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Drained and Disrupted: Examining the Impact of Organizational Exploitation on Employee Vitality and Work-Family Conflict

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Abstract

Technological advancements and heightened competition have intensified organizations' drive to maximize profits and minimize costs, often leading to the exploitation of employees. Such perceptions of exploitation pose a significant threat to employee vitality, potentially resulting in a diminished quality of work life and escalating work-family conflict. This study aims to empirically examine this phenomenon. Employing a quantitative deductive approach, data were collected from 444 employees across various levels within Information Technology organizations in Pakistan. The analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results indicate that perceived organizational exploitation significantly increases employee work-family conflict and adversely affects employee vitality. However, no significant relationship was found between employee vitality and work-family conflict. Additionally, gender did not significantly moderate the relationships assessed in the model. This research offers valuable theoretical and practical insights. By applying the Conservation of Resources Theory and the Work-Family Spillover Theory to perceptions of exploitation, the study enriches existing literature. It suggests the development and implementation of policies aimed at curbing exploitative practices to mitigate their negative consequences, thereby enhancing organizations' social sustainability.

Keywords: Employee vitality, Perceived organizational exploitation, social sustainability, Work-family conflict

Introduction

Sustainability is no longer about doing less harm, it is about doing more good. There has been an increasing emphasis on promoting corporate sustainability throughout the world. Due to the challenges of natural and business environments, organizations are under continuous pressure to implement policies and mechanisms to protect stakeholder's interests (Rahman et al., 2023). Pursuing sustainability requires organizations to focus on ecological, economic, and social goals (Clauß et al., 2022). Social sustainability is regarded as the central pillar of the three-dimensional sustainability paradigm. The social consequences arising from business activities are more precarious than physical ones. Just as pollution harms the organization and the community, poor- psychological and physical well-being and lack of work-life balance have a crucial effect on employees (Kumari & Singh, 2023). Within the organization context, social sustainability is critical for sustainable development. It can enhance employee health and well-being by creating a positive work environment, an important element of sustainable

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workplaces defined by the United Nations' sustainable development goals (Rank et al., 2022). Organizations today are operating in a highly complex and dynamic environment. To be competitive they have to deal with new challenges and uncertainties (Rank et al., 2022). Technological advancement has given rise to new employment relationships such as outsourcing, contingent and free-lance work, and a decline in trade unions. These changes have increased the potential of organizations to exploit employees in various ways (Livne-Ofer et al., 2019). Free-lance or contingent workers may be performing same tasks as the full-time workers, working for same or even more number of hours but they are deprived of several entitlements such as holiday pay, night-shift differentials and over time payment. They get unjust remuneration, delayed payments and sometimes non-payment for their services (Razzolini, 2021). The exploitation of people is not a scourge that existed in history only but the modified forms of exploitation still exist in today's world. These range from forced labor and debt bondage to some less vivid and subtle forms of exploitation, which may include taking unfair advantage of employees, asking employees to work for longer hours without extra pay, adverse working conditions, and not providing job security. A tangible illustration of this phenomenon is evident in the Wells Fargo case, where employees were compelled to promote inferior products within their network, only to be terminated when they had no more contacts to sell (Livne-Ofer et al., 2019). Another example is Foxconn which forced its employees to work for extended hours and under poor working conditions.

The prevalent sweating system in companies whereby employees are paid extremely low wages in exchange for working overtime is also a major issue (Cheng et al., 2023). In addition to this, verbal harassment such as bullying, insulting, and unfair dismissal also falls under the umbrella of exploitation (Ruiz et al., 2019). In light of the above situation, it can be argued that exploitation and its detrimental consequences can compromise employee well-being and deter organizations from achieving social sustainability goals. Research has given more attention to the environmental and economic side of sustainability as compared to the social dimension. Furthermore, within the social dimension, the focus is more on the external side of the organization. As a result, less attention has been given to employees and achieving social sustainability inside the organization (Prieto et al., 2022). Therefore, various aspects of organizational exploitation and its consequences for employees are fundamental to study to enhance the social sustainability of organizations.

Exploitation represents a scenario in which one party leverages power to gain at the cost of

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another (Tomaskovic-Devey & Avent-Holt, 2019). The significant power differences among the parties in a transaction lead to exploitation as the entity that has less power is deprived of his/her free will to decline the request of the more powerful entity in a relationship (Stanley et al., 2023). Exploitation lends itself to the benefit of the organization at the cost of employees (Huang et al., 2023). Exploitation mostly occurs in developing countries (Le et al., 2023). It is very common in countries within Asia Pacific regions. Various qualitative studies have found that exploitation exists in different industries and it is agonizing for the employees. Even though exploitation is prevalent and harmful, it is under-studied in the management research literature (Wu et al., 2023). The research that has been done so far on the subject of exploitation has tested the relationship between perceived organizational exploitation (POE) and employee turnover intentions, engagement, organizational commitment, anger and hostility, shame and guilt, employee silence (Livne-Ofer et al., 2019), exploitation, and employee workplace deviance (Huang et al., 2023), exploitation, and employee's extra-role customer service. Literature suggests that POE leads to employee resource depletion and employees may vary in their ability to experience resource loss due to exploitation (Cheng et al., 2023).

Conservation of resource (COR) theory describes the different categories of resources that result in stress (Hobfoll & Ford, 2007). The studies that have tested the resource depletion mechanism of COR theory have considered the different resources, such as psychological work fatigue (Barling & Frone, 2017), ego depletion (Deng et al., 2017), emotional exhaustion (Liu et al., 2020), and thriving at work (Zhang et al., 2023). Studies measuring employee vitality as a resource are hard to find, suggesting another research gap. Vitality refers to both the physical and mental functioning of a person and is described as having energy and the ability to fully function. Vitality is positively related to job performance (Carmeli, 2009), improves mental health, and lowers individuals' vulnerability to illness (Tummers et al., 2018).

