

# **Outcomes of Work-Family Conflict for Women in Academia: A Life Course Perspective**

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## **Abstract**

There have been numerous studies on work-family conflict, but there has been little research on the repercussions of work-family conflict in Pakistani society. In Pakistan's research culture, feminist bodies of research have been underrepresented. The purpose of this empirical, qualitative study is to look into the long-term effects of work-family conflict on working women in Pakistani academia. This research will look at four stages in the lives of working women: single women, married women without children, married women with infants, and married women with adults. The goal of this study is to look into the issues that working women in academia confront as a result of work-family conflict during these four life stages. The Effects of Work-Family Conflict for this study, conflict was investigated utilizing a qualitative case study research approach. A total of ten participants were interviewed using purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling methods. In-depth semi-structured interviews were used to gather empirical evidence. The researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim and used Nvivo software to conduct the thematic analysis. The outcomes of this study demonstrate the long-term repercussions of work-family conflict for working women in Pakistan's academia. Based on working women's life stages, this study created a typology of working women. Working women are classified into four groups based on the issues they experience throughout their lives. Unmarried working women are referred to as "Free Birds," whereas married working women without children are referred to as "Early Boomers," married working women with infants as "Mombies," and married working women with adults are referred to as "Superwomen." The study's themes are divided into three broad domains: work-specific WFC effects, family-specific WFC consequences, and domain specific WFC consequences, each with several sub-themes.

## **Keywords**

Work-family Conflict (WFC), Consequences of WFC, work women, Life course perspective/life span, Academia of Pakistan, Qualitative interviews, Thematic Analysis.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Over the last few years Because of changes in global economic trends as more and more women enter the labor market, there has been a surge in research on work-family conflict in recent years. Work-family conflict has gotten a lot of attention as an emerging subject in organizational studies. It's consequences in the personal life and conduct of employees across the life span in the world, regardless of gender, ethnicity, culture, or nationality, are not limited to organizational studies. Work-family conflict can be witnessed in practically every fact of life. Despite extensive research on work-family conflict in other countries, little work has been done on the subject in Pakistan. As a result, there is a lot of potential for research into this new area. Work-family conflict is studied and examined in other nations, as well as in Pakistan, about job satisfaction, job commitment, employee performance, motivation for work, employee retention, employee turnover, emotional exhaustion, burnout, health difficulties, and so on (Beck, Rainoldi, & Egger, 2019). However, there is a paucity of material highlighting the repercussions of work-family conflict for working women. The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of work-family conflict on working women in Pakistan's academic profession at each of their four life stages. The division of labor in the household has shifted as a result of rising inflation and changing economic and demographic patterns.

Women are becoming increasingly work-oriented to share the burdens of their families or spouses, and more women are becoming professionals, either as employees, employers, or entrepreneurs (Kossek, Perrigino, & Rock, 2020). Because it is difficult for some families to rely solely on the earnings of single males to support the entire family, women are more likely to step forward to assist their partners in improving

their living standards. As a result, the family structure has shifted from a classic single-earner family to a dual-earner household. They face problems of varying nature at different stages of their lives, so a single unmarried

employee's problem will be different from a married employee's problem, a married employee without children's problem will be different from a married employee with children's problem, and a married employee with small children's problem will be different from a married employee with adult and mature children's problem (Mumu, Tahmid, & Azad, 2021). Working women encounter a variety of issues throughout their lives, which is the basis of the explanation. It is a common misconception that teaching is an easy job and that women in academia do not encounter work-family conflicts. However, this is not the case, as this study will reveal the issues that working women in academia confront, particularly in Pakistan, where there are not many women in academia (Beigi, Shirmohammadi, & Stewart, 2018).

## **2. THEORETICAL REVIEWLITE**

### *Work-family Conflict*

The phrase "work-family balance" comes to mind. The conflict has been developed using the role theory, which states that each role has its own set of expectations and demands. Work-family conflict occurs when there is a misalignment between demand and expectations for numerous jobs (Taylor, Huml, & Dixon, 2019). Workfamily conflict is defined as "a type of inter-role conflict in which role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some ways." That is, the execution of one role obstructs the performance of another. The demands of the work domain obstruct the fulfillment of the wants of the family domain, resulting in a conflict between work and family preferences when the two incompatible demands intersect.

### *Indications and dimensions of the conflict between family and work*

WFC is further divided into three types. (a) Time-based conflict (b) Deformation-based conflict (c) Behavior-based conflict. When time spent on one role makes it difficult to dedicate deserved attention to another, this is known as time-based conflict. The failure to honor time obligations is a direct source of workfamily conflict. A time-based conflict arises when a working woman is unable to give her spouse and children time owing to her job overburden. When strain and stress in one role intrude on how they assume responsibility for the other role, tension-based conflict ensues. The willingness and ability to play another role are harmed by tension or anguish from one role. For example, if a husband opposes his wife's job and becomes self-employed, he may be unable to do his job well, resulting in a tension-based conflict (Molina, 2021). When one role's expected behavior is incompatible with another role's expected behavior, behavior-based conflict arises. A working woman, for example, may be required to maintain emotional stability at work yet unable to do so at home with her children and husband. He might deal with a conflict based on behavior in this way.

