Police employees have to work extra during uncertain situations as they are responsible to maintain law and order. Currently, this department is facing a similar situation because of COVID-19. Therefore, this study aims at investigating how police employees’ perceptions of workload imbalance their family roles and further increase their job stress and dissatisfaction. The study collected cross-sectional data from 247 constables performing their duties during lockdown because of COVID-19. Hypotheses were examined using structural equation modeling. The findings revealed that police constables’ perception of workload cause work–family conflict, job stress and job dissatisfaction. In addition, work–family conflict mediates the associations of workload with job stress and job dissatisfaction. The study collected data from a single source, though Harman’s single factor confirmed the absence of common method variance. This study extends the conservation of resource theory and has implications for the management and policymakers.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Policing, as an important sector have to maintain laws and order in society (Islam, Khan, Ahmed, Usman, & Ali, 2020). Maintaining law and order demand a 24 hr duty about which the public is not totally aware (Malach-Pines & Keinan, 2007). This hectic routine made this profession very stressful and sometimes because of uncertain situations, the police have to work extra which makes an imbalance between their work and family life (Islam, Ahmad, Ahmed, & Ahmer, 2019; Karatepe, 2013a). Since the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19), this sector is facing a similar kind of situation which has increased its workload. The first case of COVID-19 (spread across the places via case transportation) was identified in Wuhan, China (Huang et al., 2020). Within a few months, this pandemic has hit 216 countries of the world including over nine million confirmed cases (WHO, 2020). The widespread of COVID-19 made WHO announce it as a Pandemic (geographical spread, with effects to a country or whole world), and a threat for all nations (including developing and economically deprived ones). There is no vaccine or medicine available for this deadly virus, thus, precautionary measures (e.g., washing hands, and maintaining social distance) is the only solution.

Pakistan, a developing country with over 95% Muslim population (Khan, Abbas, Gul, & Raja, 2015), is located in Eastern Mediterranean Region and the first case of COVID-19, in the country, was reported on February 26, 2020 when the health minister Zafar Mirza tweet “I can confirm first two cases of coronavirus in Pakistan. Both cases are being taken care of according to clinical standard protocols & both of them are stable.” Both these cases were imported from Iran and entered the country through Taftan, a bordering city between the two neighboring countries. Within 4 months 197,745 confirmed cases with 4,001 deaths have been observed (www.covid.gov.pk).

There are several reasons for the increased cases of COVID-19. First, unfortunately in most of the countries (e.g., US, UK, France and Germany), very few screening tests were conducted at the start of the pandemic (Cossarizza, De Biasi, Guaraldi, Girardis, & Mussini, 2020). Second, in some countries, victims ignored proper inspections because of their perception concerning expenses. Third, developing countries have issues of inappropriate Human Resource systems where sick leaves are not provided, resulting in individuals’ presence at the office. Yet another reason is the one’s attitude toward the pandemic, even in the presence of a supportive HR system. Almost all of the developed and developing economies are trying to cope with COVID-19 through strict measures. China is an example of the world, which came out of the crisis with the efforts of all of the stakeholders. For instance, it is observed that the best way to treat the pandemic...
patient is to keep him/her in special care (isolation) at home or hospi-
tal (Jane et al., 2020).

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the Government of Pakistan has
taken the issue at serious levels; for instance, the screening pro-
cess was initiated at the four major airports that is, Peshawar, Lahore,
Karachi, and Islamabad immediately after its outbreak in the world. As
the exposures of COVID-19 were confirmed to travel from Iran and
China, therefore borders of Iran, China, and Afghanistan were also
closed on March 2, 2020 (Coronavirus outbreak, 2020). Further, the
public is advised to avoid handshakes, mass gathering, and taking
other precautionary measures such as washing hands etc. (Jamal,
2020), where all schools and universities are closed till August 2020,
and academic activities were shifted to the virtual levels. The govern-
ment has also implemented section 144 (where not more than four
persons can be seen together) and lockdown. Indeed, these precau-
tionary measures are taken for the betterment of the world, and
nation in particular. These situations put Pakistani police in the spot-
light, thus police have largely responded to violations with arrest,
detentions, and corporate punishment. While implementing the same,
so far, 935 police employees had reported COVID-19 positive and
17 died (Rafique & Waseem, 2020).

