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ASSESSING THE ROLE OF ETHNOPSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS IN WORK–FAMILY BALANCE AMONG TECHNICAL ORGANIZATION

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SUMMARY

The balance between occupational pressures and family obligations continues to be a consistent issue in technical organizations because of their highly scheduled structure, shifts in production systems, and command organization culture combined with deep-rooted cultural traditions. This research focuses on the effect of ethnopsychological characteristics including family collectivism, ethnic and clan identity, power distance, gender roles traditionality, filial responsibility, and uncertainty avoidance on the work-family balance of employees working in technical organizations in engineering, production, and technical support positions. The study is based on the field of cross-cultural organizational psychology and provides the analysis of the topic under consideration in the context of the post-Soviet Central Asia that features extended families, collectivism, and gradual evolution of the corporate culture. The methodology utilized for this research includes a quantitative cross-sectional design with a stratified sample of employees employed in the mechanical, electrical, production, quality control, and technical support departments of technical organizations. Further departmental variations also show that floor workers score lower on work-family balance as compared to technical support workers, which is due to

greater rigidity in their schedules. These findings will be discussed in light of current cross-cultural work-family literature and their relevance to human resource management, supervision, and organizational culture in a technical organization in a collectivist society will be highlighted.

Key words: *ethnopsychology, work-family balance, technical organizations, collectivism, organizational psychology, gender roles, Uzbekistan.*

INTRODUCTION

Balance between work and family life is one of the most studied constructs in organizational psychology, measuring how an individual is able to handle work-related and domestic duties simultaneously without getting overstrained [2]. Technical organizations encompass manufacturing plants, engineering companies, and factories where occupational stress arises from factors like shift rotation, safety-related jobs, and supervisory role [25][14]. Although there is a large literature on antecedents, such as organizational support, supervisor characteristics, and psychological capital [6][9][17], there has not been much scholarly attention paid to the ethnopsychological background that affects individuals' perception of the stress related to work-family conflict. Work-life balance is linked to productivity of workers, emphasizing the need for a proper management of the two areas of concern [12].

In its definition as the field of psychology which is interested in the psychological traits, norms, and belief systems of ethnic and cultural communities, ethnopsychology provides a lens to view work-family experience as part of group identity, kinship, and traditional roles [1]. In contrast to individualistic approaches which define work-family conflict essentially as an issue of resource allocation within the nuclear family unit, the ethnopsychological approach emphasizes kinship obligation, clan loyalty, and traditional gender roles as influences that exist on a higher plane than the individual worker [3]. The significance of collectivism for work-family conflict has been proven in cross-cultural studies [9][10]. The changing nature of working from home has brought about changes in the labor market dynamics and the organization's structure [24]. Governance in organizations plays a role in determining the performance of the multinational firms.

In fact, post-Soviet Central Asian societies such as Uzbekistan can serve as an especially interesting context for conducting the research described above. Centuries of clan-oriented society structure combined with decades of centrally controlled industrial economy have created a particular combination of culture, where strong collectivist family obligations exist side by side with the formally organized hierarchical structure in the workplace, inherited from the Soviet industrial economic system [5] [14]. It is precisely this environment, which technical organizations operate in, where the interplay between ethnopsychological aspects and organizational imperatives needs to be explored, and which, until now, was underrepresented in the international work-family literature [7][11][16].

This research tries to fill this gap by studying the relationship between selected aspects of ethnopsychology including family collectivism, ethnicity/clan consciousness, power distance, gender role tradition, filial obligation, and uncertainty avoidance on the one hand and work-family balance of technical organization employees on the other hand. This study is driven by three goals: firstly, to measure the relationship between each aspect of ethnopsychology and work-family balance; secondly, to test if the relationship varies depending on gender and department; and thirdly, to provide an interpretation of the results in relation to current cross-cultural and engineering workforce literature to generate organizational implications.

