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Multitasking at Work: Examining the Role of Polychronicity in Job Satisfaction and Performance among Academic Librarians in Lahore

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Abstract:

The growing complexity of library work due to evolving digital technologies has intensified the need for professionals to handle multiple tasks simultaneously and efficiently. This study is an attempt to understand the ability of library and information Science (LIS) professionals to multitask and its relation to job satisfaction and job performance. By using the quantitative research design, a cross-sectional, self-administered, closed-ended questionnaire was circulated to collect the primary data. Library professionals of Lahore (Pakistan) were the major population for this study. This study will also validate Hall's cultural dimension within a specific professional service sector to better understand the preferences and attitudes that shape the workplace. The current survey outcomes revealed that Pakistani LIS professionals exhibit polychronicity, which is substantially and positively correlated with their job satisfaction and job performance. This shows that professionals' ability to handle various tasks aligns with the multi-functional nature of modern libraries, leading to contentment in their professional lives. The results provided empirical support for Hall's theory in the South Asian professional context, thus suggesting the need for polychronic work environments. This implication of the study suggested that library administrators should design workflow that aligns with multitasking preferences to optimize staff engagement and overall performance.

Keywords. Polychronicity; job satisfaction; job performance; Hall's theory; information professional; library professionals; Pakistan

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Introduction

Some individuals prefer handling multiple responsibilities simultaneously rather than separately; this trait is termed polychronicity (Hall & Hall, 1990) and is essential for influencing how individuals interact with their peers and their work performance at the workplace (Conte et al., 2019). More specifically, polychronicity also refers to one's ability to simultaneously handle many tasks at a time; here, 'simultaneous' refers to a very short time rather than literal simultaneity (Asghar et al., 2020). It is also seen as an individual's preference for the work method that is most efficient for completing tasks

(Poposki & Oswald, 2015). Modern workplaces have increasingly adopted this multitasking philosophy (König et al., 2005; Wu et al., 2019) and require their employees to handle multiple responsibilities simultaneously (De Cooman et al., 2019; König & Waller, 2010; Wu & Wu, 2019). In knowledge-intensive sectors, employees' capacity to shift flexibly across different responsibilities necessitates a thorough investigation of polychronicity and its effect on productivity and workplace contentment (Howard & Conswell, 2022).

The library and information science (LIS) profession is inherently dynamic. Therefore, it requires professionals to handle a diverse

array of tasks simultaneously. It is understood that information professionals routinely handle various responsibilities, including classification, digital source management, research support, cataloging, and administrative duties (Hussain & Saddiqa, 2024). They have to manage these duties alongside the emerging influence of artificial intelligence (AI) in literary instructions. These varied and increasing workloads require a high degree of multitasking. Moreover, as the complexity of library work intensifies in the era of AI, it necessitates a comprehensive understanding of how polychronicity affects job performance and job satisfaction (Butt & Warraich, 2023).

The intersection of polychronicity, job satisfaction, and job performance could be understood as foundational to comprehending employee productivity. Employees with high polychronic tendencies comfortably handle multiple tasks in a short time (Andriani & Disman, 2023). They also often demonstrate strong problem-solving skills to navigate the complex work situations (Twaissi et al., 2022). Studies have indicated that people who can multi-task have an extent of positive influence from this trait on their jobs. This is because they become able to cope well with interruptions and accomplish faster, which makes them better suited for their roles (Anser et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2018). Furthermore, this job satisfaction becomes a source for elevated job performance, as satisfied employees will have higher motivations, an optimistic attitude, and enhanced commitment toward their roles (Koo et al., 2019; Yu et al., 2020). Ultimately, when an individual's polychronic traits align with the multitasking environment, it enhances their contentment and optimises their professional performance and outcomes.

While the concept of polychronicity in various contexts has been explored (e.g., Cochrum-Nguyen, 2013; Rahmadhanti et al., 2025; Zhijie et al., 2022), it has rarely been explored in Pakistan (Lahore), especially in the context of academic libraries. This theoretical interaction of three aspects, job satisfaction and

performance, along with polychronic trait of individuals, is largely unexamined in the context of Pakistani librarianship. Therefore, the investigation of polychronicity within Pakistani academic librarians will give valuable insights into cross-cultural differences in perception of time and its manifestation in workplace outcomes.