Implementing law and order demands 24/7 hr duty from Police
employees (Ahmad & Islam, 2019), which not has increased their
workload but also creates an imbalance between their work and
family life. Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian (1996) called such
imbalance as work–family conflict (WFC) and defined as, “a form of
inter-role conflict in which the general demands of, time devoted to,
and strain created by the job interfere with performing family-related
responsibilities” (p. 401). WFC is an emerging issue among policing
(Islam et al., 2019), which largely depends upon workplace stressors
that is, work overload (Ilies et al., 2007), and consequent negative job-
related outcomes. Among many consequences, this study primarily
focused on job stress and job dissatisfaction because of many reasons.
First, job stress and dissatisfaction are the most common outcomes in
case of individuals’ negative perceptions about their workplace
(Kalliath & Kalliath, 2013). Second, the importance of job stress and
dissatisfaction is essential as these related to other workplace out-
comes such as low performance, absenteeism, and turnover intention
(Harrison, Newman, & Roth, 2006; Islam & Ahmed, 2018; Nisar &
Rasheed, 2020). Finally, as police is responsible for the smooth func-
tioning in the society which is only possible when they are satisfied,
therefore their stress and dissatisfaction are important to consider
(Anshel, 2000). Given that, this study attempts to examine the rela-
tionships of work overload with job stress and job dissatisfaction con-
sidering WFC as a mediating variable. Theoretical framework and
literature review are presented in the next section, which followed by
methods, results and implications.

2 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Most of the past studies on workplace stressors have used job-
demand resource model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, &
Schaufeli, 2001), however, it does not provide support to family-
related resources (Barnett et al., 2012), therefore, this study extends
previous studies with the use of conversation of resource theory
(COR). COR provides a framework to understand workplace stressors
(Hobfoll, 1989). According to COR, “…reaction to the environment
that leads to: the threat of loss of resources, the net loss of resources,
and a lack of resource gain following a significant investment of
resources” (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). In simple words, individuals when
perceiving a threat to their resources (which they aim to acquire and
maintain such as energy, personal characteristics, conditions and
objects) experience stress. This is because “…individuals who lack
resources are not only vulnerable to the loss of resources, but the ini-
tial loss results in future losses” (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 81).

Drawing upon COR, this study argues that workload is a job
stressor or demand which consume individuals’ energy in terms of
psychological resources and time. Such demands acquire individuals’
addition resources (time). As resources are limited, therefore, individ-
uals remained unable to fulfill their other roles (i.e., family roles
(Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). More specifically, when an individual’s
job demands more time (workload), he/she would have less time to
fulfill their family demands/roles (Thompson, Beauvais, &
Lyness, 1999), which not only create a conflict between two roles
because of limited resources to fulfill both roles, but also impact on
individual’s other objectives (job dissatisfactory and job stress).

3 | HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Individuals’ job demands, when exceeding from available resources,
cause psychological and physical tensions, therefore, refers to work-
related stress (Cherniss, 1980). Work-related stress is harmful to any
individual (Murtaza, Gill, Aslam, & Noor, 2020) and police employees
in particular as this can lead to metabolic, cardiovascular and gastroin-
testinal diseases, such as burnout (Johnson, Todd, &
Subramanian, 2005), low job performance (Goodman, 1990), psycholo-
gical disorder (He, Zhao, & Archbold, 2002), WFC (Li, Cheung, &
Sun, 2019), and even suicide (Violanti, 1997). Literature has shed light
on several workplace stressors that negatively impact on police such
as weak supervisory support and contentious performance rating,
poor communication between officers and administrators (Morash
et al., 2008), the dangerous nature of the work environment He,
Zhao, & Archbold (2002), handling disrespectful citizens (Cheong &
Yun, 2011), irregular shift work and heavy workload (Violanti &
Aron, 1994). Among these, this study focuses on heavy workload
because it best suits the purpose (policing in pandemic).

This study argues that to enforce law and order during pandemic,
police have to work extra which increases their perception of work-
load. Past literature has suggested that high workload cause emotional
exhaustion and stress at work (Karatepe, 2013b; Lo & Lamm, 2005)
because such demands drain individuals’ resources (energy and time)
that are important to justify family responsibilities (Lapierre &
Allen, 2006), therefore, cause WFC. Based on COR, in the presence of
WFC, individuals believe that they lost meaningful resources that
were required to perform at the workplace (Hobfoll, 2002), therefore, it may cause further negative outcomes (job dissatisfaction and job stress). Although WFC can generate more job stress and job dissatisfaction (Islam et al., 2020), still researchers are interested in identifying determinants of job stress (St-Onge, Renaud, Guerin, & Cauzignac, 2002). Literature is scant about the determinants of job stress and job dissatisfaction among policing, however, Li et al. (2019) found workplace stress, and Islam et al. (2020) found job dissatisfaction as the outcomes of WFC.

