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The Impact of Work-Family Conflict on Organizational Commitment in Higher Education Institutions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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Original Article

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between work-family conflict and organizational commitment among female faculty members in higher education institutions across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. As the representation of women in academia grows, so do the challenges of balancing professional responsibilities with familial obligations. The research aims to explore the extent to which work-family conflict affects emotional attachment, loyalty, and commitment to the organization. A quantitative survey methodology was employed, utilizing standardized instruments to measure both work-family conflict and the three dimensions of organizational commitment: affective, continuance, and normative. Data were collected from a representative sample of female faculty across public and private universities in the region. The findings indicate a significant negative correlation between work-family conflict and organizational commitment, particularly in the affective and normative dimensions. The study underscores the importance of institutional support systems, flexible work arrangements, and gender-sensitive policies to enhance the organizational commitment of female academic staff. Implications for higher education management and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Introduction

Work-family conflict (WFC), is increasingly recognized as a critical issue in organizational research, particularly within the context of higher education institutions (HEIs), where demanding schedules and high levels of responsibility can exacerbate the challenges of balancing work and family roles. Recent studies highlight that WFC, characterized by a clash between work and family responsibilities, is a primary source of stress, directly influencing employees' well-being, job satisfaction, and job performance. These dynamics are especially relevant in Pakistan, where traditional family structures and cultural expectations place unique pressures on working professionals, and where policies to support work-life balance are still developing.

A study conducted in (2023), Ali et al. examines the specific effects of WFC on faculty performance in South Asian academic institutions, remarking a strong correlation between high WFC and diminished job performance, particularly among women faculty members who performs teaching, research, and family responsibilities. This study emphasizes that WFC not only affects personal well-being but also organizational outcomes, as performance declines and turnover intentions increase when employees cannot balance these roles effectively. Similarly, Khan and Ahmad (2022), focused on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and highlighted the psychological impact of WFC, exhibiting how stress and fatigue from unbalanced work and family roles can impair job commitment and productivity in HEIs. Their work highlights the need for context-specific solutions that addresses the particular cultural and social norms impacting educators in this region.

Earlier literature has also identified that WFC is composed of two primary dimensions: work-to-family conflict, where work demands interfere with family life (WIF), and family-to-work conflict, where family responsibilities impact work obligations (FIW). Both dimensions have been shown to negatively impact job performance, as suggested in a study by Rafiq and Iqbal (2021), which found that WIF is particularly detrimental in HEIs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, leading to increased absenteeism, reduced focus, and a decline in student engagement among educators. Other studies highlight the gender-based nature of WFC, where women in HEIs, especially those with young children or elder-care responsibilities, face disproportionate levels of FIW, often resulting in career stagnation or exit from academia altogether.

Globally, research has shown that institutions implementing work-life balance policies such as flexible hours, remote work options, and family leave benefits see enhanced job satisfaction and performance. However, as recent literature from Pakistani HEIs mentions, that such policies are either lacking or minimally implemented in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa particularly and the country. As research carried out by Asad and Malik (2020), discusses the resistance to work-life accommodations in academia due to perceived disruptions to productivity and traditional work structures, forcing employees to manage conflicting demands unconventionally.

The current study addresses these gaps by focusing on how WFC specifically impacts job performance within HEIs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where cultural, social, and organizational factors create unique WFC challenges. By exploring this impact, we aim to inform policy interventions that can enhance Organizational commitment.

Literature Review

Work-Family Conflict (WFC)

Recent research highlights the increasing impact of work-family conflict (WFC), on female faculty members in higher education institutions (HEIs), in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where cultural, familial, and professional expectations create complex challenges. In a study held in 2023, Ali and Khan investigated the heightened WFC experienced by women in Pakistani academia, indicating that female faculty members often face greater family demands, which can interfere with professional obligations. This study reveals that such conflict significantly diminishes job performance, leading to decreased productivity, job dissatisfaction, and an inclination toward career discontinuity. Additionally, it points to the lack of institutional policies, such as family support initiatives or flexible working hours, which leaves women with limited resources to balance their roles effectively.

A research study carried out in 2022, by Hussain et al. elaborates on these findings, specifically analyzing how gendered cultural expectations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa exacerbate the work-family challenges faced by female faculty. The study shows that women are not only expected to fulfill professional duties but also to meet extensive domestic and caregiving responsibilities, a dual role that can contribute to emotional and physical exhaustion. Hussain et al. also found that this imbalance leads to higher levels of stress and burnout, adversely impacting job satisfaction and performance.

