

WORK-FAMILY INTERFERENCE AND SATISFACTION AMONG INDIAN WOMEN[#]

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The study examined the relationship of work-family interference with two aspects of satisfaction: Work and family. Data were gathered by means of a questionnaire administered to a sample of 300 married Indian working women, who were predominantly Hindus. The women represented a wide variety of occupations and voluntarily participated in the research. Results indicate a negative relationship of role interference with both aspects of satisfaction that is, family and work, regardless of occupational status. Implications of the findings both for researchers and for policy makers are discussed.

Work and family are two important aspects of an individual's life. Their relative influence on each other has been acknowledged and addressed by contemporary professional experts in social and organizational psychology (Aldous, 1969; Cooke & Rousseau, 1984). In understanding work behaviour, a worker has also been viewed as a 'spouse,' 'parent,' and 'member' of one's society. In the context of work and family, satisfaction as a variable has received maximal consideration in social-organizational research. It is generally defined as a subjective experience toward some aspects of life that is manifested in the individual's attitudes and behaviour. It is an attitude which an individual builds after making an overall evaluation of the situation around his or her expectations. The satisfaction dimension of human life is so important that it has been presumed to be associated with almost all other behavior patterns. A review of the literature indicates that some researchers (Mottaz, 1986; Vroom, 1964) believe in the

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global nature of satisfaction, whereas others (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Near, Smith, Rice, & Hunt, 1983) talk of various facets of one's life, the sum-total of which constitute an overall satisfaction.

In recent years, researchers have been concerned with examining the relationship between role interference (i.e., work-family conflict) and various aspects of satisfaction. Interference is viewed as an important outcome of work-family interface. It has been defined "as a form of conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family are mutually incompatible to each other in some respect... participation in the work (or family) role is made more difficult by participation in the family (or work) role" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p.77). Although work-family interference has been extensively studied in the past, the existing literature and empirical data on this problem area have produced mixed results. Whereas some researchers (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1983; Cooke & Rousseau, 1984) have treated it as a unidimensional construct, others (Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991; Gutek, Nakumara, & Nieva, 1981) have conceptualized it as a two-dimensional construct: Work interference with family life/family interference with work.

The present study aims at investigating the work-family interference of married employed women and its relationship to two aspects of satisfaction: Work and family. Past research indicates that role interference has a negative relationship with job satisfaction (Jones & Butler, 1980; Pleck, Staines, & Lang, 1980), and family satisfaction (Pleck et al., 1980; Staines & O'Conner, 1980). In view of these studies, it was hypothesized in the present study that there is a significant negative relationship between role interference and aspects of satisfaction (work and family).

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) have identified three major forms of interrole conflict: Time-based, strain-based, and behaviour-based. The first two seem to be highly interrelated, that is the more the time spent in one domain, more is the strain experienced, and hence greater is the interrole conflict perceived. The degree of conflict that a woman faces in two roles depends upon the extent to which she receives additional help. Evidence (Dancer & Gilbert, 1993; Hoffman, 1989) exists that a woman's occupational status is related to family's socioeconomic status and husband's involvement in the family work. Similarly, the hired help can balance the division of labour in the family and thus can create better perception of fairness in sharing work at home. Thus, compared to those at relative lower status jobs, women at higher status jobs earn more, and thus can compensate for whatever they cannot do and/or get.

This might result into decreased role interference and increased satisfaction. Therefore, on an exploratory basis, it was conjectured that occupational status acts as a moderator of the role interference-satisfaction relationship.

METHOD

Sample

Three hundred female employees working in various organizations in the cities of Lucknow and Kanpur in Northern India participated in the study. They were predominantly Hindus and represented various diversified professions: Scientists, doctors, bank officers, college teachers, engineers, clerks (stenographers and technicians), and school teachers. They were all married, had formal education (i.e., at least two years of college education), had been working for at least one year, had at least one child, and their children were below 18 years of age. Their mean age was 35.03 years (ranging between 25 and 55 years), their average tenure in the organization was 9.54 years, and they were in the present assignment for an average of 6.68 years.

Instruments

Work and Family Satisfaction

A 12-item scale was developed to measure satisfaction with work (6 items) and satisfaction with family (6 43

items). While developing the scale, an attempt was made to word the items in such a way that they were conceptually similar in content to the two aspects of satisfaction. However, the items of one subscale differed from the other only with respect to the domain in question. Thus family satisfaction subscale included such items as "I would describe my family life as very happy", and "I feel that I am just suited for the kind of work required by my family". While framing the work satisfaction subscale items, the word "family" was replaced with the word "career/work". The respondents were asked to indicate their agreement/disagreement with each item on a 7-point scale (1= strongly

disagree, 7 = strongly agree). A test of the construct validity of the scale was made by a varimax rotated principal components analysis. The solution was constrained using the criterion of eigen value greater than 1.00, and meeting the criteria of factor loadings of .40 or greater on the defining component and no cross-loadings greater than .25. In view of these criteria, the analysis was confined to two significant factors. Work satisfaction and family satisfaction, each with four items.

Work-Family Interference

An 8-item scale (Gutek et al., 1991) was employed to assess the work-family interference among the respondents (Sample items: "After work I come home so tired that I cannot do some of the family related things I would like to do", and "On the job I have so much work to do that it takes me away from my personal/family related interests"). Response categories were identical to those of the satisfaction subscales. Although this scale was originally conceived of comprising two dimensions (Gutek et al., 1991), a principal components analysis (with the same solution criteria as those employed in the satisfaction scale) disclosed one single factor (with all the eight items converging), suggesting thereby that role interference is a unidimensional construct (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1983; Holahan & Gilbert, 1979).

