# A Study on Work Related Stress and Work Family Issues Experienced by Women Software Professionals in Chennai

Dr. C. Madhavi [1] and B. Vimala [2]

[1] Faculty Members, Dept. of Business Administration, Annamalai University, India.

**Abstract.** This article examines the impact of work family issue over the role stress dimensions. The study was conducted among the women software professional at Chennai. 500 women software professionals from the leading software concerns were selected for the study. The result of the study reveals that the work family issues significantly influence all the dimensions of role stress except RE, PI, SRD, and RIN.

**Key Words:** Work family issues, Role stress, Software Professionals, IRD, REC, RS, RE, RO, RI, PI, SRD, RA and RIN.

## 1. Introduction

Stress is a negative consequence of modern living. People are stressed due to overwork, job insecurity, information overload, and the increasing pace of life. These events produce distress: the degree of physiological, psychological and behavioural deviation from healthy functioning (J.C. Quick, J.D. Quick, D.L. Nelson and J.J. Hurrell, 1997).

In the modern world, material goods and standard of living determine societal status to a greater extent than family, education etc. Gone are the days when aristocracy was based on birth in a certain family, and such aristocracy was self-fulfilling. In such a culture, dual career couples definitely have an edge over those in whom the male is the only earning member. Higher income means a better quality of psychological and physical fulfillment of career aspirations of both spouses. However this does not come without any cost. Dual career families face considerable stress and strain. One problem is related to their respective locations. Always priority is given to the husband's career and the wife's career is accorded only secondary status. Another problem is decision regarding having a child. Many couples including women believe that child rearing would increase their domestic responsibilities and act as hindrance to their work life. These problems become even more crucial if the family is a nuclear one.

## 2. Purpose of the Study

According to Lai (1995), work and family are the two major role domains for the adults. Studies have generally shown that stressors embedded in work or family role are detrimental to psychological wellbeing. The permeable boundaries between work and family roles induce stress spillover from one domain to the other. There are three ways in which role can incompatible with each other; time spent in one role may leave little time for other role, strain within one role may spill over to other role, and behaviour appropriate for one role may be dysfunctional for the other. One of the major reasons for such role conflict is that though the number of dual career families has increased societal sex role standards have failed to change at the same pace. Husbands may feel that it is against their masculinity to perform home making. Mothers fell guilty when they are unable to take care of their family responsibilities. Despite most men and women today are not clear about the societal roles and the concept of sharing in the family system. So life in such a situation results in work family issues which ultimately lead to stress.

# 3. Objectives

    i.       To classify the respondents based on the work family issue reported by them.

    ii.      To find out the relationship between work family issue and the role stress dimensions.

# 4. Methods

The study measures organizational role stress and work family issues faced by the respondents. This is a descriptive research because it aims at describing the relationship between ORS and work family issue.

## 4.1. Organizational Role Stress

The dimension of ORS are Inter-Role Distance (IRD), Role Stagnation (RS), Role Expectation Conflict (REC), Role Erosion (RE), Role Overload (RO), Role Isolation (RI), Personal Inadequacy (PI), Self-Role Distance (SRD), Role Ambiguity (RA), Resource Inadequacy (RD). To measure the ORS, the tool developed by Udai Pareek (1982) was used. In the work family conflict scale, developed by Greenhaus and Cornelly (1981) was adopted.

## 4.2. Sampling Technique

In this study, the researcher adopted the convenient sampling technique for selecting the sample. There will not be bias in the responses in using the convenient sampling since the respondents voluntarily participate in the survey. As the respondents show interest to fill up the questionnaires, the error will also be minimal. The sample size is 500. The respondents were women software professions from leading software concerns in Chennai. Based on the pilot study the sample size was justified as 485.

# 5. Findings and Discussions

To classify the respondents into employees with less work family issues and more work family issues, two-step clusters are applied. Based on the frequency of the level of agreement of the respondents for the 24 items of work family issues the respondents are classified into employees with less work-family issues and the employees with more work-family issues. It has been found that the item number 12 contributes much for classifying the employees into two clusters i.e. employees with less work family issues and employees with more work family issues. It is seen that the 63.8 percent of the respondents have less work-family issues and 36.2 per cent of the respondents have more work-family issues.

