

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF A FOUR-DAY WORK WEEK ON JOB SATISFACTION, WORK-LIFE BALANCE, AND RETENTION INTENTIONS IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN KARACHI, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This quantitative article examines the perceived impact of a four-day work week on job satisfaction, work-life balance, and retention intention among full-time faculty and administrative staff working in private higher education institutions in Karachi, Pakistan. The study responds to a local evidence gap created by the partial use of compressed or reduced on-campus schedules during austerity pressures, where institutional leaders had practical exposure to shortened schedules but limited empirical evidence on employee outcomes. A cross-sectional survey design was used with 100 valid responses. The model positioned perceived four-day work week as the independent variable, work intensification and job satisfaction as mediating variables, work-life balance as an intervening employee outcome, perceived organizational support as a moderating condition, and retention intention as the dependent variable. The analysis used reliability testing, descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple linear regression, and a supplementary independent-samples t-test in SPSS. The results showed acceptable reliability for perceived four-day work week, job satisfaction, perceived organizational support, and retention intention, while work intensification and work-life balance required cautious interpretation. Only one of the nine hypothesized relationships was supported: work intensification had a significant negative association with work-life balance. The perceived four-day work week was not significantly associated with work intensification, job satisfaction, or work-life balance. Perceived organizational support was the only significant predictor of retention intention in regression, indicating that support structures may matter more than schedule form alone. The article concludes that private HEIs should avoid treating the four-day work week as a stand-alone retention tool and should instead align flexible scheduling with workload control, managerial responsiveness, communication, and institutional support.



Introduction

The four-day work week has moved from a fringe employment experiment into a serious organizational policy debate because it questions the assumption that employee productivity and institutional reliability require a five-day physical presence. Fan and Moen (2025) framed reduced working time as an intervention that can reshape well-being when organizations prepare employees through work reorganization and efficiency planning. This article studies that idea in a sector where schedule design has direct consequences for teaching delivery, student services, administrative coordination, and employee commitment. The focus is private higher education in Karachi, where faculty members and administrative employees often experience performance expectations that extend beyond formal work hours.

The Pakistani higher education setting makes the topic significant because flexible or compressed schedules have not only been discussed as employee-centered benefits; they have also appeared as institutional responses to cost and austerity pressure. Jain et al. (2025) described employee perspectives on a transition from five to four working days as inseparable from productivity, well-being, and organizational adaptation. In private HEIs, the same transition can be interpreted in competing ways.

Employees may see a shorter working week as relief from commuting and overload, or they may experience it as a compressed arrangement that pushes the same duties into fewer days. This tension shaped the present study because the four-day work week cannot be judged only by the number of days on campus.

Recent four-day work week studies show that subjective well-being depends on the design of the arrangement rather than the label attached to it. Venczel (2024) found that improved temporal harmony and social life may occur under a four-day week, yet rigid scheduling and uneven external support can limit the gains. This insight is important for Karachi's private universities because academic work includes lectures, advising, assessment, meetings, accreditation tasks, and student-facing responsibilities. Administrative staff face their own peaks through admissions, examinations, timetabling, fee processing, and regulatory documentation. A reduced weekly schedule may improve employee experience only when the workload is redesigned rather than merely redistributed.

The research problem is grounded in a mismatch between international optimism and local uncertainty. Saufi et al. (2023) examined turnover intention among academics in HEIs and emphasized the relevance of work-life balance within higher



education employment. Yet the evidence base is limited for private universities in Pakistan, where employees may be influenced by institutional support, economic insecurity, and workload intensity. The present article therefore asks whether employees' perception of a four-day work week relates to work intensification, job satisfaction, work-life balance, and retention intention. It also considers whether perceived organizational support provides a practical route through which universities can protect staff commitment.

Employee retention is a critical outcome in higher education because the departure of faculty and experienced administrative staff disrupts continuity, institutional memory, student support, and program quality. Shah et al. (2020) demonstrated that turnover issues among young academics in Pakistan are linked to institutional fit and embeddedness, showing that staff retention in higher education cannot be reduced to salary or schedule alone. The present study extends this concern to a four-day work week context by testing a model in which the schedule is expected to influence early employee outcomes and retention pathways. The model does not assume automatic benefits; instead, it treats employee perception as an empirical question. The purpose of this article is to develop a full research account from the proposal and statistical analysis

by linking the Karachi HEI context with current scholarship on flexible work, work intensification, satisfaction, balance, and retention. Chen et al. (2024) showed that organizational support can operate through balance and satisfaction mechanisms in predicting turnover intention, which makes support a meaningful interpretive lens for the present findings. The article presents the study through an abstract, introduction, literature review, materials and method, results, discussion, and conclusion. The results are developed in depth because the findings are not simply a matter of supported and unsupported hypotheses; they clarify where private HEIs should place managerial attention when designing flexible work arrangements.

Literature

Four-Day Work Week and Flexible Scheduling

The four-day work week is not a single standardized policy, because organizations can implement it as a reduced-hours model, a compressed-hours model, a staggered coverage model, or a hybrid arrangement. Mühl et al. (2024) treated compressed work schedules as interventions whose outcomes depend on how workload, autonomy, and recovery are organized. This distinction matters because employees may welcome one less day on campus while still facing longer daily pressure, faster



task cycles, and reduced recovery during active workdays. In higher education, this complexity becomes stronger because many tasks are not limited to fixed office hours.

A shorter week is often justified through the promise that fewer working days can improve well-being without lowering productivity. Moen and Chu (2024) showed that workers adapt strategically to a four-day week by changing time use, collaboration habits, and task priorities. Their finding suggests that schedule reform does not act directly through calendar change alone. Employees must also reorganize meetings, communication routines, and expectations about availability. This is highly relevant for faculty and administrative staff because teaching schedules, student inquiries, and regulatory tasks require coordination across people who may not share the same off-day. Qualitative evidence shows that employees do not experience the four-day week in identical ways. Venczel (2024) reported that positive changes in subjective well-being were shaped by social, organizational, and individual conditions. This indicates that a four-day work week can produce gains for some employees while creating friction for others whose job tasks, family responsibilities, or service requirements do not align with the new schedule. Private HEIs in Karachi present the same possibility: employees may value

saved commuting time, yet they may experience compressed days as intense when lecture hours, deadlines, and administrative windows remain unchanged.

Systematic attention to the four-day work week has grown because organizations are seeking models that balance productivity with well-being after the expansion of flexible work debates. Campbell (2023) reviewed the academic literature and noted that four-day work week research includes diverse conceptualizations, from compressed schedules to genuine reductions in working time. This diversity means that findings from one country or sector cannot be transferred mechanically to another. The present study therefore treats local employee perception as the core variable rather than assuming that international results automatically apply to Pakistani private universities.

Recent conceptual and empirical work also warns that the four-day week may carry both benefits and risks. Sirc (2024) discussed the potential for improved satisfaction and productivity while noting that work intensification and stress can occur if the same workload is forced into fewer days. This risk is central to the present model because work intensification is not a side issue; it is one of the hypothesized mechanisms through which a four-day schedule may either support or weaken work-life balance. A shorter week has

value only if the remaining workdays are not transformed into sustained pressure zones.

Work Intensification, Job Satisfaction, and Work-Life Balance

Work intensification refers to the experience of doing more work, faster work, or denser work within the available time. Dodanwala and Santoso (2021) found that job stress can connect satisfaction facets with turnover intention, indicating that pressure may alter how employees interpret their work conditions. In a four-day week setting, intensification becomes a decisive variable because employees may gain a non-working day while losing breathing space during working days. This trade-off can explain why schedule reforms sometimes produce mixed or uneven results across staff categories.

Work-life balance is often treated as a positive outcome of flexible scheduling, yet balance is not created automatically by a change in weekly structure. Bocean et al. (2023) found that the ability to balance work and private life can increase employee satisfaction and motivation while reducing negative work experiences. This supports the argument that balance depends on the fit between job demands and personal time, not merely on the number of working days. In private HEIs, employees may have fewer campus days but still carry grading, student communication, or

administrative backlog into personal time.

Job satisfaction represents the evaluative and emotional response employees hold toward their work, and it can be shaped by workload, support, recognition, autonomy, and perceived fairness. Susanto et al. (2022) showed that work-life balance can enhance job satisfaction and job performance, with supportive supervisor behavior influencing this relationship. For the present study, this means that satisfaction is expected to rise under a four-day work week only when employees perceive the arrangement as supportive, manageable, and fair. A shorter week that merely compresses tasks may not be sufficient to improve satisfaction.

The relationship between stress, satisfaction, and turnover can vary by sector, employee group, and organizational climate. Lin et al. (2024) showed that job stress, job satisfaction, and turnover intention can be interrelated under high-pressure work conditions. In HEIs, academic and administrative employees often experience deadlines that are cyclical rather than steady, which means that schedule changes may have different effects during admissions, examinations, accreditation reviews, or semester closures. The present study therefore interprets work intensification as an outcome that may fluctuate with workload peaks.



