

# Incongruence in the Roles Played by Employed Women in Work- Family Interface – An Approach to Role Conflict

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*This article seeks to examine the Incongruence in the various roles played by employed women and its effect on work family interface . Work- life- balance emerged as major issue in impeding the career progression of women. It explores the main barriers to women progression and highlights the long hours and multi- tasking of women associated with her work .*

*Work -family -conflict of women was examined using a piece of action research conducted in computer organization using quantitative and qualitative methods. Questionnaire were sent directly to employed females n=79 .On analysis it was identified that major construct was work to home conflict. A dual approach adopted facilitated a greater understanding of the concept of work- home -conflict that women may use both to develop and to deliver effective interventions and excel in the art of juggling.*

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## Introduction

Family and work are the most important domains of life for most adults. When conflicts between these two domains occur, its consequences are reflected in both organization and on individuals. Employed women play a more dynamic and pivotal role in meeting this challenge, however this requires an understanding of the variables that trigger such conflicts.

Role conflict is the simultaneous occurrence of two or more sets of pressures such that compliance with one makes compliance with the other more difficult (Kahn et al 1964). Role conflict occurs when

an employee is expected as a part of the job to do something that would conflict with other jobs or non-job demands or with his or her personal values. Managing the demands of both work and family is a continuing challenge for employed women.

Relatively sufficient work has gone into the probing of strategies to mitigate Work- Family –Conflict .Available theory is stretched to predict the effectiveness of strategies for reducing Work- Family - Conflict by manipulating roles given the salience of work and family roles.

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The conceptual framework and testable proposition resulting from this study will be of interest to practitioners and academicians alike. Mitigating work family conflict is an important condition for growth of employed women..

Work- family- conflict is defined here as a form of inter- role conflict arising because of pressures emanating from one role are incompatible with those from another role. Researches have identified two domains of work- family conflict, work into family and family into work (Carlson and Frone 2003; Frone, Russell and Cooper 1992) .

Assuming different roles, results in work- family- conflict because time and energy would be shared across spheres of activity. However, work -family interface must be managed to eliminate role conflict.

Married women with young children are increasingly entering the labor market and there is growing concern about the psychological implication of occupying both family and work roles simultaneously. Work place is identified as primary stressor, home in contrast has been viewed as favorable environment for women homemaker, and for women the roles associated with home are wife ,mother, homemaker and on the professional side she plays the role of a boss ,subordinate, and as a colleague both of which is of great concern to women.

## Literature

Conflict was traditionally referred to as work- family- conflict but due to the social limitation associated with the term

family, we use the home label .An imbalance in these domains is termed conflict and this occurs when the demand from one domain interfaces with the other (Frone et al 1992). Conflict worsens when important activities or responsibilities require attention at the same time can lead to increased absenteeism that affects colleagues and employees alike (Frone et al 1992) . At work place people burn out leading to reduced work performance and experience lowered job satisfaction (Rabin et al 1999) . Previous research documents prove that women experience greater conflict between work and family roles than men (Noor 2004; Walter 2004; Russell and Cooper 1992

Recent research has proposed a broader perspective on the work and home balance, which encompasses the positive aspects not just negative effects as, mentioned previously (Grzywac and Marks 2000). Sometimes work may positively spill over to home by developing a sense of competence by developing a career with better physical and mental health . So for women as quality of the work experience increases so feelings of work-home- conflict reduces. (Weasel et al 1995).

The importance of overcoming these challenge is emphasized by Glynne et al 2002 who argue that it is the attitudes, skills and behavior of line managers that ultimately determine the success if flexible working arrangements. Researches have identified two directions of work- family- conflict work into family and family into work (Carlson and Frone 2003 , Russell and Cooper 1992). Work family conflict is positively correlated with role demands which are based on hours worked (Huang

et al 2004) industry requirements and family role demands which depend on the number and age of dependent children (Huang et al 2004) Marital status (Blauberbes and Winkler1998) and relative salience of family (Noor 2004). High growth oriented women employees may find it necessary to invest additional time over and above the higher workload. These longer hours of work are likely to result in increased work- family- conflict . According to Kossek , Noe , and Demarr 1999 and Thoits 1992 ,the way in which roles are merged and integrated can influence both psychological and non-psychological outcomes as much as the number of roles held.

