

Work-Family Conflict among Married Teachers of Urban Meerut

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ABSTRACT

Background: Work-family conflict (WFC) and Family-work conflict (FWC) are likely to exert negative influences on an individual's mental health, resulting in lower life satisfaction and greater internal conflict at work-family interface. Existing literature on WFC ignores the teaching profession, despite it being a universal phenomenon. This study expands on WFC & FWC occurring in the lives of female teachers, with special mention of psychological distress and wellbeing of the working women.

Methods: The main objectives of the study were to compare WFC with FWC among married teachers of urban Meerut and to assess various factors associated with them. It was a cross-sectional study conducted in schools of urban block of Meerut, Uttar Pradesh on 384 teachers aged 20 - 50 years, and married for at least 3 years. Data was collected using a questionnaire containing Breyer's work family conflict scale and analysed using SPSS V25, ANOVA, and Pearson's correlation

Results: FWC (Mean 5.97; SD=1.962) was found to be greater than WFC (Mean 4.93.01; SD=1.571). More than 60% of the participants were always or often asked to bear the brunt of dual role, even when most of them (~58%) were working solely due to family needs. Variables like reason for working, work experiences and demand for dual roles were found to be important in deciding WFC as well as FWC.

Conclusions: This study explores WFC/ FWC and governing factors in these conflicts. Present study found that family roles created more friction towards work roles in teachers rather than work roles creating friction in family roles.

Key-Words: Work Family conflict, Teachers, Married, Women

Key Messages:

Teaching profession is no exception to the occurrence of work family conflicts. Most of the working women have to bear the brunt of the dual roles – of work and household- all alone. Mental health is directly linked to the chronic stress arising as a result of the existing conflicts. The male counterparts shall help women in their journey of breakthrough the chains and shackles of blinded traditional gender roles, and take up on the equal share of duties of household chores.

INTRODUCTION

Every individual's life revolves around two significant worlds- work and family, saddling a person with various responsibilities demanding time and energy.¹ However, the role expectations of these two domains are not always compatible, which creates conflicts.² Work responsibilities and family obligations compete for time and attention; the more individuals allocate to one area, the less they have for another.³

Past research posits that this imbalance between work and family reduce employee productivity, performance, job satisfaction, and family satisfaction and also affects their marital life satisfaction, and to provide child-care becomes strenuous.³ It

also negatively affects their health and well-being, which needs to be taken care of.⁴

Mental health is one of the top public health challenges, affecting about 25% of the population every year (World Health Organization [WHO], 2015).⁵ It is a state of well-being in which individuals can realize their abilities, cope with normal life pressures, work productively, and make contribution to the society. Its three core components are: well-being, effective functioning in personal life, and effective functioning in the community.⁶ The discord between the two domains negatively impacts one's mental health due to chronic work-job stress.⁵ This stress leads to dissatisfaction, causing general discontent and even depression.³ Depression can affect people from all walks of life, hampering their quality of life and workplace productivity.⁷

Theoretical framework

Work- Family Conflict (WFC) - The starting point:

Stress is an adaptive response, mediated by individual's characteristics and psychological process, as a consequence of any external action, situation, or event placing special physical and/or psychological demands upon a person".⁸ Employee struggle to complete the role demands of work and family lives when they start to overlap.⁹

Work-family conflict is defined as "a form of inter role conflict in which the role pressures from the two domains are mutually incompatible in some respect, such that participation in one makes it difficult to participate in another".¹⁰ As both demand energy, time, and specific behaviours, it causes conflicts.⁸ This definition implies a bidirectional relation between the two, in such a way that either work can interfere with family life (i.e., work-to-family conflict; WFC) or family life can interfere with work (i.e., family-to-work conflict; FWC).¹⁰ Both the types are conceptually different.³ The two directional components have different antecedents and

consequences. Though separate, but are related constructs.¹¹ WFC can lead to work stress, work dissatisfaction, and poor functioning, and FWC may cause family stress, dissatisfaction and fatigue, and inefficient marital and parenting functions.³