POE can influence work-family conflict of employees. WFC is influenced by abusive supervision (D. Carlson et al., 2012; Ju et al., 2020) and psychological contract breach (Hill et al., 2016). WFC is also increased by low perceived organizational support (Gurbuz et al., 2013). All these variables have some degree of commonality in terms of disappointment for the employees. The literature lacks research on the impact of POE on WFC. On this basis, it can be argued that measuring the impact of POE on WFC is an important research gap. WFC

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can negatively impact employees' task performance and employee well-being (Moreira et al., 2023), and job and family satisfaction (Shi et al., 2023) and increase employee turnover intentions (Belwal & Belwal, 2023).

Literature Review

Social Sustainability

Social sustainability is defined as “development that ensures compatibility with the civil society development and also facilitates an environment that encourages co-existence of socially and culturally diverse groups, thereby promoting inclusion and quality of life for all population segments (Caulfield et al., 2001). Another definition was given by Colantonio (2010), who defined social sustainability as a condition and process that improves the quality of life of a community (Colantonio, 2010).

Within the organization, social sustainability can contribute to the health and well-being of employees by creating sustainable workplaces and positive work environments. Hence, organizational context is a key element in enhancing social sustainability and sustainable business strategies, practices, and policies can enhance organizational and employee outcomes (Rank et al., 2022). Such practices can also enhance employee well-being and psychological empowerment at the individual level (Paulet et al., 2021). Sharma et al (2022) described a list of factors that can affect social sustainability within the organizations' system in a detailed literature review. Some of these factors include job security, employee health and safety, wage distribution, equality policy, human rights and ethical issues, top management support, psychological risk prevention, and management. In this study, it is argued that POE is a variable that can hamper the organization from achieving social sustainability goals as it can lead to negative psychological experiences like job anxiety, social isolation, cynicism, and WFC.

Exploitation and Perceived Organizational Exploitation (POE)

Despite its existence in ancient history, the concept of exploitation became the focus of attention during the early stages of social sciences (Livne-Ofer et al., 2019). The early theorists defined exploitation as the outcome of class structure and status within a society. Karl Marx associated capitalism with the concept of exploitation, as within capitalism, the wealthier groups take value from the work of the labor class (Marx, 1932). Max Weber (1968) defined exploitation as the by-product of status. He proposed that exploitation was expected to occur at any time when there were power asymmetries in relationships.

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With time, exploitation has taken new forms and shapes. The tendency of organizations to exploit employees in various ways is increasing daily. This increased tendency is due to the rise in new forms of employment, such as freelancing and outsourcing, which are the by-product of technological advancement (Livne-Ofer et al., 2019). An example of the new form of exploitation can be seen in the case of Wells Fargo. This company forced its employees to sell sub-standard products in their circle and later fired them when they did not have more contacts to sell (Morris, 2016). The research literature has recognized the potential of organizations to exploit employees, but the response to exploitation or associated consequences for employees is lacking in the research literature (Adam Cobb, 2016).

Exploitation in digital industries also includes having no job security, cutting benefits unilaterally by the organization, working long hours within a contract without having law protections, and adverse working conditions (Scholz, 2012). The other definitions define exploitation as treating someone unfairly to get the benefit from their work (The Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). In other words, taking advantage of someone who is doing the work for one's benefit (Friedman, 1994). The concept and construct of POE were first developed and validated by Livne et al. in their study conducted in 2019 (Le et al., 2023). They gave a more holistic definition, considering the changing forms of exploitation within modern times. They defined "Organizational exploitation are the employees' perceptions that the organization has purposefully taken advantage of them for its benefit (Livne-Ofer et al., 2019). Because technological advancement and the experience of COVID-19 have transformed the nature of work and jobs in contemporary times, organizations have implemented new working policies. Livne's definition is quite suitable in contemporary times. Hence, this study has taken Livne's definition to explore POE.

POE increases organizational and interpersonal deviance of employees which is translated through employees' perceptions of distributive and procedural justice. If employees possess high justice sensitivity, the above impact is magnified (Huang et al., 2023). It has an indirect negative association with employees' extra role in customer service, and this is transferred through employees' depressed mood. Employee re-appraisal can eliminate the above negative impact (Cheng et al., 2023). POE also negatively affects the organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) of employees, and this relationship is created through organizational identification. This effect of POE on OCB is reduced when the power distance is high (Wu et al., 2023). POE increases employees' turnover intentions and cyber loafing and

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reduces the proactive behavior of employees and their organization-based self-esteem (OBSE). The impact of POE on intention to leave and cyber loafing is created by transferring through OBSE (Le et al., 2023). It also increases employee silence, emotions of anger, feelings of shame and guilt, acts of revenge, and burnout. Furthermore, it reduces organizational commitment and employee engagement (Livne-Ofer et al., 2019). As discussed above, POE leads to undesirable outcomes like employees' depressed mood, cyber loafing, and interpersonal deviance; it can be predicted that it can also increase employees' WFC. It can also be predicted that POE can reduce employee vitality.

According to WFST, behaviors, emotions, and stress from work are transferred to the family domains of employees as people bring their attitudes and behaviors from one domain to another (Lawson et al., 2013). Work-family spillover includes negative as well as positive spillover from work to family and vice versa (Sirgy et al., 2020). Hence, it can be expected that experiences or effects of POE can spill over to employees' family life, increasing WFC. The following hypothesis has been developed.

H1: POE positively influences WFC

Work-family Conflict (WFC)

WFC is a widely researched topic that still attracts scholars' attention due to its significance. Work and family are the two critical components of any professional (Elahi et al., 2022). The work-family interface holds a dominantly negative view based on the belief that people possess finite resources of time and energy, and the demand of work and family compete for these limited resources. This belief has directed the focus on WFC (D. S. Carlson & Grzywacz, 2008). One of the early pioneers of the concept was Jessie Bernard, who wrote about the challenges faced by working women in their family and work roles (Bernard, 1971). The term began to gain prominence in the 1970s and 1980s, and the WFC was defined as a type of inter-role conflict in which there are incompatible role pressures from the family and work domains (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The concept evolved and included two important elements: first, it is directional, and second, it produces negative effects transferred from one domain to another. When participation in a work role makes it challenging to participate in a family role, it is called Work-to-family conflict, and when participation in a family role makes it challenging to perform family responsibilities, it is termed family-to-work conflict (FWC) (Frone et al., 1992).