Thus, the absolute level of work-family- conflict can be reduced if work family management manipulates one role. Two critical factors of work -family conflict management strategies are family roles and work place roles (Kossek, Noe, and Demarr 1999) and Lobel 1991 emphasized the congruence of strategies to the context in which they are used .

Studies on employed mothers show that while policies such as flextime and on site child care centers, reduced the time based conflicts ( Goffand 1990) .

This manifests that work at irregular timings prove problematic for women with families (Sinclair1998; Bakker 2000) describes this situation as the double life perspective between career and children whereas women have to deal with an or situation ( career or children ). Women life cycle patterns of work and child bearing are diametrically contrary to the senior

management career life cycle. The career stage when the workload and commitment necessary to succeed are most intensive coincides with peak child rearing years.

This impact on women provides greater likelihood to combine family and work responsibilities. Portions of family role can be delegated by hiring assistance with childcare and household chores or by seeking the help of relatives and friends. Work life balance is not just about women juggling a home and family although that is certainly an important part of it. It is also about adjusting working patterns so that everyone regardless of age ,gender race can find rhythm that enables them more easily to combine work with their other responsibilities or aspirations (Dept of Education and Employment 2000).

### **Labor force participation :**

During this century women have been entering the labor force in large numbers. The labor force participation of single women increased from 44 percent to almost 65 percent, the percentage of married women in the labor force increased from almost 31percent to 59percent. Husband and wife dual earner families made up almost 64 percent of all working families in 1992.

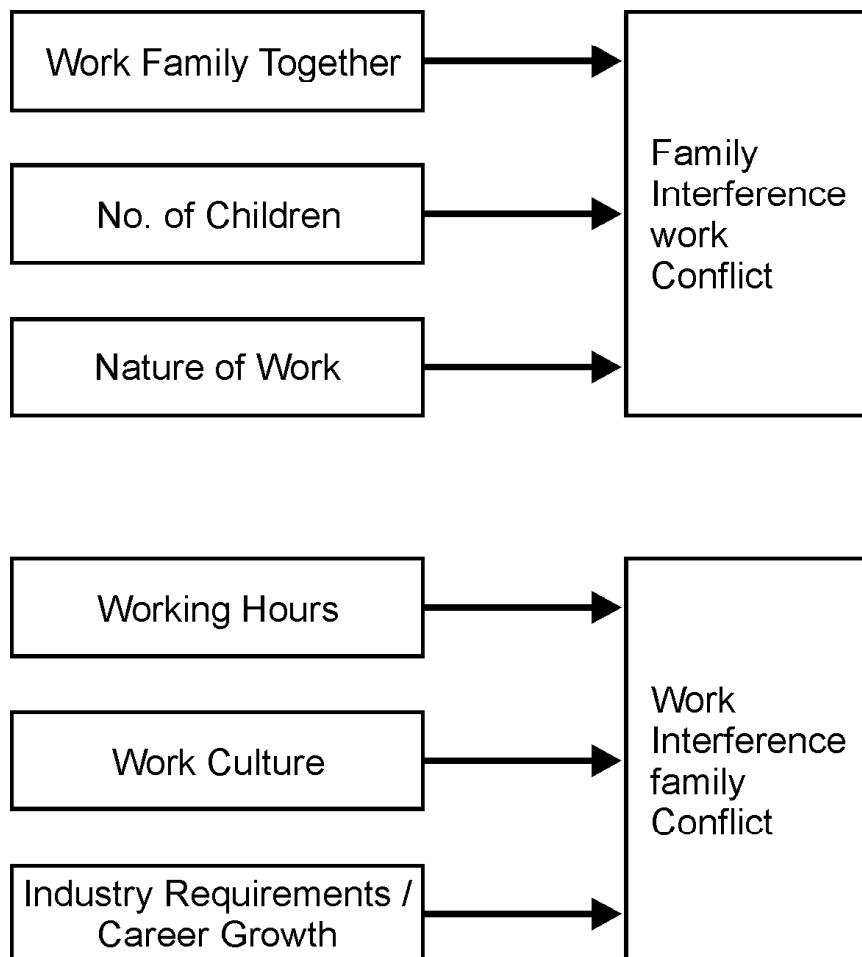
The increase in married women's labor participation has been dramatic and it has affected society particularly because now many women are in the labor force when their children are very young . Obviously because more married women are now in the labor force and the face of

