



Work Life Conflict and Job Commitment Among Students Counsellors in Higher Learning Institutions in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

The job commitment of student counsellors is crucial in Tanzanian universities, as they play a vital role in supporting students' academic, personal, and career development, addressing issues that can impact their wellbeing and performance. This study aimed to investigate the impact of work-life conflict on job commitment among student counsellors in higher education institutions in Tanzania. The study aimed to examine the influence of work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, and gender differences on job commitment among student counsellors. The study employed an explanatory research design using a mixed-methods research approach. In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected through a structured questionnaire and an interview guide. The target population of 179 student counsellors was purposely selected, resulting in a sample size of 83 respondents obtained through the Yamane Formula. Quantitative data analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics, where Spearman correlation and regression analysis were used to summarise, explore, and make inferences. Likewise, qualitative data were analysed thematically to understand patterns and meanings within textual or observational data. The findings showed a significant correlation between work-life conflict and all employee commitment factors. Furthermore, the findings reveal that work-family conflict significantly contributed to employee commitment, with work-to-family interference found to be higher than family-to-work conflict among student counsellors. Furthermore, based on work-family role conflict, the results indicate a considerable difference in organisational commitment between male and female respondents. Based on the study's findings, an organisational support program should be developed and made available to all student counsellors to lessen the strain of role conflict between work and family and to encourage their job commitment practically.

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INTRODUCTION

Work-life conflict has become an increasingly important topic in contemporary organisations due to the significant correlation between the inter-role Relationship between work and family domains. As noted by Kinman and Jones (2021), due to the competitive nature of public services and the evolving dynamics of the work environment, the phenomenon of Work-Family Life (WFL) has garnered the attention of researchers and policymakers over the past 20 years. Harrison and Gordon (2021) define work-life conflict as a form of inter-role conflict in which work and family demands are mutually incompatible, making it difficult to meet demands in one domain without compromising the other. In another study, Kundi (2024) identified two directions of WLF: work-to-family conflict, which arises when work-related pressures interfere with family responsibilities, and family-to-work conflict that emerges when work-related obligations interfere with family life. As emphasised by Rasool (2021), the dual-career household syndrome has made it more common for workers to juggle work and family obligations, putting them in the position of having to deal with demands from their jobs that either limit or interfere with their ability to spend time with their families.

Research has indicated that student counsellors in Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) frequently manage multiple responsibilities, including counselling students, interacting with faculty and staff, and overseeing the overall counselling service within the institution (Rushashu, 2022). On the other side, as a result of university students' diversity (Paegle et al., 2025), high student-counsellor ratios (Harrison & Cordon, 2021), emotional distress (Letitia, 2025) and mental health difficulties (McKenzie et al., 2022; Kadambi et al., 2020), effective counselling schemes to create a safe space for addressing stress and anxiety among college-age students are paramount. For instance, the World Bank report (2022) indicates that enrolment in higher education in Tanzania reached approximately 230,000 in 2019 and is expected to surge to between 482,000 and 597,000 by 2030. On the other hand, Otieno and Mbutitia (2020) report a shortage of professional student counsellors compared to the number of students as a significant challenge in Tanzanian universities, hindering the effective provision of guidance and counselling services. Therefore, Rushahu (2022) acknowledges the importance of university student counsellors, who play a vital role in fostering academic success, emotional wellbeing, and personal development through guidance and counselling. However, Fan et al. (2025) affirm that as a result of an increase in global student counselling, higher education student counsellors face challenges in managing workload, managing disturbances, communicating with public health services, and referring complex students compromising their job commitment (Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD), 2023).

