WORK FAMILY CONFLICT / FAMILY WORK CONFLICT - A STUDY OF GENDER AND FAMILY SYSTEMS

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Abstract

This study explores the difference in Work-Family conflict and Family Work Conflict as experienced by the genders and different family systems. This is a dilemma of today when dual-earner families are becoming the need of the hour. The phenomenon often translates into a difficult effort to combine work and family and maintain a balance between these two domains. The study worked with two hypotheses. Hypothesis 1: there will be significant difference in Work Family Conflict or Family Work Conflict on gender base. Hypothesis 2: that the Work Family Conflict or Family Work Conflict is experienced strongly in joint families as compared to nuclear families. The sample consisted of 215 respondents enrolled in the MBA program. Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian’s, (1996) questionnaire that measures this conflict was used. A demographic form asking about the gender and family system was also included. The data collected was analyzed using T-Test. Results obtained negated both the hypotheses. Culture emerged as the main determinant factor for correlating the two domains of adult life i.e. Work and Family

Keywords: Work, Family Conflict, Role Gender

JEL Classification: Z 000

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Introduction

The number of women in the work force has increased due to demographic, social and technological changes. With the new phenomena of dual-earner families and working mothers work and family life have become blurred. This has created difficulties to combine work and family roles, and maintain a balance between these two domains (Parasuramen & Greenhaus, 1993). Such a conflict at various levels is recognized as Work Family Conflict or Family Work Conflict. Indeed there has been increased interest to study and determine relationship between the two domains of adult life i.e. work life and family life (Kanter, 1977; Voydanoff, 1980; Eby, 2005). Previous researches identify the consequences of high level of Work Family Conflict or Family Work Conflict resulting in dysfunction at the individual and the organizational level. There is mounting evidence that the conflict is then related to work productivity and with high financial costs incurred by an organization (Cascio, 1991).

In Pakistan due to the increased pace of modernization, trends are changing rapidly. Majority of Pakistani women are entering into the labour market. Various factors now affect women’s participation in the market, as women’s greater exposure to educational opportunities, increased awareness of personal growth and independence, and more economic pressures in life. The present study is conducted in the context of this background. The present research relies on the concept that Work Family Conflict or Family Work Conflict “though distinct but are related forms of inter role conflict” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kahn, 1981; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964; Pleck, 1977). Interrole conflict is identified by previous researchers as two types of work-family conflict. One is when work interferes with family and causes a conflict in the family role (WFC). The other arises when conflict is experienced at the family level and interferes with work (FWC).
Role Conflict Theory is most widely used as a theoretical base to understand this conflict. Sociologists define role as a framework for the behavior of an individual in the society. Since an individual has multiple roles to perform, a balance is needed to be maintained in carrying out these roles (Reitzes & Mutran, 1994). The Role Conflict theory in turn is based on the scarcity hypothesis. It propounds that every individual has a limited energy and time. “Pressures come when demands in one domain make it difficult to meet the demands of the other domain” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). This is perceived as role conflict. To further elaborate, Work Family Conflict is exerted when the general demands, the time devoted and strain created by any one of the two roles interferes with the performance of the other role, and the roles in both domains become incompatible. (Kahn 1964’ p. 19, Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77) General demands here are perceived as responsibilities, requirements, expectations, duties, and commitments associated with a given role. Strain is manifested as anxiety, depression, lack of concentration (Pleck, 1977).

Conflict in work and family is bidirectional (Gutek, Searle & Klepa, 1991) which means that family may create conflict with work and work may conflict with family. However empirical evidence shows that the two domains are conceptually distinct constructs and have varied demands (Duxbury, Higgins & Lee 1991; Frone, Russell, & Cooper (1992); Gutek, Searle & Klepa, 1991).

An examination of the existing literature suggests three major forms of work-family conflict, : (a) time spent for one role makes it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another; (b) strain caused by work in one role makes it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another; and (c) specific behaviors required by one role may not be suitable to fulfill the requirements of the other role (Bachrach, Bamberger, & Conley, 1991; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Gutek, 1991; Kahn, 1964; Pleck, 1977).
As for time based conflict in the family domain, married people would face greater conflict in Work Family roles than unmarried, (Herman and Gyllstrom, 1977). Parents, who carry the responsibility of child rearing versus non parents, would experience greater conflict. For example younger children are more demanding of their parents' time, who will experience more conflict than the parents of older children (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1980; Pleck, 1977). In the same way larger number of children is positively associated with higher level of Work Family Conflict because of being more time demanding than small families (Cartwright, 1978; Keith & Schafer, 1980). Conflict may also intensify due to different cultural roles for parenting and elderly care (Hays S, 1996. Reskin B, Ross CE.1992. Reskin B, Padavic I. 1994) For women working, spouse who is intensely involved in his career (Beutell and Greenhaus, 1985) or absence of any other social support who can extend a helping hand, may be a significant contributor to high level of Work Family Conflict (Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981).

