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Article

# Linking Work-Family Conflict (WFC) and Talent Management: Insights from a Developing Country

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**Abstract:** Considering the profound societal change taking place in several developing countries, the objective of this paper is to reflect on work-family conflict (WFC) both as a concept and a social phenomenon. Given that WFC is a concept rooted in academic debate focusing on developments in Western, largely individualistic, societies, this paper reconsiders WFC's value added as applied in a context of a collectivist society in a developing country. The objective of this paper is thus threefold, i.e., (i) to assess WFC's applicability in a context of a collectivist society in a developing country, where the position and role of women gradually changes; (ii) to develop a culturally adjusted/sensitive scale to measure the scope of WFC in Pakistan, whereby the latter is treated here as a case study; and (iii) to reflect on the possibility of devising a set of good practices that would allow a smooth inclusion of women in the formal workforce, while at the same time mitigating the scope and scale of WFC. The value added of this paper stems from these three objectives.

**Keywords:** work family conflict; talent management; sustainability; best practice; developing country; modernization; women in society; women in formal workforce; collectivist societies; Pakistan

## 1. Introduction

Work-family conflict (WFC) is a concept well embedded in the academic literature [1–5]. In the burgeoning body of research on WFC, diverse facets of the challenge have been explored [6–8]. Essentially, the concept, and so the debate, have been born out of and revolve around the question of how to manage the increasingly demanding career and family life. Originating in academic debates in the Anglo-Saxon world, the WFC literature, to a great extent, mirrors developments specific to individualistic societies in the developed world. That is, traditionally, the WFC debate used to be concerned with the implications of progressive inclusion of women in the workforce for family life. For this reason, implicitly, especially early works on WFC exhibit a certain positive gender-bias, i.e., women, rather than men, and the strain women, rather than men, endure were at the center of researchers' attention. Importantly, over the years, a number of factors such as increasing number of dual career couples and the resultant decrease in single income families, the rise in single-parent households, as well as gradual decoupling of wage from gender rendered it necessary that new angles and new insights were added to the WFC debate. Indeed, the most recent works on WFC uphold issues as diverse as gender-equality, strain that men endure, and others, including questions of WFC in connection to the LGBT communities [9,10].

The value added and the application of research exploring diverse facets of WFC is multifold [11–13]. This paper looks specifically at WFC in connection to human resource management and, in this context, in connection to talent management in the workplace. Knowledge and understanding of WFC and the specificity of the multiple challenges it signifies are necessary for efficient talent management at a company/organization level. Research suggests that several tools, including flexible working time and place, task-oriented appraisal to mention such a few [14–17], prove efficient in mitigating WFC. Nevertheless, all too frequently employers tend to ignore these insights. This in turn affects productivity, efficiency, and as a result, sustainability of a given organization/business. To add a twist to this approach, this paper applies WFC in a less obvious context, i.e., that of a collectivist developing country undergoing a process of profound societal change that includes gradual inclusion of women in formal workforce. The objective here is (i) to assess WFC's applicability in a context of a collectivist society in a developing country, where the position and role of women gradually changes; (ii) to develop a culturally adjusted/sensitive scale to measure the scope of WFC in Pakistan, whereby the latter is treated as a case study; and (iii) to reflect on the possibility of devising a set of good practices that would allow a smooth inclusion of women in the workforce, while at the same time mitigating the scope and scale of WFC.

The argument in this paper is structured as follows. First, a structured literature review is conducted to make a case for the need of a more nuanced culturally sensitive approach to WFC. In what follows, by focusing on the case of Pakistan, a culturally adjusted, i.e., taking into account the collectivist nature of the society and its stage of development, scale to measure WFC is devised. It is then applied through surveys and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the survey outcomes follows. Discussion and recommendations complete the argument. The key message that this paper conveys is that the two-pronged process of empowering women and inducting them in the formal workforce has a price [18,19]. WFC is one of them. As in this respect, developing countries follow the path curved by others, it is important to use the opportunity to have everyone involved in the process of societal transition for the sake of mitigating the scale and scope of WFC as experienced by women, and increasingly also by other societal groups.

## 2. Literature Review: Work Family Conflict and Its Diverse Facets

Work, family and parenting hold the utmost psychological importance in one's life [20]. With the passage of time and the changing demographic in the workforce, the notion of work-family conflict (WFC) established itself as one of key topics of interest for researchers, experts and policy makers. This is due to the significant increase in the number of women in the labor force over the past decades [21]. A growing number of studies report that women find it extremely challenging to deal with the demands of both work and family life. As a result, WFC is on the rise. In the past, work and family were considered unrelated entities [22], however, the diverse number of empirical researches negated the notion as just a myth [23,24]. Work and family are two essential spheres of one's life, and they cannot be separated. Work is not only an essential source of income but also, ideally, a source of positive stimuli for one's self-esteem, empowerment, etc. Family, ideally, should be the source of love, affection, and contentment. Ideally, therefore, keeping work and family simultaneously in balance will have positive effects on individuals' well-being [25]. Reality suggests, however, that it is increasingly difficult for individuals/employees to maintain harmony between their respective family roles and professional responsibilities. Hence, the propensity of conflict between these two increases [26,27], which results in WFC.

In the academic debate on the issue, the theoretical backdrop used to explain the linkages between work and family has been the derived from role scarcity model [28] and role theory [29]. Both explicitly elucidate the relationship between work and family. The scarcity hypothesis posits that human energy resource is fixed and allocating resources to work and family simultaneously [28] produces negative affect [30], which undermines human health. Similarly, role theory [29] asserts that individuals in their life are confronted with multiple incompatible roles, and each role holds specific requirements

and expectations which might unavoidably conflict in some way. This sort of conflict has been called inter-role conflict.

