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## **A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON THE SOCIAL SUPPORT AND WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AMONG WORKING WOMEN**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The present empirical investigation is an attempt to explore social support and work-family conflict among working women. The sample of the research consists of 150 working women randomly selected in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The tools used for data collection were (1) Supervisors Support by Clark (2001) (2) Colleagues support by O'Driscoll (2000). Both tools were used to assess the level of social support. Work-Family Conflict Scale was developed by Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrin (1996). Standardized scale is selected after a comprehensive review of related literature. The researchers contacted the informants individually and data was obtained through survey method. The Mean, Standard Deviation, ANOVA, and correlation were the statistical analysis done. Results indicate that there is a significant difference in the social support (Supervisors, Colleagues) and work family conflict. In this research, it is also found that a high positive correlation exists between social support (Supervisors, Colleagues) and work family conflict among working women.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Many people in our life can provide social support. These can include our parents, spouse or partner, children, siblings, other family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors, health

professionals and sometimes even strangers. Different people in our life may provide different kinds of support, so it's unlikely that one person can provide all the support we need. Social support has become a major topic for social psychological investigation (Sarason, Sarason, & Gurung, 1997). Defined as 'social interactions or relationships that provide individuals with actual assistance or with a feeling of attachment to a person or group that is perceived as loving or caring' (Hobfoll & Stokes, 1988, p. 499). Support can come in many different forms. There are four main types of social support Emotional support: Providing emotional support can let the individual know that he or she is valued Slevin, M.L et al (1996). It is also referred to as "esteem support" or "appraisal support." Wills, T.A. (1991) Tangible support is also called instrumental support. This form of social support encompasses the concrete, direct ways people assist others Langford, C.P.H et al. (1997). Informational support is the provision of advice, guidance, suggestions, or useful information to someone, Companionship support is the type of support that gives someone a sense of social belonging (and is also called belonging) Wills, T.A. (1991). Researchers also commonly make a distinction between perceived and received support. Taylor, S.E. (2011) and Barrera, M (1986) Perceived support refers to a recipient's subjective judgment that providers will offer (or have offered) effective help during times of need. Received support (also called enacted support) refers to specific supportive actions (e.g., advice or reassurance) offered by providers during times of need. Gurung, R.A.R. (2006).

At present, work-family conflict is an intimidating crisis for several countries all over the globe. Work-family conflict is mostly understood from a demands perspective. Generally it is accepted that extensive demands arising from the work and family environments can create elevated levels of work-family conflict for many employees. Endorsing numerous roles can augment the interpersonal and interpersonal conflict experienced by individuals who jointly sustain organizational and personal responsibilities. Usually work-family conflict occurs when participation in the work role and the family role is incompatible in certain aspect. In addition, work-family conflict is bi-dimensional, explicitly, 'work-to-family conflict' were the work demands interferes with family duties and 'family-to-work conflict,' in which the family responsibilities impedes the demands of work.

## **SOCIAL SUPPORT AND WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT**

Social support from work and family domain is an important element that can assist an individual to reduce work-family conflict between work and family life. Social support can reduce conflict in workplace or family life and can simultaneously lead to enrichment in both work and family domains. Early research showed that co-workers support can enhance psychological well-being (1997), reduce role conflict, and enhance positive spill over from work to family (2004). As for supervisor support, it has been suggested by the researcher that employee who received support from the supervisor may experience lower work-family conflict (2000) and lower level of stress at work (1997), which can contribute to successful balance between work and family. Instrumental and emotional supports provide energy or positive affect for individuals to transfer to work. It can be expected that employees who received greater instrumental support experience greater work-family enrichment.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Work and family interaction is an important area of research that has been conducted by many researchers. Negative interaction between work and family will give negative consequences, such as absenteeism, turnover intention, burnout, stress, and others. Therefore, it is important for employees to balance between work and family that can lead to positive work and family-related outcomes, such as employee well-being, satisfaction in both work and family, and also organizational commitment. Social support has been seen as an important factor to assist employees with their role at work and at home. This will reduce work-family conflict among the employees and achieve positive level of inter-role between work and family. Social support can be seen as a social resource that has been found to be associated with reduced work-family conflict Erdwins et al. (2001). A study by Karatepe and Kilic (2009) found that supervisor support reduced work-family conflict among front line employees in Northern Cyprus Hotel and this was confirmed by empirical data. This finding was supported by Frye and Breugh (2004), which indicated that the supervisor support gave important consequences to work-family conflict and reduced work-family conflict.

## METHODOLOGY

### Sample

The sample for this study comprises of 150 working women randomly selected in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

### Tools Used

In this research to assess the level of social support in difference way (1) Supervisor support and (2) Colleagues support and (3) Work-Family Conflict Scale. Standardized scales selected after a comprehensive review of related literature.

### Social Support

(1) **Supervisory Support** Three items developed by Clark (2001) assessed supervisory support. A sample item is “My supervisor listens when I talk about my family”. Five-point rating scales were used (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). High scores represent a more favorable perception of supervisory support.

(2) **Colleague Support** from other people was assessed by four items developed by O’Driscoll (2000). A 6-point frequency response scale was used, where (1 = never and 6 = all the time). This scale consists of four items and has a maximum score of 24 and minimum score of 4. A higher score indicates higher levels of co-worker support.

(3) **The work-family conflict scale** assesses the extent of work-family conflict experienced by individuals. This scale is a reliable and valid instrument developed by Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian (113) that mainly includes the time and strain based components of conflict. This is a 5-items tool that measures work-to-family conflict using a 7-point Likert scale. In this scale the participants are asked to indicate to their degree or extent of agreement with each item. Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

## Data Collection

The primary method of data collection was adopted in this study. The informants were contacted individually by the researchers. The confidentiality of the responses was assured by the investigators. The obtained responses were scored and statistically analyzed.