Research Objectives:

1. To explore the effect of the dimensions of ethnopsychology (family collectivism, ethnicity/clan identity, power distance, gender role traditionality, filial piety, and uncertainty avoidance) on the work-family balance.
2. To assess the effectiveness of these dimensions to predict work-family balance among employees in technical firms.

Research Questions & Hypotheses:

- *RQ1*: To what degree do family collectivism, ethnic identity, and filial obligation play a role in work-life balance?
 - *H₁*: Family collectivism, ethnic identity, and filial obligation are positively associated with work-family balance.
- *RQ2*: What role do power distance and gender-role traditionalism play in work-life balance of technical workers?
 - *H₂*: Negative correlations exist between power distance, gender role traditionalism, and work-life balance.

This paper is divided into six parts. Section 1: Introduction includes the background of research, gaps, and objectives. Section 2: Literature Review highlights the literature on work-family balance, ethnopsychological determinants, cultural aspects, and related studies. Section 3: Methodology describes the research methodology and data analysis methods used. Section 4: Results include the results of statistical analysis. Section 5: Discussion interprets the results by comparing with previous studies. Section 6: Conclusion summarizes the conclusions drawn from the research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualizing Work–Family Balance

The concept of work-family balance has been characterized in diverse ways such as lack of conflict between roles, existence of role enrichment, and overall satisfaction and effectiveness across both realms [2][13]. A meta-analytical study analyzing the results of work-family conflict found that work-family and family-work conflicts always have been linked with lower levels of job and life satisfaction, higher level of strain, and lower psychological well-being depending on how well the outcomes are matched with their sources [2]. Based on this understanding, it has been further suggested that balance is not merely the opposite of conflict but is a separate construct of its own including aspects of role salience, efficiency in allocating resources, and subjective assessment of individuals, especially when comparing cross-cultural balances of roles having different hierarchies [13].

Cultural and Ethnopsychological Perspectives

An important contribution to work-family research across cultures is the assertion that culture can be both an antecedent of work-family conflict and a moderator in the connection between conflict and its effects, suggesting that measures and frameworks formulated in individualist cultures should not be used naively elsewhere [21][3]. The ethnopsychological tradition builds on this idea by conceiving of syndromes of collectivism, familism, coping philosophy, and gender role belief as psychological constructs within the person rather than societal factors in the background [1]. Findings from multinationally based research have found that collectivism moderates the effect of work hour intensity on perceived work-family conflict, such that collectivist employees understand long hours as different from employees in individualist societies and, at times, experience less stress as a result of providing for their families [10]. Complementary studies have revealed that cultural intelligence, the ability to adapt through cultural lenses, helps expatriate and cross-cultural employees avoid work-family conflict, implying that ethnopsychological flexibility serves as a resource in itself [9]. A systematic literature review of the theory of work-family conflict also validated the idea that an increasingly large number of recent studies use cultural dimensions derived from Hofstede, but that there is still a significant absence of studies relating to Central Asian and post-Soviet societies.

Gender Roles and Family Obligation

Gender role attitude is another construct that has been found to have a bearing on the phenomenon of work-family conflict. A moderated mediation study conducted among the Chinese workers revealed that gender role attitude indirectly affects work-family conflict through parental sacrifice and subjective

well-being, where traditional gender role attitudes exacerbate the work-family conflict among the female workers [11]. Similar results were also obtained from a cross-national study on collectivism and gender identity conducted among the UK and Spanish samples, where individual-level collectivism and feminine gender identity jointly predicted life satisfaction through work-life balance, and the effect was more pronounced in the individualistic culture [26]. For the specific sub-population of engineers, studies have shown that women who have successfully integrated both work and family identities exhibit much stronger engineering self-concepts than those facing identity conflicts, suggesting that identity integration rather than the mere availability of resources is what predicts perseverance in the engineering career [4] [5]. Another study done on female engineers operating in a more conservative Middle Eastern labor market showed that there were large wage gaps, limited career opportunities, and more work-family conflict due to the patriarchal nature of both the work environment and the home [14]. These studies are supported by another qualitative study of female manufacturing managers whose experiences were described as the 'double burden' whereby the patriarchal organizational culture exacerbates the burdens of domestic work without any support [15].