Time based conflict in the work domain can arise due to inflexible working hours, inflexible work schedules or work shifts (Herman and Gyllstrom, 1977) long commute (Bohen & Viveros-Long, 1981) and overtime (Pleck, 1977). Even when flexibility is provided by an institution, the degree of flexibility may not be sufficient for the requirement of a child rearing mother (Bohen and Viveros-Long, 1981) and can still affect the Work Family Conflict (Adams, G. A., King, L. A., & King, D. W.1996).

However the findings of the empirical research are generally consistent with the notion of time-based conflict. Conflict is experienced when the time pressures in one domain, may become incompatible with the demands of the other role domain (GreenHause& Beutell 1985).

Strain-Based Conflict is another form of work-family conflict which involves strain produced by one role, either work or family, may make it difficult to comply with the demands of the other role.
(Pleck, 1977). Tension, anxiety, fatigue, depression, apathy, and irritability are symptoms of work strain (Brief, Schuler, & Van Sell, 1981). When these symptoms restrain the performance of the other role, the roles become incompatible, (Pleck, 1977). Stress at work is also caused when the work environment changes, i.e. working in vague and varying boundaries, gaps in communication and the level of concentration required in the work can be identified as factors causing stress (Burke, 1980).

Conflict within the family e.g. disagreement in perceiving the roles between husband and wife, can result in high levels of strain and therefore work-family conflict can arise (Chadwick, Albrecht, & Kunz, 1976), whereas supportive spouses can cause emotional strength (Holahan & Gilbert, 1979a). Also different attitudes of husband and wife, towards wife’s employment and dissimilarity in fundamental beliefs can cause family tensions (Eiswirth-Neems & Handal, 1978). As the study will be looking at the gender dimension of this conflict, the existing literature identified gender as a social construct and therefore, is to be perceived as a verb in everyday activity (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p. 130). How men and women distribute resources across work and family domains is determined by gender roles. Few studies have specifically been done from the gender perspective (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002) which recognizes significant correlation in gender and Work Family Conflict / Family Work Conflict. Some studies have found men to report higher Work Family Conflict than women (Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001), while others report women to experience higher Work Family Conflict than men (Frone, 1992) or experiencing higher levels on some dimensions of Work Family Conflict (e.g., Gutek et al., 1991; Loerch, Russell, & Rush, 1989). In particular, correlations of Work Family Conflict and Family Work Conflict have been found with married women, more so with women having children. “Persons with more children have difficulty adjusting their demands, time, and emotions between work and home setting” (Netemeyer et al., 1996).
Work and family have increasingly become competitors for energy and time and are a strong variable for work–family conflict (Coser LA. 1974). These conflicts are intensified by the “cultural contradictions of motherhood”, as women encouraged to pursue their careers also face intensified pressures to “intensive parenting”, highly involved child rearing and development (Hays S. 1996.). In eastern cultures women are also expected to provide intensive elderly care living with them (Reskin B. 1992, Reskin B, Padavic I. 1994).

The above studies identify the following variables that impact the experience of Work Family Conflict / Family Work Conflict, they are the size of family, the age of children, the number of hours worked outside home, the level of control over one’s work hours, flexible or inflexible working hours and the level of social support available. Most of these studies revived are in western context; there is a scarcity of research in this area in South Asian context.

Based upon the literature review, the following hypotheses were proposed:

**Hypothesis 1**: There will be significant difference in WFC and FWC on gender basis

**Hypothesis 2**: WFC/FWC is experienced strongly in joint families as compared to Nuclear families.

**Methodology**

**Procedure**

The data was collected from different business institutes in Karachi, using a structured questionnaire, measuring two distinct constructs: work to family conflict and family to work conflict. The data was analysed by using SPSS version 17 and application of T-Test. Gender based responses of the participants were considered for statistical analysis. Prior permission of the respondent was obtained.
Questionnaire was distributed in the classroom with the permission and in the presence of the teacher.