Given that, drawings upon COR we assume that when police workforce consider they have multiple tasks to complete in a short span of time, they perceive workload, thus they lose their emotions, time and energy (precious resources). Accordingly, they remained unable to fulfill their both work-related tasks and family responsibilities. These arguments can be supported by Hobfoll’s (1989) “spiral of loss of resources” (Mansour & Tremblay, 2016). These spirals are further explained as, Individuals’ loss of resources because of their negative feelings may impact their physical or mental health (Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008). According to Mansour and Commeiras (2015) Individuals’ who face these spirals remained unable to simultaneously perform their work-related and family-related responsibilities, resulting in WFC. Hobfoll and Shirom (2001) argued that individuals with limited resources may be more vulnerable to subsequent losses. Thus, WFC may lead to further losses including job dissatisfaction and job stress.

Empirical studies on the mediating role of WFC are limited. For example, Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker, and Schaufeli (2005) noted WFC as a potential mediator between job demand and burnout, whereas, Geurts, Kompier, Rolixir, and Houtman (2003) identified WFC explaining the association of workload with well-being in hospitality sector. Particular to policing, Li et al. (2019) suggested future researchers to examine the mediating role of WFC between workplace stressors and negative outcomes. Therefore, based on limited studies and COR theory, it is hypothesized:

**H1** Workload is positively related to police employees’ WFC (H1a), job stress (H1b) and job dissatisfaction (H1c).

**H2** WFC is positively related to police employees’ job stress (H2a) and job dissatisfaction (H2b).

**H3** WFC will mediate the association of workload with job stress (H3a) and job dissatisfaction (H3b).

### 4 | METHODS

#### 4.1 | Participants and procedure

This study collected data from constable ranked police employees working in the Punjab province of Pakistan because of many reasons. First, Punjab police are under great stress because of the highest pending and unattended cases (Islam et al., 2019). Second, Punjab is diagnosed with the highest number of COVID-19 cases (i.e., 72,880 as of June 27, 2020), where police are responsible to enforce lockdown. Third, the study selected constables because they encountered with more occupational stress comparing high-ranked officers (Fielding, 1987). The study used a questionnaire-based survey and data was collected from 247 constables performing duty during the lockdown.

Maintaining social distance and precautionary measures, constables were first informed about the purpose of this study. The data was collected from the male constables as only they were appointed to perform during the lockdown. In Pakistan, the quota for female police is only 10% (Ahmad, Islam, & Saleem, 2019), therefore, they are justified. Most of the constables were between the age bracket of 25–30 years (77.3%), married (62.4%), and holding a masters’ degree (83.54%).

#### 4.2 | Measures

The study adapted scales from previous studies and respondents were asked on a “five-point Likert scale ranging between 1—strongly disagree to 5—strongly agree”. Islam et al. (2020) used three-item from Agho, Price, and Mueller’s (1992) scale to measure job dissatisfaction among Pakistani police and reported it reliable. Therefore, the same scale is used in this study with a sample item, “I am fairly dissatisfied with my job”. The study used Netemeyer et al.’s (1996) five-item scale to measure WFC, this scale has been validated by Ahmad et al. (2019) among Pakistani police. A sample item includes, “I often have to miss important family activities because of my job”. Workload was accessed through four-item scale of Mansour and Tremblay (2016) which was originally developed by Karasek et al. (1998). A sample item includes, “My job requires working very hard”. Finally, job stress was measured with Lemyre and Tessier’s (2003) six-item scale with a sample item as, “I feel preoccupied, tormented, or worried”.

### 5 | RESULTS

The study applied structural equation modeling (SEM) in two-stages. First, basic assumptions to apply SEM were examined, and data was found to be free from missing values (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), outliers (Kline, 2016), normally distributed (as values of skewness ±1 & Kurtosis ±3 were within range) (Byrne, 2016), and multicollinearity (as correlations were found to be less than .85) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

The mean and correlational values are given in Table 1. The values show that respondents were agree regarding their workload (M = 3.78), WFC (M = 3.87), job stress (M = 4.02), and job dissatisfaction (M = 3.96). Further, workload positively correlates with WFC (r = .62, p < .01), job stress (r = .58, p < .01) and job dissatisfaction (r = .52, p < .01), whereas, WFC positively correlates with job stress (r = .53, p < .01) and job dissatisfaction (r = .48, p < .01).

