

**PERCEIVED JOB INSECURITY, WORK ENGAGEMENT AND  
MARITAL CONFLICT AMONG PRIVATE SECTOR  
EMPLOYEES DURING COVID-19**



*By*

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A Research Report submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements of the  
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**2021**

## **Certificate**

This is to certify that M.Sc. research report on “**Perceived Job Insecurity, with work engagement, and marital conflict among employees during COVID-19**” prepared by Nadia Fatima has been approved for submission to Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

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**Dr. Imran Bukhari**  
*Supervisor*

*Dedicated to my beloved parents, and all those  
Whom  
I love and care*

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## ABSTRACT

The main objective of the current study was to explore the relationship between perceived job insecurity, work engagement and marital conflict among private sector employees during COVID-19. Data were conveniently collected from 280 private sector employees from different organizations of Rawalpindi and Islamabad district with the age range of 20 to 60 years. Perceived job insecurity scale (De-Witte, 2000 & Rigotti, 2003), work engagement scale (Schaufeli et al., 2001), marital conflict scales (Braiker & Kelly 1979) along with detail demographic sheets were used to measure study variables. The reliabilities of all scales were satisfactory, various statistical analyses were run to test the hypothesis. Five hypotheses were formulated based on past literature and only one hypothesis was rejected. Results showed significant negative correlation between perceived job insecurity and work engagement. Moreover, perceived job insecurity and marital conflict has found to be positively significant. Results also showed significant negative correlation between marital conflict and work engagement. Among demographics: gender, education and monthly income were found as correlates of perceived job insecurity. However, gender, age and family system and monthly income had no role in perceived job insecurity. Overall, the results of the study help in highlighting the phenomenon of perceived job insecurity during COVID-19 in Pakistan relationship to work engagement and marital conflict. Implications, limitations and suggestions for future research have also been discussed.

### INTRODUCTION

The aim of the present study is to explore the relationship between perceived job insecurity, work engagement and marital conflict among employees of private sector during COVID-19. To reduce the infection of coronavirus disease contaminant steps are adopted so that general perceptions of job insecurity have produced by COVID-19. Furthermore this study shall also find out the relationship between perceived job insecurity, work engagement, marital conflict with socio demographic variables like age, gender, monthly income, work experience and education.

Pakistan is one of the developing countries which have been hardly hit by the current pandemic (Haider&Siddiqui, 2020).According to the Ministry of Planning, 12.3 million to 18.5 million Pakistanis were lose their jobs, whereas the economy was concede a colossal loss of 2-2.5 trillion Pakistani rupees (\$12.42-15.52 billion) due to “moderate to severe shocks from the coronavirus outbreak.”The informal laborers which according to labor unions, account for 75% of the country's total 65 million workforce will be the worst hit. Around 40% of them are in agriculture sector, while remaining work in services, manufacturing, and other sectors, according to the Pakistan Institute of Labor Education and & Research (PILER), a non-governmental think tank, which deals with labor affairs. The number of unemployed people in the country has been estimated to reach 6.65 million during the fiscal year 2020-21, compared to 5.80m of the outgoing financial year. Presently, more than 30 million workers are estimated to lose their jobs in the U.S alone (Franck & Schoen, 2020; Jones et al., 2020), with leisure and hospitality industry being most affected with a loss of around 7.7 million jobs, or 47% of total positions (Frank, 2020). Marriott International, the world’s largest hotel company, started to furlough tens of thousands of employees worldwide (Karmin, 2020). Similarly, Airbnb lay off around 25% of its employees (Kelly, 2020).

Job insecurity is defined as the view of an employee as a possible threat to stability of his or her current job (Heany, House, & Isreal, 1994).Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1996) described job insecurity as "the powerlessness to preserve the necessary consistency in a threatened job situation'.Jacobson and Hartley (1991) define insecurity at work as "a difference between a person's protection level and his or her desired level. The perception of career/job uncertainty is based on insecurity about the future (Sverke, 2002). This exposure includes both the perceived chance of losing one's present job (the logical component of job insecurity) as well as the issues associated with the threat (the affective component of job insecurity) (Borg & Elizur, 1992).

Insecurity regarding the future of one's job therefore refers to both a challenge and as well as insecurity about job loss. Relevant constructions, such as the value of job for employees and the helplessness to deal with the risk of losing the job, may interfere in the process from cause to job insecurity to outcome, but are not considered to be elements of the construction of job insecurity itself (De-Cuyper, De-Witte & Vander-Elst, 2011). In accordance with these characteristics, we describe job insecurity as the subjectively perceived and undesired risk of losing the current job in the future, as well as the anxiety or fears associated with this probability of job loss (De-Witte, 2005; Sverke, 2004).

Work Engagement is characterized as an optimistic satisfying work related mindset that is portrayed by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez, & Bakker, 2002). It refers to enthusiasm, engagement, strength, passion, assimilation, desire and paying attention. Engagement to work referred to as the willingness to be faithful, engaged, committed, concentrated, inspired, absorbed, dedicated and enthusiastic (Bakker, Leiter, Schaufeli, & Taris, 2008). Vigor is described by elevated levels of vitality while living up to expectations. Dedication alludes to being deeply concerned with one's work, showing one's zeal and zeal for one's work. Absorption is portrayed by being fully focused and cheerfully immersed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one experience issues separating oneself from work (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2004). In a way, engaged employees are indeed very enthusiastic and have a good amount of energy. They're so busy at work that time flies quickly (Gilson, Harter & May, 2004).

Marital conflict can be defined as a state of tension or stress between marital partners, as couples attempt to fulfill their marital roles; (Koerner & Jackson, 1994). The reality that two people agree or intend to live together as husband and wife calls for various desires and aspirations, some of which can be achieved while others remain unfulfilled (Tolorunleke, 2014). Marital dispute is a process of interactivity in which one or both partners experience discomfort over some aspect of their relationship and attempt to overcome it in some way (Montgomery, 1999). Conflict is natural and inevitable in marriages and other relationships. Marital relations are especially susceptible to conflict, as spouses develop much shared intimacy and interdependence. These characteristics make the partners more susceptible to one another. These characteristics make the partners more susceptible to one another. At the same instant/moment, cohesion also strengthens the relationship such that partners can better withstand critiques from each other and the relationship can partner disagreements. Marital dispute is common for couples, but it can lead to divorce, when badly managed (Troupe, 2008).

### **Perceived Job Insecurity**

Job insecurity is defined as an employee's perception of a potential threat to continuity in his or her current job (Heany, House, & Isreal, 1994). Jacobson and Hartley (1991) define job insecurity as a discrepancy between the degree of security a person experiences and the degree he or she might prefer. By decreasing the number of workers, companies intend to increase productivity and competitiveness, while looking at long-term benefits. In reality, however, this strategy is accompanied by an anticipation stage in which employees experience a higher level of job insecurity regarding their future in the organization, the phenomenon known as job insecurity. Job insecurity generally refers to the subjective perceived chance of unintentional job loss (Hellgren, Näswall & Sverke, 2002). Job insecurity is perceived as a subjective work stressor (Probst, Sears, Sinclair, & Zajack, 2010), which induces strain or pressure and affects work-related behavior and activities of employees (Cheng & Chan, 2008). Accordingly, job insecurity has been found to decrease organizational productivity and efficiency, indicating the ineffectiveness of the organizational strategy (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). Insecurity about the future of one's job

may occur in a variety of settings where variation and uncertainty exist. Job insecurity can be seen as a manifestation of the more general ambiguity that people faced during their lives in contemporary society.

A distinction has to be made between self-perceived job insecurity and objective indicators of job insecurity, such as the extent of layoffs and dismissals or the calculation of job tenure ('stability of employment') (De-Witte & Naesswall, 2003). Job insecurity can also be connected with increased family issues (Mauno & Kinnunen, 2002; Larson, Beley, & Wilson, 1994; Lim & Loo, 2003). This not only has negative effects for people themselves and their families, but it can also potentially result in high costs for society as a whole.

An insecure workforce can also pose issues for companies, as insecurity can well lead employees to identify less with organizational goals and can adversely affect enthusiasm and willingness to innovate, and hence on productivity (De-Witte & Naesswall, 2003). Furthermore, it is proposed that instability raises the willingness of employees to terminate their contracts (Hellgren, Isaksson, & Sverke, 1999), with the connection between job insecurity and resignations being determined decisively by the structure of prospects outside the company (Greenhalgh & Sutton, 1991). Thus, as job insecurity increases, the most efficient employees will be the first to leave due to their high employability which, in addition to decreased motivation, will also jeopardize the efficiency and competitiveness of the organization. At most, rapidly increasing job insecurity would motivate the least productive workers to make greater efforts (Hellgren & Sverke, 2001).

