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Work or family...? Huge conflict in working population: a cross sectional study in a city in Karnataka

Ratnaprabha G. K.*, Sindhu P., Aswin Kumar, Prakash R. Kengnal, Ashok Kumar M. S.

Department of Community Medicine, SS Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Center, Davangere, Karnataka, India

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*Correspondence: Dr. Ratnaprabha G. K.,

E-mail: drrdtnagk@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: Work and family are the most important responsibilities of an adult. The last two decades have been marked by striking changes in the world of work and nature of the family. Work schedules, work orientation, marriage, children and spouse employment patterns may all produce pressures to effectively exhibit ones work role or the family role, which are interdependent. The objectives of the study were to assess work family conflict (WFC) among the working population in a city in Karnataka, and its determinants.

Methods: A community based cross sectional study was carried out during August-September 2015 among 400 adult working population of Davangere city, working in different sectors (hospitals, schools, colleges, banks and police department). A pretested structured self-administered questionnaire consisting of socio-demographic details, Carlson's Work-Family Conflict Scale was used. Data was analyzed using SPSS 10 for frequencies, Chi square test, student's T test and ANOVA.

Results: Out of 400 study participants, 62% were men. Mean scores of work to family conflict was 27.28±5.68 and that of family to work conflict was 25.37±5.61. Time based work to family conflict was more compared to strain and behaviour based. Conflict scores were higher for females, >45 years age, employees who had children, especially child under 5 years of age. WFC was found to be highest among doctors, police and nurses.

Conclusions: Work to family conflict was higher than family to work conflict, especially time based.

Keywords: Work family conflict, Working population, Public sector, Private sector, Gender, Parenthood

INTRODUCTION

Work and family represent two of the most central realms of adult life. Earlier men and women's sense of self was based on quite different societal roles. Work for men, and family was the identity defining role for women. Over the past three decades, there have been significant changes in society's ideas of gender, work roles, and parenting, especially over the world of work and nature of the family. Market competition has increased pressure on organizations and employers leading to long hours, increased workload, job insecurity, uncertainty and stress

for the employees in most of the jobs.³ India is home to the world's second largest workforce approximately 478 million people & women compose 32% of working population.⁴ Since more and more people seeking jobs, they are having tough time in balancing work and family simultaneously.

Work-family conflict (WFC) is a complex construct having multiple forms (time-based, strain-based and behavior-based) and operating in multiple domains (work and family) and is bidirectional. Work-family conflict is defined as "a form of inter-role conflict in which role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually

incompatible in some respect", meaning that "participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role".

Time based WFC arises when multiple roles compete for a person's time. Time spent on activities within one role generally cannot be devoted to activities within another role. Time-based conflict is consistent with the excessive work time and schedule and role overload. Time-based conflict can take two forms, (1) time pressures associated with membership in one role may make it physically impossible to comply with expectations arising from another role; (2) pressures also may produce a preoccupation with one role even when one is physically attempting to meet the demands of another role. ¹¹

A second form of work-family conflict involves role-produced strain. There is considerable evidence that work stressors can produce strain symptoms such as tension, anxiety, fatigue, depression, apathy, and irritability. 12,13 Strain-based conflict exists when strain in one role affects one's performance in another role. The roles are incompatible in the sense that the strain created by one makes it difficult to comply with the demands of another.

Third form is the behaviour based WFC. Specific patterns of in-role behavior may be incompatible with expectations regarding behavior in another role. It has been suggested, for example, that the male, managerial stereotype emphasizes self-reliance, emotional stability, aggressiveness, and objectivity. Family members, on the other hand, may expect a person to be warm, nurturant, emotional, and vulnerable in his or her interactions with them. If a person is unable to adjust behavior to comply with the expectations of different roles, he or she is likely to experience conflict between the roles.

Therefore work schedules, work orientation, marriage, children and spouse employment patterns may all produce pressures to participate extensively in the work role or the family role. Conflict is experienced when these pressures are incompatible with the demands of the other role domain. ¹⁵ It could be work to family conflict (W to FC) or family to work conflict (F to WC).

As there is rapid growth of working population, there is increasing number of nuclear families in developing countries off late which ultimately will affect the physical and psychological wellbeing, cause sleep problems and poor mental health and affecting the child rearing and care of elderly at home, and ultimately no job satisfaction⁴ and reduced quality of life. ¹⁶⁻¹⁸

Although the study of work and family has spawned rich concepts and empirical literatures, these two domains of life traditionally have been studied independently, but lately the researchers are trying to study the effect of one over the other.¹⁹ However there is dearth of literature on

this association in developing countries which makes these kind of studies more required. Therefore a study was designed to assess the work family conflict among working population in a city in Karnataka and its determinants.