Therefore, since students are the driving force behind any university, university-level counselling services are highly required to provide support to distressed students, in addition to improving their mental health and wellbeing (Kadambi et al., 2020). Baganzi (2021) affirms that several university-level institutions in Ireland have reported that student retention and progression are fostered by attending student counselling services, in addition to improving their mental health and wellbeing, and that students value these services. Despite their crucial roles, student counsellors have raised concerns related to the pressures encountered in this service (Agarwal, 2021), which have been linked to limited funding and a lack of resources (Loughran, 2016; McKenzie, 2021). The impact of these demands on services and on counsellors has been noted, ranging from fatigue and underperformance to feeling less qualified and unwell at work, as well as dissatisfaction and a lack of job commitment (Letitia, 2025; McKenzie et al., 2023). WFC can also predict lower job performance, a higher absenteeism rate, and decreased levels of job satisfaction, as individuals who experience conflicts that spill over from the job to the household sphere have a significantly higher likelihood of quitting their jobs (Paegle et al., 2025). On the other hand, individuals who encounter difficulties that spill over into their jobs often say that to meet their needs, more flexible work schedules and family-friendly policies are required.

As Fan et al. (2025) indicate, employees who can successfully manage their personal and professional lives are more likely to be engaged and committed to the organisation.

Research has also indicated that student counsellors need a strong job commitment encompassing dedication, empathy, and a willingness to support students' wellbeing and academic success (Kandambi *et al.*, 2020; McKenzie *et al.*, 2023). A strong job commitment ensures that counsellors are always available, attentive, and dedicated to helping students navigate various challenges. As noted by Su and Jiang (2023), students are more likely to seek help and confide in counsellors who demonstrate a genuine commitment to their job. Therefore, in contrast to the wealth of research on other professions, there are few studies on the connection between work and family conflict and job commitment among those who provide counselling (Handelzalts & Sunyer, 2025), and most of the studies originate from developed countries (Rajab-Gilan et al., 2025; Qian et al., 2024). Therefore, it is essential to conduct this study to identify the underlying gaps. Moreover, the study had various objectives, including identifying the most common determinants of work-family conflict, determining the bi-directional effect of work-family conflict, evaluating the bi-directional effect of family-work conflict on employee commitment, and finally investigating the effect of gender on the Relationship between work-family conflict / family-work conflict on employee commitment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Spillover Theory

The study adopted the Greenhaus and Powell (2006) Spillover theory, which posits that work and family are two primary domains of life for individuals. Therefore, an individual's conduct in one domain is influenced by their actions, attitudes, emotions, and abilities in another domain. This interaction can have either positive or negative effects (Fan et al., 2024). As the theory emphasises, work and family life are not mutually exclusive; instead, individuals frequently transfer their attitudes, actions, and feelings from one domain to another. In this way, although there are temporal and physical boundaries between work and family, emotions and behaviours are carried from one living space to another, resulting in either work-family/family-work spillover (Kundi, 2024). According to Kandambi et al. (2020), work-domain variables encompass job-related factors, while non-work-domain variables include family responsibilities, leisure activities, community involvement, and religious roles. Individual and demographic variables include personality traits, behaviours, gender, and socio-economic status, as reflected in income.

Nonetheless, negative spillover between the two domains has been the main focus of most research on the work-family interface among service provision employee categories (Rasool, 2021; Braganzi, 2021; Paegle et al., 2025). This type of study adopts a conflict perspective, assuming that individuals who play multiple roles often feel stressed because they lack sufficient time or energy to fulfil their responsibilities in each role. Handelzalts et al (2024) indicate that there are four distinct work-family spillover experiences: negative and positive spillover from work to family and family to work. In this research, both negative and positive work-family spillover were examined together. According to Rajab-Gilan et al. (2025), negative work-to-family spillover refers to the type of conflict or interference that arises when an individual's work responsibilities interfere with their ability to meet personal life obligations. This type of conflict arises from the degree to which home obligations are impeded by the expectations one should meet in the workplace. (Freire & Bettencourt, 2020)

Similarly, Agarwal (2021) and Rasool (2021) define negative family-to-work spillover as the type of conflict or intervention that arises from family roles hindering job-related responsibilities. The primary point of contention in this

type of disagreement is the extent to which one's personal duties overlap with their professional obligations. Therefore, the Spillover theory was considered the most effective in this study, as it highlights the importance of employees consistently experiencing a positive workplace. Since student counsellors spend a great deal of time imparting valuable knowledge and perspective to students, Fan et al. (2025) assert that having a positive work environment can have a significant impact on students' roles and other aspects of their lives outside the workplace. Positive spillover implies that positive aspects of the office can improve life at home and vice versa, leading to organisational commitment. However, contradictory results across the literature highlight the need for a more thorough understanding of the circumstances that either increase or decrease the likelihood of positive or negative spillover (Qian et al, 2024; Letitia, 2024; Pujowata & Eswan, 2025)

