

Effects of Gender Role Identity on Work-Family and Family-Work Conflict as Perceived by IT Professionals of Kolkata City during Lockdown Phase due to COVID-19

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Abstract: Present study aimed at finding out the relation between gender role identity and work-family and family-work conflicts of both male and female IT professionals of Kolkata during COVID-19 lockdown phase. Two random samples of 100 participants (50 males & 50 females) aged 30 to 40 years residing in Kolkata were selected. The Indian Gender Role Identity Scale (Basu, J., 2010) and The Work-Family Conflict and Family-Work Conflict Scales (Netemeyer et al., 1996) along with a general information schedule were administered on selected samples through online. Findings suggest that gender role identity, work-family conflict as well as family-work conflict, all the variables under study had found to be gender dependent for I.T. professionals living in Kolkata; & their gender role identity differentially contributed to work-family conflict & family-work conflict. Furthermore, there existed significant association between gender roles & WFC-FWC for those male & female I.T. professionals of Kolkata during lockdown for COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Gender Role Identity and Work-family & family-work conflict, lockdown.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a major social and psychological impact on the population by increasing social isolation, unemployment, separating families and several other changes in the way that has adversely affect our psychological wellbeing. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19, a disease caused by coronavirus, a pandemic. Closer home, a nationwide lockdown has been enforced in India to tackle the spread of the Coronavirus, and people find themselves enmeshed in varying degrees of quarantine - either self-isolation at home or mandated quarantine to prevent contagion. As India is currently in a six-week nationwide lockdown to combat the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), many people are experiencing heightened feelings of uncertainty, insecurities, unrest and loneliness. Prolong lockdown for an indefinite period is often associated with negative psychological effects, some of which may endure for years. Lockdown is often an unpleasant experience for those who undergo it. Separation from loved ones, the loss of freedom, uncertainty over disease status, and boredom can create dramatic effects. Because of lockdown both male and female members are confined in their houses and therefore, are compelled to share in varying degrees the household chores as domestic helps are not available during this period. Present study is conducted on IT professionals of Kolkata, the capital of the Indian state of West Bengal. Information Technology (IT) industry in India has got a tremendous boost due to globalization of Indian economy and favourable government policies. IT and IT related professionals are at a constant pressure to deliver services efficiently and have to be cost effective. Employees working in IT industry are prone to develop a lot of health problems due to continuous physical and mental stress of their work. IT industry has become one of the fastest growing industries in India. Strong demand over the past

few years has placed India among the fastest growing IT markets in Asia-Pacific region. The reason for choosing particularly IT employees is that the level of stress these employees face is comparatively higher than other employees. On the other hand, family and work have long been regarded as the most important domains of life of most adults (Andrews and Withey, 1976). However, the role expectations of these two domains are not always compatible, which creates conflicts between work and family life (Netemeyer et al., 1996). This, in turn can have detrimental effects on both sides. Work-family conflict is said to arise from simultaneous pressures from the work and family domains that are incompatible in some respect. Because of this incompatibility, participation in one role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Additional working hours were at the expense of home time, while high work intensity or work pressure may result in fatigue, anxiety or other adverse psycho-physiological consequences that can affect the quality of home and family life (White, Hill, McGovern, Mills, & Smeaton, 2003).

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined work-family conflict as a special form of inter-role conflict that arises when there are incompatible demands between work and family roles. Work-family conflict has two directions. Work-to-family conflict (WFC) occurs when experiences and commitments at work interfere with family life and family-to-work conflict (FWC) arises when family responsibility interferes with work life. The negative consequences of work-family conflict for women and their families have been well established (Allen et al., 2000; Aryee et al., 2005; Amstad et al., 2011). Individuals with high levels of work-family conflict report more depressive symptoms (Zhang et al., 2017), more marital problems (Barling and Macewen, 1992; Higgins et al., 1992), poorer health status (Frone et al., 1997), and reduced life satisfaction, well-being, and quality of family life (Aryee et al., 1999; Stoeva et al., 2002).

