

Research Paper

Impact of Parenting Sense of Competence and Work-Family Conflict on Parental Burnout among Single Parents Working in India

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ABSTRACT

This present study aims to understand the impact of Parenting Sense of Competence (PSOC) and Work-Family Conflict (WFC) on Parental Burnout among Single Parents Working (SPW). As the prevalence of single parents is rising, it is important to understand the work-family dynamics which is crucial to promote well-being. The research employs a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire to collect data. A snowball sampling technique was used to collect data (N=115) from Single Parents Working. The obtained data were analyzed using correlational and multiple-regression analysis. The components of PSOC (Parental Satisfaction and Parental Efficacy) and WFC (Work to Family Conflict and Family to Work Conflict) were taken as possible predictors of Parental Burnout (overall). Results from Correlational analysis revealed a positive correlation between WFC and Parental Burnout whereas a negative correlation between PSOC and Parental Burnout and PSOC and WFC. Furthermore, the results of multiple regression analysis revealed that both the components of PSOC (Parental Satisfaction and Parental Efficacy) had a significant negative impact on Parental Burnout. For WFC, only Family to Work Conflict had a positive influence on Parental Burnout among SPW. These findings provide an understanding of the work and family dynamics of single parents who are employed and manage both work and family responsibilities. Enhancing PSOC through skill-building interventions can help mitigate parental burnout among SPW that can strengthen their mental and overall well-being.

Keywords: Parenting Sense of Competence (PSOC), Work-Family Conflict (WFC), Parental Burnout, Single parents working

In the modern and constantly evolving era, Indian parents must navigate a multifaceted landscape that is shaped by traditional values, evolving socio-economic dynamism and modern life. They try to maintain harmony between work and family which makes them juggle between the demands of responsibilities of each domain. Single parents who are taking responsibility of their child(ren) experience extra pressure on them as they play a dual role in managing both work and family responsibilities, often facing unique challenges that require resilience and adaptability. They face unique challenges such as social taboos and

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Received: March 22, 2025; Revision Received: March 28, 2025; Accepted: March 31, 2025

Impact of Parenting Sense of Competence and Work-Family Conflict on Parental Burnout among Single Parents Working in India

stigmas which include traditional mindsets of viewing single parenthood as unconventional or less capable of providing a stable family environment. Addressing these issues requires a strong and effective support systems that promote their well-being and resilience.

Work-family conflict

Working parents around the globe strive to maintain harmony with professional obligations and parental responsibilities. These responsibilities at work and home can act as a facilitator to improve and grow in life or can act as a hindrance creating stress and imbalance in one's life. The dynamic interplay of both leads to a phenomenon called "Work-Family Conflict". As parents strive to excel in their careers while nurturing their children it becomes a challenge to maintain a balance in both domains of their life. Work-Family Conflict is defined as "*a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role*" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Work-Family Conflict can surface in two directions which are Work to Family Conflict and Family to Work Conflict. These two concepts are distinct but are interrelated with each other (Netemeyer et al., 1996). The pressure arises due to conflict in the role in either of the domains leading to over-involvement in the domain thereby creating an imbalance between work and family domains. Three major conflicts were Time-based conflict (when time demands in one domain interfere with another by preventing the person from participating fully in other domains), Behaviour-based conflict (when behaviour and cognition that are appropriate in one domain prove to be less efficient in other domains) and Spill-over based conflict (emotional aspects such as negative affect that is experienced in one domain pertain to the other domains as well). Various theoretical evidences show that WFC occurs when depletion of resources occurs as it triggers stressors and imbalance in the work-family dynamics (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002). Boundary theory by Clark (2000) showed WFC could be due to segmented boundaries between work and family which is based on the flexibility and permeability of the boundaries.

