

## **GENDER CONFLICTS: BALANCING THE FAMILY AND THE PROFESSION - A CHALLENGE FOR MARRIED WORKING WOMEN OF SOUTH INDIA**

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### ***Abstract***

**Aims and Objectives:** The current study aimed to identify the presence of Work-Family Conflicts, Marital Conflicts and Accommodation in the reports of married working women. Gender conflicts are present in issues and pressures pertaining to the family, work, marriage and the household. These concepts of Work-Family Conflict (WFC) and accommodation are central to this study.

**Material and Methods:** The sample for this study consisted of married working women of South Indian background. The total sample comprised of 38 married working women. The information was collected by circulating the pre-tested structured google form questionnaire containing questions on work family conflict and marital conflict.

**Outcome:** Correlating the overall responses in terms of majorities for particular questions shows us the phenomena we are inclined to study. We can identify WFC experiences from the majority responses being affirmative for the interference of time spent on work with family or vice versa (64.9%) and the majority responses for ever feeling the need to prioritise work over family in order to prove themselves in a work environment (64.9%). The responses indicating accommodation in spite of discontent is indicated through various responses. An unfavourable division of household labour is indicated by the little household help from spouses (75.7%) and the majority responding with taking full responsibility for the organisation of housework (62.2%). The attitude of the partners themselves are indicated for the spouse by the responses indicating they do not fully realise how difficult the housework can be (67.6%) and for the respondents by the majority being somewhat dissatisfied with the division (62.2%). However, in spite of these responses and their uniformity, a majority has reported no disagreements having ever risen over chores. This correlates to the theory of marital accommodation, by which women do not express their complaints freely and adjust to the gender roles in spite of working full-time or part-time jobs.

**Key words:** *Work Family Conflict, Accommodation, Marital Conflict, Gender Roles*

## Background of the Study

Gender inequality is considered a social phenomenon that has persisted for centuries in which men and women are treated differently or not given equal opportunities. Gender inequality pervades in all aspects of life. Many have studied gender inequality and more specifically, gender inequality and conflicts within the household and as it pertains to men and women in marital relationships.

In the twenty-first century, these gender conflicts have decreased as empowerment and awareness have both risen over the past few decades in particular. However, new circumstances also give way to new and changing issues. One such issue is the relation and intersection of work pressures, family priorities and the ensuing relationship between married partners. These issues can be studied independently and in relation to one another.

Gender roles refer to the allocation of roles, behaviours and duties to individuals on the basis of gender. This is prominent even today and in marriages even if both partners work full-time jobs. Gender roles are often not acknowledged and are assumed automatically.

Work-Family Conflict (WFC) is a concept that surfaced around the 19th century and has been in prominence ever since. It refers to the intersection of work commitments and family commitments, which usually are not compatible with each other and thus create some conflict for the individual. It has two dimensions: when work priorities affect family life and when family priorities affect work life. Usually, any conflict that arises will show both of these dimensions and the individual is forced to choose between them.

This WFC is sometimes accompanied by or results in Marital Conflict (MC) when it causes disagreements between couples who need to divide family duties but have separate work lives. However, these conflicts may be hidden in the form of accommodation, defined by Gillin and Gillin as 'the term used by sociologists to describe a process by which competing and conflicting individuals and groups adjust their relations to each other in order to overcome the challenges which arise in competition or conflict'. Park and Burgess (1921) have noted: 'Accommodation is a natural issue of conflicts disappears as an overt action. Although it remains hidden and may become active again with time.

Gender roles are important for understanding the work-home interface. They are common beliefs that apply to individuals on the basis of their socially recognized sex which are the basis of the division of labor in most societies (Wood and Eagly, 2010). Research has found variances in work-home conflict, ranging from variances in the experience of WFC to the existence of different work and home backgrounds to women and men (Shockley, et al., 2017)

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

These concepts of Work-Family Conflict, gender roles and accommodation are central to this study. That gender conflicts are present in issues and pressures pertaining to the family, work, marriage and the household.

### **Objectives of the study**

- To identify the presence of Work-Family Conflicts, Marital Conflicts and Accommodation in the reports of married working women.
- To analyse the division of household chores between working partners and its effects.

### **Sample for the study**

For the particular study 38 married working women of South Indian background were taken as a sample through random sampling method.

### **Nature of the Research Design**

The nature of the research design adopted for the current study was descriptive in nature.

### **Tool for Data Collection**

Primary data was collected from the respondents using mailing questionnaire as per reviewed literature and available sources by obtaining content validity from the experts.

### **Reliability**

The reliability of the tool was tested for its average inter-item correlation and the number of items. For this study the reliability was measured by using Cronbach Alpha test. The Cronbach Alpha co-efficient, based on primary data was 0.646.

### **Data Process and Analysis**

On each day of data collection, the researcher reviewed the data and checked for its completeness and then the responses were coded and entered into the Microsoft Excel. The entered data was analysed using SPSS package. The statistical analysis comprised of the frequency distribution was done.

**SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS****Table No. 1 Status of Job**

S.No.	Category	Frequency	Percent
1	Fulltime	32	84.2
2	Parttime	6	15.8
<b>Total</b>		38	100.0

**Source: Primary Data**

The analysis of the table shows respondents status of the job. It is revealed that more than eighty percent of the respondents were in full time jobs and less than twenty percent among them were in part time jobs. From the above findings it could be analysed that respondents prefer to work in full-time jobs and they spent most of the time at work places out from their homes that leads to gender specific conflicts.

