

## Causes of Work-Family Conflict Among Female University Teachers

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### **Abstract**

*The main aim of the study was to identify the causes of conflict between the family and work lives of married female teachers of the universities in Pakistan's patriarchal society. This study was qualitative in nature. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the causes of role conflict at work place among married female university teachers. Three public sector universities, University of the Punjab, Lahore College for Women University and University of Education, were selected as sample. Sixty female teachers were interviewed. The interviews were audio recorded then transcribed and coded for emerging themes and categories. The analysis of the data revealed that women experienced role conflict as a result of simultaneity of their multiple roles. Extended working hours at university has a great contribution in generating work-family conflict.*

**Key Words:** Work-family conflict, University teachers

### **1. Introduction**

The two poles of one's life comprise on work and family. These are compact with one and other that work efficiency at one place influence the work performance of the other place. With reference to the models of work-family conflict, the conflict is defined when the life of one pole interferes the life of other pole in such a way that hinders the quality of work and also damages the performance at both places (Burke, 1988; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The meaning is further extended when the direction of relationship is pointed out. The conflict at work can affect the family life and similarly the conflict at family can disturb work (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992).

The attention arose towards this type of conflict more when women started taking part in outside home activities and stepped in professions. Some of the factors related to family life (cooperation from spouse, number and age of children) have found influential on work life, similarly, the demands of work found affecting family life (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kossek & Özeki, 2001). Duxbury & Higgins (2001) stated that when teachers spend time and energy at two parallel positions, the work-family conflict becomes obvious to happen. According to Nadeem and Metcalf (2007), stepping in and stepping out in work and family cause this type of conflict that whenever once occurred, the sufferer befalls to face problems in personal life as well. The onset symptoms of this conflict find its base at unstable conditions of work. It is a phenomenon primarily faced by working women who put their time and energy at work and family simultaneously. Allen, Herst, Burck and Sutton, (2000) shared the feelings of employees who face this work-family conflict that include low self-image, tiredness, damaged performance, lack of work-vigor and emotional burnout. The influence of work-family conflict leave lasting physical symptoms those are potent to the normal health of a worker (Beauregard, 2006; Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2005).

The personal problems faced by workers at home in form of more number of children, ignorant share of spouse in fulfilling duties at home, and unfulfilled tasks affect the performance at work (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). When counted the outcomes of this conflict are late reach at work, truancy, low work efficiency and lack of vigor (Kirchmeyer & Cohen, 1999).

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Hearn (1999) reported the reason that work-family conflict is a problem of female workers primarily as men remain aside when the question of performing home tasks and up-bringing children is involved. The reasons remain many that cause this work-family conflict, but the significant point is to remediate this conflict in order to make workers feel emotionally, physically, and psychologically easy within work environment to show optimal work performance. The tendency to face this work-family conflict is faced among women more than male workers (Hammer, Allen, & Grigsby, 1997). The emphasis on keeping balance in both the corners i.e. the heavy home responsibilities at home adds more to this conflict to female workers (Noor, 2002). It will be right to claim that work-family conflict is more an issue of female workers in terms of shouldering more responsibilities of home along work life.

The issues related to this conflict are personal as well as professional. The conflict of work and family has remained a concern of research in the context of developed countries but it is now becoming an issue of developing countries as well where women have stepped into professions while taking the responsibilities of home tasks altogether (Nurhazirah & Abdul Kadir, 2011). In a male-controlled society like Pakistan, women have taken place in the world of work and it is also established that teaching suits to females with regard to the nature of this profession as well as managing the bulk of responsibilities at home. Here the difference of school teaching and university teaching is needed to clarify with respect to nature of tasks to be performed as well as the restriction to spend work hours at workplace.

So this study will focus on exploring the causes of work-family conflict among university female teachers in Pakistani context.

