

Work-Family Conflict and Turnover Intentions: Mediating Effect of Stress

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Abstract

The study examines the relationship between work-family conflict (WFC) and turnover intentions (TI) along with mediating effect of stress on work-family conflict and turnover intentions. The Data was collected through self-administered questionnaire from 335 respondents of four public sector universities in Islamabad. The structural equation modeling method was used for data analysis. Results of investigation confirmed the significant positive relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intentions, and that stress mediates positively in WFC and TI link. First limitation of the present research is, of cross sectional data. Secondly as the study is based on public sector universities data, therefore, it limits the generalization of its findings to private sector universities only. Thirdly, all the respondents of the study were full time faculty members; hence, the results may not be relevant to part time employees. Much of the past research has been mostly conducted in the individualistic cultures of the West (especially the U.S.), thus, raising questions regarding generalizability of the findings to the collectivist culture of the East (e.g., Pakistan, India). This study attempts to fill the gap to examine the effects of the work-family conflict on turnover intentions in a collectivist culture of Pakistan.

Keywords: Work-family conflict, turnover intentions, stress, mediation.

Introduction

The vital assets of every organization are its people. Importance of human interaction is imperative as organizations are made up of people, not technology or structure. A consulting firm evaluates high human development index for the highest performing companies. Now a days to maintain high performance, people are more burdened to keep balance between personal and professional lives. Work family conflicts are on rise in today's world and are not restricted to one organization. The conflict leads to negative consequences especially in the Asian countries like Pakistan which is a collectivist society. Work and family mirrors two of the most important segment of our daily life, of which leaves profound impact to our understanding of human nature. Researchers have since long established these variables correlation leading to conflict. Work-family conflict occurs when demands from one role affects one's ability to meet the demands associated with another role in another domain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

In the contemporary world work-family issues have gained special importance for employees, families, and organizations; as little time for family responsibilities and obligations raise stress on the home-work interface. Work-family conflict a form of inter-role conflict where the role pressures from each domain are mutually incompatible in some sort (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Work-family conflicts emerge when the expectations associated with one domain are incompatible with the demands associated with the other domain. The conflictive interface between home and work as a potential stressor (Voydanoff, 1988). The nature and direction of work-family conflict, conjectures that time-based work interferes with family and family interferes with work, i.e. concluded that employees experiencing stress leads to turnover (Kelloway, Gottlieb, & Barham, 1999). Therefore work-Life symmetry is a critical business strategy to reduce turnover rate, and to uplift overall firm performance (Soon, Quazi, Tay, & Kelly, 2005).

The adequate flexibility can solve the problem of work life balance (Marks & Scholarios, 2001) as objective of flexible work arrangements is to improve inter-role conflict, that will attract workers, especially those faced with competing demands (Rau & Hyland, 2002).

Work-life balance policies help in reducing stress (Yasbek, 2004). Organizations should introduce those policies that help employees balance their work and private lives (Thompson, Andreassi, & Prottas, 2003). As more the physical/psychological symptoms, and turnover intentions give rise to greater work-family imbalance (Ling & Phillips, 2006). Many prominent researchers have linked work-family conflict with numerous problems: domestic violence (Trachtenberg, 2008), poor physical activity (Roos, Lahelma, & Rahkonen, 2006), poor eating habits (Eva, Sirpa, Tea, & Eero, 2007), poor emotional health (Grice et al., 2007), excessive drinking (Roos, Lahelma, & Rahkonen, 2006), substance abuse among women (Frone, Barnes, & Farrell, 1994), decreased marital satisfaction (Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999), decreased emotional wellbeing (Lambert, Hogan, Camp, & Ventura, 2006), neuroticism (Boyar & Mosley, 2007). Work-family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict in which work and family demands are mutually incompatible, meeting demands of both the domains is difficult (Higgins, Duxbury, & Lyons, 2007) which create stress, basically a form of unpleasant emotion (Côté & Morgan, 2002) that has got the potential to increase employees turnover rate. The Spillover theory (Hill, Ferris, & Martinson, 2003) supports work family conflict which explains the conditions under which the spillover between the work micro system and the family micro system is positive or negative, if work-family interactions have rigidly structured in time and space, then spillover in terms of time, energy and behavior is generally negative.