On the basis of scarcity theory and inter-role theory, researchers defined WFC as “a form of multiple conflicts in which the role pressures of the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respects” [31]. To put it differently, WFC occurs when demands between the work and family roles are mismatched with each other and affect one’s ability to deal with both roles. Elaborating further on WFC phenomena, researchers [31] proposed three types of pressures contribute to WFC: time, strain, and behavior-based pressures. Time-based pressure occurs in proportion to number of hours or time allocated in one role, making it arduous to allocate time to another role. Strain-based pressure occurs when strain resulting from one role negatively interferes in another role, e.g., being cranky and short tempered at home because of overload, maltreatment or bullying at workplace [15]. Behavior-based pressure occurs due to incompatibility of suitable or specific behavior required in work and family domains (e.g., being authoritative or strict at work may assist getting work done, but being strict at home may create tension at home).

Balancing work–family demands has become an increasingly exigent task for working personnel around the globe [16]. Work to family interference (WIF) factors tend to be related with job type, job involvement, job flexibility, work time commitment [17], inflexible working hours or schedules [32], overtime [33], and workplace bullying [34] considered as responsible of causing occupational stress among the workers [35]. A research conducted with working women reported that women tend to have a poor relationship with their spouses as a result of inflexible work schedule [36] and unfinished work [37]. On the other side of the coin, family to work interference factors involve the cultural role of parenting [38] predicted by the presence of younger children [39] or having more children [40], elderly care [41] marital tension or spending more time on household chores [42] unavailability of child care [43] family system [44] and spousal support [45] play an important role in family to work interference (FIW).

### 3. Is the WFC Still Relevant If Applied to the Case of Pakistan?

The objective of this section is to reflect on WFC and its applicability in the context of Pakistan. The latter is treated here as a case-study in ‘Eastern’ collectivist society, a developing country undergoing a process of profound societal change. Considering the fact that the WFC was coined to allow examination of processes and developments specific to Western, individualistic societies in developed world, the question is to what extent and how WFC can be applied in context of Pakistan.

Social and economic structure of the eastern society is quite complex as compared to Western societies [46]. Powell et al. [16] acknowledged that work family literature lacks insights into societal and cultural factors shaping individuals’ experiences at the work-family interface. According to Hofstede [47] culture refers to “the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another”. With strong family orientation and deeply rooted traditional family relations, Pakistani culture considered family as a nucleus and is considered as a source of contentment and peace in life. However, with the passage of time and the changing economy in terms of increasing inflation, people started realizing the need to share financial responsibilities by the participation of women in the workforce. However, changing trends in the work force did not bring much change to Pakistani women’s lives. That is, they still face culturally determined expectations and are expected to fulfill the traditional role of homemaker [48]. Pakistani women are still considered to be the only ones responsible for fulfilling the demands of children and family. In these circumstances, conflicts arise when the family, and especially the spouse, are not ready to cooperate in view of easing the burden endowed on women. This lack of readiness to support women results in strain among working women [46]. Therefore, it is important to address culturally related variables responsible for WFC. Moreover, literature [49] has suggested the fourth dimension of WFC, namely, psychologically based WFC. The latter depicts a situation of conflict that results from psychological preoccupation in one role domain, which then interferes with the ability to perform a role in another domain. Examples include being preoccupied or mentally distracted due to work responsibilities

and thus underperforming at home, or conversely, being stressed or thinking about a sick child, thus undermining performance at work.

The nature of demands encountered in the work and family domains as well as the resources available in these domains in collectivistic cultures may be different from those in individualistic cultures. Hofstede et al. [50] noted that in collectivistic societies, individuals are expected to maintain harmonious relationships with extended family members. In Pakistan, there is a commitment to maintaining a long-term relationship to their extended families [51]. As such, family obligations often extend beyond responsibilities toward one's own children and spouse; individuals often have financial and emotional obligations towards extended family relations [16]. Thus, extended family obligations may divert time and energy resources of employed parents in collectivistic societies. Literature suggests [52,53] that uneven or disproportionate domestic family duties and responsibilities are important factors that make it difficult for women to combine all their domestic responsibilities with their work life. A study conducted with Pakistani women reported that pressure from the employers and home roles put women under the burden of dual responsibilities, which resulted in mental, psychological, and emotional stress [54,55]. A study conducted with successful Pakistani professional women reported that participants had to work hard to balance their professional roles with the traditional demands of their culture, specifically their duties as wives and mothers [56,57]. Moreover, a similar study carried out with on Pakistani married female professionals concluded that working hours, inflexible schedule, high work demand, lack of spousal support and high family demands as contributing factor of WFC [58]. Furthermore, working women having younger children faced more distress over family issues and expressed more guilt for not giving proper time to their children, husbands, and family [58]. Moreover, a lack of social support, especially spousal support in the management of household responsibilities, could lead to FWC which further create stress and tension among working women [59].

#### 4. How to Measure WFC in Context of Pakistan? Method and Methodology

Drawing on the discussion presented in the previous sections, this study makes a case for a culturally adjusted WFC sensitive to the specificities of Pakistan, i.e., a collectivist society in a developing country. To this end, in this section an indigenous scale to measure WFC, referred to as Work Family Conflict Strain Scale (WFCSS) is developed. The WFCSS is an indigenous tool designed to capture conflict that arises at the intersection of competing work and family obligations as experienced by married working women in Pakistan. The WFCSS is developed in Urdu language that has the suitable psychometric properties to account for nuanced, culturally-sensitive meanings.

