

Gender Role Identity and Women's Career Advancement: The Mediating Role of Work-Family Conflict in Higher Education Sector

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The present study addresses W-F(Work-Family) conflict mainly contributes to the existing literature by examining how W-F conflict and perceptions about gender roles influence women's career advancement.

Methodology/Approach: A descriptive study using primary data has been to investigate the objective and hypotheses. The instrument developed and used to collect data in this study was a questionnaire. The research data for this study from married women working in the B-Schools in the Tamil Nadu region

Findings: This study provides valuable data for academic institutions to build strategies, policies, practices, and equal opportunities to support more women to move up to higher positions and attract more women to opt for the academic profession. This study provides valuable data for academic institutions to build strategies, policies, practices, and equal opportunity to support more women to move up to higher positions and attract more women to opt for the academic profession.

Practical Implications: Nowadays, women are still underrepresented in the higher positions in most organizations, especially in the higher education sector. Some of the crucial questions are whether family responsibilities affect women career development and career expectation influences the relationship between work-family conflict and career development of women or not.

Keywords: Work-Family Conflict, Gender Studies, Career Advancement, Higher Education, Career Expectation and Career Development

Document Type: Research Paper

I. INTRODUCTION

Women have made good progress in pursuing higher education and increasing their representations in the labor market, reducing gender inequality in the last three decades. But the representation of women in the academic industry is generally inadequate, especially in top or powerful positions (Morley, 2006; Van den Brink, Benschop & Jensen, 2010). In India, even the Institutes of National Importance like IITs and NITs have the women faculty, on average, at 11.24 % and 17.75%, respectively (Sharma, 2020). This gender difference also exists in Business schools (B-Schools); for example, in IIM Ahmedabad, the average number of women faculty is less than 16% (Sharma, 2014). This gender gap only widens as one moves up the hierarchy. Similar data exist in other higher education sectors.

According to the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2016-17 report, only 17% of top positions like the vice-chancellor, pro-vice-chancellor, and the director post held by women. None of the states has more than 40% women in professor positions despite their higher proportion in the entry-level positions. The number of women holding higher powerful positions is fewer in the academic industry, but they also experience pay disparity at all levels (Johnson, 2017; Tao, 2018). Even though women's participation in the educational sector is increasing, there are still numerous barriers and challenges for women's progression to senior positions. It may be due to various factors such as work-family conflict (W-F conflict) (Hoobler, Wayne, & Lemmon, 2009), lack of social support like supervisor, co-workers, mentors, and networks (Wanberg, Welsh & Hezlett, 2003; Apospori, Nikandrou, I & Panayotopoulou, 2006; Abalkhail & Allan, 2015), organization politics (Tharenou, 1997), perceptions of gender role identity (Davidson & Burke, 2011), perceptions of organizational work-family culture (Forret & Janasz, 2005), organizational structure issues (Kanter, 1977), social capital (Bagilhole & White, 2011).

The present study addresses W-F(Work-Family) conflict and is designed to contribute to the existing literature by examining how W-F conflict and perceptions about gender roles influence women's career advancement. This study provides valuable data for academic institutions to build strategies, policies, practices, and equal opportunity to support more women to move up to higher positions and attract more women to opt for the academic profession.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Research studies on the W-F conflict area have been given more importance and concern in the last two decades since individuals struggle with multiple roles (Martins, Eddleston & Veiga, 2002). The rising number of dual career couples and working mothers have substantially increased the demands in their family domain and primary work responsibilities (Allen, Herst, Bruck & Sutton, 2000). Many studies are conducted in W-F conflict to understand its nature and outcome (Hoobler et al., 2009; Maloni, Gligor, Cheramine & Bond, 2019; Okurame, 2012). It has become a significant area in organizational research. The W-F conflict ensues when the demands from work and family are mutually incompatible (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Khan, 1964). The W-F conflict is bi-directional where work conflicts with family, mainly referred to as Work-Family Conflict (WFC), and family conflicts with work mainly referred to as Family Work Conflict (FWC) (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1996).

