their expectation of WFB
- Present recommendations to the HR management teams on how policies can be updated to gain WFB.

The main research questions of this study are as follows. (1) How does the perception on work- and family-related factors influence female hotel employees' WFB? (2) What problems do female hotel employees face? (3) What strategies should be recommended to achieve WFB? (4) How can policies be enhanced to gain WFB from an organisational perspective?

Literature Review

Definition of WFB

Frone [16] explained that work and family life should be 'in balance'. Specifically, WFB is defined as the lack of conflict or interference between work and family roles. Green and Beutell [5] identified WFB as a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role.

Over the last two decades, WFB has been conceptualised as an individual's orientation across different life roles and the inter-role phenomenon. Campbell linked WFB with satisfaction and functioning at work and home with a minimum of conflict, as well as a satisfying healthy and productive life that includes work, play and love. WFB also integrates a range of life activities with attention to self and to personal and spiritual development, as well as expresses a person's unique wishes, interests and values.

Marks and MacDermid defined role balance as 'the tendency to become fully engaged in the performance of every role in one's total roles system, to approach every typical role and role partner with an attitude of attentiveness and care'. However, these researchers observed that this expression of full engagement reflects a condition of 'positive and negative role balance'. Additionally, they acknowledged the importance of distinguishing the two concepts from each other.

Kirchemeyers defined a balanced life as one that includes satisfying experiences in all life domains and a life that can be achieved when personal resources, such as energy, time and commitment are well distributed across domains. Kofodimos explained that balance comprises a satisfying, healthy and productive life that includes work, play and love. Clark [2] defined WFB as 'satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict'. To conclude, the three scholars implied the similarly high levels of satisfaction, functioning, health or effectiveness of individuals across multiple roles.

From the negative aspects, Mark and MacDermid noted that 'even-handed alertness' is a characteristic of positive balance and is most explicit in the equality of role commitments. Mark and MacDermid indicated that negative balance implies a lack of alertness in different roles. To balance the work–family life, both sides should have equal weights on the fulcrum, regardless of whether the weights are equally heavy or equally light.

The definitions of WFB likewise implicitly considered two components of equality, namely, input and outcome. Kirchmeyer explained that inputs are the personal resources that are applied to each role. To be balanced is to approach each role, including work and family, with an approximately equal level of attention, time, involvement or commitment. Positive balance suggests an equally high level of attention, time, involvement or commitment. By contrast, negative balance refers to an equally low level of attention, time, involvement or commitment. These inputs reflect the personal level of role engagement in terms of time and psychological involvement. A balanced individual is substantially engaged in the work role than the family role, particularly from the female perspective.

The negative outcome of WFB has an expanding body of research on how work and family can benefit each other, such as positive spillover, enhancement, enrichment and facilitation. Facilitation occurs when the gains obtained from one domain are transferred to and enhance the functioning in the other domain. One way a person can be facilitated in the work domain is by obtaining support from the home and work domains.

In various studies, social support is linked as a crucial factor that positively affects WFB. Various studies viewed social support as a personal factor. That is, one that may come from an employee's spouse or partner, parents, siblings, children, extended family and friends. Many studies have demonstrated that personal social support is positively linked to WFB. Of considerable importance is support from the husband, who contributes in such areas as earning income

for the family and personal financial management, home and family responsibilities, career management and support and interpersonal support. Family support includes the exchange of support among relatives [17].

Previous studies have claimed that social support can be conceptualised as emotional and instrumental support. Social support refers to the behaviours and attitudes of family members to assist in daily household activities, such as relieving the employee of household tasks or otherwise accommodating the employee's work requirements. Emotional support means the expression of feelings to enhance others' affect or behaviour. Other studies have also stated that emotional support contributes to a positive affect that could aid an individual in the work domain.

