

An Empirical Study on the Factors Contributing to Work Family Conflict among Young Employees in the IT Companies

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Abstract

This paper empirically tests the factors generally understood as contributing to the work family conflict of employees in the IT companies through a comparative study of men and women. Since majority of the IT workforce in India are young it is important to understand whether earlier parameters for work life balance are relevant in the present context. The analysis revealed that the work family conflict has a definitive impact in both men and women in the IT companies. However it was found that women suffer more from work family conflict as they have the dual responsibility though the difference is not significant. To analyze the data collected from the IT employees in India we used linear regression model using Excel and SPSS. The analysis revealed that the gender difference do not impact greatly on the work family conflict. This point out to the fact that we need to rethink on the way we understand the concept of work family conflict among the young IT employees.

Contribution to Body of Knowledge

The outcome of this study emphasizes the need for managing work family conflict in the information technology companies. The factors that contribute to work family conflict from gender perspective are clearly brought out methodically.

Keywords: Conflict, Family Demands, Work Demands, Work Family, Work Flexibility, Work Life Balance

1. Introduction

Earlier men used to earn the livelihood while women took care of the household responsibilities. Roles and responsibilities were separated, leaving very little scope for conflicts. But today, women are equally stepping in every employment sphere. Especially in IT sector, proportion of women employees is higher as compared to other employment sectors. This is because IT does not involve physical hard work and provides suitable workplace environment to its employees. Information Technology has provided large scale employment to women. On the other hand it has increased the mental pressure and stress within the employees because the work is not limited to office hours.

They carry their work stress to home. Employees are supposed to meet strict deadlines and have high expectations from their managers. Advancement in telecommunication facilities; has increased the workload of the employees. This has increased the expectations of the managers from the employees. Work-from-home and audio-video conferencing employees have increased pressure on employees. The time spent in work leaves insufficient time for family and vice versa. Current generation has faced highest divorce rates because of these conflicts.

Information Technology is one of the most challenging as well as rewarding fields of employment in the current scenario. Because of the kind of work and the rewards and challenges associated with it, Information

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technology is quite different from other employment sectors. It mostly consists of generation X and generation Y population who like to take up new challenges in their work and in turn have expectations from their employers in terms of growth and increments. They cannot wait to get up the corporate ladder quickly.

Organizations are looking out for the factors which affect the work life balance leading to these conflicts so that they can create a healthy workplace with satisfied employees and less turnover intentions. Managers are extremely concerned to create satisfied employees. Researchers have pointed out that work family conflict plays a major factor for the job satisfaction of the employees. There has been enormous amount of research and discussions going on today in order to find out what creates job satisfaction in the organizations. In order to reduce the turnover intentions of employees, organizations are consistently searching for the elements which lead to job satisfaction. We aim to identify the factors causing work family conflicts and hamper the work life balance of the employees.

Researchers most commonly associate work-life balance to a sense of balance and satisfaction employees experience between their work / professional lives and their personal life¹². We may define the term work as the time and energy people contract to others in expectation for a predefined reward. The term life can be defined as the opportunity offered to the employee to achieve the goals in the given contexts. Likewise the term balance can be understood as the activity of individual to manage possible conflict between different demands of work and other wise on his or her time and energy in a way that satisfies their needs⁶. Work life balance therefore refers to the working arrangement that enables the employee to strike a balance between the job responsibilities and family demands³⁰.

In India the stress related problems have grown phenomenally over the past few years. Increasing number of young people between the age group of 30-45 are falling victims of the stress and related health problems. Through this study we try to understand the young and recent entrants of employees into the IT industry and how they manage their work and life.

The objectives of study are as follows:

1. To understand the phenomenon of work life balance issues among the young IT professionals in India.

2. To identify the factors affecting the work life balance of these professionals.

2. Literature Review

It is generally told that employees in the IT organizations given the nature of work tend to suffer more from work family conflict^{4,18,25}. By doing a survey of the existing literature on the topic of work family conflict a number of factors were identified as contributing to work family conflict such as, role conflict^{5,13}, work demand and family demand³⁰, work flexibility^{17,22}.

2.1 Work Family Conflict

According to Kahn et al.¹⁹, work-family conflict can be defined as incompatibility of the work role pressure and the demands from family domains. Greenhaus & Beutell¹³ defined it as the unsuccessful effort of the employee to fulfill the work role demands which interfere into their ability to fulfill the family demands.