The study consisted of four stages. In stage I, WFCSS items were generated through recommended combined method of inductive and deductive approaches [60]. In stage II, the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on (N = 250) married working women aged ranged 25 to 60 years (M = 40.0, SD = 10.2). Using varimax rotation which yielded five factors (work interference with family, family interference with work, psychological spousal conflict, societal perception strain, and work strain) accounted for 60% of variance. In stage III, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out to endorse the factors emerged through EFA. The CFA sample was consisted of an additional sample of married working women (N = 500) age ranged 25 to 60 years (M = 39.2, SD = 9.64) recruited through purposive sampling from Lahore city (Pakistan). Results of CFA showed a good fit with the data. The alpha coefficient for five factors ranged from 0.80 to 0.90 and 0.93 for the total WFCSS. In stage IV, the convergent (0.71) and discriminant validity (−0.64) was determined with the scores of psychological wellbeing and psychological distress subscales of Mental Health Inventory.

#### 5. The Study and Its Results

##### 5.1. Stage I—Item Generation of Work-Family Conflict Strain Scales (WFCSS) for Pakistani Women

The items were generated using an inductive as well as and deductive approach through relevant literature; five semi structured interviews; and three focus groups with working women, i.e., doctors,

nurses, lecturers, schoolteachers, and bankers. Review of existing scales (see Appendix A) was conducted, and items relevant to Pakistan's culture were highlighted. WFC factors are more or less similar among women globally. However, this study aimed to develop a more culturally sensitive scale. To this end, interviews were conducted and insights from focus groups were collected.

Informal interview protocol was prepared in coordination with the consultation of a psychology lecturer and psychologist to get in-depth, detailed, and comprehensive WFC variables. Semi structured interviews were carried out with five working women selected through purposive sampling strategy, with the age of respondents between 30 and 40 years ( $M = 34$ ,  $SD = 3.4$ ), working in a school, college, hospital or bank to elicit their experiences of WFC. The interviews were conducted in a one to one setting, and they were audiotaped with participant's permission and transcribed later. Detailed probing was done to elicit maximum factors responsible for WFC in our culture. Similarly, three separate focus groups were conducted to reach to many participants at once and to get a rich source of information from working women in different professions. Using purposive sampling, the first focus group was comprised of female teachers ( $N = 3$ ) aged between 30 and 40 years ( $M = 33$ ,  $SD = 1.2$ ) working in the banking sector. The second focus group comprised of four women working in hospital, two doctors and two nurses aged between 25 and 60 years ( $M = 33$ ,  $SD = 3.4$ ). The third focus group was comprised of three working women from the school and university sector aged between 30 and 40 years ( $M = 34$ ,  $SD = 1.0$ ). Participants were encouraged to share their experiences of work family interaction in terms of work, family, and cultural antecedents and how conflict among these affects their health. A prior permission and written consent were taken for audiotaping the discussion; afterwards, that discussion was transcribed, and relevant information was extracted. In order to retain the most appropriate items for scale, 40 statements were grouped together for endorsements from five experts to established content validity.

### 5.1.1. Empirical Validation through Experts

In this step, content validity of WFCSS was established by approaching four experts (two psychologists and two social workers) having at least three years of professional experience. Content validity is the extent to which it is pertinent to construct the instrument [61]. Experts were asked to rate each item in terms of relevance to its construction, clarity, and readability on a 4 point rating scale ranging from 1 = Not relevant to 4 = Most highly relevant with the construct.

Expert rating served as basis to establish the content validity index (CVI) (Table 1). According to research findings, when the number of experts is equal to 5 or less, CVI should be not be less than 1 [62]. In order to calculate each item CVI (I-CVI) index, the rule of thumb is dividing the number of agreements by the total number of experts. The scale Content Validity Index (S-CVI) "Scale CVI = Total Item CVIs/Total No. of items". The WFCSS scale content validity is calculated as follows:  $S-CVI = 0.32/40 = 0.80$ .

**Table 1.** Experts (E) ratings, No. of agreements and I-CVIs for Work Family Conflict Strain Scale (WFCSS) for Pakistani women.

| Sr# | E1 | E2 | E3 | E4 | E5 | # of Agreements | I-CVI |
|-----|----|----|----|----|----|-----------------|-------|
| 1   | 4  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 2   | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 3   | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 4   | 3  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 5   | 4  | 2  | 4  | 3  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 6   | 4  | 4  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 5               | 1     |
| 7   | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 8   | 3  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 9   | 4  | 3  | 3  | 4  | 3  | 5               | 1     |
| 10  | 3  | 4  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 11  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 5               | 1     |

Table 1. Cont.