The role of workplace, which includes support from supervisors and co-workers [17], is another critical element of WFB. Organisational and supervisory understanding regarding family duties is positively related to satisfaction or the balance between work and family life. Workplace support via an organisational approach involves the implementation of family-friendly policies, which are associated with employees' satisfaction with their WFB. Several organisations provide work–family benefits to their staff members, such as job sharing, communication, job-protected parental leave, flexi-time, resource services, unpaid family leave, dependent care assistance, shorter standard work weeks, improvement in job conditions, on-site childcare, support groups for working parents, day-care facilities and canteen facilities. Many scholars have indicated that flexible work arrangements enable individuals to integrate work and family responsibilities in time and space and are instrumental in achieving healthy WFB.

Although the majority of the preceding literature review are gender neutral, these studies recognise that all the aforementioned variables have a more substantial impact on women at work than on men. Webster identified family structures and noted that female roles continue to be the primary providers for family and childcare responsibilities. The presence of a large workforce dominated by women has increased research attention on WFB issues. Although studies [7,18] on the quality of work–life balance have focused on work-stress problem solving as a central concept, evidence from women dealers in Macau remains lacking.

Dimension of WFB in the hospitality sector

The WFB dimension is considered important and diverse for hospitality employees [14]. Firstly, the long work hours and shift work leave minimal time for family and friends. Secondly, unpredictable wages and lack of stability in employment relationship are concerns [7] that could create stress and lead to pressure for hospitality employees. The work is stressful because of the nature of service delivery and the heavy workload for service employees. Kim et al. [19] argued that hotel employees are often faced with contradictory or conflicting demands and expectations from a multiplicity of sources. For example, when employees have a difficult time with a customer, they are likely to be in a bad mood when they return home. Additionally, individuals with unsatisfying family lives will attempt to pursue work activities that bring satisfaction and vice versa [20]. This evidence demonstrates an important point. That is, work and family life influence each other. Hence, employers, societies and individuals cannot ignore one sphere without putting one in potential peril.

Champoux determined that compensation can occur simultaneously among individuals and can explain why individuals choose to stay in their jobs although they realise the difficulty in achieving WFB.

Glass ceiling in the hospitality sector

Demographics, salaries and job satisfaction are revealed as the ‘glass ceiling’ that keeps women in their jobs. A large pool of females engaged in the casino hotel business manage the external interfaces of work and careers and of home and children. Regardless of their marital status, female hotel employees face long working hours. Kim et al. [19] reported that frontline hotel employees work long and anti-social hours because many hotel casinos are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The three common shifts in a day are 7:00 am–3:00 pm, 3:00 pm–11:00 pm and 11:00 pm–7:00 am. Similar to other hospitality jobs, work in hotel casinos is extremely demanding and many staff members have limited prospects and low job security. Stress may originate from the hotel casino management and their customers. Shift work has the potential to disrupt family and social life as well, particularly for female employees. Females often have high levels of family responsibility, particularly in East-Asian societies, while those involved in shift work may experience a high level of work–family roles [21]. Compared with males, females exhibit lower levels of shift work tolerance and report more fatigue and sleepiness whilst working in risk-exposed environment.

Apart from shift work, marital status may likewise affect the family balance of female employees. Previous studies have discussed that married individuals generally exhibit higher quality of life scores and improved mental and physical health than single individuals.

Shift work can negatively influence marital relationships because the former is associated with family burdens and complementary duties in females. Shift-taking can affect the normal relationships of many married couples. Female employees with caring responsibilities struggle to maintain this distinction because of the consistent and unpredictable needs of their children clashing with their work schedules [22,23]. If their children have health or other problems, then female employees working on a shift may be unable to take care of them immediately. Furthermore, single female employees may lack interest in developing their career in the hotel’s frontline department. Given that single females may wish to create their family whilst young, night shift or irregular working hours may distort their social life. Consequently, they may lose the opportunity to make friends or even create their own nests. Overall, this scenario can interpret how female hotel employees constitute themselves and their capabilities in relation to WFB when articulating their feelings regarding and in response to this concept. The literature suggests the uptake of a work–life policy to use the work–life context in expanding WFB [24]. Therefore, investigating how the job status of female hospitality frontline employees can affect their WFB and create value for HR management is a noteworthy endeavour. WFB programmes for female employees should be developed. The current study advances the understanding on WFB amongst female frontline casino hotel employee roles and on improving WFB policies and practices for the HR department. Policy planning and implementation of WFB can assist female hotel employees reduce the work–life conflict brought about by pressure, thereby creating balance between their family and work. Accordingly, the productivity and service quality of organisations tend to improve when employees are satisfied.