Quality of work life provides a broader lens because it connects working conditions, employee well-being, and retention-related attitudes. Jayaraman et al. (2023) presented quality of work life as a precursor to work-life balance, indicating that balance depends on how employees experience the broader employment environment. The present article uses that logic to interpret a four-day work week as part of a larger workplace system. The schedule may create opportunities for recovery, yet the quality of the employment relationship determines whether those opportunities become meaningful employee outcomes.

Higher Education Context and Employee Retention

Higher education institutions are labor-intensive organizations in which quality depends heavily on committed faculty, skilled administrative employees, and stable internal processes. Zhang et al. (2022) found that burnout and turnover intention among university instructors were linked through job satisfaction, which shows that academic retention depends on employees' emotional and evaluative responses to work. This evidence supports the inclusion of job satisfaction in the present model, even though the current analysis later shows that satisfaction did not significantly predict retention intention in this sample.

The higher education workplace differs from many corporate settings because work is distributed across teaching, mentoring, research, service, compliance, and student support. Kim (2023) examined university lecturers and identified workload and work-family conflict as important sources of job satisfaction variation. This is relevant for private HEIs in Karachi because faculty and staff may have to absorb schedule changes without reductions in academic expectations. A four-day week may therefore be experienced as useful by some employees and neutral by others, depending on task load and institutional flexibility.

Retention intention among academic staff is shaped by embeddedness, available alternatives, professional growth, and institutional support. Shah et al. (2020) linked turnover issues among young academics in Pakistan with organizational and community embeddedness, showing that local higher education employees may evaluate whether their institutions provide stability and fit. This supports the present study's decision to examine retention intention as the final outcome rather than only measuring satisfaction or balance. Employees may enjoy aspects of a four-day schedule yet remain uncertain about staying if institutional support is weak.

Work-life balance has also been examined directly in relation to



turnover intention among academics. Saufi et al. (2023) tested antecedents of turnover intention in HEIs and positioned work-life balance as a key pathway in academic employment. Their approach is conceptually close to the present model, although the Karachi study uses direct correlation testing rather than structural equation modeling. This distinction matters because the current findings reveal that the hypothesized pathways did not operate strongly in the sample, despite their theoretical relevance.

Job satisfaction among employees in higher education can be influenced by both academic identity and organizational management. Bhatia and Williams (2023) studied job satisfaction parameters among employees in HEIs and identified managerial support, interpersonal relations, and departmental factors as meaningful elements. This supports the practical relevance of perceived organizational support in the current study. When employees judge whether to stay, the availability of institutional backing may be more immediate than the schedule structure itself.

Perceived Organizational Support and Retention Intention

Perceived organizational support refers to the extent to which employees believe that their institution values their contribution and cares about their well-being. Zhu et al. (2023) found that perceived organizational support

can influence retention intention through engagement-related mechanisms in healthcare work. The sector differs from higher education, yet the mechanism is useful because it shows how employees may remain with an organization when they feel protected and recognized. In a four-day work week context, support may determine whether employees experience the schedule as relief or as imposed compression. Support is particularly important when organizations redesign work because employees need clarity about expectations, availability, workload distribution, and fairness. Weng et al. (2023) showed that talent management can influence employees' intention to stay, with organizational support contributing to positive work attitudes. This aligns with the present model's attention to retention intention in private HEIs. A schedule reform that lacks communication and resource planning may be weaker than a conventional schedule supported by responsive leadership and transparent workload management. Research on turnover often finds that satisfaction and balance matter, but these variables may not be equally powerful in every sample. Maharani et al. (2024) found that occupational stress and work-life balance can influence turnover intention through job satisfaction. The present study tested related paths and found limited support, which makes the findings valuable



because they identify the specific pattern in a Karachi private HEI sample. Rather than forcing the data to match prior theory, the article interprets the weak effects as a sign that local institutional support may be a stronger retention cue.

Recent work also connects perceived organizational support with turnover intention through job satisfaction. Haryadi et al. (2025) examined perceived organizational support and meaningful work as predictors of turnover intention through job satisfaction, indicating that support may strengthen employees' psychological attachment to the organization. In the present study, perceived organizational support did not significantly predict job satisfaction, yet it did predict retention intention. This suggests that employees may decide whether to stay on the basis of institutional backing even when their general satisfaction scores do not show a strong statistical link.

The evidence base on organizational support has expanded across sectors, including education. Kiiza (2025) examined perceived organizational support and job satisfaction among teachers, emphasizing recognition, rewards, and training as support dimensions. In private HEIs, similar support may include manageable workloads, fair scheduling, timely communication, staff development, transparent leadership, and resources for teaching and administration. The current study

therefore treats organizational support as a central managerial finding rather than a minor control factor.

Conceptual Synthesis and Hypothesis Development

The conceptual model in this article connects the perceived four-day work week with work intensification, job satisfaction, work-life balance, perceived organizational support, and retention intention. Arokiasamy and Krishnaswamy (2021) studied perceived organizational support and turnover intention among academic expatriates, showing that support can be relevant to academic retention in cross-cultural employment contexts. This reinforces the inclusion of perceived organizational support in a Pakistani HEI model. The expectation was that support would strengthen positive outcomes, although the actual analysis did not estimate an interaction effect.

The model assumes that a shorter week may lower work intensification and improve job satisfaction and work-life balance. Ganji et al. (2021) showed that empowerment, organizational support, and ethical climate can affect turnover intention through job satisfaction, which supports the broader logic that workplace conditions shape retention pathways. Applied to private HEIs, this means that schedule reform should be treated as one workplace condition among many. The four-day week



may help, but its effect is likely to depend on workload design, support, fairness, and employee voice.

The study also assumes that job satisfaction and work-life balance may strengthen retention intention. Orpina et al. (2022) examined private university academics and treated perceived organizational support as a condition that can shape the satisfaction-turnover relationship. This is closely aligned with the present article's institutional context because private universities often combine academic aspirations with market pressures. The model therefore expects that employees will be more likely to stay when they experience satisfaction, balance, and support together.

The proposed relationships were stated as nine directional hypotheses. Likardo and Praningrum (2025) found that perceived organizational support and organizational commitment can influence turnover intention through job satisfaction, which supports the theoretical expectation that support-related variables can shape retention pathways. The Karachi study tested direct relationships through Pearson correlations and examined retention intention through multiple regression. The findings therefore offer a direct, locally grounded test of whether the assumed paths appear in the sample.

The last conceptual point concerns work-life balance as an outcome that

can mediate or connect the effects of HR practices and retention. Naini and Riyanto (2023) examined perceived organizational support and work-life balance in relation to turnover intention through job satisfaction. This helps explain why the present study included both balance and satisfaction in the model. At the same time, the article carefully distinguishes conceptual labels from statistical tests: mediation and moderation were part of the model logic, but the performed analysis tested direct correlations and a regression model.

Materials And Method

The study used a quantitative, descriptive, explanatory, and cross-sectional survey design. The design was suitable because the study examined employee perceptions numerically and tested hypothesized relationships among clearly defined variables at a single point in time. The target population consisted of full-time faculty members and full-time administrative or operations staff working in private higher education institutions in Karachi, Pakistan. Respondents were required to have at least one year of institutional service so that they had a meaningful basis for judging workload, support, satisfaction, balance, and the perceived implications of a four-day work week. The final analytical sample consisted of 100 valid responses, which were used consistently in reliability analysis, descriptive

statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and the supplementary gender-based t-test. Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The instrument contained demographic items and adapted Likert-scale items measuring perceived four-day work week, work intensification, job satisfaction, work-life balance, perceived organizational support, and retention intention. The response

Table 1

Variables, Measurement Roles, and Composite Structure

Variable	Model role	Items	Composite interpretation
Perceived 4 Day Work Week	Independent variable	5	Employee perception of a working week delivered over four days
Work Intensification	Mediating variable in conceptual model	7	Current work pace and effort density
Job Satisfaction	Mediating variable in conceptual model	9	Overall contentment with university employment
Work-Life Balance	Intervening employee outcome	4	Quality of time and boundary control outside work
Perceived Organizational Support	Moderating condition in conceptual model	6	Perceived institutional value, care, and backing
Retention Intention	Dependent variable	3	Intention to remain with the current university