### **Factors Causing Job Insecurity**

Following are the factors which are causing job insecurity among employees.

**Family size.** The family situation must be taken into account as another consideration in assessing perceived job insecurity because of different role expectations and different specializations, a clear connection can be expected with the attribute 'gender'. However, regardless of the exact allocation of the roles, job insecurity can be expected to differ as the value of an individual's salary for the family's survival increases. Furthermore, because of their concern for children, parents are likely to respond more sensitively to a threat to their employment situation than people without children (Erlinghagen, 2008). Finally, it is logical to assume



that the uncertain financial condition of the household increases perceived job insecurity, because the imminent loss of a job is a threat to the very livelihood of the family.

**Job tenure.** Furthermore, there is a connection between job tenure or experience and perceived job insecurity. The longer the employees remain with the same organization; the secure should be from dismissal or termination, whether because investments in company specific human capital are protecting them (Becker, 2000; Mincer, 2002), because tacit contracts and confidence have been formed over time or whether special legal obligations may exist to safeguard and support employees with many years' tenure and experience. On the other side, however, it is also conceivable that employees who have often changed their employers and therefore have a shorter period of employment do not necessarily feel more precarious as a result.

It may be that their vast experience in the global labor market has led them to perceive frequent job changes as a normal situation that simply needs to be managed rather than threatened. Conversely, job loss anxiety may increase with the length of the period of employment, as departure from the company could lead to high costs. These costs might include the loss of company-specific human capital or of entitlement to pay rises that have actually been accepted (in the form of seniority pay, for example). Moreover, private investments may also be potentially affected by a phase of mobility that is both feared and has an uncertain outcome. However, as long-term private investment (house purchase, importance of social networks based on neighbors or friends, etc.) increases with the duration of jobs tenure, this may also be another explanation why job insecurity might increase with the duration of employment (Belot & Ermisch, 2006). Taking both claims together, the distribution of perceived job insecurity linked to the duration of employment is likely to be U-shaped. As a result, employees with very short and very long job tenures will definitely experience a very high degree of job insecurity.

**Size of job industry.** In addition to a general work tenure effect, scale of company and sector or business effects should also be reckoned on. Thus employees in large companies are often expected to face less job insecurity simply because of the greater value of internal labor markets. Moreover, small firms do not have as great powers of resistance in times of economic crisis as larger firms (Idson, 2011),

particularly since small firms necessarily include a higher share of start-ups that are at particularly high chance of failure in the first few years of trading (Jovanovic, 2003). Such factors suggest that perceived job insecurity is diminishing with the size of the organization. In addition, there are companies that are prone to severe seasonal influences (e.g. manufacturing, tourism, construction, and agriculture) and there are companies that are decreasing because of structural change. It can be expected that employees in both of these fields will face greater job insecurity.

### **Work Engagement**

It refers to the enthusiasm, excitement, participation, strength, passion, assimilation, interest, in paying attention. Engagement with work is characterized as the ability of being loyal, devoted, committed, concentrated, inspired, absorbed, dedicated and enthusiastic (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008).

Employees' participation at work is an attractive situation for the staff and as well for the organization for which they work. Work engagement and employee engagement are interchangeable terms regardless of their utilization. Engagement or commitment with work insinuates the connection of the worker with his or her job, in as much as a representative way that is might incorporate the leadership with the institute (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Rhenen, 2009). Work engagement is an inspiring concept that refers to the utilization of the voluntary portion of individual resources and coordinates towards task required for specific professional job (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011).

Work engagement is supported by two conceptual measures of energy and involvement (Bakker, Albrecht, Leiter, 2011), along with three regular engagement areas; physical, cognitive and emotional (Saks, 2006). Bakker and Leiter, (2010) has given some explanations about why engaged employees do better than those who are not engaged. Firstly, engaged employees often experience positive feelings, including pleasure, thrill, excitement, and zeal. Secondly, better physical and psychological wellbeing is experienced by engaged employees. Thirdly, highly engaged employees are able to create their own private and work resources, like others' support. Finally, they can also move their involvement to others. Bakker and Democratic (2008) reported that highly engaged workers received more appraisals from their parents' at-in-job and additional job execution, demonstrating that workers

engaged have better performance and they are ready to step to the additional or next mile. Therefore, the importance of studying is attached to the ripple effect it generates and sticks not only significant personal outcomes as a result rather better organizational efficiency is also yielded.

The idea of work commitment has existed for quite a while, as an idea, yet the different techniques and different conceptualizations have endured the progression of a reasonable measure that simply portrays work commitment (Thomas, 2009). Subsequently, it is essential to immediately study how the thought progressed in order to explain its significance and to deduce an undeniably reliable measure.

Work duty was also conceptualized as in engagement, individuals utilize and interact emotionally, mentally, and genuinely during job exhibitions at the end of the day, people bring their own selves into their job as suggested by Kahn (1990).

Maslach and Leiter (1997) proposed work commitment as the alternative of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1998). In scanning for a way to deal with staying away from burnout, they prescribed that drew in representatives have an inclination essentialness and see their work as test. Two experts found this approach to be the paper that made the recommendation as suggested by Maslach and Leiter (1997) and Utrecht thought of work responsibility (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

However, Schaufeli et al., (2002) thought it unreasonable to test the burnout-responsibility continuum by using only the burnout stock, ordered work duty. Furthermore baffling the endeavors to depict and evaluate work responsibility, a variety of different research studies have used different methodologies (Rothbard, 2001), for instance the time one spends contemplating one's role at work and the strength of one's accentuation on an occupation at job (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004) in the same way adopted Kahn's multi-space concept of stirring engagement and growth a measure for it, yet fail to assert work duty as a multifaceted build.

Saks (2006) acknowledged Kahn's (1990) perception of work responsibility as employment linked, for instance a worker is psychologically exposed in a specific organization job. He proposed that the two most predominant occupations among most hierarchical individuals are their employment and their work as a person from an association. Thus, he also proposed that job commitments should be recognized from authoritative engagement.

Robinson, Hayday, and Perryman (2004) conducted a study on thousand workers in Great Britain Institute of Employment Studies and the findings revealed that it was the guiding force behind the representative duty that made the workers feel valued and connected with their practices. (In order to develop the musings and lift the voice of employees on a particular issue, he tested the fundamental authority process in workers). In an explanation it has been proposed that a connected with representative displays three general practices which enhance their exhibition (Baumruk & Gorman, 2006). These activities are: the workers upgrade the choice of the association before the partners.

The delegate needs to be in the association or corporation, in spite of better suggestions from different association or corporation. The worker contributes extra energy, invests more exertion and takes creativity to carry innovation to the association. It resembles the likelihood of a satisfactory relationship between a person and a vocation or organization.

Lauver and Kristof-Brown (2001) and Sekiguchi (2007) proposed that the individual affiliation fit represented as identical between agents and affiliations. Connected to representativeness, are will undoubtedly have an eminent relationship with their administrator, encouraging them to have increasingly certified frames of mind, points and activities as embodied by Markao and Sridevi (2010). Furthermore, it was found that the relationship with the members used to be genuinely annexed to their association and is engaged in their work to the level that they are willing to go past their business contract. A positive linked between work engagement and occupation asserts has been appeared in an exploration by Schaufeli and Salanova (2007). Employment resources play an important and outward motivation role in job, as stated by Bakker and Leiter (2010). Employees get inspiration and determination from work resources and constructive organizational behavior, as they fulfill a person's desire for self-control, connection and abilities. They can even go beyond their motivational level and bring to the best of his or her abilities and finish the work assigned to them (Meijman & Mulder, 1998).

Every one of these thoughts as old wine in new containers to be explicit, they either were relative to duty or a repackaging of various forms with different imprints, and that the earlier musings similarly fail to help work responsibility as a multifaceted build. Thus, there has been on wisely or for the most part recognized measure (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

## **Components of Work Engagement**

Three components of work engagement are defined below:

**Vigor.** It is characterized by a higher concentration of drive and psychological elasticity while working. There is a motivation to empower the energies of work and attentiveness, regardless of the challenges (Schaufeli et al., 2001).

**Dedication.** It is characterized as having firm interest in work and experiencing feelings of passion, value, pride, and significance (Schaufeli et al., 2001).