Dynamics of Work-Family conflict: Work and family have increasingly become antagonist spheres, equally greedy of energy and time.¹² If imbalanced, it causes stress and also taxes the coping resources of the marital relationship.³ The theory of COR-Consumption of resources, integrates work and family by the concept of exhaustion of limited resources.¹⁰ It is grounded on principles of role stress and inter-role conflict which argue that the competition for limited resources of time, energy, and attention, results in conflicts⁵

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) argued that three forms of inter-domain conflict occur at the work-family interface:

- i. **Time-based conflict** – limited time to devote
- ii. **Strain-based conflict** - dissatisfaction, tension, or fatigue from one affects the other
- iii. **Behaviour-based conflict** – specific incompatible behaviour demands²

Effects of WFC -

Workers with high levels of WFC face- increased physical and mental health risk, decreased job performance, easy distraction at work, and more incidents of work withdrawal behaviours (e.g., tardiness, absenteeism, and turnover), which may lead to lower satisfaction with life³ due to emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment and depersonalization.¹³ The more the conflict among work roles, the greater the chances that stress will spill over and cause negative behaviours.¹² 'Negative affectivity' is an individual's tendency to experience high levels of subjective distress, depression, nervousness, anxiety, and feelings of anger, contempt, disgust, and fear.¹⁴ The negative outcomes not only

affect individuals, but also their families and the organisations in which they work.¹¹

WFC and work related factors:

- **Employee commitment-** The willingness of the employee to put forth extensive effort and maintain appropriate behaviour by himself.

Job factors –

- **Job satisfaction** – The degree to which people like their jobs. - People who consider their job as central part of their life seem to enjoy it, while the rest only perform it as their routine.⁸
- **Job security** – The state of having an enduring job- Decreasing job security results in increased workplace competition- a heightened desire to outperform peers.
- **Job stress** - The tension and pressures growing out of job requirements. – When left unchecked, it leads to emotional exhaustion or burnout.²

WFC and family – The Indian Household

Scenario: Gender roles change the understanding of work-home interface. The home sphere (including household chores), is assumed to be in charge of women.¹⁵ The tides of urbanization and modernization also affect the boats of Indian families, where Indian women, irrespective of class, not only have entered into paid occupation, but also been exposed to substantial educational opportunities, thus, opening new vistas, increasing awareness and raising aspirations for personal growth. This, along with economic pressure, is instrumental in influencing women's decision to enter the work force.¹² With the increase in phenomenon of dual-career couples (two working people in a committed relationship), the conflict between work and family have reached a crisis.³ More and more working women have found themselves caught in the dilemma of whether to raise a baby or to be promoted.⁶

Women bearing the brunt: A number of factors apart from the chains and shackles of the pre-assigned traditional gender roles, complicate things for women, e.g.-multiple duties performed, strain due to conflict and overload, organization culture and work dynamics, personal resources, social support & family support, stage & orientation of career, coping strategies, etc. Other variables such as family size, age of the children, hours at workplace, and flexibility of schedule also impact the experience of WFC and FWC.¹²

The job of the teacher: Many women opt for teaching, due to the supposedly less workload, in order to combine the two roles, with less conflicts. However in reality, work family conflicts can occur in all, including teachers. Existing literature suggests that most of the research on work-family conflict ignores those in teaching profession.¹⁶

This study advances our understanding of the impact of social structures on the lives of working married teachers, by investigating the interplay between their roles at work and in family, giving rise to what we know as conflicts on work-family interface. Urban Meerut provided as a perfect setting to conduct this study, since it represents a transitional society; having strong urban influences intermingled with a more traditional Indian way of living. The specific objectives of this study were, to compare work-family conflict (WFC), with family-work conflict (FWC) among married teachers of urban Meerut and to assess various factors associated with WFC and FWC, among married teachers of urban Meerut.