Their findings highlight a need for structural and policy interventions to better support female faculty in balancing work and family responsibilities.

Further, Rafiq and Aslam (2021), examined the distinct effects of work-to-family conflict (WIF), and family-to-work conflict (FIW) on women faculty members, emphasizing that WIF—where work demands interfere with family life—was more prominent among female faculty in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This conflict was linked to reduced engagement in academic duties, lower job commitment, and decreased well-being. Rafiq and Aslam also found that FIW, although less prevalent, still contributed to performance issues, as female faculty often prioritized family needs over work responsibilities, particularly in urgent family situations. Their research emphasizes the need for flexible work arrangements to accommodate the dual demands that female faculty face.

In earlier research, Ahmad and Gulzar (2020), explored how the traditional family structure in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa influences the WFC experienced by female faculty. They argued that gender roles in the region often lead women to shoulder the primary responsibility for family caregiving, which intensifies the conflict between work and family roles. This study found that while male faculty members generally received familial support to focus on their careers, female faculty were often expected to manage both domains without comparable assistance, resulting in greater work-family conflict and a negative impact on their academic careers.

These studies collectively highlight the persistent challenges that female faculty face in HEIs of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, due to work-family conflict. They indicate a critical need for institutional policies that promote gender equity, such as supportive work environments, family leave policies, and flexible schedules, to help mitigate the conflict and enhance the performance and well-being of female faculty members.

Job Performance (JP)

Recent research stresses the complexities surrounding job performance among female faculty in higher education institutions (HEIs), of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where gender-based challenges, cultural expectations, and institutional limitations intersect. A research study conducted 2023, by Ali and Raza examined the professional output of female faculty members, revealing that cultural norms and domestic responsibilities often hinder job performance, particularly when women are expected to balance academic duties with significant caregiving roles. Their findings showed that without flexible policies or support systems, women experience higher levels of stress and role overload, which impair focus, productivity, and career progression.

In another recent study, Khan and Bibi (2022), investigated the direct impact of organizational support on job performance among women faculty, discovering that institutions with policies supporting work-life balance saw higher performance and job satisfaction rates among their female faculty. The study found that access to flexible working hours and family support resources significantly improved engagement and dedication, positively influencing teaching quality, research output, and commitment to institutional objectives. Findings by Khan and Bibi suggest that targeted support can be transformative for female faculty who face unique socio-cultural pressures in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Moreover, Ahmed and Iqbal (2021), focused on the barriers to job performance specific to female faculty in this region, noting that career advancement is often slower for women due to limited mentoring opportunities and the lack of equitable workload distribution. Their study found that women faculty were often assigned administrative or student-facing roles, which detracted from time available for research and academic development—key indicators of performance in HEIs. This imbalance was shown to stifle professional growth and diminish the overall performance of female faculty members, underscoring the need for gender-sensitive workload policies and mentoring programs.

Earlier, Akhtar and Rafiq (2020), explored how familial expectations and societal norms impact the performance of female faculty in the HEIs of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They highlighted that, culturally, women are often expected to prioritize family obligations, which can conflict with the demands of academia, a profession that often requires extended hours and flexibility. Their study found that this cultural expectation led many female faculty members to experience guilt or conflict, reducing their engagement and productivity in academic roles. Akhtar and Rafiq recommended institutional initiatives that foster an understanding of these challenges and actively work to support female faculty in their dual roles.

Collectively, these studies emphasize the importance of creating a supportive and equitable work environment for female faculty in the HEIs of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They suggest that addressing the unique cultural and structural challenges faced by women in academia can lead to enhanced job performance, greater job satisfaction, and improved retention, thereby benefiting both the faculty and the institutions in which they serve.

Work-Family Conflict (WFC), and Organizational Commitment (OC)

Organizational commitment, which Meyer and Allen (1991) define as the emotional attachment, identification, and involvement of an employee with their organization, is another essential area that is impacted by work-family conflict (WFC). Netemeyer et al. (1996) reveal that employees who experience high levels of work-family conflict (WFC) display lower levels of organizational commitment due to sentiments of dissatisfaction and disengagement. On the other hand, this dynamic is especially obvious for female faculty members in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Employees may experience a decrease in their sense of belonging and commitment to their institutions when the needs of their families interfere with their ability to perform their jobs. The absence of institutional measures that address work-family conflicts, such as flexible work hours or efforts that are family-friendly, makes this problem even more difficult to deal with. For instance, the lack of supportive measures to accommodate working mothers sometimes forces female faculty members to make tough choices, which can occasionally lead to the intention of resigning from their positions or disengaging with the aims of the organization.

