Navigating the effect of Work-Family Conflict on Job Performance: The Mediating Role of Work-Family Guilt and the Moderating Effects of Gender Role Orientations and Reducing Work

Ahmad Usman[1], Asma Malik[2], Abdul Basit[3]

Abstract
This paper explores how work-family conflict is intertwined with the relationship between job performance and also delves into the mediating role of work-family guilt. Additionally, this study explores its moderation effects of gender roles and reducing work. As the paper argues, the existing research on this subject has had several gaps. The approach is grounded on two major theories namely role dynamics theory and source attribution perspective. A correlational research design was followed to test the proposed hypotheses. Data were collected from 127 married employees (73 males and 54 females) working in the service sector in Pakistan. Reliable and validated scales measured work-family conflict, work-family guilt, job performance, gender role orientations, and reducing work. Statistical analyses, moderated-moderated mediation, and so on were conducted on these relationships. The results showed that work-family conflict negatively impacted job performance and that work-family guilt is a significant mediator. On the contrary, though, gender role orientations as well as reducing work were not expected to moderate the mediated relationships. This study pointed out how important work-family guilt is in explaining how work-family conflict influences job performance. The study contributes to the organizational behavior literature by emphasizing the emotional mechanisms underlying WFC and their impact on employee performance. Practically, the findings underline the importance of developing organizational policies that minimize work-family conflict and provide emotional support to employees. The insights gained open new avenues for research, particularly in culturally diverse contexts like Pakistan, where traditional gender norms play a significant role in shaping work and family dynamics.
Keywords: Work-family conflict, job performance, work-family guilt, gender role orientations, reducing work, role dynamics theory

1. Background of the study

This section of research presents the multidimensional nature of work-family conflict (WFC) as a core issue within organizational studies. WFC is described as the incompatibility of work and family roles that leads to an increase in strain resulting from the overlap of demands across these domains, further reducing one's ability to fulfill their duties effectively. This conflict has been highlighted as an important determinant shaping organizational outcomes, with meaningful implications for job performance, employee well-being, and turnover intentions (Grzywacz & Butler, 2008). Based on a theoretical basis of role dynamics, the study examines how stresses in work and family roles create inter-role conflicts that are both enacted behaviorally and emotionally (Kahn et al., 1964).

Evolving societal and organizational dynamics, especially the increased participation of women in the workforce and changing family forms, have made WFC increasingly relevant. Dual-role expectations often add to the intricacy of managing occupational and domestic responsibilities by replacing traditional gendered divisions of labor. Studies have found that WFC is associated with negative outcomes like job dissatisfaction, psychological distress, and performance, making it a focus of organizational research and intervention efforts (Allen et al., 2000; Wadud, 2022).

According to this study, WFC is a bi-directional concept and entails work interfering with the family and the family interfering with work. Ecological systems theory and the theory of conservation of resources underlie the theoretical model to indicate environmental demands are inversely related to individual's resources. Moreover, it would combine the source attribution perspective, whereby persons cognitively attribute the cause of conflict to certain domains, leading them to experience emotional responses and methods of coping. Attribution through this process is helpful in knowing more about the emotional impact of WFC, especially when family commitment is overshadowed by requirements at work (Shockley & Singla, 2011).

An important part of this study involves the investigation of work-family guilt (WFG) as a mediator between WFC and job performance. WFG is defined by negative emotions associated with an imbalance of perceived roles; it is highly prevalent in people experiencing dual-role expectations. The studies have shown that WFG has a detrimental effect on workplace engagement and performance, leading to the vicious cycle of low productivity and high stress. Gender is another critical moderating factor because women are always reported to feel more guilty than men, due to deeply ingrained societal expectations surrounding caregiving and professional responsibilities (McElwain, 2008; Hasan & Sadat, 2023).

This research introduces GRO and strategies to decrease work commitments as moderator variables. GRO measures an individual's beliefs concerning the traditional gender roles to which he or she ascribes and thus influences their experience of WFC and the consequences of WFC. Reducing work refers to a practical

---
[1] Corresponding Author, Institute of Administrative Sciences, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan, **usman.ias@pu.edu.pk**
[2] Institute of Administrative Sciences, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan
[3] Lahore Institute of Science and Technology , Pakistan, abasit_shahbaz@yahoo.com

intervention through time and energy reallocated from occupational pursuits to family responsibilities. This strategy is in line with wider organizational strategies aimed at achieving work-life balance and employee well-being (Aarntzen et al., 2019; Farhadi, 2021).

This research is especially meaningful against the backdrop of a highly industrializing and fast-inhabiting Pakistan, a country posing significant challenges to traditional roles for working families and in the workplace. By using participants from the service sector, the study addresses the prevailing gap in the literature, which has focused significantly upon Western contexts or female-only samples; including both male and female allows for a more nuanced consideration of gendered experiences in handling these work and family roles.

Based on the source attribution and gender role orientation theories, a comprehensive analysis can be undertaken regarding WFC and its repercussions. The theory says that the WFG will mediate the relationship of WFC with job performance and the GRO between WFC and WFG, whereas work reduction is going to act as a moderator on the relation of WFG with job performance. A moderation mediation approach will be developed with the integration of theoretical construct with empirical data for these hypotheses.