This study fills an imperative gap in knowledge through its depiction of the impact of polychronicity among Pakistani professionals. The outcomes of this research confirm that library professionals who prefer handling multiple tasks experience higher job satisfaction, which facilitates performance. These findings are essential for library administrators in Lahore and similar contexts globally, as they show that recognizing employees' multitasking abilities can improve overall organizational performance. Therefore, libraries should design work environments that align with employees' multitasking preferences in order to have satisfied and productive professionals.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are;

1. To find the level of polychronicity among Pakistani library professionals.
2. To explore the impact of polychronicity level on job satisfaction and job performance of library professionals.

Theoretical Framework

This study builds on framework introduced by anthropologist Edward T. Hall. In *The Silent Language* (Hall, 1959), Hall stated that individuals are partially unaware of their non-verbal communication behaviors. Elaborating on this concept across his extensive works (Hall & Hall, 1990), Hall proposed three interrelated cultural dimensions: time, space, and context (Kittler et al., 2011). Among these dimensions, time is a critical aspect for studying one's culture, especially for detailing how people move through and perceive time.

This dimension of time is further divided into two behavioral preferences: monochronic and polychronic time. Monochronic cultures, such as those in Germany, Switzerland, and Scandinavia, view time as linear. In these cultures, individuals prioritize completing one task at a time (Hall & Hall, 1990).

Polychronicity, on the other hand, describes a person's tendency to engage in more than one task simultaneously. In polychronic cultures, such as those of Latin American and Arabic societies, individuals are considerably flexible (Hall & Hall, 1990). These people can manage to do many things at once, with a high time commitment. In this study, using Hall's framework regarding individuals' being polychronic, in the context of library professionals, is undertaken. This concept is studied alongside job satisfaction and job performance to entail the dynamics among these three factors.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Literature Review

Polychronicity, as a construct, traces its origins to cultural anthropology, initially conceptualized by Hall in the 1950s as a dimension of cultural time perception, distinguishing between monochronic (linear, sequential task completion) and polychronic (simultaneous, flexible task completion) cultures. Multiple studies have been conducted to operationalize this concept in various fields (Conte et al., 2019; Howard & Conswell, 2022; Zhijie et al., 2022)

According to Hall and Hall (1990), polychronicity is a time dimension that represents people who are used to performing multiple tasks simultaneously. Polychrome or polychronic people are inclined to engage in several operations at once, like jugglers, possibly because they are so involved with each other. People in a more polychronic culture engage in multiple activities. For example, a person A working on a project will consider a phone call an interruption and will

try to reschedule to answer it at another time. This behavior is more likely to from a monochronic individual. On the other hand, person B may answer the call and will continue the task simultaneously and this behavior is more polychronic. This shift from one task to another may involve moving back and forth and shifting attention from one task to another (Frei et al., 1999).

Hall and Hall (1990) used the term "monochronic" for people who prefer to perform a single task at a time and are not comfortable handling many tasks simultaneously. Later, this concept was elaborated by Bluedorn (1992), Kaufman et al. (1991), and Kaufman et al. (1999). On the other hand, people who handle multiple tasks at a time, have flexible timing and place more emphasis on relationships rather than rigid timing, are polychronic (Conte et al., 2019). This shift from one task to another may involve moving back and forth and shifting attention between tasks (Howard & Cogswell, 2022).

Job satisfaction reflects a person's contentment and attitude toward their role (Luthan, 2011). When an employee is satisfied with their assigned role, they are likely to contribute more than those who are not. Therefore, employers' focus on aspects that would improve employees' workplace contentment and thus retain them longer. The term 'job satisfaction' is used primarily in workplace psychology, which is seen as a behavioral outcome in organizational settings (Luthan, 2011). Several studies have explored this connection between work satisfaction and its output and the positive correlation of both of these factors (Iaffaldano et al., 1985; Locke, 1970; Petty et al., 1984). Similarly, Ngari, Guyo and Odhiambo (2016) conducted a study with a sample of 375 employees from a total of 15850 to conclude that polychronicity substantially impacted these employees' performance outcomes.