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Therefore, a high level of work–family conflict has been associated with a variety of physical and psychological health problems. Scarcity theory assumes that the personal resources of time, energy, and attention are finite, and that the devotion of greater resources to one role necessitates the devotion of lesser resources to the other role (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Marks, 1977; Seiber, 1974). Conflict theory proposes that work and family domains are incompatible due to their different norms and responsibilities (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Every society, ethnic group, and culture has gender role expectations, but they can be very different from group to group. They can also change in the same society over time. Gender roles in society means how we're expected to act, speak, dress, groom, and conduct ourselves based upon our assigned sex. Gender roles in family and work domains are in a state of flux. The traditional view of the male as breadwinner and the female as homemaker has shifted over time (Lease, 2003). Changes in social norms have resulted in men and women placing a high value on both work and family roles (Gordon & Whelan-Berry, 2005). Gender refers to the social and psychological dimensions of sex. Gender role is used to describe the social prescriptions or stereotypes associated with each sex as it may also be used to describe the extent to which a particular individual complies with the social expectations. Gender identity refers to the ways an individual defines oneself in terms of femininity and masculinity and this is the more personal, private sense of oneself in terms of their body and how they relate to the gender role expectations. The present study is exploring the effect of gender identity roles of both male and female IT professionals on their work-family and family-work conflicts during lockdown period for COVID-19 pandemic.

Lockdown in Kolkata due to COVID-19:

The Government of West Bengal announced a complete lockdown in West Bengal on March 22 to impose a complete safety restriction due to COVID-19. On March 23, Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi announced a nationwide lockdown (India Times, 18 March 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic was first confirmed in Kolkata, capital of West Bengal on 17 March 2020 in Kolkata (The Economic Times, 29th April, 2020). The Health and Family Welfare department of Government of West Bengal has confirmed a total of 1259 COVID-19 positive cases, including 908 active cases, 61 deaths and 218 recoveries, as of 4 May 2020. The West Bengal state government has identified 7 hotspots on 7 April 2020. Afterward, The West State Government has released a list, saying four districts, including Kolkata, have been declared as red zones in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak, and 348 areas as containment zones out of which Kolkata has 227 (Edu Kare Bulletin, 29th April, 2020).

Considering the above, the present investigation had the following aims and objectives on the basis of certain selected variables- gender-role identity (i.e., masculinity & femininity) as independent variable & work-family conflict as well as family-work conflict as dependent variable:

- 1) To study the significant difference, if any, between male and female IT professionals of Kolkata on their gender identity role.
- 2) To study the differential effects, if any, in work-family and family-work conflict as perceived by male and female IT professionals of Kolkata during COVID-19 lockdown phase.
- 3) To explore, if any, the correlation between gender identity roles and work-family conflict and also between gender identity roles and family-work conflict for both sexes, separately.
- 4) To study whether there is any significant correlation between masculinity & femininity as well as between work-family conflict and family-work conflict for both sexes, separately.

Hypotheses

- 1) Male I.T. professionals living in Kolkata will significantly differ from their female counterparts in respect of gender role identity (i.e., Masculinity & femininity).
- 2) Male I.T. professionals will be significantly different from female group in respect of their perceived work-family conflict & family-work conflict.
- 3) The independent variable i.e gender role identity (in terms of masculinity & femininity) would contribute differentially to work-family conflict & family-work conflict, respectively for male & female group separately.
- 4) The independent variables of the study would correlate significantly with each other for male & female group separately.
- 5) The dependent variables of the study would correlate significantly with each other for male & female group separately.

2. Method

Participants

A Web-based survey composed of a group of 100 Information Technology professionals (50 males and 50 females) residing in Kolkata had been done during lockdown period. Participants belonging to 30 to 40 years are considered for the present study. All are post graduates and their family structures are nuclear type. Their monthly family income ranges from Rs. 50,000/- to 80,000/-.

Survey Instrument:

General Information Schedule: It elicits information about socio-demographic variables like age, sex, education, domicile and family income etc.

The Work–Family Conflict and Family–Work Conflict Scales: This scale was developed by Netemeyer and associates (1996). The questionnaire consists of two subscales: Work-Family Conflict (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$) and Family-Work Conflict (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$). All 10 items are rated on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree).

The Indian Gender Role Identity Scale: This scale was developed by Jayanti Basu (2010). For the present study

IGRIS (C) which was prepared for married adult couples aged between 30 to 50 years was used. This scale consists of 54 items, 18 in each category, namely, masculine, feminine and neutral. The reliability values of IGRIS (C) for M scale were 0.86, 0.84 and 0.89 and for F scale were 0.79, 0.75 and 0.85. All 54 items are rated on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (low) to 7 (high).

Collection of Data:

Data were collected through web-based survey method from the IT professionals of Kolkata city during COVID-19 lockdown phase (between 3rd to 6th weeks). Both male and female professionals were approached online through mail and social networking sites. All the interested participants were provided online questionnaires through mails.