Implications of this study go beyond academia and provide useful insights to organizational leaders and policymakers. Mechanisms of WFC, which can have an impact on employee performance, form a significant part of the discussion, and that is where organizational cultures need to be encouraged and supported to foster organizational performance. Flexible work arrangements, gender-sensitive policies, and work-family guilt interventions can help promote organizational outcomes. The research also appeals to higher organization practice inclusivity in terms of the representation of different gendered experiences in policy-making and implementation. With an underutilized aspect being applied such as WFG, incorporating GRO, the developing discourse around work-family interfaces advances by incorporating these previously unrealized aspects. This sets the basis for theoretically linked consequences with reality, offering great capacity for subsequent researches dealing with aspects of occupational and domestic management over work and family. In adding a fast-industrialising aspect to its analysis, it opens the scope for doing WFC research much better, allowing for an assessment of research in developed versus development economies.

2. Literature Review

This section provides a review of the relevant literature that serves as a basis for understanding the key variables in this study: work-family conflict, job performance, work-family guilt, gender role orientations, and efforts to reduce work-related demands. The interrelationships between these variables are then explored and hypotheses are developed. This section ends with a discussion of the theoretical frameworks that guide the research, role dynamics theory, and the source attribution perspective, which serve as the theoretical basis of the study.

2.1. Work-Family Conflict

Work-family conflict (WFC) is defined by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) as the inter-role conflicts that arise when work and family demands are incompatible. WFC can take a work-to-family conflict or family-to-work conflict form in which work pressures negatively impact family life or family obligations interfere with job performance, respectively (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003).

Research earlier demonstrated the harmful effects of WFC on employees' mental and physical health, examples to enumerate are job performance, stress, anxiety, and burnout (Anderson et al., 2002; Allen et al., 2000). Job satisfaction was decreased while turnover intentions were increased in the case of WFC (Amstad et al., 2011). Moreover, research has shown that the effects of WFC may differ according to the type of work, individual coping mechanisms, and family types (Frone et al., 2003).

Societal changes in Pakistan have made more women join the workforce. This has changed the dynamics in the work-family relationship and intensified WFC because the women are expected to perform their work roles while they are also supposed to take up traditional caregiving responsibilities (Hussain et al., 2009). Although there is considerable research on WFC in the Western context, its influence from cultural norms and gender expectations in developing countries such as Pakistan is not well-explored (Khare & Kapoor, 2019).

2.2. Job Performance

Job performance refers to the expected value to the organization resulting from discrete behavioral episodes that a subject has for a given period (Motowidlo & Kell, 2012). Its common measurement is based on aspects like task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behaviors (Dizgah et al., 2012).

Research has indicated that WFC negatively affects job performance due to the reduction of cognitive resources, attention, and focus, which are important determinants of job task accomplishment (Kengatharan, 2017). Employees who face more role conflict also tend to possess lower levels of motivation and greater degrees of emotional exhaustion, hence reducing job performance (Peiró et al., 2020). Research in different sectors and industries has repeatedly demonstrated the importance of work-family relationships. This is important for improving job performance within organizations (Karatepe, 2013).

2.3. Work-family Guilt

Work-family guilt is a psychological state in which an individual feels that they are not meeting the demands or expectations of one role because of the pressures of another. Work-family guilt, according to McElwain (2008), is the negative emotional reaction that arises from an imbalance between conflicting work and family

responsibilities. This emotional impact of the conflict, particularly feelings of guilt, tends to increase the levels of stress of employees, which would consequently further reduce their job performance (Greenhaus et al., 1987).

Many studies have investigated the effects of work-family guilt, and most of them found that individuals who suffer from work-family conflict tend to experience difficulties in concentration, emotional distress, and job engagement (Shaw & Burns, 1993; Lo et al., 2003). Overall, research has shown that women are more likely than men to feel guilty about managing their work and family roles, which is a trend attributed to traditional gender roles (Guendouzi, 2006). This feeling of guilt negates the performance at the job since an individual may have less competency or commitment to professional jobs because of a perception that he or she has failed in the family obligations (Morgan & King, 2012).

Secondly, work-family guilt has been found to act as a mediator between WFC and job performance. As a matter of fact, it creates an emotional barrier that hampers employees' effectiveness in their jobs (Borelli et al., 2017). Thus, research into WFC and job performance will be incomplete without acknowledging work-family guilt as a critical variable.

2.4. Gender Role Orientations

Gender role orientations are the attitudes and beliefs that individuals hold about society's expectations of males and females, including their work and family obligations. Traditionally, it has been assumed that men are the main breadwinners and that women are the caregivers for children and perform other family responsibilities (Korabik et al., 2008). Studies have found that a person who is more traditional-oriented toward gender roles experiences higher degrees of work-family conflict, as well as has challenges in balancing family and work roles (Korabik et al., 2008). In contrast, people with more egalitarian gender role orientations, where both partners share responsibilities in both work and family spheres, report lower levels of WFC, higher job satisfaction, and improved performance (Aarntzen et al., 2019).

The relevance of gender role orientations is particularly pronounced in non-Western societies, such as Pakistan, where traditional gender expectations continue to exert a strong influence on individuals' roles both at home and in the workplace. In such environments, social expectations of women increase regarding success in both roles which further elevates tension and may increase the potential of work-family conflict. Hussain et al., (2009); Khare & Kapoor, (2019) The WFC is considerably higher among Pakistani females as well as job dissatisfaction as against males in dual-career families, based on findings of a research study done in Pakistan, (Rehman & Roomi, 2012).