Many have pointed out that WFC occurs when individual perceives that the union of work roles and family roles are not properly aligned and which will result in mutual interferences^{1,9,10,11}. Both genders feel it differently as the nature of work of both are differently and also the societal judging of them too are different for both the genders⁸. However a study by Wang et al.³¹ shows inconsistencies in the role of gender in the work family conflict. More over from the IT industry perspective we were not able to find much reference to the gender dimensions of the work family conflict.

2.1 Work Demands

Greenhouse and Beutell¹³ have identified the time spent at work as the most consistent predictor of work family conflict. There is a direct correlation between the time spend at work and work family conflict. Some other reasons they elaborate include job security, supervisor support, coworker support, work demands or overload, work-role conflict, work-role ambiguity, job dissatisfaction, and extensive use of communication technology that blurs the boundaries between home and work. Individuals do not get adequate amount of time to devote to work and family, which leads to both work and family stress¹³. Many authors have found that working hours impact the WFC^{21,22,20}. In IT industry, the job demands an individual to be flexible

with different tools and technology. With every new tool and technology or change in versions of the existing technologies, individuals need to update themselves, which requires them to put extra effort in order to be compatible in the market. Individuals are often seen engrossed in learning these tools and technologies during their non-working hours, which in turn affects their family life. In order to get financial benefits, employees work overtime and in shifts which again increases work family conflict³. Voydanoff P.,²⁹ in his book argues that the number and scheduling of work hours, job demands and controlling has a positive impact on the work family conflict.

2.3 Family Demands

Family demands involve giving time to family, mostly to children, spouse, and elderly parents. Number of dependent children is major indicator of the level of family demands²⁷. Married employees face higher conflicts as compares to singles and employees having small children at home experience more conflicts than those who do not have kids¹⁵. And parents with small children experience higher conflicts than those with mature children^{25,27,13,14}. Employment of the spouse is one of major factors for increased family demands in employees⁸. According to Keith and Schafer¹⁹ husband's working hours increases the conflicts of female employees. Greenhaus & Kopelman¹⁴, and Lou et al.²² also find that husbands of female managers or professionals experienced higher FWC. This may be presumed that these women spent more time building career and focus less on spouses and other family members.

2.4 Work Flexibility

Demerouti et al.⁷ in their book suggest that work flexibility can be identified in terms of, when to work, where to work and how the communication of the work is done. They also say that it reduces the work family conflict. Allan and Mayer² too argue that work flexibility reduces toe work family conflict. They also argue that flexibility leads to work interfering with family life more than family interfering with work. Byron³ also noted that the term flexi time or work flexibility has resulted in high work family conflict. From the various literatures we can conclude that flexibility can be defined in terms of autonomy of work life and also the allowance of personal space.

3. Methodology of the Study

It is an exploratory study for the purpose of looking into work-life balance concerns in case of IT professionals. For this we used a simple, non-probability sampling which comprises of IT professionals with minimum one year of experience. Respondents in this study are the IT professionals working in medium to large cities in India with their designations as software engineer, business analyst, project managers, testers, etc. For the study, a total of around 122 samples were collected, including approximately 65% as male and 35% as female respondents. Survey data was collected using online Google doc. The questionnaire included questions related to work demands, family demands, work flexibility and work family conflict. The respondents were asked to rate different items using a 5-point likert scale where 1 as strongly disagree to 5 as strongly agree. After collecting the data, it was tabulated and analyzed in SPSS. Data was gathered through online survey. There were 122 respondents with approximate ratio of male to female respondents as 65:35. All the respondents were in the age group of 20-30 with at least 1 year of experience in IT companies. As all the respondents were usually very young and under the age group of 30, age factor was not taken into account for our research analysis. The questionnaire for the survey is given in appendix.

3.1 Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study is restricted to software professionals working in Indian IT companies. The awareness of work life balance policies and perceived importance are studied from the point of view of software professionals only. There were few limitations in the research. Firstly the respondents to the survey were only 122. Higher are the respondents, more accurate are the results obtained from the survey analysis. Second limitation which we came across was the ratio of female to male employees (35:65 in our survey). Equal proportions of male and female respondents can give more accurate results as variables such as work demand; family demands and work flexibility vary with gender. Lastly, as this research is carried out as part of MBA dissertation, time to carry out the research was comparatively less.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framed is defined to validate the objectives of the study and draws heavily from the related previous works. (Figure 1).