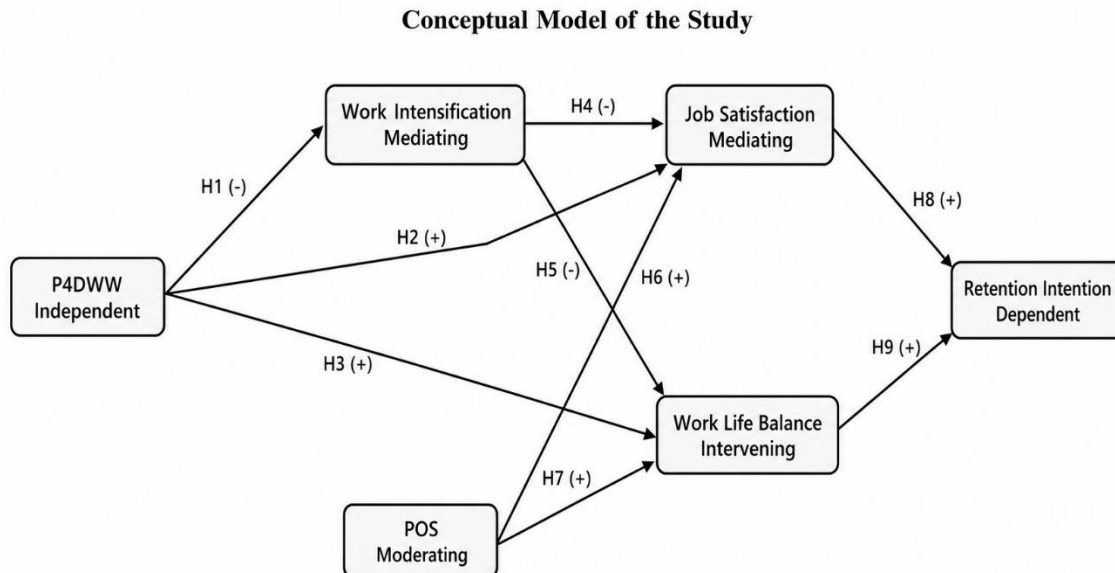


Figure 1. Conceptual model guiding the hypothesized relationships.

The study used non-probability sampling through a combination of convenience and purposive approaches. Convenience sampling enabled access to employees who were reachable and willing to respond to the online survey, while purposive sampling ensured that respondents matched the professional, organizational, geographic, and service-duration criteria. The analysis was conducted in IBM SPSS. Internal consistency reliability was assessed through Cronbach's alpha. Descriptive statistics summarized minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis. Pearson correlation was used to test the nine hypotheses because each hypothesis described a direct relationship between two variables. Multiple linear regression was used to identify which predictors were

associated with retention intention when entered together. An independent-samples t-test compared job satisfaction between male and female respondents.

Results

Overview of Analytical Logic

The results section reports the empirical outcomes from the SPSS analysis of 100 valid survey responses. The analysis was designed to connect the research objectives with measurable evidence rather than merely report isolated statistics. The opening objective was to assess how employees perceived the four-day work week, while the later objectives examined whether that perception was associated with work intensification, job satisfaction, work-life balance, perceived organizational support, and retention intention. The statistical pipeline therefore began with

reliability analysis, moved to descriptive summaries, examined bivariate relationships through Pearson correlations, tested the proposed hypotheses, and then used regression to determine which predictors were most closely related to retention intention. A supplementary t-test assessed whether job satisfaction differed by gender. This sequence allowed the study to determine whether the hypothesized model received broad, partial, or limited empirical support. The results are presented in a way that supports the objectives of the research by showing what the evidence says about each part of the conceptual model. The study did not assume that a four-day work week would automatically improve

satisfaction, balance, or retention. Instead, it tested whether the expected relationships appeared in a sample of private HEI employees in Karachi. This is important because the four-day work week in this context was associated with austerity and compressed scheduling conditions rather than a fully designed employee well-being intervention. The analysis therefore gives practical value even where hypotheses were not statistically supported. A non-significant finding can indicate that institutional decision-makers should not depend on schedule change alone. A significant result can indicate where attention should be directed when designing flexible work arrangements.

Table 2

Analytical Sequence used for the SPSS Output

Stage	Procedure	Purpose
1	Data coding and reverse coding	Prepare responses so higher scores indicate higher construct levels
2	Composite score computation	Create scale-level variables for analysis
3	Reliability analysis	Assess internal consistency of each construct
4	Descriptive statistics	Summarize central tendency, spread, and shape
5	Pearson correlation	Test direct bivariate relationships and hypotheses
6	Multiple regression	Identify predictors of retention intention
7	Independent-samples t-test	Compare job satisfaction by gender

The variables used in the analysis were treated as composite scores. Perceived four-day work week measured how employees evaluated

the possible emotional and energy-related benefits of working across four days. Work intensification measured the density and pace of

work. Job satisfaction measured the overall positive or negative evaluation of employment in the university. Work-life balance measured the quality of time and boundaries outside work. Perceived organizational support captured the extent to which employees felt valued and backed by the institution. Retention intention measured the intention to remain with the current university. The following table places these variables beside their measurement role so that the statistical results can be read as a connected model rather than as disconnected outputs.

Scale Reliability and Measurement Consistency

Reliability analysis was the first substantive step because the study depended on composite scores. A scale-level variable can be interpreted confidently only when its items show enough internal consistency to justify aggregation. Cronbach's alpha was calculated for all six constructs. The pattern was mixed but usable for the purpose of direct relationship testing. Four constructs met or approached the conventional acceptability range, while two constructs fell below the

preferred threshold and were interpreted with caution. This means that the results should not be read as invalid; rather, they should be read as indicating that the work intensification and work-life balance scales showed weaker item consistency in this sample than the other scales.

The reliability results are important because they affect how strongly later findings can be interpreted. Perceived four-day work week produced an alpha of .741, which is acceptable for a perception-based adapted measure in a cross-sectional survey. Job satisfaction produced the strongest internal consistency with alpha of .813, indicating that the nine items cohered well in capturing satisfaction. Retention intention also showed acceptable internal consistency with alpha of .790, while perceived organizational support produced alpha of .715. Work intensification had alpha of .636, and work-life balance had alpha of .607. These two values suggest that responses to those items were less uniform, possibly because employees experienced work pace and balance in more individualized ways.

Table 3

Reliability Values for the Study Constructs

Variable	No. of items	Cronbach alpha	Interpretation
Perceived 4 Day Work Week	5	.741	Acceptable
Work Intensification	7	.636	Caution
Job Satisfaction	9	.813	Good
Work Life Balance	4	.607	Caution

Perceived Organizational Support	6	.715	Acceptable
Retention Intention	3	.790	Acceptable

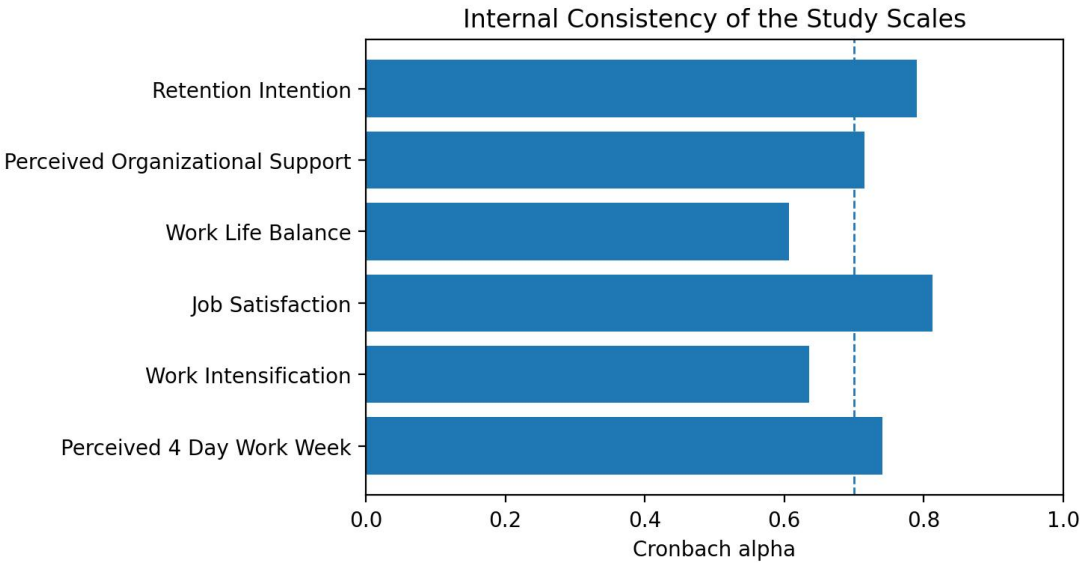


Figure 2. Internal consistency pattern across the six scales.

The reliability pattern provides a useful insight into the local HEI context. Employees may understand job satisfaction, perceived institutional support, and intention to stay in relatively coherent ways because these constructs are part of familiar workplace judgments. Work intensification and balance may be less internally stable because different job categories experience compressed schedules differently. Faculty members may intensify work through grading, lesson preparation, and student communication, while administrative staff may intensify work through service queues, deadlines, and office coverage requirements. Work-life balance may also vary because household

responsibilities, commuting patterns, and personal obligations differ across employees. Thus, the below-threshold alpha values are not only technical limitations; they may also reflect diversity in the lived experience of compressed work arrangements.