2.5. Reducing Work

Reducing work is the conscious choice by employees to reduce the time and energy directed toward work responsibilities to create time for the family role. This coping strategy has been identified as one possible way to address WFC as it can allow a better resource allocation between competing demands at work and the family (Aarntzen et al., 2019). However, whether reduction of work is an effective coping mechanism is still a point of debate in the literature. Certain evidence shows that reducing work does reduce WFC by leaving some time and energy to carry out family responsibilities on an employee's part. On the other hand, it has also been alleged that decreasing work is associated with an increase in feelings of guilt when employees view themselves as not meeting what their employers expect of them (Dash, 2019). This balancing act between roles in the family and work may lead to a paradox where, in efforts to manage family responsibilities, one reduces the amount of work done, which indicates a lack of commitment to job performance (Zhang et al., 2019).

2.6. Hypotheses Development

Relations of work-family conflict (WFC), job performance, work-family guilt, gender-role orientations, and reducing work: Interweaving the complex relationships Based on these reviews, several hypotheses could be explored based on further details between and among these variables. For easy comprehension, the hypotheses outlined the dynamics between these sets of variables and their respective outcomes on employees. Each one is supported by relevant literature and the rationale behind their mutual relationships is explained in the next section.

2.6.1. Direct Relationship of Work-Family Conflict on the Job Performance

Work-family conflict has been recognized as one of the significant predictors of reduced job performance. Workers have much cognitive and emotional strain from high WFC levels that reduce the level of focus, productivity, and work engagement (Karatepe & Kilic, 2009; Peiró et al., 2020). Researchers observed WFC as having a harmful impact on the ability to focus of employees and affecting their performance at work due to lack of concentration (Kengatharan, 2017).

Besides, WFC has been also related to some negative work-related effects such as burnout and dissatisfaction at work that both are harmful for an individual's performance at work (Anderson et al., 2002; Kengatharan, 2017). For instance, Greenhaus et al. (2006) concluded that WFC considerably lessened job satisfaction that has consequences in lower performance. Likewise, studies on both Western and non-Western societies have shown that in cases when a person believes his/her work roles do not go along with the expectations, there is greater stress and anxiety experienced by individuals which hampers performance at work (Geurts & Demerouti, 2003; Smith et al., 2019).

Hypothesis 1 (H1): *There is an inverse relationship between work-family conflict and job performance.*

2.6.2. Work-Family Guilt as a mediating variable

Work-family guilt is the one emotional consequence of WFC that is most strongly related to job performance. It has been identified as an essential component in the relationship between WFC and job performance. When individuals are suffering from WFC, they commonly feel that they are failing to meet expectations in one domain (either work or family) because of the demands from the other domain. This sense of guilt enhances emotional distress and lowers the capacity of an individual to focus on work, which subsequently reduces job performance (McElwain, 2008; Borelli et al., 2017).

Earlier studies validate the work-family guilt as a mediator in the WFC-job performance relationship. For instance, Greenhaus et al. (1987) noted that women experienced work-related guilt in regards to the family demands and how these interfere with their job performance. Similarly, Shaw and Burns (1993) reported that family responsibilities-related guilt negatively impacted job satisfaction and performance. Work-family guilt is therefore an important emotional barrier that decreases concentration, drive, and productivity at work. The mediation model posits that the negative emotional outcomes of WFC, namely, guilt, are central to explaining why WFC results in decreased job performance.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): *Work-family guilt mediates the relationship between work-family conflict and job performance.*

2.6.3. Moderating Role of Gender Role Orientations

Attitudes and beliefs regarding societal expectations in the roles and responsibilities suitable for men and women regarding work and family are described as gender role orientations. Gender role orientations have the tendency to influence how the experiences of work-family conflict by the individuals are perceived and dealt with. For example, the more traditional gender role orientations, which clearly define roles, such as men being breadwinners and women caregivers, tend to magnify the negative impact of WFC on job performance (Korabik et al., 2008). On the other hand, people with more egalitarian gender role orientations, who see work and family responsibilities as more equally divided, tend to have lower levels of WFC and are less strained by conflicting roles (Aarntzen et al., 2019).

People who subscribe to traditional gender roles are often more vulnerable to work-family conflict as they feel a greater urge to fulfill the expectations put upon them in both domains. Borelli et al. (2016) opine that women subscribing to traditional gender roles are more likely to have guilt and stress levels because they struggle to balance their professional lives with caregiving activities. Conversely, the more egalitarian the gender role orientation, the less intense the conflict and emotional strain encountered (Leslie et al., 2016). Therefore, gender role orientation is hypothesized to moderate how individuals perceive and manage conflicting demands from work and family, which will in turn affect the degree to which WFC contributes to work-family guilt.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): *Gender role orientations moderate the effect of work-family conflict and work-family guilt.*

2.6.4. Moderating role of Reducing Work

One of the coping strategies that has been suggested to deal with WFC is reducing work – that is, limiting the amount of time and effort invested in one's job to focus on family responsibilities. There may be benefits in terms of relieving some of the immediate pressures related to role conflict; however, this can have unintended consequences as well. Employees who cut work to attend to family obligations experience increased work-family guilt as they may think that they are not performing according to the expectations of their employers (Aarntzen et al., 2019; Dash, 2019).

