

Gender Differences in Work Family Conflict and its Relationship with Work Performance

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the gender differences in work-family conflict and the relationship between work-family conflict and work performance among Indian employees, working from home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A sample of one hundred male and female employees was collected via a convenient and snowball sampling method. They provided information on their work-family conflict and work performance using the following scales: Work-family Conflict Scale and Individual Work Performance Questionnaire. It was found that there is a negative relationship between work-family conflict and work performance. It was also found that significant gender differences exist in work-family conflict. Indian female employees observed higher work-family conflict than male employees. Therefore, it was found that within remote workers in India during the pandemic, females experienced higher work-family conflict than males. However, there was not enough evidence to support that females experienced lower work performance than males as only two of the three subscales reported a significant difference between the two groups.

Keywords: *Work-family Conflict, Task Performance, Contextual Performance, Counterproductive Performance, Remote Work; Gender Differences*

Come the pandemic, 4 in 5 of the world's workforce was under lockdown meaning that majority of the employees had to work-from-home (Chaudhary & Yeo, 2020). There are many definitions and components of what qualifies as work from home. One that is largely agreed upon is that it encompasses the remunerative job duties and responsibilities that workers complete from the same building and other adjacent areas as their homes. However, the transition from home to work is not always easy, since the boundary between the office and home is blurred in remote work. Due to the work pressure spilling over into familial life work-family conflict occurs. This is when an individual experiences incompatibility of demands between work and family roles, causing participation in both roles to become difficult (Weer & Greenhaus, 2014). Remote work allows work roles to infringe on family roles (Mirchandani, 2000; Eddleston & Mulki (2015); Russell, O'Connell, & McGinnity, 2009). A high level of work-family conflict has

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Received: August 14, 2021; Revision Received: September 20, 2021; Accepted: September 30, 2021

Gender Differences in Work Family Conflict and its Relationship with Work Performance

also been associated with physical and psychological health problems (Stoeva et al., 2002; Jansen et al., 2003; Zhou et al., 2018). According to a study conducted by Wesley & Muthuswamy (2005) in Tamil Nadu, work-to-family conflict was more prevalent than family-to-work conflict. This suggests that the permeability of work into family is more than that of family into work. The aforementioned study acts as a base for the formulation of the present study.

This study also attempts to understand the relationship that work-family conflict can have on the employee's work. In order to assess this, the variable of work performance is chosen. Campbell et al. (1993) describe work performance as an individual-level specific behavior. Work performance is how well an individual performs a job, role, task or responsibility. Work-family conflict also tends to impact an individual's work performance negatively. In their study, Karatepe et al. (2013) found evidence that work-family conflict decreased work performance of employees through decreased job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion. Ahmad (2008) also found a positive correlation between work-family conflict and lowered job performance. Voydanoff (1988) found the amount and scheduling of work time, job demands, and the presence of children in the home are related to work/family conflict among men and women. She also observed that women scored higher than men in work/family conflict.

Rapid economic growth in India has seen an increase in women's employment, which has led to an increase in dual-earning families. Western researchers have found females to experience more work-family conflict than males (Krantz, Berntsson, & Lundberg, 1994; Duxbury Higgins, & Lee, 1994; Franakenhaeuser, Lundberg, Fredrikson, Melin, Tuomisto, Myrsten et al., 1989; Greenglass & Burke, 1988; Lundberg, Mardberg, & Frankenhaeuser, 1994, Marshall & Barnett, 1993; Williams & Alliger, 1994). This is observed in the Indian population as well, as stereotypical gender roles are extremely prevalent. The overall understanding is that Indian women have to juggle between work and family, whereas men's jobs get priority. For example, in couples with children, the mother is expected to care for the children and help them with their schooling, so their job has a higher chance of being put on the back-burner. Desai et al. (2011) compared Indian home-based females and office-working females and found that, home-based women workers reported less stress and more satisfaction with their careers, provided that they received a cooperative home environment, assistance for housework, and flexible working hours. This implies that women perceive higher satisfaction with their work and are able to do their jobs, only if their spouses and children are cooperative and supportive. This leads to increased work-family conflict.