Descriptive Findings and Distribution of Responses

The descriptive statistics provide the central tendency and spread of each composite variable. These values help explain the general condition of the sample before the article turns to relationship testing. The perceived four-day work week mean was 11.37, with a standard deviation of 4.685 and an observed range from 5 to 22. Because the scale had five items, this pattern indicates moderate

dispersion in perceptions rather than a uniform endorsement of the schedule. Work intensification had a mean of 16.30 and a standard deviation of 4.827 across seven items, with a range from 7 to 39. This range shows that some employees reported relatively low work intensity while a small number reported high levels of work pressure.

Job satisfaction had a mean of 20.12 and a standard deviation of 5.080 across nine items. The observed scores ranged from 9 to 34, showing that respondents were not clustered

at one extreme. Work-life balance had a mean of 9.26 and a standard deviation of 2.744 across four items, with scores from 4 to 16. Perceived organizational support had a mean of 14.01 and a standard deviation of 3.799 across six items, with scores from 7 to 24. Retention intention had a mean of 7.43 and a standard deviation of 2.100 across three items, with scores from 3 to 12. Together, these descriptive values indicate a sample in which perceptions varied enough to support correlation and regression analysis.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for the Study Variables (N = 100)

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skew	Kurtosis
Perceived 4 Day Work Week	100	5	22	11.37	4.685	0.259	-1.117
Work Intensification	100	7	39	16.30	4.827	1.140	3.669
Job Satisfaction	100	9	34	20.12	5.080	0.305	0.136
Work Life Balance	100	4	16	9.26	2.744	0.243	-0.436
Perceived Organizational Support	100	7	24	14.01	3.799	0.219	-0.121
Retention Intention	100	3	12	7.43	2.100	-0.134	0.408

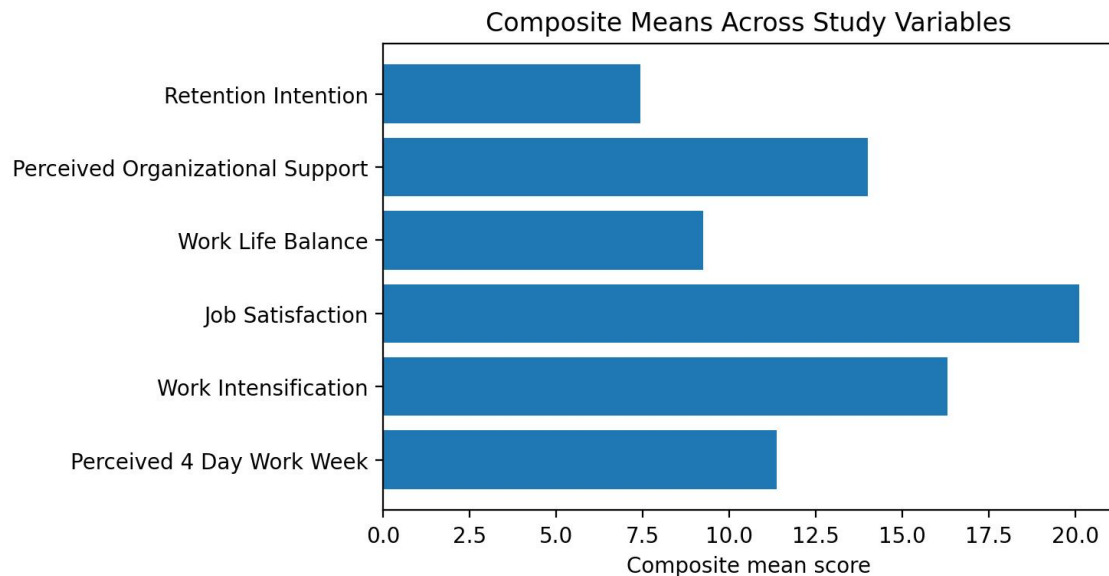


Figure 3. Composite mean scores for perceived schedule and employee outcome variables.

The distribution indicators further clarify the assumptions behind the analysis. Skewness and kurtosis for perceived four-day work week, job satisfaction, work-life balance, perceived organizational support, and retention intention were within a broadly acceptable range for the use of Pearson correlations and linear regression. Work intensification was the notable exception, with skewness of 1.140 and kurtosis of 3.669. This indicates a right-skewed and more peaked distribution, suggesting that most respondents reported moderate work intensity while a smaller group experienced substantially higher pressure. That pattern is meaningful because it suggests that work intensification may not be spread evenly across employees. The four-day work week may affect some subgroups more strongly than

others, especially those with roles that require continuous coverage or fixed service delivery.

The descriptive results also help explain why the perceived four-day work week did not later show strong relationships with the hypothesized outcomes. The mean and standard deviation suggest that perceptions of the schedule were not uniformly positive or negative. Employees appear to have evaluated the arrangement with mixed expectations. Some may have associated it with rest and well-being, while others may have anticipated work compression. When such mixed perceptions exist in a sample, the overall correlation with satisfaction, balance, or retention can become weak even when individual employees hold strong views. This is one reason the descriptive evidence must be read

together with the correlation matrix rather than treated as a standalone conclusion.

Age Profile and Sample Composition

The available age profile shows that the largest share of respondents fell in the 25-34 age bracket, followed by the 45-54 age bracket. Employees aged 35-44 formed the next major group, while respondents under 25 and those aged 55 or above formed smaller proportions. The age-bracket frequency output totaled 113 in the

Table 5

SPSS frequency display, while the analytical sample for reliability, correlation, regression, and t-test results was 100. For that reason, the age profile is interpreted only as an approximate demographic distribution, and the main analytical findings are based on the confirmed sample size of 100. This distinction is important because the study should not overstate demographic precision where the frequency table contains a counting inconsistency.

Approximate age Profile of Respondents based on Frequency Output

Age bracket	Frequency	Percent
Under 25	13	11.5%
25-34	40	35.4%
35-44	23	20.4%
45-54	32	28.3%
55 and above	5	4.4%

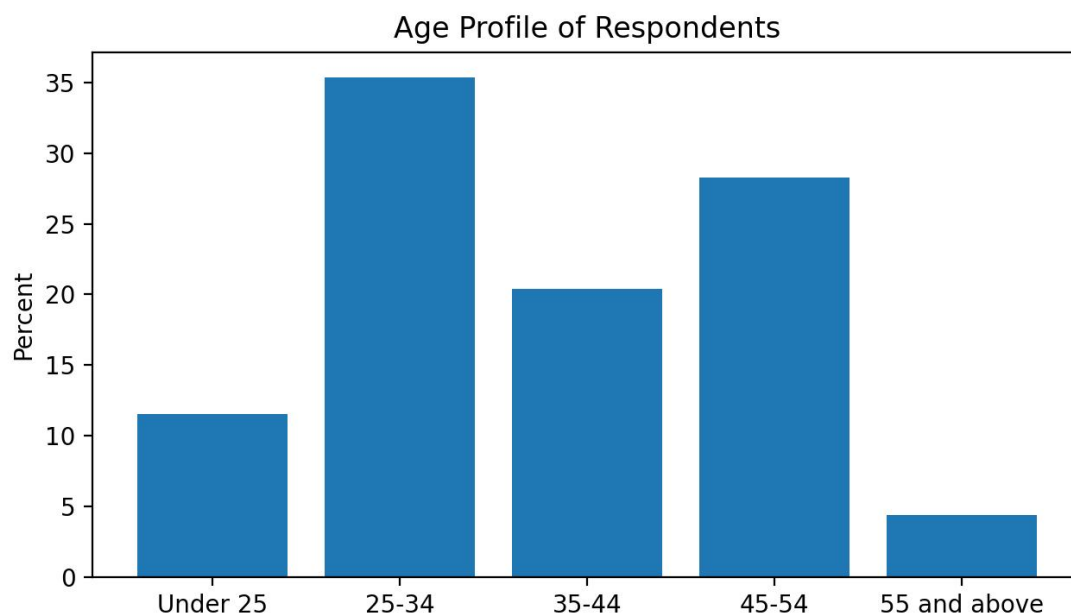


Figure 4. Age distribution of respondents from the available frequency output.



The age pattern remains useful as contextual information. A concentration in the 25-34 group suggests that many respondents were likely in early or mid-career stages, where workload expectations, growth aspirations, and retention decisions can be particularly sensitive to institutional support. The notable 45-54 group suggests that the sample also included experienced employees who may evaluate scheduling change through a longer history of institutional routines. Younger employees may value flexibility for personal development, commuting relief, or further study, while older employees may emphasize predictability, workload control, and institutional respect. The results do not test these differences directly, but the profile helps explain why perceptions of a four-day work week may not be homogeneous.

The supplementary gender comparison reported later offers another limited view of group differences, but the central analysis does not segment the model by age, job category, department, or university. This is a limitation for interpretation because a four-day work week may carry different implications for faculty members, student services staff, finance staff, examination offices, admissions teams, and operations personnel. The observed overall results should therefore be understood as general sample-level findings. They do not

rule out the possibility that certain groups experienced stronger benefits or challenges. In future work, larger samples could compare employees by job category, years of experience, and direct exposure to four-day scheduling.