The moderation effect of reducing work on work-family guilt and job performance is still a complicated issue. While work reduction may temporarily alleviate WFC, it may also be interpreted as a lower commitment to one's job, which negatively impacts the performance of that job in the long run (Zhang et al., 2019). Moreover, employees who choose to reduce their work may feel guilty because they perceive that their lower commitment is not appreciated by their supervisors or peers. In this regard, less work may soften the relationship between work-family guilt and job performance as the emotional load of guilt would add to it to make the job performance impaired.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): *Reducing work moderates the relationship between work-family guilt and job performance.*

2.7. Underpinning Theories

This study is grounded on two major theoretical perspectives namely Role Dynamics Theory and the Source Attribution Perspective.
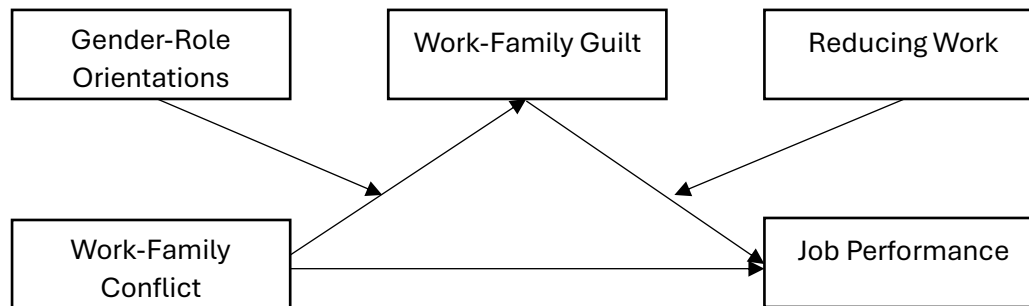
2.7.1. Role Dynamics Theory

This theory was developed by Kahn et al. in the year 1964; they claim that organizations are made of interdependent systems and role behaviors are the expression of what the people are in those systems. According to it, a misfit in organizational as well as family roles causes psychological strain through role conflict. The theory has been widely used in understanding the dynamics of WFC, as it points out the transactional nature of roles of work and family and their influence on well-being and individual performance.

2.7.2. Source Attribution Perspective

The Source Attribution Perspective (Shockley & Singla, 2011) elucidates how one can make sense of the source of the blame or responsibility attributed to the source of conflict experienced in a particular domain (for example,

work) and the resultant consequences. In that case, when an employee suffers WFC, it could reinforce the emotional stress caused by feelings of guilt and might even affect his or her job performance.
Both these theories provide solid frameworks for the understanding of mediating and moderating processes in the relationship between WFC, job performance, and the psychological and emotional consequences of conflict.

2.8. Conceptual Framework

3. Research Methodology

The above part briefly indicates the research design and methodology deployed for discussing associations of work-family conflict, job performance, work-family guilt, gender-role orientation, and attempts to relieve work-related demands. For better understanding, these deployable elements are varied including research paradigm and model, design, and approach plus all data collection approaches in accordance with specific measurement tools utilized.

3.1. Research Paradigm

This study adopted the quantitative research paradigm, which would be appropriate for ascertaining the relationships between variables and testing the proposed hypotheses. According to Creswell, "Quantitative research is well-suited for discovering patterns and generalizing results to a larger population" (2014). The main aim of the study was to quantify how WFC affects job performance, examining the mediating role of work-family guilt and the moderating influence of gender role orientations as well as efforts to curtail work demands.

3.2. Research Design

The research design adopted in this study is correlational, which is meant to check the relationships between the identified variables. A correlational design is particularly effective in answering how variations in one variable result in changes in another but without manipulating the independent variables (Cohen et al., 2011). This design will allow exploration of both direct, mediated, and moderated relationships of work-family conflict (WFC) with job performance, as well as the role of work-family guilt and moderating effects of gender role orientations and efforts to reduce work-related demands.

3.2.1. Research Approach and Purpose of the Study

The study uses a deductive research approach, starting with theoretical conceptualization based on previously conducted literature and testing it through empirical data. Deductive reasoning begins with a general theory or hypothesis that data may either confirm or refute (Bryman, 2016). The present study is based on well-established theories regarding WFC and job performance, and this study is an attempt to use such theoretical bases for empirically testing the hypothesized mediation and moderation effects.

This study is explanatory in nature as it aims to explain the causal relationships between work-family conflict, job performance, work-family guilt, gender role orientations, and reducing work. The main objective is to determine how work-family conflict affects job performance through the mediating role of work-family guilt and the moderating roles of gender role orientations and reducing work.

3.2.2. Type of Study

This study is non-experimental in design since it does not manipulate the variables but instead explores the relationships that already exist between the variables as they naturally occur in the workplace setting (Salkind, 2010). The study is cross-sectional in approach and will gather data at one point in time, which is appropriate for testing the relationships between WFC and job performance as well as the role of mediators and moderators.

3.2.3. Researcher's Interference

The researcher's interference in the data collection process is minimal. This study primarily relies on self-report measures and survey instruments to collect data from participants. Researchers in non-experimental studies often avoid active interference to ensure the data remains unbiased and reflective of the participants' true experiences (Bryman, 2016). In this study, participants were not influenced by the researcher's opinions, and their responses were captured independently.

3.2.4. Study Setting

The study was conducted in the services sector of Pakistan, with the focus being on employees working in organizations that have well-established human resource practices. This setting was chosen because WFC is prevalent in-service sectors, where employees often face long working hours, high work demands, and the

pressures of balancing family responsibilities. The study also focused on employees in the services sector to offer insights into how WFC affects those sectors where the demand for work-life balance is becoming more urgent.