**Absorption.** It is characterized as paying full attention in the job. Individuals feel difficulty while detaching and their time passes so rapidly (Bakker, Schaufeli, & Salanova, 2001).

## **Job Demand Resource Model of Work Engagement**

Given below are the engagement related antecedents. The concept of work engagement was created in the conjunction with the job demand- resource model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). This model clusters job resources into two levels i.e., organization-related resources and work-related resources. The assumption of present study is that workers have personal resources to carry out their jobs, the more they will be interested in their work (Saks & Gruman, 2014). The original model focuses on employment resources, but later this model was expended by Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli (2007). Personal resources were included in the original model, which shows that personal resources can lead to work engagement and this work engagement ultimately leads to performance. Keeping in perspective the revised version of model, current study has focused on the personal resources as important antecedents of performance related outputs.

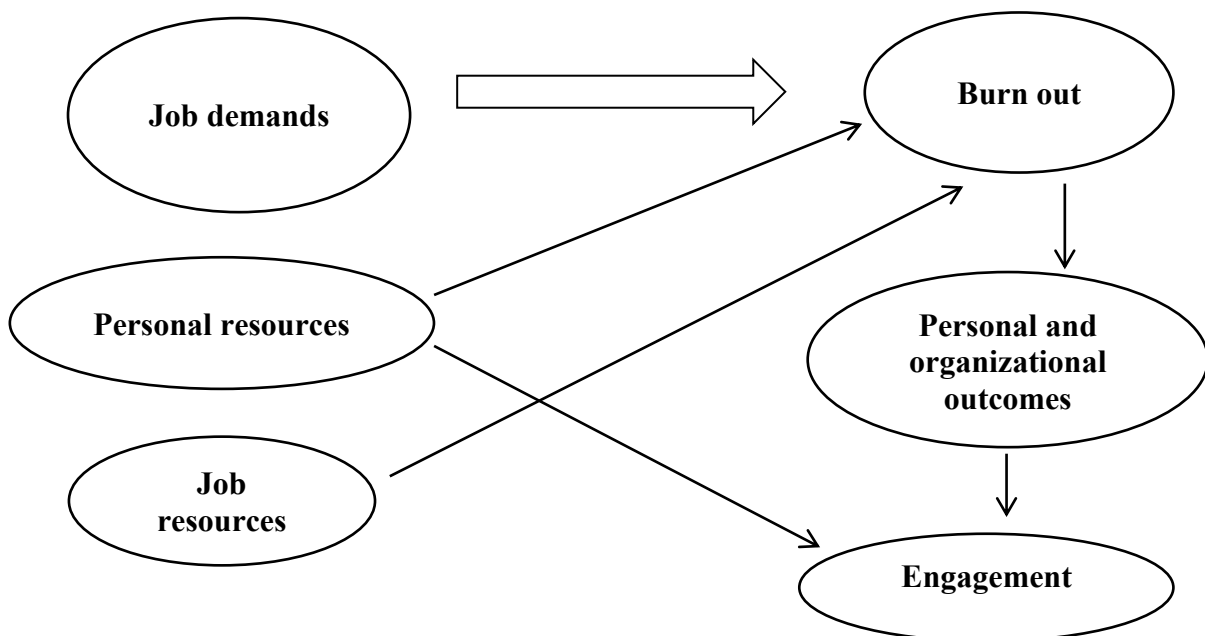
**Job resources.** These are all the physical, social or organizational characteristics of jobs. These features are helpful in achieving the objectives of the job, eliminating the demands of the job, and motivating individual improvement and learning. A positive relationship was found among various resources of the job and the work engagement i.e., job control, task variety, opportunity for development, and learning. These assets are necessary for the reduction of different demands of the jobs

but on the other end they are supportive in attaining the objectives (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

**Personal resources.** These are the individuals self-features which are linked to resiliency and refer to the individual's sense of their skill to apply power and influence on the environment effectively. These resources are flexible and vulnerable to modification.

Previous studies suggested that physical and emotional well-beings are connected to personal resources. Hopefulness, self-efficiency and flexibility are some of the personal resources that are helpful in controlling the circumstance.

In addition, employees who are highly committed have many self-distinctiveness attributes such as extraversion, conscientiousness, and emotional stability, and these discriminate them from the workers who are less motivated and engaged in work. Work engagement also demonstrates a positive connection with psychological capital (Zhu, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2009).



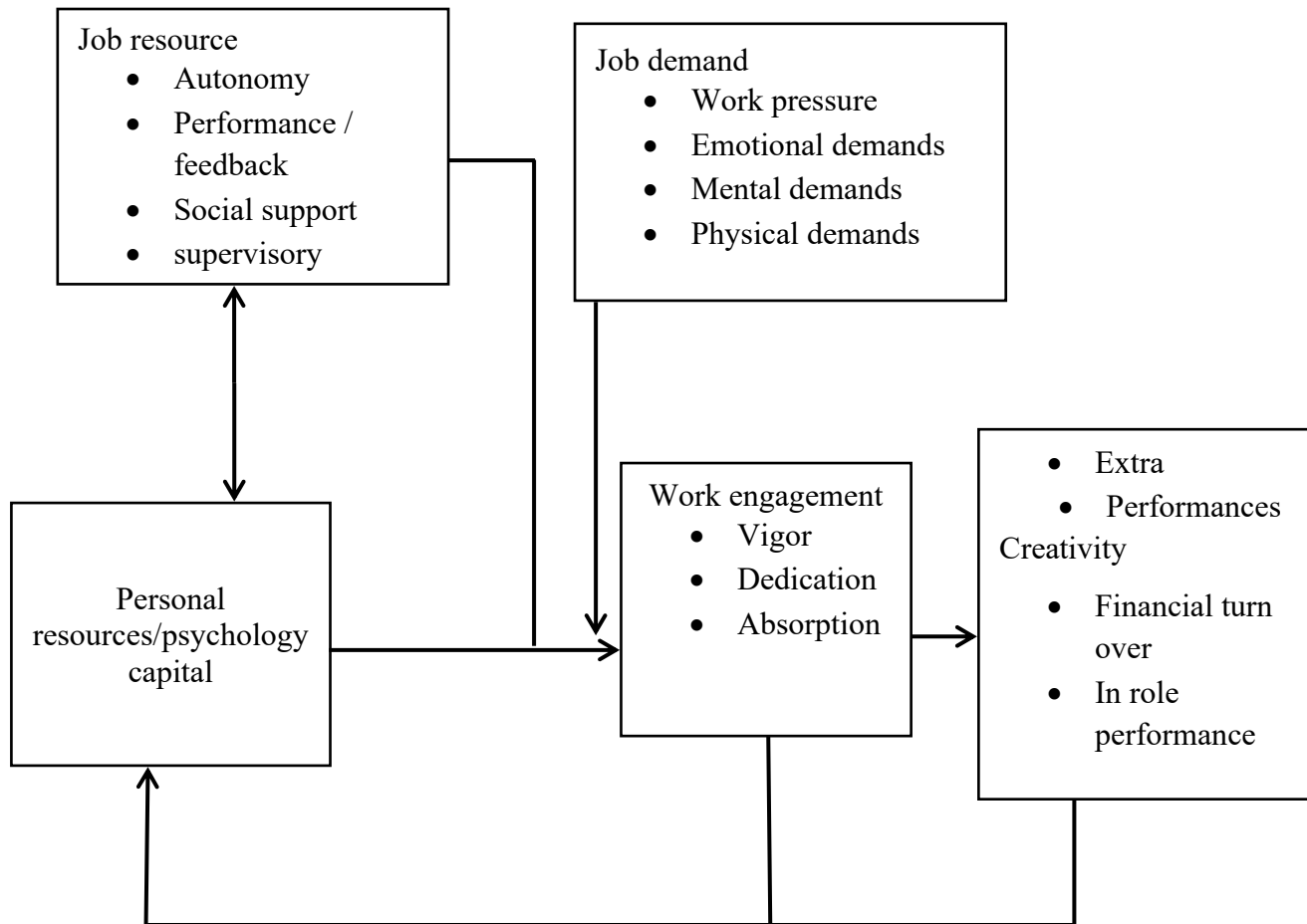
## Figure 1.