Work-Life Conflict Issues among University Student Counsellors

The study by Harrison and Gordon (2021) indicates that as student counsellors deal with students' personal struggles, academic challenges, and mental health issues, they can experience emotional exhaustion and stress that spills over into their personal lives and vice versa. Therefore, the Spillover theory was found relevant in this study, as it recognises the interconnections between life domains, where events in one domain affect another, and how stressors in work spill over into family life. Furthermore, Tavasoli and Sunyer (2025) assert that Spillover theory is closely related to strain-based conflict, as it posits that stress or strain from one domain (such as work) can "spill over" into another domain (such as family), leading to strain-based work-family conflict. A good example is reported by Fan et al. (2025), who insist that a stressful workday for a counsellor can lead to negative emotions carried home, potentially affecting family interactions. Additionally, since McKenzie et al. (2023) and Kundi (2024) suggest that the counselling profession is highly skewed towards women, the Spillover theory is well-suited for this study, as it examines how positive or negative spillover can be both beneficial and detrimental for both genders in the counselling profession. Finally, this theory fits the study by details how the accumulated stress and negative emotions in both work and family domains can contribute to psychological distress, manifested as anxiety, depression, burnout, or reduced overall wellbeing.

However, Lunyungu (2025) indicate that in Tanzanian HLIs, many initiatives have been undertaken to improve employee working environments, including the formulation of friendly policies and practices. In these policies, factors such as supervisor support, good relations with co-workers, training and development, attractive and timely incentives, recognition plans, and an adequate workload contribute to developing a working environment that has a positive impact on employees' level of job commitment. However, studies by Agarwal (2021) and Rasool (2021) suggest that the poor implementation of these policies has led to WLC among workers in public institutions in Tanzania. Therefore, regardless of these initiatives, there is evidence of ineffective provision of guidance and counselling services in HLIs, reflected by the serious psychosocial problems of students contributing largely to moral decay (Gatachew, 2020)

Thus, by addressing these dynamics, the study aims to offer insightful information that will help student counsellors and policymakers improve their wellbeing in this crucial area. This information can help guide focused actions to lower WFC and lessen the negative effects of work-related stress. By examining the applicability of the spillover theory in HLIs, the study can further contribute to the body of literature by providing a more comprehensive understanding of how work-related stressors impact employees' home lives and contribute to psychological distress. A more thorough investigation of the underlying mechanisms in this particular industry setting is provided by the integrated theoretical frameworks.

METHODS

Materials and Methods

Study Design and Sampling Techniques

This study employed an explanatory research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches, to effectively address its objectives. The design was chosen because it employs triangulation features, where various techniques are combined in a single study to generate both qualitative and quantitative findings (Julius et al., 2024). The study purposely selected the HLIs since they have a responsibility and obligation to offer a range of counselling and guidance services to all students (Rushau, 2022). According to the TCU report (2019), all 47 HLIs were considered the study's target population, using Cohen's (1988) Rule of thumb theory to select 35% to 75% of the Institutions. In this study, systematic random sampling was used to select the Director of Student Services, the Dean of Students, Wardens, Social Workers, Student Counsellors, and Janitors from each institution, making a total of 179 student counsellors. This category of respondents was mostly preferred because they directly address students' psycho-sociological problems as they transition into university life; hence, they are considered to have valuable information regarding how they experience WLC in relation to their active involvement in counselling activities (Rushau, 2022). Additionally, as noted by Lunyungu, (2025)), university counsellors are considered a vulnerable cadre that experiences a high level of stress due to the nature of their profession. Likewise, the sample size was determined using the Yamane (1967) formula $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2} = \frac{179}{1+179(0.05)^2} = 83$. According to Julius et al. (2024), this sample size indicates the desired level of precision of the estimate as it exceeds 50%.