WFC increases anxiety and depression, which then reduces life satisfaction (Kuśnierz et al.,

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2022). Another study also found a link between high WFC and depression, anxiety, and insomnia (Antino et al., 2022). In a study conducted on nurses, the number of rotating shifts was found to be associated with elevated levels of WFC. Additionally, it revealed a negative association between the quality of work life and WFC (Al-Hammouri & Rababah, 2023). Time-based and strain-based WFC negatively affects the job and family satisfaction of employees. Another study investigating the dimensions of WFC found that time-based, behavior-based, and strain-based WFC increase the unsafe behavior of coal mining workers, and employees' work engagement levels carried this through (Min et al., 2023).

WFC is increased due to off-work technology-assisted supplemental work and this leads to stress perceptions (Giunchi et al., 2023). WFC also reduces occupational commitment which then increases turnover intentions (Belwal & Belwal, 2023). WFC is influenced by hindrance techno stressors and challenge techno stressors, and it reduces job satisfaction (Shi et al., 2023). WFC hurts the work-life balance and performance of employees (Isa Muzakar & Indrayati Nur, n.d.) and knowledge workers' innovative behavior, which is translated through their FWC and their spouse's emotional exhaustion within the family (Song et al., 2023). Another study assessed the longitudinal impact of WFC on depressive symptoms and it found that depression immediately increased after exposure to WFC. These symptoms reached the peak at the second episode of exposure and returned to previous levels during the fifth episode for older women in the 60s age range (Park et al., 2023). WFC elevates emotional exhaustion, and this effect is reduced by family-supportive supervisors (Gull et al., 2023). WFC is increased by work-related stress and WFC increases job burnout (Yuan et al., 2023).

Employee Vitality

The construct of vitality was developed by Ryan and Fredrick in 1997 as they identified that this construct is not investigated in the literature (Bostic et al., 2000). They defined vitality as an individual's subjective experience of being full of energy and alive. Vital people are more vigorous, and lively and possess general energy for life. It is a function of physical factors like fatigue and pain and psychological factors like love or being effective (Ryan & Frederick, 1997). It is the energy that emerges from the self (Deci & Ryan, 2013). Vital individuals' spirit is not only exhibited in their productivity but they also energize people around them. These individuals have optimal functioning (Carmeli, 2009).

Vitality is related to positive and negative affect, and personality dimensions such as

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neuroticism, extraversion, and conscientiousness. It is also related to physical health (Ryan & Frederick, 1997). Vitality enhances work performance and reduces absenteeism. It also increases individuals' likelihood of participating in voluntary work (Steenbergen et al., 2015). The vitality of employees in organizations is increased by job autonomy, teamwork, and decision-making participation (Tummers et al., 2015). It is also positively influenced by capacity and feelings of high-quality relationships. Vitality increases the job performance of employees (Carmeli, 2009). Vitality is negatively influenced by ego depletion sensitivity and positively affected by avoidance temperament (Adil et al., 2021).

Various leadership elements also affect vitality. It is enhanced by the leader's motivating language directly as well as indirectly through psychological meaningfulness (Binyamin & Brender-Ilan, 2018). Vitality is also increased by a leader's proper task communication as well as job autonomy (Tummers et al., 2018). Transformational leadership augments the vitality of employees, which then increases their task performance and contextual performance (Ying Keat & Zainal, 2024).

Low levels of vitality reduce proactive behavior (Wörtler et al., 2020) and pro-environmental behavior of employees (Afshar Jahanshahi et al., 2019). Since reduced vitality has negative consequences, it can be predicted that it can lead to other negative employee states and behaviors, such as WFC, job anxiety, behavioral cynicism, and social isolation of employees. This study considers vitality as an important resource of employees, the depletion of which can lead to further resource losses mentioned above.

Conservation of resource theory (COR) explains the essence of psychological stress. It postulates that stress occurs when an individual faces the loss of valuable resources and in situations that present a threat to these resources. The resources consist of individuals' objects, characteristics, and energies, which they value and use to gain other resources. People work to gain and protect the resources which they value. The COR theory also categorizes resources on an internal and external basis. Internal resources are those that individuals possess, such as a sense of mastery, optimism, and vitality. External resources are those that are external to the individuals, for example, employment and social support. (Hobfoll & Ford, 2007).

Based on the principles of COR theory, POE is a stressor that can deplete employees' resources in the form of reduced vitality as in the situations of exploitation, employees may become unable to protect their resources or acquire new resources Furthermore, based on the

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same principle of WFST discussed in the previous section, resource loss at the workplace due to exploitation in the form of reduced vitality can spill over to an employee's family, thereby increasing WFC. The following hypothesis have been developed.

H2 (a): POE negatively influences employee vitality.

H2 (b): Employee vitality negatively influences WFC.

Moderating Effect of Gender

Gender is an important element when it comes to research about WFC. Literature has found some evidence regarding gender differences when it comes to experiencing work-family conflict. One research found that men scored higher on WFC than women (Yoo, 2022). Another study found that women reported higher WFC than men when they perceive that there is a high family sacrifice climate at their workplace. For such women, WFC further increases if they have higher segmentation preferences between work and family domain (Nsair & Piszczek, 2021). Some other research shows that those women experience low WFC who organize their work and family roles in a salience hierarchy and their non-traditional gender roles pre-dominates them i.e. they give high preference to their careers (Erdogan et al., 2021). However, some research has found no significant differences between WFC of men and women (Fan et al., 2024; Lyu & Fan, 2022). Since, there is evidence that gender is an individual factor that has the tendency to affect WFC, this study has taken gender as a moderator between POE and WFC.

H3(a): The positive relationship between POE and WFC is stronger for females than males

H3(b): The negative relationship between employee vitality and WFC is stronger for females than males.

Literature also shows that male employees possess higher inner resources (general life vitality), work enjoyment, job satisfaction and lower work stress as compared to female employees (DeHaan et al., 2024). Another research also found that women experience more work stress than males (Corrente et al., 2024) and more emotional exhaustion as well (Stowe, 2016). On the contrary, a study found no differences in women and men in terms of their experience of high level of stress in a context of less gender segregation (Fida et al., 2023). Since POE is a stressor and employee vitality, the outcome of stressor in our study, we can predict that gender can affect this relationship. Hence the following hypothesis has been developed.

