

# An Analysis and Ranking of Family Roles Inducing Work-Family Conflict amongst Working Women

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## ABSTRACT

In India “women account for only 14% of leadership roles and 30 % of professional and technical workers” World Economic Forum, December 2019 report (source: news article, Economic Times, Dec. 17, 2019). This data clearly reflects the existence of glass ceiling for women at work. One major unnoted cause that keeps women at a disadvantage is the high level of work –family conflict faced by working women. Using insights from the literature on work family conflict, the study will highlight various family roles (traditional and modern) and their effect on working women. Considering the impact of this conflict the study aims to provide solutions that might help reduce the conflict of roles and help women achieve benchmark career stature.

**Keywords:** *Work – Family Conflict (WFC); Gender Roles, Family – Work Interference; Job - Spouse Conflict; Job - Homemaker Conflict; Job - Parent Conflict*

## INTRODUCTION

Work family conflict is defined as “...a form of inter role conflict in which the role pressure from work and family domain are mutually incompatible in some respect, that is, participation in work (or family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (or work) role” (Bethge and Borngärber, 2015). As suggested by the scarcity theory individuals have finite amounts of time, energy or resources at their disposal (Marks, 1977). Disagreeing demands from work and family drains an individual both physically and psychologically. Studies have clearly highlighted that demands of roles from one domain often can pose as a challenge to performing with full capacity in the other domain (Aryee et al., 1999; Netemeyer et al., 1996; Bellavia & Frone, 2005).

Women especially in a society like ours typically, are more focused on their traditional family roles than their career aspirations. However, in this modern era the lines between men and women roles at home and at work are blurring. Older studies have found that women whose career aspirations are

not similar to their husbands seem to experience more conflict between family and work roles (Beutell and Greenhaus, 1982). Husband-wife disagreement about family roles (Chadwick, Albrecht & Kunz, 1976) and husband-wife dissimilarity in attitudes toward a wife's employment status (Eiswirth-Neems & Handal, 1978) also can contribute to family tension causing negative spillover from work to family and family to work.

Nevertheless in some sections of the society women are still held responsible for managing most household chores, care giving responsibilities and other conventional roles irrespective of their employment status. Inspired from the traditional boundaries and defined by the social group, this disproportionate amount of work at home that has been assumed as “women’s responsibly” often leads to women sacrificing milestone growth opportunities in due to interference of family roles in their work-life resulting into work-family conflict.

Most research directly or indirectly have focused on the following three types of work – family conflict, based on Beutell and Greenhaus’s (1982) work – Time based conflict, Strain based conflict and Behavior based conflict. Rooting from the same, more suited for this study is another categorization of work family conflict encompassing – Job – Spouse Conflict, Job – Parent Conflict and Job – Homemaker Conflict (Jean Lee Siew Kim and Choo Seow Ling, 2001) as these are the major preoccupations at home that keep married women engaged in a traditional society.

Considering, the dramatic change over the years in the gender roles and women’s choices of pursuit of career and excellence over traditional responsibilities, the rise in the literature around the work-family conflicts has also been noticed. Also, considering the fact that work boundaries are less permeable than family boundaries (Dugan et al., 2012) this investigation will help us understand the contrasting demands of work and family roles that still keeps the women at a back foot at the workplace. The study will further throw light on the possible solutions that can help curb the work-family conflict for women and improve their work performance, helping them reach new heights in their careers and shatter the glass ceiling.

## **REVIEWS OF LITERATURE**

Based on the definitions of work-family and family-work conflict, if an individual is unable to function according to the requirements of various roles in work and family domains, there is a high likelihood that the individual will experience conflict between these roles (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). According to Frone et al. (1992), family-work conflict is more likely to wield its negative influences in the family domain, thus contributing to lower life satisfaction and increased conflict within the family. Family-work conflict, like work-family conflict, is also associated with individuals’ attitudes towards their jobs (Netemeyer et al., 1996). The study aims to contribute to the

existing body of knowledge regarding family-work conflict and to understand the interrelations between constructs: work-family and family-work conflict.