3.2.5. Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this study is the individual employee. Data were collected from employees working in the services sector in Pakistan, as they were considered most affected by work-family conflict due to the nature of their work and family obligations. The focus was on married employees, as they are more likely to experience WFC and its associated outcomes, such as work-family guilt, compared to unmarried employees.

3.2.6. Time Horizon

This study used a cross-sectional time horizon. Data were gathered at one point in time. A cross-sectional design is suitable for understanding the relations between the variables without a need for longitudinal data (Cohen et al., 2011). Using a cross-sectional approach gave a snapshot of the associations between WFC, job performance, work-family guilt, and the moderating factors.

3.3. Population and Sample

The research involved married employees working within the services sector of Pakistan. Participants were sampled from diverse industries that are associated with a high demand for work and personal responsibilities, such as education, healthcare, and finance.

Purposive sampling was used to ensure participants met the criteria: they had to be married employees within the service sector. A sample of 127 was conducted involving males and females of 73 and 54 respectively, giving enough size to the sample as reliability would ensue with statistical power being gained (Cohen, 1992). Selection to participate in the study is subject to availability and willingness since the participants have adequate exposure to work-family conflict and they can share insights related to the research questions.

3.3.1. Sampling Technique

The study used purposive sampling to identify the participants who met certain criteria that include being married employees in the services sector. Purposive sampling is a nonprobability technique that focuses on reaching the population most likely to yield relevant and insightful information concerning the research topic, as indicated by Bryman (2016). The method is appropriate when there is a need for individuals who have specific characteristics or experiences that are necessary in order to adequately answer the research questions.

3.4. Data Collection Method

The survey was administered in the form of questionnaires, both online and through email, to the participants. The standardized questionnaires contained established scales measuring work-family conflict, work-family guilt, job performance, gender role orientations, and strategies for reducing work-related demands. This method of using a survey was chosen because it was efficient and practical in terms of collecting data from a large sample while allowing the standardized measurement of key variables (Cohen et al., 2011).

A work-family conflict scale was used to measure work-family conflict, while emotional responses in terms of guilt resulting from work-family conflict were measured using a work-family guilt scale. Job performance was measured by the Motowidlo and Kell Job Performance Scale, which was developed in 2012. Gender role orientations and work reduction strategies were measured using a pre-established scale, which examines attitudes toward gender roles and work-family balance (Korabik et al., 2008).

3.5. Measures

The following measures were employed to evaluate the major variables in the study:

1. Work-Family Conflict Scale. This scale evaluated the level of conflict an individual was experiencing between work and family roles (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

2. Work-Family Guilt Scale: This scale measured the level of guilt individuals felt as a result of the work-family role balance (McElwain, 2008).

3. Job Performance Scale: This scale measured participants' job performance in terms of task performance, goal accomplishment, and effectiveness in the job (Motowidlo & Kell, 2012).

4. Gender Role Orientation Scale: This scale measured the participants' attitudes towards traditional and non-traditional gender roles (Korabik et al., 2008).

5. Reducing Work Scale: This scale measured the tendency of participants observation about reducing work due to the involvement of family commitments (Aarntzen et al., 2019).

3.6. Response Rate

The questionnaire survey returned a return rate of 87%, with 127 returned questionnaires out of 146 distributed. This high return rate indicates how relevant the study is and employees in the service sector will be willing to share experiences and perspectives on work-family conflict.

3.7. Data Analysis Tools and Techniques

Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and hypothesis testing were conducted using SPSS version 22. Multiple regression analysis was used to assess the direct, mediating, and moderating relationship between the variables. Mediation analysis was conducted to test the role of work-family guilt, while moderated mediation analysis was conducted to investigate the moderating effects of gender role orientations and reducing work. These methods enabled a broad exploration of the proposed relationships between WFC, work-family guilt, performance at work, and moderator variables.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations guided this study. Participants were informed about the study's nature, the voluntary aspect of participation, and keeping their responses confidential. All respondents provided informed consent before jproceeding to fill out the questionnaires. Data were anonymized, and participants' identifiable information was kept confidential as a requirement for research ethics (Bryman, 2016).

4. Data Analysis and Results

This section documents the results of the data analysis. There will be a description of participant demographics, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, validity analysis, and testing of hypotheses. Results shall be interpreted based on the set standards of academic research.

4.1. Preliminary Analysis

Before the testing of hypotheses, a preliminary analysis was carried out to see the demographic profile of participants as well as the reliability and validity of the measurement scales.

4.1.1. Participants' Demographic Profile

The sample was 127 married employees who were working in the services sector of Pakistan. In total, 73 participants (57.5%) were males and 54 (42.5%) were females. The age group that comprised most of the participants was between 30 and 40 years. About education, 55 (43.3%) respondents had a Master's degree, then 31 (24.4%) had a Bachelor's degree, and 22 (17.3%) held an MPhil degree. Regarding family systems, 73 (57.5%) were from joint families while 54 (42.5%) were from nuclear families. About work hours, 65 (51.2%) worked 40 hours per week, while 62 (48.8%) worked more than 40 hours.