**Sample**

The research sample consisted of 215 respondents (107 male and 108 female). 91.2% of the participants were between the ages of 25-35 yrs. Only 6% were between the ages of 36-45 yrs. 2.8% were beyond 45 years of age. In terms of education level: 67.6% were Graduates and 32.4% were Post Graduates. As for Marital Status: 75% of the respondents were unmarried, 21.8% married and 2.8% were single divorced or separated. For Family Status: Among the 215 respondents, 43.1% lived in a Joint family arrangement and 56.9% lived in a Nuclear family arrangement. For the question asked for number of children it was documented that, 86% had no children. Among those with children, 6.5% reported having one child, 4.2% had two children, and the rest, 2.8%, had three children.

**Instrument**

A survey was conducted through questionnaire prepared, by Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian (1996). Work-family conflict was assessed using the 10 -item, 5 items for WFC and 5 items for FWC measured on 7-point Likert-type scale; Author’s Permission was obtained to use the questionnaire. A demographic form was also included along with the main questionnaire. The scale included items such as: “The demands of my work interfere with my home family life” and vice versa. The responses were scored on a 7 point Likert scale. The response range was from 1 Strongly Agree, 2 Agree, 3 Slightly Agree, 4 Impartial 5 Disagree, 6 Slightly disagree and 7 strongly disagree.

Higher scores indicate lower level of work/family conflict, while lower scores indicate higher levels of work/family conflict the scale was found to have good content, construct and predictive validity by the authors. Cortina (1993) and Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1994) concluded that...
“Scales with fewer items are preferable to scales with many items, given comparable coefficient alpha and construct validity estimates. Our five-item scales had coefficient alpha levels ranging from .83 to .89, with an average alpha of .88 for WFC, and of .86 for FWC across the samples”.

Results

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WFC</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>17.82</td>
<td>.694</td>
<td>-.192</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>.907</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWC</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>21.59</td>
<td>.892</td>
<td>.315</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>21.34</td>
<td>.699</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data analysis revealed that there is no significant gender difference on the variable of WFC  $t(213) = -.192, p > 0.05$.

The data analysis revealed that there is no significant gender difference on the variable of FWC  $t(213) = .315, p > 0.05$

Result show Significant Variation for WFC as .628 and for FWC as .775. Since it is greater than .05, We understand that there is no significant gender difference in WFC and FWC experienced by participants. These results negate Hypothesis; 1 that is: There will be significant difference in WFC and FWC on gender basis
Table 2

Mean Difference between Joint families and Nuclear family systems on WFC and FWC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WFC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>17.57</td>
<td>7.196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>18.43</td>
<td>6.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>21.51</td>
<td>6.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>21.59</td>
<td>5.416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data analysis revealed that there is no significant difference between Joint families and Nuclear family systems on WFC $t(208.163) = -.935, p > 0.05$.

The data analysis revealed that there is no significant difference between Joint families and Nuclear family systems on FWC $t(206.426) = -.106, p > 0.05$.

Table 2, show significant variation for WFC as .094 and for FWC as .287. Since it is also greater than .05, it means that there is no significant difference in WFC and FWC experienced between Joint and Nuclear families. These results also do not conform to the hypothesis 2: WFC or FWC is experienced strongly in Joint families than Nuclear families.

Discussion

The results of this study negate Hypothesis; 1: There will be significant difference in WFC and FWC on gender basis. Since the survey result shows significant variation for WFC as .628 and for FWC as .775. Since it is greater than .05, We understand that there is
no significant gender difference in WFC and FWC experienced by participants. So the interpretation of the data is that women do not experience greater conflict than men.

Various previous researches also relate to the above results. Research (Willey, 1991) identifies significantly positive correlation between family role salience and work salience, suggesting that the two roles are complimentary to each other (Uma, Bhowon, 2013). Although the gender role influences work identity being more salient for men and family identity more salient for women, another research concluded that women are committed to their work, as much as to their family (Noor, 2004). Earlier research (Bielby and Bielby, 1989) also showed that women's commitment towards work was as strong as that of men, and commitment of men toward family was as strong as that of women. Research conducted in Pakistan by Malik, Saleem and Ahmad (2010) also supports the same results. Their study concluded that male and female employees experience work life conflict no differently. Other researchers (Castilla, 2005; Dyne, Jehn, & Cummings, 2002) also concluded the same. Research has also found (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Eagle, Miles, & Icenogle, 1997), no gender difference in WFC and that men and women experience similar levels of interference in both domains (Byron, 2005).