Limited definitions of family-work conflict are found in the work and family literature, as a large number of studies have focused exclusively on work-to-family effects (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005). Therefore, family-work conflict is defined in this study as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the general demands of, time devoted to, strain created by, and behaviour required by the family interfere with performing work-related responsibilities” (Netemeyer et al., 1996, p. 401; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Since the overlapping variables are more among work-family and family work conflict researchers tend to not discriminate amongst the two.

According to Eagly & Carli (2007), the masculine roles of the family provider and the ideal employee are interdependent and complementary for men. In contrast, the feminine roles of the family nurturer and the ideal employee are independent and conflicting for women. In other words, if a working woman with children regards her family role of being a mother as more salient than her work role as an employee, she is more likely to experience conflict in the form of work interfering with family. In a study conducted by Pitt-Catsouphes et al. (2006), women who participated in various roles, especially women with children who took on the additional role of employee were frequently exhausted, greatly vulnerable to stress-related issues and not capable of managing the various demands of their work and family lives. According to Pleck (1977), men are more likely to allow the work domain to interfere with the family domain; in contrast, women are more likely to allow the family domain to interfere with the work domain.

Professional women have various options with regard to the extent to which they embrace their family roles. An increasing number of women seem to delay marriage and children in order to first establish their careers (Hill, Märtinson, & Ferris, 2004). These decisions seem to be based on the assumption that a greater family role may lead to fewer career opportunities for women (Statham, Vaughan, & Houseknecht, 1987). Marriage and child-rearing are essential elements of the life script of most women in professional careers, and women are looking for more effective ways to successfully integrate the demands of work and home (Galinsky et al., 2002).

A study conducted by Duxbury & Higgins (1992) concluded that in terms of work and family expectations, it was found that expectations from work were a stronger predictor of work-family conflict for men, whereas expectations from family were a stronger predictor of family-work conflict for women.

## **Work – Family Conflict – Family Related Antecedent**

Most research on predictors of work-family conflict focuses on the situational variables, be it in the work domain (e.g., work hours, job characteristics, and company culture) or family domain (e.g., family structure and partner support). The role of dispositional factors (i.e., personality characteristics) in understanding the relationship between work and non-work has been, until recently, neglected (Carlson, 1999, Baltes et al., 2011; Katarina Katja Mihelič & Metka Tekavčič, 2014).

Furthermore, Beutell and Greenhaus (1982) reported that large families produce conflict primarily for women whose husbands are highly involved in their own work careers. It is plausible that a highly career-involved man devotes little time to his family, thereby increasing the already heavy time demands placed on his wife by a large family.

Different aspects of family structure also influence the perception of conflict between work and family, even though variables related to family primarily serve as predictors of family-work conflict rather than work-family conflict (Byron, 2005; Frone et al., 1992). Nevertheless, there is evidence that family characteristics affect negative spillover from work to family as well. (Katarina Katja Mihelič & Metka Tekavčič, 2014) Age, marriage, and fewer children were variables related to lower levels of stress in the conservation of resources model (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Family support and spousal support were both found to decrease the level of work-family conflict (Michel et al., 2011; Blanch & Aluja, 2012). Specifically, men who experience less affectual support from family members perceive more negative spillover from work to family (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Being criticized or burdened by family members causes more conflict for women (and not for men) (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Instrumental spousal support decreases all forms of work-family conflict (time-, strain- and behavior based conflict) (Halbesleben et al., 2012).