Job performance is often considered as professionals'/individuals' attitudes and actions that contribute to the overall progress of an organisation (Campbell, 1990). Carlos

and Rodrigues (2016) defined job performance as the activities that contribute towards the production of goods or performing services. This area has been a focus of studies and researches happening in organizational psychology (Peng, 2014). Hall and Hall (1990) has revealed that there is an infinite number of ways in which cultures and people organize time. He divided the cultures into two different segments based on time organization behaviors among people; polychronic and monochronic cultures. In respect of polychronic cultures, research has shown that the way people handle their tasks and manage time at work affects their happiness and work quality at their workplace. In Pakistan, Butt & Warraich (2023) studied that polychronic LIS individuals who can handle multiple tasks at once serve patrons better than others. Additionally, a pharmacy study of 313 workers found similar results, which showed that those who multitask reportedly felt more satisfied in their assigned role (Arndt et al., 2006). Multiple studies have also confirmed this pattern of multitasking and its influence on workplace progress across various fields (Arndt et al., 2006; Jang et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2006; Ngari et al., 2016).

Job satisfaction is a significant factor in boosting job productivity because happy employees are more likely to perform well and stay at their workplaces longer. Therefore, the term 'job satisfaction' encompasses factors such as employer encouragement, recognition of work, fair treatment, and a manageable workload/stress (Soroya, 2022; Zaidi, 2021). Dewan (2014) also concluded that multitasking has been linked with job satisfaction and performance of library professionals. Moreover, in the Pakistani context, it has also been discussed that multitasking plays a very important role in librarians' job satisfaction and performance, thereby further strengthening employee retention in the organization (Ahmad & Shahbaz, 2017; Shahzad & Khan, 2023). For further testing, the following hypothesis has been formulated.

H1: Polychronicity among library professionals has a statistically significant impact on job

satisfaction.

Job performance is considered to be an important factor of any organization's success and it also influenced by personal and organization factors (Soroya, 2022; Yustina & Valerina, 2018). These factors include task autonomy, independent decision-making powers, and task significance (Altaf et al., 2024). Studies in other fields, such as hospitality and the banking sector, have established that polychronicity behavior significantly contributes to service recovery performance, and this multitasking also motivates employees to engage more actively with the organization (Jabbar, 2023).

Polychromatic individuals are apt at multitasking simultaneously within the given time (Arndt et al., 2006; Bluedorn et al., 1999); this is due to their problem-solving approach that enables them to navigate through the complex and challenging interactions (Karatepe et al., 2013). As such individuals effectively switch between various tasks without even considering additional inquiries as interruptions, they manage to accomplish the anticipated outcomes that meet their job expectations (Asghar et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2020). Consequently, an individual's polychronic capacity plays a substantial role in shaping their high performance. Which proves especially beneficial in demanding work environments where workloads are high and capabilities need to meet with the responsibilities of a position (Arasli et al., 2018; Karatepe & Ngeche, 2012; Karatepe et al., 2013; Mon et al., 2025). Moreover, given that library professionals work in dynamic environments that require simultaneous attention to inquiries, administrative duties, information retrieval, and an overall supportive organisational structure that can actively utilize individuals' multitasking skills to enhance the overall productivity. In regards of discussion, the subsequent hypothesis have been formulated:

H2: Polychronicity among library professionals has a statistically significant impact on job performance.



It has been established that job performance is not merely a static task associated with a role; rather, it is an actual behavior that measures the quality and quantity of work done within the a specified period (Ding et al., 2012; Dinc et al., 2018; Motowidlo & Kell, 2012). An essential element of an individual's performance is job satisfaction, which is understood as a positive and affective attitude ensuing from their work experiences (Giri et al., 2010; Oluwatayo & Adetoro, 2020). There have been various empirical research studies that demonstrate a direct and positive relationship between job satisfaction and performance outcomes across various organizational settings (Mount et al., 2006; Mittal & Jain, 2012; Mon et al., 2025; Oh et al., 2014; Pinheiro & Palma-Moreira, 2025).