Data Collection and Data Analysis Techniques

The study collected both primary and secondary data using various tools, as suggested by Myring (2022), to ensure data triangulation. To collect primary data, the study employed the Work-Family Conflict Scale (WFCS; Netemeyer *et al.*, 1996), which measures the extent to which work is interfered with by family responsibilities. This scale was relevant since it examines both study dimensions in terms of time-based, strain-based, and behaviour-based work-family conflicts facets of family interference at work. Each item was measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree," whereby respondents were required to indicate the level of agreement/disagreement with the statements therein. In a 5-point Likert scale, the mean levels of averages were typically interpreted as follows: 1.0-1.8 (very low), 1.81-2.60 (low), 2.61-3.40 (moderate), 3.41-4.20 (high), and 4.21-5.00 (very high). To examine the organisational commitment level of student counsellors, the scale developed by Allen and Meyer (2000) was adopted, which examines three key components: affective commitment (emotional attachment), continuance commitment (cost-benefit calculation), and normative commitment (obligation). This scale reflects the study's objectives. Furthermore, relevant books, published journal papers and reports, as well as government and non-governmental policies and circulars related to the study, were reviewed to enrich this study with secondary sources.

Nonetheless, quantitative data were analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics, whereby Spearman's rank correlation coefficient and regression analysis were adopted. In descriptive analysis, the Likert scale level 5 was used in the decision range, whereby items with a mean score of 3 and above were deemed to have a high contribution in LC. In contrast, the items with a mean score of less than 3 were considered to have a lower contribution in WLC. In regression analysis, diagnostic results indicated a well-fitting model that meets its assumptions, including linearity, multicollinearity, normality of residuals, and homoscedasticity (constant variance of errors).

Pilot Study Results

To establish the trustworthiness and accuracy of the research findings, a Cronbach's alpha test was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the study's parameters. A result of 0.77 and above was considered a strong measure of reliability, allowing the study to continue, as recommended by Taber (2018). Thus, testing the reliability of data minimised errors and biases in this study

Table 1 presents Cronbach's alpha values for the reliability analysis of the pilot study. As the results indicate, the reliability coefficients display acceptable values of at least 0.77 (Taber, 2018). As indicated in Table 1 below, since all variable constructs ranged from 0.78 to 0.87, they were considered acceptable and reliable for further analysis.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha values for the reliability analysis of the pilot study

Constructs	Reliability Coefficients
Time-based Work Family Conflict	0.87
Time-based Family Work Conflict	0.84
Strain-based Work Family Conflict	0.83
Strain-based Family Work Conflict	0.79
Behavioural-based Work Family Conflict	0.83
Behaviour-based Family Work Conflict	0.78
Employee Commitment	0.82

Source: Research constructs (2024)

RESULTS

The study was undertaken to examine the influence of work-family conflict on job commitment among student counsellors in HLIs in Tanzania. The following section presents the overall findings of the study.

Demographic Information

The study's findings indicated that more than half of the respondents (63.9%) were female, and the majority of respondents (41%) fell within the 40-49 age range. At the same time, the majority of counsellors (66.3%) were married, whereas most of the study subjects (53.3%) held master's degrees. Data analysis revealed that 30.1% of respondents had working experience between 16 and 20 years, while the majority (73.5%) worked more than 8 hours per day, indicating a higher likelihood of WLC among respondents.

Determinants of Work –Family- Conflict among Students' Counsellors in HLIs

The study aimed to examine the main determinants of work—family conflict among students and counsellors in HLIs. To achieve this objective, respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement with 18 WFC/FWC statements, presented on a 5-point Likert scale; the mean score for each item was then determined to conclude. In a 5-point Likert scale, the mean levels of averages in each statement were typically interpreted as follows:

1.0-1.8 (very low), 1.81-2.60 (low), 2.61-3.40 (moderate), 3.41-4.20 (high), and 4.21-5.00 (very high). As indicated in Table 2, student counsellors reported high levels of work interference with family, with time-based work interference with family scoring higher (3.78 on average), followed by time-based family interference with work (3.71 on average). In time-based work, the majority of respondents strongly agreed that their work prevents them from participating in family activities (mean score: 3.79), followed by the category that agreed they have to miss out on family events due to the time they dedicate to their career (mean score: 3.56).

