

**When Family Responsibilities Enter the Workplace: Marital Status, Job Designation,
and Family–Work Conflict**

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Received: 02-01-2025

Revised: 02-02-2025

Accepted: 18-02-2025

Published: 26-02-2025

ABSTRACT

Family–work conflict is an important dimension of the relationship between family responsibilities and occupational life, particularly among employees engaged in demanding professional occupations. This study examined differences in family–work conflict among researchers working in agricultural research institutions of Punjab, Pakistan, with particular attention to marital status and job designation. Data were collected through stratified sampling from researchers working in agricultural research institutions. Family–work conflict was assessed using a multidimensional set of items gauging the extent to which family responsibilities and concerns interfere with work performance, concentration, and day-to-day work duties. The measurement results demonstrated satisfactory indicator loadings, internal consistency, and collinearity properties. Group differences were examined using Welch's analysis of variance, followed by Games–Howell post-hoc comparisons. The findings revealed statistically significant differences in family–work conflict across marital-status categories. Single researchers reported lower family–work conflict than married and divorced researchers, whereas married and divorced researchers did not differ significantly. Significant differences were also observed across job designations, with Principal Scientists reporting the highest level of family–work conflict, followed by Senior Scientists and Scientific Officers. The findings demonstrate that family–work conflict varies according to both family circumstances and occupational position.

Keywords: Family-work conflict, marital status, job designation, researchers, Games–Howell post-hoc tests.

INTRODUCTION

Family and work are two major areas of adult life, and their interplay has emerged as a focus of organizational and sociological studies (Ajala, 2017; Anafarta & Kuruüzüm, 2012). While working offers people income, a sense of identity, social recognition, and avenues for self-actualization, they also have to invest time, attention, and emotion into their families (Ansari, 2011; Ayodeji & Akinbode, 2017; Boyar et al., 2008). Family–work conflict occurs when family needs are incompatible with work duties (Burley, 1995; Byron, 2005). This type of conflict is one in which the obligations of a particular social role interfere with the expectations of another (Cheung & Wong, 2013). Occupational

responsibilities can thus also be social and have an impact on the concentration, performance and capacity to perform successfully in the workplace (Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Erdamar & Demirel, 2014).

The role of family–work conflict is especially important in jobs with heavy workloads, professional duties and expectations for sustained mental activity (Fellows et al., 2016; Fendrich & Axelson, 1971). One such occupational context is agricultural research (Batoool et al., 2023; Shahzad et al., 2023; Shahzad, Batoool, Anjum, et al., 2024). Agricultural researchers at research institutes should conduct research, interpret information, write reports and publications, engage in professional activities and help achieve the goals of the institute (Shahzad, Batoool, & Sajid, 2024; Shahzad et al., 2025). These tasks can demand a great deal of mental effort and time (Anafarta & Kuruüzüm, 2012; Ansari, 2011). Meanwhile, researchers are still in the midst of family relations and could have duties regarding spouses, children, parents, household management, and other family duties. Family pressures can encroach upon the work domain when these responsibilities interfere with professional responsibilities (Ayodeji & Akinbode, 2017; Boyar et al., 2008; Burley, 1995).

Family–work conflict, however, will not be equally experienced by all employees (Fellows et al., 2016). The social and organizational status of employees varies, and the nature and level of demands which are experienced can be influenced by their social and organizational status (Fendrich & Axelson, 1971; Fetto & Nomaguchi, 2018). Marital status is especially important as it may bring in other expectations and responsibilities within the family. The obligations of married workers are often different from those of unmarried workers, in terms of obligations towards their spouse, obligations towards children, obligations for household decisions, and obligations for extended family (Fox et al., 2011; Haslam et al., 2015; Hussain et al., 2021). Meanwhile, divorced and widowed workers might face unique family situations and obligations (Hussain et al., 2021). Marital status is thus an important criterion to use when looking into whether there is a different level of interference with work for those who are married.