Although these variables have been studied extensively in the West, there has not been much research into this, especially with respect to gender differences in the Indian context. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a window of opportunity has emerged to study work-family conflict in remote workers of the Indian population, which makes the present study novel. As per literature review, a positive correlation between work-family conflict and work performance has already been established in the West. Therefore, in an effort to fill these gaps, the present study attempts to study gender differences in work-family conflict and its impact on work performance among Indian employees working from home.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Objectives

- Objective 1. To find the relationship between work-family conflict and work performance.

Gender Differences in Work Family Conflict and its Relationship with Work Performance

- Objective 2. To find the difference in work performance between male and female employees working from home.
- Objective 3. To find the difference in work-family conflict between male and female employees working from home.

Hypotheses

Based on the extant theoretical and empirical evidence, the following hypotheses were proposed:

- Hypothesis 1. There will be a significant relationship between work-family conflict and work performance.
- Hypothesis 2. There will be a significant difference in work performance for both male and female employees working from home.
- Hypothesis 3. There will be a significant difference in work-family conflict between male and female employees working from home.

Participants

The sample consists of 100 participants who were working from home during the pandemic. Snowball and convenience based non-probability sampling techniques were used to select the sample. No particular age limit was set for the inclusion criteria. It was observed that 73% of the participants were males, and 27% were females. The participants were aged between 50- 53 years with a mean age of 43.84 years. The 'marital status' and 'number of children' were also collected as part of demographics. 95% of the participants are married whereas 4% were single and 1% were divorced. 86% had children and 14% did not.

Materials

Two measures were used in the study, Work-family Conflict Scale, developed by Haslam, Filus, Morawska, Sanders & Fletcher in 2015. The work-family conflict is a measure which studies the extent to which the functioning of one in the work domain negatively impacts the family domain.

Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ), developed by Koopmans (2014), IPWQ is divided into 3 subscales, namely- Task Performance, Contextual Performance and Counterproductive Work Behaviour.

Data Collection

Because of the restrictions of COVID-19 pandemic Google Forms was used to collect the data. The form was shared with the participants through Gmail and WhatsApp platform. A consent form was attached to the instruction manual to make the participants aware of their rights while filling out the form. The scales were used with the permission of the respective authors. Upon clarification of the purpose of the study, consent was taken from the participants. This ensured voluntary and informed participation and confidentiality of all the participants. Participants were given clear written instructions for each of the scales used in the battery and asked to respond by selecting the most appropriate option. An email ID hrmpactical@gmail.com was provided for any clarifications and concerns. The participants were briefed about the nature of the study and the instructions were explained thoroughly. Each response was numbered and collected confidentially. Google Sheets was used to collate the data and SPSS was used to conduct statistical operations.

Gender Differences in Work Family Conflict and its Relationship with Work Performance

Scoring

Work-family conflict is a 5 items scale where respondents are asked to answer each item by indicating the extent of their agreement on a 7-point Likert ranging from ‘Very strongly disagree’ to ‘Very strongly agree’. The scores for work-family conflict ranges from 5 to 35, with higher scores indicating higher levels of conflict.

Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) is an 18-item scale where respondents are asked to answer each time by indicating the extent of their agreement on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from ‘Strongly disagree’ to ‘Strongly agree’. A subscale score ranging from 0 to 4 with a high score reflects the height of the dimension.

Variables

The variables chosen for this study are work-family conflict and work performance.

RESULTS

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Work-family Conflict and Work Performance

Variables	1	2
Work-Family Conflict	-	-
Work Performance	-0.423**	-
Mean	20.52	9.31
Standard Deviation	8.16	1.67
Range	30	6.52

**significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 1. represents a significant negative correlation between work-family conflict and work performance ($r = -0.423$).