Marital status effect on WFB

Single women who hold jobs have been determined to be as satisfied with their jobs as men who hold jobs. The former is also less likely to worry over their jobs. They are also mentally healthier than married females [25]. Close social bonds are related to a feeling of well-being and such bonds and feelings appear to be more frequent in single women than in men. Conversely, married females are less satisfied with

their WFB than single females. Given the inflexible work time, the need to look after their children and family mainly explains the tendency for married females to have limited satisfaction with their WFB.

Many studies have argued that a woman’s role has fairly undergone major changes recently in industrial societies [26–30]. Innes and Sharp [31] determined that married females have mental disorder compared with single females because they work under pressure to earn a living without any choice. Moreover, married females are emotionally unstable in their jobs. Therefore, they are likely challenged to achieve WFB. Several studies [17,32,33] have argued that women have different notions of the appropriate amount of time to spend at work and for personal time. Other studies have determined that age, career stage and family structure affect the preferred hours for work and family/personal activities [17,34]. Single and married females effects of each marital, parental and spouse employment combination on balance. Married females with children report substantially low balance, whereas single females have considerable WFB [21]. The presence or absence of children in the family continues to make significant differences in the degree of balance. Therefore, the different expectations of WFB between single and married females should be investigated. The current study addressed this gap by analysing the single and married female frontline employees on the different perspectives of WFB and identifying the challenges of managing WFB based on the personal situation. Thereafter, suggestions for HR practitioners will be provided.

Methodology

This research adopts a descriptive approach with a qualitative research design. Purposive sampling is used in this research. Data were collected randomly from eight casino hotels. Female employees who work in casino hotels in Macau are the target interviewees, specifically frontline staff members comprising casino dealers and service staff. Open-ended questions are used and the data are analysed using grounded theory framework. The sample size for in-depth interviews comprises 30 female frontline employees who work in a Macau casino hotel. The sample includes 13 single and 17 married female casino hotel employees. Interviews stop when information saturation is reached. The interviews are expected to last approximately one hour and are recorded and fully transcribed.

Each interviewee will receive a set of questions one week before the actual interview to provide them time to understand the research concern of this study. In-depth face-to-face interviews are conducted to collect the primary data. Secondary data are collected from government websites, HR reports, journals and articles. The data are summarised and organised based on the themes generated by the document review. Summaries of the interviews will be prepared to highlight the main concepts that emerge and set the context for quotes selected and utilised as examples in the research report. The audio recordings of each interview are firstly transcribed from traditional Chinese and translated thereafter to English. A summary form will be drafted after each interview to record the information provided by every participant, summarise the interview content and provide a reference point for the next interview. The information collected will be numbered and recorded in a summary document. Notes and memos will be drafted from the beginning of the data collection period. Data analysis and coding will be carried out in several stages. The codes generated will be displayed in different categories in themed charts, and domain analysis will be used to describe and analyse each theme separately. Thereafter, the findings at different levels will be synthesised, while the coding results at different levels will be compared to explore the differences in

opinions and suggestions. The resulting explanations and discussions will be eventually compared with previous research to refine the conceptual framework of this study and determine the results on how to achieve WFB.

Discussion and Result

The findings were based on the concept of Strauss and Corbin’s [35,36] ‘theoretical saturation’. A total of 30 participants were interviewed. They included 17 married and 13 single female employees. They were all female employees aged between 18 and 45. Their roles included frontline dealers, front office staff members and casino employees. Their work experience ranged from one year to five years (Table 1).