H3(c): The negative relationship between POE and employee vitality is stronger for females

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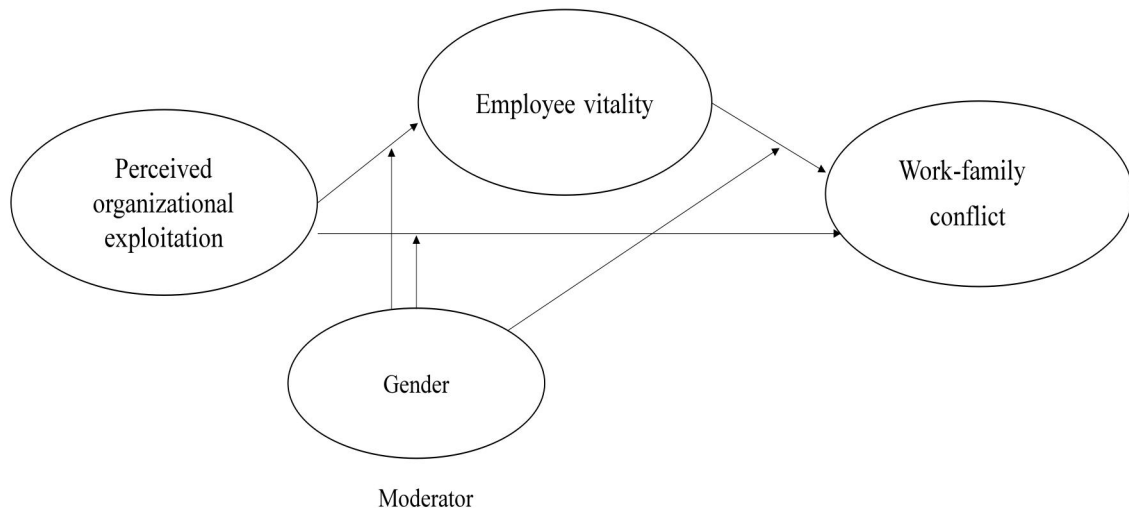
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than males.

Theoretical Framework

The following theoretical framework has been developed for this research.



Research Methodology

Population

This study has been conducted on the employees working in Pakistan's software companies which are part of the Information Technology (IT) sector. It is one of the fastest-growing industries in Pakistan and contributes around 4.7% to the country's GDP (SBP, 2024). The IT sector of Pakistan plays a crucial role in shaping the economic landscape of the country. It has a significant share in the country's exports. IT services exports reached 3.4 billion in 2024, a 24% growth from the previous year (Profit, 2024). The major export markets are the USA, UK, Canada, Singapore and UAE. Over 10,000 IT companies are registered with Pakistan's SECP Securities and Exchange Commission. These include software development, hardware, IT, e-commerce, and information communication. There are approximately 3166 software development companies in Pakistan. IT sector has set a target to reach \$20 billion by 2025 (IFC, 2024). The IT industry receives an average of around 2500 graduates each year (PSEB, 2020).

Literature suggests that employees working in the IT sector of Pakistan face various forms of exploitation, such as unfair rewards and compensation (Farooq et al., 2022; Tahir, 2019). They also work under the fear of job insecurity (Khan & Ali, 2021). They have to work for extended hours without reasonable compensation (Abrar et al., 2021). Hence, this

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shows that IT is the suitable sector to conduct this study.

Sampling

Non-probability sampling is the one in which the probability of the selection of a subject is unknown and includes convenience, quota, and snowball sampling (Acharya et al., 2013). Many organizations in Pakistan are unregistered or hidden, not monitored at any governmental level, and are not even taxed (Ali et al., 2023). They account for around 35% of the total GDP of the country (Wahid, 2023). As the total size of the population is unknown, drawing a sample based on probability is impossible. Hence, this study used a non-probability sampling technique. Within non-probability sampling, this study used purposive sampling. It is a type of non-probability sampling in which a researcher chooses the sample participants based on his/ her judgment and criteria (Rai & Thapa, 2015). It helps in selecting the subjects that give useful information within the limited research resources available to the researcher (Campbell et al., 2020). The minimum sample size based on Kline (2016) was 240 for this study which was determined by including 10 responses for each item.

Data Collection Instrument

This study used three measures to collect the data for testing the developed hypotheses. The widely used measurement scales with consistent reliability and validity have been adopted.

Table 1: Measurement Scales Used In This Study

Measure	Author	Items
POE	Livne et al (2019)	14
Employee Vitality	Carmeli and Kark (2008)	5
WFC	Netemeyer et al (1996)	5

Analytical Method

This study used the quantitative analysis method and utilize Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). SEM belongs to a second-generation multivariate data analysis technique that is used for the validity and reliability assessment of model measures. SEM is appropriate for both theory extension and theory testing (AmirAlavifar, 2012). In SEM, we can perform multiple regression and factor analysis simultaneously (Dash & Paul, 2021). Within SEM, this study used Partial Least Square-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM).

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Data Analysis and Results

Demographic Profiles

444 complete responses were received and data analysis was performed on these responses. Out of this 72 (16.2%) were females and 372 (83.8%) were males. Majority of the respondents (74.4%) belonged to the age group of 24-43 years and just 2.3% were above 59 years. Majority (53.5%) held Masters qualification and 0.2% had doctorate qualification. Majority (50.2%) had experience of 1-5 years in the current organization and the lowest percentage was of the group having 6-10 years of experience in the current organization i.e. 10.6%. 55.9% had more than 10 years of overall working experience 33.5% had more than 10 years of experience in the industry. 66.9% were married and 2.5% were widowed or divorced.