METHODS

A community based cross sectional study was conducted during August to September 2015 among working population of Davangere city, Karnataka, India. Considering the 50% as the prevalence of work family conflict, 5% absolute precision and 95% confidence level, the estimated sample size was 384, which was rounded off to 400.

Since the work pattern is different in different sectors, and to have a better representation of all the working population, five different sectors with one Public and one Private representation and proportionate to gender in each sector, were included in the study. These were Hospitals, Schools, Colleges, Banks and Police department. A sample of 100 each were considered from Hospitals, Schools, Colleges and 50 each were considered from Banks and Police departments. Public and private representation was not possible for Police Department. These institutes were chosen conveniently and all the people working in that institute were included in the study till the required sample size was met. Our study included adult men and women (≥18 years) working in the above mentioned sectors in Davangere for a period of at least one year and those who were willing to participate in the study.

Ethical clearance from Institutional Ethical Review Board was obtained at the beginning. After obtaining the informed consent, a pre-tested structured selfadministered questionnaire was given to participants, which consists of demographic details, Carlson work family conflict scale. The scale was translated to local language Kannada and then back-translated before pilot testing and necessary modifications were made to suit the local setting. The WFC Scale is an 18-item self-report scale that is both bi-directional and multidimensional. The scale is bi-directional in that it assesses both directions of work-family conflict (i.e., work-interference with family and family-interference with work). The scale is multidimensional in that, within both scales measuring directionality, the three major forms of workfamily conflict are represented (i.e., time-, strain-, and behavior-based). Respondents rate the degree to which each statement describes their experience on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). As the scores increase, the conflict increases. Data was entered in Microsoft excel sheet and analyzed using SPSS version 10. Results were represented in the form frequencies, percentages and Mean±SD. Mean differences were studied using student's t test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test.

RESULTS

A total of 400 employees participated in the study and majority (62%) were men. Table 1 explains the other

socio-demographic characteristics of the participants. Mean income of study participants was Rs. 36,876.51. Majority of them (86.3%) belonged to upper class.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of study participants.

Variables		Frequency (%)	
Total participants		400	
Age (in yrs) Mean: 40.57±10.11 yrs Range: 20–60 yrs	18 – 25	29 (7.2)	
	26 – 35	107 (26.8)	
	36 – 45	124(31)	
	> 45	140 (35)	
Gender	Men	248 (62)	
	Women	152 (38)	
Marital status	Unmarried	35 (8.8)	
	Currently married	357 (89.3)	
	Separated/ widowed	8 (2)	
Occupation	School teachers	100 (25)	
	Lecturers/ Professors	100 (25)	
	Bankers	50 (12.5)	
	Police	50 (12.5)	
	Nurse	50 (12.5)	
	Doctors	50 (12.5)	
X7	1 – 5	105 (26.3)	
Years of working Mean: 12.64± 9.12 yrs Range: 1–39 yrs	6 – 15	173 (43.3)	
	16 – 25	80 (20.0)	
	>25	42 (10.5)	
Socioeconomic status (Percapita)	Upper class	345 (86.3)	
Mean: Rs. 14,887.17±12,033.38	Middle class	53 (13.3)	
Range: Rs. 500-70,000	Lower class	2 (0.5)	

Table 2: Work family conflict among study participants.

Conflict scores	Mean±SD	Range
Total conflict score	52.64±10.03	26–72
Work to family	27.28±5.68	13–41
Family to work	25.37±5.61	10–38
Time based work interference with family	09.95±2.33	4–15
Time based family interference with work	08.60±2.29	3–14
Strain based work interference with family	9.20±2.69	3–15
Strain based family interference with work	8.18±2.52	3–13
Behaviour based work interference with family	8.13±2.26	3–14
Behaviour based family interference with work	8.58±2.20	3–14

When asked about the responsibilities at home, 63 (15.8%) employees reported that they have an under-five child to take care at home, 172 (43%) reported that they have an elderly to take care at home, and 43 (10.8%) reported that they have a bedridden patient to take care. Employees with any one of these responsibility at home were 205 (51.2%), since multiple responses were possible for this variable.

Employees work family conflict was assessed using Carlson WFC scale. Scores of this scale are explained in Table 2. Looking at the scores, W to FC appears to be higher than F to WC, especially time based interference by work to family than strain based and behavior based interferences. When we arbitrarily classified the conflict scores into three equal groups, 66(16.5%) had "no conflict", 192 (48%) had "some conflict" and 142 (35.5%) had "severe conflict".