Organizational Support, Leadership, and Technical Work Environments

According to the theory of organizational support, workers who perceive their employers as appreciating their efforts and being concerned with their well-being are likely to respond by exhibiting more engagement and lower strain, such as work-family balance-related [17]. Applying this theory to a setting where safety and technical skills are involved, it was discovered that perceived organizational support plays the role of one of the mediating mechanisms between leadership and employee well-being [17]. There is corroborating evidence coming from Slovenia according to which positive work-family balance outcomes are positively correlated with worker's work engagement, thus proving the idea that work-family balance is organizational resource rather than strictly individual issue [18]. Studies carried out on the engineering workforce showed that work-family conflict, occupational commitment, and perceived organizational support predict attrition among female engineers, and lack of proper organizational support contributes to higher probability of leaving the profession [25][23]. Another recent moderated mediation study revealed that work-family conflict leads to lowered proactive work behavior mediated by psychological strain, meaning decreased productivity in technical organization due to disregard for the issue of work-family balance [19].

Regional and Post-Soviet Context

Literature on work-family relationships in Central Asian and post-Soviet economies is relatively limited compared to Western, East Asian, and South Asian literature on the subject. One of the recent studies conducted on the banking industry in Uzbekistan revealed that working conditions, remuneration package, and organizational commitment together affect work-life balance and worker productivity, whereas communication and trust variables are insignificant, the authors explaining this as due to hierarchical and formalized nature of workplaces in the region [20]. A similar study conducted in the information-technology industry in Uzbekistan revealed that remote work ability, task delegation, and organizational well-being measures affect job satisfaction via work-life balance for technically competent workers. In cross-national research on twenty-four countries, it was found that work-family policies are effective conditional on individualism-collectivism at the national level and gender egalitarianism, and that fathers in individualist countries and mothers in collectivist countries are the most affected by available work-family policies, which has implications for gender obligations at home in Central Asia [22]. This literature, taken together, indicates that technical organizations in collectivist and post-Soviet and Islamic culture contexts like Uzbekistan need to have an ethnopsychological perspective on work-family balance, and not simply replicate models that have been validated in the individualist labor market [7][8][16].

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The quantitative, cross-sectional, and correlational research design was used to investigate the relationship between the ethnopsychological constructs and work-life balance in workers employed in technical organizations. This design provided an opportunity for evaluating the relationship between several predictor constructs and one outcome construct.

Population and Sampling

The total number of respondents in the study was $N = 332$ employees drawn from technical organizations (which included mechanical engineering, electrical and electronics, manufacturing/production, quality/maintenance, and technical support/information technology departments) in Uzbekistan. Target population involved the employees working in engineering, production, quality control, maintenance, and technical support roles in technical organizations that were manufacturing-focused. Stratified random sampling technique was used where the departments were the variables of stratification so as to make sure proportional representation from departments such as mechanical engineering, electrical and electronics, production/manufacturing, quality/maintenance, and technical support/information technology. The inclusion criteria included at least six months of employment and living or providing financial obligations to at least one family member.

Instrumentation

The data collection process was done through a structured and self-administered questionnaire that had three parts. The first part included the demographic and occupational variables such as age, sex, marital status, department, and years with the organization. The second part involved a multidimensional scale of ethnopsychological orientation measuring family collectivism, ethnicity/clan, power distance, gender role traditionalism, filial obligation, and uncertainty avoidance on a scale of one to five (strongly disagree to strongly agree). The third part included a measure of work-family balance on role fulfillment, time adequacy, and subjective satisfaction.