Many people would see these two, i.e., work and family domains, as central aspects of their lives, and the co-presence of these domains may lead to enriching or conflictual, which influence on performance, health, and well-being of individuals (Allen et al., 2000; Van Steenbergen & Ellemers, 2009). The demands in one domain may limit one's competence or ability to complete the required needs in the other domain. Gender differences, mainly in work and family experiences, have consistently been an essential theme in the research of W-F conflict (Hoobler et al., 2009; Kim, 2020; Lewis & Cooper, 1999; Maloni et al., 2019; Okurame, 2012). People's gender identities impact the way men and women cope with W-F conflicts (Meeussen, Veldman & Laar, 2016). Gender theory suggests that men and women are socially constructed because of deeply embodied social practices (Guenther, Humbert & Kelan, 2018).

Gender identity is a complex psychological and social process where men and women perceive and adopt various traditional masculine and feminine responsibilities and roles (Anderson & Leslie, 1991). The cultural and social factors influence the relationship between gender and W-F conflict (Farmer, 1985). Thus, the perception about gender role identities affects men and women's beliefs about the importance of roles in work and family domains (Kerpelman & Schvaneveldt, 1999). Gender norms influence decisions about engaging in or avoiding work and family roles in one's social context, like what roles should be done by men and women. These norms will communicate to what extent men and women are incompatible with the work and family roles (Eagly, Wood & Diekmann, 2000; Eagly & Karau, 2002). This intertwined nature of one's gender identity, work, and family roles will lead to spill-over in life from one domain to another. Many studies have stated women experience higher W-F conflict than men because of greater responsibilities in the family domain (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Hoobler et al., 2009; Vange, 2004). Women are primarily responsible for the household and child-rearing responsibilities (Mayrhofer, Meyer, Schiffinger & Schmidt, 2008). Women do more household work than men even when employed (Mahitivanichcha, 2003; South & Spitze, 1994).

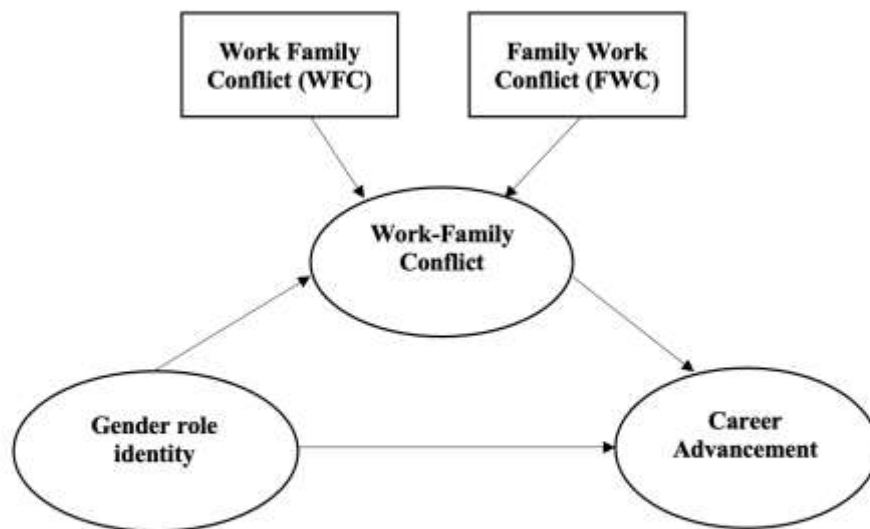


Figure 1: Mediating role of W-F conflict on the relationship between gender role identity and career advancement

III. METHODOLOGY

An explanatory study using primary data has been to investigate the objective and hypotheses. The instrument developed and used to collect data in this study was a questionnaire. Data for this study were collected from married women working in the B-Schools in the Tamil Nadu region. This study is conducted by purposive sampling techniques to select the respondents. The questions were sent in booklet form and through emails to collect their responses. Anonymity was guaranteed to the respondents to improve response accuracy. The respondents are requested to fill the questionnaire comprising the questions related to gender role identity, W-F conflict, and career advancement.

The questionnaire consists of three parts: the first part measures the demographic information, the second part measures the W-F conflict factors and perceptions of gender role identity, and the third part measures the Career advancement factor. The variables chosen for this study are: Gender role identity (Independent Variable), Career advancement (Dependent Variable) and Work-Family Conflict (WFC), Family Work Conflict (FWC) (Mediating Variable)

The variables used in the survey to capturing each factor are from standardized questionnaires developed or used by earlier researchers.

1. WFC (Netemeyer, Boles & McMurrian, 1996)

- The main demands of my work interfere with my home and the quality of family life.
- The amount of time taken in my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities.
- Things I wanted to do at my home do not get done because of my job's demands.
- My job is to produce a strain that makes it challenging to fulfill the family duties.
- Due to the work-related duties, I have to make changes to my plans for family activities.

