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Work-Family Conflict of Female Employees in an Apparel Firm in Batticaloa

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted with the objective of investigating the level of work-family conflict among the female employees and to investigate whether work-family conflict vary based on the demographical factors of the sample in the selected apparel organization in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka. Balancing work and family domain is the most challenging aspect of an employee in the modern society. Simply work-family conflict is the deadlock that arises between the job demands and family duties. Work-family conflict arises when demands and expectations of work often conflict with demands and expectations of families of employees. This scenario was revealed by a quantitative method using five point Likert scale questionnaire from 142 operational level employees. On average, majority of the respondents revealed that there is high level of work-family conflict among the sample of the selected apparel organization. Also the current study pinpoints that there is a significant difference in work-family conflict based on the marital status of the employees, number of children of the employees and working experience of the sample of the population. Hence, it is a huge challenges for the management to restraint the negative consequences of work-family conflict and to increase an employees' feeling of integration with the organization.

Keywords: work-family conflict, role conflict theory, female operational level employees, apparel industry

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1. Introduction

Sri Lanka is a favorable destination for garment manufacturing services due to cheap and availability of labor and easy access to sea routes compared with other developing countries. Work and family are two different domains contribute uniquely to understand the human behaviour. Although these two domains are related, the relationship between these two domains has being emerged as a form of conflict by the early researches (Allen, Hesrt, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). This work-family conflict is a concept to be studied as a stress variable which may affect the family life of an employee, whereby he/she gives much more priority and time for work domain (Soomro et al., 2018). Work-family conflict may increase, if the individuals commit more time or psychological resources to work. One of the major forms of role stressors found in many organizations is the work-family conflict (incompatible demands between the work and family roles) because the work force and families continue to evolve, as more women continue to enter the workforce, as dual- responsible women in the current world. It is also said that ninety percent of the garment workers are females in many South Asian countries such as Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (Joshi, 2002). Hence, managing the negative consequences emerged due to the work-family conflict of female workers in an apparel organization is a huge challenge to the human resource management.

Also the work-family conflict has been shown to mental and physical well-being including burnout and health problems (Demerouti, Nachreiner, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2001). Role conflict at work and an organizational culture that does not support work-life balance policies will lead to work-family conflict. Marital status, number of children, and whether the employees has to take care of elderly people at home are some of the challenging roles for females, where they could not balance it with the working hours. This conflict has a number of organizational and individual consequences, including stress, burnout, depression, somatic health problems, lower marital satisfaction, poor job performance and increased absenteeism (Aryee, Srinivas, & Tan, 2005). This conflict can also result in outcomes such as job dissatisfaction, burnout and turnover (Aerts, 2017).

Research Problem

When considering this particular organization, which is a woman based organization; they also experiencing some issues. Consequently, this has impact on the turnover, absenteeism, many health issues and conflicts among operational level employees, which leads to reduce the overall performance of the organization. Therefore, work-family conflict is a challenge that needs to be studied in apparel industry to help the employees manage their work and personal life effectively. Moreover it is crucial to identify the demographic factors which could vary work-family conflict among the employees. On the basis of above mentioned reasons a study is needs to be conducted to understand the level of work-family conflict. Further, many researches have not considered studying much regarding the work-family conflict of women employees in apparel sector. Therefore, as Sri Lankan society women is more bound with family and cultural aspects, addressing the issues regarding the above concept is needed to benefit both employees and the

organization. The arguments presented thus far motivate the necessity of gaining a valid understanding regarding the work-family conflict of operational level employees in the selected apparel organization.

2. Literature Review

This section in the current review exhibits the theoretical aspect in past researches in relation with this research topic, specifically regarding the concept of work-family conflict.

Work-Family Conflict

Work-life balance has been a significant concept to be studied over the past few years as it contributes to too many negative consequences at last. This concept determines how much time is available to an employee to balance both work and family demands without creating an inter role conflict. When the demands and responsibilities from work start to interfere, two forms of conflict come up. Those are; Family-Work Conflict (FWC), where family life interfering with work and Work-Family Conflict (WFC), where work is interfering with family life. Family-work conflict also has a positive relationship with burnout; however work-family conflict is more strongly related to job burnout (Aerts, 2017).