The Higher Education Commission (HEC), the main regulator of higher education in Pakistan is responsible for education policy, quality assurance, degree recognition, and development of new universities and institutions. HEC recognizes 132 universities of which 73 are public sector and 59 are private universities (HEC, 2012). According to Hostede's cultural ranking Pakistan is highly collectivist society and has very low score of 14/100 on individualism (Robbins & Judge, 2007). Therefore, the present study has not only added value and significance by exploring the direct impact of work-family conflict on turnover intentions, but has also increased our understanding and knowledge by studying these concepts in a collectivist culture of Pakistan. The study will also help the educational sector of Pakistan through highlighting certain guiding principles which will assist in developing strategies to reduce turnover intentions among faculty members. It will also be beneficial for academicians as it would develop their understanding regarding the mediating effect of stress in the relationship between work family conflict and turnover intentions.

Literature Review

Work –family conflict

Work-family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict in which work and family demands are mutually incompatible, meeting demands of both the domains is difficult (Higgins, Duxbury, & Lyons, 2007). Work-family conflict is a one-dimensional construct despite the fact that the definitions suggests work affects family and family affects work implies a bi-directional relationship (Allen & Armstrong, 2006). The work-family conflict is a form of interrole conflict occurring as a result of general demands and strain, created by the job interfering with one's ability to perform family related responsibilities (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996). There are three different types of conflicts; time-based, strain-based and behavior-based conflicts (Kelloway, Gottlieb, & Barham, 1999), Time-based conflict is experienced when time pressures of one role prevents an employee from being able to allot time to meet the demands of another role. Strain based conflict occurs when pressure or strain from one role affects how a person performs in another role, and behavior-based conflict occurs when behavioral patterns required and exhibited in one role are incompatible with those required for another role.

There are six models (Frone, Barnes, & Farrell, 1994) that can be used to explain the effects of work family conflict; the segmentation model, the congruence model, the identity or integrative model, the spillover model, the compensation model and the resource drain model. The segmentation model explains that life and family represent two separate unrelated domains that have no influence on each other, while the congruence model suggests that since work and family share a common cause, they can have either a positive or negative correlation and that any relationship found between the two is spurious. The identity or integrative model suggests that work and family are so closely intertwined that any attempt to differentiate between the two would be futile. The spillover model hypothesize that one domain affects another by way of a positive relationship and there is spillover from one domain to the other.

For example, an employee who is in a negative mood state at work will experience a negative mood state at home, as the negative affect carried over from the workday would spill over into his or her home life. Likewise, a positive mood state at work would lead to a positive mood state at home. The compensatory model suggests that there is a negative relationship between work and family, and that, for example reduced satisfaction in one domain would lead a person to try to make up for this by increasing energy exerted towards some aspect in the other domain.

Finally, the resource drain model states that the negative relationship that exists between work and family occurs as a result of one domain using up time and energy that are needed for the other domain. The majority of empirical studies results examining these reactance models supports for the spillover effect. Spillover effect is the term used to describe the occurrence of a mood, energy, motivation, etc from one domain to the other. A positive spillover effect occurs when a positive state in one domain leads a positive state in another domain, thereby facilitating or enhancing the second domain and vice versa. Over the past twenty years, researchers have made valiant attempts to understand work family conflict by examining the antecedents and consequences of the construct. Past research examining these antecedents and consequences has supposed that work-family conflict has deleterious consequences such as lowered job and life satisfaction, increased job and life stress, lowered organizational commitment, and increased intention to turnover (Allen et al., 2006). Work-family conflict could cause employees to quit their job (Cohen, 1993) because the tasks and stress at workplace leads not only to frustration in the workplace, but also at home. This study found both WFC and FWC, were positively related to turnover intentions; highlighting that both work and family issues may encourage employees to search for employment elsewhere (Allen & Armstrong, 2006). Therefore, it could be hypothesized that:

H1: Work-family conflict will positively influence turnover intentions.

Stress

Stress is defined as an emotional and psycho-physiological reaction to aversive and noxious aspects of work, work environments and work organizations (Levi & Levi, 2000). It is a state characterized by high levels of arousal and distress and often by feelings of not coping. Stress is a nonspecific response of the body to a stimulus or event (Kavanagh, 2005). Stress is also defined as the “pressure or anguish resulting from difficult situations” (Alves, Chor, Faerstein, & Werneck, 2004). Stress refers to workers not being able to adapt to work and, therefore, involves some biological and psychological reaction (Hsieh, Huang, & Su, 2004). Job-related tension has a causal impact on job satisfactions, which then influence turnover intentions (Kemery, Mossholder, & Bedeian, 1987). Similarly, emotional exhaustion leads to more turnover intention (Otis & Pelletier, 2005), whereas work satisfaction leads to less turnover intention. Many researchers have also linked stress with reduced worker and organizational performance (Giga & Hoel, 2003; Sheridan & Abelson, 1983). Many researchers have explored positive relationship between stress and turnover intentions (DeVries & Wilkerson, 2003; Moore, 2000; Leontaridi & Ward, 2002).