Parenting sense of competence

Parenting responsibilities require dedication and adaptability to various situations so that working parents can effectively deal with challenges faced by them in both domains. Parental cognitions which include their beliefs, values, perceptions and attitude plays a vital role in parent-child interactions. The concept of PSOC is derived from socio-cognitive perspective in which Bandura had explained self-efficacy as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Based on this, Johnston & Mash (1989) defined PSOC as "*parents' belief to be efficient and have control in one's parents' behaviours that positively influence the child(ren)'s development and thereby experiencing a feeling of satisfaction in one's parenting role.*"

Hence, the PSOC includes two major components which are parental efficacy (belief in their own skills to perform efficiently in the parental role) and parental satisfaction (the feeling of joy or pleasure experienced after completing valuable goals). Studies have shown that strong PSOC can foster positive parent-child relationships because parents choose adaptive parenting styles that involve non-punishing and caretaking behaviour towards the child (Coleman & Karraker, 1998; Ohan et al., 2000). Therefore, parents having high PSOC instil

Impact of Parenting Sense of Competence and Work-Family Conflict on Parental Burnout among Single Parents Working in India

confidence in themselves as a parent who can navigate challenges effectively while nurturing the children's development.

Parental burnout

When an individual is exposed to a high level of WFC it may lead to stress (both job and parental stress). To understand the concept of Parental Burnout it is important to understand the concept of parental stress which occurs when the demands associated with the parenting role exceed the resources available to deal with those demands (Deater-Deckard & Scarr, 1996). Sometimes managing demands of parental role can lead to experience of stress and anxiety by the parents. Continuous exposure to parental stress leads to Parental Burnout which is defined as an “*overwhelming exhaustion linked to one's parent role leading to disconnection from the children emotionally and self-doubt about their own parenting skills and capabilities*” Three major domains of parental burnout are emotional distancing from children, physical and emotional exhaustion in taking care of children, and low personal accomplishment as a parent (Roskam et al., 2017). An exhaustive systematic review of Parental burnout by Ren et al. (2024) showed four major factors that correlate positively or negatively with it. These are namely individual factors (e.g., personality, self-compassion), interpersonal factors (e.g., parent-child relationship), community factors (social support) and cultural factors (policies). Other factors such as demographics (such as gender, income, marital satisfaction, educational level etc.) of the parents also determine the level of Parental Burnout that will be experienced (Vigouroux et al., 2018).

Current Study

The present study aims to understand the impact of WFC and PSOC on Parental Burnout among Single Parents. The concept of “Burnout” has been studied in the work context as job burnout and many policies and helping aid programs have been developed to provide awareness. But, on the contrary, Parental Burnout got the spotlight in recent times and is yet to be explored more. Previous studies have shown how these variables are interrelated but this study aims to identify the impact of components of PSOC and WFC on Parental Burnout among Single Working Parents. The components of PSOC include Parental Satisfaction and Parental Efficacy while the components of WFC include Work to Family conflict and Family to Work Conflict respectively.

Objective

To examine the impact of components of WFC PSOC and PSOC WFC on Parental Burnout among Single Parents Working (SPW).

The following hypotheses were made based on the above objective-

- **H1-** Parental Satisfaction would have a negative impact on Parental Burnout among SPW.
- **H2-**Parental Efficacy would have a negative impact on Parental Burnout among SPW.
- **H3-** Work to Family Conflict Would positively influence Parental Burnout among SPW.
- **H4-** Family to Work Conflict Would positively influence Parental Burnout among SPW.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The data for the study was collected from Single parents (either mother or father) from Delhi- NCR region who were employed and were solely responsible for raising the child/ren by managing the responsibilities of work. The sample includes participants who are divorced/ separated or widowed (lost their spouse). The majority of the single parents were middle-aged (between 36-50 years) who participated in the study.

Eligibility criteria

The individuals participating in the study were either separated/divorced or widowed and were employed along with at least one child dependent on them financially. The study excluded unmarried single parents who have children through surrogacy or by adoption and parents with children (ren) with special needs to maintain relevance within the research scope.