Organizational position may also influence exposure to family–work conflict (Mache et al., 2015; Michel et al., 2011). The designation of a job indicates variations in levels of authority, professional duties, workload, decision making expectations, and career-related duties. Senior researchers may have more administrative and supervisory tasks, while lower-level researchers may have different kinds of task pressures and accountability (Shahzad et al., 2023; Shahzad, Batoool, Anjum, et al., 2024; Shahzad, Batoool, & Sajid, 2024). These occupational differences could impact on how much family responsibilities encroach on work activities (Batoool et al., 2023). Family–work conflict is therefore useful to examine to understand if there is a difference in family–work conflict across organizational roles.

Much, however, has been written on work–family relationships, and in considering family–work conflict among researchers in agricultural research institutions, an occupational and institutional perspective is offered (Shahzad, Batoool, & Sajid, 2024; Shahzad et al., 2025). Agricultural researchers conduct knowledge-based work and at the same time manage family responsibilities in a specific organizational context (Shahzad et al., 2023; Shahzad, Batoool, Anjum, et al., 2024). Analyses of marital status and job designation variations can determine if there are comparable levels of family–work conflict across social and occupational groups. Therefore, the present study aims to explore the family–work conflict of researchers working at agricultural research institutes in Punjab; especially to see the differences according to marital status and job designation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The family-work interface has been studied in the context of the inter-role conflict (Mache et al., 2016; Mache et al., 2015; Michel et al., 2011). Family–work conflict is the interference in the person's ability to fulfill work-related responsibilities due to pressures from the family domain. It is different from work–family conflict, in which family responsibilities get in the way of work demands (Nomaguchi, 2012; Patel et al., 2006; Ruppner, 2013). This distinction is important to me, as the source of the interference is the family domain, and the outcome is in the work domain (Shahzad, Batoool, Anjum, et

al., 2024; Singh & Kumar, 2011). Family-work conflict can occur when family responsibilities, family issues, caregiver responsibilities or stressors take time and psychological energy away from work-related activities (Namasivayam & Mount, 2004; Nomaguchi, 2012; Patel et al., 2006).

The concept can be interpreted in terms of the general role theory, which poses that people have several roles within a society, and they have to take care of the expectations of those roles (Soomro et al., 2018; Sulfan & Syahrizal, 2022; Van Steenbergen et al., 2014; Yan et al., 2022). Role conflict occurs when the requirements of the various roles come into conflict (Patel et al., 2006). Staff working in both paid and unpaid roles may then have conflicting expectations (Sulfan & Syahrizal, 2022; Van Steenbergen et al., 2014). Working hours may be occupied with duties on the family front, involving involvement and attention, which can make concentration and the ability to carry out occupational tasks difficult (Yan et al., 2022; Yoo, 2022).

The work–family resource perspective also provides a useful explanation (Patel et al., 2006; Ruppanner, 2013). People have limited resources like time, energy, attention and emotional ability (Sulfan & Syahrizal, 2022; Van Steenbergen et al., 2014; Yan et al., 2022). If significant resources are allocated to the family, there may be less available for the individual to use on work-related activities (Nomaguchi, 2012; Patel et al., 2006; Ruppanner, 2013). This may be seen as distraction, difficulty with concentration, problematic finishing tasks and a sense that their work is suffering a consequence of family issues (Sulfan & Syahrizal, 2022; Van Steenbergen et al., 2014; Yan et al., 2022). So, family-work conflict does not necessarily have to be present in physical absence from work, but family issues can also creep into the workplace.

Studies of work–family relationships also have noted that conflict can be different for different people and situations (Cinamon & Rich, 2002; Erdamar & Demirel, 2014; Fellows et al., 2016; Fendrich & Axelson, 1971). Workers' experiences of competing roles may be influenced by the structure of their families, marital status, parenting role, workload, expectations from the organization, and social support (Hussain et al., 2021; Ju et al., 2018; Latief et al., 2022). The above factors indicate that the experience of family–work conflict should not be assumed to be the same for a given occupational population.

Marital status is a significant social characteristic in examining the demands related to the family (Fendrich & Axelson, 1971; Hussain et al., 2021; Nomaguchi, 2012). Marriage typically creates an assortment of interpersonal and household duties that may need to be ongoing investments of time and attention (Singh & Kumar, 2011; Sulfan & Syahrizal, 2022; Van Steenbergen et al., 2014). Working individuals may also have to prioritize work demands with marital and family duties of children and other household members (Yan et al., 2022; Yoo, 2022). These family issues can then remain a regular focus of the employee's attention during working time and can become a distraction in the workplace.