Perceptions of female hotel employees on WFB

The majority of the interviewees perceive WFB as the lack of contradiction between their work and family roles. All interviewees need equal time distribution between their family and work. A few interviewees consider WFB for their health and psychological well-being. Accordingly, obtaining WFB indicates achieving satisfaction between family and work. The priority task is to not bring their emotional feeling back at home whilst having a stable job to earn a living. In this way, they can provide financial support and take care of their family. Therefore, they perceive that life and work should be harmonious [37-39].

Major challenges that female employee face in real life

The majority of frontline staff members believe that shift arrangement is a crucial factor for female employees, while a few employees claim that the working environment leads to satisfaction in WFB. Female employees with families experience difficulty in achieving WFB because they need to look after their families [40-43]. They request for a leave when their children are sick or should be provided with special care. Female employees feel dissatisfied when their organisation disapprove their one-day leave for family reasons. This situation is challenging for employees because they need to make a living but should also report to their duty. They feel unhappy and depressed when their organisation disregards the needs of their family. Long working hours, high workload and demanding customers and supervisors cause stress and pressure to the interviewees. Many married females complain that they have limited flexible schedule options in the workplace. Many female employees expect to have five working days

instead of six working days. The impact of work schedules on WFB may be affected by personal- and family-related characteristics. The time bind is not simply a function of actual hours of work and family or personal time. This condition generally affects married female frontline employees when achieving WFB [44,45].

Several jobs are described as unskilled jobs, such as those of casino dealers. Thus, tolerance is the only option for female employees. Management can easily find a replacement for them even if they have a high turnover. Therefore, females often suffer from many unfair policies and their needs are ignored by their organisation. They may project their anger when they return to their family because of heavy workload. Therefore, many female employees often think that a ‘win–win’ situation is difficult to achieve. A total of 70% of interviewees agree that an attractive package and salary can trade off the imbalance in family and work, whereas the remaining 30% believe that attractive salary may not trade off the balance. Other employees think that they can achieve WFB if their organisation provides flexibility in working hours to present them with substantial time to spend with their family. Single female employees can achieve WFB more easily than female employees with family. Married female employees aim for career achievement rather than family balance. Poor working environment leads to poor WFB. For example, female employees fear the harmful effects of passive smoking on their health in the casino where customers are allowed to smoke. Health-threatening environment conditions lead to stress. Sexual harassment from drunken gamblers create a terrible threat to female employees during their night shift. Overall, many employees believe that support from their company and colleagues is important. Female employees believe that they can create high job satisfaction and loyalty with their organisation when their WFB is established.

Difference between single and female WFB

Several differences have been identified between single and married female employees (Table 2). Married employees claimed that salary cannot trade off WFB. Although they have relevant income, they compromise their relationship with their spouse or children. By contrast, single employees think money can trade off the WFB. In terms of career expectation, married females wish to earn their living because they want to provide an improved quality of life for their children and family. Moreover, they have more family commitments than single employees. By contrast, single females only focus on individuals and have minimum commitments. Married employees prefer to focus on family relationship more than career achievement, whereas single employees want career achievement only. Overall, the married females believe that WFB will lead to ‘win–lose’ outcomes, whereas single females claimed that they can achieve ‘win–win’ outcomes.

Both parties suggest that such provisions can achieve WFB if an organisation can provide a friendly environment, good team work, organisational support for the family, five working days and workload adjustment.

Recommendation for HR practitioners on uplifting the policy and gain WFB

Many interviewees think that a pleasant working environment facilitates the achievement of WFB. Many interviewees encounter a problem in rotating their shift. Therefore, a few employees suggest that their organisation should listen to them and provide them with flexibility in work shift to achieve WFB. Moreover, they earn their living to upgrade their quality of life. A pleasant working environment and friendly work colleagues create a friendly working environment,

		Interviewee	Percentage
Married status	single	13	43%
	Married	17	57%
Age	under 24	12	40.00%
	25-34	11	36.70%
	34-45	6	20.00%
	over 45	1	3.30%
Working experience	Less than 1 year	6	20.00%
	1-3 year	4	13.30%
	3-5 year	10	33.30%
	5 year or above	10	33.30%
Salary range, By MOP / month	MOP\$10,000-14,000	1	3.30%
	MOP\$14,001-20,000	6	20.00%
	MOP\$10,000-14,000	23	76.70%

Table 1: Demographic information of the interviewees.