Table 2: Demographic Profile

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	72	16.2
	Female	372	83.8
Age	Less than 24 years	16	3.6
	24-43 years	332	74.8
	44-59 years	86	19.4
	above 59 years	10	2.3
	Up to Intermediate	7	1.6
Qualification	Under graduate	17	3.8
	Graduate	134	30.2
	Masters	237	53.5
	M.S/M. Phil	48	10.8
	Doctorate	1	0.2
Tenure	less than 1 year	96	21.6
	1-5 years	223	50.2
	6-10 years	47	10.6
	more than 10 years	78	17.6
	less than 1 year	4	0.9
Overall experience	1-5 years	103	23.2
	6-10 years	89	20.0

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	more than 10 years	248	55.9
Designation	Manager	160	36.0
	Non-manager	284	64.0
	Unmarried	136	30.6
Marital status	Married	297	66.9
	Widow/divorcee	11	2.5
	Total	444	100.0

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis was performed to check the normality of the data in SPSS. The skewness and kurtosis values of all the constructs were within the required range of ± 2 according to George & Mallery (2010) which shows that the data was normally distributed. The results are presented in table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
POE	444	2.5695	.92563	.429	.116	-.309	.231
EV	444	3.7757	.75872	-.876	.116	1.233	.231
WFC	444	2.6712	1.12992	.310	.116	-.691	.231
Valid N (listwise)	444						

Measurement Model

Item and Construct Reliability

The item reliability was measured using outer loadings. All items were within the acceptable range of greater than 0.7 according to (Hair et al, 2022) except for eight items. We retained these items because the AVE of their constructs was higher than 0.5. According to (Hair et al. 2016), the values of Cronbach alpha and Composite Reliability should be greater than the threshold value of 0.7. Table 4 shows that all the values in the columns of CB and CR are greater than 0.7. Hence our construct reliability is also confirmed.

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Table 4: Factor loadings, Cronbach alpha, Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted

Construct	Item	Loadings	CB	CR	AVE
Employee vitality	EV1	0.419	0.826	0.862	0.567
	EV2	0.754			
	EV3	0.886			
	EV4	0.794			
	EV5	0.824			
Perceived	P1	0.519	0.924	0.934	0.506
Organizational	P2	0.643			
Exploitation	P3	0.705			
	P4	0.644			
	P5	0.664			
	P6	0.686			
	P7	0.774			
	P8	0.752			
	P9	0.831			
	P10	0.783			
	P11	0.693			
	P12	0.699			
	P13	0.727			
	P14	0.782			
Work-family conflict	WFC1	0.847	0.930	0.947	0.782
	WFC2	0.911			
	WFC3	0.916			
	WFC4	0.903			
	WFC5	0.841			

Validity

In order to test the validity of the construct, the two-fold approach suggested by the Wringle et al was used. This approach suggests that in order to confirm the validity, the discriminant and convergent validities must meet the criteria. As noted by Hair et al, 2016, the AVE should be greater than 0.5 for the construct to be convergently valid. The values in table 4 confirms

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the convergent validity of our constructs.

For checking the discriminant validity, we used HTMT criteria. HTMT values confirm the discriminant validity as all the HTMT value in table 5 are less than 0.9 (Gold et al, 2015).

Table 6 shows the cross loadings of the items of the variables used. The values shows that all the items are presenting their own variables, as the items loadings of a particular variable are greater than their loadings on other variables items.

Table 5: HTMT

	EV	POE
EV		
POE	0.310	
WFC	0.275	0.715

Table 6: Cross Loadings

	Employee vitality	Perceived organizational exploitation	Work-family conflict
EV1	0.419	-0.006	-0.034
EV2	0.754	-0.137	-0.152
EV3	0.886	-0.447	-0.347
EV4	0.794	-0.182	-0.184
EV5	0.824	-0.200	-0.213
P1	-0.067	0.519	0.302
P10	-0.290	0.783	0.532
P11	-0.262	0.693	0.631
P12	-0.184	0.699	0.509
P13	-0.298	0.727	0.485
P14	-0.367	0.782	0.536
P2	-0.154	0.643	0.385
P3	-0.167	0.705	0.433
P4	-0.100	0.644	0.417
P5	-0.211	0.664	0.374
P6	-0.218	0.686	0.468
P7	-0.345	0.774	0.497
P8	-0.318	0.752	0.478

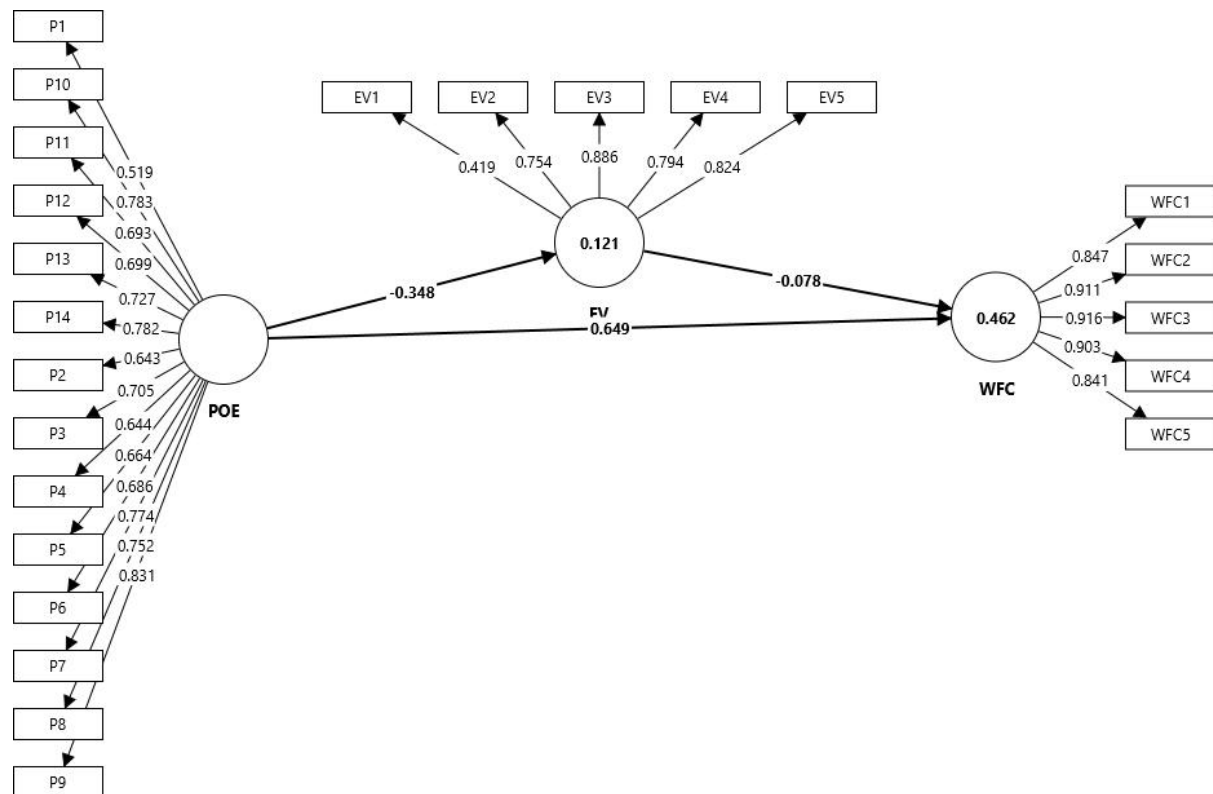
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P9	-0.309	0.831	0.552
WFC1	-0.244	0.595	0.847
WFC2	-0.238	0.584	0.911
WFC3	-0.276	0.601	0.916
WFC4	-0.331	0.643	0.903
WFC5	-0.248	0.560	0.841