Marital status does not just cause a distinction between married and unmarried people, though. The families of various marital statuses may be markedly different (Fendrich & Axelson, 1971; Hussain et al., 2021). As a single worker, you may not have many obligations to your spouse, yet you may be renting out to parents, siblings or other family members (Singh & Kumar, 2011; Sulfan & Syahrizal, 2022). Likewise, divorced or widowed workers might be eligible for special provisions with regard to household management, care of others or dependent family members (Hussain et al., 2021; Nomaguchi, 2012). This means that the differences in family–work conflict can come about for various reasons across marital-status groups, and not just because one group is assumed to be experiencing more conflict than the other (Singh & Kumar, 2011; Sulfan & Syahrizal, 2022).

A sociological definition of marital status is that it is a position in society which affects the division of family roles and expectations (Van Steenbergen et al., 2014; Yan et al., 2022). Given the specific focus of this study, namely family interference with work, and that this interference is measured differently across marital status, it is important to consider marital status in order to see if researchers in various marital circumstances report varying levels of family–work conflict. This leads to the first hypothesis: Family-work conflict varies based on marital status and job designation.

Another possible source of differences in employees' family–work conflict is job designation (Ajala, 2017; Namasivayam & Mount, 2004). There are variations in organizational positions with regard to authority, responsibility, decision making, supervision, professional expectations and workload (Singh & Kumar, 2011; Soomro et al., 2018; Yan et al., 2022). Senior researchers may also have duties related to their own research project, such as project leadership, supervision, administration, institutional representation, and mentoring, in research institutions (Nomaguchi, 2012; Patel et al., 2006). The research/technical/organizational roles of other researchers could be different (Singh & Kumar, 2011; Soomro et al., 2018).

There are differences between individuals' roles that may affect the reaction to family demands. Those who have extensive professional demands may not be able to be more flexible about family demands for interruptions during working hours (Namasivayam & Mount, 2004; Nomaguchi, 2012; Patel et al., 2006). On the other hand, workers in more autonomous jobs might have more flexibility in time and manner of task completion (Fettró & Nomaguchi, 2018; Fox et al., 2011; Haslam et al., 2015; Hussain et al., 2021). Therefore, the association between family responsibility and work activity could be influenced by the differences in workload, responsibility, autonomy and role expectations linked to the job designation.

Importantly, any consideration of job designation does not imply that higher or lower positions are more likely to have more or less family–work conflict. Instead, it offers an empirical context for establishing if there are differences in the conflict that is reported, dependent on the organizational role held by the researcher. A comparison in the context of agricultural research institutions, where researchers work in various professional functions and have a ranked organizational hierarchy, can give an idea of how significant the interference in the family is across different occupational positions. Based on this, the second hypothesis is proposed that: Based on this, the second hypothesis is proposed that: H2: There are statistically significant differences in family–work conflict based on job designation.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Respondents

The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine family–work conflict among researchers working in agricultural research institutions of Punjab, Pakistan. Researchers constituted the unit of analysis. Data were collected using a stratified sampling technique, allowing researchers from relevant organizational strata to be represented in the study. The demographic and occupational information collected from respondents included marital status and job designation, which served as the grouping variables for the analysis.

Measurement of Family–Work Conflict

Family–work conflict was measured as a five-item construct capturing the extent to which family-related responsibilities and concerns interfere with employees' performance and concentration at work (Haslam et al., 2015). The items assessed whether family commitments negatively affect work performance, distract respondents during work, interfere with day-to-day work duties, and make it difficult to concentrate on occupational tasks. Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the following statements:

- My work performance suffers because of my family commitments.
- Family-related concerns or responsibilities often distract me at work.
- My family matters have a negative impact on my day-to-day work duties.
- It is difficult to concentrate at work because of family responsibilities.

- If I did not have family responsibilities, I would be a better employee.