Individuals who are pleased with their roles perform better and exhibit a greater sense of accuracy, focus, and put in effort to provide maximum output (Bhatti et al., 2019; Sánchez-Beaskoetxea & Coca García, 2015; Yuen et al., 2018). Studies have noted that satisfied

employees are self-motivated to focus on goal-oriented evaluations and they effectively rely on their personal knowledge and skills (Piansoongnern, 2013; Yustina & Valerina, 2018). This positively impacts the overall performance of an organization (Mittal & Jain, 2012). Therefore, an employee's satisfaction from their job is reflected through their ultimate contribution toward improving the quality of the organization's operations, which is eventually decisive for clients', customers', and users'/patrons' (in the context of libraries) satisfaction (Piansoongnern & Anurit, 2007; Shahnawaz Adil, 2015). Considering this, the study hypothesizes:

H3: Job satisfaction among library professionals has a statistically significant impact on job performance.

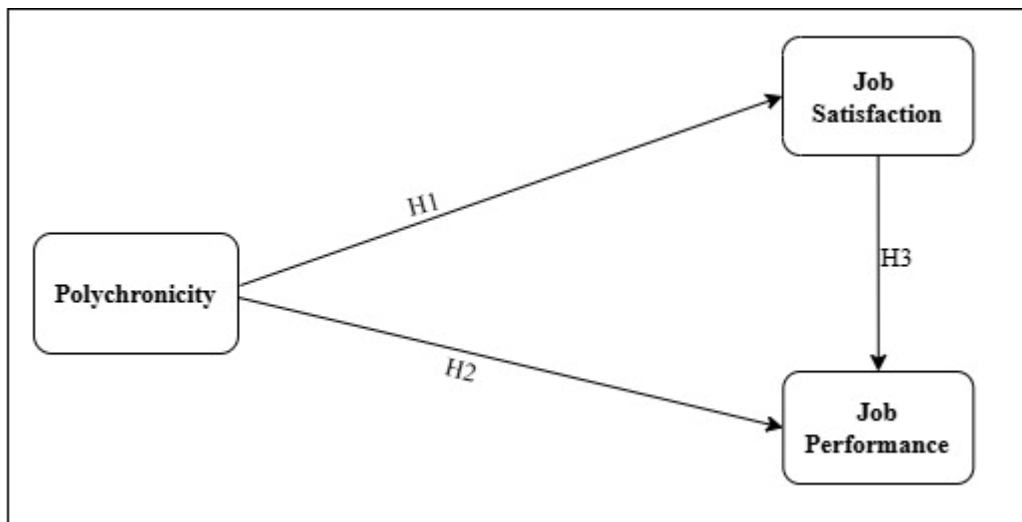


Figure 1: Research Mode

Methodology

This study used a survey to test research questions about polychronic traits and work outcomes among library professionals. This study design is appropriate for testing the proposed hypothesis because it enables

systematic measurement of polychronicity and its impacts on job satisfaction and job performance (Creswell & Clark, 2023). Before collecting data, approval from the institutional ethical review board (IERB) was obtained. The question in the intended survey explicitly stated that the participation on individuals'



end was voluntary and all responses would stay confidential. The survey was shared and distributed amongst the intended participants through email, WhatsApp groups, and professional networks. In total, 223 library professionals from HEC-recognised universities in Lahore completed the survey.

Three tests were used to measure the variables of polychronicity, job satisfaction, and job performance. A 5-item scale was used for measuring the multitasking abilities of the professional (Bluedorn, 1999). It was appropriately contextualized for library and information science professionals. A 10-item scale from Macdonald et al. (1997) was used to measure the extent of job satisfaction, and a 5-item scale, as used by Shan et al. (2015), measured the work performance of participants. All three scales that were used had a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); they were tested on a smaller

group as Pilot testing for reliability/consistency (Cronbach's alpha) as shown in Table 1. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS v. 28) has also been employed for data analysis.