Second, to examine measurement model through confirmatory factor analysis because the study used adapted scales (Islam, 2019).
The study followed Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2017) regarding the standard value of loading (i.e., ≥0.50), and “Chi-Square/Degree of Freedom (χ²/df ≤ 3.0), Standard Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR ≤ 0.10), Comparative Fit Index (CFI ≥ 0.90), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA ≤ 0.08)” were used to access model fit (Williams, Martins, Consalvo, & Ivory, 2009). The study followed Fornell and Larcker (1981) regarding composite reliability (CR ≥ 0.60), average variance extracted (AVE ≥ 0.50), and Cronbach’s Alpha (α ≥ 0.70). The measurement model was noted as fit that is, χ²/df = 2.89, CFI = 0.94, SRMR = 0.063, and RMSEA = 0.055. In addition, the values of Cronbach’s Alpha, CR and AVE were also found well above the used criteria (see Table A1).

Third, we run the structural model at 5000 bootstraps at 95% confidence to test the hypotheses (see Table 2). The study noted a significant impact of workload on WFC (β = 0.55, SE = 0.045, CR = 12.376, p < .01), job stress (β = 0.34, SE = 0.046, CR = 7.403, p < .01) and job dissatisfaction (β = 0.29, SE = 0.056, CR = 5.198, p < .01), which supports H1a, H1b and H1c respectively. Similarly, WFC was noted to have a significant impact on job stress (β = 0.21, SE = 0.052, CR = 3.958, p < .01) and job dissatisfaction (β = 0.25, SE = 0.063, CR = 3.958, p < .01)

### Table 1
Descriptive and correlational analyses

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|
| 1 - Workload | 1 |   |   |   |
| 2 - WFC | .62** | 1 |   |   |
| 3 - Job stress | .58** | .53** | 1 |   |
| 4 - Job dissatisfaction | .52** | .48** | .44** | 1 |
| Mean | 3.78 | 3.87 | 4.02 | 3.96 |
| SD | 0.79 | 0.89 | 0.69 | 0.74 |

**p < .01.

### Table A1
Confirmatory factor analysis

| Scales | λ  | AVE | CR   | α   |
|--------|----|-----|------|-----|
| Job dissatisfaction (Due to hectic nature of work...) | | | | |
| 1 - I am dissatisfied with my job. | 0.82 | 0.61 | 0.82 | 0.79 |
| 2 - I cannot find enjoyment in my job. | 0.77 | | | |
| 3 - I am bored with my job. | 0.74 | | | |
| Work–Family conflict | | | | |
| 1 - The demand of my work interferes with my home and family life. | 0.71 | 0.58 | 0.78 | 0.74 |
| 2 - Because of my job, I cannot involve myself as much as I would like in maintaining close relations with my family or spouse/partner. | 0.75 | | | |
| 3 - Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my job puts on me. | 0.83 | | | |
| 4 - I often have to miss important family activities because of my job. | 0.78 | | | |
| 5 - There is a conflict between my job and the commitments and responsibilities I have to my family or spouse/partner. | 0.72 | | | |
| Job stress | | | | |
| 1 - I have physical aches and pains: Sore back, headache, stiff neck, stomach ache | 0.78 | 0.67 | 0.86 | 0.84 |
| 2 - feel preoccupied, tormented, or worried | 0.69 | | | |
| 3 - I feel confused: my thoughts are muddled; I lack concentration; I cannot focus. | 0.84 | | | |
| 4 - I feel a great weight on my shoulders. | 0.88 | | | |
| 5 - have difficulty controlling my reactions, emotions, moods, or gestures | 0.83 | | | |
| 6 - I feel stressed | 0.86 | | | |
| Workload | | | | |
| 1 - My job requires work very fast. | 0.76 | 0.59 | 0.74 | 0.77 |
| 2 - My job requires working very hard. | 0.79 | | | |
| 3 - I am asked to do excessive amount of work. | 0.81 | | | |
| 4 - My job is very hectic. | 0.72 | | | |
TABLE 2  Hypotheses testing through bootstraps

| Relations                   | β   | SE  | CR   | Bootstraps @ 95% |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|------|------------------|
| Workload → WFC              | 0.55| 0.045| 12.376| 0.420 0.671 |
| Workload → Job stress       | 0.34| 0.046| 7.403 | 0.225 0.465 |
| Workload → Job dissatisfaction | 0.29| 0.056| 5.198 | 0.152 0.443 |
| WFC → Job stress            | 0.21| 0.052| 3.958 | 0.088 0.341 |
| WFC → Job dissatisfaction   | 0.25| 0.063| 3.931 | 0.085 0.415 |

Indirect effects

| Workload → WFC → Job stress | 0.11| 0.036| —     | 0.052 0.201 |
| Workload → WFC → Job dissatisfaction | 0.14| 0.044| —     | 0.053 0.228 |

SE = 0.063, CR = 3.931, p < .01, which supports H2a and H2b respectively.