On the other hand, time-based family interference with work ranked second, with the majority of respondents strongly agreeing that their professional obligations are frequently interfered with by the time they spend with their families (mean score = 3.71). In a similar vein, a higher percentage of respondents indicated that their career development progress has been limited by the time spent handling family obligations (mean score 3.07). In similar ways, student counsellors experienced higher strain-based work interference with family (3.68 on average) compared to strain-based family interference with work (3.31 on average). The most frequently mentioned issue was that respondents often felt emotionally drained after work, which made it difficult for them to contribute effectively to their families and households. In reference to strain-based family issues interfering with work, participants reported feeling frequently distracted by family issues at work as a result of stress at home.

With reference to Table 2 below, respondents indicated that, in the context of behaviour-based work interference with family, the problem-solving techniques they employ at work were ineffective for addressing issues at home (2.81 on average). Regarding behaviour-based family interference at work, the majority of respondents stated that problem-solving behaviours that work for them at home do not translate well to the workplace (2.65 on average). In general, the study indicated a higher score in work-life conflict than work-family conflict among student counsellors in Tanzania. As noted by Clark (2021), a higher mean score indicates that, on average, respondents tend to agree more strongly with statements that indicate work-life conflict in HLIs.

Table 2: Determinants of Work-Family/Family-Work Conflict among Student Counsellors

Statement	Mean	SD
Time-based work interference with family		
More often than not, my work prevents me from participating in family activities.	3.79	1.92
My work demands much time; therefore, I am unable to contribute equally to family chores and activities.	3.52	1.83
I have to miss out on family events because of the time I need to dedicate to my career.	3.56	1.86
Time-based family interference with work		
My professional obligations are frequently interfered with by the time I spend with my family.	3.71	1.89
Spending time with my family frequently prevents me from participating in work-related activities that could further my career.	3.07	1.65
I have to miss work since I have many family commitments to attend to.	2.97	1.48
Strain-based work interference with family		
Upon returning home from work, I am frequently too exhausted to engage in family activities or duties.	3.44	1.81
When I come home from work, I am often so emotionally spent that I am unable to be of any help to my family.	3.68	1.86

Sometimes I am too stressed to enjoy the things I like to do when I get home because of all the responsibilities at work.	2.65	1.61
Strain-based family interference with work		
Due to the tension at home, I often find myself thinking about family issues at work.	3.21	1.83
I find it difficult to focus on my work because I am frequently under stress from my family obligations	2.31	1.54
My family's stress and anxiety frequently impair my capacity to do my job duties.	2.11	1.53
Behaviour-based work interference with family		
I struggle to apply the same problem-solving techniques I use at work to solve difficulties at home.	2..81	1.78
At home, I would not want to act in a way that is ineffective and costly for me at work.	2..45	1.51
My work-related habits do not translate into improved family satisfaction.	2.51	1.61
Behaviour-based family interference with work		
The behaviours that work well at home often do not translate well to the workplace.	1.72	0.72
At work, I would not want to act in a way that is required or useful at home.	2.61	1.64
My approach to problem-solving at home seems less effective in the workplace.	2.65	1.69
Total	61.4	21.8

Source: Research Construct (2023)

Correlation Analysis between WLC and Employee Commitment

In this study, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (r) was used to investigate the Relationship between WLC constructs and employee commitment. The study adopted the coefficient of determination (R^2) to verify the goodness of fit. In the study, the value of r ranged between -1 and +1, where $r = 0$ implied no correlation, and $r = 1$ indicated perfect correlation. Table 3 below shows the correlation matrix of independent variables WLC based time, strain and behaviour-based conflict and dependent variable employee commitment variables, namely, affective, normative and continuance commitments. According to the correlation results, both variables showed correlation coefficients close to 1.0 ($p < .01$), indicating a statistically significant, strong correlation between WFC variables and employee commitment dimensions.