| Str# | E1 | E2 | E3 | E4 | E5 | # of Agreements | I-CVI |
|------|----|----|----|----|----|-----------------|-------|
| 12   | 3  | 4  | 4  | 3  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 13   | 4  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 3  | 5               | 1     |
| 14   | 3  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 3  | 5               | 1     |
| 15   | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 5               | 1     |
| 16   | 2  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3               | 0.60  |
| 17   | 4  | 4  | 3  | 3  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 18   | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 19   | 4  | 4  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 20   | 3  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 21   | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 22   | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 23   | 4  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4               | 1     |
| 24   | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 25   | 3  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4  | 4               | 1     |
| 26   | 3  | 4  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3               | 1     |
| 27   | 3  | 4  | 4  | 3  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 28   | 4  | 4  | 4  | 3  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 29   | 3  | 4  | 4  | 3  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 30   | 3  | 3  | 3  | 3  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 31   | 4  | 4  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 32   | 4  | 4  | 3  | 3  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 33   | 3  | 3  | 2  | 2  | 3  | 3               | 0.60  |
| 34   | 4  | 3  | 3  | 4  | 4  | 5               | 1     |
| 35   | 3  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 2  | 3               | 0.60  |
| 36   | 3  | 2  | 2  | 3  | 3  | 3               | 0.60  |
| 37   | 3  | 4  | 3  | 3  | 2  | 3               | 0.60  |
| 38   | 2  | 3  | 3  | 2  | 3  | 3               | 0.60  |
| 39   | 3  | 3  | 2  | 2  | 2  | 3               | 0.60  |
| 40   | 4  | 4  | 4  | 3  | 4  | 2               | 0.40  |

Note: I-CVI below 1 is not incorporated for S-CVI.

According to [62,63], acceptable criteria of S-CVI is 0.80 and above. Thus, indigenous WFCSS has acceptable scale content validity. The chosen items were closely scrutinized for their content as well. Suggestions from the participants on wording were incorporated, and rephrasing was done before presenting them in the final version of the questionnaire having 32 items.

### 5.1.2. Pilot Study

In order to determine the clarity and level of difficulty of WFCSS, a pilot study was carried out. Purposive sampling strategy was employed on (N = 30) working women in different professions with ages ranging between 25 and 60 years (M = 34, SD = 7.3). They were encouraged to report any ambiguity in understanding of items. However, none of them reported any ambiguity in terms of understanding the items content, and 32 items were listed for further analysis.

### 5.2. Stage II—Factor Structure, Construct Validity and Internal Consistency of the Scale

In Stage II, factor analysis was followed by a pilot study, which revealed no ambiguity in terms of items understandability and comprehensibility. To establish construct validity of the current scale, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was carried out using Varimax rotation. An independent sample was taken through purposive sampling strategy (N = 250), and sample size was decided according to recommended criteria of at least five participants per item [64]. Sample comprised of working women from different professions (school, universities, hospitals, and banking) aged between 25 and 60 years (M = 40.0, SD = 10.2) The majority of women were from the medical profession (37%) and the school

sector (37%), whereas 22% belonged to higher education and 4% to the banking sector. Women facing challenges such as separation, divorce, and infertility were not included in the sample.

### 5.2.1. Procedure

Permission from concerned authorities (schools, hospitals, banks, and universities) were taken prior to administrating the present protocol. Adequate information regarding the purpose of the study was commutated and written consent was taken from the participants. Furthermore, instructions regarding filling the scale were clearly mentioned in writing as well as verbally. The confidentiality of information was assured, and completion of scale was followed by thanking the participants for their time and cooperation.

### 5.2.2. Results

EFA was run after examining the factor analysis assumptions. The varimax rotation method was used to extract Principal components. Analysis generated 5 mutually inclusive factors showing eigenvalue greater than 1 (see Table 2). All factors were clear, well defined, and selected on the basis of theoretical assumptions along with screen plot, and eigenvalue greater than 1.0. Moreover, significant amount of variance (60%) was accounted for 5 factors. Factor 1 comprised of seven items related to family variables' interference with work domain (responsibilities, children, unpleasant/tension at home); therefore, it was labeled as "family interference with work (FIW)". The items no. 9, 10, 11, 17, 18, 26, and 27 showed loadings on the first factor and explained 38% of the variance (Appendix B). Factor 2 comprised seven items related to work variables that interfere with the family domain (nature, time, responsibilities, etc.), and was therefore labeled as "work interference with family" (WIF). Items no. 1, 2, 3, 4, 19, 20, and 21) loaded on this factor and accounted for 7.65% of variance. Factor 3 comprised of six items (14, 15, 16, 28, 29, and 30) related to spousal conflict over managing work and family responsibilities encounter by working women which cause psychological strain on women (e.g., lack of appreciation, criticism for being an irresponsible wife, etc.) This factor was labeled as "psychological strain due to spouse" (PSS), which accounted for 5.54% of variance. Factor 4 composed of six items (5, 6, 7, 8, 12, and 13) related to societal perception and expectations from working women that cause strain in addition to WFC (e.g., eldercare, expected guests, traditional expectations etc.) Therefore, this factor was labeled "psychological strain due to societal perception strain" (PSSP) and accounted for 5.18% of variance. Factor 5 comprised six items (22, 23, 24, 25, 31, and 32) related to strain caused by work domain (e.g., bringing assignments home, senior attitudes, unequal distribution of work responsibilities, etc.), which cause additional strain on working women. Therefore, the fifth factor was labeled "psychological strain due to work" (PSW) which accounted for 4.38% of variance.