### JD-R Work Engagement Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007)

**Schaufeli's work engagement theory.** Bakker, Gonzalez, Schaufeli, & Salanova (2002) defined work engagement as "a optimistic, satisfying, work-related mental state that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption." Work engagement is conceptualized as a higher-order core factor that is containing three interrelated dimensions: vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). *Vigor* is defined as a state of being available; both physically and mentally, to expend energy in the work at hand, and also to exhibit mental resilience to persevere even in the face of challenges. Energy is the underlying bipolar component with opposite ends of power or vigor and mental exhaustion (Gonzalez-Roma, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Lloret, 2006). *Dedication* is described as "being profoundly engaged in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, motivation, pride and challenge" (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Identification is the underlying bipolar component of dedication at one end, and cynicism on the other (Gonzalez-Roma et al., 2006). Schaufeli et al. (2002) described work engagement as an antithesis of burnout, arguing that vigor and dedication are the exact opposites of exhaustion and cynicism. *Absorption* is, ultimately, a dimension of work engagement in which individuals are fully engaged in their work and develop a mindset that allows them to show complete concentration in the work (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) characterized absorption by a state called flow, in which time passes so quickly, and at a positively deviant end one finds it impossible to separate oneself from work.

Kahn's work engagement theory conceptualized it as a work role, while Schaufeli's theory conceptualized engagement as an antithesis of burnout. Therefore, Schaufeli equates engagement to a task activity or the task itself, instead of a work role (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008).



**Figure 2.**

**Schaufeli's Work Engagement Model (Bakker & Leiter, 2010)**



For both, Employee and organization there are many benefits of work engagement. One of these advantages is that engaged workers tend to have outstanding performance, improved internal enthusiasm, and the acquisition of the work resources and private resources, such as self-efficiency as explained by Salanova and Schaufeli (2007). Engaged employees perform very well for many different reasons for instance, positive emotions and optimistic feelings. Additionally, positive work attitude is related with work, good mental well-being and reduced the exhausted risk (Dar, 2014). Demerouti et al., in 2001 proposed that individual's health is positively connected to job satisfaction and dedication. Some organizational advantages of work engagement is the preservation of positive, cooperative, and a healthy passionate picture in organization as described by Schaufeli et al., in 2007. Engaged employees tend to be healthier, fit and feel less symptoms of stress and anxiety (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

A strong significant correlation was found by Harter, et al., in 2002 between work engagement and work outcomes. Cropanzola and Wright (2001) said that people who have positive thoughts towards their job are more extravert and supportive. Further, Frederick in 2001 suggested that positive feelings are constructively attributed to an individual's extraversion trait. So it can be said that work engagement is also connected to the personality traits as well. Finally engaged employees have more recurrent positive and optimistic feelings and are also able to create their own resources.

### **Marital Conflict**

Marital conflict refers to the clashing of principles, values, desires, ideas or having disagreement about actions or feelings. Conflict in marriage entails the challenges, strife, dilemmas and stresses that the couples face in their marital relationships. It involves personal misunderstandings, and interpersonal problems that arise in a marriage over different and contradictory points of view, frames of reference and beliefs.

Conflict is normal and unavoidable in marriages and other relationships. Ironically, one's perception of interpersonal conflict is often greater with one's spouse, compared to other long-term relationships (Argyle & Furnham 1999).

La-Haye (1998), states that dispute is usual in marriage since couples enter it having different cultural backgrounds, perspectives and worldviews, and the two individuals joining together tend to have problems of coping and dealing with one another.

Marital relationships are especially vulnerable to conflict, because couples develop a great deal of mutual affection and interdependence. These qualities make the partners more prone to one another. At the same time, cohesion strengthens the relationship such that spouses can better tolerate each other's critiques and that the relationship can survive partner disagreements.

The term conflict often conjures up perceptions of hostile clashes and dysfunctional relationships. However, previous researches have shown that the mere presence of a conflict is not inherently a negative thing or bad. Even, some conflict generates positive outcomes. Conflict allows relationship partners to share essential feelings and to formulate creative solutions to issues. Furthermore, successfully managed and resolved conflict can reinforce the relationship bonds and improve the relationship's stability and solidarity.

Averages of the number of disagreements between marriages are probably not important because different types of marriages exhibit different degrees of conflict. Some partners create a relational culture where they often argue; others experiences disagreements infrequently and establish a norm to disagree only on issues of importance. However, developmental patterns can be consistent. For example, older couples who have been married for a longer period of time are engage in less overt disagreements as compared to younger newly-weds couples (Zietlow & Sillars 1988). Yet the mere occurrence of disputes reveals very little about the overall health or cohesion of marital relationships (Gottman, 1994).

Couples who do not feel supported in the marital relationship may have lower self-esteem and communicate differently with their children than their peers who have warm, responsive relationships. Conflict is a pervasive characteristic of the family, that can have positive or negative consequences depending on how it is expressed and how successfully it is resolved (Noller & Fincham, 1993). The intensity and complexity of disputes vary widely, both within and between partners. Some of the criticism is merely minor disagreements or complaints. They get minimal attention and produce short-lived results.

Other disputes represent ongoing struggles about individual's personally important problems that generate extreme personal anxiety and relationship stress. Conflicts that are persistent and stable over time are more problematic for relational cohesion, although relational harm can be mitigated when partners share relationally confirming messages during ongoing conflict.

**Sources of marital conflict.** While most couples marry in love with the intention of honoring vows, several issues arise overtime, which can lead to divorce, or a marriage devoid of emotion, love, and communication. Almost 50% of all marriages end up in divorce, despite the pressure to live together, particularly for the sake of children. Family and the divorce process itself pressurize people to try to make it happen. Mostly marriages do not end in legal divorce, but many end up in emotional divorce. Marriage is obviously a challenge and so many negative and unpleasant possibilities need to be acknowledged, anticipated and discussed.

**Power struggles.** Completion and competition are two principles that characterize spousal relations. This means that the partners will both desire to have love and gain control over each other. Thus, men will usually behave in a possessive and controlling manner if they feel uncomfortable and insecure about their masculinity or the affection of their wife. Women will also seek an independent role. As a rule, whenever the partners want to dominate a marriage, obviously there will be a dispute. For instead of having an independent relationship, they have an adversarial relationship. This entails that they deprive one another of their inherent uniqueness. The sketch of the spousal role perversion leads to a searching and relevant question: why is it that the partners inclined to a competitive relationship (Okello, 2005).

**Child upbringing and number of children.** Kaongo, Carlton, and Shaw (1984) observe that child upbringing is still a significant obstacle for most married couples. There are situations in which they do not agree on how to administer punishment to their children. In such situations, one of the spouses may discipline the child against the wish of the other partner, which may lead the other spouse to join with the punished child. In this way, one partner is ignored and this can lead to dispute.

Collins, (2002) insists that in circumstances where a woman is only able to give birth to daughters, her husband becomes uncooperative and does not only exhibit anger towards the wife, but also towards the daughters, and may not even support them. He always acquires other wives with the hope of having sons. The circumstance ends up causing hostility in the family, leading to untold difficulties in the child's upbringing among married couples. In certain situations, the mother may shift love from the husband to the children. In such a situation, the father may feel ignored, and this may lead to countless complaints from the father leading to dispute between the couples.

Marital dispute may arise over the number and spacing of children (Mason & Taj, 2007). Whenever couples do not agree on family planning, husbands normally desire more children than wives, consistent with women providing more childcare.

**Money matters.** Schwartz and Scott (2007) reported that money ranks the most common cause of marital dispute. In addition, Stein Metz and Sussman (2009) suggests that money and lack of it is a greatest source of dispute in marriage, and this according to Coleman (1984), is because money is necessary not just for obtaining necessities of life, but also for the acquisition of luxuries. One or the other partner is guilty of mismanagement of family financial resources.

Husbands who spend or give money unwisely will lead their families into poverty. Drinking, smoking, drugs and gambling are little "foxes" which eat the financial stability of families. On the other side, some women are extravagant; they expend a lot of money on makeup and garments at the expense of the family budget. This scenario is a painful form of abuse, lack of care, which explains a failure to adjust the economic side of marriage (Okelle, 2005).

The marriage ceremony has become a competition and an exhibition in society, instead of being modest and for the sake of performing such rituals, and several times the man has taken a massive loan, leaving the newly wed in heavy financial debts (Okelle, 2005). This causes financial pressure and greatly reduces the love and intimacy that the two would have otherwise enjoyed. Therefore they start quarreling and start blaming each other for the problems.