## Statistical analysis

The statistical package for social science (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. The Mean, Standard Deviation, ANOVA, and Correlation were the statistical analysis done.

## RESULTS

**Table I : Showing the Mean, SD, and t-value for social support and Work family Conflict of the working women on the basis of Type of Family.**

Variables	Type of Family	N	Mean	S.D	t-value
<b><u>Social Support</u></b> Supervisors support	Nuclear Family	16	5.44	2.128	3.39
	Joint Family	84	7.75	4.062	
<b>Colleagues support</b>	Nuclear Family	16	9.24	4.312	2.31
	Joint Family	84	12.00	4.747	
<b>Work Family Conflict</b>	Nuclear Family	16	25.48	9.294	2.21
	Joint Family	86	31.87	14.999	

From the analysis of results summarized in table I it is observed that the t-value ( $t=3.39$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) for Type of Family pertaining to their Supervisors support is significant difference. The significant mean differences in Supervisors support in Joint family (7.75) and Nuclear family (5.44) indicates that Supervisors support was more among those living with Joint family than those living in Nuclear family.

Same table t-value ( $t=2.31$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) for Type of Family pertaining to their Colleagues Support is significant difference. The significant mean differences in Colleagues Support in Joint family (12.00) and Nuclear family (9.24) indicates that Colleagues was more among those living with Joint family than those living in Nuclear family.

Same table also indicates the ( $t=2.21$ ,  $p< 0.05$ ) of Work Family Conflict was significantly influenced by the Type of Family. The significant mean differences in work family conflict for Joint family (31.87) and Nuclear family (25.48) indicates that work family conflict was more among those living with Joint family than those living in Nuclear family.

**Table II: Showing the Mean, SD, and F-ratio for social support and work-family Conflict of the working women on the basis of Marital Status.**

Variables	Marital status	N	Mean	S.D	F
<b><u>Social Support</u></b>  <b>Supervisors Support</b>	Married	84	35.36	28.01	6.31
	Unmarried	14	21.95	9.89	
	Divorced	2	13.00	1.41	
	Total	100	23.65	14.46	
<b>Colleagues Support</b>	Married	84	12.29	4.17	6.60
	Unmarried	14	8.78	4.28	
	Divorced	2	4.50	.707	
	Total	100	8.67	4.48	
<b>Work Family Conflict</b>	Married	84	58.29	26.13	2.72
	Unmarried	14	46.07	23.59	
	Divorced	2	22.00	5.65	
	Total	100	47.30	24.25	

From the above table II, it is observed that the 'F'- ratio ( $F=6.31$ ,  $p< 0.05$ ) for Marital Status pertaining to their Supervisors Support is significant difference. The significant mean differences in Supervisors Support in Married employees (35.36) seem to have more Supervisors Support than their counterparts of Unmarried employees (21.95) and Divorced

employees (13.00) indicates that Supervisors Support was more among those Married employees than those Unmarried and Divorced Employees.

From the above table II, it is observed that the ‘F’- ratio ( $F=6.60, p < 0.05$ ) for Marital Status pertaining to their Colleagues Support is significant difference. The significant mean differences in Colleagues Support in Married employees (12.29) seem to have more Colleagues Support than their counterparts of Unmarried (8.78) and Divorced employees (8.67) indicates that Colleagues Support was more among those Married employees than those Unmarried and Divorced Employees.

Same table II also indicates the ( $F=2.72, p < 0.05$ ) of Work Family Conflict was significantly influenced by the Marital Status. The significant mean differences in work family conflict for Married employees (58.29) seem to have more work family Conflict than their counterparts of Unmarried employees (46.07) and Divorced employees (22.00) indicates that work family Conflict was more among those Married employees than those Unmarried and Divorced employee.

**Table VI showing the correlation between Social Support and Work-Family Conflict Among working women .**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Supervisor support</b>	<b>Colleagues support</b>	<b>Work-family Conflict</b>
<b>Supervisor support</b>			
<b>Colleagues support</b>	.318**		
<b>Work-family Conflict</b>	.310**	.264**	

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

In this study the correlation co-efficient were worked out in order to understand the relationship of supervisors support and colleagues support. It is evident that supervisors support is positively and significantly correlated with colleagues support

( $r=.318$ ,  $p< 0.01$ ). It is evident that supervisors support is positively and significantly correlated with work-family Conflict ( $r=.310$ ,  $p< 0.01$ ). Same table also explore that that colleagues support is positively and significantly correlated with work-family conflict ( $r=.264$ ,  $p< 0.01$ ). And it is proved that supervisors support is positively and significantly correlated with work-family conflict ( $r=.310$ ,  $p< 0.01$ ).

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings of the present study have expanded the results substantiated the psychometric properties of the measure of social-support, work-family conflict. Second, the data indicated that social support is directly influenced and has significant difference on conflict. The result is congruent with the earlier studies on social support may lead to work-family enrichment (Erdwins et al. (2001)). Another study was also conducted by Bhargava and Baral (2009) which found that social support was a predictor to work-family conflict. The result provides empirical support for a positive relationship between social support and work-family enrichment. Social support has been seen as an important factor to assist employees with their role at work and at home. This will reduce work-family conflict among the employees and achieve positive level of inter-role between work and family. The present study provides indications that an individual with higher levels of Social Support are more likely to experience higher level of Work family enrichment. Successful employees in managing multiple roles between these two important domains contribute to affective organizational commitment and lower the risk of turnover intention among the employees in a particular organization.

## **CONCLUSION**

The present empirical investigation is an attempt to explore Social Support and Work Family conflict among working women. The study results also revealed that social support and work family conflict have a significant and positive influence on employees.

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