Table 3: Determinants of work family conflict.

Dimensions of Conflict	Determinants	N	Mean ± SD	F	P
	Gender				
Work interfering with family	Males	248	27.13±5.82		0.400
	Females	152	27.53±5.46	-0.707	0.480
Family interfering with work	Males	248	25.10±5.31		0.244
	Females	152	25.80±6.06	-1.167	
	Age (yrs)				
Work interfering with family	18 – 25	29	27.21±5.10		0.512
	26 – 35	107	27.21±5.56	0.760	
	36 – 45	124	26.76±5.56	- 0.768	
	>45	140	27.81±5.99		
	18 – 25	29	25.41±5.41		
T 11 1 4 6 1 141 1	26 – 35	107	25.21±4.97	0.000	0.077
Family interfering with work	36 – 45	124	25.31±5.97	0.069	0.977
	>45	140	25.52±5.83		
	Parenthood				
Work interfering	Yes	320	27.67±5.72	0.275	0.004
Work interfering with family	No	80	25.71±5.25	0.275	0.004
T 11	Yes	320	25.57±5.80	1 605	0.101
Family interfering with work	No	80	24.55±4.69	4.685	0.101
	Number of children				
	No child	80	25.71±5.25		
Work interfering with family	1 - 2	286	27.79±5.80	4.468	0.012
	> 2	34	26.68±4.96		
Family interfering with work	No child	80	24.55±4.69		
	1 – 2 children	286	25.75±5.87	2.507	0.083
	> 2 children	34	24.03±5.07		
	Young child at home				
Work interfering with family	No young child	337	27.03±5.77	-2.287	0.024
	Child $0 - 5$ yrs age	63	28.63±4.99	-2.267	
Family interfering with work	No young child	337	25.17±5.65	-1.692	0.094
ranny interfering with work	Child 0 – 5 yrs age	63	26.41±5.30	-1.092	
	Occupation				
	Teacher	100	26.47±5.96	_	<0.001
Work interfering with family	Lecturer/Professor	100	27.44±6.18		
	Banker	50	24.20±4.53	6.423	
	Police	50	29.34±4.29	0.423	
	Nurse	50	27.54±6.07		
	Doctor	50	29.34±4.29		
Family interfering with work	Teacher	100	24.29±6.33		0.002
	Lecturer/Professor	100	26.43±5.75		
	Banker	50	23.34±4.62	3.94	
	Police	50	25.40±4.63		
	Nurse	50	27.16 ± 5.90	<u> </u>	
	Doctor	50	25.58±4.31		
	Type of sector				
Work interfering with family	Public	225	27.96±5.16	-6.676	0.008
	Private	175	26.41±6.19	0.0.0	
Family interfering with work	Public	225	26.06±5.04	-2.774	0.006
	Private	175	24.47±6.17		

Determinants of WFC

Every determinant was assessed separately for W to FC and F to WC association. There was no significant association of either of the conflicts with gender, age, marital status, work experience and socio-economic status of the study participants as shown in Table 3. However the conflict scores were found to be higher among females and people aged >45 years. Parents experienced more W to FC, especially having an underfive child (p<0.05). There is significant difference found in the conflict levels among different occupations considered in the study. W to FC was found to be significantly high among doctors and police personnel and F to WC was highest among nurses (p<0.05). Public sector employees were found to have more conflict than private sector employees (p<0.05).

DISCUSSION

Women had higher conflict scores compared to males in the present study; however it was not statistically significant. Many of the earlier studies have shown significantly higher conflict among females, especially W to FC. 6,18,20-22 Study by Rajadhyaksha et al. in India showed that F to WC was also significantly higher among women than men.²³ This is due to internalization of the belief that roles are gender specific and prescribes different life-options for men and women. For men, this life option implies prioritization of work over family, whereas for women, it implies prioritization of family over work. Ultimately men identify themselves with "work roles" and women with "family roles". Therefore women in India are expected to fulfil all the responsibilities of the family irrespective of her occupation and most men are not willing to share the responsibilities of household work. This may eventually lead to stress and increased work family conflict among women compared to men. It is observed that supportive spouses may protect each other from experiencing high level of work family conflict and a husband with profeminist attitudes may buffer his wife from the conflict associated with extensive involvement outside the home. 24,25