Pilot Testing

Before this main study, the survey was tested on 45 library professionals having similar traits intended for participants of the study. This was done using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 28). Using the average score, ranges and percentages were calculated for facilitating the later descriptive analysis. The reliability check for this sample testing showed good results: Cronbach's Alpha for the polychronicity scale is 0.72, job satisfaction is 0.87, and job performance is 0.87. All resultant values were within the acceptable threshold (as shown in Table 1), confirming that the survey's questions were ready for full study.

Table 1
Results of Pilot Testing

Scales	Cronbach's Alpha
Polychronicity	0.72
Job Satisfaction	0.87
Job Performance	0.87

Findings and Data Analysis

Demographic Analysis

Demographic variables include gender, age, type of institution, academic qualification, organization type, professional experience,

and monthly salary range. Detailed analysis of demographic variables is as under:

Gender

Out of the total participants, 118 (53%) and 105 (47%) were male and female, respectively, as shown in Table 2.



Table 2

Gender of the Respondents

Sr. No.	Gender	Frequency	Percent
1	Male	118	53
2	Female	105	47
Total		223	100.0

Age Distributions of the Respondents

Out of the total population, 44% of participants belong to the age group of 26-35 years.

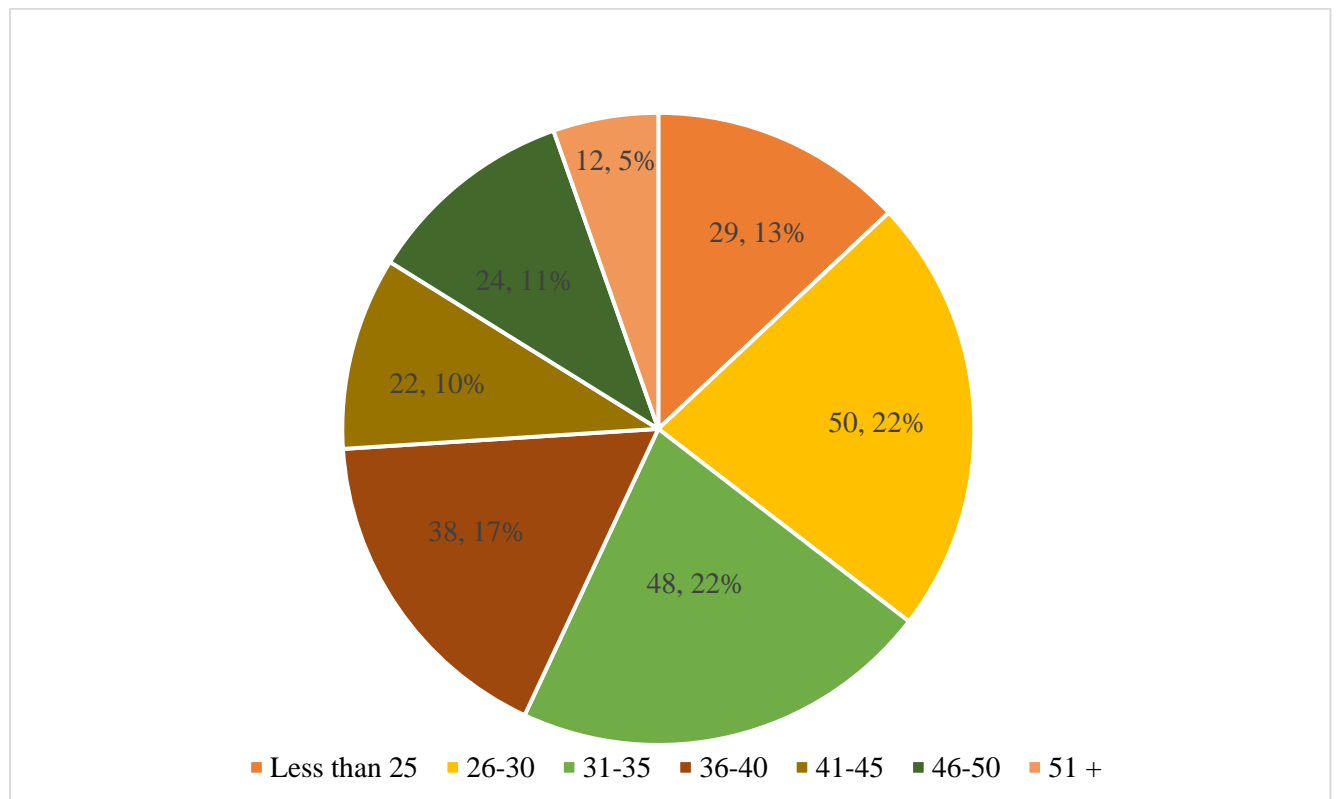


Figure 2: Age groups.