**Table 2.** Factor loading of 32 items of WFCSS (N = 250).

| Item   | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | Item Total Correlation |
|--------|------|------|------|------|------|------------------------|
| WIF1   | -    | 0.74 | 0.20 | -    | 0.10 | 0.30 **                |
| WIF2   | 0.10 | 0.69 | -    | -    | -    | 0.30 **                |
| WIF3   | 0.13 | 0.76 | -    | 0.12 | 0.14 | 0.50 **                |
| WIF4   | 0.12 | 0.56 | 0.48 | -    | 0.33 | 0.70 **                |
| PSSP5  | 0.15 | -    | 0.19 | 0.68 | -    | 0.51 **                |
| PSSP6  | 0.10 | -    | -    | 0.73 | 0.17 | 0.80 **                |
| PSSP7  | -    | -    | 0.12 | 0.76 | -    | 0.40 **                |
| PSSP8  | -    | -    | 0.12 | 0.72 | 0.12 | 0.41 **                |
| FIW9   | 0.66 | 0.26 | 0.16 | 0.13 | 0.33 | 0.52 **                |
| FIW10  | 0.61 | -    | 0.25 | 0.15 | 0.10 | 0.32 **                |
| FIW11  | 0.65 | -    | 0.14 | 0.13 | 0.20 | 0.61 **                |
| PSSP12 | -    | 0.16 | -    | 0.73 | -    | 0.60 **                |
| PSSP13 | -    | 0.13 | 0.13 | 0.69 | -    | 0.58 **                |
| PSS14  | 0.25 | 0.22 | 0.69 | 0.11 | -    | 0.80 **                |



Table 2. Cont.

| Item  | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5    | Item Total Correlation |
|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------------------------|
| PSS15 | -    | 0.19 | 0.77 | 0.25 | 0.20 | 0.51 **                |
| PSS16 | 0.17 | -    | 0.74 | 0.16 | 0.17 | 0.50 **                |
| FIW17 | 0.72 | -    | 0.18 | -    | 0.32 | 0.62 **                |
| FIW18 | 0.67 | 0.23 | 0.17 | 0.17 | 0.23 | 0.80 **                |
| WIF19 | 0.12 | 0.62 | -    | -    | 0.27 | 0.53 **                |
| WIF20 | 0.17 | 0.51 | -    | 0.12 | -    | 0.70 **                |
| WIF21 | 0.30 | 0.69 | 0.28 | -    | 0.46 | 0.70 **                |
| PSW22 | 0.24 | 0.22 | 0.14 | 0.15 | 0.65 | 0.43 **                |
| PSW23 | 0.30 | 0.11 | 0.18 | 0.12 | 0.65 | 0.60 **                |
| PSW24 | 0.35 | 0.21 | 0.30 | -    | 0.62 | 0.61 **                |
| PSW25 | 0.29 | 0.37 | 0.21 | 0.14 | 0.65 | 0.32 **                |
| FIW26 | 0.72 | 0.11 | 0.25 | -    | -    | 0.42 **                |
| FIW27 | 0.74 | 0.13 | 0.27 | -    | 0.19 | 0.61 **                |
| PSS28 | 0.27 | 0.32 | 0.63 | 0.16 | -    | 0.30 **                |
| PSS29 | 0.19 | 0.12 | 0.69 | 0.11 | -    | 0.50 **                |
| PSS30 | 0.19 | 0.24 | 0.76 | 0.17 | 0.13 | 0.63 **                |
| PSW31 | 0.22 | 0.13 | -    | 0.18 | 0.69 | 0.30 **                |
| PSW32 | 0.44 | 0.40 | 0.16 | -    | 0.71 | 0.44 **                |

\*\*  $p < 0.01$  Note. Items less than 0.40 loading were excluded.

Table 3 showed that WFCSS is internally consistent measure, as all the subscales of WFCSS showed positive correlation with other and above all with total scores of WFCSS.

**Table 3.** Alpha coefficient, inter-correlations for five subscales, and total scores of work family conflict strain scale (N = 250).

| Factors  | 1 | 2       | 3       | 4       | 5       | 6       | $\alpha$ |
|----------|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| 1. FIW   | - | 0.52 ** | 0.53 ** | 0.30 ** | 0.62 ** | 0.81 ** | 0.90     |
| 2. WIF   | - | -       | 0.50 ** | 0.30 ** | 0.74 ** | 0.83 ** | 0.83     |
| 3. PSS   | - | -       | -       | 0.50 ** | 0.60 ** | 0.81 ** | 0.87     |
| 4. PSSP  | - | -       | -       | -       | 0.40 ** | 0.64 ** | 0.85     |
| 5. PSW   | - | -       | -       | -       | -       | 0.82 ** | 0.82     |
| 6. WFCSS | - | -       | -       | -       | -       | -       | 0.93     |
| TOTAL    | - | -       | -       | -       | -       | -       | 0.93     |

\*\*  $p < 0.01$  Note. FIW = family interferences with work, WIF = work interference with family, PSS = psychological strain due to spouse, PSSP = psychological strain due to societal perception, PSW = psychological strain due to work.

### 5.3. Stage III-Confirmatory Analysis

#### 5.3.1. Sample

Using purposive sampling strategy, an additional (N = 500) working women aged between 25 and 60 years (M = 39.2, SD = 9.64) were approached from different institutions and organizations (i.e., 3 schools, 3 colleges/universities, 3 hospitals, and 2 banks) where the majority of women participants could be found. Only married working women with at least one child were included in the sample.

#### 5.3.2. Instrument

Work family conflict strain scale (WFCSS) developed in Stage I was used. The scale comprised five subscales named family interference in work, work interference with family, psychological strain due to spouse, psychological strain due to societal perception, and psychological strain due to work.

### 5.3.3. Procedure

Before administering the indigenously developed WCSS, permissions were taken from all institutions and organizations by explicitly communicating the purpose of the study. In the following step, the participants were informed about the scope and objectives of the research. Then participants were requested to fill the consent forms. The confidentiality of their personal details was assured. The completion of the questionnaire was followed by thanking the participants for their time and cooperation. A total of 650 questionnaires were distributed from which 550 questionnaires were returned. Among them, 50 forms were incomplete, while the rest of 500 questionnaires were retained for the CFA.