Occupational Status

Since the sample was represented by a wide variety of professions, occupational status was treated as a continuous variable on an 8-point scale (1 = clerks; 2 = school teachers; 3 = unclassified officers; 4 = engineers; 5 = bank officers; 6 = doctors; 7 = scientists; 8 = college teachers) on the basis of educational and salary levels.

In addition to the above measures, several single-statement items were used to assess the respondents' personal-demographic characteristics such as age, tenure in the organization, tenure in the present assignment, length of marriage, and number of children. Table 1 provides descriptive statistics and scale characteristics of the variables employed in the study. The analysis reveals that the reliability coefficients of the scales were fairly adequate (in the .70's). It should also be noted that the two dimensions of satisfaction were significantly correlated [$r(298) = .35, p < .01$], yet suggesting a reasonable amount of independence of the subscales.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and zero-order correlations of study variables

Variables	I	II	III	IV
I Family satisfaction	.72			
II Work satisfaction	.35*	.83		
III Role interference	-.15*	-.15*	.77	
IV Status	-.09	.04	.01	+
<i>M</i>	22.88	21.74	28.37	3.64
<i>SD</i>	3.88	4.62	8.67	2.50

Note: Diagonal entries indicate Cronbach's coefficients alpha;

*Single-item measure; * $p < .01$

Procedure

Data were gathered by means of a survey questionnaire. The respondents were personally contacted at their workplace or at their residence and detailed instructions, written and verbal, regarding how to fill-in the questionnaire were given. The completed questionnaires were collected within two days according to the convenience of the respondents. Participation in the research was voluntary, with a complete anonymity of the individual responses guaranteed.

RESULTS

To test a significant negative relationship between role interference and aspects of satisfaction, a stepwise hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed controlling for the effects of personal-demographic variables like age, tenure in the organization, tenure in the present position, number of years married, and number of children. A summary of relationships is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Stepwise hierarchical multiple regression analysis results: Interference-satisfaction relationships controlling for demographics

Variables Set	R^2	R^2 Change	Beta	F
<i>Family satisfaction</i>				
1. Demographics	.02	.02		1.28
2. Role interference	.04	.02	-.15	6.48*
<i>Work satisfaction</i>				
1. Demographics	.05	.05		3.01*
2. Role interference	.07	.02	-.15	6.85*

* $p < .01$

The results support the hypothesis that role interference has a negative impact, explaining a total of 2% of the variance, in each aspect of satisfaction. While demographic variables had no significant impact of family satisfaction, such impact was clearly visible in the case of work satisfaction (5% of the variance). It should be noted that, even after controlling for the effects of personal-demographic variables, role interference did appear as a significant predictor (R^2 Change = .02) of work satisfaction.

The moderating role of occupational status in the role interference-satisfaction relationship was investigated by means of hierarchical multiple regression analysis. While doing so, predictor and moderator variables were first converted to z scores and then an interaction term of interference X status was computed. In the analysis, each dimension of satisfaction was regressed hierarchically on role interference, status, and their interaction term, in that order. This analysis is presented in Table 3. The analysis clearly suggests that the independent effect of role interference is apparent (2% of the variance) for both aspects of satisfaction: Satisfaction with work, and satisfaction with family.

Neither the main effect of status nor its interaction with role interference was found to touch its significance level.

Table 3

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis results: Interference X status interaction and satisfaction

Variable	Family Satisfaction			Work Satisfaction		
	R^2	R^2 Change	Beta	R^2	R^2 Change	Beta
Interference (A)	.02	.02	-.15*	.02	.02	-.15*
Status (B)	.03	.01	-.09	.02	.00	.04
A X B	.03	.00	-.06	.03	.01	.07

* $p < .01$

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study support the hypothesis that there exists a negative relationship between work-family interference and satisfaction. Both the aspects of satisfaction i.e., work and family appear to be associated to the same degree with role interference. The results can better be understood in terms of "scarcity hypothesis" (Marks, 1977), which suggests that there is a finite stock of physical and psychological energy in human beings. Having multiple and diversified roles, an individual is drained out of energy which causes stress and conflict, thus lowering the level of satisfaction. This argument seems particularly plausible in the case of women who combine the two roles of work and family together. These women have simultaneous roles in contrast to dual-earner men who have sequential duties. Thus women in two roles can neither evade from their socially determined role of homemaker, nor can they disregard their investment in training. This increases the likelihood of work-family interference for them. It should be noted that in a correlational study such as this, it is only indirectly implied that role interference leads to dissatisfaction. The possibility of reverse causality cannot be ruled out. Only experimental research can tell us about a definite causality.

The conjecture that occupational status acts as a moderator of the interference-satisfaction relationship did not receive support from the present data. Past research (Lawrence, 1961) suggests that satisfaction

and one's income do not correlate in a sample of working women. There is a possibility that factors like family structure (joint or nuclear), husband-wife interactions, and amount of actual additional help might influence this relationship. A controlled analysis of these factors in the assessment of the effect of status as a moderator would probably bring more positive results. Future researchers should explore this possibility as an interesting and challenging research question.

The study has some obvious implications for employees and policy makers of women organizations. Employers must make efforts to understand the correlates of satisfaction in order to provide better coping strategies and fringe benefits to their employees. Such intervention programs might increase work efficiency as well as can improve well-being and the family life of working women.

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