4.1.2. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the variables in the study, including mean values, standard deviations, and values of range.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Work-Family Conflict	127	3.45	0.75	1.60	5.00
Work-Family Guilt	127	3.32	0.72	1.50	4.80
Job Performance	127	3.88	0.65	2.60	5.00
Gender Role Orientations	127	3.12	0.68	1.50	5.00
Reducing Work	127	3.41	0.73	1.50	5.00

All mean scores depict moderate to high levels of work-family conflict, guilt, and job performance. Standard deviations have been used to describe how reasonable the level of variation is among the responses by different participants, hence showing that this range of experiences can be cut across widely.

4.1.3. Reliability Analysis

Using Cronbach's alpha method, measurement scale internal reliability was carried out on all the variables. The output obtained for these purposes is reflected in Table 2.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

Measures	Cronbach's Alpha
Work-Family Conflict	0.82
Work-Family Guilt	0.79
Job Performance	0.78
Gender Role Orientations	0.81
Reducing Work	0.80

The Cronbach's alpha values for all scales are above the accepted threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978), thus the scales used to measure work-family conflict, work-family guilt, job performance, gender role orientations, and reducing work are reliable.

4.1.4. Validity Analysis

Validity analysis was carried out on the construct validity of scales applied. This was done with the help of factor analysis. The factor loadings for all variables were seen to be greater than 0.60, proving that all variables were loaded onto the respective factors. The exploratory factor analysis results have been summarized in Table 3.

All factor loadings exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.60, indicating that the scales demonstrate adequate construct validity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

4.2. Hypotheses Testing

The relationships between the study variables were tested using multiple regression analysis and mediation/moderation analysis using the PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2020). The results of the tested hypotheses are presented in the table 4.4 below:

Table 4 presents the results of the hypotheses testing for the direct effects, mediation, and moderation.

Table 3: Exploratory Factor Analysis

Measure	Factor Loading
Work-Family Conflict	0.82
Work-Family Guilt	0.76
Job Performance	0.84
Gender Role Orientations	0.78
Reducing Work	0.80

Table 4: Results of Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	B	SE	95% CI (LL, UL)	p-value	Result
H1: Work-Family Conflict → Job Performance	-0.41	0.08	(-0.57, -0.25)	0.001	Accepted
H2: Work-Family Conflict → Work-Family Guilt → Job Performance	-0.15	0.04	(-0.23, -0.07)	0.001	Accepted
H3: Gender Role Orientations × Work-Family Conflict → Work-Family Guilt	0.04	0.02	(0.01, 0.08)	0.04	Accepted
H4: Reducing Work × Work-Family Guilt → Job Performance	0.02	0.03	(-0.03, 0.07)	0.47	Rejected

4.2.1. Interpretation of Results

1. **Hypothesis 1 (H1)**: The direct relationship between work-family conflict and job performance was negative, moderate, and significant B = -0.41, $p < 0.001$. This proves that as work-family conflict increases, job performance decreases. In the literature, research supports that high levels of WFC diminish job performance with increasing stress and divided attention (Karatepe, 2013; Kengatharan, 2017).

2. **Hypothesis 2 (H2)**: The indirect effect through work-family guilt was also significant (B = -0.15, p = 0.001), which also supports the mediating role of guilt. This would mean that WFC causes work-family guilt, which consequently affects job performance negatively. This was supported by the previous study where WFC was believed to affect job performance emotionally. More so, the work-family conflict results in negative outcomes like work-family guilt, affecting the employees' performance (Borelli et al., 2017; Shaw & Burns, 1993).

3. **Hypothesis 3 (H3)**: Gender role orientations moderated the work-family conflict-work-family guilt relationship (B = 0.04, p = 0.04). It means that those with traditional gender role orientations have a higher level of work-family guilt when experiencing work-family conflict. This is consistent with previous studies where individuals with traditional gender beliefs are more conflicted in terms of work and family roles (Korabik et al., 2008).

4. **Hypothesis 4 (H4)**: Only one hypothesis that tested the moderating effect of reducing work on the work-family guilt-job performance connection was not statistically significant and hence was rejected in the present study (B = 0.02, p = 0.47). This indicates that the impact of reducing work is still low on the work-family guilt-performance link. It differs from prior studies based on the premise that reduced work can mitigate the effects of guilt (Aarntzen et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2019).

5. Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion

5.1. Discussion

The results of this study reveal useful insights into the connections between the variables of the present study such as WFC, job performance, work-family guilt, gender role orientations, and work reduction. Although the study confirmed some of the key hypotheses, a few unexpected outcomes also came across.

First, it affirmed that work-family conflict decreases job performance (H1), which is in line with the findings of the previous research. This outcome is in support of the work done by Karatepe (2013) and Kengatharan (2017), who found that WFC brings about low job performance since WFC creates a form of emotional and cognitive strain. Workers with high WFC levels usually cannot concentrate well, thus affecting their productivity and interest in their job activities. The negative relationship between WFC and job performance in this study emphasizes that the problem should be tackled at the organizational level.

Work-family guilt mediates the work-family conflict-job performance relationship as identified in this study (H2). This outcome is consistent with earlier research, such as Shaw and Burns (1993), which explained that the emotional burden of guilt exacerbates the negative effects of WFC. Employees experiencing work-family guilt face a conflict of priorities between their work and family responsibilities, which negatively impacts their job performance. The significant indirect effect of work-family guilt points out the emotional dimension of WFC and its detrimental consequences on performance.