**Wider Family Pressure.** Sometimes parents and relatives may unduly interfere in a couple's private life, and thus cause tension. This makes a couple feel deeply compelled to live according to expectations of their parents. Such spouses have no freedom or autonomy in their domestic affairs at all (Barry & Williams, 1987). The involvement of in-laws in a couple's private life also contributes to marital disharmony. This is because the primary relationship between the partners and their parents could have a direct impact the conduct of the former marriage.

According to Bankroft (1989) all couples arguably, experience interference in their marriage by in-laws either directly or indirectly. Bankroft (1989) points out that, for example, the views of the in-laws may have a significant effect on the couple's disputes over money or the appropriate husband-wife positions and roles. Frequently also, when relatives treat a partner with disrespect, hate and discrimination, a dispute occurs.

**Theoretical models of marital conflict.** Following are the theoretical models of marital conflict.

**Role theory.** Role theory refers to social role that draw attention about social responsibilities that employees play in field of employment and how employees faced stress could negatively affect success in family circle (Googins, 1991) work place assets like responsibility, working hours and security have an effect on the social responsibility of workers and, depending on whether the workers receive these resources in positive way (satisfactory job authority and working hours), they might having minimum or maximum marital disputes (Friedman, & Greenhaus, 2002). Edward and Rothbard (2005) demonstrated that the increased work requirements and work involvements are responsible of employment dispute and family's expectations.

**The Conflict theory.** This conflict theory tries to combine both macro and micro research. Through doing this Bourdieu (1989) makes it possible for financial reporting of the impacts of huge societal pressures throughout occurrence of special community events, like the impacts of financial accounting, morals, education in single couple's disputes.

A field is indeed a model of social status, organized internally in words of strength relationship (Wallace & wolf, 1999). Field definition go far beyond the conventional concepts of profession or organized and could be "single and multi-institutional in nature" both with flexible and restrictive limits.

## **Relationship Between Perceived Job Insecurity, Work Engagement and Marital Conflict**

Job insecurity is considered as a stressor (De Witte, 1999) that can negatively affect employee's engagement and performances (Bosman, Rothmann & Buitendach, 2005; Vander Elst, Bosman, De-Witte, De-Dyper, & Stouten, 2013). As employees perceive their work as insecure, they are likely to feel powerless, helpless and feel lack of control (Vander Elst, De Cuyper & De Witte, 2011). These factors will negatively affect the degree to which employees are involved in their jobs. Empirical analysis on this relationship actually confirms the negative relationship between job insecurity and work engagement. Employees will be less engaged in organization if they have perception of job insecurity. This will lead to higher turnover and employees will be more in to quitting from the current job (Awan & Salam, 2014).

During pandemic employees who were experiencing high job insecurity were more vulnerable to stress and marital conflict (Abbas, Malik, & Sarwat, 2021). Past researches proved that as Zahoor et al. (2019) reported that marital conflict was found to be the significant moderator in relationship of job insecurity. The results are significant with negative correlation between job insecurity stress and employees work engagement and shows that job insecurity significantly reduce the engagement of an individual at their work (Bashir & Ismail, 2010). Results are consistent with past literature as according to Akram (2020) marital conflict is associated with employees' engagement at work.

Asfaw and Chang (2019) explained that the relationship between job insecurity and employee productivity may be due to worker reactions to job insecurity such as reduced effort and organizational withdrawal. The findings of their study found that higher levels of perceived job insecurity were associated with lower levels of work engagement. Job insecurity has a negative impact on work engagement and employee happiness. Research conducted by Jung et al. (2021) finds that job insecurity has a significant negative impact on employee engagement, which is consistent with the research results of Feng et al. (2020).

A study conducted by Mauno et al. (2005) stated that perceived job insecurity is negatively linked to work engagement and that this relationship is particularly strong for permanent employees. The findings were confirmed by cross-sectional research by De Cuyper et al. (2008) and Vander Elst et al. (2013) and a longitudinal analysis by Mauno, Kinnunen and Ruokolainen (2007), which confirmed that job insecurity had a negative impact on the level of involvement of employees.

Frone, (2003) and Kinnunen (2014) conducted a study the findings of the study show that a job stressor first causes workers to feel poorer occupational well-being (e.g. job frustration), which, in turn, is linked to marital dissatisfaction.

Jenkins, Murry, and MacDonald (1982) conducted a research the findings of the study revealed the negative effect of job insecurity on employees' resulting in higher rates of divorces.

Job insecurity was found to be associated with poorer marital role quality and consistency (Cheng, Mauno, & Lee, 2014) in the context of marital dissatisfaction, marital stress, and poorer marital adjustment.

Finally, Job insecurity was linked to parental behaviors through overall inadequate family functioning (Larson, 1994).

### **Relationship of Age and Education With Perceived Job Insecurity, Work Engagement, and Marital Conflict**

The findings & the data empirically proofs the facts detailed in the literature review. De-Witte (2003) reported a positive relationship between perceived job insecurity and age. The findings of the De Witte study suggest that people aged 40s are considered to raise children and thus face more job insecurity than others who do not have such a responsibility. Similarly high job insecurity is perceived by employees of old age. Näswall, (2003) conducted a study showing the results of the study showed that people between 30 and 44 years of age are more vulnerable to job insecurity.

Schaufeli, (2004) reported a weak positive relationship between work employment and age. Bezuidenhout and Cilliers (2011) suggested a research to investigate the impact of the age of women academics' on their job experience in South African universities. The purpose of the research was to determine the impact of age on the work engagement questionnaire was used. The results of the research indicated a positive relationship between age and work engagement.

Sverke et al. (2000) argued that manual workers respond more strongly to job insecurity because these employees usually have lower levels of education and expertise and are more dependent on their existing jobs. It is found that workers having low status are more at risk about loss of job and experience more job insecurity. It is often due to the fact that low-status workers have low qualifications, and that is why they struggle to keep up with the current work and fear of unemployment causes a high level of insecurity.

The findings empirically proofs the facts detailed in the literature review. According to the results of the Maad and Noor (2008), employees with matric intermediate and bachelor degrees express higher levels of job insecurity than those with master MPhil and PhD degree. Risk factors for feeling job insecurity include lower educational status, being self-employed or working in private practice and working in the manufacturing industry (Näswall & De Witte, 2003; Alterman, Luckhaupt, Dahlhamer, Ward & Calvert, 2013).

### **Relationship of Gender and Job Designation With Perceived Job Insecurity, Work Engagement, and Marital Conflict**

De-Witte (1999) revealed that job insecurity was negatively related to the well-being of male workers, but not female employees. Traditionally, it is believed that men consider themselves as a "breadwinner" of their households (Bernard, 1981), whereas women consider financial matters as their secondary responsibility (Conger, Lorenz, Edler, Simons, & Xiaojia, 1993). Male employees may thus suffer more from job insecurity than female employees because male employees are more aware of the potential negative effects of job loss (De-Witte, 1999). According to the job dependence viewpoint individuals who are economically insecure, or worried that



they cannot meet living expenses if they lose their present job, are vulnerable to job insecurity.

It is evident from studies that men experience more job insecurity than women. Male employees reported high level of job insecurity than female employees. However, it is also discussed that a woman having responsibility of earning bread may face same degree of job insecurity as of man (De- Witte, 1999).

The negative impact of job insecurity on efficiency and turnover intention was more profound among manual employees (blue-collar workers) than non-manual employees (white-collar workers, specialists, and managers) Sverke et al. (2002).

In addition, certain job types such as manufacturing, agriculture, and construction jobs have more consistently been associated with increased job insecurity (Gallie White, Cheng, & Tomlinson, 1998; Kinnunen, Mauno, Nätti, & Happonen, 1999; Näswall & De-Witte, 2003).

Employees in these types of jobs generally have lower levels of qualifications (Schaufeli, 1992) and lower salaries, which can make employees more dependent on their present job to maintain financial security and stability (Muñoz de Bustillo & de Pedraza, 2010). Both factors have been related with increased job insecurity (Muñoz, de Bustillo & de Pedraza, 2010).

### **Relationship of Income With Perceived Job Insecurity, Work Engagement and Marital Conflict**

Biagetti, Chirumbolo, and Scicchitano (2019) conducted a study the finding indicated that those who are secure at job indicate that their income is higher, if they do not have any problem in making ends meet. The findings of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for the first order stochastic dominance confirm that the net monthly salary of secure employees stochastically dominates.

Few papers have demonstrated the effect of perceived Job insecurity on the average income levels. Maurin and Postel-Vinay (2005) show that perceived job security and income are two substitute components in the functioning of European labour markets.