The most consistent family antecedent predicting family interference with work is parenting (Tausig & Fenwick, 2001). Upon examining the relationship between parenting and the work and family interface, Moen & Roehling (2005) found that parenting alters men's and women's work and family roles. For women, the conversion to motherhood is associated with increased time spent in the family domain, which is achieved by adjusting the demands from work to accommodate family demands and activities (Hinze, 2000). For men, the conversion to fatherhood has been associated with increased working hours and greater prioritization of work (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 2000). Parents report more conflict than non-parents (Mauno et al., 2011; Byron, 2005). Number of children living in the household or their presence is positively associated with conflict (Beauregard, 2006; Netemeyer et al., 1996; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998), whereas the age of children has a negative

influence (Winslow, 2005). A Norwegian study found that conflicts between the work and family domains are more intense among single parents and couples with children than those without children (Innstrand et al., 2010). The weighted mean average (meta-analytic) correlation between the number of children and work-family interference differs for males and females, with 0.15 for males and 0.02 for females, respectively (Byron, 2005). Respondents in Spain that are married with children experience greater work-family conflict than single respondents (de Luis Carnicer et al., 2004). Married respondents reported higher conflict than non-married counterparts (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000), as did parents compared to non-parents (Grzywacz et al., 2002; Winslow, 2005).

### **Effects of Work – Family conflict**

Research by Bray, Campbell, and Grant (1974) revealed that "successful" Bell System managers (those who reached middle management) exhibited increasing involvement in both work and (to a lesser extent) marital family, a condition that may arouse work -family conflict. Factors such as self-efficacy and job satisfaction are significantly associated with emotional intelligence and work-family conflict family conflicts. (Afsheen Masood et. al. 2019)

Researchers have found that workers facing high levels of work/family conflict are at increased physical and mental health risk, have less satisfactory job performance, poorer parental performance, more incidences of work withdrawal behaviors (e.g., tardiness, absenteeism, turnover, and low job involvement), decreased morale, and lower satisfaction with job, life, marriage, and family (Duxbury & Higgins,1991; Frone, Russell, & Cooper,1992; Hammer, Bauer, & Grandey, 2003; Leiter & Durup, 1996; O. Driscoll, Ilgen, & Hildreth,1992).

Hence, a study describing the family roles and their burden on women folk needs to be discussed so as to increase women participation in top level management positions.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- To identify the dominant family roles creating work-family conflict from the available literature for married working women.
- Analyzing the correlation among the identified dominant family roles and work-family conflict (WFC).
- Ranking the recognized family roles inducing the WFC.
- To analyze the impact of family interference on women's job orientation and proposing insightful solutions to deal with WFC.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This descriptive study aims to understand the dominant family roles creating WFC for working women further assessing their relationship, ranking and analyzing their impact on women's job orientation.

**Sample Selection:** The participants were chosen using random sampling method. Targeting at the 5 major zones of Indore City (M.P.); 34 married working women (employees) based at Vijaynagar, Palasia, Geetabhawan, Chawani and Bhwarkua area belonging to families strongly depending on two source earning were chosen to participate in the study.

**Data Collection and Analysis:** to fulfill the aim of the study, relevant papers related to the similar domain were analyzed. Subsequently, responses from a sample were collected through a self administered questionnaire. The questions were divided into two major sections: first, aiming to gather responses regarding facing WFC due to various dominant family roles which were collected on a 5-point-likert scale. Second section, acquired responses on women's orientation towards their jobs under the effect of WFC. The collected data was analyzed using correlation, one sample T-Test and ranking method.

**Finding and Conclusion:** Consequently, building on the antecedents and responses of the participants (data analysis) an effort was made to understand the coping mechanism of working women facing WFC, based on which suggestions to reduce the conflict are proposed.

## **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

### **Dominant Family Roles Creating WFC**

Working women and mothers, take up many different roles in the family and at work. Increased commitments at work and unreduced family obligations are conflicting roles causing conflict, when they are simultaneously dealt with (Sibylle Heilbrunn & Liema Davidovitch, 2011). In a 2001 study, Jean Lee Siew Kim and Choo Seow Ling divided WFC into three parts, namely Job - Homemaker conflict, Job - Spouse conflict and Job - Parent conflict. The antecedents considered in the study are work stressors, work hours, and schedule inflexibility (work characteristics) and Number and age of children and family support (family characteristics). In other studies aspects such as emotional intelligence, level of commitment and locus of control while dealing with family members and family roles are also considered as triggers of WFC (Margaret A. Shaffer et. al. 2011)