Procedure and Data Analysis

Before administering the test on a large scale, a pilot study was conducted to measure the internal consistency of the instrument by retaining the questions where Cronbach's Alpha value was greater than 0.70. Questionnaires were distributed at times when there is no production to avoid any hindrance in the process and data collection was done voluntarily and anonymously. Analysis of the collected data entailed the use of Pearson product-moment in determining the association of the ethnopsychological variables and work-family balance, after which multiple analysis was conducted. Figure 1 provides the theoretical model that shows the association between ethnopsychological dimensions and work-family balance by mediation of organizational variables, while figure 2 illustrates the methodology workflow for data collection and analysis.

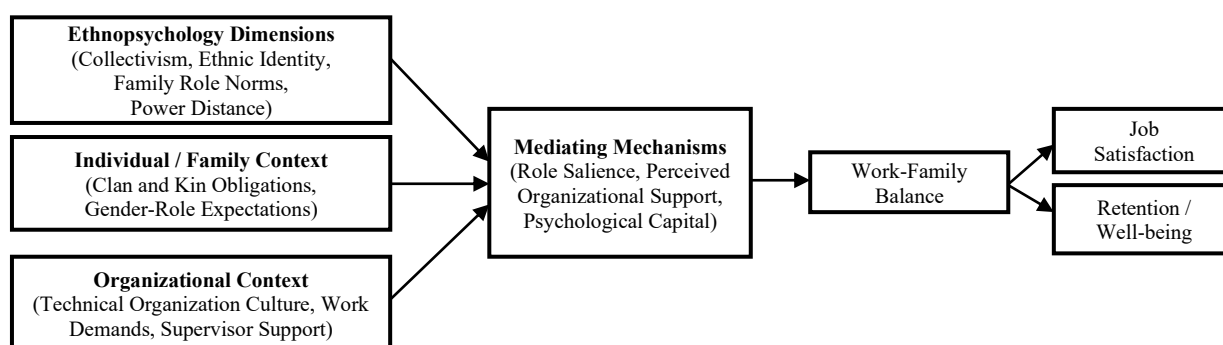


Figure 1. Conceptual framework linking ethnopsychological dimensions, mediating mechanisms, and work-family balance

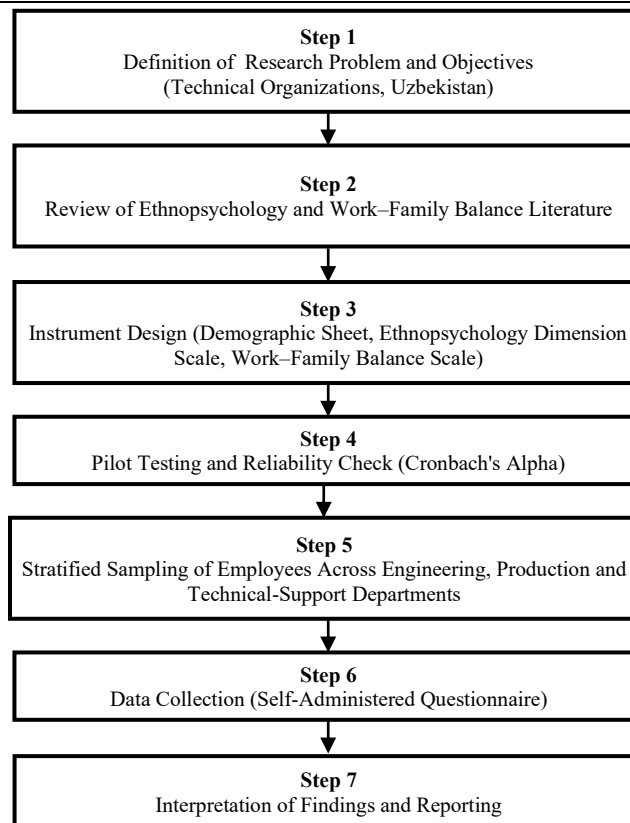


Figure 2. Sequential methodological workflow

Ethical Considerations

The study involved a voluntary response sample where informed consent was sought prior to the collection of data, with responses being collected anonymously. Organizational management has no access to individual responses; only aggregate data is presented here.