Figure 2: Estimated Model extracted from Smart PLS 4



Structural Model Assessment

Collinearity

The collinearity of the constructs was assessed using VIF. All the values were lower than the threshold of 3.3 according to Kock & Lynn (2012). Hence there is no issue of multi-collinearity.

Table 7: Collinearity Statistics (VIF)

	Employee vitality	Work-family conflict
Employee vitality		1.138
Perceived organizational exploitation	1.000	1.138

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Path Co-efficient

The analysis of path co-efficient is shown in table 8. The path POE → WFC ($\beta = 0.649$, $p = 0.000$) and path POE → employee vitality ($\beta = -0.348$, $p = 0.000$) were statistically significant. Hence H1 and H2a of this research were supported. Paths Employee vitality → WFC ($\beta = -0.078$, $p = 0.060$) was not statistically significant, hence H2 (b) was not supported.

Table 8: Path co-efficient

	B	Sample mean (M)	SD	T statistics	P values	Accept/ Reject
Employee vitality -> Work-family conflict	-0.078	-0.078	0.041	1.898	0.060	Reject
Perceived organizational exploitation -> Employee vitality	-0.348	-0.357	0.038	9.185	0.000	Accept
Perceived organizational exploitation -> Work-family conflict		0.650	0.034	19.040	0.000	Accept
	0.649					

Co-efficient of Determination (R^2)

To study the predictive power of the constructs under study, R^2 values were assessed. Through R^2 , we can determine the percentage of variation in the dependent variable explained by the independent variable. The R^2 value of EV shows that 12.1% variation in EV is explained by POE which is weak according to Cohen, 1988. The R^2 value of WFC indicates that 46.2% variation in WFC is explained by the POE and EV, which is substantial according to Cohen, 1988. In this study, our target dependent variable is WFC. Its R^2 is 46.2% which is substantial. Hence our model is able to explain the required effect.

Table 9: R-square

	R- square
Employee vitality	0.121
Work-family conflict	0.462

Multi-group Analysis (MGA)

In addition to the hypotheses H1 and H2, it was also hypothesized in this paper that the gender moderates the effect of POE on employee vitality and WFC and employee vitality on WFC of employees. To check this, we considered two genders (male and female) in a multi-group analysis. As suggested by Henseler et al (2016), prior to MGA, we conducted the

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measurement invariance of composite models (MICOM). For this, we conducted the permutation test in SmartPLS 4. This test measures the invariance in the considered groups using three steps. First step is, the assessment of configural invariance, second compositional invariance and the third is the equality of composite mean values and variances. Since the two groups we are comparing have the same kind of conceptual framework, we don't need to test the configural invariance. The results of MICOM are given in Table 10, 11 and 12.

Table 10: Compositional invariance using MICOM (Male vs Female dataset)

	Permutation p value	Compositional invariance
Employee vitality	0.453	Yes
Perceived organizational exploitation	0.339	Yes
Work-family conflict	0.433	Yes

Table 11: Measurement of composite mean values using MICOM

	MOD=0	95.0% CI	Permutation value	p Equal means
Employee vitality	0.180	-0.207-0.211	0.079	Yes
Perceived organizational exploitation	0.042	-0.210-0.209	0.377	Yes
Work-family conflict	0.015	-0.211-0.211	0.458	Yes

Table 12: Measurement of Composite Mean Invariances

	VOD=0	95.0% CI	Permutation value	p Equal variance
Employee vitality	-0.107	-0.331-0.406	0.285	Yes
Perceived organizational exploitation	-0.091	-0.250-0.306	0.260	Yes
Work-family conflict	-0.077	-0.2210.281	0.260	Yes

The tables 10, 11 and 12 shows that our data set met the requirements of compositional invariance and equality of composite means and composite mean invariances since all the p-values are above 0.05.

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Table 13: Results of MGA (males and females)

		β (Female)	p-value (Female)	β (Male)	p value (Male)	Difference Male- Female	p- value	Invariant
POE	->	0.628	0.00	0.653	0.00	0.025	0.868	Yes
Work-family conflict								
Employee vitality	->	-0.114	0.316	-0.074	0.109	0.039	0.740	Yes
WFC								
POE-> Employee vitality		-0.440	0.00	-0.337	0.00	0.103	0.251	Yes