In the present study, WFC was highest among employees aged more than 45 years when compared to employees of other age groups and also showed an increasing trend with increasing age similar to the findings in the study by Baah KD in Ghana, West Africa where the finding hypothesized that conflict in families emanating from workplace is significantly and positively related to the age. Thus, the older one gets, more will be the WFC. However few studies state that, age is significantly and negatively correlated with WFC. It is only W to FC increasing in later age group and not F to WC, probably because, as the age increases the responsibility and expectations at work place increases along with their seniority at work, which in turn may affect family life. 29

Conflict scores were found to be higher among married people followed by separated ones compared to unmarried people; however it was not statistically significant. Similar findings were observed in many of the earlier studies. 6.29-31 Weisel and Tzuk pointed out that W to FC of one spouse has a positive relationship with F to WC of the other spouse, while both dimensions of conflict have a negative impact on the quality of parent-child interaction and parental self-efficacy. 32

Literature is consistently showing that the major responsibility of parenthood contributes significantly to work family conflict, more so with the parents of younger children. 6,9,24,25,33 Balancing both career and family is an arduous task for working women especially when they have small children and there is no well-equipped daycare/crèche facility where they can leave their kids without any tension while they are at work. Women often suffer from the guilt-complex of not spending enough time during the tender age of their children and being forced to leave their children in the hands of the maids on whom they have little faith. This will create lot of stress and strain and role conflict, especially among women.²⁸ Bharat S also commented that absence of childcare facilities and inflexible working hours constitute major impediments for employed mothers.³⁴ Similarly in the present study, work family conflict was higher among employees who had children compared to one who did not have children, more so among employees having 1 – 2 children and child below the age of 5. W to FC was higher than F to WC among employees who had children. Aminah Ahmad found that among female factory operators with youngest child aged less than three years experienced more work-to-family conflict than those with youngest child aged three and above. 35 Lu et al found that age of the youngest child was negatively correlated with both work-to-family conflict and family-to-work family.³⁶ The findings support the contention that employees especially working mothers with younger children would experience more W to FC than those with older children. Intuitively, these results make sense as employees with children are more likely to have inflexible commitments at home that will conflict with expectations or demands at work and vice versa too since most of them will be in their initial years of carrier which needs lot of dedication and commitment at work place.

Duxbury et al found that Canadian employees with dependent care responsibilities at home report higher levels of W to FC.³⁷ In the present study, however conflict scores did not differ for those who had an elderly or a bedridden patient to take care at home than those who did not have.

Sanghamita B observed in her study that 74 per cent of the working women believed that they would require flexible working hours, whereas 50 per cent said that 'flexibility in work location' (working from home/telecommuting) could be considered as an important provision for women professionals with younger kids or any other pressing family responsibilities. Seventy-seven

per cent of them emphasized on the need for 'child care facilities' at workplace and 83 per cent expected their employers to provide them support for non-work commitments.²⁹ Therefore these could be possible solutions to the above problem.

Dhanabhakyam et al observed that work stress was found to be more in public sector than private sector, as it is observed in the present study.¹⁹

W to FC was highest among doctors, police and nurses in the present study which is similar to the findings of Mache et al, Lambert et al and Amina Ahmad respectively. 38-40 This can be explained by the fact that the time spent at work by all these individuals is much higher than other working groups. It is shown that WFC is directly related to the number of hours worked per week, more so with amount and frequency of overtime, presence and irregularity of shifts and inflexibility in work schedule as it is observed among police, nurses and doctors. 9,41 Interestingly Kanter has observed that employees who observe "Interaction fatigue" at work may withdraw from personal contact at home as it may be explained for occupations like doctors, nurses and police in the present study. 42

CONCLUSION

Work to family conflict was higher than family to work conflict, especially time based W to FC. Conflict was significantly associated with parenthood, especially having young children and was higher in public sector than private sector and among doctors, nurses & police compared to Bankers and Teachers. Women having a child in 0-5 years old had been a significant contributor for WFC. Providing child care facilities at the work place would reduce the WFC significantly. Employees getting periodic off from their work or Institutes promoting holiday trips with family for employees, especially in occupations which ask for regular change in the shifts, overtimes or on call duties like doctors, nurses and police, may give them extra time to spend with the family and thus improve the work efficiency, family life and reduce the work family conflict. However the efficiency of such solutions will have to be studied on a larger population and varied occupations.

Limitations

As the study was done in a limited geographical area, it lacks generalizability. There is scope for further research involving wider geographical area and varied occupational groups. There are possibilities of social desirability bias among the study participants as they may not be willing to disclose the discomfort they have with either family or work place.

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