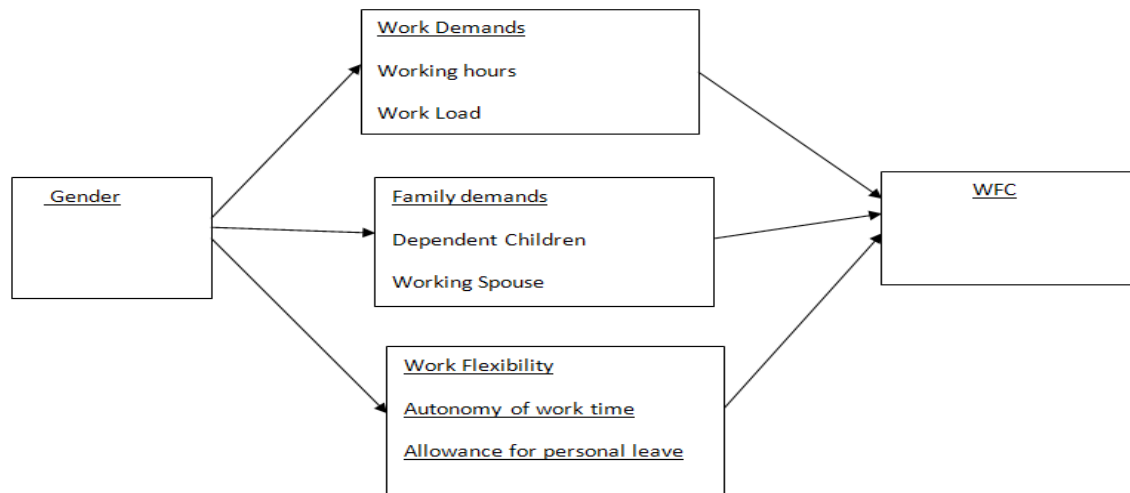


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework for Work Family Conflict (self-compiled).

3.3 Hypothesis

The hypothesis and the variables were derived based on the following model.

Work family conflict occurs when work interferes with family i.e., when work demands are so high that employees find it difficult to give time to family. Work family conflict increases when work demand increases and vice versa. The following hypotheses are proposed.

Hypothesis 1a: Work demand positively impacts on the Work family conflict for female employees.

Hypothesis 1b: Work demand positively impacts on the Work family conflict for male employees.

High family demands lead to work family conflict. Spending much time with family or to meet family demands create pressure on employees where they fall in short of time to meet the demands at work. It not only includes employee's office timings but also the time which employee which he can utilize at home in order to gain some extra work skills. Higher the family demands, more is the work conflict. Thus the following hypotheses are proposed.

Hypothesis 2a: Family demands positively impacts the work family conflict for female employees.

Hypothesis 2b: Family demands positively impacts the work family conflict for male employees.

Work flexibility is important determinant of work family conflicts. Work flexibility consists of two aspects: flex-

ibility in office timings of employees and flexibility in the way employees can work. Micromanagement at workplace leaves very little space for work flexibility. Higher the work flexibility, lesser are the work family conflicts faced by the employees. Hence we propose the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 3a: Work flexibility negatively impacts work family conflicts for female employees.

Hypothesis 3b: Work flexibility negatively impacts work family conflicts for male employees.

4. Analysis of the Study

Systematic data analysis was done throughout the process. It included preparing data for analysis (done in excel), handling of blank responses (done in excel), statistical analysis and hypotheses testing. Prepared data was analyzed in SPSS. In order to test the reliability of the data, Cronbach Alpha test was performed. We have total 14 survey questions with 122 respondents and the Cronbach's Alpha was .848 which indicates very healthy data reliability. Pearson correlation and linear regression analysis was used to analyze the impact of different independent variables on the dependent WFC.

Cronbach alpha test was performed on the data set. Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency. A "high" value of alpha shows how closely related a set of items are as a group in an underlying construct. Cronbach alpha value ranging between 0.7 and 0.9 explains good internal consistency in the response data set. As shown

in the Table 1, Cronbach alpha for our data is .848. This shows that data used for survey has high reliability. In order to ensure more accuracy in the response set, we have used 3-4 questions per variable in the survey and the average of all the questions under the variable is considered as final score of that variable.

Pearson correlation was used to measure the degree of association among the variables. Correlation with double star (**) among the variables in the Table 2 had the strongest relationship between them. For example, in the table correlation between work demand and work family conflict is high, which shows that there is significant impact of work demand on WFC. Similarly, there is significant relationship between work flexibility and WFC. However, the correlation between family demands and WFC is less,

which indicates lesser correlation of family demands on WFC.