Table 3. Correlations between Dependent and Independent Variables

		Time-Based Conflict	Strain-Based Conflict	Behaviour-Based Conflict	Employee Commitment
Time-Based Conflict	Pearson Correlation	1	.540**	.476**	.482**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	93	93	93	93
Strain-Based Conflict	Pearson Correlation	.540**	1	.599**	.443**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	93	93	93	93

Behaviour-Based Conflict	Pearson Correlation	.476**	.599**	1	.397**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	93	93	93	93
Employee Commitment	Pearson Correlation	.482**	.443**	.397**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	93	93	93	93

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The bi-directional Relationship of WFC and FWC interference on employee commitment

The study aimed to investigate the influence of bi-directional work-family and family-work interference on employee commitment among student counsellors. The study employed multiple regression analysis, which allowed the researchers to include multiple independent variables (WFC and FWC) and a dependent variable (employee commitment) to assess the unique contribution of each interference type (McKenzie et al., 2023; Budhiraja, 2022).

Regarding the work-family interface, the results in Table 3 reveal a significant negative effect of work-family conflict on the organisational outcomes of students' counsellors in Tanzania. The results indicate that work-family conflict accounted for 86.7% of the total variance, which is a substantial variance in determining employee commitment ($R^2 = 0.867$). Accordingly, as work-family conflict increases, there is a higher likelihood of a decrease in job commitment among counsellors. When the demands of work and family are incompatible, it limits the ability to meet the expectations of both domains, lowering job commitment and vice versa.

Table 3: The bi-directional work-family Interference on Employee Commitment

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.0931 ^a	.0867	.0858	.12536
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Commitment				
b. Predictors: (Constant), work-family interference				

The bi-directional Relationship of Family Work Conflict interference on employee commitment

As Table 4 below indicates, the regression result indicated a significant contribution of family work conflict to employee commitment among student counsellors in HLIs in Tanzania. The results indicate that family-work conflict accounted for 7% of the total variance in determining organisational commitment among workers ($R^2 = 0.073$). This finding suggests that family-work conflict negatively impacts students' commitment to counsellors in Tanzania. As a result, employee commitment tends to decrease, and vice versa, indicating an inverse relationship between the two variables. Therefore, the results imply that when family responsibilities and commitments interfere with the work performance of respondents, the effects can lead to stress, lower job satisfaction, and potentially impact their job commitment.

Table 4: The bi-directional Family-Work Conflict on Employee Commitment

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.0865 ^a	.0749	.0732	1.22922
a. Dependent Variable: Employee Commitment				
b. Predictors: (Constant), Family-work conflict				

Source: Researcher Constructs (2023)

4.6 Gender difference on work-life conflict and employee commitment

To further examine gender differences on WLC, t-test tests were conducted to assess the level of work-life conflict across genders in all six dimensions. On four of the six conflict dimensions, significant differences were found. More specifically, female respondents were found to experience more conflict than men in terms of all three family interference with work forms of conflict (time, strain, and behaviour), as well as time-based work interference with family conflict. Surprisingly, the chi-square tests used to examine work-life conflict differences between genders revealed that more men than women experienced higher strain-based work interference with family, as well as higher behaviour-based work interference with family.

Table 5: Gender Differences work Work-Life Conflict, and Employee Commitment

Dimension	Mean for Males	Mean for Females	t	P
Time-based work interference with family	2.62	2.89	.57	.607
Time-based family interference with work	1.14	2.16	-2.57	.049
Strain-based work interference with family	2.74	2.51	-2.35	.019
Strain-based family interference with work	1.65	1.98	-2.09	.048
Behaviour-based work interference with family	2.69	2.64	-1.62	.017
Behaviour-based family interference with work	2.65	2.72	2.13	.040

* p , .05.

DISCUSSION

The study aimed to assess the influence of work-life conflict on employee commitment among student counsellors. The findings revealed a significant but negative contribution of work-family conflict to the employee commitment of the respondents, with work-to-family interference found to be higher than family-to-work conflict among student counsellors. Supporting these findings, Harrison and Gordon (2021) affirm that conflicting work and family demands can lead to increased stress, reduced job satisfaction, and potential burnout, ultimately affecting an employee's willingness to stay with an organisation. As further indicated by Kundi (2024), the resources available at home have a positive effect on job performance and are indirectly related to household work arrangements. Therefore, as student counsellors often experience higher work-to-family conflict than family-to-work conflict due to their demanding jobs,

the effects will spill over into their personal lives, making it difficult to balance work and family responsibilities, thereby compromising their normative commitment (Paegle et al., 2025).