When an employee feels an emotional link, attachment, and engagement with their employer, this is referred to as affective commitment between the employee and the organization. In contrast to employees who continue with the company out of obligation, those who have a high affective commitment to the firm do so because they actually want to. People that fit this description are often more eager to put in significant effort on behalf of the organization, have a strong desire to remain with the organization, and agree with the organization's objectives and principles. According to Meyer et al. (2020) researchers found that a high level of affective commitment was related with favorable outcomes, including improved job performance, decreased inclinations to leave the company, and decreased absenteeism.

When employees believe that quitting the firm would incur considerable expenses, they are more likely to be committed to continuing their employment there. People tend to acquire this kind of dedication when they believe they have too much to lose, such as the potential for financial or social repercussions, or when they do not have any alternative employment opportunities available to them. Comparing the potential benefits of remaining with the potential costs of leaving is a necessary step in this process. According to Allen and Meyer (1990) employees who have a high level of continuation commitment may remain with the business out of necessity rather than want. Furthermore, this type of commitment is not always associated to great job performance or low rates of absenteeism.

It is the sense of obligation an employee feels to stay with the organization, driven by a belief that remaining is the right or ethical choice. This feeling may arise from a sense of loyalty, gratitude for opportunities the organization has provided, or from socialization processes that encourage

loyalty to the employer. While normative commitment can support employee retention, it does not always lead to high performance or strong engagement, similar to continuance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

According to Meyer and Allen (1997) and Meyer et al. (2020) Organizational commitment plays a significant part in the achievement of a variety of beneficial outcomes. These results include enhanced job performance, increased Job Performance, decreased turnover and absenteeism, and an increase in organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs). A staff that demonstrates a high degree of dedication is associated with increased levels of production, decreased expenses associated with recruitment and training, and a more favorable culture within the firm.

H1. Work-family conflict significantly negatively affects organizational commitment among female faculty in higher education institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



Work Family Conflict (Independent Variable) **Organizational Commitment** (Dependent Variable)

Fig 1. The theoretical framework of the study. Source: (Author Constructed)

Methodology

This casual study is conducted to investigate the impact of work-family conflict on job performance in female faculty of higher education institution of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Multi stage sampling technique was used to conduct this study. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has 7 divisions and each division contains 2 to 9 districts. District were selected on the bases of socio cultural and geographical distributions. A total of 342 samples were studied for this study. The convenience sampling technique is used, realizing the fact that not all the individuals in the sample would have an equal chance to be chosen. Cross-sectional time horizon was used for the study, conducted only a one-time due to the time constraint and limited resources. Data is collected from female faculty members of higher education institutes of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa using adopted questionnaires (details given in Table 1) for the Work-Family Conflict and organizational commitment as:

Table 1

Details of the instruments used in the Study

Sr.	Variable	Source	Year
1	Work-Family Conflict	Shen , et al.	2022
2	Organizational Commitment	Wayne and Casper	2016

For the analysis of collected data, a mix of statistical methods was employed including rreliability study (Cronbach’s Alpha), descriptive statistics, Skewness-Kurtosis, correlation, and regression analysis.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Analysis

Table No.2 shows the mean values of all variable that are approximately same of descriptive analysis, the minimum value shows the minimum value of the variables and the maximum value shows the maximum value of the variables. This table elaborate that all values are from 1 to 5. It means that statistical values are the mean values in actual about a specific variable. Standard deviation represents the deviance from the mean value of the data. Skewness and Kurtosis is the gauge to check the normality of the data. For the confirmation the value of the Skewness must be between +1 to -1 and this table also elaborates that almost all values are in the defined ranges of

skewness and confirmed the normality of the data. Kurtosis is measured to identify the normality of the data. This tables gives the rapidly idea of the idea and jarque-bera test is used to checked the goodness of the data.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis		
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Work-Family Conflict	342	3.9489	.88484	-.492	.161	1.836	.321
Organizational Commitment	342	3.0124	.86832	-3.87	.161	-.7893	.321

Valid N (listwise)= 342

Reliability Analysis

Reliability study is conducted on all variables using the Likert scale to measure the coordination influence from the scale of 1 to 5. On the basis of the results obtained from reliability test (as in Table 3) explains the alpha coefficient value for the 8 items of Organizational Commitment is 0.87 i.e. 87%, While the reliability test of 12 items of work-family conflict is 0.79

Table 3

Reliability Analysis

Sr. No	Name of Variable	No of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Work-Family Conflict	12	79%
2	Organizational Commitment	8	87%

The alpha coefficient values for all the scales are greater than 0.6 suggesting a moderate and strong levels internal consistency among the items.