### 5.3.4. Results

In order to confirm the measurement model of WFCSS, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. Furthermore, AMOS-21 was used to confirm the factors retained in the EFA. CFA showed a good fit to the data with Chi square = 1085.072,  $df = 485$ ,  $p = 0.000$ , RMSEA = 0.050, CFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.90, and GFI = 0.93. In CFA, chi square value is recommended non-significant, but in a larger sample, it is usually significant. Therefore, it is generally recommended to divide the chi square by degree of freedom, and it should be less than 3, which represents a good model fit [65]. In the current CFA, chi square value is divided by degree of freedom yield 2.23, which is within recommended limit.

## 5.4. Stage IV—Convergent and Discriminant Validity

To further establish psychometric properties of the indigenously developed WFCSS, convergent and discriminant validities were assessed.

### 5.4.1. Sample

An additional sample of ( $N = 50$ ) working women aged 25 to 60 years ( $M = 39.6$ ,  $SD = 9.16$ ) were approached through purposive sampling from different professions.

### 5.4.2. Instrument

#### Work Family Conflict Strain Scale for Pakistani Women (WFCSS)

Work Family Conflict Strain Scale for Pakistani Women was developed in Stage I of the current research. It is a 32-item, 7-point rating scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagreed) to 7 (strongly agreed). It comprises five subscales and has alpha Coefficient 0.93 (see Appendix B).

#### Mental Health Inventory (MHI)

Mental health inventory developed by Veit and Ware [66], Urdu version [67], was used to establish the convergent and discriminant validity. MHI is a 38-item inventory having a 6-point rating scale where all of the time is rated as 1 and none of the time as 6. MHI has two global scales, viz., psychological well-being and psychological distress. As WFCSS measures the strain and psychological stress encountered by the working women in balancing the work and family responsibilities, MHI was used for convergent and discriminant validity.

#### Psychological Distress Subscale

Psychological distress subscale of MHI [67] was used for convergent validity. Psychological Distress, which elucidates negative mental health condition, comprised 24 items, having 6-point rating format and scores ranging from 22 to 132. Moreover, the alpha coefficient of the psychological distress subscale is ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ). The hypothesis was that a positive association between WFCSS and psychological distress subscale of MHI exists. Furthermore, it was assumed that the correlation between the latent constructs of two scales was close or equal to the value of 1.00.

### Psychological Wellbeing Subscale

Psychological well-being subscale of MHI [67] was used for discriminant validity. Psychological well-being elucidates positive mental health status, which measures emotional stability and life satisfaction. It comprised 14 items and scores ranging from 16 to 96. Overall alpha coefficient of psychological wellbeing is ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ). The hypothesis was that a negative association between WFCSS and psychological wellbeing subscale of MHI exists. Moreover, it was assumed that the correlation between the latent constructs of two scales was less close to 1.00.

#### 5.4.3. Procedure

The same procedural protocol used in Phase II and III was followed for validation study as well. WFCSS, along with psychological distress and psychological wellbeing subscales of MHI, was administered on the 50 working women. It took 12 to 18 minutes to complete the questionnaire protocol, and participants were acknowledged for their time and effort. To establish the convergent and discriminant validity, correlation analysis was calculated between WFCSS and MHI.

#### 5.4.4. Results

In order to established convergent validity, positive correlation between WFCSS and psychological distress subscale of MHI was hypothesized. Using Pearson correlation findings revealed that total, and all subscales of MWFCC had positive significant correlation with psychological distress subscale. Similarly, for discriminant validity, negative correlation between WFCSS and psychological wellbeing subscale of MHI was hypothesized. Using Pearson correlation, findings revealed that total, and all subscales of MWFCC had negative significant correlation with psychological wellbeing subscale (see Table 4).

**Table 4.** Correlation matrix for the work family conflict stress strain (WFCSS), mental health inventory (MHI)-psychological distress and MHI-psychological wellbeing.

| Sr. no. | Scales                      | 1 | 2       | 3        |
|---------|-----------------------------|---|---------|----------|
| 1       | WFCSS Total                 | - | 0.71 ** | -0.64 ** |
| 2       | MHI-Psychological Distress  |   |         |          |
| 3       | MHI-Psychological Wellbeing |   |         |          |

\*\*  $p < 0.01$  Note. Work family conflict stress strain for Pakistani women (WFCSS).

## 6. Discussion

Numerous scales have been developed to capture WFC and its related types but, to our best knowledge, none of them appropriately measure the underlying cultural expectations related to the position and role of women in so called Eastern societies. According to Hofstede's cultural framework [46], Western societies practice individualism whereas collectivism is the most dominant culture of Pakistani society. Pakistani working women face multiple roles due to prevailing cultural expectations from them. They are not just an employee, a daughter, a wife, a mother but also a daughter in law, sister in law, etc. They are not only supposed to look after their children and spouse but also look after aging in-laws and other family members. Their responsibilities when compared to those of Western women are much broader, and consequently, their family-to-work conflict scenarios are very different from those in Western society. Therefore, keeping in view the dire need to have cultural coherent measure, the current study stepped forward to develop culturally appropriate and psychometrically sound scale capturing conflict and strain occurred due to interaction work and family related variables.

The present study yielded strong preliminary evidence for the validity and reliability of the WFCSS. The indigenously developed scale displayed a sound factorial structure, as well as satisfactory convergent, discriminant, and internal properties. The items for the WFCSS were thoroughly generated

and tested through content and construct validity. EFA using varimax rotation method was executed, which yielded five distinctive factors having 32 items. The alpha coefficient of overall and five factors showed high internal consistency and significant inter correlations among factors (see Table 3).