Additionally, a strong, statistically significant inverse association between organisational commitment and work-family conflict was found in this study, implying that employees with a high level of work-family conflict therefore show less effective loyalty to the organisation. This finding is consistent with a previous study by Letitia (2024), which reflects the Spillover theory, affirming that when stressors in one domain generate strains that are then transferred to another domain, thereby affecting an individual's wellbeing and job commitment. Moreover, according to role conflict theory (Zayed et al., 2021), when individuals with multiple roles experience role stress and overload, they are likely to compromise their psychological needs. Consequently, counsellors may feel greater pressure and tension when juggling multiple roles, which can lead to reduced job commitment. Supporting the findings, Pujowata and Eswan (2025) insist that the job commitment of student counsellors is important, as the profession of counselling requires "passion" and "compassion." Being a professional counsellor in HLIs requires an in-depth awareness of and concern for the diverse conditions of students, necessitating a serious commitment and engagement.

Therefore, highly committed student counsellors in HLIs will align themselves with the institution's goals, have a stronger tendency to identify with the organisation, and are more likely to exhibit positive behaviour and attitudes. The results of this study were corroborated by various studies, such as Paegle et al. (2025), Freire and Bettencourt (2020), and Clark (2021), which indicated a statistically significant unfavourable association between organisational commitment and work-family conflict. Furthermore, a modelling study conducted among nurses in Iran revealed that those with higher levels of work-family conflict also exhibit lower levels of organisational commitment (Harrison & Gordon, 2021; Fan et al., 2024). Nonetheless, a different study disproved the theory linking organisational commitment to the work-family paradox (Qian et al., 2024). A different study on the connection between WFC and organisational commitment demonstrated that when an individual is undergoing WFC, their jobs require actions that do not reflect their true value and worth. As a result, they are unable to perform the work well, which exacerbates their distress and adversely impacts their emotional response, including organisational commitment (Handlzs et al., 2024).

The findings also support the results of Rasool (2021), who has indicated that striking a balance and maintaining harmony between work and family has always been a significant challenge for women in general. As a result, employees who have a high level of work-family conflict are less effectively committed to the organisation. Furthermore, the current study demonstrated that substantial variations were found in four of the six conflict dimensions. More specifically, the study found that female respondents exhibited more conflict than men in terms of all three family interference with work forms of conflict (time, strain, and behaviour) as well as time-based work interference with family conflict. As noted by Cui and Li (2021), these differences may stem from historically established gender roles, where women tend to be overwhelmed with multiple responsibilities compared to men. Furthermore, the results showed a significant difference in organisational commitment between male and female participants. In this study, the results showed that male respondents exhibited higher organisational commitment than female respondents, indicating the impact of home responsibilities on their workplace duties.

As Agarwal (2021) indicates, the social expectations and behavioural norms that women face while juggling obligations to both family and work have led working women to experience higher levels of work-family conflict and job-family stress than their male counterparts. Furthermore, the results support the findings by Kundi (2024), who found that across prime working-age groups, men tend to experience higher motivation and commitment in the workplace than women. According to Rajab-Gilan et al. (2025), research has demonstrated that women have

historically struggled to strike a balance and maintain harmony between their personal and professional lives. Consequently, the main outcomes that are seen are stress, mental exhaustion, and psychological burnout or disorder, and the main strategy that women at tertiary institutions adopt is to resume and end work whenever it is convenient for them (Zayed *et al.*, 2021). Budhiraja (2022) recognised the significance of Spillover theory and noted that people who integrate multiple roles frequently experience the effects of conflicting roles; family and work roles are frequently incompatible because everyone has a limited number of resources (such as time and energy).