### *Working women & Work-family Conflict in Pakistan*

More and more women are entering professional professions as a result of rising inflation and a growing desire among women to be self-sufficient. Following the sharp rise in economic crises and inflation, it has been increasingly difficult to subsist on the earnings of a single male breadwinner, which has become a major motivator for women to take an active role in sustaining their families (Aijaz, Shahab, Khan, & Nawab, 2020). Pakistan's work market is dominated by men. According to the World Development Indicator for 2013, Pakistan's labor force accounts for 56 percent of the entire population, with male labor accounting for 78 percent and female labor accounting for only 22 percent. In 2013, the World Development Indicators published a report titled "World Development Indicators." These figures suggest that women's participation in the labor force is low (Ahmad, Muazzam, Anjum, Visvizi, & Nawaz, 2020).

### *Work-family Conflict in academia*

Some sectors of the labor market, such as the medical and teaching professions, are supportive of female employees. In the realm of academics, the number of female professors is steadily increasing. Female teachers are employed in lower proportions at colleges and universities and in higher proportions in schools, demonstrating the prejudice against women gaining positions in higher education and designation (Nair, Jayabalan, Subramaniam, & Perumal, 2020). Teachers do not have to face conflicts in their work and family roles because optimal working hours are committed to the job in this profession, and because of this fair allocation of time and energy for job and family, teachers do not have to confront conflicts in their work and

family responsibilities. Furthermore, while female teachers endure more job stress, instructors in this profession have the benefit of extensive holidays during which they may spend time with their families and relieve stress from their jobs. They play numerous roles at once, the most prominent of which is a mother and a teacher at the same time. Teachers are the members of society whose job it is to mold the personalities and behavior of their students. They bear enormous responsibility for their students' intellectual, social, and emotional development (Torp, Lysfjord, & Midje, 2018).

#### *Consequences of Work-family Conflict for working women*

Because of dual roles and obligations, the effects of work-family conflict have become more severe as women's participation in the labor market has expanded. Juggling many roles with limited resources, according to role theory, leads to role conflict. The conflict between various positions has been linked to negative effects on employee well-being and performance, according to past research. Consequences specific to the family investigate issues such as perceived family carelessness, mother-child conflict, delayed marriages/childbirth, and marital strife. Work-related ramifications examine delayed career advancement, employment discontinuity/turnover, poor job performance, tardiness, absences, and job satisfaction/commitment. Emotional exhaustion/burnout, as well as health-related repercussions, are domain-wide implications (Saleem & Ajmal, 2018).

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

Data gathering and data collection methodologies will be covered in this section. It will also present objective support of the current implications of the work-family conflict that women in academia confront. It will explain why that particular study was conducted. The subjectivism aspect of ontology is used because the main concern is to investigate the meanings that people associate with different social phenomena. Due to the complexity of the phenomena under investigation, this research will employ a retroduction technique that combines inductive and deductive reasoning. It will use a deductive method to explore the lived experiences of working women in Pakistani academics about the WFC and develop new themes to characterize the challenges and repercussions that working women have encountered.

In the present study, working women in the field of academia are considered as population. The sample consists of ten working women from the University of Punjab, a public university. The saturation concept is used to choose the sample. When the additional information in duplicating the data becomes too much to handle, data saturation occurs (Guest, Namey, & Chen, 2020). Qualitative studies are considered suitable for social science studies as they ensure the flexibility to explore the different behaviors of individuals (Guest et al., 2020).

The objective of the present study is to highlight the consequences faced by working women so that they can be better explored through face-to-face interaction with participants through interviews. In-depth interviews are preferred in the domain of work-family interference to gain context-sensitive information about work and family issues (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). Feminist researchers mostly use in-depth interviews for data collection as they provide more subjective information to the researcher by non-hierarchical bonding between the researcher and the respondents (Constantinou, Georgiou, & Perdikiogianni, 2017). For the analysis of the interviews conducted, the audio data was transformed into a written form which is called transcription. This study has verbatim transcribed all the interviews including a pilot interview. The verbatim or orthographic style of transcription not only focuses on what is said but also focuses on how it is said (Eaton, Stritzke, & Ohan, 2019).