Academic Qualification

An interesting outcome of the study is the categorization of library professionals according to their academic qualifications. Another fascinating finding of the study is that

a large number of library professionals (42%) have opted for research degrees such as MS/M.Phil and Ph.D as shown in Table 3. Professionals with a qualification of a master's degree are the highest in number (130, 58%).

Table 3

Academic Qualifications

Sr. No.	Academic Qualification	Frequency	Percent
1	Ph.D.	8	3.6
2	MPhil/MS	85	38.1
3	Master/BS	130	58.3
	Total	223	100.0

Organization Type

Participants in the study belong to government, semi-government, and private-sector organizations. The largest number of

participants are working in the private sector (n=100, 45%) following Govt. sector (n=93, 42%) and the Semi-government (30, 13.5 %), respectively, as shown in Table 4.

Organization Type

Sr. No.	Organization Type	Frequency	Percent
1	Govt.	93	41.7
2	Semi-Govt.	30	13.5
3	Private	100	44.8
	Total	223	100.0

Professional Experience

Professional experience of participants varies from less than 5 years to 31 or more years of service. It is pertinent to note that 35% of

participants have five or fewer years of experience, and they belong to the early career stage. The trend in participants' professional experience is shown in Figure 3.

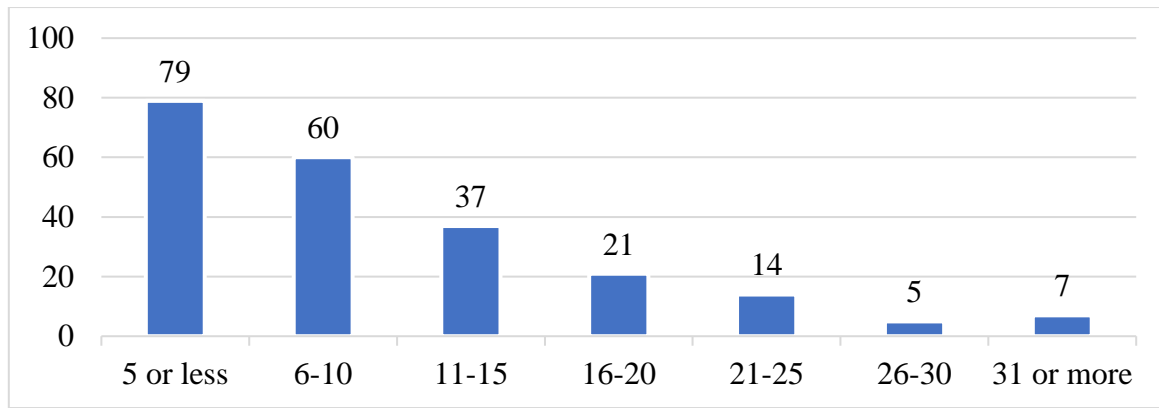


Figure 3. Professional experience.

Theory Test

Descriptive statistical analysis shows (Table 5) the mean value of Polychronicity (3.04) with St. Deviation .657 and a range of means from 1.60 Table 5

to 4.70. It implies that library professionals can be categorized into low and high polychronic types. Hence, the claim of Edward T. Hall that two types of people are found in society based on time dimensions has been supported in this study.

Descriptive Statistics (Polychronicity)

Polychronicity	N		Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Min	Max
	Valid	Missing						
	223	0	3.04	3.00	2.90	.657	1.60	4.70

Hypothesis Tests

In this section, all three hypotheses were tested. The regression analysis has been used to test the hypotheses.

The results of the regression analysis of H2 show that the standardized coefficient $\beta = 0.033$ and $P = 0.001 (> .05)$. As the p-value is $< \text{Alpha } (.05)$, the hypothesis H2 is accepted and concludes that there is a statistically noteworthy impact of polychronicity on job performance among library professionals in Pakistan.