**Table – 1** shows the association between work-family issues and demographic factors. The chi-square result shows that there is association between the work-family issues and the age of the employees since the P-value 0.050 is significant at 5 per cent level.

It is inferred that employees in the age group 25-35 years are found to have more work family issues than other age groups. The more work-family issues among the middle aged women may be due to more commitment in the organizational roles and family roles. They might have got promotion in the office, which is associated with more responsibility and complexity. And in the family they might have responsibilities like children's higher education. So, all these lead to the imbalance in their work and family.

There is no association between work-family issues and demographic factors such as education designation, experience, family type, income, distance travelled and mode of transport.

The results indicate that there is association between work – family issues and the number of family members of the employees because the chi-square value is 5.065 and the P-value is 0.050. Majority of the employees with less family members have reported more work-family issues than others.

This is because there is no sharing of responsibility. When more adults are available; sharing of family responsibilities is possible. So the work-family issues are observed to be at higher end for the respondents in small family.

The result indicates that there is association between the work family issues and the relaxation method adopted by employees because the chi-square value is found to be 20.593 and the P-value is 0.001. Women who follow religious activity are found to report more work-family issues than others.

So, it is found that there is no association between the education, designation, experience, family type, income, distance traveled and mode of transport used and the work-family issues. There is association only between age, relaxation methods, marital status, and number of family members of the employees and the work-family issues experienced by employees.

**Table – 2** depicts the influence of work-family issues over ten dimensions of stress. The mean value of stress ranges from 7.77 to 8.88 for respondents with less work family issues, and the mean value ranges from 8.33 to 9.51 for employees with more work-family issues.

The result indicates that there is variation in IRD experienced by employees based on work-family issues. It is observed more the work-family issue, higher the IRD. When the work-family issue is more, there is conflict between work and family roles. That naturally keeps them at a distance from organizational roles.

RS is high among employees with more-work family issues with a mean value of 9.51. The result indicates that there is variation in the RS experienced by employees based on work-family issues. It is understandable that employees with more work-family issues have higher level of RS than employees with less work family issues. Role stagnation is feeling of being stuck in the same role. This is obviously true with software women, because, the family commitments and other responsibilities may make them to be stagnated with present role.

REC experienced by the employees is found to vary based on work-family issues. Employees with more work-family issues have a higher level of REC. When there is more work-family issues, they may not be able to concentrate in their work. Their attention is diverted more towards family issues than the work. This leads to stress and they are not able to do what is expected out of them.

RE is high among employees with more work-family issues with a mean value of 9.47, and low among employees with less work-family issues with a mean value of 8.88.

There is no variation in RE, PI, SRD and RIN experienced by employees based on work-family issues.

RO is high among the employees with more work-family issues. When there are more work-family issues, they spend their productive time in resolving the family issues. Because of this they may not be able to complete their work within the time. So the workload is increased. It is rapidly on the increase when more and more is demanded on the employees. It occurs when a person is pressed for time or feels that he is unable to handle the total quantum of work expected from him. Higher role overload is part and parcel of the software professionals. It has two aspects-quantitative and qualitative (Moshin Aziz, 2004). The ever-increasing technological complexity requires the users to change with it. This again increases their workload, since they have to meet out the quality and quantity expected out of them within the time frame.

RI is high among employees with more work-family issues with a mean value of 8.89. It is inferred from the result that the RI experienced by employees varies significantly. The RI is found to be at higher level among employees with more work-family issues. Employees with more work-family issues may not have social support and family support. This increases their stress level due to role isolation.

Higher incidences of role ambiguity are seen among women employees with work-family issues with a mean value of 8.60 and low among the employees with less work-family issues with a mean value of 7.78. From the result, it is inferred that there is significant variation in the role ambiguity experienced by the employees. RA is found to be at higher level among women with more work family issues. This results in when a person is not clear about the various expectations that people have from her. This arises due to lack of orientation to women when she is supposed to occupy a new role in the organization.