Considering various studies done overtime the major roles or responsibilities that most research talk about are listed below:

1. Responsibilities related to household chores (Homemaker Role) – these include activities such as cooking, cleaning and tidying, laundry and shopping for kitchen essentials. In some cases taking care of the elderly also becomes a task from most women, specially a responsibility assumed by the daughter-in-laws.
2. Spouse Roles – shared responsibilities or factors related to the partner such as financial, emotional and physical support. For example a fight at home with one's spouse can keep women preoccupied and stressed at work causing distraction and reduced work focus.
3. Parenting Role – studies have shown that women acquire more parenting role than men (Vanessa A.G.F De Sousa, 2013) and time pressure and age of the children having strongest relation with parenting conflict (Beutell and Greenhaus's, 1982). However, many studies point out and logically too as the children grow older the conflict related to work and parenting reduces.

Studies based on work family conflict also highlight that conflict between family and work is always going to be an issue given that it increases with age, marital status, and the number of children (Neneh & Ngek Brownhilder, 2018). These factors are strongly related to the dominant family roles played by women at home.

More so the WFC faced by working women is stronger as most of the family responsibilities, as stated above are assumed by women making it harder for her to balance her work and family demands. Hence, identifying the dominant family roles becomes the first step to help women in deal with WFC.

### **Correlation among the Family Roles and Work-Family Conflict**

Studies state that women even when in same profession may experience different type of conflicts depending upon: structure of the family, flexibility of work schedule, emotional intelligence, work expertise and experience, etc (Urfi Khalid, 2017). Therefore, making a quantifiable assumption on the type of conflict majorly faced by women is very difficult. However, following is an attempt to correlate and rank the conflict and roles under this:

**Table 1: Depicting participant profile and their response to experiencing WFC**

<b>Participant with children</b>				
Yes				25
(Above 18)				(7)
No				9
<b>Experience of Interference from family on work:</b>				
No				0.14%
Yes				61.17%
Sometimes				94.11%

**Table 2: Describing the sample size, sample mean and Standard deviation**

	<i>Strain Conflict</i>	<i>Time Conflict</i>	<i>Behavior Conflict</i>	<i>Parenting Concerns</i>	<i>Spouse Concern</i>	<i>Household Chores</i>	<i>Actions Under Conflict</i>
N	34	34	34	34	34	34	34
Mean	2.529	2.765	2.912	3.441	2.706	2.706	2.000
Std. Dev.	1.080	1.075	0.933	1.691	1.219	1.382	1.128

**Table 3: Participant response to facing various kinds of conflict and conflict faced due to specific family role.**

<b>Type Of WFC/ Experience</b>	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Strain Conflict	26.47%	11.76%	44.11%	17.64%	0.00%
Time Conflict	20.58%	8.82%	44.11%	26.47%	0.00%
Behavior Conflict	5.88%	23.52%	50%	14.70%	5.88%
<b>Role Conflict</b>					
Parent Role Conflict	26.47%	2.94%	14.70%	11.76%	44.11%
Homemaker Role Conflict	23.52%	26.47%	20.58%	14.70%	14.70%
Spouse Role Conflict	20.58%	20.58%	35.29%	14.70%	8.82%

**Table 4: One Sample T Test. T Value – 10.337**

Actions Under Conflict

Mean	2
Variance	1.272727273
Observations	34
Hypothesized Mean	0
Df	33
t Stat	10.337
P(T<=t) one-tail	3.505
t Critical one-tail	1.692
P(T<=t) two-tail	7.011
t Critical two-tail	2.0345



**Table 5: Correlation Analysis of the conflicts and the dominant family roles**

	Strain Conflict	Time Conflict	Behavior Conflict	Parenting	Spouse Concern	Household Chores
Strain Conflict	1					
Time Conflict	0.711	1				
Behavior Conflict	0.469	0.341	1			
Parenting Role	0.134	0.376	-0.090	1		
Spouse Concern	0.237	0.316	0.323	0.212	1	
Household Chores	0.311	0.360	0.308	0.303	0.702	1.000