To cross validate the EFA results, CFA was undertaken on an additional sample (N = 500). The final model depicts excellent fit indices (see Figure 1) having 32 items. Together, these results offer strong support for the five discrete meaningful factor structure of the WFCSS (family interference with work, work interference with family, psychological strain due to spouse, psychological strain due to societal perception strain, and psychological strain due to work). The coefficient alpha was used to check the internal consistency of each of the five factors, and reliability of each factor was over the level of acceptance of 0.70 [68,69].

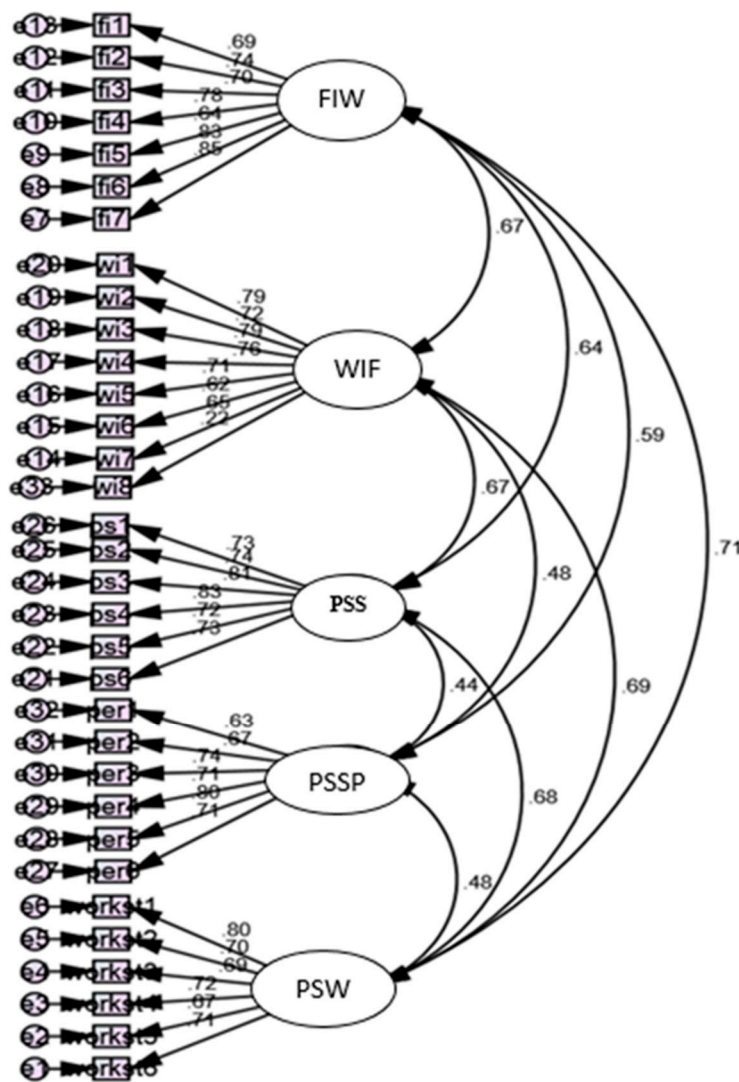


Figure 1. WFCSS Final Model.

Moreover, current study further highlights the convergent and discriminant validity of the indigenous WFCSS. As the current scale measures the conflict, and strain occurs as a result of interactions of work and family related variables mental health inventory was used which also measures distress and strain. The WFCSS total scores were correlated substantially with a psychological wellbeing and psychological distress subscales of mental health inventory. As hypothesized, positive meaningful associations were obtained among the subscale of the psychological distress subscale and WFCSS.

Similarly, negative association was found among the psychological wellbeing subscale and WFCSS. These findings further supported that indigenously developed WFCSS has strong construct validity.

## 7. Limitations

Notwithstanding the cultural uniqueness of the current study, limitations exist. First, the sample was selected randomly. Accordingly, since purposive sampling method was used, the generalizability of findings may be somewhat limited. Secondly, the scale has been particularly devised keeping in view the married working women WFC scenario. This may limit the generalizability of the scale to single, divorced, widowed, or childless women. Future research should incorporate Western scale WFC dimensions in the indigenously developed WFCSS in order to have magnified perspective on antecedents and consequences of the WFC.

## 8. Conclusions and Recommendations

Against the backdrop of profound societal change taking place in several developing countries, the objective of this paper was to reflect on work-family conflict (WFC) as a concept and a social phenomenon. Considering that WFC is a concept rooted in an academic debate focusing on developments in Western, largely individualistic, societies, this paper reconsidered WFC's value added as applied in a context of a developing country. The objective of this paper was threefold, i.e., (i) to assess WFC's applicability in a context of a collectivist society in a developing country, where the position and role of women gradually changes; (ii) to develop a culturally-adjusted, sensitive scale to measure the scope of WFC in Pakistan, treated as a case study; and (iii) to reflect on the possibility of devising a set of good practices that would allow a smooth inclusion of women in the formal workforce while at the same time mitigating the scope and scale of WFC.