RESULTS

From the last analyzed sample ($N = 332$; divided into mechanical engineering [$n = 78$], electrical and electronics [$n = 64$], manufacturing [$n = 91$], quality and maintenance [$n = 47$], and technical support/IT [$n = 52$]), there were differences in work-life balance scores between various departments, with the production and manufacturing workers having the least average work-life balance score while the technical support employees having the highest one. Figure 3 below shows the distribution of the respondents along with their average work-life balance scores.

Gender differences in the scores of the ethnopsychological dimensional factors showed a generally converging pattern where family collectivism and filial responsibility received the highest scores among both genders. The female employees had relatively higher gender role tradition score and relatively lower power distance score than the male employees. Figure 4 illustrates these average scores using a radar display that allows comparison among the six factors.

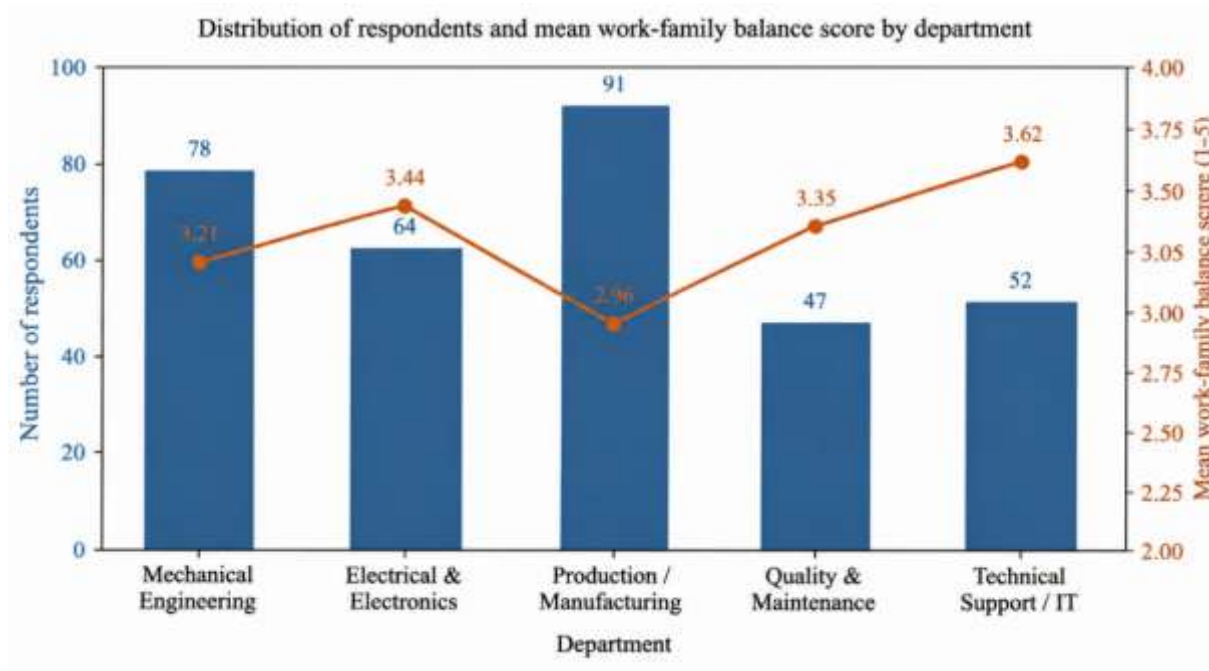


Figure 3. Distribution of respondents and mean work-family balance score by department