According to Budhiraja (2022), individuals who mentally process role duties outside of typical physical or temporal boundaries, such as working from home or engaging in non-work-related tasks during work hours, allow role expectations to infiltrate and permeate other domains. Therefore, the study findings support the Spillover theory in the sense that the results have clearly proved that work-family conflict, stemming from the excessive demand of counselling and guidance services, can significantly reduce a counsellor's job commitment through the "spillover effect," where negative experiences at work or home negatively impact a counsellor's job commitment. Consequently, the absence of university student counsellors' commitment can significantly harm student wellbeing, academic performance, and the university environment by reducing support, increasing stress, and potentially causing burnout.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

First, the study confirmed the negative impact of work-family conflict on job commitment among student counsellors. According to the Spillover theory, individuals who play multiple competing roles often feel stressed because they lack sufficient time or energy to fulfil their responsibilities in each role, resulting in negative spillover. The findings further established that work-family role conflict has a significant influence on employee commitment, showing that respondents' level of employee commitment was significantly but negatively impacted by work-family role conflict. The results also showed that employee commitment may suffer as a result of family-work contradiction (FWC), which is a result of family-work conflict (WFC). Likewise, the study concludes that social expectations and behavioural norms that women face when playing a combination of family and work roles have led working women to experience higher levels of work-family conflicts and job-family stress than their male counterparts. Furthermore, in terms of all three types of family interference with work conflict—time, strain, and behaviour—as well as time-based work interference with family conflict, it was discovered that female counsellors experienced more conflict than male counsellors.

The study recommends that HLIs should ensure that student counsellors are protected against all sources of WFC through an organisational support system. These include, among others, job incentives, the opportunity for day-care for the children of workers, and recreation centres should also be provided for managers and all levels of workers. This will help improve organisational commitment among the counsellors and lessen stress caused by work-family role conflicts. Moreover, affirmative actions should be in place to protect female counsellors against the harmful effects of WLC. At the same time, female counsellors should adapt their own role integration strategies to suit their individual preferences, situations, and dynamics.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study underscore the critical importance of leveraging a well-balanced work and non-work life responsibilities to minimise constant work pressure, reduce stress and prevent burnout among employees. This fosters a happier and more sustainable work environment, leading to increased commitment to the organisation. Moreover, these findings have significant practical and policy implications, aligning closely with Section 7 of the Employment and Labour Relations Act of 2004 that provides binding responsibilities to employers to create a healthy

and good working environment, by regulating the conditions of employment such as hours of work, annual leave, sick leave, maternity leave and other forms of leave. In doing so, the Act aims to promote economic efficiency, social justice, and fair treatment, thereby enhancing employee satisfaction, security, and job commitment.

On the other hand, the findings provide supporting evidence for human resource policies, such as those that demonstrate an organisation's commitment to employee needs, promoting a culture of care and consideration where employees feel supported in managing both work and personal life. As indicated in this study, employees who experience conflict in the workplace tend to have lower job commitment and are more likely to experience poorer mental and physical health, which consequently affects their job performance. Therefore, at the university level, embracing work-life balance practices among student counsellors not only supports compliance with existing policies but also supports students' mental health, academic success, and overall wellbeing, helping them manage stress, anxiety, and personal challenges.

Limitations and Areas for Further Studies

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of work-life conflict on job commitment among student counsellors in Higher Learning Institutions in Tanzania. The study was carried out in selected HLIs in Tanzania, which may limit the applicability of the findings to other institutions with similar characteristics. On the other hand, the study's primary method relied on self-reported data, which may have led to response bias. In the same vein, the study employed an explanatory research design, which aimed to investigate the long-term impact and shifts in work-life conflict. However, a longitudinal design and expanded geographic scope could overcome these constraints. Lastly, the study focused on student counsellors' perceptions of work-life conflicts and job commitment in institutions; however, further research is needed to understand their coping strategies.

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Authors' Contributions

Conceptualisation: Elisifa Ezekiel Nnko. Literature Review: Elisifa Ezekiel Nnko, with Christina Mosses Maeda, participated in selecting relevant literature. Data Collection and Analysis: Christina Mosses Maeda carried out the pilot study and data coding, and Elisifa Ezekiel Nnko carried out the final data analysis. Development of draft manuscript: Elisifa Ezekiel Nnko addressed all comments from peer reviewers, proofread the manuscript and revised it for the final accepted version.

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