3. Results & Discussion

The present study intends to find out the nature of certain variables, their associations & gender differences perceived

Table 2: Z-test values & results for testing the significance of mean difference between male & female I.T. Professionals according to these Independent & Dependent variables

Independent Variables	Z-Test Value	Sig. (2-tailed) [p-Value]	Result	Remarks
Masculinity	5.833	.000	p value < alpha value (p < 0.01)	Statistically significant. Hence, H _a is accepted.
Femininity	-6.307	.000	p value < alpha value (p < 0.01)	Statistically significant. H _a is accepted.
Dependent Variables	Z-Test Value	Sig. (2-tailed) [p-Value]	Result	Remarks
Work-Family Conflict	-3.603	.000	p value < alpha value (p < 0.01)	Statistically significant. H _a is accepted.
Family-Work Conflict	5.482	.000	p value < alpha value (p < 0.01)	Statistically significant. H _a is accepted.

Table-2 represents the z-test values for all the variables under study to test the significant mean difference between two sexes. From the above tables, it is seen that male I.T. professionals scored higher than females in masculinity (from table-1: Male Mean = 87.760; Female Mean = 78.380), which was significant at 0.01 level of significance. But on the other hand, females scored higher in femininity subscale (from table-1: Male Mean = 76.920; Female Mean = 86.540) at 0.01 level of significance. Thus, Hypothesis-I was summarily accepted & it might be said that male I.T. professionals living in Kolkata significantly differed from their female counterparts in respect of gender role identity (i.e., Masculinity & femininity).

According to gender stereotype theory, men are generally perceived as more masculine than women, whereas women are generally perceived as more feminine than men. The distinction between male & female serves as a basic organizing principle for every human culture. All societies allocate adult roles on the basis of sex & anticipate this allocation in the socialization of their children. Not only are boys & girls expected to acquire sex-specific skills, they are also expected to have or to acquire sex-specific self-concepts & personality attributes, to be masculine or feminine as defined by that particular culture (Barry, Bacon & Child, 1957). The same picture had been found in the present study where males are significantly dominant in masculine traits & females are significantly dominant in feminine traits as depicted by their z-test values. As Janet T Spence & Robert L Helmreich in 1979 reported that many individuals are shown to be appropriately sex-typed, that is, men tend to be

by I.T. professionals of both sexes living in Kolkata city during lockdown period.

Table 1: Findings from Descriptive Statistics

Independent	Variables	Biological Sex	N	Mean	SD
	Masculinity		Male	50	87.760
Female			50	78.380	7.219
Femininity		Male	50	76.920	7.668
		Female	50	86.540	7.584
Dependent	Work-Family Conflict	Male	50	17.080	5.517
		Female	50	21.480	6.643
Family-Work Conflict		Male	50	23.200	7.016
		Female	50	16.580	4.865

Table-1 represents mean & standard deviation values of independent and dependent variables on both sexes. In order to find out gender difference, z- test has been conducted and the results are given below.

high in masculinity & low in femininity & women the reverse.

Whereas the z-test values for work-family conflict & family-work conflict had been found to be -3.603 & 5.482, respectively at 0.01 level of significance. The computed p of .0001 for obtaining the observed mean differences between male & female I.T. professionals by chance of random sampling regarding these two variables were much less than the chosen α of 0.01 & were considered too low. Thus, the differences between the group means were considered significant (P < 0.01) for work-family conflict & family-work conflict. Furthermore, in depth analysis pointed out that the directions of obtained z-test values was negative in case of work-family conflict; & it was positive in case of family-work conflict. From table-1, it was seen that the mean scores of female group for work-family conflict (M= 21.480) was greater than males (M= 17.080); thus indicating higher degree of work-family conflict than that of male I.T. professionals; whereas males were high in mean scores (M= 23.200) for family-work conflict than that of female group (M= 16.580) indicating higher degree of family-work conflict perceived by males. Therefore, Hypothesis-II, which tells that male I.T. professionals will be significantly different from female group in respect of their perceived work-family conflict & family-work conflict has been summarily accepted.

In a study revealed in American Psychological Association, Kristen Shockley (2017) said that men & women may experience the same level of work-family conflict but

perceive it differently. Women may feel guiltier about work interference with family because of traditional expectations that mothers are caretakers. A father's traditional role has been as the primary breadwinner so men may feel they are fulfilling their family responsibilities by working, resulting in less guilt. Gutek & associates (1991) found that women in dual-learner couples experienced more work interfering with family than men. It is believed that women are more likely to experience family demands intruding on their work roles due to the traditional gender-based division of labour. At the same time, men will be more likely to have work demands interfering in the family domain (Pleck, 1984; Voydanoff, 1988). In today's hectic society, finding work-family balance is difficult, & it might become more problematic during the period of lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic when dual-earner couples of I.T. professionals had to stay at home & continue their office work from home at the same time taking all the responsibilities of household chores by themselves. This situation might increase work-family conflict in women as they were perceiving work from home interfering with their family responsibilities & whereas men staying at home & attending work from home perceived family interfering with their job responsibilities hence, there was an increase in family-work conflict in men.