Table 2. t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Male and Female Indian Employees on Work Performance

	Male	Female	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig value
Task Performance	<i>N</i> = 73 <i>M</i> = 3.36 <i>SD</i> = 0.54	<i>N</i> = 27 <i>M</i> = 2.82 <i>SD</i> = .630	3.90	41.137	.000*
Contextual Performance	<i>N</i> = 73 <i>M</i> = 3.255 <i>SD</i> = 0.620	<i>N</i> = 27 <i>M</i> = 2.715 <i>SD</i> = .632	3.816	45.742	.000*
Counter-productive Performance	<i>N</i> = 73 <i>M</i> = 0.912 <i>SD</i> = 0.927	<i>N</i> = 27 <i>M</i> = 1.303 <i>SD</i> = .805	-1.939	98	.055

* significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed) ** significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Gender Differences in Work Family Conflict and its Relationship with Work Performance

Table 2. represents t-test results for differences in the three subscales of IPWQ between male and female Indian employees. It can be observed from the table that the difference between means of the two groups task performance, contextual performance and counterproductive performance is low. However, the results signify a statistically significant difference between the two groups on two of the three subscales, namely, Task Performance and Contextual Performance.

Table 3. Results of t-test and Descriptive Statistics for Gender Differences in Work-Family Conflict

	Male	Female	t	df	Sig value
Work-family Conflict	N = 73 M = 19.25 SD = 8.14	N = 27 M = 23.96 SD = 7.29	-2.643	98	.01*

**Significant at 0.05 level*

Table 3. represents t-test results for gender difference in work-family conflict among male and female Indian employees. It can be observed from the table that the difference between means of the two groups is high for work-family conflict. The results also signify a statistically significant difference between the two.

DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore gender differences in work-family conflict and work performance, as well as the relationship between work-family conflict and work performance among employees working from home in India. Work-family conflict and work performance are important aspects of human resource management. With a blurring of boundaries between work and family life in remote working conditions, work-family conflict becomes an issue for employees. It is also true that this disturbance in the work-life interface can have negative implications for work. In remote work, when the individual is not able to create a distinction between their work roles and family roles, there are bound to be shortcomings in the way they perform their job duties, that is, their work performance.

To understand this spillover of work-family conflict into work performance, a relationship between the two was analyzed. As seen from Table 1, $r = -0.423$, that is, a significant negative correlation was established between work-family conflict and work performance. This negative correlation value indicates that when work-family conflict increases, the work performance of the individual decreases. This may be so because the employees are not able to concentrate on their work due to familial distractions. Work-family conflict occurs when an individual experiences incompatibility of demands between work and family roles, causing participation in both roles to become more difficult. For example, in remote work individuals can be caught up between choosing to do household chores and attending to work. By affecting employee's productivity, work-family conflict may be reducing work performance. There may also be a negative cycle, where long and strenuous work may lead to conflicts in the familial domain, and in return those conflicts would negatively impact concentration at work. The individuals could also potentially be facing familial demands, such as those of children or old parents, which they may not be able to fulfill due to their work, which in turn would reduce their work performance.

Gender Differences in Work Family Conflict and its Relationship with Work Performance

It can be observed from result table 2 that $t(41.137) = +3.90, p < .05$ for 'task performance'. This means that the difference between both males and females is statistically significant for task performance. A reason for it can be the societal expectations associated with Indian female employees. It is expected that women dutifully complete their household duties before their office work. This span of distraction can cause a difference in the task performance being put out by both the genders. It can be also be seen from table 2 that $t(45.742) = +3.816, p < .05$ for 'contextual performance', which means that there is a significant difference in the performance of males and females and females score higher on the domain of 'contextual performance'. It may be because of what contextual performance entails, that is, activities that contribute to the social and psychological core of the organization. Contextual performance increases the overall well-being of an organisation because of which social networks get strengthened. Such behaviors are well corroborated with females as they tend to be better communicators and are less reluctant to take up roles in helping fellow coworkers (Baker et al., 2015), thus making a considerable difference on this subscale. It can be seen from table 2 $t(98) = -1.939, p > .05$, which indicates that there is no significant difference between males and females in terms of counterproductive work performance. According to Spector & Fox (2002) counterproductive work is the kind of behavior that intentionally harms the organisation or its members. They also argue that those employees who can control factors that induce negative emotional reactions at work are less likely to engage in counterproductive work behaviors. The difference in means between males ($M = .912$) and females ($M = 1.303$) is very low which indicates that neither male nor female Indian employees want to indulge in actions that would cause harm to their organisations.