Figure 3: Estimated model of MGA- males extracted from SmartPLS 4

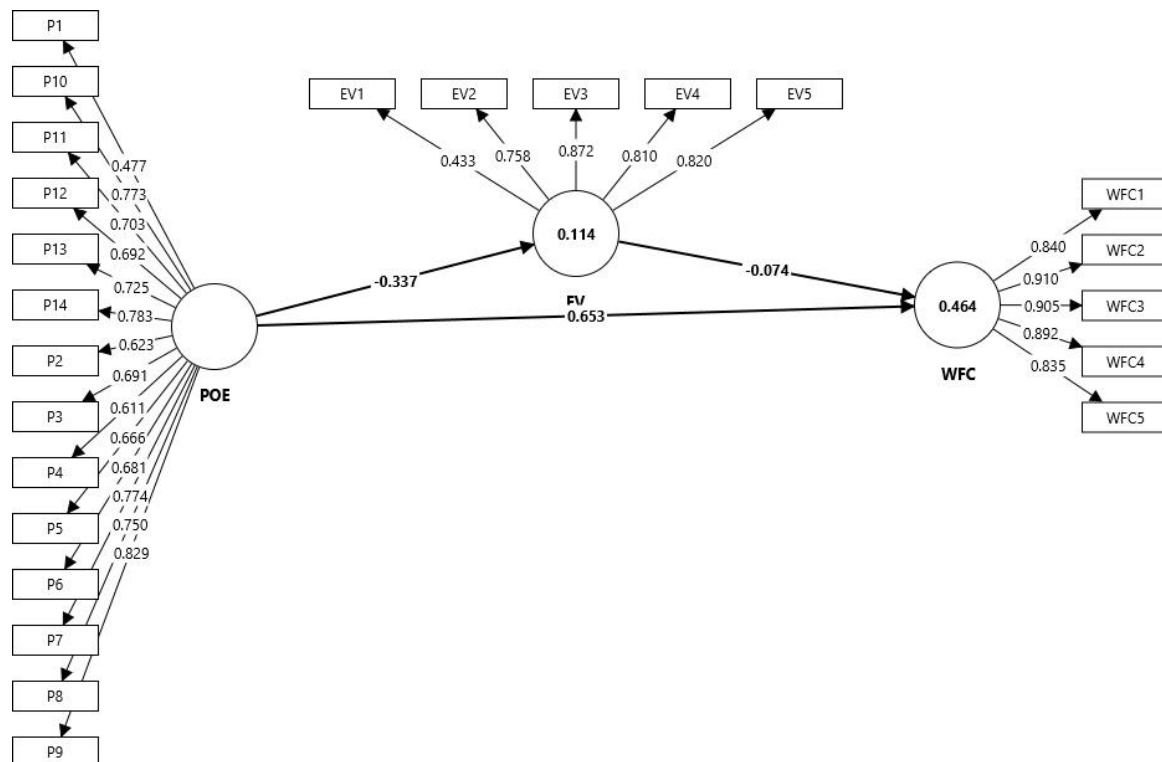
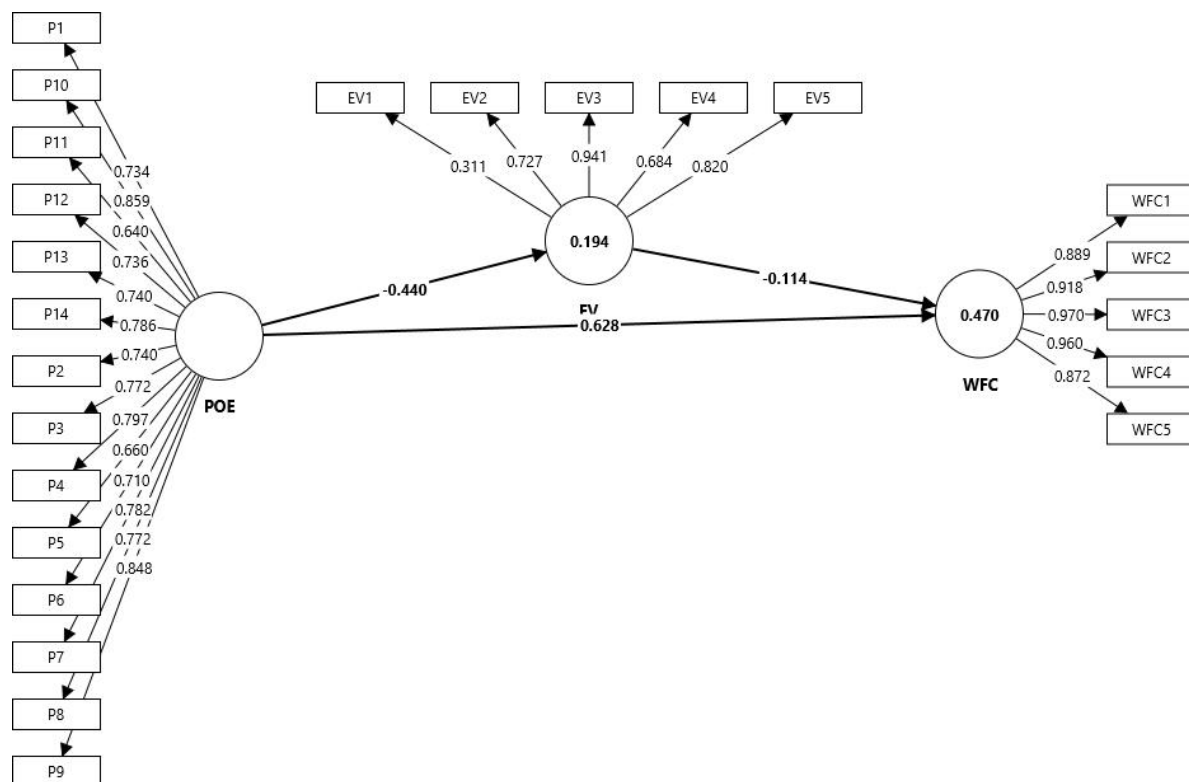


Figure 4: Estimated model of MGA-females extracted from SmartPLS4



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Table 13 shows that higher perceived exploitation increases work-family conflict for both genders. The effect is highly significant ($p\text{-value} = 0.000$). This shows that POE strongly contributes to work-family conflict for both males and females. Along this path, the difference of impact between males and females is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). Hence gender doesn't moderate the relationship between POE and WFC and H3(a) was rejected. The impact of employee vitality on WFC is also not statistically significant for either gender ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$). Hence, employee vitality does not significantly impact work-family conflict in either group and H3(b) was rejected. The high POE leads to lower employee vitality in both genders ($p\text{-values} = 0.000$), means the effect is highly significant for both males and females. Along this path too, the difference of impact between both males and females is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). This shows that gender doesn't moderate the relationship between POE and employee vitality and H3(c) was rejected.