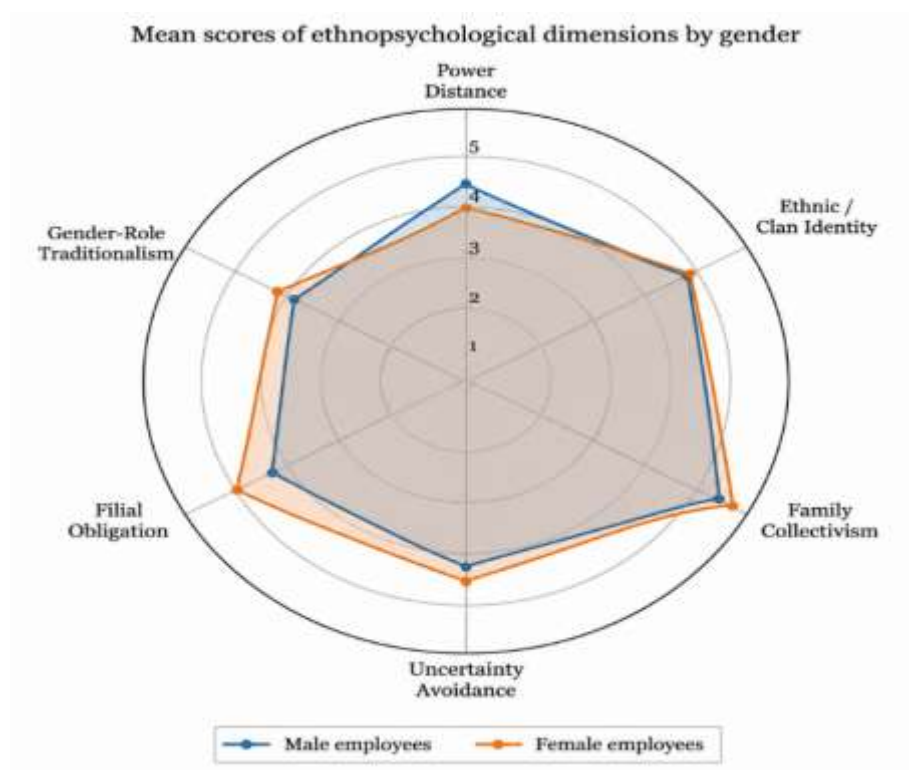


Figure 4. Mean scores of ethnopsychological dimensions by gender

Table 1 contains the result of testing the hypotheses of the study (H_1 and H_2), where the ethnopsychological factors analyzed, Pearson correlation coefficients (r) and the final result obtained for each hypothesis is stated.

Table 1. Summary of hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Variables Tested	Statistical Evidence (r , β)	Verdict
H_1	Family Collectivism & Filial Obligation vs. Work-Family Balance	Family Collectivism ($r = 0.38$), Filial Obligation ($r = 0.29$)	Supported (Positive bivariate relationships and predictive weights confirmed)
H_2	Power Distance & Gender-Role Traditionalism vs. Work-Family Balance	Power Distance ($r = -0.33$), Gender-Role Traditionalism ($r = -0.41$)	Supported (Significant inverse relationships confirmed)

DISCUSSION

The positive relationship between family collectivism and work–family balance fits well with the previous findings that suggest how collectivism can be regarded as a psychological resource, not as an additional stressor, especially in cases where work effort is perceived as a natural continuation of family-provisioning effort [10]. Such findings fit well with the idea that the effects of work–family conflict are mediated by domain matching and interpretation, not determined independently of cultural settings [2]. The positive link between filial obligation and balance serves as yet another confirmation of the hypothesis that ethnopsychological constructs associated with the obligation to the extended family differ from Western conflict-based concepts [1][3].