Correlation Matrix and Direction of Relationships

The Pearson correlation matrix is the central evidence base for the nine hypotheses because each hypothesis describes a direct relationship between two variables. The correlation results show that the hypothesized model received limited support. Only one hypothesized relationship reached statistical significance in the predicted direction: work intensification was negatively associated with work-life balance. A separate relationship outside the nine hypotheses also reached significance: perceived organizational support was positively associated with retention intention. This second result became highly important because it was also supported in the regression analysis. The remaining hypothesized paths were weak and non-significant.

The perceived four-day work week had weak relationships with all expected early outcomes. Its correlation with work intensification was positive rather than negative, $r = .101$, $p = .318$. Although this relationship was not significant, the direction did not match the hypothesis that a four-day work

week would reduce work intensification. Its correlation with job satisfaction was $r = .022$, $p = .826$, indicating almost no association in this sample. Its correlation with work-life balance was $r = .067$, $p = .507$, again weak and not

significant. These findings indicate that employees' perception of the four-day work week, by itself, did not meaningfully align with the outcomes it was expected to influence.

Table 6

Pearson Correlation Matrix Among Study Variables.

Variable	P4DWW	WI	JS	WLB	POS	RTI
P4DWW	1	.101	.022	.067	-0.014	-0.189
WI	.101	1	-0.058	-0.198	-0.096	-0.065
JS	.022	-0.058	1	-0.052	.059	-0.044
WLB	.067	-0.198	-0.052	1	.154	.136
POS	-0.014	-0.096	.059	.154	1	.268
RTI	-0.189	-0.065	-0.044	.136	.268	1

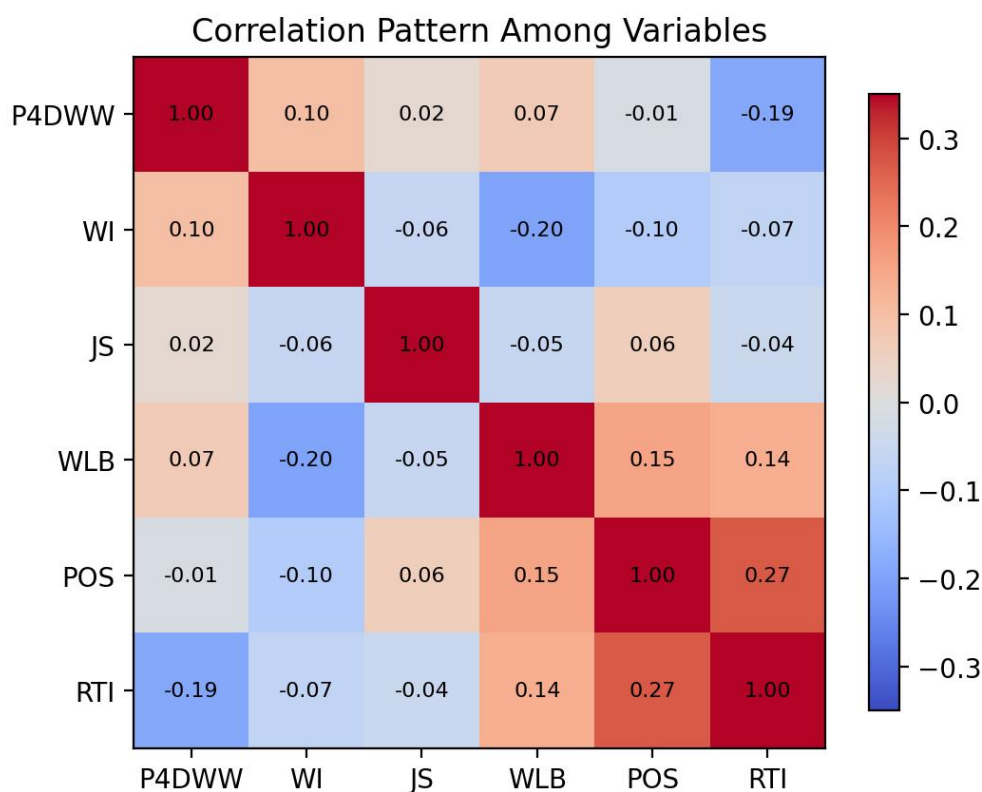


Figure 5. Heat map visualization of correlations among the six variables.

The work intensification results intensification had a weak and non-significant negative relationship were more informative. Work



with job satisfaction, $r = -.058$, $p = .570$. This did not support the hypothesis that intensification would reduce satisfaction. Work intensification had a significant negative relationship with work-life balance, $r = -.198$, $p = .048$. Although the magnitude was small, the result was statistically significant and in the expected direction. This supported the idea that a denser work pace makes it harder for employees to maintain balance between work and non-work life. In practical terms, the finding suggests that workload design matters even when schedule perception does not show a direct relationship with balance.

Perceived organizational support had weak, positive, and non-significant relationships with job satisfaction and work-life balance. Its correlation with job satisfaction was $r = .059$, $p = .559$, and its correlation with work-life balance was $r = .154$, $p = .127$. These findings did not support the two hypothesized support paths. Yet perceived organizational support had a significant positive relationship with retention intention, $r = .268$, $p = .007$. This path was not one of the nine formal hypotheses, but it was the strongest association in the matrix. The result suggests that employees who felt greater institutional support were more likely to report an intention to remain with their university.

The final hypothesized paths concerned job satisfaction and work-life balance as predictors of retention intention. Job satisfaction was not significantly related to retention intention, $r = -.044$, $p = .666$. Work-life balance was also not significantly related to retention intention, $r = .136$, $p = .176$. These findings indicate that the expected route from positive employee outcomes to intention to stay did not appear strongly in this sample. This does not mean that satisfaction and balance are unimportant in general. It means that, within the observed data, employees' stated retention intention aligned more clearly with perceived organizational support than with their composite job satisfaction or work-life balance scores.

The pattern of correlations provides an important answer to the research problem. The four-day work week did not appear to be a direct driver of satisfaction, balance, or work pace among the respondents. Work intensification mattered for work-life balance, which confirms that the burden of compressed or dense work is a real issue. Organizational support mattered for retention, which suggests that employees may evaluate whether to stay on the basis of institutional care, responsiveness, and backing. These two significant signals point to a practical interpretation: schedule design should not be separated from

workload management and organizational support.

Hypothesis Testing Outcomes

The hypothesis testing summary confirms that eight of the nine proposed hypotheses were not supported. H1 predicted that perceived four-day work week would negatively affect work intensification. The correlation was $r = .101$ with $p = .318$, so H1 was not supported. H2 predicted a positive relationship between perceived four-day work week and job satisfaction. The observed correlation was $r = .022$ with $p = .826$, so H2 was not supported. H3 predicted a positive relationship between perceived four-day work week and work-life balance. The observed correlation was $r = .067$ with $p = .507$, so H3 was not supported. These results show that the perceived four-day work week did not produce a statistically

visible effect on the early employee outcomes in the model.

H4 and H5 examined work intensification. H4 predicted that work intensification would negatively affect job satisfaction. The observed relationship was negative, $r = -.058$, but the p value of .570 showed that the relationship was not statistically significant. H4 was therefore not supported. H5 predicted that work intensification would negatively affect work-life balance. The observed relationship was $r = -.198$ with $p = .048$, which was statistically significant and in the predicted direction. H5 was supported. This is the only formal hypothesis that received empirical support. The result directly supports the study objective that sought to examine how work intensification relates to work-life balance.

Table 7

Hypothesis Testing Summary based on Pearson Correlation

Hypothesis	Predicted relationship	r	p	Decision
H1	4DWW -> Work Intensification (-)	.101	.318	Not supported
H2	4DWW -> Job Satisfaction (+)	.022	.826	Not supported
H3	4DWW -> Work Life Balance (+)	.067	.507	Not supported
H4	Work Intensification -> Job Satisfaction (-)	-.058	.570	Not supported
H5	Work Intensification -> Work Life Balance (-)	-.198	.048	Supported
H6	Organizational Support -> Job Satisfaction (+)	.059	.559	Not supported
H7	Organizational Support -> Work Life Balance (+)	.154	.127	Not supported

H8	Job Satisfaction -> Retention Intention (+)	- .044	.666	Not supported
H9	Work Life Balance -> Retention Intention (+)	.136	.176	Not supported

H6 and H7 tested the hypothesized relationships from perceived organizational support to job satisfaction and work-life balance. H6 predicted a positive relationship between support and job satisfaction. The observed correlation was $r = .059$ with $p = .559$, so H6 was not supported. H7 predicted a positive relationship between support and work-life balance. The observed correlation was $r = .154$ with $p = .127$, so H7 was not supported. Both relationships were positive, but neither reached statistical significance. This means that organizational support showed movement in the expected direction for satisfaction and balance, yet the evidence was not strong enough to accept those hypotheses in this sample.