Viewpoint	Married female employees	Single female employees
Salary trades off the WFB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salary cannot trade off WFB 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salary can trade off WFB
Career expectation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earn a living supporting their family, family have improved lifestyle quality. More family commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earn a living and improved lifestyle quality of individuals Less family commitment
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family relationship more than career achievement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career achievement
Achieve WFB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Win–lose outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Win–Win outcomes
Solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friendly environment Five working days Good team spirit Workload adjustment Flexible working hours Reduce stress in the working environment 	

Table 2: Different viewpoints between married and single female employees to achieve WFB.

good team spirit and job sharing. A good supervisor can likewise reduce their stress. The availability of flexible schedule options, such as flexible working hours and extended lunch breaks, can create a positive effect on WFB. A few interviewees suggest that their organisation can adjust their workload depending on their needs. They wish that their organisation can reduce their heavy workload and long working hours to cater to the needs of their family. Five working days can provide them with substantial time to spend with their family. Other interviewees suggest that the HR can provide certain activities with their family. Accordingly, they can spend time with their family whilst at work. A supportive work atmosphere, in which transparency is practised and their concerns addressed, lifts their spirits and enables them to endure their physically and mentally demanding jobs. The industry practitioners suggest employing sufficient manpower.

Implications for HR practitioners

The current research has determined that many female frontline staff members have encountered numerous challenges. Moreover, many females wish to have WFB. Given many females' desire to earn a living, they suffered from long work hours and poor working conditions. Hence, many females are determined to be loyal to their organisation. If an organisation can provide a healthy working environment that is more supportive to their family, then female employees can create considerable job satisfaction and create productive services for the organisation, thereby possibly achieving a 'win-win' situation. Therefore, HR practitioners should understand what these employees need. Their shift rotation indicates that they should find a balance between the single and married employees. Practitioners can allocate single and married females with equal workloads. Consequently, they can rotate their job agenda. If married females need to take care of their family, single females can provide internal support. Moreover, an organisation can provide a few events and activities for their employees and family to nurture cohesion and belongingness in the organisation.

Limitation and Conclusion

This study substantially contributes to the improved understanding of the current situation among female employees in Macau and their expectations on WFB. In terms of the implications for HR practitioners, the findings provide a comprehensive solution for creating a healthy and productive environment and facilitating the local female dealers in becoming an employer of choice to attract the best talents. The results of this study should assist management practitioners identify the root of their problems, thereby increasing job satisfaction and task performance, reducing turnover rates and enhancing organisational effectiveness and work commitment.

Certain areas still require consideration in future research. The findings of this study could be extended by recruiting participants from a broad geographical area, over a long period of time and with different types of practitioners from different service industries. Such future investigation would offer a substantially comprehensive study of different practitioners in different regions. Future studies could compare and contrast the views of female and male staff regarding their expectations of WFB. This study highlights the problem of female dealers who work in casino hotels. However, the discussion is limited to the hospitality sector from the viewpoint of female employees. Given that female employees often have a high level of responsibility, their needs for WFB should be investigated. The most significant contribution of this study will be to improve our understanding of the female staff members' expectation of WFB. The findings will provide HR practitioners with a comprehensive solution for creating a healthy and positive working environment, as well as enable the hotel management retain the best talents for their organisations. Hence, hotels can enhance their productivity and competitiveness in the market. The casino hotel practitioners in Macau can identify the root of the problems, thereby increasing health- and WFB-related programmes for women. The situation of the Macau hotel industry reinforces the need for this study.

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