## **Rationale of the Study**

It can be seen from the previous account that the phenomenon of Perceived job insecurity has gained increasing importance, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented economic ramifications, financial consequences and job loss. Due to the rapidly changing nature of the pandemic, those currently employed may experience increased job insecurity and financial worries. Job insecurity is perhaps more common these days than ever before due to COVID-19, continuously accelerating globalization and digitization, and the pursuit of greater efficiency and cost-cutting by organizations. All of this generally means greater job insecurity for employees. Containment steps (i.e. social distancing, self-isolation, travel bans, etc.) introduced to minimize spread of COVID-19 have resulted in decreased workforce across many economic sectors, as well as a general perception of job instability, including fears of job loss or worries of job continuity. Perceived job insecurity has been identified as a major stressor during the outbreak of COVID-19, as it has a negative effect on the individual's financial capacity due to the high risk of financial loss. Containment steps were adopted to minimize the outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) have developed a general perception of job insecurity. However, no previous studies have explored potential interactions between the fear of being infected by COVID-19 and perceived job insecurity in the general population.

Periods of widespread job insecurity (i.e., permanent loss of a job or loss of characteristics of a job), such as recessions, increase risk for worse mental health outcomes. For example, during the Great Recession, experiencing a job-related impact (e.g., lost a job; took job below experience; took on additional job) was related with heightened anxiety and depressive symptoms two to three years after the recession ended. These results seem especially relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as many employees have face increased job insecurity (e.g., reduced work hours, wage cuts, and job losses) due to pandemic. Job insecurity is a stressful experience associated with depressive feelings. Similar to job insecurity, many people may also face greater financial problems as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Wage cuts were a usual response from companies during the pandemic, and people viewed the pandemic as a major threat to personal finances.

However in Pakistan the phenomenon of perceived job insecurity have not been paid much attention by the researchers. The present study is an attempt to investigate the concept of “perceived job insecurity” during COVID-19 as well as to determine the relationship between perceived job insecurity with work engagement, and marital conflict among private sector employees during COVID-19. In the Pakistani context, the phenomenon of perceived job insecurity has not been studied in detail.

Work engagement is a valuable and contemporary concept in the field of industrial organizational psychology. It has positive effects both on the organization as well as on workers as individuals. In recent years, scholars have demonstrated a keen interest in work engagement and many of them already have agreed that work engagement leads to organizational success, job performance, financial performance, and employee outcomes (Christian, Garza,&Slaughter, 2011; Hoper et al., 2012; Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Now the concept work engagement has added considerable importance and recognition among current professionals as an essential drive for success (Richman, 2008). Thus, increased work engagement should be common goal for various areas during COVID-19.

The social distancing, confinement and quarantine adopted since March 2020 to confront the COVID-19 pandemic have affected multiple vital areas. During the lock down, employees are at risk of facing greater levels of perceived job insecurity and, as a result, marital conflict. Different researches have been conducted in different countries but in Pakistan there are only few researches conducted on these variables among private sector employees during COVID-19 Pandemic. This research will improve our understanding of perceived job insecurity, work engagement, marital conflict among private sector employees during COVID-19. In this research I tried to focus on the limitations of the past researches and try to make improvements. Previous studies have highlighted that job insecurity has serious consequences not only on the individuals’ financial capacity, but also on their marital life, performance and mental health.

## **METHOD**

### **Objectives of the Study**

The present study aimed at the following:

1. To explore the relationship between Perceived Job Insecurity, work engagement and marital conflict among private sector employees during COVID-19.
2. To explore the relationship of age, gender, education, monthly income, family system, and work experience with perceived job insecurity, work engagement and marital conflict among private sector employees during COVID-19.

### **Hypotheses**

1. There will be negative relationship between perceived job insecurity and work engagement among private sector employees.
2. There will be positive relationship between perceived job insecurity and marital conflict among private sector employees.
3. There will be negative relationship between marital conflict and work engagement among private sector employees.
4. Low Educated people will perceive more perceived job insecurity as compared to highly educated people respectively.
5. Male will perceive more perceived job insecurity as compared females respectively.

## **Operational Definitions of variables**

**Perceived job insecurity.** Job insecurity is an employee's perception of a potential threat to continuity in his or her current job (Heany, Isreal, & House, 1994). This construct was measured by Perceived Job Insecurity Scale (De-Witte, 2000). High score indicates higher levels of job insecurity and low score indicates lower levels of perceived job insecurity.

**Work engagement.** Work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related experience that includes three complementary dimensions: an energetic dimension (i.e. vigor), an affective dimension (i.e. dedication), and a cognitive dimension (i.e. absorption). This construct was measured using the short version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). High score indicates higher levels of work engagement and low score indicates lower levels of work engagement.

**Marital conflict.** Marital conflict is a state of tension or stress between marital partners as a couple try to carry out their marital roles. The fact that two people agree or plan to live together as husband and wife calls for different expectations and hopes, some of which might be fulfilled while others remain unfulfilled (Tolorunleke, 2014). Marital Conflict is operationally defined as the scores on Marital Conflict Scale (Braiker & Kelley, 1979). High scores on the scale indicate high marital conflict and low score on the scale indicate low marital conflict.

## **Sample**

The total sample was comprised of 260 private sector employees working in Islamabad and Rawalpindi region. Their educational level ranged from intermediates to MPhil & PhD level and their ages varied from 20-60 years old. Their work experiences ranged from 1 year to 40 years. And their monthly income ranged from 15 thousands to 2lacs. The participants included employees from various banks, telecom organizations, development and financial service organizations were visited. The sampling technique on the basis of which the sample was approached was convenient- purposive sampling.

## **Table 1**

*Description of Demographic Variables as percentage of a Sample (N = 260)*

Demographics	F	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	153	58.84
Female	107	41.15
Total	260	100
<b>Age</b>		
Adolescence 13-19 years	1	.38
Early Adulthood 20-39 years	239	92.27
Middle Adulthood 40-59 years	17	6.56
Late Adulthood 60 and above	2	.77
Total	259	99.98
<b>Education</b>		
Intermediate	13	5.01
Bachelors	96	37.06
Masters	134	51.73
MPhil & PhD	16	6.17
Total	259	99.97
<b>Type of job</b>		
Private	238	91.53
Public	22	8.46
Total	260	100
<b>Family System</b>		
Joint	180	69.23
Nuclear	80	30.76
Total	260	100

**Instruments**

**Perceived Job Insecurity.** Perceived job insecurity is assessed by Perceived Job Insecurity Questionnaire by De-Witte (2000) and Rigotti (2003) (see appendix C). It is a 4-items scale having 5-point Likert type scale where “1” indicates a strong disagreement and “5” indicates a strong agreement with the item. Item number 2 is reversed scored. The Cronbach alpha reliability for this scale was founded to be .82 (as reported by De Witte, 2000). High scores obtained on this scale indicate a greater level of Job Insecurity.

**Work Engagement.** Work engagement is measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scales by Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, and Bakker (2001). It is 9 items scales, the items are rated on a 7-Point Likert Scale ranging from 0 (*Never*) to 6 (*Always*) (see Appendix D). The nine items breaks down with vigor (VIG; items number 1, 2 and 5), dedication (DE; items number 3, 4 and 7) and absorption (AB; items number 6, 8 and 9) each having 3 items. The alpha coefficient range for the scale is  $\alpha = .85$  to  $\alpha = .94$  (as reported by Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). High scores obtained on this scale indicate a greater level of work engagement.

**Marital Conflict.** Marital conflict shall be assessed with the 5-items scale developed by Braiker and Kelley (1979) (see Appendix E). The items are rated on 5-point Likert Type Scale ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Always*). A higher score on the scale indicated a higher degree of marital conflict. The alpha reliability for this scale was founded to be .81 (as reported by Kelley, 1979).

## **Procedure**

The managers of the organizations were contacted for the permission of data collection from employees. Both online and offline modes of data collection were used. After getting the permission from the respective organizations the employees were approached for the data collection. Both male and female employees were approached individually and were asked to fill the questionnaires. An informed consent form was used which carried detailed information about the voluntary nature of participation, they have right to quit at any time, anonymity. Participants were instructed to read carefully and fill out the scales honestly. It was also assured to participants that information provided by them would be used only for research. Before distributing the questionnaires the employees were informed about the purpose of the research. The consent of the willing and participation in the research was also taken on the informed consent from attached with the protocol. The participants were asked to give honest responses and to fill whole questionnaire. It was assured that the information given will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purpose. 280 questionnaires were disseminated in the organizations out of which 20 were discarded and 260 were used to analysis. At the end participants were thanked for their involvement and support.