# 6. Suggestions

Since 36.2 percent of respondents expressed high work-family issues is an alarming signal. Software industry needs to take steps to balance work and family. If not, this will affect the growth of the industry as well as the nation economy in the long run. In this industry career oriented women have emerged in a mass and even at young age. The two major ORS dimensions are reflected due to work-family issues viz., REC and RI. These problems can be due to psychological state. Overcoming this is possible only when they

realize that carry over and hangover of work to family and vis-a-vis will not help in better performance in both roles. This ultimately increases stress alone.

Mental make up for women to take up dual role is very much important to face the work-family issues. Family members' role is very vital to bring down this problem. Their responsibility sharing and moral support alone can help in this regard. Practice of meditation, is to be slowly inculcated among the employees to make them balanced.

Family get together in the organization can be conducted periodically so that the family members can understand the nature of the job. This will help to balance work and life. Social support will be extended by the family members and organization understanding individual's responsibility will help in reducing the stress due to work-family issues. Organizations must also extend possible support from their part to reduce organizational role stress.

# 7. Conclusion

Stress and work family issues prevail among dual career women. The study establishes that the role stress dimensions experienced by the women software professionals make a significant impact upon their work family issues.

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## Table – 1

**Work – Family Issues Based on Demographic Factors**

| Demographic Factors | | Less Work-Family Issues | | More Work-Family Issues | | Chi-square | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Frequency | % | Frequency | % | | |
| Age in years | > 25 | 187 | 67.5 | 90 | 32.5 | 7.519 | 0.050** |
| | 26-35 | 109 | 57.1 | 82 | 42.9 | | |
| | 36-45 | 13 | 81.3 | 3 | 18.8 | | |
| | > 45 | 10 | 62.5 | 6 | 37.5 | | |
| Marital Status | Married | 124 | 59.9 | 195 | 40.6 | 2.322 | 0.050** |
| | Unmarried | 195 | 66.6 | 98 | 33.4 | | |
| Number of Family Members | Below 3 | 109 | 57.7 | 80 | 42.3 | 5.065 | 0.050** |
| | 4-6 | 172 | 68 | 81 | 32 | | |
| | More than 6 | 38 | 65.5 | 20 | 34.5 | | |
| Relaxation methods | Yoga | 72 | 65.5 | 38 | 34.5 | 20.593 | 0.001* |
| | Fine arts | 45 | 65.2 | 24 | 34.8 | | |
| | Meditation | 52 | 82.5 | 11 | 17.5 | | |
| | Sports | 52 | 63.4 | 30 | 36.6 | | |
| | Religious activity | 84 | 52.8 | 75 | 47.2 | | |
| | Other methods | 14 | 82.4 | 3 | 17.6 | | |

Source: Primary Data    * - 1% level      * - 5% level      NS – Not significant

## Table – 2

**Influence of Work-Family Issues on Role Stress Dimensions**

| Role Stress Dimensions | Less Work-Family Issues | | More Work-Family Issues | | t-value | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | S.D. | Mean | S.D. | | |
| IRD | 8.53 | 4.42 | 9.37 | 3.13 | -2.478 | 0.014** |
| RS | 8.65 | 4.21 | 9.51 | 3.44 | -2.458 | 0.014** |
| REC | 7.88 | 4.38 | 8.84 | 3.74 | -2.580 | 0.010* |
| RE | 8.88 | 4.09 | 9.47 | 2.93 | -1.867 | 0.062 (NS) |
| RO | 8.30 | 4.23 | 8.98 | 3.46 | -1.931 | 0.050** |
| RI | 7.89 | 5.04 | 8.89 | 3.54 | -2.576 | 0.010* |
| PI | 8.30 | 4.54 | 8.92 | 3.80 | -1.640 | 0.102 (NS) |
| SRD | 8.14 | 4.15 | 8.76 | 3.55 | -1.765 | 0.078 (NS) |
| RA | 7.78 | 4.43 | 8.60 | 4.15 | -2.058 | 0.040** |
| RIN | 7.77 | 4.82 | 8.33 | 3.92 | -1.393 | 0.164 (NS) |

Source: Primary Data      ** - 5% level      * - 1% level      NS – Not Significant