Table 3.1: Correlation Coefficients between Independent & Dependent Variables under study:

Biological Sex	N	Variables		
		Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	
			Work-Family Conflict	Family-Work Conflict
Male	50	Masculinity	-.666**	.885**
Female	50		-.658**	.374**
Male	50	Femininity	.629**	-.710**
Female	50		.916**	-.349**

Note: * p < .05; ** p < .01

From table-3.1, it can be seen that both male & female I.T. Professionals of Kolkata city had statistically significant negative correlations between masculinity & work-family conflict at .01 level of significance which means as masculinity increased in both sexes, their perceived work-family conflict decreased significantly; similarly, negative correlation existed between femininity & family-work conflict of both sexes where p < .01, indicating an increase in femininity trait there would be a significant decrease in perceived family-work conflict by both samples. On the contrary, a significantly positive correlation existed between masculinity & family-work conflict for male & female I.T. professionals (p < .01 in each case) & also between femininity & work-family conflict of both sexes where p < .01. This means as masculinity increased, male & female I.T. professionals perceived significantly greater family-work conflict whereas an increase in femininity would increase the perceived work-family conflict significantly for both samples. Thus, hypothesis-III has been accepted as a whole & it might be told that the independent variable i.e gender role identity (in terms of masculinity & femininity) significantly contributed differentially to work-family conflict & family-work conflict, respectively for male & female group separately.

Researchers (Thoits, 1986) have proposed that men derive more meaning from work than women, thereby implying

that work could be more central to men's lives (Galinsky et al, 2008). Therefore, a man's performance at work allows him to maintain his masculine role as the family breadwinner (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009); & women are portrayed as expert in home-making to be central in their lives. These gender-role-based stereotypes restricted men or women to their occupied cultural & social expectations. But, during lockdown, emerging demands at home as well as demands at work might become incompatible to both dual-earner couples as they had to manage household chores by themselves & work from home for their jobs. Due to this turmoil, those with higher masculine traits might feel family responsibilities to interfere with work responsibilities & thereby perceive more family-work conflict during this time. On the other hand those with higher feminine trait might feel stressful in coping with work pressure amidst taking care of family responsibilities, & hence feel work interfering family as perceived by work-family conflict. It would be difficult for dual-earner I.T. professionals during this period of lockdown to maintain balance in spending time in both roles as housekeeper as well as employee for the company.

Table 3.2: Inter-correlation between Independent Variables as well as between Dependent Variables under study:

Biological Sex	N	Variables	Variables:	
			Femininity	Family-Work Conflict
Male	50	Masculinity	-.581**	
Female	50		-.659**	
Male	50	Work-Family Conflict		-.710**
Female	50			-.300*

Note: * p < .05 ; ** p < .01

Table 3.2 has shown that both male & female groups had statistically significant (p < 0.01) negative correlation between masculinity & femininity. That means as masculinity increased, their femininity decreased significantly. Hence, Hypothesis-IV was accepted as the independent variable gender role identity (i.e., masculinity & femininity) negatively correlated significantly with each other for male & female group separately.

A study which investigated gender stereotypes & the relationship between masculinity & femininity had revealed the fact that the relationship between masculinity & femininity becomes increasingly negative with age (Biernat, M, 1991). Masculinity & femininity are conceived as bipolar opposites, almost all men having a firm sense of their psychological masculinity & almost all women having a similar sense of their femininity, (J. T. Spence, 1984).

Furthermore, it was seen from the above table that there existed significant negative relationship between work-family conflict & family-work conflict for male I.T. professionals at 0.01 level of significance; & for female group at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, Hypothesis-V was also accepted which told that the dependent variables of the study would correlate significantly with each other for male & female group separately.

Conceptually, conflict between work & family is bi-directional. Studies differentiate between work-family conflict & family-work conflict (Boyar et al, 2007; Carlson et al, 2000). Work-family conflict occurs when experiences

at work interfere with family life; family-work conflict occurs when experiences in the family impede with work life (Haar, 2004; Hsieh et al., 2005).

4. Conclusion

The present study revealed that gender role identity, work-family conflict as well as family-work conflict, all the variables under study had found to be gender dependent for I.T. professionals living in Kolkata; & their gender role identity differentially contributed to work-family conflict & family-work conflict. Furthermore, there existed significant association between gender roles & WFC-FWC for those male & female I.T. professionals of Kolkata during lockdown for COVID-19 pandemic.

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