We have done hypothesis testing using linear regression testing. We have performed individual regression tests for all the variables. We have assumed significance level for the survey data as 95% which means that alpha value for hypothesis testing will be .05.

Hypothesis 1a: Work demand positively impacts on the Work family conflict for female employees.

The Table 4 for the linear regression ($F(1, 41) = 13.7$, $p=0.001$), shows that the dependent variable "WFC" and the independent variable "Work Demands" are related. The probability of the F statistic ($p=0.001$) was less than or equal to the level of significance (0.05), and thus the hypothesis was rejected. R Square is 25% (Table 3) which indicates that the variable 'work demands' explains for 25% variations of WFC in case of female employees.

Hypothesis 1b: Work demand positively impacts on the Work family conflict for male employees.

The Table 6 for the linear regression ($F(1, 771) = 29.822$, $p=0.000$), shows that the dependent variable "WFC" and the independent variable "Work Demands"

Table 1. Reliability test

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.848	14

Table 2. Pearson Correlation

Correlations

		Work demand	Family Demand	Work Flexibility	WFC
Work demand	Pearson Correlation	1	.276**	.330**	.523**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002	.000	.000
	N	122	122	122	122
Family Demand	Pearson Correlation	.276**	1	.271**	.216*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002		.002	.017
	N	122	122	122	122
Work Flexibility	Pearson Correlation	.330**	.271**	1	.488**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.002		.000
	N	122	122	122	122
WFC	Pearson Correlation	.523**	.216*	.488**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.017	.000	
	N	122	122	122	122

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

are related. The probability of the F statistic ($p=0.000$) was less than or equal to the level of significance (0.05), and thus the hypothesis was rejected. R Square is 28% (Table 5) which indicates that the variable 'work demands' explains for 28% variations of WFC in case of male employees.

Hypothesis 2a: Family demands positively impacts the work family conflict for female employees.

Based on the Table 8 for the linear regression ($F(1, 41) = .040, p=.843$), we find that there was no relationship between the dependent variable "WFC" and the independent variable "Family Demands". There probability here for the F statistic ($p=.843$) is greater than the level of significance (0.05), and thus hypothesis cannot be rejected. R Square is 0.1% (Table 7) which indicates that the variable 'family demands' explains for 0.1% variations of WFC in case of female employees.

Hypothesis 2b: Family demands positively impacts the work family conflict for male employees.

Based on the Table 10 for the linear regression ($F(1, 77) = 7.935, p=0.006$), we find that there was no relationship between the dependent variable "WFC" and the independent variable "Family Demands". There probability here for the F statistic ($p=.006$) is greater than the level of significance (0.05), and thus hypothesis cannot be rejected. R Square is 9.3% (Table 9) which indicates that the variable 'family demands' explains for 9.3% variations of WFC in case of female employees.

Hypothesis 3a: Work flexibility negatively impacts work family conflicts for female employees.

Based on the Table 12 for the linear regression ($F(1, 41) = 5.804, p=.021$), it was found that between the dependent variable "WFC" and the independent variable "Work Flexibility" there was no relationships. We rejected the hypothesis because probability of the F statistic ($p=0.021$) was lesser than the level of significance (0.05). R Square is

Table 3. Model summary of work demands (female employees)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.500 ^a	.250	.232	.819

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work Demands

Table 4. Linear regression for work demands (female employees)

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.191	1	9.191	13.700	.001 ^b
	Residual	27.507	41	.671		
	Total	36.698	42			

a. Dependent Variable: WFC

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work Demands

Table 5. Model summary of work demands (male employees)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.528 ^a	.279	.270	.946

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work demand

Table 6. Linear regression for work demands (male employees)

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	26.674	1	26.674	29.822	.000 ^b
	Residual	68.871	77	.894		
	Total	95.544	78			

a. Dependent Variable: WFC

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work demand

Table 7. Model summary of family demands (female employees)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.031 ^a	.001	-.023	.946

a. Predictors: (Constant), Family Demands

Table 8. Linear regression for family demands (female employees)

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.036	1	.036	.040	.843 ^b
	Residual	36.662	41	.894		
	Total	36.698	42			

a. Dependent Variable: WFC

b. Predictors: (Constant), Family Demands

Flexibility' explains for 12.4% variations of WFC in case of female employees.

Hypothesis 3b: Work flexibility negatively impacts work family conflicts for male employees.