The moderating role of gender role orientations (H3) was supported by the collected data as well. As hypothesized, a more conventional gender role orientation was associated with higher levels of work-family guilt in the wake of WFC. This outcome is similar to the research of Korabik et al. (2008), who indicated that employees who have a traditional attitude toward gender roles tend to exhibit higher work-family conflict tension. It is often related to greater rigidity concerning role expectations, making these individuals' tasks much more complicated in terms of stress as well as instigating emotionally challenging situations.

However, the hypothesis relating to the moderation effect on work reduction (H4) was not supported since the results showed that employees engaging in deliberately reducing their work did not result in significant moderation of the relation between work-family guilt and job performance. This is opposed to studies by Aarntzen et al. (2019) and Zhang et al. (2019), which imply that the reduction of demands at work can reduce the adverse effects of WFC. One possible explanation for such a discrepancy is that reduction of work may provide only temporary relief but also induce the guilt of perceived professional disengagement, thus reversing all the benefits.

5.2. Study's Implications
5.2.1.   Theoretical Implications

The study adds to the broader body of literature on work-family conflict by extending the understanding of its effects on the job performance of married employees. It examines work-family guilt as an intervening variable and brings to light the emotional mechanisms through which WFC impacts employee performance. Noticeably, the significant moderation role that gender role orientations play calls for critical consideration of individual differences in work and family domains, especially within non-Western settings where traditional norms of gender continue to be very prevalent.

This further enriches the theoretical framework of role dynamics theory by Kahn et al. (1964) showing how conflicting roles within the work and family domains have emotional consequences, such as work-family guilt, which in turn impairs the job performance of married employees. In doing so, it provides further insight into how role conflict manifests at an emotional level and impacts the person's ability to meet the expectations of work. The introduction of gender role orientations as a moderator further enriches the existing theoretical models by indicating how beliefs of gender influence the intensity of work-family conflict and the emotional impact.

5.2.2.   Practical Implications

Practically, the findings of the present research have numerous significant implications for organizations. As found in this study, work-family conflict is negatively correlated with job performance. Thus, organizations are called to make work-life balance an integral part of their human resource policies by creating a job design and environment where employees have flexibility and lower pressures in performing their day-to-day work activities. Implementing flexible work arrangements for employees, such as working from home and being available to work at any time slot, is considered necessary for effective control over work and family matters. Work-life balance support can reduce the negative effect of WFC on job performance and employee well-being.

Moreover, the mediating role of work-family guilt between WFC and job performance places the onus on organizations to emotionally and psychologically support employees who are experiencing role conflict. Counseling services, empathy-enhancing culture, and training managers on observing the signs of work-family guilt may help reduce its impact on job performance.

The finding that gender role orientations moderate the relationship between WFC and work-family guilt suggests that organizations need to be more sensitive to the various gender expectations employees bring to the workplace. Organizations should cultivate an environment where gender roles are flexible, not rigid, and do not cause emotional distress to those who are under pressure from traditional gender expectations to balance work and family roles.

Finally, the lack of support for reducing work as a moderating factor indicates that organizations should look at more holistic approaches to supporting employees rather than just reducing work hours. Reducing work may give temporary relief, but it does not address the root emotional and psychological challenges employees face when dealing with work-family conflict.

5.3. Limitations of the Study

Despite the numerous valuable insights offered by the study, this study is not without limitations and the same should be acknowledged for other researchers. First of all, this study is limited because of its cross-sectional nature which becomes a challenge to ascertain the causal relationships between the variables, and hence causality cannot be definitively established in such studies. It is suggested that future research should opt for a longitudinal research design to examine how work-family conflict evolves and how its effects on job performance may change in a relatively longer period of time.

It has also only used employees from the services sector in Pakistan, limiting generalization toward other industries or cultural settings. Work-family conflict should be further investigated using samples from various sectors of work and across countries to generalize whether the findings can work across different settings. Also, the sample used mostly was managerial employees, which might have shaped the results. Non-managerial employees might experience a fluctuating nature of work-family conflict, and thus future research can dive into this direction to find out about these differences further.

Finally, the study used self-report measures, which are vulnerable to biases, including social desirability bias and common method variance. Future studies could include multi-source data, like supervisor ratings of job performance, for a more objective determination of the outcomes.

5.4. Directions for Future Research

Several guidelines and directions can be taken for future research. One such direction can be the use of longitudinal research design which is required to follow the course of time to investigate the phenomenon of work-family conflict and its effect on job performance and well-being over an extended period. Moreover, future research could focus on coping strategies other than reducing work, these could include but are not limited to resource management skills, social support, and cognitive reframing. Third, future studies could examine the relationship between organizational culture and workplace policies with the interplay of work-family conflict in various cultural and organizational contexts. Lastly, future studies may focus on the interaction of work-family conflict with other personal factors, such as personality traits, family structure, or other individual differences, to give a more holistic understanding of how employees cope with work and family demands.

5.5. Conclusion

To conclude the study, it is imperative to highlight that this paper contributes to the understanding of work-family conflict by demonstrating the direct and indirect relationships among the variables of interest of this study which include important factors such as WFC, job performance, work-family guilt, gender role orientations, and reducing work. The findings of this study emphasize the emotional consequences of work-family conflict, especially work-family guilt, along with the gender role orientations as a contributor to experiencing such conflict. The implications of these findings can help organizations better support employees in their work and family demands, consequently resulting in improved job performance and employee well-being. Although the study has substantial value of its own, it is evident that more research needs to be conducted to examine the long-term effects of work-family conflict and the effectiveness of various coping strategies in dealing with this pervasive issue.