The major challenge faced during the transcription of the interview was the language barrier. Most of the interviews were bilingual; Urdu and English. It was difficult to transcribe Urdu wordings in English in a way that will not alter the actual essence and meaning of the sentence. Some Urdu words are used in transcription with their English meanings in bracket for convenience of readers. In a qualitative study, field notes comprise all of the items that the researcher saw and saw during the data gathering procedure. The researcher's own interpretation should not be included in the field notes (Nascimento et al., 2018). Thematic analysis is considered as essential part of qualitative research for identification, analysis and reporting patterns (themes) of the data. Thematic analysis allows flexibility and creativity in data analysis. The data analysis was started soon after the data collections as major themes emerged during the interviews based on the most frequent consequences of WFC exposed by working women.

**4. ANALYSIS & FINDING**

This segment will describe the implications that a working woman in the academic area must confront throughout her life, based on facts. According to the theory of roles, a person can play a variety of roles based on his social standing. There are additional statuses for a woman who works in academics; mother, wife, daughter, sister, daughter-in-law, and teacher, to mention very few (Roberts, Calogero, & Gervais, 2018). Working women who juggle several duties have a negative attitude about their jobs and experience mood spillover as a result of the transition from one role to another (Farradina, Psikologi, & Riau, 2017). Unmarried women are referred to as "free birds" in this study since it is widely held in Pakistani society that women before marriage are independent and enjoy freedom at their parents' house.

They are not subjected to the same obligations and responsibilities as working women in later phases. The study further refers to "early boomers" for married women without children, who just got the transition from their phase of free birds. For married women with infants, this study proposed the typology as "mombies". The name itself is self-explanatory. These types of women, at their present stage of life, face a lot of problems with WFC. Working women in Pakistan are mostly family orientated, prioritizing their family over their career. And, especially at this point, when the kid is old enough to be left alone with the mother, working women face unfavorable repercussions for pursuing their careers, which push her away from her ideal worker status and cause her job performance to deteriorate. Finally, working women with adults are referred to as "superwomen" because they have gone through a difficult period in their lives and now that their child/children have started school, their problems have lessened. However, their problems do not end here; only the nature of their problems has changed and become less intense.

Free birds live with their parents and parents typically compromise for their children's development and happiness, professional advancement was not an issue for them. Free birds can follow their careers without difficulty. For job progression, an MPhil or Ph.D. degree is required. For mombies, their commitment level also remained the same after having infants. Sometimes in their life, they became less satisfied for time being but as their children entered their adult stage, their problems got less intensified. For early boomer commitment level and job satisfaction remained the same after marriage because of the flexibility of their job, teaching is time demanding but it all depends on how much balance is maintained between both responsibilities.

Surprisingly, most of the participant's commitment levels increased as they move from free birds to early boomers. Free birds can maintain a high degree of devotion to their work, resulting in job satisfaction. Participants were more ambitious and career-oriented before marriage. They were happier at work since they didn't have any family commitments. For all superwomen in this study, commitment and satisfaction levels increased with time and with every new phase of their life. They believe that they can work better under the pressure of responsibilities. As free birds are enjoying their unmarried phase of life so they did not face the problem of being late at their workplace. Mombies have reached the point in their lives where they must provide full-time care for their infants. It is solely the responsibility of the mother to feed her child, to allow him or her to sleep at a reasonable hour, to look after them if they become ill, and to take care of them in other ways. So, even if the infant is with a maid, mother-in-law, or mother, they must perform some chores like their mother before leaving home.

Superwomen had to send their children to school. In the case of free birds, no guilt was prevalent in the interview of any of the participants. In the case of early boomers, there was no guilt present in the minds of any early boomer for non-compliance with their family roles because of their job. The only guilt for some of the mombies was that they could not give due time to their children when they were at their infant stage but that was just for time being and husbands to offices, so they face some problem in reaching their workplace on time.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The conclusion of findings according to Role theory, which asserts that a person has numerous roles depending on his or her standing, supports the findings of this study. The more responsibilities a person has, the more conflicts he or she may encounter. At the age of four Working women play many roles throughout their lives, which they must juggle. They must be managed and the dispute must be resolved quickly at the end of each phase. A working woman may face all types of consequences of WFC at a time. There is no hierarchal system in bearing the consequences of WFC. Secondly, all the three types of consequences of WFC are not exclusive to each other. All three of them are interlinked and have some connection and relationship between them.

A working woman cannot face work-specific, family-specific, or domain un-specific consequences in isolation. Whenever a working woman has some work-specific issues she may face family-specific problems due to that and vice versa. The same is the case with all types of consequences of WFC. The consequence faced by working women from any domain will affect the other two domains. Therefore, all three types of

consequences of WFC move in a cycle, not in isolation. Finally, this study has generated the typology of working women based on their life course; free birds for unmarried women, early boomers for married women without children, mombies for married women with infants, and superwomen for married women with adults.

This typology generated is linked with all the three types of consequences of WFC which states that the consequences of WFC are different for working women at each of their life stages.

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