## 2. Literature review

The roots of work-family conflict has been found in the role conflict theory Kahn, Worlfe, Quinn, Snock, and Rosentha, (1964), where role conflict is described as the feel of difficulty in performing two roles up to the expectations simultaneously that cause stress on the part of individual of the fear of not behaving accordingly. The role conflict stems from imbalance of fulfilling duties as a home member with varied roles to perform as well as behaving a responsible worker. Whenever an imbalance is faced among the roles of work and family, the work-family conflict follows (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The level of expectations from female workers is higher than the expectations of male workers (Robinson & Godbey, 1997). The amount of time does also differ that females give to family as compared to time spent by men. According to the finding of a study Hochschild (1989) shared the estimated time that a lady works more at home as compared to men, where the outside home liabilities keep functioning side by side for both the genders.

The issue takes an adverse shape when the observation proves that male workers do not set working hours according to the timetable of their ladies at home (Shelton & John, 1996). With the increment in the time spent at work by female workers, male workers are less likely to adjust their timetable to share the burden of responsibilities of women at home. Other than the division of time in work and family, there are certain roles that attached with males like keeping maintenance of goods at home whereas cooking, cleaning, and child rearing are held the duties of women (Robinson & Godbey, 1997). Analysis on the assigned roles of men and women emphasizes the degree of emergency on tasks as the roles expected from women to perform at home are as necessary as to continue routine. Men can manage to perform their expected roles at their free time as well as those are not to be done on daily basis (Shaw, 1988). In a study conducted by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), clear evidence is sought on discovering work-family conflict among females due to the significance of role they perform to run the routine of family life. There prevails the evidence of research that gender wise difference of facing work and family conflict does not exist significantly (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991). Certain examples do also exist that claim the share of home responsibilities between male and females

that ease the role of females as the contribution of females towards family in terms of jobs is ultimately a shouldering towards males' role in providing bread and butter to family (Silver and Frances, 1994).

The old practice of women considered to perform only within home roles have devastatingly been different from the mid of 20<sup>th</sup> century, this trend set has welcomed females from all ages to step in professions (Moen, Phyllis, & Elaine, 1992).

Han and Moen (1999) also favored the share of women in breaking the conventional stereotypical roles and pointed attention that certain change contributes to the work of each other separately and towards the family as a whole.

The resistance from society against accepting the change of roles of women towards work at personal level, and towards contributing to the economy as a whole is yet a hindrance on way of female workers. Priority is still given to the family responsibilities that stamp to accept this phenomenon of work-family conflict more faced among female workers (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

The kind of fewer acceptances towards the contribution of women at work, does not only affect the career opportunities and success of female workers but also the incentives attached with the jobs of female workers get ruined (Silver, 1993).

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined work-family conflict as "a form of inter role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (p. 77).

The directions of conflict that are told in their model are two ways as well as multiple ways. Once considering that work affects family and family affects works, the other shape can be of multifold. There are three dimensions: time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based conflict. Time-based work/family conflict arises when the time demands from one role make it physically impossible to meet the requirements of another role, and when preoccupation with one role's requirements occurs, even when physically involved in meeting the requirements of another role. Work-related sources of conflict include hours worked and commuted per week, amount and frequency of overtime, irregularity of shift work, and inflexibility in the work schedule. Family related sources include number of children, younger children, and family size (including older relatives).

Six dimensional form of work-family conflict was suggested by Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, (1998) where work and family and family and work conflicts had further divisions of time, strain and behavior. Apart from the conflict occurred by work or family on one another, time conflict was defined when the time spent at one place hinders the roles to perform at the other place. Strain conflicts happens when the stress caused by the roles of work hinders the fulfillment of family responsibilities whereas the behavior conflict occurs when the in-appropriation of behavior damages the performance of the other place and the worker fails to perform as per expected from him/her.

Patel, Govender, Paruk, & Ramgoon (2006) pointed attention of the contribution of organization towards the progression of this conflict among workers. Teaching itself has been considered as a multifold profession whose emphasis is not only on acknowledging the children with new knowledge and skills whereas the aspect of training and personality building of students is additional responsibility of teachers. It causes teachers to indulge their optimum efforts into professions and makes it a 24/7 job. Finding time for family and self is hard to maintain by teachers (Cinamon & Rich, 2005).