the Indian South family has changed. The number of traditional families with the husband as role provider is decreasing. In 1990, 28 percent of married couple's families with children had both husbands and wives who worked part time.

Very few women quit their job either during or after pregnancy. Women over 25 years were full time workers during their first child birth. Women are returning to

work very soon after the birth of their child. In 2001, 44.5 percent of women had returned to work six months after child birth and 53 percent had by twelve months after child birth. Women are still responsible for providing most of the family care in addition an estimated \$100 billion in earnings are lost annually when trained and experienced women worker are absent from work for more than fifty hours due to their own or family members.

**Fig 1. Variables in Work-Family-Interface**



**Table :1**

**Demographic Data of the Respondents:**

**Categories**

**Age (Percentage)**

31-40	59.4
41-50	25.3
51-60	1.3
Mean	36.95 (SD) (7.46)

**Employment Status**

Full Time	64.6
Part Time	35.4

**Marital Status**

Divorced With Children	12.7
Widowed	1.3
Married With Children	86.0

**Number of children**

One	69.6
Two	27.8
Three	2.6

**Age of the children**

1-6	32.7
7-12	45.9
13-18	14.8
19-24	6.6
25-30	0
31-36	0

Number of hours spent on household work  
-18.3

**Aims and Objectives of the Research**

The aim of the study therefore is to examine the levels of conflict experienced among working women and to explore,

- To check the awareness of Role conflict among working women.
- The main direction of conflict and how they spill over.
- Home and work stressors.
- Who are the significant others contributing to the different conflicts and spill over?
- Solutions to the different conflicts.

**Methods**

The project was conducted among working mothers those who are directly employed. The company has a strong and official commitment to work force welfare. Brief details are provided for background but this paper will maintain a focus on the global issues of conflict among working women but not address the specific issues within the company.

**Process**

This research aims to describe, understand and explain the work family interface among employed women It involves close collaboration between the researcher and the client and the data collection process itself is seen as a form of intervention through which the research participants are expected to generate their own learning.

Quantitative studies have dominated in the study . However to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanism of work home conflict an approach is required which can uncover the intricacies of how conflict arises. Quantitative processes facilitate the possibility of detecting incidence prevalence and secular trends whilst a qualitative approach presents the opportunity to gather data on individual subjective beliefs. A 5-point scale was used for responses. Questionnaire were only circulated to female employees of the organization open ended questions aimed at achieving an in depth understanding of the individuals experiences of work home conflict.

Questions were adopted to facilitate debate and explorations about how conflict arose and were the dominant issues. The collected data were then coded by hand all information was kept confidential.

### **Characteristics of the sample**

The demographic characteristics of the working mothers are summarized in table 1. The majority of the working mothers were between the ages of 31 and 40 (59.4 percent the mean age of the group were 36.95). Majority of the working mothers were full time workers which constituted about 64.6 percent compared to 35.4 percent who worked part time .12.7 percent of working mothers stayed single when 1.3 percent were widowed . 86.0 percent were married and staying together with children . Of the working mothers, the majority had children

between the ages of 7-12 (45.9 percent). Analysis of the demographic issues including working status marital status and children showed significant differences. However part time employees were slightly older than the full timer's, but there were no differences in their work home conflict.

Nearly 86 percent of women reported that they were often tired after work. There were significant differences between mothers and those with no children. Almost majority of the participants stated that they experienced work home conflict. Therefore, we were able to acknowledge their conflict in multi national term . It is difficult to have a family and a career but it is not impossible.