The findings of research presented in this paper suggest that regardless of the few limitations mentioned earlier, an indigenously developed WFCSS for Pakistani women is culturally coherent. It holds reliable construct validity, which in turn proves helpful in assessing the effects of WFC comprehensively. WFCSS developed is a novel tool that has great application potential not only for researchers but also for experts, social workers, and human resource managers. This paper sought to highlight that developing countries follow a path of growth and development comparable, but not identical, to that of the developed economies. Therefore, a focus on and a thorough understanding of issues such as WFC in its nascent phase might allow to develop preventive measures. These might include measures, on the one hand, aimed at increasing the society's awareness of the phenomenon and, on the other hand, introduction of incentives for employers to allow certain measures known for reducing the WFC [14–17]. More work needs to be done to develop a set of recommendations that might eventually feed into the decision-making process with a view to promoting policies and best practices aimed at mitigating WFC. Indeed, this is the scope of research our team embarked on already. In this vein, we plan to extend this work by, on the one hand incorporating more textual and non-textual data [70–74] and, on the other hand, by applying the findings in diverse contexts [75]. Apart from offering direct insights into respective policy considerations, these might then also be the useful in context of natural language processing models [76–80] and optimization techniques [81,82].

**Author Contributions:** M.A. conceived the idea; M.A., A.M. and A.V. planned the study, performed statistical analysis and drafted the manuscript. A.A. and R.N. edited analysis and critically revised the manuscript. A.V. critically revised the manuscript and supervised the study. R.N. oversaw the project. All authors equally contributed to the submission of the manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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## Appendix A

**Table A1.** Principal measures of work-life conflict.

| Source                               | Measure  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Burke, Weir, & DuWors, 1979          | General W-F (+ personal life)  |
| Holahan & Gilbert, 1979              | Role Conflict (job, conjugal, parental, personal in terms of self realization) |
| Boben & Viveros-Long, 1981           | W→F and F→W, time and strain   |
| Kopelman, Greenhaus & Connolly, 1983 | W→F, time and strain   |
| Wiley, 1987                          | W→F, strain  |
| Loerch, Russel, & Rush, 1989         | W→F, behavior  |
| Small & Riley, 1990                  | W→F, spillover   |
| Gutek et al., 1991                   | W→F e F→W, time and strain   |
| Rice et al., 1992                    | W→F, strain  |
| Frone, Russel, & Cooper, 1992        | W→F and F→L, time  |
| Matsui, Ohsava & Onglatco, 1995      | W→F, time and strain   |
| Netemeyer et al., 1996               | W→F and F→W, time and strain   |
| Stephens & Sommer, 1996              | W→F, time, strain, and behavior  |
| Carlson et al., 2000                 | W→F e F→W time, strain and behavior  |

Source: Adapted from Colombo, L. [69].

## Appendix B

The following items have been seen as common conflicts due to work-family interaction. Carefully read the items and circle any number of points 1 to 7 that closely applied to you over the past year.

**Table A2.** Work Family Conflict Strain Scale for Pakistani Women (Translated into English).

| Family Interference in work   |
|---|
| 1. Family related responsibilities keep me preoccupied during working (office) hours.   |
| 2. Thoughts about my children often distract my attention from work.  |
| 3. Despite extreme efforts, family responsibilities hinder my professional abilities.   |
| 4. Family responsibilities related to in-laws often get on my nerves to an extent that colleagues complain about my absent mindedness.                            |
| 5. I often do not pay proper attention at work due to tension/unpleasantness at home.   |
| 6. During office hours, I often manage family responsibilities on phone (e.g., calling home/school, eldercare) due to which I feel distressed in front of others. |
| 7. Family responsibilities holdback my professional progress.   |
| Work interference in family   |
| 8. The nature of my job makes it difficult for me to spend time with my family.   |
| 9. My working hours (or work schedule) make it hard to spend sufficient time with family.   |
| 10. Due to job tasks, I often cannot fulfill my home responsibilities.  |
| 11. Responsibilities at work often make me feel physically drained to look after my family.   |
| 12. Job fatigue often creates stress between my husband and me.   |
| 13. Due to work commitments, I often ignore responsibilities towards in-laws, which results in tension between my husband and me.                                 |
| 14. I often ignore responsibilities towards my children while fulfilling job assignments.   |
| Psychological strain due to spouse  |
| Reason behind my psychological strain:  |
| 15. Husband criticism on giving priority to work over family responsibilities.  |
| 16. Being a working woman, husband often considers me an irresponsible wife.  |
| 17. Being a working woman, husband often complains about not giving sufficient time to in-laws.   |
| 18. An imbalance between work and family responsibilities often results in husband's criticism on my management skills.   |
| 19. My husband ignores my financial needs because of my earnings.   |
| 20. Lack of appreciation from husband over efforts to balance work and family responsibilities.   |

Table A2. Cont.

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| Psychological Strain due to societal perception       |   |
|---|---|
| In our Society—Reason behind my psychological strain: |   |
| 21.   | Working hours of women are considered a source of recreation.   |
| 22.   | Despite affordability, often families do not arrange house help for working women, which causes psychological strain on women.            |
| 23.   | Looking after an older person is an added responsibility, which results in psychological discomfort.                                      |
| 24.   | Working women are considered inefficient at household chores.   |
| 25.   | Our society holds traditional expectations in household chores from working women.  |
| 26.   | Inviting guests on weekends without informing, often disturbs a week's planning. This results in a psychological strain in working women. |
| Psychological strain due to work                      |   |
| 27.   | My senior's unrealistic attitude often makes me feel disturbed throughout the day.  |
| 28.   | Inequitable responsibilities at work often make me feel agitated at home.   |
| 29.   | Due to workload, I often get bitter with my colleagues, which results in mental disconcertment/distress.                                  |
| 30.   | Work responsibilities often instigate melancholy/gloominess.  |
| 31.   | Work related thoughts often keep me worried at home.  |
| 32.   | My attitude is often aggressive at home due to job responsibilities.  |

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