Procedure

The study was conducted on both online and offline platforms using a snowball sampling method. Single Parents who were employed and were solely bearing the responsibilities of work and family were approached. Three standardized measures were used in the study to collect data from the targeted population with detailed instructions provided. Consent was taken from all the participants by ensuring their confidentiality and privacy before providing them with the questionnaire. Participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any point in time. After the data collection, the obtained data was analysed using SPSS software in which a correlational analysis was performed to identify the relationship among the variables. Additionally, multiple regression analysis was performed to determine the impact of Components of PSOC and WFC on Parental Burnout among SPW.

Measures

In the present study following measures were used-

- **Work-Family Conflict Scale:** The Work-Family Conflict Scale was developed by Netemeyer et al., (1996) which encompasses two scales work to family (WFC) and family-to-work (FWC). It is a self-report questionnaire having a total of 10 items with two subscales having 5 items in each scale. Each item is scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1(Strongly agree) to 7 (Strongly Disagree). 5 items of the WFC scale include items like “*the demands of my work interfere with my home and family life*”, “*Due to work-related duties, I have to make changes to my plans for family activities*” whereas the rest 5 items of FWC includes items like “*I have to put off doing things at work because of demands on my time at home*”, “*Family- related strain interferes with my ability to perform job-related duties.*”
- **Parenting Sense of Competence Scale:** The Parenting Sense of Competence (PSOC) scale is a self-report questionnaire which was originally developed by (Gibaud-Wallston & Wandersmann, 1978) having 17 items that aim to measure parental self-esteem. A revised version of the same scale was given by Johnston and Mash (1989) which includes a total of 16 items that are used in the present study. This scale encompasses two subscales, parental efficacy, and parental satisfaction. Each item is scored on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly agree) to 6 (Strongly disagree). Parental Satisfaction includes 9 items such as “*Even though being a parent could be rewarding, I am frustrated now while my child is at his / her present age*”, “*Being a parent makes me tense and anxious*” whereas Parental Efficacy includes 7 items like “*Being a parent is*

Impact of Parenting Sense of Competence and Work-Family Conflict on Parental Burnout among Single Parents Working in India

manageable, and any problems are easily solved.”, “I meet by own personal expectations for expertise in caring for my child”.

- Parental Burnout Assessment:** The Parental Burnout Assessment (PBA) is a self-report measure which was developed by Roskam et al. (2018) having 23 items that measures parental burnout is used in the present study. There is total 4 sub scales, exhaustion in one's parental role, contrast with previous parental self, feelings of being fed up with one's parental role and emotional distancing from one's children. Each item is scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (Never) to 6 (Everyday). Exhaustion in one's parental role subscale includes 9 items like *“I feel completely run down by my role as a parent”*, *“I have zero energy for looking after my child(ren)”*, Contrast with previous parental self includes 6 items like *“I tell myself that I am no longer the parent I used to be”*, *“I am no longer proud of myself as a parent”*, Feelings of being fed up with one's parental role includes 5 items like *“I feel like I can't take any more as a parent”*, *“I feel like I can't cope as a parent”* and Emotional distancing from one's children includes 3 items like *“I do what I am supposed to do for my child(ren), but nothing more”*, *“I am no longer able to show my child(ren) how much I love them.”*

RESULT

Descriptive Analysis

The demographic details of the participants of single parents working (SPW) are provided in the Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic Details of the Participants

Demographics	Single Parents Working N (%) N=115	
Age	20-35	22 (19.1%)
	36-50	79 (68.7%)
	51-65	14 (12.2%)
Gender	Male	26 (22.6%)
	Female	89 (77.4%)
Qualification	10 th /12 th / Diploma	2 (1.7%)
	Graduation	54 (47.0%)
	Post Graduation & above	59 (51.3%)
Occupation	Private	60 (52.2%)
	Government	33 (28.7%)
	Others	22 (19.1%)
Marital Status	Married	0
	Separated	36 (31.3%)
	Divorced	35 (30.4%)
	Death of Spouse	44 (38.3%)
Years of separation	0-5	70 (60.9%)
	6-10	30 (26.1%)
	11 & above	15 (13%)
Socio-economic Status	Middle Class	52 (45.2%)
	Upper-Middle Class	15 (13%)
	Upper Class	48 (41.8%)
Number of Children(s)	1	68 (59.1%)
	2	42 (36.6%)
	3 or more	5 (4.3%)