### **Domains of conflict**

Analysis in both phases revealed the different ways in which work and home interacted. Both were underpinned by a strong secure commitment.

Work interfered more homes and with greater impact then vice versa . Home was described in many ways including being an important role that was centered on personal times including partners and children " Work on the other hand was described in terms of its tasks and what it represents work load colleagues were important themes in these description and respondents were unable to identify boundaries of the roles and split over occurred . The combination of stereotypical female roles in the home and additional tasks at work resulted in varying levels of conflict. This study has found that combining their responsibilities

predominantly resulted in time constraints. However rather than just being short supply of time problem were more related to multiple roles and tasks ,working women become better focused to home and work priorities. Negative spill over was triggered by feeling compelled to work for financial reasons which led to a poorer home management. Further discussion revealed that as part time working has become an increasingly common working phenomenon but part time staff may loose opportunity in the work place.

## Analysis & Findings of the study:

Table 2

Working mothers N = 79	Working Hours	Work Culture	Industry Requirements
Mean	6.78	4.34	4.53
SD	3.89	3.17	3.19

### Variables interfering with Work Family conflict

Graph 1 :

Frequency Reponses of respondents on the two different categories

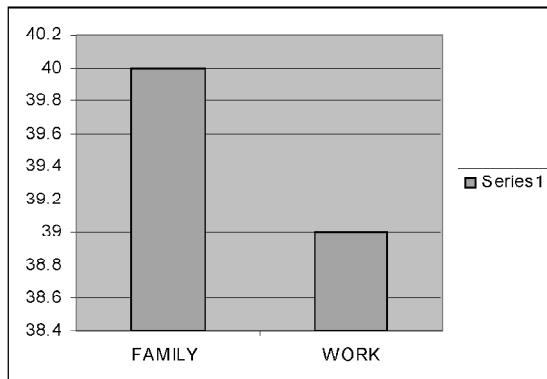
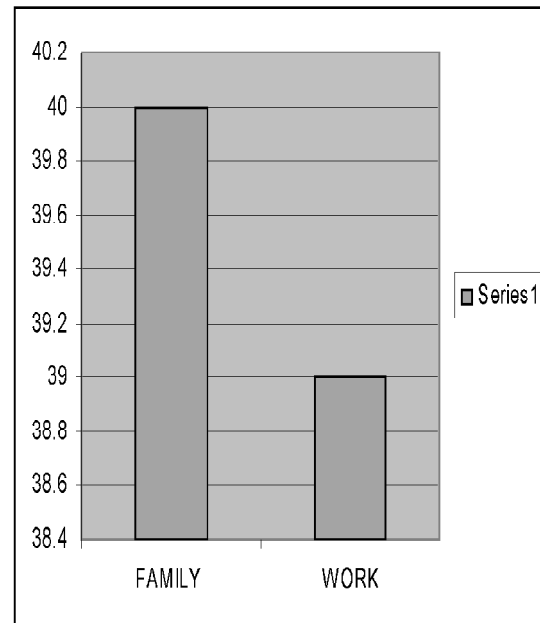
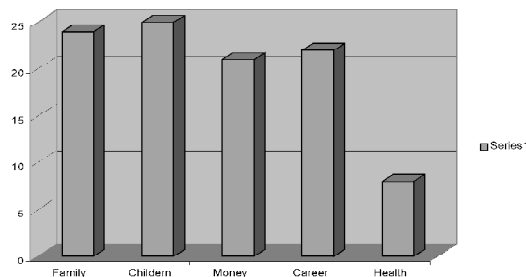


Fig :2



Graph 2 :

The graph below identify the variables as the major determinants of conflict



### Hypothesis testing -Chi Square Test

Null hypothesis framed states that there is no significant difference between the roles played by employed women and the conflicts associated with it.

Alternative hypothesis state that there is significant difference between the roles played by employed women and the conflict associated with the same.

### **Result of the finding**

It was found that Alternative hypothesis has been accepted proving the relation ship between roles and conflict.