Impact of Polychronicity on Job Satisfaction and Job Performance

The H1 hypothesis was tested through regression analysis, which showed a statistically significant impact of polychronicity on job satisfaction (standardized coefficient $\beta = 0.204$, $p = .000 < .05$). Hence, the hypothesis was accepted, and it was determined that polychronicity among library professionals has a statistically significant encouraging influence on job satisfaction.

Impact of Job Satisfaction on Job Performance

The outcomes of the regression analysis show that the standardized coefficient $\beta = .704$ and $p = .000 < .05$. As the p-value $< \text{Alpha } (.05)$, the hypothesis H3 is accepted, and the conclusion is that job satisfaction among library professionals has a statistically significant positive impact on job performance. Details of the relationship are shown in Table 6.



Table 6
Test Results

Hypotheses	Relationship	β Coefficients	t Statistics	p-Values	Decision
H1	Polytonicity > Job Satisfaction	0.204	2.404	0.000	Accepted
H2	Polytonicity > Job Performance	0.033	1.021	0.001	Accepted
H3	Job Satisfaction > Job Performance	0.704	4.902	0.000	Accepted

All three hypothesized relationships were statistically significant. Complete data is shown in Figure 4.

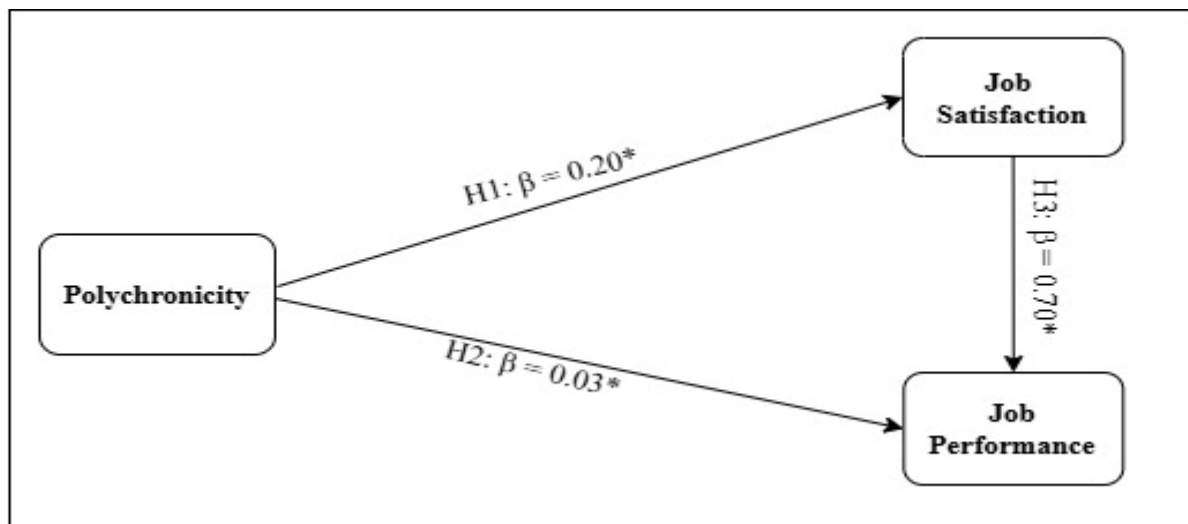


Figure 4. Structural model results show the path coefficients for polychronicity, job satisfaction and job performance. All significant results are indicated with an asterisk at $p < 0.05$.

Discussion

This research explored how multitasking traits or library professionals’ polychronic personality corresponds with job satisfaction and job performance across different libraries of Lahore. Grounded in Edward T. Hall’s cultural work, the outcomes depicted that his cultural theory is valid for the population of this intended study, specifically Pakistan’s

context. Moreover, this research focused on how the preferences for multitasking (polychronicity) can shape workplace attitudes and behavioral outcomes. Lastly, the empirical findings also supported all three proposed hypotheses.