H8 and H9 tested whether job satisfaction and work-life balance were associated with retention intention. H8 predicted a positive relationship between job satisfaction and retention intention, but the correlation was $r = -.044$ with $p = .666$. H8 was not supported. H9 predicted a positive relationship between work-life balance and retention intention, but the correlation was $r = .136$ with $p = .176$. H9 was not supported. These results weaken the expected chain in which four-day work week perception

leads to better satisfaction and balance, which then leads to retention. The chain did not operate as proposed in the direct correlation analysis.

The hypothesis outcomes should be read as a focused contribution rather than a failure of the study. The findings indicate that the international promise of the four-day work week did not transfer automatically into measurable relationships in this private HEI sample. The data show that the schedule perception alone was not a significant predictor of the outcomes. Yet the study still identified a relevant supported path: work intensification harms work-life balance. It also identified a significant practical relationship outside the formal hypotheses: perceived organizational support is positively linked to retention intention. These findings produce actionable evidence for universities that are considering flexible or compressed schedules.

A key statistical issue is that correlation testing evaluates direct pairwise relationships. The proposal described work intensification and job satisfaction as mediating variables, work-life balance as an intervening outcome, and perceived organizational support as a moderating variable. The analysis

did not conduct formal mediation or moderation tests, such as indirect-effect bootstrapping or interaction modeling. As a result, the hypothesis testing should be interpreted as direct relationship testing. This distinction protects the validity of the article because it avoids claiming effects that were not statistically estimated. The language of mediation and moderation remains useful for conceptual positioning, but the evidence reported here concerns reliability, descriptive distribution, correlations, regression, and group comparison.

The supported H5 path has practical meaning because it suggests that a shorter working week can be undermined by dense work demands. If employees must complete the same volume of duties in fewer days, the additional non-working day may not compensate for daily pressure. Work-life balance may deteriorate when working days become too crowded with meetings, student issues, administrative deadlines, and compressed communication. This finding is especially important for private HEIs because workload peaks are predictable in academic calendars. Institutions can anticipate pressure points and redesign deadlines, office coverage, and task allocation before adopting or extending shortened schedules.

The unsupported paths also carry meaning. The lack of significant relationships between perceived

four-day work week and the three early outcomes suggests that employees may not view the arrangement as a stable source of well-being. Some employees may associate it with better rest, while others may associate it with longer daily hours or higher pressure. Those opposing perceptions can offset each other statistically. Similarly, satisfaction and balance may not predict retention intention when employees evaluate staying in terms of job security, institutional reputation, family needs, income stability, career growth, and perceived support. Thus, the results invite a more realistic interpretation of employee retention in private HEIs.

Regression Analysis for Retention Intention

The multiple linear regression model examined retention intention as the dependent variable and entered perceived four-day work week, work intensification, job satisfaction, work-life balance, and perceived organizational support as predictors. The model was statistically significant overall, $F(5, 94) = 2.572$, $p = .032$. The multiple correlation was $R = .347$, with $R^2 = .120$ and adjusted $R^2 = .074$. This means that the model explained 12.0 percent of the variance in retention intention, while the adjusted value indicates a more conservative estimate of 7.4 percent after accounting for the number of predictors. The model therefore had

modest explanatory power, but it was statistically meaningful as a

group of predictors.

Table 8

Multiple Regression Model Summary for Retention Intention

Indicator	Value
R	.347
R Square	.120
Adjusted R Square	.074
Std. Error of the Estimate	2.021
Durbin-Watson	1.526
F	2.572
Sig.	.032

The Durbin-Watson statistic was 1.526, which did not suggest a serious independence problem for the residuals. The standard error of the estimate was 2.021, showing the typical prediction error in retention intention score units. The regression should be interpreted as an explanatory supplement to the correlation results, not as proof of causality. Because the study was cross-sectional, the model shows associations among variables measured at one point in time. It does not establish that organizational support caused retention intention. It does show that, when all five predictors were entered together, perceived organizational support was the only statistically significant predictor of retention intention.

The unstandardized coefficient for perceived organizational support was $B = .139$, with $SE = .054$, standardized beta = .251, $t = 2.554$, and $p = .012$. This indicates that higher perceived organizational support was associated with higher retention intention, controlling for the other variables in the model. The standardized beta suggests that organizational support had the strongest unique contribution among the predictors. This result is consistent with the correlation matrix, where organizational support also had the strongest significant association with retention intention. It therefore becomes the main practical finding of the regression analysis.

Table 9

Regression Coefficients Predicting Retention Intention

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	6.123	1.602	-	3.823	.000
Perceived 4 Day Work Week	-.086	.044	-.191	-1.955	.053
Work Intensification	-.001	.043	-.003	-.028	.978
Job Satisfaction	-.020	.040	-.049	-.502	.617

Work Life Balance	.082	.077	.108	1.072	.287
Perceived Organizational Support	.139	.054	.251	2.554	.012

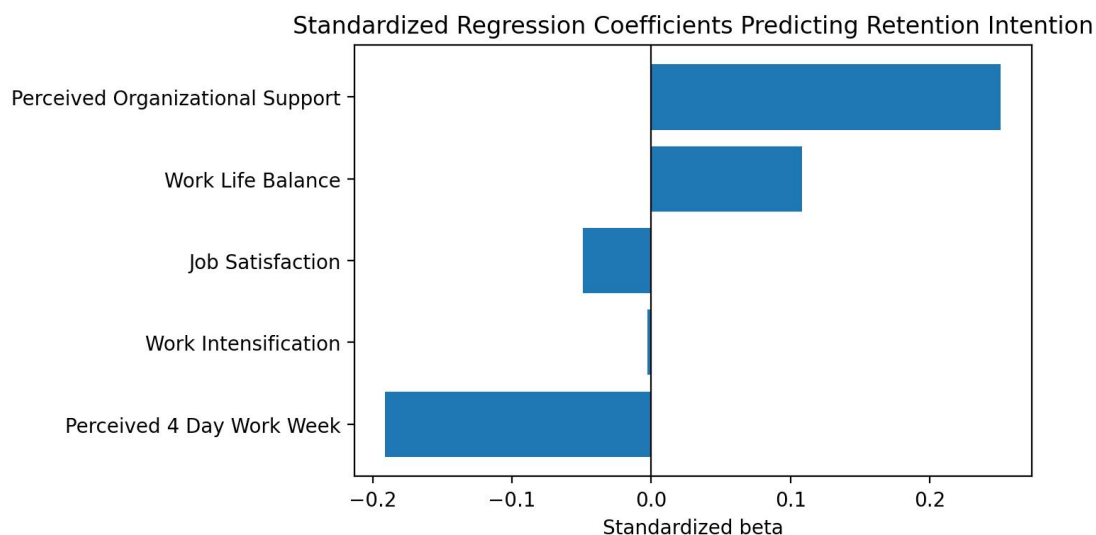


Figure 6. Standardized beta coefficients for the regression model.

The perceived four-day work week had an unstandardized coefficient of $B = -.086$, $SE = .044$, standardized beta = $-.191$, $t = -1.955$, and $p = .053$. This result was close to the .05 threshold but did not meet it. The negative direction is notable because the hypothesized model did not expect the perceived four-day work week to be negatively associated with retention intention. The near-significant result should be handled carefully. It should not be interpreted as evidence that a four-day work week reduces retention intention, because the p value was above .05. It does suggest that employee perceptions of the arrangement may be more complex than simple positive expectations. Work intensification had almost no predictive value in the regression model, with $B = -.001$, $SE = .043$, beta

= $-.003$, $t = -.028$, and $p = .978$. This indicates that, after accounting for the other predictors, work intensification did not explain retention intention. This may seem surprising because work intensification was significantly related to work-life balance. The two findings can be reconciled by recognizing that a variable can matter for one employee outcome without predicting another. Work intensification affected balance, but it did not directly predict whether employees intended to remain with their university in this model.

Job satisfaction also did not predict retention intention, with $B = -.020$, $SE = .040$, beta = $-.049$, $t = -.502$, and $p = .617$. The non-significant result aligns with the correlation between job satisfaction and retention intention. In this sample, satisfaction



scores did not translate into a measurable intention to stay. This could mean that retention intention in private HEIs is shaped by broader organizational or economic considerations beyond satisfaction. Employees may report moderate satisfaction while still considering alternative employment, or they may report lower satisfaction while remaining due to limited alternatives, stability concerns, or institutional loyalty.

Work-life balance had a positive but non-significant coefficient, $B = .082$, $SE = .077$, $\beta = .108$, $t = 1.072$, and $p = .287$. This indicates that better work-life balance was associated with higher retention intention in direction, but the relationship was not strong enough to be statistically significant. The result suggests that balance alone may not be enough to explain retention in this sample. Work-life balance may still matter as part of employee well-being, but the decision to stay appears more closely related to support than to balance when all predictors are considered together.