## DATA INTERPRETATION

Drawing inference from the collected data and participant responses; the family roles that interfere majorly with the work responsibilities of women are elaborated on below:

- WFC and Spouse Role: The correlation study shows very significant positive correlation ( $r=0.702$ ) between household role and spouse related conflict implying that women expects their spouse to help and support them with household work.
- Time ( $r=0.310$ ) and behavior ( $r=0.323$ ) conflict also have positive correlation expressing the time and behavior pressure working women face with respect to their partner, this can be understood as less time devoted to each other in the relationship creating conflict or a fight between spouse can affect the work performance of women employees.
- WFC and Homemaker Role: The household chores are majorly assumed to be the women's responsibility in many homes till date. Further considering the correlation analysis women face significant Strain conflict ( $r=0.311$ ), Time conflict ( $r=0.360$ ) and Behaviors conflict ( $r=0.308$ ) while juggling household and work responsibilities. Considering that most women have summed the household chores as an inherent responsibility this correlation is not very strong but certainly is positive.
- Factors creating Job - Parent Conflict: Considering the correlation analysis Parenting Role has no significant relation to behavior conflict ( $r=-0.090$ ) of working women. Further, parenting role shows a significant relationship with Time Conflict ( $r=0.376$ ). This can be justified by understanding the social identity concept of women being majorly responsible and accustomed to parenting requirements of the child.

## Ranking the Family Roles inducing WFC

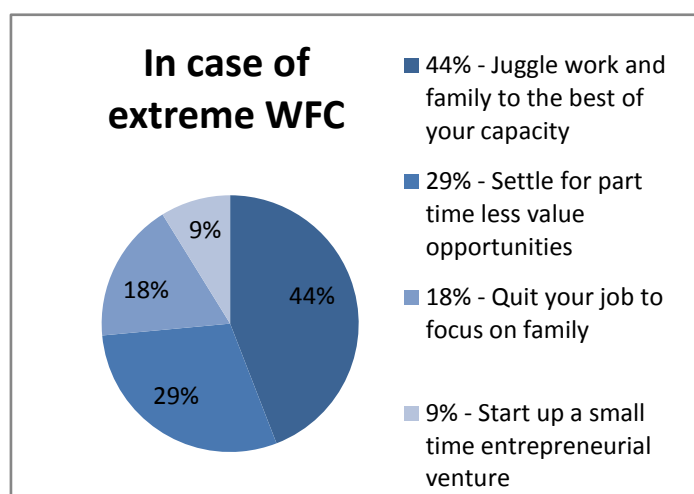
Building on the literature and responses of the participant (table 3) the three dominant family roles can be ranked as follows:

1. Parenting Role – 44% of the women participants responded that they are always occupied with the concerns regarding their children’s wellbeing when at work. However, with increase dependency of the household on two incomes working women tend to delegate the care giving responsibilities to various authorized service facilities. This certainly does not reduce the concern related to their children but as the children grow older the Job-Parenting conflict seems to reduce.
2. Homemaker Role – The participants of the study stated that majorly when faced with heavy household chores, support from other women members at home such as mother-in-laws or sister-in-laws is helpful. 90% of the women participants have reported to have house help (maids) to take care of such chores. Some women also stated that support from the spouse helps reduce the effect of this conflict. Women with adolescent age children also find support from their children and reduced homemaker conflict.
3. The Spouse Role – was ranked least of the three roles by the participants as this role usually creates conflict due to lack of emotional support received from the partners. However, men now-a-days are taking up pro-feminist roles to help and assist their women counterparts with their day to day responsibilities. Further, considering the societal and cultural changes; men have started to understand and respect the financial support received from their partners. This conflict doesn’t seem to affect unless women are overburdened with the household responsibilities with zero support from their partners.