Impact of Parenting Sense of Competence and Work-Family Conflict on Parental Burnout among Single Parents Working in India

Correlational Analysis

Table 3 gives the results of the correlation analysis among the three variables. Work-Family Conflict and Parental Sense of Competence were significantly negatively correlated ($r = -.383, n = 115, p < .05$). Similarly, Parenting Sense of Competence and Parental Burnout has a significant negative correlation ($r = -.484, n = 115, p < .05$). There was a significant positive correlation between Work-Family Conflict and Parental Burnout ($r = .375, n = 115, p < .05$).

Table 2: Correlational analysis among WFC, PSOC and Parental Burnout

Variable	1	2	3
1 WFC	1		
2 PSOC	-.383*	1	
3 PB	.375*	-.484*	1

Regression Analysis

To test our hypothesis whether there is a significant impact of the components of Parenting Sense of Competence and Work-Family Conflict on Parental Burnout for SPW, Multiple Regression was performed. The data was analyzed using the step-wise method and various significant models that emerged are discussed further. Table 3 revealed significant predictors of Parental Burnout for the SPW using multiple regression analysis. The observations in the table showed that both the components of PSOC i.e. Parental satisfaction and Parental Efficacy were significant predictors that correlated negatively with the outcome variable. Additionally, Family to Work Conflict impacts Parental Burnout and correlates with it positively (Model 3: $F(3,111) = 15.265, p < .05, R \text{ square} = .292$) The emerged model explains 27.3% variance in the outcome variable. Overall, Parental Efficacy was found to be the most significant predictor for the SPW group which is accounting for 15.1% of the total variance in the outcome variable ($B = -.749, SE = .260, \beta = -.256$). Therefore, $H1, H2$ and $H4$ are accepted while $H3$ is rejected.

Table 3: Impact of components of WFC, PSOC on Parental Burnout among Single Parents Working

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	SE	β	B	SE	β	B	SE	β
Parental Satisfaction	-1.164	.253	-.398	-1.084	.243	-.371	-.749	.260	-.256
Parental Efficacy				-1.258	.374	-.280	-1.228	.361	-.273
Family to Work Conflict							.770	.259	.264
F	21.241 (p=.005)			17.263 (p=.001)			15.265 (p=.004)		
R	.398			.485			.540		
R²	.158			.236			.292		
Adjusted R²	.151			.222			.273		
R² change	.158			.077			.056		

Impact of Parenting Sense of Competence and Work-Family Conflict on Parental Burnout among Single Parents Working in India

Model:1: Predictors: (Constant), Parental Satisfaction

Model:2: Predictors: (Constant), Parental Satisfaction, Parental Efficacy

Model:3: Predictors: (Constant), Parental Satisfaction, Parental Efficacy, Family to Work Conflict