Correlation

Table No. 4 shows that correlation between (Organizational Commitment) and WFC (Work-Family Conflict)

Table 4

Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Study

(Sample n= 342)

			WFC	OC
Work-Family Conflict	"r"	Sig. (2-tailed)	1	-0.281**
Organizational Commitment	"r"		-0.072**	1

+Significant at 0.01, two tailed

The Pearson correlation value (r=-0.281, p=0.000) between Work-Family Conflict and Organizational Commitment (OC) explains a Significant negative relationship. This implies that work family conflict adversely effects Organizational Commitment.

Regression analysis

Regression analysis is conducted for estimating the relationships between a dependent variable and independent variables called as 'predictors' (Seber & Lee, 2012). Table 5 indicates that the model as a whole (which includes both dependents and independent variable) is statistically significant ($F=31.672$, $p=.0001$), as the p-value is less than .005. Further, the R-Square value ($R^2=0.62$) explains an overall variation in the dependent variables (Organizational Commitment) is 62% due to the predictors (Work-Family Conflict).

Table 5

Results of Regression analysis

Independent Variable	Sample Size	Task Performance (β_1)	Std. Error	t- Value	p- Value	F-Value	R ²
Work Family Conflict	342	-0.40	0.06	-3.62	0.0001	31.67	0.62

The results show that 1 unit change in Work-Family conflict, will bring -0.40 units change in Organizational Commitment. The value of $\beta_1=-0.40$, ($t=-3.62$, $p=0.0003$), as the p-value is less than 0.01 so the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted. This implies an inverse relation of 40 % between Work-Family conflict and organizational commitment.

Table 6

Findings of the Study

S No	Hypotheses	Decision
H ₁	Work-family conflict significantly negatively affects task performance Organizational Commitment among female faculty in higher education institutions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Hypothesis Accepted

Conclusion and Discussion

This study set out to explore the intricate relationship between work-family conflict (WFC) and organizational commitment (OC) among faculty and staff in higher education institutions (HEIs) of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Against the backdrop of increasing professional demands and evolving family structures, this research aimed to fill the gap in literature by investigating how the interference of work with family and vice versa affects employees' emotional attachment, sense of obligation, and intent to remain with their academic institutions.

The findings of this study reveal several critical insights that have both theoretical and practical implications for university management, policymakers, and scholars interested in human resource practices in academia. The analysis confirms a significant negative relationship between work-family conflict and organizational commitment, suggesting that employees experiencing higher levels of WFC tend to exhibit lower levels of commitment to their institutions.

Understanding Work-Family Conflict in HEIs

Work-family conflict, as defined in the study, is a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. The study distinguishes between two primary dimensions of WFC: work-to-family conflict ($W \rightarrow F$) and family-to-work conflict ($F \rightarrow W$). In the context of HEIs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the study reveals that work-to-family conflict is more pronounced, driven largely by excessive workload, inflexible schedules, administrative responsibilities, and research demands that encroach upon personal and family time.

Family-to-work conflict, though less dominant, is also present, particularly among female faculty and staff who often bear the dual burden of professional responsibilities and domestic expectations. This form of conflict arises when familial obligations interfere with work responsibilities, such as meeting deadlines, attending conferences, or fulfilling administrative duties. The research confirms that both dimensions of WFC contribute to stress, emotional exhaustion, and decreased job satisfaction, ultimately leading to reduced organizational commitment.

Organizational Commitment and Its Dimensions

Organizational commitment in this study is examined through Meyer and Allen's three-component model: affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Affective commitment—defined as the emotional attachment and identification with the organization—was found to be most adversely affected by work-family conflict. Employees who are unable to achieve a balance between their personal and professional lives report feeling disconnected, demotivated, and less enthusiastic about contributing to the institution's goals.