The findings of the first hypothesis (H1) confirm that polychronicity among library professionals has an essential influence on job

satisfaction. Prior research has also shown that individuals who prefer handling multiple tasks are reportedly more satisfied with their jobs (e.g., Jang and George, 2012), who concluded this in their research on hotel staff. Similarly, Arasli et al. (2014) also noticed its key role in being a determinant of satisfaction in the frontline staff. Other studies (Andriani et al., 2021; Beshka, 2022) have also inferred similar results, which showed that a person's ability to multitask can have a direct positive effect on overall employee well-being and job satisfaction. Lasly, Mon et al. (2025) indentified the positive impact of polychronicity and jobs satisfaction amongst the workers of the manufacturing industry.

Furthermore, the outcomes of this study confirm that polychronic professionals experience greater engagement with their professional roles and exhibit good performance, supporting the second hypothesis (H2). These findings are supported in the study by Karatepe et al. (2013) and Rich et al. (2010), who also concluded the substantial influence of polychronicity on job performance. Grawitch MJ and Barber LK (2013), and Fournier et al. (2013) also depicted a constructive relationship between multitasking and higher job performances in their studies. Other than this, there are several researchers who have discussed this impactful relationship between both of these across various jobs (Arasli et al., 2018; Conte et al., 2019; Kantrowitz et al., 2012). Similarly, Mon et al. (2025) also concluded in their study that job performance is significantly improved when work engagement increases due to handling multiple tasks at a time.

Regarding the third hypothesis (H3), its confirmation validates that job satisfaction has a statistically significant impact on job performance among library professionals. This outcome is supported by similar studies (Noh et al., 2015; Porter et al., 2019; Talukder et al., 2018) that conclude a significant impact of job satisfaction on job performance. Similar results are also reported by the research of Ramezani et al. (2018) and Torlak & Kuzey (2019).

It must be noted that, through these supporting studies, it becomes evident that these results are regardless of any specific location. Additionally, even the context-specific studies like those of Sony & Mekoth (2019) and Satvir Singh & Vidyarthi (2018) in India also confirm similar outcomes: greater employee satisfaction means greater performance. Briefly put, the data and results of this research confirm that there is a substantial link between polychronic work behavior, job satisfaction and job performance. Recently, Almarkhi et al. (2023) did a study on various work sectors and determined the positive relationship between job satisfaction and job performance. Similarly, Pinheiro and Palma-Moreira (2025) also did a positive correlation of these two factors, based on the participants working in organizations.

Limitations of the Study

Just as this study has merit, it also comes with its limitations, which firstly come in the form of the online survey used, because the findings of this study are then only applicable to library professionals who are active on the internet and social media. This also means that the LIS professionals without internet access or having limited knowledge of configuring the websites and webpages were excluded from the study. Secondly, this research is geographical limited, as it is only conducted amongst the library professionals of Pakistan.

Therefore, the findings may not work similarly in other contexts or countries. It is an understood thing that all cultures handle work differently, and thus the finding of this study only reflects Pakistan's context. Lastly, this research only looked at the ways three variables directly affect each other (polychronicity, job performance, and job satisfaction) and did not examine them against/with other factors as mediators or moderators. This aspect can be utilised by future researchers to explore more in-depth cultural dimensions and differences in how people work.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has successfully contextualized Hall's cultural dimension of time, specifically from the lens of polychronicity, within the modern library environment. The statistical results of this study confirm that library and information professionals with polychronic tendencies in Pakistan experience higher levels of job satisfaction. As a result, this satisfaction acts as a catalyst for job performance and enables professionals to effectively navigate the multi-faceted environment of work. The outcomes shows that acknowledging employees' skills can prove to be critical in the overall advancement of an organisation's success.

Building upon this study as a foundation, there are various ways in which future researchers can work. Such as, the theoretical framework is applicable across various different geographical regions and diverse cultures. Similarly, the studies encompassing various geographical locations can also provide a cross-cultural polychronicity performance link within the broader LIS sector. Also, future studies can also incorporate the objective measures of the job performance to further enhance the data and mitigate the potential behavioral biases. Lastly, researchers can also expand the current theoretical model by introducing mediating and moderating variables.

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