Work-family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict that occurs when the energy, time or behavioral demands of the work role conflict with those of family roles (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Hence, the working people tend to experience conflict between the work and family responsibilities they have to attend to (Aryee et al., 2005). It is investigated that job demands, such as role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload, are primary sources of stress contributing to work-family conflict (Yardley, 2012). The conflict between the two roles, work and family, is inevitable because both pull in opposite directions, which are simply incompatible with each other as the two realms invoke different demands, priorities, norms, expectations and requirements (Shaffer, Sebastian, Dimitrova, Lazzarova, Chen, Westman, & Wurtz, 2016). Actually work-family conflict determines the degree of stress for an employee when employees spend more time working, which results in less time available for the family and the situation where an employee is likely to find it difficult to establish a satisfactory work-to-family balance (Soomro et al., 2018).

It is important to consider regarding certain factors in family life which affects the work performance directly or indirectly. Some of the employees may be acting as dual-earners, single working parent and separated from the spouse/widows have made the concept, work-family conflict more critical in modern society and family factors such as; having more children, having young children being a single parent with no partner, may also contribute heavily to this conflict. Consequently employees have to work hard, often involving extra work hours to meet their financial obligations, and the result can often be an imbalance between work and family (Soomro et al., 2018). Many authors suggest that they should adapt family-friendly practices, which some may also refers to as 'best practices' (Mansour & Tremblay, 2016). So, these family-friendly policies could be used as an applicable tool to operational level employees in apparel industry to attract and retain employees.

This work-family conflict concept also can be seen as time-based, strain-based and behavior-based as per the description in Role Conflict Theory (Yardley, 2012). The first aspect is time-based demand; where some work reduces the time available to perform another work which the person should pay more attention. For example, a female manager is working an excessive amount of time in a week. However, the demands from her work could make it difficult to fulfill the responsibilities of the family domain due to the limits of time. The second aspect is strain-based demand; where strain from one domain is carried over to another domain which effecting the second domain negatively. For an example, if a supervisor blames at work and she/he carry the strain and show that strain on family members at home. Ultimately the behavior-based conflict means a situation when a persons' behavioral type cannot be transferred from one domain to another.

In the current society, balancing work and family domains is the most challenging aspect. Specially, women face many difficulties to balance these two domains, as job demands and family duties interference may create conflicts. This difficulty may leads to a problematic situation in accomplishing both individual and organizational goals. The work interfering with family life will create negative consequences such as higher level of stress, lower life and marital satisfaction, increased level of depression and health problems which impact on well-being of an employee directly. Further Siddiqui (2013), explained that with today's shift work being a common configuration, sleep difficulties can also be a problem that can affect the quality of an individual's life. For example woman working night shifts have a higher risk of developing breast cancer, ischemic stroke and endometrial cancer; it is, however, important to keep in mind that men are not immune to the deleterious effects of shift work. Lower job commitment and poorer job performance is related to work-family conflict (Cooklin, Westrupp, Strazdins, Giallo, Martin, & Nicholson, 2016). Experiencing work-family conflict can result in outcomes such as job satisfaction, burnout and turnover (Aerts, 2017). It is therefore imperative to consider the causes of work-family conflict which may lead to negative consequences over to work and family matters.

Work-family conflict symptoms that an employee may experience feelings such as; stress and exhaustion, and it may contribute to lower organizational performance. Work-family conflict is a stressor that creates tension and higher levels of burnout, when the work responsibilities clash with the family responsibilities (Yardley, 2012). The study for 258 hotel employees in Canada shows that the mean values of work-family conflict, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are 3.3, 2.54 and 1.78 respectively (Mansour & Tremblay, 2016). Further for married working women, irrespective of the sector they are in, the age group they belong to, the number of children they have and their spouse's profession, it is very difficult to balance their work and personal lives (Delina & Raya, 2013). Also a study revealed that the workers with children of course, have a higher level of work-family conflict, are more stressed, more emotionally exhausted and more disengaged at work in response to emotional exhaustion (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004).