2. FWC (Netemeyer, Boles & McMurrian, 1996)

- The demands of my family or spouse, as well as my partner, interfere with work-related activities.
- I have to put off doing many things at work because of demands on my time at home.
- Things I want to do at work get disturbed mainly due to the demands of my family or spouse/partner.
- My home life mainly interferes with my responsibilities at work, it affects mainly getting to work on time, accomplishing daily tasks, and working overtime.
- The family-related strain interferes with my ability to perform job-related duties.

3. Career Commitment (Blau, 1985)

- Would take a different job for the same pay

- Want a career in academics
- If I could do it all over, I would not choose academics.
- If you had all the money needed, still work in academics.
- Ideal vocation too well to give it up
- Perfect employment for a life-work
- I was disappointed ever entered the academic profession.
- Spend time reading academic-related material

4. Mentoring Support (Thomas & Ganster, 1995)

Would you please indicate the extent to which your mentor support:

- Was critical of my efforts to combine work and family.
- Juggled tasks or duties to accommodate my family responsibilities.
- I was understanding or sympathetic to my family's demands.
- Listened to my problems of trying to balance work and family demands.
- They shared ideas or advice on how to balance work and family responsibilities.
- I showed resentment of my family's needs.
- Helped me resolve conflicts between work and family responsibilities.

5. Perceptions of gender role identity (Sin & Yau, 2004)

Family Orientation

- It should be women's responsibility to manage household affairs.
- Men should concern themselves with external affairs, women with internal affairs.
- Men belong to society, women to the family.
- As a wife, a woman has the responsibility to breed offspring for her husband to continue his clan.
- For a married woman, the most important thing is her family and not her career.
- The most important thing for women is to take care of their families.
- The husband should be in a dominant position in the family.

Submissiveness

- Men have higher social status than women.
- Women need not be intelligent, but they need to be virtuous.
- A woman should be obedient to her father before marriage, her husband after marriage, and her son after her husband's death.
- A wife should avoid achieving more than her husband.
- A wife's level of education should not be higher than her husband's level.

Social and Economic Independence

- Women should have independent thinking.
- A married woman mainly has the right to determine whether she bears children or not.
- Women should have their careers.
- Women should be financially independent.

6. Career Advancement (Patwardhan, Mayya & Joshi, 2016)

- Your organization has not stereotyped against women
- Your organization has no inherent gender bias in recruitment and promotion
- Your organization's gender equality policy is clear
- Your organization has adequate labor and nondiscrimination laws
- Your organization has flexible work solutions
- Management does not view it as a man's job
- Your organization has leadership training for women
- Your organization has equality policies and programs
- Men are encouraged to take leave for family responsibilities

IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

1. Career Advancement

Hypothesis 1: The Gender role identity and its adverse effect on W-F conflict.

An empirical investigation of the relationship between W-F conflict, gender identity, and career advancement is absent in the literature. W-F conflict is a considerable threat towards career advancement (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Hoobler et al., 2009; Vange, 2004). According to the W-F conflict theory, participation in one domain makes it more difficult to effectively engage in the other domain because the demand in one domain reduces individuals' time, effort, and energy to function in the different disciplines. Since the societal norms put pressure on women to take more responsibilities and roles in their family domain, it depletes their time and physical and mental resources to function effectively at work (Mahitivanichcha, 2003; Mayrhofer et al., 2008; South & Spitze, 1994). Women mainly expected to feel the primary obligation to their family roles (Schwartzberg & Dytell, 1996; Thompson & Walker, 1989). Many studies have stated women experience higher W-F conflict than men because of greater responsibilities in the family domain (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Hoobler et al., 2009; Vange, 2004). In this study, we found that the gender role has an adverse effect on career outcomes. In terms of W-F conflict, women no longer aspire or desire to be engulfed in their work environments and also that arrangements allows little control over the working hours. The women career changes and employment decisions, predominantly guided by the demands of the family care, can be understood through multiple perspectives have an impact on the career advancement.

2. Career Advancement and W-F conflict

Hypothesis 2: W-F conflict has a negative effect on Career Advancement.