In the organizational setting additional work burdened by management, causes more stress among employees and therefore they quit, especially during critical incidents. Emotional exhaustion leads to more turnover intention, whereas work satisfaction leads to less turnover intention (Otis & Pelletier, 2005). Job stress and its effects on psychiatric symptoms are also associated with an employee's tendency to leave the job (Braaten, 2000). Job stress is positively related to intent to leave current employment (Williams, 2003). The amount of stress has a significant positive effect on turnover intentions (Layne, Hohenshil, & Singh, 2001). The conversation of resource theory (Hobfoll, 1989) is the supporting theory in the relationship of work-family conflict and turnover intentions through stress as a mediator. This theory proposes that people strive to protect and build resources, such as objects (money, house), conditions (quality of one's roles, external support), energies (time and level of vigor), and personal characteristics (beliefs such as a positive outlook). Psychological stress occurs when these resources are lost or threatened and ultimately it leads towards high turnover intentions. Similarly, stress has a significant positive effect on turnover intentions in the view of (Leontaridi & Ward, 2002; Layne, Hohenshil, & Singh, 2001). Furthermore, work-family conflict leads to stress (Cropanzano, Rupp, & Byrne, 2003) which further leads to high intentions to turnover (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996). Therefore, it could be hypothesized that:

H2: Stress mediates positively in the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intentions.

Turnover Intentions

Turnover intention is defined as the desire of an individual to leave an organization (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Turnover intention is broadly defined as an attitudinal (thinking of quitting), decisional (intention to leave), and behavioral (searching for a new job) process (Sager, 1994). Turnover intention is conscious willfulness to seek for other alternatives in other organizations. Employee turnover occurs when employees voluntarily leave their jobs and must be replaced. Turnover at work place has received attention by many researchers (Richer, Blanchard, & Vallerandi, 2002; Williams, 2003). Managers and researchers consider turnover a problem because of costs associated with it (Lucas, Parasuraman, Davis, & Enis, 1987; Soon, Quazi, Tay, & Kelly, 2005). Within the OB literature, turnover intentions have been widely researched (Cohen, 1993). When employee performance is consistently poor, threats or punishment lead many individuals either to be dismissed (involuntary turnover) or threatened, punished enough to leave (voluntary turnover) (Hochwarter, et al., 2001). Similarly self-actualization, interpersonal relations, directly can influence employees' affective reactions to their job, which sequentially influences their turnover intentions (Lachman & Diamant, 1987). Turnover Intentions shows a high positive relation with work life conflict in the view of (Riley, 2006). Similarly turnover intention is positively correlated with stress in the view of (Layne, Hohenshil, & Singh, 2001). These studies indicate that as stress level increases, individuals are more likely to leave their position and seek alternative roles either within the field or in another industry.

Turnover is the rate at which employees leave an organization. The higher the turnover rate, increases recruitment, training, socialization, experience etc. expense of organizations. Several behavioral consequences of reduced job involvement, weakened performance, and low job satisfaction would lead to turnover (Richer, Blanchard, & Vallerandi, 2002; Bhagat, 1983). Many researchers consider turnover an important issue for organizations (Morrell, Clarke, & Wilkinson, 2004; Yu, 2008) and favors friendly work life policies to reduce turnover. Now companies are more conscious of maintaining work life balance and offer friendly policies (Yasbek, 2004). High turnover rate deplete continuity of care, and harm workers' abilities to achieve optimal management functions (Thaden, 2007). Many researchers suggest that work-life balance policies help in reducing stress (Yasbek, 2004) and also to reduce turnover intention (Valcour & Batt, 2003).

Methodology and Results

In the present research, personally administered questionnaire/instruments were used to gather the relevant data. This kind of data collection technique was less expensive and helped in collecting the completed answers within a short period of time. Before filling the questionnaire, the respondents were given an informed consent form and were also informed of their rights. After finishing the questionnaires, the respondents returned back the questionnaire to the researcher. Moreover, the participant's demographic information is presented in Table-4. The sample of this present research was drawn from four public sector universities in Islamabad. These were randomly selected from a list of public sector universities in Islamabad (HEC, 2012). Participants of the study consist of all full-time faculty members (Lecturers and Assistant Professors) of four public sector universities in Islamabad. A total of 445 faculty members working in different universities were approached to fill the questionnaires, out of 445, only 345 faculty members got agreed to be the part of the study and filled questionnaires. They were assured of keeping confidentiality.