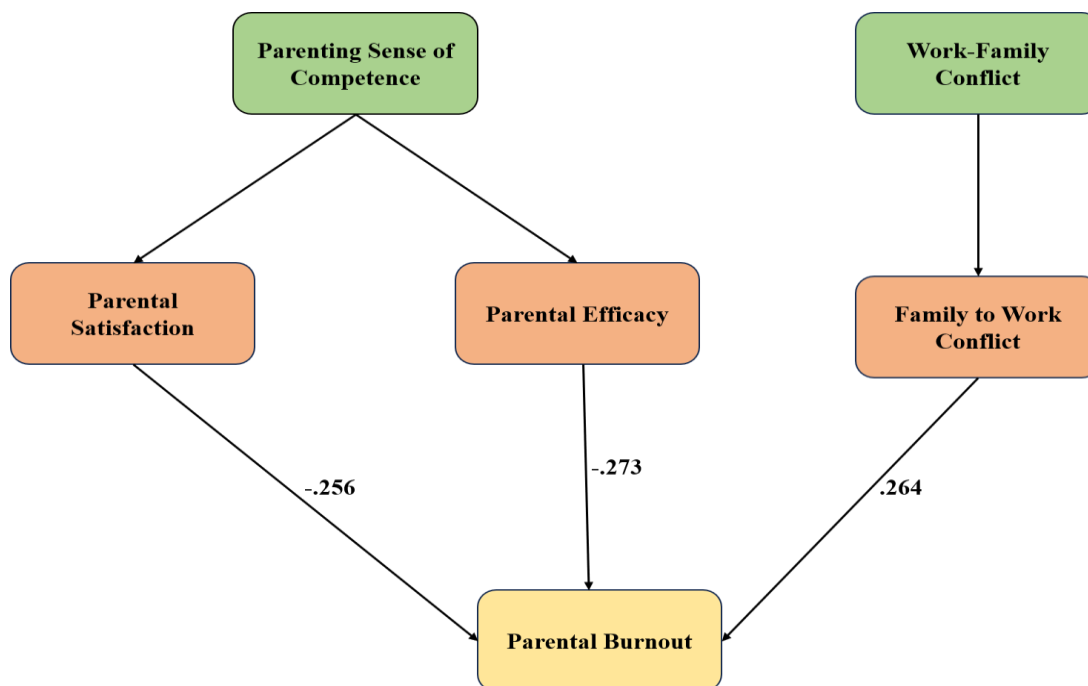


Figure 1: Diagrammatic Representation of Predictors of Parental Burnout for SPW

DISCUSSION

Parenting is a dynamic and unique role for every parent which involves constant adaptation and advancements. It is one of the most rewarding yet challenging roles which requires proper balance and management of resources. The ultimate goal of every parent is to provide support and guidance to their children at every stage of life. During this process, various emotions and thoughts are affected by the perception of the parents. For example, some parents may find immense satisfaction and confidence in their abilities, while others may struggle with self-doubt, stress, and exhaustion. In our study, three significant predictors were identified among SPW: Parental Efficacy, Family to Work Conflict and Parental satisfaction. According to our results both the dimensions of PSOC (Parental Efficacy and Parental Satisfaction) are significant negative predictors of Parental Burnout among Single Parents Working. This indicates that Single Parents having high Parental Efficacy are less prone to experience Parental Burnout. As single parents handle work and family responsibilities, their PSOC levels are crucial in determining their ability to deal with challenges. The obtained results can be explained by saying that single parents with higher Parental Efficacy tend to focus on their strengths and view the challenges as opportunities to grow in life. As single parents are solely responsible for their child (ren) 's future, their perception of parenting plays a crucial role in shaping the child(ren) 's future. This was supported by a study by Jackson & Scheines (2005) which revealed that employment of a single mother impacts the parent-child relationship with the mother's self-efficacy mediating the relationship. Thus, the perception of a parent being efficient in their roles impacts the children's behavioural outcome and reduces the feeling of self-doubt or inadequacy. A study

Impact of Parenting Sense of Competence and Work-Family Conflict on Parental Burnout among Single Parents Working in India

by Maurya et al., (2017) showed that children of Single Parents exhibit more emotional and behavioural problems than children who have both parents with them.

Similarly, for every parent Parental Satisfaction reflects the joy and happiness they derive from their parenting. Especially in the case of Single Parents, Parental Satisfaction becomes an even more profound source of emotional reward that helps them enjoy their parenthood journey and develop resilience against challenges. The sense of accomplishment in the family domain is achieved when they are satisfied with their parenting which motivates them and provides emotional strength to persevere. A systematic review on Parental Efficacy of single parents showed that early attachment styles and setting up appropriate boundaries, by providing balanced guidance and fostering resilience in the children in turn provide a sense of satisfaction in parents (Glatz et al., 2024). Additionally, it was observed that successful parenting gives them a strong sense of achievement, and a feeling of joy that is derived from witnessing positive behaviours in children (Rees et al., 2023). The dynamic interplay between parents' competence and children's behaviour determines the ability to deal with parental stress and their proneness towards experiencing exhaustion and burnout. Hence, both Parental Efficacy and Parental Satisfaction create a positive feedback loop that protects the parents against negative feelings and thoughts.