It can be seen from table 3 that $t(98) = -2.643, p < .05$ therefore, there is a significant difference in work-family conflict between male and female employees working from home. Since the mean value for work-family conflict for women ($M = 23.96$) is higher than for men ($M = 19.25$), it can be inferred that women face higher work-family conflict. Heavy working hours and workload can significantly contribute to work-family conflict. In such cases, maintaining a balance between the two roles may be extremely difficult, especially for Indian women. This is because of the prevalent gender roles in the Indian society. A woman's job is usually not given as much importance as a man's job in a dual earning household. The woman is expected to compromise on her work and focus on her family, which is also one of the biggest constraints in women's employment in paid work in India (Deshpande & Kabeer, 2019). According to Deshpande (2020), during the pandemic in India "most women continued spending roughly 6 hours per day on domestic work, with men spending between half and one-third of that amount". Since women spent more time invested in domestic work as compared to men, they also had less time when compared to men to focus on their job duties, therefore, these factors may have contributed to women experiencing more work-family conflict.

However, there also exists evidence that remote work could be a positive contributor to gender equality. In fact, a study conducted by Deshpande (2020) found that during the early stringent lockdown phase (April 2020) men's contribution to domestic work increased, however it also declined around August 2020). The study also noted that though there was a decline, men did not relapse to contribution of pre-lockdown level. This potentially suggests that during work-from-home Indian men did step up to contributing in domestic work. Others have also found that remote work increases women's ability to engage in paid work (Mathur, 2020; Chung, Birkett, Forbes, & Seo, 2021).

Gender Differences in Work Family Conflict and its Relationship with Work Performance

Organizations can adopt more family-friendly policies in order to make remote work easier for employees. A strategy they can implement is flexitime work schedules. In such a system, employees have greater control over the hours they wish to work. For example, if mothers want to attend to their children after their school time, they can choose to work morning shifts. Compressed work weeks can also be implemented wherein the workers can be assigned a particular number of hours of work that they must complete in a week, but they can choose how many hours a day to work. The results of two meta-analyses (Baltes et al., 1999; Moores, 1990) suggest that compressed schedules generally bring a moderate reduction in absenteeism, a small increase in productivity, a large increase in job satisfaction, and a moderate increase in fatigue. It was also found that when organizations promote work-life balance, then job performance and well-being increase (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012).

This study has found significant results that indicate that in the Indian context, gender differences do exist in work-family conflict. It has also found a significant negative relationship between work-family conflict and work performance, which indicates that as work-family conflict would increase work performance would decrease. Therefore, this study can be used as a reference for future research on gender studies with respect to work-from-home basis. However, one of the shortcomings of the present study was that it only considered work-family conflict, for an overall view family-to-work conflict can also be incorporated in further research. These limitations can be overcome in studies seeking to extend this topic in the Indian context.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that if organisations promote family-friendly policies to decrease work-family conflict, they will in turn help employees increase their work performance. This is because familial spillover into work affects the individual's work performance. Family-friendly policies would also help to reduce the disparity in work-family conflict between the two genders.

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Gender Differences in Work Family Conflict and its Relationship with Work Performance

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Gender Differences in Work Family Conflict and its Relationship with Work Performance

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Gender Differences in Work Family Conflict and its Relationship with Work Performance

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Acknowledgement

The authors appreciate all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process. The authors would like to extend a special appreciation to Professor Varsha Singh (Assistant Professor, Kamala Nehru College, University of Delhi) for her guidance in this study.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Komal D., Aastha G. & Muskan K. (2021). Gender Differences in Work Family Conflict and its Relationship with Work Performance. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 9(3), 2173-2182. DIP:18.01.207.20210903, DOI:10.25215/0903.207