The five items collectively operationalized family–work conflict as family-to-work interference, rather than the broader bidirectional work–family relationship. Responses were aggregated to represent respondents' level of perceived family–work conflict. The resulting measure was subsequently compared across marital-status and job-designation groups to test the study hypotheses.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. First, the measurement properties of family-work conflict scale were assessed using indicator loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and variance inflation factors. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, sample size, mean, standard deviation, standard error, confidence intervals, minimum, and maximum values, were then calculated to describe family-work conflict across marital-status and job-designation groups. Because the study examined differences in family-work conflict across groups and the equality-of-variance assumption was not relied upon, Welch's ANOVA was used as a robust omnibus test of group mean differences. Following significant Welch's ANOVA results, the Games–Howell post hoc test was employed because it is appropriate for pairwise comparisons when group variances and sample sizes may differ.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Measurement Model

The measurement properties of the family–work conflict scale were first assessed to establish the adequacy of the construct before examining group differences. As shown in Table 1, the five FWC items demonstrated satisfactory indicator loadings, ranging from .783 to .847. The corresponding communalities ranged from .614 to .717, indicating that a substantial proportion of the variance in each item was explained by the underlying FWC construct. The composite reliability (CR) of the scale was .882, while Cronbach's alpha was .881, indicating high internal consistency among the five indicators. In addition, the variance inflation factor values ranged from 1.951 to 2.407, remaining well below commonly used thresholds for problematic multicollinearity. Overall, these findings indicate that the FWC scale demonstrated satisfactory reliability, indicator quality, and collinearity properties for subsequent analysis. Next descriptive statistics were calculated.

Table 1 Items, Loadings, Reliability and Collinearity of Work Exploitation Scale

Items	λ	Communality	Alpha	CV	VIF
FWC			.882	.881	
FWC1	.823	.677			2.273
FWC2	.847	.717			2.407
FWC3	.842	.710			2.331
FWC4	.828	.686			2.320

FWC5	.783	.614			1.951
Note: CR = composite reliability, VIF = variance inflation factors, λ = loadings					

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for family–work conflict across marital-status and job-designation categories are presented in Table 2. Across the full sample ($N = 329$), the mean FWC score was 14.87 ($SD = 3.75$), with scores ranging from 7 to 25. Differences were apparent across marital-status groups. Single respondents ($n = 60$) reported the lowest mean level of FWC ($M = 11.57$, $SD = 1.96$), whereas married respondents ($n = 240$) reported a higher mean ($M = 15.58$, $SD = 3.74$). Divorced respondents ($n = 29$) had a mean FWC score of 15.76 ($SD = 2.91$), which was slightly higher than that of married respondents.

Descriptive differences were also observed across job-designation categories. Principal Scientists ($n = 14$) reported the highest level of FWC ($M = 22.14$, $SD = 1.29$), followed by Senior Scientists ($n = 154$; $M = 17.10$, $SD = 2.68$). Scientific Officers ($n = 161$) reported the lowest mean FWC ($M = 12.10$, $SD = 2.17$).