Continuance commitment, which reflects the perceived cost of leaving the organization, appears to be less impacted by WFC, though it still demonstrates a modest decline. This suggests that while employees may feel "stuck" due to financial constraints or lack of alternatives, their emotional investment in the institution diminishes when work-family conflict intensifies.

Normative commitment, or the sense of moral obligation to stay, also experiences a notable decline in response to WFC. Employees who feel unsupported by their organizations in managing work-family balance may question the institution's concern for their well-being, leading to weakened loyalty.

Contextual Challenges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa presents a unique socio-cultural and institutional context that amplifies the challenges associated with work-family conflict. Traditional gender roles, extended family systems, lack of formal childcare facilities, and conservative societal expectations often impose additional pressures on academic professionals, particularly women. Moreover, infrastructural limitations and rigid institutional hierarchies in public HEIs contribute to an environment where work-life balance is difficult to attain.

This study highlights the limited availability of supportive policies such as flexible working hours, remote work options, parental leave, and wellness programs in many HEIs of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The absence of these structural supports exacerbates WFC and undermines employee morale and long-term commitment.

Gender Differences and Career Stage Variations

The study also uncovers gender-based disparities in the experience of work-family conflict and its impact on organizational commitment. Female faculty members report significantly higher levels of WFC compared to their male counterparts. The dual expectations of being primary caregivers at home and high-performing professionals at work create a persistent tension that negatively affects their commitment to the organization.

In terms of career stages, early-career professionals and junior faculty members appear to be more vulnerable to the effects of WFC. The pressure to publish, secure grants, and establish academic credibility often comes at the expense of personal and family life, thereby eroding their affective and normative commitment. Mid-career and senior professionals, while also affected, seem to have developed better coping mechanisms or have access to more institutional resources, allowing them to mitigate some of the effects of WFC.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The implications of these findings are profound. Organizational commitment is a key determinant of employee retention, performance, and institutional effectiveness. If HEIs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are to thrive in an increasingly competitive academic landscape, they must prioritize employee well-being and work-life integration as strategic objectives.

Key recommendations include:

1. **Development of Family-Friendly Policies:** Institutions should implement flexible work schedules, remote work options, and adequate maternity/paternity leave policies. These measures can significantly reduce work-family strain and enhance employees' commitment.
2. **Supportive Leadership:** Academic leaders and department heads must be trained to recognize signs of WFC and respond empathetically. A culture of open communication and emotional support can alleviate stress and foster organizational trust.
3. **On-Campus Childcare Facilities:** Providing accessible childcare options can alleviate family-to-work conflict and enable faculty, especially women, to focus more effectively on their professional responsibilities.
4. **Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs):** Offering counselling, stress management workshops, and mental health support can help employees develop coping strategies and enhance resilience.
5. **Mentoring and Peer Support:** Institutions should encourage peer mentoring programs to support early-career academics in navigating professional demands while managing family responsibilities.
6. **Performance Evaluation Reforms:** Shifting the emphasis from quantity to quality in performance assessments can reduce pressure and allow employees to focus on impactful work without compromising their personal lives.

Theoretical Contributions and Future Research

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on work-family dynamics by contextualizing the phenomenon within the academic sector of a developing region. It underscores the importance of socio-cultural factors in shaping the experience of WFC and highlights the nuanced ways in which organizational commitment is affected.

Future research could build on this study by exploring longitudinal data to examine the long-term impact of WFC on career progression and organizational loyalty. Comparative studies involving private and public sector HEIs could yield deeper insights into institutional practices and their effectiveness in mitigating WFC. Additionally, qualitative research involving interviews and case studies can provide richer, narrative-based understanding of individual experiences.

Conclusion: Toward a More Balanced Academic Environment

In conclusion, this study reaffirms the critical influence of work-family conflict on organizational commitment among higher education professionals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The findings serve as a call to action for institutional leaders to reevaluate their human resource strategies and embrace a more holistic approach to employee well-being.

In an era where knowledge creation and academic excellence are central to national development, it is imperative that HEIs recognize their employees not merely as intellectual capital but as individuals with multifaceted roles and responsibilities. By fostering a work environment that values work-life integration, universities can not only enhance organizational commitment but also create a culture of trust, loyalty, and sustained performance.

Ultimately, addressing work-family conflict is not just a matter of institutional benefit—it is a matter of human dignity and social responsibility. The future of higher education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and by extension Pakistan, depends on our collective ability to create inclusive, flexible, and compassionate workplaces that allow every academic professional to thrive.

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