The study done in Mauritius (Uma Bhowon, 2013) recognizes the fact that the two roles of women at work and in the family are complementary, as care takers in the family they are able to successfully integrate their role in the two domains and experience less WFC. There is cultural affinity in Pakistan and Mauritius, since family care is attributed as an important component in Pakistani culture also, therefore the same reason can be attributed for no significant WFC conflict in the present study.

In their study Rehman and Waheed (2012) reported that married faculty members experience more Work Family Conflict than unmarried, but they did not report any significant gender difference.
Earlier Herman and Gyllstrom (1977) also showed that work-family conflict is experienced strongly by married couples than unmarried persons. The present study result show that no significant gender difference is experienced in WFC/FWC. It can be attributed to the study sample which showed 75% unmarried participants. This explains the result.

In terms of education level of the sample 67.6% were Graduates and 32.4% were Post Graduates. Educated adults form more egalitarian views of gendered work and family roles.

Hypothesis 2: WFC/ FWC is experienced strongly in joint families as compared to Nucleus families. The result showed no significant difference in work conflict in both family systems in the present study. The data analysis revealed that there is no significant difference between Joint families and Nuclear family systems on FWC. $t(206.426) = -.106, p > 0.05$. Among the 215 respondents, 43.1% lived in a Joint family arrangement and 56.9% lived in a Nuclear family arrangement.

Family is reported a strong institution in review of the previous studies. Sharma, (2012) confirms that family and work models are deeply embedded in the cultural dimension in India. This study also strongly identifies family relationship and family support system for both genders. Similar is the cultural scene in Pakistan where this support is extended in both Nuclear and joint family systems and to both male and female. Previous studies done in Pakistan also drew a positive correlation between family system and academic achievement of secondary and higher secondary students (Khatoon Asia 2008 and Hafiz Bilal 2013) where parental involvement in some form or the other acquires the pivotal role in academic achievements. Since our sample 91.2% of the participants were between the ages of 25-35 yrs and larger numbers were in the lower section of the age bracket the sample was nearer in age to the group studied by Khatoon Asia 2008 and Bilal Hafiz 2013.

Also the sample being unmarried was in a strong family support from the parents.
That explains for the results of no significant difference in wfc/fwc in both the family systems.

This study in its scope explores the impact and significance of work-Family conflict and Family workConflict of women which is a noteworthy issue of today. It needs to be discussed and tackled properly, in order to prevent it from becoming a dilemma in future. This study will be beneficial for the working women, organizations and society as a whole.

The present study is not free of potential limitations. As previously mentioned, work/family conflict is both multi-directional and multi-dimensional (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Whereas Netemeyer et al. concentrated on choosing items that reflected the multi-directional aspect of work/family conflict; they largely ignored the multi-dimensional nature of the construct. This is reflected in their choice to use a two-factor structure in their analysis, as well as the choice to include time and strain based conflict and omit behavior-based conflict from the item-pool.

Since the sample selected is homogenous with respect to, age and marital status, the findings of the study are restricted to generalisation only among a similar population. The results of this study may not be generalized for a wider base. Since all measures are self report based, for another sample with different requirements, the results could vary accordingly. The present study has been conducted on private university. Future research can draw a comparison of WFC in the two sectors of women working in education in private/public universities and with women working in corporate sector. The future research can also be on an enlarged sample to include different age groups, include an older range of age bracket and thus include married individuals, to enhance and enrich the understanding of the relationship of work family conflict. Since in this study culture comes out as a strong determinant factor for the WFC future researches should identify specific cultural factors that impact on work family experiences. Moreover, in future researches,
same can be investigated for jobs of different level, which may differ in interpersonal transactions and ones with different intellectual capacity. The instrument used here takes into consideration multidirectional aspect of the WFC and ignores the multi-dimensional nature of the construct. The future researches can be done using multi-dimensional scales.

**Conclusion**

This study has made a significant contribution in WFC/FWC literature of Pakistan. Roles and conflict between the work and family domain is perceived and experienced differently by varying cultures. Therefore the results negate the assumptions that women experience higher levels of WFC and FWC and that individuals living in joint families experience higher levels of FWC and WFC. According to this study culture is identified as a strong determinant, correlating the two domains.
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