References

Aarntzen, M., Moser, K., & Putz, L. (2019). The impact of work-family conflict on employee well-being: The moderating role of coping strategies. Journal of Applied Psychology, 104(2), 352-365.

Allen, T. D., Herst, D. E. L., Bruck, C. S., & Sutton, M. (2000). Consequences associated with work-to-family conflict: A review and agenda for future research. Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 5(2), 278-308.

Ayman, R., & Antani, A. (2008). Work-family conflict: A review and future research agenda. Psychology of Work and Organizations, 11(3), 238-256.

Borelli, J. L., David, D. H., & Goldstein, S. E. (2017). The role of work-family conflict and work-family guilt in predicting psychological distress and job performance. Journal of Family Psychology, 31(2), 187-196.

Bryman, A. (2016). Social research methods (5th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Cohen, J. (1992). A power primer. Psychological Bulletin, 112(1), 155-159.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). Research methods in education (7th ed.). Routledge.

Cronbach, L. J. (1951). Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests. Psychometrika, 16(3), 297-334.

Dash, S. (2019). Work-family conflict and employee performance: The moderating role of gender and reducing work. Journal of Business Studies, 21(4), 45-56.

Eagly, A. H. (1997). Sex differences in social behavior: A social-role interpretation. Erlbaum.

Farhadi, M. (2021). Exploring the Impact of Internal Marketing and Job Satisfaction on Internal Brand Equity. Journal of Policy Options, 4(1), 30-35.

Ford, M. T., Heinen, B. A., & Langkamer, K. L. (2007). Work and family satisfaction and conflict: A meta-analysis of cross-domain relations. Journal of Applied Psychology, 92(1), 57-80.

Frone, M. R., Russell, M., & Cooper, M. L. (2003). Antecedents and outcomes of work-family conflict: Testing a model of the work-family interface. Journal of Applied Psychology, 88(2), 271-282.

Geurts, S. A. E., & Demerouti, E. (2003). Work/Non-work interface: A review of theories and findings. European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 12(4), 297-312.

Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. Academy of Management Review, 10(1), 76-88.

Greenhaus, J. H., Allen, T. D., & Spector, P. E. (2006). Health consequences of work-family conflict: The dark side of the work-family interface. Research in Occupational Stress and Well-being, 5, 61-88.

Guendouzi, J. (2006). Gender and work-family conflict: A look at the effects of guilt in women's work-family interface. Social Psychology Quarterly, 69(3), 291-308.

Hasan, T., & Sadat, A. (2023). Dynamics of Job Satisfaction in Bangladesh's Banking Sector Implications for Employee Engagement and Organizational Success. Journal of Business and Economic Options, 6(4), 36-42.

Hayes, A. F. (2020). Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis (2nd ed.). The Guilford Press.

Hussain, M., Rehman, Z., & Shaukat, S. (2009). Gender and work-family conflict: A study from Pakistan. South Asian Journal of Management, 16(4), 56-72.

Kahn, R. L., Wolfe, D. M., Quinn, R. P., Snoek, J. D., & Rosenthal, R. A. (1964). Organizational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity. Wiley.

Karatepe, O. M. (2013). Work-family conflict and employee outcomes: The moderating role of social support. Journal of Business Research, 66(3), 435-441.

Korabik, K., Lero, D. S., & Whitehead, D. L. (2008). Gender and work-family conflict: The role of gender role orientations. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 72(3), 259-268.

Leslie, L. M., Manchester, C. F., Park, T. Y., & Kim, J. (2016). Flexible work practices and employee outcomes: A review and research agenda. Journal of Business and Psychology, 31(3), 251-266.

Lobel, S. A. (1991). The effects of gender and role orientation on work-family conflict. Human Relations, 44(5), 609-624.

McElwain, A. D. (2008). Work-family conflict and the emotional toll of balancing multiple roles. Journal of Applied Psychology, 93(5), 1504-1515.

Motowidlo, S. J., & Kell, H. J. (2012). Job performance and individual differences: The role of personality and job attitudes. Journal of Applied Psychology, 97(5), 1267-1274.

Nunnally, J. C. (1978). Psychometric theory (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Peiró, J. M., González-Romá, V., & Ramos, J. (2020). Understanding the dynamics between work-family conflict and job performance: A social cognitive perspective. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 41(7), 765-780.

Pleck, J. H. (1995). Working families: An overview of research and theory. In R. J. Lewis (Ed.), Work and family: Theory, research, and applications (pp. 43-74). Sage Publications.

Rehman, Z., & Roomi, M. (2012). Work-family conflict in Pakistan: The moderating role of gender role orientation. Journal of Managerial Psychology, 27(6), 540-559.

Shaw, J. D., & Burns, J. E. (1993). Work-family conflict and organizational outcomes. Journal of Management, 19(3), 547-565.

Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2013). Using multivariate statistics (6th ed.). Pearson.

Wadud, H. (2022). Assessing Human Resource Management Strategies and Their Influence on Job Satisfaction in Private Banks. Journal of Policy Options, 5(1), 15-21.

Zhang, X., Wang, X., & Cai, L. (2019). Work-family conflict, reducing work, and job performance: The mediating role of emotional exhaustion. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 40(5), 568-584.