## RESULTS

After data collection, data entry into SPSS was carried out for statistical analysis. The psychometric properties of the scales used in the study were determined by computing reliabilities and inter scale correlations. Mean scores of all the scales was computed. Independent sample t-test was computed to determine the differences across gender, family system. One way ANOVA was applied to establish differences on the basis of the Education and Pearson Product Moment Correlation was conducted to determine the relationship among study variables.

**Table 2**

*Alpha Reliability Coefficient and other Psychometric Properties of the Scales Used (N = 260)*

Scales	No. of items	$\alpha$	M	SD	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
					Actual	Potential		
PJI	4	.80	9.71	4.17	4-20	4-20	.29	-.85
WE	9	.74	36.89	8.43	7-54	0-54	-.43	-.03
Vigor	3	.72	11.24	3.29	1-18	0-18	-.17	.13
Dedication	3	.71	13.54	3.83	1-18	0-18	-.73	.08
Absorption	3	.72	11.97	3.61	1-18	0-18	-.19	-.41
MC	5	.74	13.01	3.82	5-25	5-25	-.12	-.46

*Note:* PJI= Perceived job insecurity, WE= work engagement, MC= marital conflict

Table 2 shows the alpha reliabilities, means and skewness of the scales used in the study. It ranges from .80 to .71. The reliabilities are in satisfactory ranges. The values of skewness and kurtosis are also in acceptable range which is within the range of +2 and -2 which indicates a normally distributed data set (George & Mallery, 2016).

**Table 3**

*Inter Scale Correlations among Perceived Job Insecurity, Marital Conflict, Work Engagement, Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption.*

Scales	1	2	3	4	5	6
Job Insecurity (1)	-					
Work Engagement (2)	-.26**	-				
Vigor (3)	-.23**	.74**	-			
Dedication (4)	-.25**	.81**	.47**	-		
Absorption (5)	-.11	.77**	.42**	.49**	-	
Marital Conflict (6)	.22**	-.17**	-.14*	-.19**	-.03	-

*Note: \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$*

Table 3 shows the values of Pearson product Moment Correlation among variables of the study. Perceived job insecurity has negatively significant relationship with work engagement that is  $-.26^{**}$  and its dimension vigor and dedication, ( $-.23^{**}$ ,  $-.25^{**}$ ). Whereas it has no significant relationship with absorption. The scale and sub scales are correlated at significance level ( $p < .01$ ). Marital conflict has significant positive relationship with perceived job insecurity that is  $.22^{**}$  and marital conflict has negative significant relationship with work engagement and its dimensions.

**Table 4**

*Gender differences in perceived job insecurity, work engagement, vigor, dedication, absorption and marital conflict (N =260)*

Scale	Male		Female		<i>t</i> (258)	<i>p</i>	CL		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	(n=153)		(n= 107)				(95%)		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	
PJI	9.43	3.93	10.12	4.48	1.30	.12	-1.71	.35	.16
WE	36.67	9.00	37.19	7.57	.48	.09	-2.61	1.57	.06
VIG	11.33	3.27	11.11	3.32	.53	.90	-.59	1.03	.06
DED	13.44	3.96	13.69	3.64	.51	.15	-1.19	.70	.06
ABS	11.90	3.68	12.08	3.52	.39	.65	-1.08	.71	.04
MC	12.66	3.67	13.51	4.00	1.77	.34	-1.80	-.09	.03

*Note:* PJI= Perceived Job Insecurity, WE= Work Engagement, VIG= vigor, DED= dedication, ABS= absorption, MC= Marital Conflict.

Table 4 shows the gender differences between male and female on perceived job insecurity, work engagement, its subscales and also on marital conflict. The result shows that there is non-significant difference between males and females on all study variables.

**Table 5**

*Type of job mean differences in perceived job insecurity, work engagement, vigor, dedication, absorption and marital conflict.*

Scales	Private (n=238)		Semi-Govt (n= 22)		<i>t</i> (258)	<i>p</i>	CL (95%)		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
	PJI	9.83	4.19	8.50			3.82	1.43	
WE	36.94	8.36	36.27	9.31	.35	.59	-3.03	4.38	.06
VIG	11.26	3.25	11.04	3.74	.29	.26	-1.23	1.66	.06
DED	13.55	3.83	13.40	3.88	.17	.91	-1.53	1.83	.03
ABS	11.99	3.61	11.81	3.65	.21	.84	-1.41	1.76	.04
MC	12.88	3.89	14.36	2.80	1.73	.03	-3.15	.196	.43

*Note:* PJI= perceived job insecurity, WE= work engagement, VIG= vigor, DED= dedication, ABS = absorption, MC= marital conflict.

Table 5 indicates mean differences with respect to type of job along study variables. Result indicate significant differences across type of job on marital conflict, which indicates that private sector employees showed significantly more marital conflict as compared to semi-Government, however result showed non-significant differences across all other variables.

**Table 6**

*Family systems mean differences across perceived job insecurity, work engagement, vigor, dedication, absorption and marital conflict.*

Scale	Joint (n=180)		Nuclear (n=80)		p	CL (95%)		Cohen's d	
	t(258)					LL	UL		
	M	SD	M	SD					
PJI	9.73	4.16	9.68	4.22	.08	.71	-1.06	1.15	.01
WE	36.76	8.93	37.15	7.24	.36	.08	-2.64	1.82	.04
VIG	11.27	3.32	11.16	3.23	.26	.98	-.75	.98	.03
DED	13.42	3.96	13.82	3.52	.78	.16	-1.41	.61	.10
ABS	12.06	3.67	11.77	3.48	.60	.42	-.66	1.24	.08
MC	12.91	3.78	13.22	3.95	.59	.41	-1.32	.70	.92

*Note:* PJI= perceived job insecurity, WE= work engagement, VIG= vigor, DED= dedication, ABS= absorption, MC= marital conflict.

Table 6 illustrates the comparison between joint and nuclear family system on perceived job insecurity, work engagement, and its sub scales and also on the scale of marital conflict. The results show that there is non-significant difference between joint and nuclear family system.

**Table 7***One-way Analysis of Variance for the Effect of Education on variables of the study**(N = 260)*

Scale	Intermediate		Bachelors		Masters		MPhil & PhD		F	P	$\eta^2$	Tuk ey's Post Hoc
	(n=13)		(n= 96)		(n= 134)		(n= 16)					
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD				
PJI	9.07	3.81	10.72	4.16	8.85	3.86	11.06	5.44	4.61**	.00	0.05	2>3
WE	32.53	9.27	36.86	7.46	37.00	9.13	37.50	10.46	1.26	.28	0.01	
Vig	9.84	2.82	11.41	2.89	11.12	3.44	12.12	4.31	1.31	.27	0.01	
Ded	12.84	3.93	13.53	3.61	13.73	4.01	12.68	3.77	.512	.67	0.00	
Abs	9.84	3.93	11.91	3.28	12.14	3.78	12.68	3.66	1.83	.14	0.02	
MC	12.84	4.48	13.93	3.69	12.38	3.75	12.56	3.91	3.21	.02	0.02	2<3

*Note:* PJI = perceived job insecurity, WE = work engagement, VIG = vigor, DED = dedication, ABS = absorption, MC = marital conflict

Table 7 show results of one way analysis of variance. ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of education level on Perceived Job Insecurity, Work Engagement its subscales and Marital Conflict. It was found that statistically significant mean difference ( $p < .01$ ) exists among different education groups for Perceived Job Insecurity. Tukey's post hoc analysis was conducted to find out exactly which two groups are different. Post hoc analysis reveals that group 2 (M= 10.72, SD= 4.16) with Bachelors level of education was statistically different from group 3 (M= 8.85, SD= 3.86) with master level of education. It was also found that statistically mean difference ( $p < .05$ ) exists among different education groups for marital conflict.

Tukey's post hoc analysis was conducted to find out exactly which two groups are different. Post hoc analysis reveals that group 2 (M= 13.93, SD= 3.69) with Bachelors level of education was statistically different from group 3 (M= 12.38, SD= 3.75) with master level of education. However, other than perceived job insecurity and marital conflict no group difference was found for any other study variable.

**DISCUSSION**

The main objective of the present study was to explore the relationship between perceived job insecurity, work engagement and marital conflict among private sector employees during COVID-19. It also attempted to verify the role of various demographics such as (gender, family system, monthly income, and job experience) in relation to perceived job insecurity, work engagement and marital conflict among private sector employees during COVID-19. The study was conducted on a sample of employees from different private sectors.