The standardized instruments were utilized to measure the variables in this research. Work-family conflict was measured with 4 items from "My work schedule often conflicts with my family life." (Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly, 1983). Stress was measured using 4 items from "Working with people directly puts too much stress on me." (Stanton, Balzer, Smith, Parra, & Ironson, 2001). Turnover Intention was measured using 4 items by (Kelloway, Gottlieb, & Barham, 1999).

In the present study path analysis was performed, using AMOS 7, to analyze the proposed model. Such as the effect of low sample size on the Chi-square test, we utilized two-step process to test the proposed model as suggested by (Anderson and Garbing, 1988). In the first stage, analysis was conducted on the five questions/items of WFC, five items of stress and five items of Turnover Intentions (TI). After the factor structures were validated, researcher moved towards the path analysis to examine the hypothesized association among five WFC items, five ST items and five TI items. This process was adopted as the sample size was lesser. According to Gorsuch, 1983 and Hatcher, 1994; a minimum subject requirement to item ratio is at least 5:1. On the other hand, Nunnally 1978, suggested that the subject to item ratio should be at least 10:1.

Failure to have a typical sample of sufficient size may result in unstable loadings (Cliff, 1970). In the present research model, there were three embryonic variables named as WFC, stress and turnover intentions entails structural model. The structural model tests the paths among WFC, stress, and TI. Moreover, the fitness of the model was analyzed and assessed by the fit statistics.

In present research study the model fit was measured by the following fit statistics as Chi -square value was divided by the associated degree of freedom (χ^2/df) to estimate the model fitness relative to the sample size (Bollen,1989; Kline,1998); then, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is viewed to measure the differences among population covariance and population implicit covariance matrix; In contrast to the Null model Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was measured; and Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) was also measured to estimate the fluctuations between the sample covariance matrix and the sample implicit covariance matrix.

The measurement model is first tested for the fit to the data. The model attained an accepted fit (Table 3) as $\chi^2/df = 2.36$, CFI= 0.96, TLI=0.94, and RMSEA=0.07 and the factor loadings are greater than 0.7, moreover, majority of R^2 values are larger than 0.5 (see Table 2). WFC, stress and TI are tested with the help of structural equation modeling technique to study the paths among them. The path from WFC to stress ($= 0.37$, $p < 0.01$) is significant. Similarly, positive and significant results are seen through the direct structural paths from WFC ($= 0.21$, $p < 0.05$) and TI. The indirect effect of WFC on TI is significant ($=0.1813$, $p < 0.01$). This shows that the effect of WFC on TI is partially mediated by stress. The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) indicated that the models fit the data and all the factor loadings were significant and greater than 0.5.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study reveals that work family conflict has a positive relationship with stress and turnover intentions that is if work family conflict increases the employees stress level, and the turnover intentions will also increase. The previous literature shows the relationship between work-family conflicts, stress and turnover intention. However, studies of WFC in Asia are still in adequate particularly its rareness is observed in Pakistan. When WFC develop, turnover intention increases because people are not satisfied with their job and they want to quit it to reduce intentions. They switch to jobs which provide better facilities at workplace to maintain the employees work and family balance. The Work family conflict has profound reciprocal impact with job performance. When WFC increases job performance decreases, employees are unable to devote their energies on the jobs, which ultimately decrease their efficiency and productivity causing damage to the organization. We found that busy work schedule of employees within the organizations make it difficult to find spare time for family members in Pakistan. This study finds work life conflict and stress has a positive relationship with turnover intentions. The findings and the data empirically prove the facts and support literature review as explained earlier. The organization had to adopt the strategy which will address work life conflict and the causes of stress for successful operations. Stress also increases because the environment is dynamic. Apparently hard business plans, organization new practices and programs adoption to change usually create a stressful state. Stress management training may substantially reduce stress symptoms.