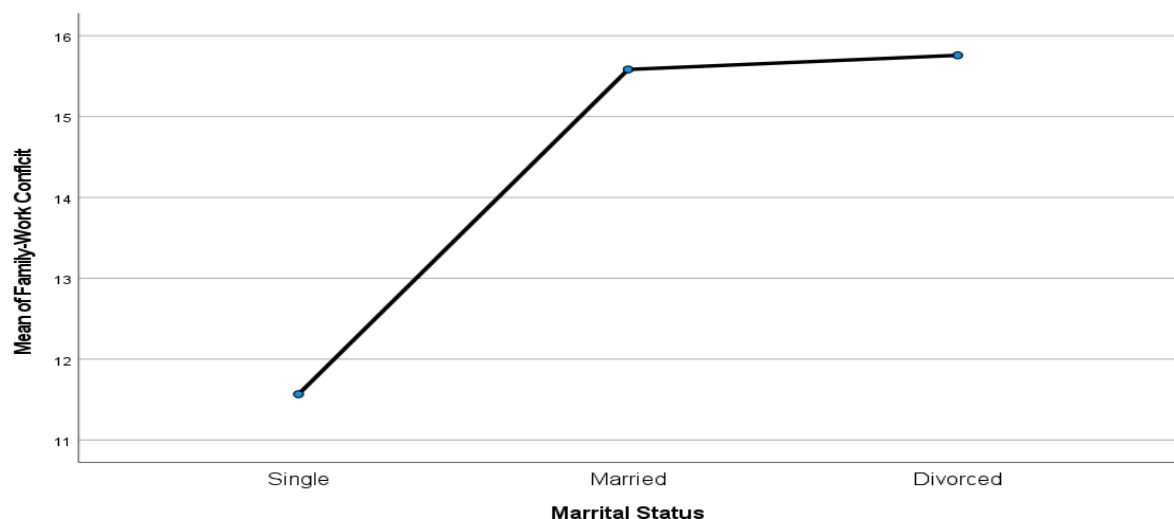


Figure 1: Visual Summary of Family-Work Conflict Across Various Categories of Marital Status

Thus, the descriptive results suggest substantial variation in family–work conflict across both marital-status and job-designation groups.

Table 2 Descriptives of Family-work Conflict Across Marital Statuses and Job Designations

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% CI for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		

Marital Status								
Single	60	11.57	1.960	.253	11.06	12.07	7	15
Married	240	15.58	3.744	.242	15.11	16.06	8	25
Divorced	29	15.76	2.911	.541	14.65	16.87	11	25
Total	329	14.87	3.751	.207	14.46	15.27	7	25
Job Designation								
Principal Scientist	14	22.14	1.292	.345	21.40	22.89	21	25
Senior Scientist	154	17.10	2.683	.216	16.67	17.52	12	25
Scientific Officer	161	12.10	2.166	.171	11.76	12.44	7	15

Differences in Family–Work Conflict by Marital Status

Because the group sizes and variances were unequal, Welch's ANOVA was used to examine differences in FWC across marital-status categories. As reported in Table 3, the analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in FWC across marital-status groups, Welch's $F(2, 74.27) = 72.00, p < .001$. This finding indicates that FWC was not equivalent across the three marital-status categories and provides support for H1.

Table 3 Welch's ANOVA for Family-Work Conflict by Marital Status and Job Designation

Independent variable	Welch's <i>F</i>	df1	df2	<i>p</i>
Marital status	72.00	2	74.27	< .001
Job designation	398.85	2	42.76	< .001

Moreover, Games–Howell post-hoc comparisons were conducted to determine which marital-status groups differed from one another. Single respondents reported significantly lower FWC than married respondents, with a mean difference of -4.02 , $SE = .35$, 95% CI $[-4.84, -3.19]$, $p < .001$. Similarly, single respondents reported significantly lower FWC than divorced respondents, with a mean difference of -4.19 , $SE = .60$, 95% CI $[-5.64, -2.74]$, $p < .001$. In contrast, the difference between married and divorced respondents was not statistically significant, mean difference = -0.18 , $SE = .59$, 95% CI $[-1.62, 1.27]$, $p = .953$. Thus, the significant overall effect was attributable primarily to the lower level of FWC reported by single respondents, while married and divorced respondents did not differ significantly from one another.