Data of 260 married employees was collected by using convenience sampling techniques from different organization of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. To find the relation between study variables, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, t-test and one way ANOVA were used in present study. Data analysis was performed through various phases after data collection and entry. Initially, data cleaning was carried out for the correction of mistakes during data entry. Recording of the negative items was carried out and their sums were computed. To determine the psychometric properties of the study variables, alpha reliabilities of the scales and their sub scales were calculated. It is evident that for all the scales the vales of the reliabilities was ranging from .80 to .74 (see table 2) the reliabilities of the scales and their subscales show that scales are internally consistent and reliable scales. In addition to the alpha reliabilities, the descriptive statistics were also computed for both the scales and their subscales to determine potential and actual range, kurtosis, mean, standard deviation and skewness of the data, for checking the normality of the data. In the present study the values for all the variables revealed that data is normally distributed. All values were in acceptable range which showed that the results may prove themselves to be more generalized. The demographic details were found and computed in table 1.

The first hypothesis of this research was that perceived job insecurity shall be negatively related with work engagement. The results of the present study support this hypothesis and showed that there is significant negative correlation between perceived job insecurity and work engagement.



The findings of this research are same as Vander-Elst (2013). Vander-Elst (2013) research showed that perceived job insecurity has significant relationship with work engagement. Past researches showed that job insecurity is negatively related to work engagement (Mauno, 2005; De-Cuyper 2008). Abbas, Malik, and Sarwat, (2021) research showed that job insecurity had negative effect on dedication/engagement level of the employees. Researchers have found consistent negative relationbetween perceived job insecurity and work engagement, job insecurity, is likely to produce a reduction in work engagement, because it erodes the notion of reciprocity, which is crucial in maintaining well-being (Maslach, schaufeli & leiter, 2001).

The findings of Bosman, Buitendach and Rothmann (2005) study showed that individuals who experience job insecurity, experience less work engagement, and more exhaustion and disengagement at work. Previous studies have explored that Job insecurity was negatively associated with work engagement, consistent with the literature and our expectations (Nonnis & Presti, 2012). Numerous studies have found that job insecurity is an organizational resource that can increase the stress level of workers and is linked to work engagement (Bashir & Rammay, 2010). Asfaw and Chang (2019) hypothesized that job insecurity can significantly decrease employees work engagement. Employees will be less engaged in organization if they have perception of job insecurity. This will lead to higher turnover and employees will be more in to quitting from the current job (Awan & Salam, 2014).

Second hypothesis of the present study was that perceived job insecurity shall be positively related with marital conflict. The results of this study showed a significant positive relation between perceived job insecurity and marital conflict respectively. The study of (Wilson, 2020) supports the result of present research. These findings were also supported by research conducted by (Minnotte & Yucel, 2018). Literature indicated that higher feelings of job insecurity were found to correlate with life dissatisfaction spoiled marital and family relations (Westman, Etzion and Danon, 2001).As supported by literature (Naseer, Nauman & Zheng, 2020) which predictedthat job insecurity was positively related to both marital and family functioning. There is good reason to believe job insecurity and marital conflicts are related.

As it was confirmed by (Atta, Malik, & Zahoor, 2019), that employees who experience high job insecurity also report more marital conflict, implying that work stress affects their marital life. The findings of correlations supported the hypothesized direction of the relationships between variables. Literature indicated the positive relationship among job insecurity and marital conflict (Larson, Wilson, & Beley, 2012)

The third hypothesis of this research was that marital conflict shall be negatively related with work engagement. The results of the present study showed a significant relation between marital conflict and work engagement. Past literature showed that marital conflict has negative relationship with employees work engagement, marital conflict is a significant predictor of work engagement, with higher levels of marital conflict correlating with lower levels of work engagement (Opie & Henn, 2013). The finding of current research is consistent with existing literature, as previous studies found a negative relationship between marital conflicts. The findings of this study are same as Martin, (2013). As previous researches mentioned, engaged employees experience high energy levels, feelings of being engrossed in their work, enthusiasm, commitment, dedication, and total concentration (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). It was therefore expected that individuals experiencing conflict as a result of incompatible demands in their work and family lives may be less engaged in their work. From the results of the present study and previous literature, it can be concluded that the stress associated with marital conflict may prevent individuals from achieving optimal concentration and dedicating the necessary time and energy to their work roles. Essentially, marital conflict is likely to reduce the extent to which an individual is engaged in his or her work.

The fourth hypothesis of this research was about the education differences in perceived job insecurity. One way ANOVA was used to check the relationship of education with all the variables of the research among private and public sector employees. The result of this study showed that education had significant relationship with perceived job insecurity and marital conflict. The findings of this research are supported by Nella, Galanis, Montgomery, and Beno, (2015) Lower educational status is risk factor of perceived job insecurity. Whereas there is non-significant relation between work engagements, its dimensions. (See table 7). (Moser & Paul, 2009;

Zahoor, Malik, & Atta, 2019) have indicated that, *lower educated individuals are more likely to be found in “vulnerable” employment positions* (e.g. blue collar positions, jobs with a limited amount of *work-related* resources) with an *increased likelihood of job insecurity* or unemployment. Results of current study are in accordance with earlier literature. Another study (Burgard, Brand, & House, 2009) showed that people with less education report significantly more job insecurity than those people with more education.

To check the gender differences in perceived job insecurity, work engagement and marital conflict, *t*- test was used to compare the means. Exploring the gender differences was fifth hypothesis of this research. Results of independent sample *t*- test showed non-significant gender differences among male and female in perception of perceived job insecurity, work engagement, and marital conflict. As reported by literature (Adewale, & Adekiya, 2015) which predicted that the role of individual within the family has also been identified as a relevant driver of perceived job insecurity. According to Awan and Salam (2014) male and female equally perceived job insecurity as both of them contribute in the expenses of family. In the opinion of Erlinghagen (2007) this can be divided into the degree of individual financial contribution to the family. Previous study (Benos, Galanis, Nella, & Panagopoulou, 2015) indicated a finding connected to the traditional role of breadwinner. Hence, findings are consistent with literature.

## **Conclusion**

The study was conducted on private and public sector employees. The present study had a goal to explore the relationship between perceived job insecurity, work engagement, its dimensions and marital conflict among private sector employees. The study revealed that there is negative correlation among perceived job insecurity and work engagement, and its dimensions, whereas there is positive correlation between perceived job insecurity and marital conflict.

Furthermore, demographics were also explored from this study. Gender, education, monthly income family system, and work experiences. The results indicated that private sector employees are high on marital conflict than semi-government; people with low education are high on perceived job insecurity than people with high education.

## **Implications of the Study**

Despite of limitations, current study has some implications in daily life.

1. The findings have several implications for professionals and policy makers. The findings of the study can be used to develop intervention programs to minimize the causes of perceived job insecurity and marital conflicts of employees and policy makers and practitioners should develop interventions and strategies that prevent perceptions of job insecurity from arising.
2. This study has provided the basis for the future researches to explore these variables further and by giving it a new direction by adding more variables for examples mental health and job stress.
3. This study provided the effect of various demographic variables like age, gender, family system and education with marital conflict and job insecurity.
4. Findings of the present study help in the guidance programs, to teach about the factors that lead employees towards better performance and more work engagement and decrease their insecurity about continuity of job.

## **Limitations and suggestions**

It is not possible for a human being to conduct a flawless research; each research has their own strong point and limitations too. Here are few limitations of the stud and respective suggestions.

1. First, the measure being used was one- dimensional i.e. self-report measures which affect the responses by faking. Future researchers can use multi-dimensional measures to increase the quality of the study and make it more comprehensive.
2. Secondly, the study comprises of married employees of only a particular region of Pakistan. Purposive convenient sample was collected from two cities of Pakistan i.e., Islamabad, and Rawalpindi, due to time limitations.
3. This is quantitative and cross-sectional study; more accurate results would be acquired through longitudinal research and qualitative method to improve the findings. So future researcher can use qualitative and longitudinal research design.

4. Another limitation of the present study is that it includes only married employees, the size of sample should be increased to well represent of the population. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies should include a wider range and sample to increase the variety of the sample. And the sample should include both married and unmarried employees.
5. Future researchers should increase the generalizability of the results and a more diverse sample from different cities across Pakistan should be recruited. The future researchers should not be restricted to take sample from two different cities and should cover different cities for the purpose of data collection.

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