Career Advancement can be defined as the promotion of professional titles in the organization. It is a system career path to meet employee goals and needs of the organizations (Kwah, Kow, Lee, Lee & Lim, 2012). Career Advancement enables employees to produce better performance. This study focuses on the career advancement of women. Career advancement also refers to the ability expected for career development prospects and opportunities in the organization. Career Advancement is a long-term goal. The organization must implement various measures to improve its performance and promote it effectively through a proper system. Then it will help to boost their capabilities to the professional level, compete and upgrade for their career.

Previous studies have found several factors that influence women's promotion in leadership or top positions and classified them under interpersonal, individual, organizational, and family (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989). Interpersonal determinants include proactive partnerships and supportive relationships like peers and mentors to facilitate career advancement (Higgins & Kram, 2001). Individual determinants include personal resources such as career aspirations, personality traits, and other psychological factors that concern managing and motivational aspects (Kirchmeyer, 2002).

The Organizational factors focused on the support system in the organization (Ramli, Chin & Choo, 2016). Family factors like the presence of spouse and dependents are considered barriers for women to increase their W-F conflict, pay, and satisfaction (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Hoobler et al., 2009; Martins, Eddleston & Veiga, 2002; Vange, 2004). Interpersonal, individual, organizational, and family factors contribute to a person's career advancement (Xiao, 2010). In this study, we considered the following factors to play an essential role in career advancement: family orientation, family time, submissiveness, social and economic independence, and societal orientation to capture the perceptions of gender role identity. We found out that in the study that W-F conflict has a negative effect on Career Advancement.

3. Mediating Role of W-F conflict

Hypothesis 3: W-F conflict mediates the relationship between gender role identity and career advancement

Investigation of how W-F conflict affects women's career advancement, especially in the Indian cultural context where the role of women is primarily on household and child-rearing. Increasing education and career opportunities for women in the country have created a trend where both couples are career-focused, and many women enter the formal workforce (Okurame, 2008). The present study is an attempt to guide organizations on encouraging more remarkable career advancement among women.

The mediating role of W-F conflict on the relationship between gender identity and career advancement needs to be studied, and there is no empirical evidence to test this assumption. This gap in the literature hinders the theoretical development of models used in the W-F conflict area. Gender influences in the experience of W-F conflict have contradictory findings. While some studies have reported that men and women have differences in experiencing W-F conflict, some found no differences. The role of gender identity is to be studied to create clarity in the existing literature.

V. DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper aims to identify work-family conflict, career expectations, and career development for women. The work-family conflict has a significant impact on the performance of the women in the organisation. It is because this variable is the dominating variable to prove the work-family conflict is important factor which affects the career development of women. The work-family conflict affects the career in three ways-time, strain, and behavior. So the family responsibility has a prominent influence on job time. Nowadays, mainly women are still underrepresented in the higher positions in most organizations, especially in the higher education

sector. Some of the crucial questions are whether family responsibilities affect women career development and career expectation influences the relationship between work-family conflict and career development of women or not.

Moreover, family strain influences the energy as well as the performance of the job they perform in the organisation. The Effective behavior at home will result in effective on the job. The career expectation also has significant loading of all the variables—competition, freedom, and expertise contribute to the performance. The maximum loading for career expectation shows that this variable is the most dominating. It is because most people expect their career through competition to get promotion in this competitive world. It is also needed to gain freedom from a job. These factors are essential for career development. Career development also has significant loading—career success satisfaction, salary progression satisfaction, career progression satisfaction, rank, and salary.

Also, the study results are following the previous studies quoted in the literature review. However, despite the Work-Family conflict modeling, this study has significant limitations as few top management in the higher education sector participated. A larger, more representative sample of individuals in the higher education sector would have permitted a more sophisticated analysis with larger subgroup sizes. Moreover, this study only mentioned work-family conflict and did not mention family-work conflict. Work-Family conflict includes both directions of work-family conflict, i.e., WFC and FWC. In addition, future scholars might be able to use these findings to research similar topics using a nationally representative sample in the higher education sector.

This study indicates that women are ready and eager to contribute to organizations if they are willing to give them a chance. Women are mainly motivated by situations that give them opportunities to learn. This study provides valuable data for academic institutions to build strategies, policies, practices, and equal opportunities to support more women to move up to higher positions and attract more women to opt for the academic profession. This research W-F conflict contributes to the existing literature by examining how W-F conflict and perceptions about gender roles influence women's career advancement as well as help the policy makers to look into the career development of women so that more women will get into the job which will reduce the gender inequality in the organisation.

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