The evidence from previous researches emphasizes that the factors associated with organizations have positively correlated with this work-family conflict; time spent at work is a prime concern of research findings. Other factors specific to teaching profession, were also found influential towards work-family conflict; those include the number of students in class,

handling needs of special students, as well as answering the concerns of parents as a responsible teacher (Cinamon & Rich, 2005).

When researched with the variable of teacher experience, this conflict of work-family was also found influential as new teachers find difficulty in adjusting this conflict than senior teachers in the field Cinamon and Rich (2005). A contradictory finding was also found by Noor (2002) that work experience has nothing to reduce the work-family conflict.

As reported earlier that the dimension of this conflict is multifold, the home related factors including number of children, share of spouse, and age of children were associated with work-family as well as family-work conflict (Cinamon & Rich, 2005).

The current study is an endeavor to point out the factors of family and work at once that cause this particular kind of conflict among university female teachers. Putting both the lives of university teachers and drawing the contribution of those on one and other place will help to draw misbalancing factors. Once drawn those conflicting factors, a balance can be suggested to remediate the progression of this conflict. It will help teachers to become professionals and perform their duties.

### 3. Methodology

This study was qualitative in nature. The opinions of people were collected by conducting semi-structured interviews. Expert opinion and focus group discussion was used for developing instrument. The study group consisted of 30 female teachers from universities. Purposive sampling was used to select the sample for the study. In first phase faculties was identified in all universities. In second phase all departments in each faculty was enlisted. In third and last phase proportionate sample was selected from each department according to the total faculty members in each department. Field notes were also taken along with interviews. Interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants, lasting approximately one hour. Interviews were conducted after having discussion with participants according to their convenience and availability. Before the recording, the purpose was explained to the participants and their consent was sought. The interviews were transcribed and coded for emerging themes and categories.

### 4. Results and Analysis

#### Work interfering with family

Since the reasons to join teaching at university level are divergent. The beginning point to diagnose WFC can be rooted from the very reasons to opt this profession as career. The reasons include teaching as most feasible/ secure profession for females, teaching is considered attractive, passionate, and fortunate career. More or less the nature of most of the service providing jobs cause this kind of conflict but teaching is very chanceful to conflict arousal due to its demanding nature. Even then it was found an acceptable and honorable job for females. Güneyli & Aslan, (2009) also expressed that teaching is a respected and a holy profession open to enhancement, teachers always in a state of guiding the humanity, serving / enlightening citizens, and determining their future. According to the respondents:

*“Teaching is a noble profession, meaningful, worthwhile.”*

*“I think teaching is considered to be the best and most respected profession in our society because teacher is the one who not just teaches the course but creates the personality of the future generations.”*

Another respondent explained:

*Teaching is most feasible job that can be carried along with having a family life.*

### **Role perception**

Teaching at university level is perceived as respectable and alluring profession overall and particularly in our context. Güneyli & Aslan, (2009) also reported that teaching is a respected and a holy profession open to enhancement, teachers always in a state of guiding the humanity, serving / enlightening citizens, and determining their future.

Other than the responsibilities related to teaching and learning, university teaching has remained attached with research and knowledge producing activities. It is the point that does not only distinguish this profession from others but also puts responsibility on the end of university faculty to concentrate on developmental aspects of students as well as to upgrade their knowledge.

### **Tasks to be performed**

Teaching is a scattered profession and university teachers are not out of it. Other than lecturing and guiding the students (contact hours), teachers have to perform managerial duties and many administrative tasks. Examination duties, paper marking, paper setting, students' mentoring and advisory, program headship, project conduction, research related activities and many other similar to it. There are certain cases where relaxations are not allowed and teachers were found bound to follow the rules and restrictions. A challenge can be seen in a shape that the behavior of administration is rigid and mostly situation oriented. A parallel perspective was identified that it is sometimes beyond the capacity of administration as well as put ignorant. As one of the participants explained:

*“Administration has to follow rules governed by government. They cannot do much about it. The things which fall under their power are at times ignored.”*

### **Influence on family**

When 6 to 9 hours are said to spend with job tasks then it affects family dealings and concentration in lasting manner. The observable form of this conflict is delaying home duties like Cooking, washing, providing pick and drop to children, tutoring, taking care of in-laws and husband, strict and harsh behavior, more demanding behavior from family members, and the suffering of studies of children. It is also reported by a respondent.