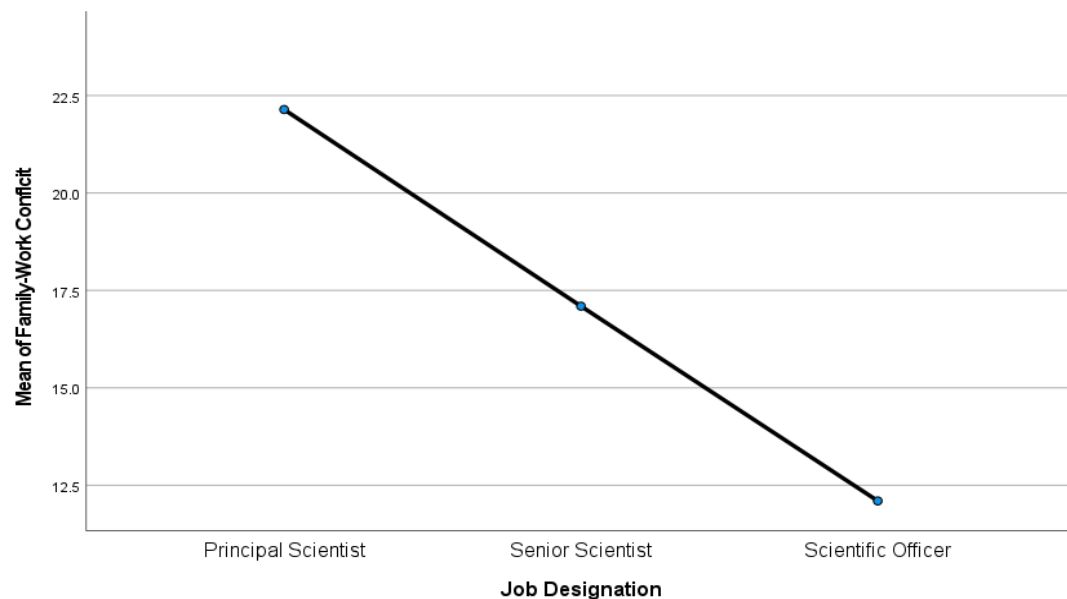


Figure 2: Visual Summary of Family-Work Conflict Across Various Categories of Job Designation

Differences in Family–Work Conflict by Job Designation

Similarly, Welch's ANOVA was also employed to examine whether FWC differed according to job designation. The results showed a statistically significant difference among Principal Scientists, Senior Scientists, and Scientific Officers, Welch's $F(2, 42.76) = 398.85$, $p < .001$ (Table 3). Therefore, the level of FWC varied significantly across job-designation categories, providing support for H2.

Table 4 Games–Howell Post Hoc Comparisons of Family–Work Conflict by Marital Status and Job Designation

Comparison	Mean Difference	SE	95% CI	<i>P</i>
Marital Status				
Single – Married	-4.02	.35	[-4.84, -3.19]	< .001

Single – Divorced	-4.19	.60	[-5.64, -2.74]	< .001
Married – Divorced	-.18	.59	[-1.62, 1.27]	.953
Job Designation				
Principal Scientist – Senior Scientist	5.05	.41	[4.03, 6.06]	< .001
Principal Scientist – Scientific Officer	10.04	.39	[9.07, 11.02]	< .001
Senior Scientist – Scientific Officer	5.00	.28	[4.35, 5.65]	< .001

Additionally, the Games–Howell post-hoc comparisons indicated that all three job-designation groups differed significantly from one another. Principal Scientists reported significantly higher FWC than Senior Scientists, with a mean difference of 5.05, $SE = .41$, 95% CI [4.03, 6.06], $p < .001$. Principal Scientists also reported significantly higher FWC than Scientific Officers, with a mean difference of 10.04, $SE = .39$, 95% CI [9.07, 11.02], $p < .001$. Finally, Senior Scientists reported significantly higher FWC than Scientific Officers, with a mean difference of 5.00, $SE = .28$, 95% CI [4.35, 5.65], $p < .001$. The pattern of means therefore indicates a stepwise difference in FWC across the three designations, with the highest reported conflict among Principal Scientists and the lowest among Scientific Officers.

The results of the study have shown that family–work conflict is significantly different among different family status and job designation of agricultural research researchers in Punjab. Single researchers reported significantly less family–work conflict than did married and divorced researchers, but there was no significant difference between married and divorced researchers. This trend indicates that the levels of family concerns that interfere with researchers' work may be affected by family-related responsibilities related to various marital statuses. There were also significant differences between job designations, with Principal Scientists reporting the highest family–work conflict, followed by Senior Scientists and Scientific Officers. The pattern suggests that level of organization and related professional duties can affect the experience of family-related interference with work. To summarize, the results indicate that family–work conflict is not an equal experience for all members of the research workforce, but rather is socially and organizationally differentiated.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the study findings indicate that marital status as well as job designation significantly differentiates the family–work conflict of the researchers working in agricultural research institutions of Punjab. The findings highlight the need to look at the work–family relationships of employees from a broader perspective, considering their family status and organizational roles. Awareness of these differences could contribute to the understanding of the circumstances that hinder researchers' concentration and work performance when they have family responsibilities.

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