An increase of dual-income families and single-parent households in Pakistan may create conflict for those who need to work as well as raise a family. Due to the importance of this issue, it is strongly recommended to implement a balance working life system so that the employees can better manage work related stress and family related issues. It is recommended that organizations should adopt flexible work schedule programs especially for female employees. The study also elucidate supportive work environment has a significant impact on workplace. This includes family oriented benefits like Paid recreation, holidays, remuneration, work off opportunities to spend appropriate time with family, Maternity leave for female, sick leaves, child care centers at workplace, workplace and manager support, employees recreational programs, training to cope up in tough working schedules etc. Family oriented benefits act as motivator among the employees who suffer from stress from heavy workload, busy work schedules and interfering family related demands. The employees will use optimal capacity at workplace and will be able to show their presence at home too. Pakistani organizations must introduce such policies that can include tele-work and telecommuting policies enabling to work from home so as employees have better control over their life schedules. Work family conflict can also be reduced by establishing workplace family-friendly policies. In Pakistan to work such policies; ensure that managers and supervisors are supportive of and encourage employees to follow adopted policies.

It is important for the organization to consider these programs that maintain balance between work and family related demands to overcome the difficulties at work and home place. These kinds of initiatives assist manageable work-family setups for remedial measures. The organizations need to be aware about the working problems to solve them and get promoted for their desired aims. Pakistani employees mainly face this issue because inflation is increasing day by day and income of single person is not enough to feed the family so when both members are compelled to work. This financial constraint leads to raise conflicts. Therefore organizations must adopt all those above mentioned strategies to deal with WFC issues. When these remedies will be adopted it will definitely bring positive outcomes.

The limitations of the study are: (1) - First possible limitations of the present research may be the use of cross – sectional data. (2)- The study has employed public sector universities which limits the generalization of the findings to private sector universities. (3)- All the respondents of the study were full time faculty members having stable employment; therefore they were involved in social exchange based employment relationships. The results, thus, may not be relevant to part time or contract faculty members involved in an economic exchange based employment relationships.

Figure-1: Theoretical Framework

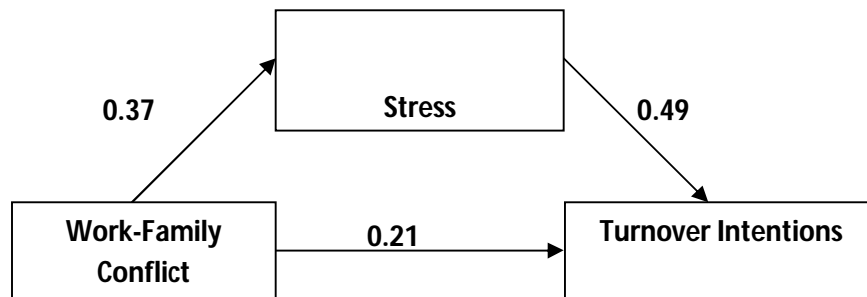


Table-1: the measurement Model

Construct	Items	Factor Loadings	R ²
Work-family conflict	1	0.724	0.61
	2	0.762	0.51
	3	0.763	0.63
	4	0.725	0.53
	5	0.726	0.55
Stress	1	0.875	0.77
	2	0.711	0.74
	3	0.715	0.68
	4	0.794	0.64
	5	0.735	0.58
Turnover Intentions	1	0.792	0.51
	2	0.768	0.63
	3	0.756	0.53
	4	0.745	0.55
	5	0.726	0.71

Table-2: Fit Indices

Fit Indices	Perfect Fit	Accepted Fit	Path Model	Structural Model
X² /df	X ² /df < 3	3 < X ² /df < 5	1.91	2.36
CFI	0.97 < CFI < 1	0.95 < CFI < 0.97	0.98	0.96
TLI	0.95 < TLI < 1	0.90 < TLI < 0.95	0.97	0.94
GFI	0.95 < GFI < 1	0.90 < GFI < 0.95	0.96	0.93
RMSEA	0 < RMSEA < 0.05	0.05 < RMSEA < 0.08	0.05	0.07

Table: 3 - HEC Recognized Public Sector Universities of Islamabad

1. Air University, Islamabad
2. AllamaIqbal Open University, Islamabad
3. Bahria University Islamabad
4. COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Islamabad
5. Federal Urdu University of Arts, Sciences and Technology, Islamabad
6. International Islamic University, Islamabad
7. National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad
8. National University of Sciences and Technology, Islamabad
9. Quide-i-azam University Islamabad

Table 4: The Main Characteristics of the Sample (N = 335)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	200	60%
Female	135	40%
Age		
Less than 35 years	100	30%
35-45 years	155	46%
More than 45 years	80	24%
Tenure		
Less than 5 years	105	31%
5-10 years	110	33%
11-15 years	60	18%
More than 15 years	60	18%
Designation		
Lecturer	165	49%
Assistant Professor	170	51%

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