METHODOLOGY

The study was approved by the ethical committee of Subharti Medical College (SMC), Meerut, in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, revised in 2000. It was a cross-sectional study conducted from September 2018 to January 2019. Sample frame consisted of female teachers working in consenting schools

from urban block of Meerut. Simple random sampling was done through chit system and teachers fitting the inclusion criteria were included till sample size was achieved. Due to limited similar studies, maximum variability was assumed i.e. equal to 50% ($p = 0.5$), and sample size was calculated at 95% confidence level with $\pm 5\%$ precision, which turned out to be 384, the calculation for which is as follows-

$p = 0.5$, hence $q = 1 - 0.5 = 0.5$; $e = 0.05$; $z = 1.96$

$$n = \frac{z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

So,

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2(0.5)(0.5)}{(0.05)^2} = 384.16 \sim 384$$

Where n is the sample size, z is the selected critical value of confidence level, p is the estimated proportion of maximum variability in study population, $q = (1-p)$, and e is the desired level of precision.

The selected participants were aged between 20 to 50 years, and married for at least three years. The data was collected using self-administered questionnaire consisting of Breyer's work family conflict scale. SPSS V25, ANOVA. Pearson's correlation was used for determining relationship between the variables

Breyer's Work Family Conflict Scale-WFCS¹⁷

It is a German scale, developed by Breyer B., and Bluemke M. as a part of Measurement Instruments for the Social Sciences – MISS – which includes empirically tested measurement instruments in an online open access repository for social and behavioural science measurement. It is published in various languages, including English, and is also validated for use in India. It is a four item scale measuring work-family conflict as a two-directional process – work interference with family and family interference with work. Items 1 & 2 measure WFC and 3 & 4 measure FWC. The items have been used since 2002 in the Family and Changing Gender Roles module of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). Each

item has a 4-point rating scale with following categories:

4 = "several times a week", 3 = "several times a month", 2 = "once or twice", 1 = "never"

For each facet, a mean score can be computed. It is also possible to compute a total mean score- indicator of work-family conflict as a whole.

RESULTS

Table 1 denotes the responses of the married female teachers, where 38.8 % teachers were 'always' demanded to look after all the housework with their jobs. 13.8 % said that they were 'never' compelled with the home duties. 25.8 % and 21.6 % said sometimes and often respectively.

Table 1: Responses of women, when were asked about how many times they were demanded to look after the housework with their jobs

If were demanded to look after household work	N = number	Frequency (%)
Always	149	38.8 %
Often	83	21.6 %
Sometimes	99	25.8%
Never	53	13.8 %
TOTAL =	384	100 %

Table 2 defines the personal reason of working, where most of the women (~58 %) are working in order to meet their family needs (40.1 % to simply support their families, and another 18 % to cope with the times of financial crises). Only 25.8 % women are career oriented, who opted teaching job for their own personal growth and needs. And about 16.1 % women reported no specific reason.

Table 2: Responses of women, when were asked about their reason of working

Reason of work	n = number	Frequency (%)
To support family	154	40.1 %
Financial crunch	69	18 %
Career oriented	99	25.8%
Not specific	62	16.1 %
TOTAL =	384	100 %

WFC & FWC were quantitatively measured as two separate entities, using a self-reported questionnaire containing Breyer's WFCS – ISSP; 2002. Table 3 shows the computed results of score

obtained in each type of conflict. The mean scores show that FWC was higher (Mean 5.97; SD=1.962) in comparison to WFC (Mean 4.9301; SD=1.571), with the maximum score possible in any of the two conflicts on WFC being 8, and minimum 2.

Table 3: Scores of women on WFC and FWC

Scores	Mean (SD)	Range
WFC	4.93 (1.571)	2-8
FWC	5.97 (1.962)	2-8

WFC = Work Family Conflict

FWC = Family Work Conflict

Scores measured using Breyer's Work Family Conflict Scale; ISSP 2002

The result of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the ratings of WFC and FWC across the different variables was computed in Table 4. The number of children which the woman bears was found statistically to be highly significant in WFC ($F=9.46$; $P < 0.01$). The overall work experience was significant for both WFC ($F=9.723$; $P < 0.05$), and FWC ($F=2.981$; $P < 0.05$). The variable of Dual role demands was highly significant for both WFC ($F=14.264$; $P < 0.01$), and FWC ($F=4.080$; $P < 0.01$). Reason for working was also a statistically highly significant factor for both WFC ($F=14.62$; $P < 0.01$), and FWC ($F=11.60$; $P < 0.01$). WFC was more in comparison to FWC for the factors of-number of children, overall work experience, number of working hours, the dual role demands, and also for the reason of working. Working hours was an independent statistically highly significant factor for WFC ($F=11$; $P < 0.01$).