Based on the Table 14 for the linear regression ($F(1, 77) = 29.643$, $p=0.000$), it was found that between the dependent variable "WFC" and the independent variable "Work Flexibility" there was no relationships. We rejected the hypothesis because probability of the F statistic ($p=0.000$) was lesser than the level of significance (0.05). R Square is 27.8% (Table 13) which indicates that the variable 'Work Flexibility' explains for 27.8% variations of WFC in case of female employees.

5. Findings and Discussion

It was found after the analysis that works demands is not a major factor for both men and women in creating WFC. This may be because most of the respondents are young professions with 2 to 3 years of experience. As they are ready to put in the extra hours in their effort to progress in their carrier higher work demands seems not causing any conflict for them. Another reason could be that they do not have much family responsibilities and can put in the extra time and effort for the job. A third reason may be because they want to put in the extra time to learn more skills on the job.

From the results it is evident that family demands strongly impact the WFC in case of female employees. Work Family Conflicts increase with increase in family demands of female employees. Female employees have more household responsibilities as compared to the male. Even the unmarried female employees are more associated in activities like cooking at home, while the case is not true with young and unmarried male employees. Hence, work family conflicts increase with increase in family demand for female employees while male employees are not much impacted with family demands.

Work flexibility can be explained in terms of flexible working timings and degree of freedom provided to the employees in the IT companies. From the results we find that increase in work flexibility does not have much impact on WFC. Our respondents' data set belong to very young age group of less than 30 years. They do not have

many responsibilities at home. Even if organizations are strict about the employees' work timings, employees do not find it hard to follow the timings. At times, bosses are very strict about the work and want to actively engage their employees. As the respondents belong to very young age group, they find it as opportunity to widen their horizon of technical and business skills instead of taking it as strict supervision.

As respondent set is very young, they face less work family conflicts. However, the case may not be true with the employees who are married and above the age group of 30. Employers need to be flexible in their policies, like the office timings. One rule cannot fit for all. The same strict timings may not work for all. From the results we see that in case of female employees, increase in family demands increase WFC. As they have more household responsibilities. Many organizations have already implemented flexible

Table 9. Model summary of family demands (male employees)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.306 ^a	.093	.082	1.061

a. Predictors: (Constant), Family Demand

Table 10. Linear regression for family demands (male employees)

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.926	1	8.926	7.935	.006 ^b
	Residual	86.619	77	1.125		
	Total	95.544	78			

a. Dependent Variable: WFC

b. Predictors: (Constant), Family Demand

Table 11. Model summary of work flexibility (female employees)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.352 ^a	.124	.103	.885

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work Flexibility

Table 12. Linear Regression for work flexibility (female employees)

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.551	1	4.551	5.804	.021 ^b
	Residual	32.147	41	.784		
	Total	36.698	42			

a. Dependent Variable: WFC

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work Flexibility

Table 13. Model summary of work flexibility (male employees)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.527 ^a	.278	.269	.947

a. Predictors: (Constant), Work flexibility

Table 14. Linear regression for work flexibility (male employees)

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	26.558	1	26.558	29.643	.000 ^b
	Residual	68.987	77	.896		
	Total	95.544	78			

a. Dependent Variable: WFC

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work flexibility

policies for females like maternity leave policies and others. However the facilities are not the same in all software companies and these companies need to seriously look into the aspect. Now days IT companies have work from home facilities available to the employees. It can be highly useful for sick employees and employed mothers. As all IT jobs do not require the employees to be at workplace, this can be a win-win situation for these employees and the software companies. Though ambitious majority of the employees in IT companies belong to Gen Y, they do not like to be micromanaged by their bosses. So, employers should provide flexible work place to the employees in order to make them feel at home and being more productive.

6. Conclusions and Future Scope

With the growing scope of software jobs, it has become easy for the employees to switch jobs. As per observation it usually a trend that employees switch their jobs in every two to three years. This had led to an increased concern in the employers to implement employee friendly policies in order to retain the employees and increase productivity. Employers are looking for innovative policies at workplace which can help the employees to manage the work life balance. Much research is being done to find out the factors which cause work family conflict in the employees. This paper will help the IT organizations to find out

the factors which impact work family conflict and thus in turn work life balance of the employees. Based on these results, they can come up with employee friendly policies and also, the organizations can revise their policies in order to provide high employee satisfaction and reduce turnover rate in employees. Organizations need to understand employees' problems in order to achieve successful results.

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