**Table No. 2. Planning and Organisation of Domestic Work in addition to the Professional Life**

S.No.	Category	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	25	65.8
2	No	13	34.2
<b>Total</b>		38	100.0

**Source: Primary Data**

The above table shows the planning and organization of the household work in addition to the job. It is found that more than sixty five percent of them were of the opinion that they were in position to plan and organize household chores in addition to the job. But women still have a huge role to play in the family such as time management, expectations and general organization change but the role of the woman in the family does not. From the above findings it could be inferred that both husband and wife were in good coordination to balance the professional life and domestic chores.

**Table No. 3. Work done by Spouse**

S.No.	Category	Frequency	Percent
1	Little	29	76.3
2	Divided Equally	5	13.2
3	A lot	4	10.5
<b>Total</b>		38	100.0

**Source: Primary Data**

The analysis of the Table shows that an unfavourable division of household labour was indicated by the little household help from spouses (76.3%). It was obvious that men were giving their full individual attention, energy and time to their careers but were hardly taking any domestic responsibilities. Hence from the above findings it could be inferred that women still have very intensive and time-consuming family roles and that leads to cause role conflict.

**Table No. 4. Does the spouse do Domestic work willingly or forcefully**

S.No.	Category	Frequency	Percent
1	Willingly	15	39.5
2	Must be forced	7	18.4
3	Spouse needs a moretime to convince	16	42.1
<b>Total</b>		38	100.0

**Source: Primary Data**

The above Table shows that it takes long time to convince the spouse for taking the responsibilities of domestic chores (42.1%) and the results shows that nearly twenty percent of the spouses do take part in domestic chores forcefully. To conclude to deal with these conflicts' roles, women have to make choices and create options in order to change the traditional gender roles like less childcare and household responsibilities and situations where women are supposed to take care of household activities after a day at work have to evolve towards greater equality.

**Table No. 5. Still responsible for the Planning and Organisation of household work in addition to professional life**

S.No.	Category	Frequency	Percent
1	I am responsible for all the planning of housework	26	68.4
2	We plan together	12	31.6
<b>Total</b>		38	100.0

**Source: Primary Data**

Nearly seventy percent of the women were responsible for planning and organization of the domestic works in addition to their professional life. It must be understood that to highlight the fact that too much involvement in domestic chores may lead to create problems. Women once arrive home they are not “psychologically available for their family and these family roles are not fulfilled properly. Women today are wondering how they can find the time and the energy to fulfil their promises of work and family while achieving satisfaction and success in all the different facets of their lives”.

**Table No. 6. Spouse does not realise exactly how mentally difficult Domestic work is**

S.No.	Category	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes, Very Strongly	6	15.8
2	Yes, To Some Degree	20	52.6
3	No, I think my spouse understands very well	9	23.7
4	I do not find the housework mentally difficult	3	7.9
<b>Total</b>		38	100.0

**Source: Primary Data**

The findings of the Table reveal that more than fifty per cent of the spouses realized to some degree that how difficult it was for women to manage household responsibilities and professional life. During this reign of technology with its new ways of working (internet, email, conference call, telecommuting) seems too difficult to manage time. Indeed, with these new ways of communication, it is inevitable for people to be connected everywhere at all times. Consequently, the difference between professional life and domestic chores of the family becomes ever more blurred and balancing these both roles may not be fulfilled properly.

**Table No. 7. Satisfied with the way household chores were divided**

S.No.	Category	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	14	36.8
2	No/Not Entirely	24	63.2
<b>Total</b>		38	100.0

**Source: Primary Data**

While asking the opinion about satisfaction with the division of household responsibilities it was found that more than sixty percent of them were not satisfied. It could be analysed that how the persistence of traditional values and gender role stereotypes in the definition of women's roles might be the reason for gender conflicts. Usually, everyday jobs allocated primarily to women are typically of lowered status than to men and it tends to be regarded as less desirable than men's work. Additionally, the responsibilities classified as women's be disposed to be realized as necessary for women and unrealistic for men.

**CONCLUSION**

Domestic chores interaction has remained the attention of a varied importance of the scientific literature during the past decades. However, in this study while correlating the overall responses in terms of majorities for particular questions shows the phenomena the researcher was inclined to study. The researcher could identify WFC experiences from the majority responses being affirmative for the interface of time spent on work with family or vice versa and the majority responses for ever feeling the need to prioritise work over family in order to prove themselves in a work environment. The responses indicating accommodation in spite of discontent is indicated through various responses. An unfavourable division of household labour is indicated by the little household help from spouses and the majority responding with taking full responsibility for the organisation of housework.

The attitude of the partners themselves are indicated for the spouse by the responses indicating they do not fully realise how difficult the housework can be and for the respondents by the majority being somewhat dissatisfied with the division. However, in spite of these responses and their uniformity, a majority has reported no disagreements having ever risen over chores. This correlates to the theory of marital accommodation, by which women do not express their complaints freely and adjust to the gender roles in spite of working full-time or part-time jobs.

WFC affects both health and general life such as work performance and work satisfaction within the organizational context and also increases conflict rates and decreases family satisfaction. However, perception of partner involvement on household chores increases WFC both in men and in women. In addition to this, results of the study showed that when the involvement of women in household chores is high, their levels of work conflict (WC) and family conflict (FC) are similar, i.e., it equally affects both areas. Both their perceptions about involvement in household chores contribute significantly to the perception of WFC their own involvement too contributes significantly to FC, but negatively, that means the more involved their partner is in the domestic chores, the greater their WFC.

Hence, the researcher can conclude that among married working women of South India, there is prevalence of Work-Family Conflicts facilitated by a need to conform to gender roles in the household and to accommodate for the sake of avoiding Marital Conflicts.

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