Therefore, with a positive outlook on their parenting skills and problem-solving abilities, single parents develop resilience which helps them to reduce their focus on overwhelming thoughts and negative emotions like guilt, exhaustion, etc. A study supported the fact that improving the efficacy of single parents improves child(ren)s moral development because single parents having high Parental efficacy can engage in positive parental practices such as active listening, setting clear boundaries and reducing feelings of insecurity (Indreswari et al., 2022).

Family-to-work conflict was the only component of WFC which was significantly predicting Parental Burnout among SPW. A possible reason for this could be that, as sole caregivers, SPW bear the full responsibility of childcare and household management alongside their professional duties. Their child(ren) are dependent on them (emotionally, physically and financially) which adds extra pressure to handle both work and family responsibilities effectively. A research by Maldonado & Nieuwenhuis (2019) showed major challenges faced by Single Parents, revealing that they struggle to balance both work and life which significantly affects their well-being. Moreover, single mothers face gender discrimination, experience poverty and lack effective support systems. Employment plays a crucial role in safeguarding the well-being of single working parents, as it provides financial stability and a sense of self-sufficiency. However, without workplace policies that support work-life balance—such as flexible work hours, remote work opportunities may create conflict between work and family domains for many single parents resulting in experiencing overwhelming stress. Results of a study by Reimann et al., (2020) supported this fact stating single parents face more Family to Work conflict than Work to Family conflict.

Additionally, Family to Work conflict can also be explained by Role theory (Kahn et al., 1964) which explains that sometimes resources in one domain are utilized more by making them less available for other domains and behaviours effective in one domain may not necessarily be effective in other domains. Whenever a parent is facing WFC either or both Work to family conflict or family to work conflict, they tend to feel stressed and sometimes incompetent as a parent which can lead to decreased parental satisfaction. Research by

Impact of Parenting Sense of Competence and Work-Family Conflict on Parental Burnout among Single Parents Working in India

Wang et al. (2024) showed that PSOC mediated between Work-Family Enrichment and Parental Burnout. This indicates that if a parent is satisfied with his/her parenting roles and perceives themselves as competent then they are less likely to experience Family to Work conflict. Therefore, SPW who lack the ability to compartmentalize their roles effectively experience conflict and longer exposure to these conflicts may affect their parenting capabilities resulting in feelings like inadequacy and exhaustion.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the study underscores the dynamic relationship between WFC, PSOC and Parental Burnout among SPW. The correlational analysis confirmed that these variables are correlated with each other. To understand the influence of PSOC and WFC on Parental Burnout, regression analysis was performed. Results revealed that both the components of PSOC (Parental Satisfaction and Parental Efficacy) had a significant negative impact on Parental Burnout. For WFC, only Family to Work Conflict had a positive influence on Parental Burnout among SPW. These findings emphasize the importance of awareness and support programs by developing interventions and policies to foster healthier work-family integration and subjective well-being of single parents in India across diverse familial contexts.

Limitation and future directions

Collecting data from Single Parents was difficult as many participants who were eligible for the study refused to share their opinions/responses for the study. Therefore, the sample size was relatively small and homogenous which further restricts the generalizability of the findings. As every single parent goes through a unique set of challenges, a qualitative approach including interviews and case studies can provide a more comprehensive outlook of the scenario. Additionally, fewer male participants were there in the study leading to gender disparity.

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Impact of Parenting Sense of Competence and Work-Family Conflict on Parental Burnout among Single Parents Working in India

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Impact of Parenting Sense of Competence and Work-Family Conflict on Parental Burnout among Single Parents Working in India

Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Suchitra, T. & Tiwari, A.S. (2025). Impact of Parenting Sense of Competence and Work-Family Conflict on Parental Burnout among Single Parents Working in India. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(1), 2611-2621. DIP:18.01.248.2025 1301, DOI:10.25215/1301.248