The regression findings shift the practical interpretation of the study. The hypothesized model anticipated that satisfaction and balance would be the immediate predictors of retention intention. The regression instead showed that perceived organizational support was the only significant predictor. This suggests that employees may base their retention intention less on the

schedule itself and more on whether the institution provides backing, responsiveness, and recognition. A university that introduces a four-day schedule without support systems may not improve retention. A university that strengthens communication, workload allocation, and managerial support may improve retention even when schedule benefits are uncertain.

The model's modest R Square is also important. A value of .120 means that most of the variance in retention intention remained unexplained by the five predictors. This does not weaken the value of the significant support effect; it shows that retention intention is multi-causal. Other variables not included in the model may include salary satisfaction, career progression, job security, leadership trust, institutional reputation, commuting burden, family obligations, external job opportunities, employment category, and perceived fairness. Future research can expand the model by adding these variables and by testing whether the effect of support differs between faculty and administrative employees.

Supplementary Gender-Based Comparison

An independent-samples t-test compared job satisfaction between male and female respondents. The male group had a mean job satisfaction score of 20.17, a standard deviation of 5.163, and a sample size of 64. The female group had a mean

job satisfaction score of 20.03, a standard deviation of 5.000, and a sample size of 36. The difference between the two means was very small, only .144 score units. The t-test result was $t(98) = .135$, $p = .893$,

indicating no statistically significant difference in job satisfaction by gender. The result shows that satisfaction levels were highly similar across the two groups in this sample.

Table 10

Independent-Samples t-test Comparison of Job Satisfaction by Gender

Group	n	Mean	SD	t	df	p	Decision
Male	64	20.17	5.163	.135	98	.893	No significant difference
Female	36	20.03	5.000	.135	98	.893	No significant difference

The t-test is supplementary because gender difference was not one of the central hypotheses. Its value lies in checking whether one major demographic grouping showed a clear satisfaction difference that might complicate interpretation of the main model. The result suggests that the overall job satisfaction findings were not driven by a major male-female difference. Since both groups reported nearly identical mean satisfaction scores, the weak relationship between job satisfaction and retention intention cannot be attributed to a simple gender gap in satisfaction. This supports the general interpretation that job satisfaction was not the main retention signal in the observed data. The gender comparison should still be interpreted carefully. The groups were unequal in size, and the analysis only compared job satisfaction, not all variables. It did not test whether gender influenced perceptions of the four-day work week, work intensification, balance, organizational support, or retention intention. It also did not examine

intersectional conditions such as caregiving responsibility, commute length, job category, or seniority. A four-day work week may affect employees differently depending on these factors. The present t-test simply shows that male and female respondents did not differ significantly in their reported job satisfaction.

The practical implication of the t-test is that university management should avoid assuming that satisfaction responses differ sharply by gender without supporting evidence. In this sample, the more relevant organizational signal was support. If private HEIs want to develop scheduling policies, they should collect richer demographic and job-role data rather than relying on broad categories alone. Faculty and administrative staff may face different schedule-related pressures, and employees with caregiving responsibilities may experience different work-life balance outcomes. Future analysis could use larger samples to test group differences in all major constructs and to examine

whether organizational support operates differently across groups.

Integrated Interpretation of the Result Pattern

The integrated result pattern is clear: the four-day work week perception did not significantly predict work intensification, job satisfaction, or work-life balance; work intensification did significantly reduce work-life balance; perceived organizational support significantly predicted retention intention; job satisfaction and work-life balance did not significantly predict retention intention. This pattern offers a refined answer to the study's main question. The four-day work week, as perceived in the current private HEI context, was not a direct solution to employee satisfaction, balance, or retention. The stronger evidence points to workload pressure and organizational support as the central issues.

This finding is supportive of the research objective because the objective was not to prove that the four-day work week works. The objective was to examine how the perceived four-day work week relates to key employee outcomes in Karachi's private HEIs. The evidence shows that the relationship is weak at the direct bivariate level. This is a useful and policy-relevant conclusion because it prevents institutions from adopting the schedule as a symbolic reform without addressing workload and support. A four-day week may still

be valuable, but only when supported by clear operational redesign.

The most consistent practical message concerns work intensification. The only supported hypothesis shows that a faster, denser work pace is associated with poorer work-life balance. This means that schedule reforms must be judged by the daily experience of work, not by the number of days off. If a four-day week leads to overloaded teaching days, reduced administrative processing time, longer queues for student services, compressed meetings, and increased after-hours work, employees may not experience better balance. Private HEIs should therefore conduct workload audits before schedule change and should monitor whether off-campus days are genuinely non-working or merely become hidden workdays.

The second major message concerns organizational support. Perceived organizational support emerged as the only significant regression predictor of retention intention. This indicates that employees who believe their university values them and supports their work are more likely to report an intention to remain. Support may include managerial responsiveness, fair workload decisions, access to resources, clear communication, flexibility during workload peaks, respect for personal time, and recognition of employee effort.



These conditions may matter more to retention than whether the week contains four or five on-campus days.

The weak links from job satisfaction and work-life balance to retention intention require a careful reading. In many organizational models, satisfaction and balance are expected to predict the intention to stay. In this sample, they did not. This may be because employees' retention intentions were influenced by other factors not measured in the model, such as salary, job market conditions, security, promotion, institutional reputation, or family location. It may also be because satisfaction and balance scores were not sufficiently differentiated across respondents. The finding does not dismiss satisfaction and balance as important; it shows that they were not the strongest statistical drivers of retention intention in this dataset.

The near-significant negative coefficient for perceived four-day work week in the regression deserves attention without overstatement. Since $p = .053$, it cannot be treated as a significant finding. Yet the direction suggests that some employees may have associated the four-day arrangement with a reduction in retention intention when other variables were controlled. This could happen if employees expected the schedule to increase work compression, uncertainty, or reduced service coordination. The result supports the

need for careful communication. Institutions should explain whether a four-day schedule means reduced hours, compressed hours, alternating coverage, remote work, or merely fewer on-campus days.

The results also show why the conceptual model should be revised for future studies. The original model placed perceived organizational support as a moderating variable, but the analysis treated it as a direct predictor in correlations and regression. Given the significant direct relationship between support and retention intention, future models should include organizational support as a direct antecedent of retention intention and then test whether it also moderates the effects of four-day work week perception on satisfaction, balance, and intensification. This would better reflect the empirical signal found in the current data.

The reliability results suggest another direction for refinement. Work intensification and work-life balance had lower alpha values, which may mean that employees interpreted the items differently or that these constructs require context-specific adaptation for Pakistani HEIs. Future questionnaires could separate academic workload, administrative workload, student-facing workload, hidden after-hours work, and commute-related time pressure. Work-life balance could be measured across personal time,



family time, recovery, fatigue, and boundary control. This refinement would improve construct precision and potentially reveal stronger relationships.

The study also demonstrates the value of reporting non-significant findings. In applied organizational research, there is often pressure to show that popular reforms produce positive outcomes. The present results resist that simplification. The evidence suggests that a four-day work week does not automatically create satisfaction, balance, or retention benefits in private HEIs. Yet it also shows where meaningful change can occur. Workload intensity must be managed, and organizational support must be strengthened. These findings are more useful to managers than a broad claim that shorter weeks are either successful or unsuccessful.

The Karachi context adds practical relevance because private HEIs operate under resource constraints, student expectations, competitive pressures, and staff retention challenges. A schedule change introduced for austerity reasons may be interpreted differently from one introduced through employee consultation and work redesign. If employees perceive that a shorter week is merely a cost-saving measure, they may not associate it with well-being. If they perceive that leadership has planned the schedule to protect workload, support service continuity, and respect personal

time, the same schedule may be evaluated more positively. The current data point toward the importance of that institutional framing.

The results therefore support a cautious evidence-based approach. Private universities should not reject the four-day work week solely because most hypotheses were unsupported, nor should they adopt it as a guaranteed retention strategy. They should pilot it with clear workload rules, service coverage plans, monitoring tools, and staff feedback loops. They should measure whether employees experience lower intensification, better balance, and stronger support after implementation. They should also compare faculty and administrative staff because the same schedule can create different forms of pressure for different roles.

Result-Based Managerial Reading for Private HEIs

The empirical pattern can be translated into a management reading for private HEIs without moving beyond the statistical evidence. The data suggest that employees did not connect the perceived four-day work week with clear improvements in satisfaction, balance, or workload pressure. This means that management should not communicate a shorter week as an automatic employee benefit unless the policy is backed by workload controls. The significant work intensification and work-life balance



relationship shows where staff experience can deteriorate. If the same teaching, advising, reporting, and service duties are concentrated into fewer working days, employees may receive a calendar benefit while losing daily control over their time. That trade-off can weaken the meaning of flexible scheduling.