*“I find less time for my kids and their studies that make me stressed.”*

Another respondent explained.

*“At times, when long days, meetings and similar tasks cause me to relinquish some of my responsibilities towards family to other family members which are met with criticism, I feel the state of conflict.”*

Another observed influence on children is in form of ignorance as well as expecting their assistance by performing home tasks. As following expression of a respondent shows:

*“For children, one has more expectations. And one becomes a bit strict”.*

### **Family interfering with work**

#### **Influence on work performance**

It is understood fact that one can never perform well at workplace if other place (home) is suffering. The work family conflict is a problem that becomes a cause of delaying job tasks and causes low performance. Concentration gets divided and impacts on work life as well. If ease is triggered from family life, it becomes visible in form of proficient performance at work place. It is observed that females with more children and with young children are facing more conflict than having less and older children. One respondent explained this in following words:

*“In case of younger kids mothers are required to pay more time to their children for whom they get less time for preparation of the teaching and non-teaching assignments.”*

As Noor (2002) also reported that with more number of children and household work females faced conflict.

### **Spouse role**

Being 51 % of the whole population, females are to put their efforts in the economic terms as well. Here the conflict arises from the social bindings and the work requirements. Primarily the responsibility to provide the family with basic needs is for men, when women take charge by their contribution and share this responsibility then it is obvious that women might be helped out in performing home duties by spouses. The majority of participants/ interviewees explained the share of their spouse in household responsibilities is around 10 to 20 percent. Less of the interviewees reported it up-to 50 %.

It is observed that female teachers feel conflict between work and family lives as they have to perform multiple roles. The variant roles can cause conflict. Pakistan is a male dominant society. Even after drastic change in thoughts and behaviors, there exist many restrictions for females. Due to these females have to give up many opportunities of professional development. As one of the respondent expressed:

*“When workshops, abroad study, scholarships are dropped due to family restrictions. When children are unhappy when you don’t give the due time to them and when you are all tired after working so much at job. Keeping the balance and best of both worlds is literally impossible without the care by spouse”.*

Thus it is observed that females are having conflict leading to reduction in interest, participation in professional activities which results in reduced professional progress. Siver (1993) supports this finding by reporting that females are bound to fulfill the needs of the family which affects their professional progress, as their decision of selecting profession depends upon the traditions, values and norms of the society as well as the support, a female gets from her spouse, age of her children to take care, and help from the institution where she works.

## **5. Conclusion**

Norms of the society hinder the decision of females in adopting professions. Females are required to execute many different roles. The variation in roles and requirements of society can cause conflict. Most important role of females is considered the caring of family which can be the cause of work-family conflicts for them. They are forced to maintain a balance between work and family responsibilities that produces conflicts. As it is also reported by Greenhaus, Jeffrey, & Beutell (1985), that pressure on females to create balance in work and family roles creates conflict.

Building upon the findings of the present study and work previously done in this regard, this work-family conflict was more found as a feminine issue with regard to the role to be performed at home and the contribution of females in professional activities. Several causes were explored that increase this conflict among working females. A balance can be achieved if the cooperation from family and schedule timing can be adjusted to a general work-plan level. As if this conflict lasts for long time, it leaves ending results and converts into a stress and other work related emotional disorders.

Greenhaus and Beutell, (1985); Beauregard, (2006) also explained that factors affecting family to work conflict (FWC) are childcare, household tasks, support of spouse etc) and factors affecting work to family conflict (WFC) are working hours at job and job autonomy.

This study can be a helpful source in identifying the causes of conflict between the family and work lives of females which can lead to identify the possible preventions and solutions for those hindrances.

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