## The Impact of Family Role Interference on Women’s Job Orientation

There are considerable empirical evidence that establish the dominance of strain conflict for working women – where strong work demands are associated with lower job satisfaction, lower psychological well-being, more job-related distress, further creating greater work-to-family conflict (Wallace, 2005; Rima Charbaji El-Kassem, 2019).

In case of facing extreme work family conflict, 29% of the participants chose to settle for a part time or a less value



offering work opportunity. Along with that, 18% preferred quitting their jobs to focus better on their family responsibilities, even when 50% of the participants reposted to have taken up a job to ensure financial stability.

These choices can be justified by various studies indicating that WFC results into higher levels of burnout and increased stress (Frone et. al., 1996; Thomas and Ganster, 1995; Vanessa A.G.F De Sousa, 2013) causing a negative spillover from work to family. Stress is majorly felt due to the demands these roles make on a person's energy (Bickford, 2005). Karasek Jr. (1979) notes that work demands lead to negative psychological outcomes. It can lead to depression, when women feel like that they are losing control over their work – life balance. Considering the dyadic nature of WFC it is understood that it not only affects the working women but also the members of her family and her other relationships. Therefore, resolution of such conflicts is also important.

### **Proposed Suggestions to deal with WFC**

The participants of the study majorly pointed out to the existence of time based conflict and behavior based conflict between work and family. Time based conflict occurs due to time pressure resulting from insufficient amount of time spent with either work or family due to pressures from the other domain. Behavior based conflict occurs due to a negative or a positive spillover due to overwhelming emotions experienced at either work or family, example a bad day at work might result into an aggressive or frustrated mood or behavior at home.

Denise et. al. (2012), in their study of the efficacy to cope with stress talked about four styles of coping with the work family conflict (direct action, help- seeking, positive thinking, and avoidance/resignation). Further, the study indicates that help-seeking and direct action used at home may help reduce Family Interference with work successfully. Adding to the proposed solutions the following recommendations can reduce the family role strains for working women:

- Pro-feminist role by spouse: Support from partners not only helps a woman feel emotionally acclaimed but also motivates them to pursue their professional aspiration. It further also improves the chances of improving the societal reputation or image of women thereby promoting equality among genders.
- Availability of House help: Women when return from work feel swamped up due to various chores at home. In this context a helping hand from other members at home or maids can help reduce the work pressure thereby giving women a head space and time to relax and refresh.
- Taking breaks and increasing emotional intelligence: Studies have shown that women with higher emotional intelligence experience lesser role conflicts (Afsheen Masood et. al, 2019).

Hence, women must also ensure that they take out time for themselves and think of positive self reinforcements to reduce conflicts and work towards her ambitions.

- Focus on acquiring new skills and hobbies: Involvement in leisure activities might ensure women gaining the much needed self-confidence and serve as an outlay of suppressed emotions or depression that might affect their physical and mental health. Hence, taking up new hobbies or adding to their skill set might provide them the avenue to vent out the pressure created due to overlapping role burden.

## **CONCLUSION**

WFC mostly occurs due to conflicting demands creating strain, time and behavior pressure. The above suggestions can help women ensure that they are able to strike an appropriate balance between their work and family errands without having to give up on their responsibilities or achievements in either field. Some of the suggestions mentioned above talk about the individual wellbeing of the women dealing with WFC whereas, there are certain suggestions that require support from spouse and family members; studies like this can play major role in creating awareness and removing stigma around concepts such as pro-feminist partners and gender roles and ensure that both genders share the responsibilities of the household equally thereby reducing the WFC for both genders. Not only solely for the benefit of the women in employment but removing such hurdles from the society will also contribute to increase the manpower and skilled labour force in the market with deserving women also participating and being considered for various job roles. As per the Indian government's NITI Ayog - Aug. 2019 report, the commission aims to increase the women workforce participation to 27% from now to 48% in the coming decade. The NITI Ayog CEO further elaborated that this would add close to USD 700 billion to India's economy giving it a fulfilled boost (source: news article, Economic Times, Aug 09, 2019). Therefore dealing with the said issue can help women, society and the economy of the county on a significant level.

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