The inverse relationship between gender-role traditionalism and work-life balance, especially prominent among women, bears strong similarity to results obtained among dual-earners in China and Korea, wherein gender-role traditionalism exacerbated perceived conflict through the mechanism of parental sacrifice and unequal division of labor at home [11]. These observations are further corroborated by research conducted in the labor market of a conservative Middle Eastern society, where patriarchal values hindered career advancement and increased work-family conflict for female engineers [14] as well as in the context of manufacturing workplaces, where female managers perceived their work as being encumbered by an unsupported ‘double burden’ [15]. The above-mentioned studies, when compared, point to the stability of gender-role traditionalism as a cross-cultural risk factor for decreased work-life balance in technical and engineering jobs regardless of national or ethnic background [5][25].

The inverse relationship of power distance and work-family balance is compatible with studies that suggest that hierarchical and inflexible supervision systems restrict the flexibility in scheduling needed to address conflicting family issues [17]. When there is an impression of distance or authoritarianism on the part of supervisors, there is less willingness to ask for flexibility, which probably accounts for the relatively lower levels of balance reported in case of production-floor workers compared to technical-support workers, owing to the presence of rigid supervision and scheduling in production settings. This interpretation is further supported by findings that suggest that organizational work-family involvement is positively linked with work engagement [18] and that organizational support and professional commitment determine the retention of technical professionals, especially women, in their career path [25][23]. Placing these results in the context of post-Soviet Central Asia, this work adds to the earlier results obtained in the Uzbekistani banking and information technology industries, where it was found that factors other than interpersonal trust and communication – working conditions, compensation, and flexibility – were the most significant influences on work-life balance.

The results here imply that this situation can be due to the presence of specific ethnopsychological orientation: where there is strong family collectivism and filial obligation within the population of workers, differences in work-life balance will be more likely to depend on organizational structure (such as scheduling) rather than interpersonal or communication factors. This result aligns with cross-cultural evidence suggesting that the success of work-family initiatives by organizations is contingent on the combination of national cultural orientation and gender equality, where collectivist orientations tend to increase the importance of family-role factors among women. The overall pattern of results thus lends support to the model of ethnopsychologically embedded work-life balance, where cultural factors interact along with organizational support in technical work settings. In practical terms, this indicates that technical firms in collectivist societies, characterized by extended family ties, should adopt human resource management techniques that take into account the need to meet kinship obligations, such as the provision of leave based on extended family occasions, but at the same time deal with issues of

organizational rigidity as a consequence of power distance, such as granting scheduling authority to supervisors. Considering that the gender bias in gender role traditionalism was evident, it seems necessary to take corrective actions [5][25][15].

CONCLUSION

This research sought to explore the linkages between ethnopsychological variables and the work–family balance of employees working in technical organizations based in a collectivist post-Soviet Central Asia environment. Family collectivism, ethnic and clan identity, and filial obligation were found to be positive correlates of work–family balance and serve as culturally-specific psychological assets which enable employees to manage occupational and domestic responsibilities. On the other hand, power distance and gender-role traditionalism proved to be negative correlates of work–family balance since they limit the possibility for scheduling flexibility and perpetuate domestic inequity, especially in the case of female employees. In addition, departmental analysis has shown that occupational role within the technical organization, namely the level of shift rigidity in production versus technical roles, has a moderating effect on the experience of balance independent of the cultural orientation. Taken together, these results highlight the cultural nature of work–family balance which moves away from the universally applicable frameworks, based on the assumptions of individualism and recognizes the extended-family obligation, hierarchical distance, and gender-role belief as key factors determining employees' experience in technical environments. The practical implications of the results for organization practice are that human resource policies in such organizations need to take into account not just flexibility but also kin obligation, delegation of scheduling decisions to the supervisor level, and facilitation of a fair distribution of household chores among technical professionals, especially female ones. From the methodological point of view, the cross-sectional research design prevents the conclusion of causality, and the use of self-report questionnaires means the presence of common method variance; thus, the employment of longitudinal research designs along with the usage of mixed-method approach including supervisor-rating and organizational performance measures would add to future research. Extension of the current theoretical model to other technical industries, other post-Soviet and Central Asian countries, and cross-country comparisons would shed light on the generalizability of the suggested ethnopsychological theory.

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