The management reading also indicates that retention intention is more responsive to perceived organizational support than to schedule perception in this sample. This does not mean that the schedule has no role in retention. It means that employees appear to look for signs that the institution values them, listens to them, and supports their capacity to do the work. A four-day work week that is imposed without consultation may not create such a signal. A four-day work week that is designed with employee participation, realistic task allocation, accessible supervisors, and clear service coverage may become part of a broader support system. The regression finding therefore turns attention toward the institutional meaning attached to the schedule.

The unsupported hypothesis paths can guide policy design by showing what should be monitored during implementation. If a university adopts a four-day work week, it should measure work intensification before and after the change. It should examine whether staff are working longer days, handling more tasks per hour, receiving more

messages outside formal hours, or losing time for preparation and recovery. It should also measure whether staff feel that their off-day is protected. If employees use the off-day for catching up on hidden work, the policy may not create the intended work-life balance gains. The results from this study make such monitoring necessary rather than optional.

The findings also suggest that organizational support should be treated as a measurable outcome of schedule reform. Management can ask whether employees feel that their institution has provided sufficient resources, clear instructions, fair workload distribution, and timely responses during the scheduling change. Retention intention may increase when staff interpret the policy as evidence that the university cares about their well-being and professional contribution. It may not increase when staff interpret the policy as cost control, campus closure, or administrative convenience. The significant support-retention relationship makes this distinction central to implementation.

For faculty members, a result-based policy response would require attention to teaching timetables, assessment deadlines, consultation hours, research expectations, and digital availability. For administrative employees, it would require attention to service counters,



student queries, admissions, examinations, finance, procurement, and record keeping. A single four-day rule may not suit all functions in the same way. The data do not separate these categories, but the weak schedule-outcome relationships suggest that employee experience is likely uneven. Universities may therefore need differentiated coverage models rather than a uniform compressed week. This could include rotating off-days, remote service windows, or adjusted task cycles during academic peaks.

The study also provides a cautious reading of retention. Employees do not necessarily intend to stay because they are satisfied or because they report moderate balance. In this dataset, those relationships were not significant. A private HEI should therefore avoid assuming that general satisfaction surveys fully explain staff retention. Support, recognition, fairness, job security, professional growth, leadership trust, and workload realism may all shape whether employees remain. The current regression isolated perceived organizational support as the strongest measured predictor, but its modest explanatory power shows that retention is broader than the tested model. This creates a practical need for periodic retention diagnostics rather than one-time schedule evaluation.

The result pattern can also inform future internal dashboards. A

university evaluating a four-day work week could track composite scores for work intensification, work-life balance, support, and retention intention at multiple points during the semester. Such tracking would allow leadership to identify whether the policy is creating strain during examination periods, admissions windows, or accreditation activities. The present cross-sectional study offers a baseline logic for such monitoring. It shows that work intensification and organizational support deserve special attention, while satisfaction and balance should still be tracked as important employee outcomes even when they did not predict retention intention in this sample.

Discussion

The findings contribute to the current four-day work week debate by showing that the schedule itself may not function as a universal employee well-being intervention. Fan and Moen's (2025) coordinated trial evidence suggests that reduced working time can improve well-being when organizations redesign work before implementation. The Karachi findings show why that condition is crucial. Employees in private HEIs did not show significant associations between perceived four-day work week and the expected outcomes, which suggests that local implementation conditions can weaken direct schedule benefits. The result is especially meaningful because the



study context involved austerity-linked scheduling rather than a fully resourced well-being program.

The supported relationship between work intensification and work-life balance is consistent with concerns that compressed schedules can transfer time pressure into fewer days. Mühl et al. (2024) argued that compressed work schedules must be assessed through the working conditions they create, not merely through the formal calendar. The present findings support that view in a higher education context. A four-day week can be perceived as attractive, yet it may fail to improve balance if daily tasks become denser. This means that private HEIs should treat workload redesign as the core of schedule reform.

The non-significant paths from perceived four-day work week to job satisfaction and work-life balance also challenge overly optimistic assumptions about flexible work. Jain et al. (2025) showed that employee perspectives on moving from five to four days involve productivity and well-being considerations together. In the present study, employees may have evaluated the four-day schedule through both positive and negative expectations. The weak correlations suggest that the schedule carried no single shared meaning across respondents. This reinforces the need for employee consultation before policy adoption.

The most important practical finding is the significant direct association between perceived organizational support and retention intention. Chen et al. (2024) found that organizational support can influence turnover intention through balance and satisfaction pathways, while the current regression shows a direct retention signal. This difference may reflect sector, sample, measurement, or analysis design, but it strengthens the argument that institutional support is central. In private HEIs, employees may remain when they believe the university backs them, communicates clearly, and protects them from unmanaged workload pressure.

The unsupported relationships from job satisfaction and work-life balance to retention intention should not be read as evidence that these outcomes are irrelevant. Zhang et al. (2022) found that job satisfaction can reduce turnover intention among university instructors under burnout conditions. The Karachi data show a different pattern, which may indicate that satisfaction and balance were not the immediate drivers of stay intention in this specific sample. Retention decisions may have been influenced by organizational support, career stability, external employment options, or institutional reputation. This points to the value of context-specific retention models. The study also highlights the need to distinguish conceptual models from tested statistical models. Geremias et



al. (2025) used mediation logic to examine how work-family conflict relates to turnover intention, showing the value of indirect pathways in employee research. The present study described mediation and moderation conceptually but tested direct correlations and a regression model. The discussion therefore avoids claiming mediation or moderation effects. Future research should test indirect and interaction pathways through structural equation modeling or PROCESS models with larger samples.

The finding that perceived organizational support predicted retention intention has clear implications for HR policy in private HEIs. Zhu et al. (2023) linked support-related mechanisms with retention intention in demanding work environments, and the current findings indicate that similar support concerns may operate in higher education. Universities should design shorter-week policies with visible support mechanisms, such as workload mapping, transparent communication, backup staffing plans, protected non-working time, and staff feedback channels. Without these mechanisms, the four-day week may be interpreted as administrative compression rather than a genuine flexibility policy.

The study's limitations also create opportunities for future research. Campbell (2023) emphasized that

four-day work week research includes varied models and implementation types, making context-specific designs necessary. Future studies in Pakistan should compare institutions that have fully implemented a four-day week with those using partial, temporary, or hybrid arrangements. They should separate reduced-hours models from compressed-hours models. They should also include longitudinal data so that employee perceptions can be measured before implementation, during adjustment, and after the schedule becomes routine.

Future research should also improve measurement by adapting work intensification and work-life balance items to the HEI environment. Kim's (2023) work on university lecturers shows that workload and work-family conflict are central to satisfaction in academic employment. A refined instrument for private HEIs could measure teaching load, student contact time, assessment deadlines, administrative peaks, commute burden, digital after-hours work, and departmental staffing. Such detail would help explain which employees benefit from a four-day week and which employees experience heavier pressure.

The managerial contribution of the study is not a simple recommendation for or against the four-day work week. Weng et al. (2023) showed that employees' intention to stay is influenced by



talent management and organizational support, which aligns with the current evidence that support carries the strongest retention signal. Private universities should therefore treat the four-day week as one possible component of a broader retention strategy. The strategy should prioritize organizational support, workload realism, leadership responsiveness, employee voice, and reliable service delivery. When these conditions are present, schedule flexibility may become a meaningful benefit; when they are absent, the same schedule may have weak or mixed effects.

Conclusion

This article examined the perceived impact of a four-day work week on job satisfaction, work-life balance, and retention intention among full-time faculty and administrative staff in private higher education institutions in Karachi. The study was grounded in a local research gap: private HEIs had experience with compressed or reduced schedules during austerity conditions, yet there was limited evidence about how employees perceived the arrangement and how those perceptions related to employee outcomes. The quantitative analysis of 100 valid responses provided a direct empirical test of nine hypothesized relationships and a regression model predicting retention intention.

The findings showed that only one formal hypothesis was supported.

Work intensification was significantly and negatively related to work-life balance, indicating that denser work pressure harms employees' ability to maintain balance between work and personal life. The perceived four-day work week was not significantly related to work intensification, job satisfaction, or work-life balance. Job satisfaction and work-life balance were not significant predictors of retention intention. Perceived organizational support emerged as the strongest practical signal because it was significantly associated with retention intention in the correlation matrix and was the only significant predictor in the regression model.

The study concludes that a four-day work week should not be treated as a stand-alone solution for satisfaction, balance, or retention in private HEIs. Its value depends on how work is redesigned, how workload is distributed, how communication is managed, and how strongly employees feel supported by the institution. Private universities considering flexible or compressed schedules should pair the schedule with workload audits, clear service coverage, staff consultation, managerial responsiveness, and protection of non-working time. The findings contribute locally grounded evidence to the four-day work week debate and show that the practical route to retention lies less in the schedule label and more in the



institutional support system surrounding it.

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