Table 4: One-way ANOVA – Background variables with Work–Family Conflict (WFC) and Family–Work Conflict (FWC)

	WFC		FWC	
	F factor	P value	F factor	P value
No. of children	9.46	0.00*	1.837	0.140
Age of the Eldest child	0.657	0.622	1.717	0.145
Overall work experience	9.723	0.00*	2.981	0.031†
Working hours	11	0.00*	1.575	0.208
Dual role demands	14.264	0.00*	4.080	0.007*
Reason for working	14.62	0.00*	11.60	0.00*

ANOVA – Analysis of variance software

* = significant at p value < 0.01

† = significant at p value < 0.05

The inter-correlation of WFC and FWC with respect to the background variables was analysed using the Pearson's correlation, which showed 'Overall work experience' to be the most important significant factor correlated to both WFC and FWC, in a negative sense (Table 5). That is, better the overall work experience, lesser are the chances of conflicts. Working hours and dual role demands were also found significantly positively related to WFC. That is, more the number of working hours, and the dual role demands, higher are the chances of conflicts. However, non-significant relationships were found for age of the women, age of the eldest child, and the number of children in-between WFC and FWC.

Table 5: Inter-correlation among the Work–Family Conflict (WFC) and Family–Work Conflict (FWC) with background variables – pearson's correlation

	WFC	FWC
Age	-0.72	0.071
No. of children	0.025	0.090
Age of the eldest child	-0.032	0.041
Overall work experience	-0.211	-0.122
Working hours	0.190	0.082
Dual role demands	0.107	0.040

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed at exploring WFC/FWC and factors which influence them among married school teachers in urban block of Meerut.

In the present study, FWC was found to be greater than WFC. This was a contrasting finding to similar studies done previously where WFC came out to be more than FWC.^{12, 15} This difference could be due to the fact that teaching is considered, 'less demanding' and hence, 'more suitable' for women, in traditional societies so that they can combine roles between work and family with lowest levels of conflict. More than 60 % of teachers included in the present study were, 'always' or, 'often' asked to bear the brunt of dual role. On an average, involvement of women in household chores was more than double the involvement of their male partners and women were often conflicted due to their dual roles.¹⁵ As previous studies have pointed out raised

FWC not only leads to absenteeism, dropouts, and reduced productivity but it also increases burnout in women as their work roles are compromised.¹²

Present study found that more than 58 % of teachers worked only to meet their family needs, while only 25.8% teachers were driven by their career ambition. 'Financial crunch' or 'augmenting family income' were found to be major reasons of working, much like the previous studies.¹²

Although previous literature shows no role of organizational support on work-family and family-work conflicts¹, present study saw, 'overall work experience' as a major contributing factor to both. Similarly, 'number of children' and 'working hours' were not found to be major contributors for WFC in previous studies¹², but were positively correlated to WFC in the present study.

CONCLUSION

This study explores WFC/ FWC and governing factors in these conflicts. This field of research is still not abundantly studied in Indian society despite most Indian working women feeling a dual burden in their lives. Present study found that family roles created more friction towards work roles in teachers rather than work roles creating friction in family roles. Such findings point towards biased and skewed gender roles in our society. As a transitioning society, which is rapidly progressing, this field of research must be tapped into more.

Limitations and Future Research

Direction:

Despite, that this study improves our understanding of the association between WFC and FWC, some significant questions in terms of what future studies should be concerned with, are still apparent. Future research might also focus greater attention to the role of other factors, such as, education, salary received, etc. on WFC and FWC, along with the consequences that ensue from them. Job security¹, overall

mental health^{5, 6} and burnout¹² also show strong influence over these conflicts, but were not assessed in the present study. The study was conducted on a limited sample of 384 subjects of one profession, thus, there is scope for external validity from the studies to be conducted in future on other professions. Though the German scale of Breyer's for measurement of WFC and FWC is validated for use in many countries including India, there is also a need to devise an Indian scale, specific to Indian needs.

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