Discussion

In this study, POE was found to be positively related to employee WFC. This confirms the theoretical proposition of WFST that behaviors, attitudes and emotions from work domain are transferred to family domain (Lawson et al., 2013). POE is negatively related to employee vitality as proved by our research. This confirms the theoretical proposition of COR theory that a stressful situation can weaken the employee resource pool such as employee vitality. When organizations are unable to provide resource passageways (a pathway where resources are supplied, protected and shared), the employees get affected negatively and can become less productive (Hobfoll, 2011). Our study supports the finding of Livne et al. who found significant impact of POE on employee variables such as turnover intentions, organizational commitment, employee burnout and psychological withdrawal. The study of Livne et al (2019) was conducted on employees working in construction and medical residents in US, UK and Israel, concluded that employees may perceive exploitation in the organization. They further explained that these perceptions trigger outward focused emotions of anger and hostility there by leading towards attempts of revenge by the employees in the form of high turnover intentions. In case of construction workers there are physical work demands and health risks. In our study on IT sector employees, the challenge is over-burdened work demands, odd working hours and compromised mental health. In both industries employees are facing exploitative treatment. Our research is supporting their findings because the object of both the studies are humans and humans in different industries may experience the similar

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emotions in an unfavorable situation.

This study found that gender doesn't moderate the relationship between POE and employee vitality. Since, POE is a form of stressor in our study, this finding confirms with the study of (Fida et al., 2023) who found no significant gender differences when it comes to experiencing stress. Both men and women are at risk to get high stress. Their study was conducted in Italian organizations where there are less gender differences in work role and environment. We also found that gender doesn't moderate the relationship POE and WFC. This finding confirms with the results of (Fan et al., 2024; Lyu & Fan, 2022), who found no significant differences between the WFC of men and women. The research of both Lyu and Fan (2022) and Fan et al (2022) were conducted in China and they found job crafting as an important factor for their findings. Furthermore, in China, liberation movements for women have considerably reshaped their gender roles (Chuanchuan & Jingwen, 2021). Although, Pakistan has traditional culture where men and women have to play their expected gender roles, modernization and new trends have impacted these roles to a great extent as both men and women are taking part in social and economic spheres of life (Mahmood & Ali, 2021). This suggests that women may be getting more support from their families to perform their work roles. Hence, they are getting affected equally by POE as their male counterparts.

The variables of employee vitality and WFC assessed in this study are representative of employee mental health and well-being. If these are not managed well, it can compromise physical and emotional state (Ryan & Frederick, 1997) and lead to anxiety, depression and insomnia (Antino et al., 2022; Kuśnierz et al., 2022). Employee health and well-being are important elements of the concept of social sustainability as described by United Nation's sustainable development goals (United Nations, 2015).

Conclusion

The objective of this research was to study those factors which play a key role in achieving social sustainability goals of the organizations. In an organizational context, employee health and well- being are important aspects of social sustainability. For this, we assessed the consequences of organizational exploitation and the impact of POE on employee vitality and WFC were measured. The study further assessed the interactive effect of gender on the above relationships. The study hypotheses were tested on the data collected from 444 respondents working in the IT sector of Pakistan. Two out of six hypotheses were supported. The study found significant positive relationship between POE and WFC and significant negative

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relationship between POE and employee vitality. However, the study didn't find significant relationship between employee vitality and WFC.

The study found no significant moderating effect of gender on the relationship between POE and employee vitality and WFC. Overall, the findings are in alignment with the previous literature. When employees perceive exploitation, it leads to negative psychological experiences which in this study were in the form of increased WFC and reduced vitality. Secondly, contrary to the beliefs that women experience high WFC in response to workplace challenges in a traditional Pakistani society where gender roles are defined, this study found no significant moderation of gender while assessing the impact of POE on employee vitality and WFC.

Practical Implications

This study offers several implications for the IT and other organizations to promote social sustainability through their practices. It offers key insights regarding what the organizations should do to achieve social sustainability goals. If the negative relationship is established between the organization and employees, it is very difficult to reverse. Hence proactive approach is better than taking remedial steps after the damage is occurred. Firstly, if employees are perceiving exploitation, organizations must revise the policies. For example, if the rewards they are getting is not enough for the work that they are performing, organizations may revise their compensation policies. If employees are not being given the credit for their ideas from which the organization is benefitting, such control mechanisms may be developed by which employees can raise their concerns and grievances. Control mechanisms may also be developed to ensure that employees at all levels are being treated equally and respectfully. If the work design is haphazardly structured to the point that employees are not left with any time for personal and family life, they experience high WFC, organizations can think about redesigning the jobs to reduce this problem. Secondly, it is also possible that exploitation is not structural but perceptual only. In that case, open communication can solve the issue. Communication between the organization and employee addressing the causes and reasons of exploitation can be helpful. These steps can help greatly in creating a sustainable workplace and positive working environment in organizations. Hence organizations can promote health and well-being of their employees which is an important element of social sustainability.

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Limitations and Future Research Directions

This research has the challenge of acquiring authentic data as a large number of organizations operating in Pakistan are unregistered (Ali et al., 2023). Due to this non-probability sampling techniques has been employed as the exact size of the population is unknown. The issue of generalizability is associated with the non-probability sampling technique as selection bias may occur. Another limitation is the collection of cross-sectional data. Because of this making strong claims based on this study's findings is difficult. An issue of social desirability bias can also arise due to reliance on self-reported data which this study has gathered.

This research was conducted in Pakistan which is a developing country. Future research can be done in other developing countries to find out if similar results are obtained in other developing country contexts. This study focused on IT sector. Future research can be done in other industries to see if the impact of POE is similar or different in those industries. This study measured the impact of POE on WFC and employee vitality. Future research can consider other variables such as counter productive work behaviors and innovative behavior. This study used gender as the moderator. Future research can use other variables such as employee's personality type to see whether it moderates the relationship between POE and employee vitality and WFC or not.

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