The mediating role of WFC was examined by identifying indirect paths with upper and lower boundaries. The study noted significant indirect path between workload and job stress through WFC ($\beta = 0.11, SE = 0.036, LL = 0.052, UL = 0.201, p < .01$) with no zero value between upper and lower boundary. Moreover, the indirect path between workload and job dissatisfaction through WFC was also found to be significant ($\beta = 0.14, SE = 0.044, LL = 0.053, UL = 0.228, p < .01$) with no zero value between upper and lower boundary. These results support suggested hypotheses H3a and H3b respectively.

6 | DISCUSSION

This study proposed a model that how police employees' workload during pandemic impact their WFC which further increase their job-related stress and dissatisfaction. The study collected data from 247 constables working in province Punjab, Pakistan. The study noted a significant direct effect of workload on WFC, job stress and job dissatisfaction. In addition, WFC was found to mediate these associations. Many contributions have emerged from this study. First, the study noted a significant direct association between workload and WFC among police employees. This finding is consistent with the findings of Goh, Ilies, and Wilson (2015) and Ilies et al. (2007) who noted a direct impact of daily workload on daily WFC. According to COR, individuals' perception of workload drains their emotions, energy and time, therefore, they less likely to fulfill their family roles.

Second, the literature on WFC among policing is limited (Islam et al., 2020), a sector with challenges, therefore, the results of this study highlighted a few important predictors and outcomes of WFC which previously remained inconsistent (X. R. Zhao, Mattila, & Ngan, 2014). The finding of this study regarding the direct association of WFC with job stress and job dissatisfaction is consistent with previous findings. According to K. Zhao, Zhang, Kraimer, and Yang (2019), individuals who feel that their work domain is not allowing them to perform their family domain are less likely to satisfied with their job. Likewise, Islam et al. (2019) noted that the police workforce with the perception of WFC is less likely to engage in their work activities. More specifically, Islam et al. (2020) also identified that the police workforce experiences more WFC which threatens their family role and increases their job dissatisfaction. This study adds to the previous studies on policing by incorporating job stress as an additional outcome of WFC.

Third, Li et al. (2019) suggested future researchers examine the mediating role of WFC between workplace stressors and negative outcomes. With this backdrop, this study found WFC as a potential mediator between the association of workload with job stress and job dissatisfaction. Unlike previous studies on workplace stressors (as they used job-demand resource model), this study used the principle of OCR "spiral of loss of resources" as it better explains the concept of WFC and subsequent stress (Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008).

Suffice to say that police constable because of heavy workload lose their time and energy (essential resources), thereby remained unable to fulfill their family responsibilities which results WFC. If they remained unable to resolve such conflicts, lose further resources such as job satisfaction and well-being thus cause job dissatisfaction and stress.

6.1 | Practical implications

Practically, this study offers many valuable suggestions to policymakers and management. The police department can use the findings of this study to reduce WFC which further causes job dissatisfaction and job stress. As workload is identified as a major reason behind WFC as excessive job demands drain employees' energy and time, therefore management needs to plan it properly through voluntarily part times, compressed workweeks, flexible time, and family leaves. These strategies may help police employees to perform their family roles, thereby reduce WFC. However, sometimes because of emergency the said strategies cannot be implemented. In such situations' employees should not consider such duties as permanent. This is possible through training sessions about maintaining a boundary between work and family roles. Particularly
to the case of COVID-19, the study suggests management care for the personal health of the appointed constables by providing them proper kits, as this can also be a major cause of threat to their family roles. According to COR theory, individuals when to feel a loss of resources, socioeconomic factors may help them to gain more resources, therefore, supervisors by playing their role can reduce the impact of WFC on the further loss of resources (i.e., job stress and job dissatisfaction).

6.2 Limitations and future directions

Despite theoretical and practical contributions, the study has few limitations. First, considering COVID-19 the study collected cross-sectional data from a single province of a developing country (i.e., Pakistan), which cannot predict causality, therefore, future researchers are suggested to generalize the findings in western countries through a longitudinal study. Second, although Harman’s single factor confirmed the absence of common method variance (as we found a single factor contributing less than 50% in variance, Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), still, future researchers are suggested to collect data from different sources (i.e., data on WFC must be collected from spouse/partner). Third, respondents of the current study were male constables, although justified in methods, still the representation of female constables can help in generalizability. Finally, future researchers need to examine conditional variables (such as family support, person-job-fit, supervisor support etc. that may help individuals to gain more resources) to further understand the mechanism between workplace stressors and family stressors. According to COR theory, individuals when feeling a loss of resources, socioeconomic factors may help them to gain more resources, thus may reduce further negative outcomes.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST
The researcher declares no conflict of interest.

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