### **Correlation Testing**

Correlation on the same grounds proves that there is high correlation between the number of roles by women and the conflict associated with it.

Work family conflict was positively correlated with role demands.

Findings of the study shows that the main source of conflict was job juggling of priorities balancing time between work and family. Guilt at working, lack of social life, not having enough time, childcare and not having any help from family members as been the main source of conflict.

One of the main concerns expressed by the mother in the study was that because they were working they felt that they were failing as a mother another concern was that of having too much to do and not having enough time for themselves feels that women are pulled in so many directions and that there is no time for just one -self .

The greatest concern in relation to being a mother were spending enough time with their children concerns about the

children's health and trying to organize their out of school activities some of the working mothers used the word guilt when referring to their role as a much such as the guilt factor involved in doing a full time job that requires a great deal commitment is stressful because women think she is failing as a mother mainly caused by an over crowded life style too many commitment and a desire to do things properly without enough time to do.

### **Suggested solutions to conflict**

Individuals should become more aware and accept that conflict is a part of life. Achieving balance in both domains was noted and encouragement was taken from how some women had managed and resolved their pressures. This provided message for health professionals who want to address the psychological health issues of women aiming to balance their home lives with the work place culture. Since conflicts develop dynamically organization are challenged to offer programmes that women would want to access to commensurate dynamism.

To reduce work family conflict organization should focus on reducing role conflict and over load. In addition, family supportive programme such as childcare facilities and flexible schedules can help employees balance the competing demands of work and family.

Several mentoring programs can be arranged by organization for women to meet the demands of role conflict.



## Strategies to promote work life balance

Acceptance of the conflicts in the two domains of work and family must become a part of life.

- As one of the recommendation suggested by mothers are, policies such as flexi time, on site childcare crèche to a certain extent reduce the hard -ships of time and energy constraints.
- Corporate need to slowly acknowledge flexi workers as viable employee base.
- Portion of the family roles can be shared by hiring assistance for child care, and house -hold chores or with the help of relatives, friends and other elders in the family.
- Women friendly policies can be framed and practiced in the organization.
- Training programs to support work- life balance and stress management is suggested.
- The culture and attitude of the corporate organization must consider the importance of the domestic life of its employees. The culture of the corporate organization must be such that the family of each employee is considered to be important and policies should be framed such that women must be able to accommodate in the organization, as well fit rightly in the environment.

## Limitations and future direction

The Research study has the limitation although the study on the employees of one organization can allow us to predict for

the respective industry but this cannot be generalized.

The subject of the study relates only to Indian women and various other parameters stick to the Indian context. The analysis is based on the data collected however the genuinity of the responses is not tested and the study is time bound and may not hold true for ever.

## Implication

The employer employee relation ship have started recognizing the importance of quality of work and family lives to help alleviate family interferences with work. With increasing number of women entering the work force and the correspondingly large number of dual earner families organization would undoubtedly benefit from more family friendly policies.

The whole area of work family overlap needs to be more care fully conceptualized and precisely measured. Role attitude and the distribution of responsibility as well as tasks among family members regarding housework, childcare and other related family functions need to be measured.

The socio economic status and the nature of profession also may affect the difference. More research is needed specifying the complex internal relation ship among job condition individual responses and role responsibilities out side the work in the context of stress and stress related ailments. To unravel these

conditions longitudinal data need to be taken.

Another topic for investigation includes measuring the relative importance of socialization and the need to manage work family conflict in promoting techniques in women owned business.

## Conclusion :

The above findings show that work influences both physical and psychological health .For women a broader perspective, relate to the positive and negative aspects of work home experience.

One aspect is women can reduce their conflict levels and they are willing to share their experiences with other women as this may help in managing work home conflict using a paradigm approach the study has also high lighted other ancillary areas such as sound support and elders into the family.

Part time work though appeared to be a solution it has found to increase the pressure and conflictual to work led to negative attitudes on these. To the extent that work and family are inter connected maintaining a harmonious relation ship between the two will benefit both individuals and organization as a whole.

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