3. Methodology

Following the literature review, this part of the study will describes the research methodology of the present study.

Research Hypotheses

The chosen research methodology should explicit the research objectives of the study. One of the objective is to investigate whether work-family conflict significantly differ based on the demographic factors of the selected sample. For this purpose specific research null hypotheses were formulated;

Hypotheses 1: The level of work-family conflict is not significantly varied by job position of the employees. (P-value > α)

Hypotheses 2: The level of work-family conflict is not significantly varied by age of the employees. (P-value > α)

Hypotheses 3: The level of work-family conflict is not significantly varied by education level of the employees. (P-value > α)

Hypotheses 4: The level of work-family conflict is not significantly varied by marital status of the employees. (P-value > α)

Hypotheses 5: The level of work-family conflict is not significantly varied by number of children of the married employees. (P-value > α)

Hypotheses 6: The level of work-family conflict is not significantly varied by number of family members of the employees. (P-value > α)

Hypotheses 7: The level of work-family conflict is not significantly varied by working experience of the employees. (P-value > α).

Sampling and Sample Size

Sampling is defined as the process of selecting a smaller group of people who basically have the same characteristics and preference as the total group from which it is drawn (Wrenn, Stevens, & Loudon, 2006). Sample is the subset from population. The necessary requirement in the sample choice is that the selected samples must be reflecting the whole population's intentions. The researchers selected 112 machine operators and 30 team leaders as the sample of the study from 1440 employees of the selected apparel organization by using the simple random sampling method.

Method of Data Collection

The study relied on survey design as the researcher assumed it to be the most appropriate according to the sample and nature of the study. The survey method is characterized by a self-administrated, structured questionnaire to gather data from the respondents.

Therefore, the researcher used a structured questionnaire with 5 point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. It consists with two separate sections. In the first section researchers developed eight

questions to get demographic information such as job position, age, education level, marital status, if married the number of children, number of members in the family, work experience and the working section. In the second section, work-family conflict is measured using 6 items in the questionnaire. Work-family conflict among employees is measured using the scale developed by Kopelman, Greenhaus and Connolly (1983). A higher score on the scale indicated a higher degree of work-family conflict.

Reliability of Instruments

Cronbach's alpha value is calculated to test the internal consistency reliability of the instrument. Reliability coefficient as Cronbach's alpha coefficient shows the average correlation among items that include under a variable. To exist the reliability in the instrument, value of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient should be equal or greater than 0.7 (Sekaran, 2010). In this study, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient values for overall variable is 0.872 so it is indicated that all the items considered as reliable constructs in the current study.

Method of Data Analysis

Univariate analysis is used to measure the mean, standard deviation of each dimension. It is a useful tool to measure the level of a variable. Therefore, univariate analysis can be employed to achieve the objective of the research study, which is to investigate the level of work-family conflict among the operational level employees of the apparel organization. The below decision rule is applicable for the degree of work-family conflict for the study purpose (see Table 1). Further, ANOVA testing and independent sample t test is used to investigate how work-family conflict varies with demography of the employees of the selected apparel organization in Batticaloa.

Table 1: Intervals of Application Degrees

Interval	Degree
1.00-1.80	Very Low
>1.80-2.60	Low
>2.60-3.40	Moderate
>3.40-4.20	High
>4.20-5.00	Very High

(Source: Hiba & Ayham, 2016)

4. Findings

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Personal information consists the demographic information of 142 worker level employees'; job position, age, education level, marital status, number of children if married, number of family members and working experience in the organization. Table 2 shows the analysis of respondent demographic information.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Sl.No.	Demographic Factor	Sample Size N=142	Percentage
01.	Job Position		
	Machine operators	112	78.9%
	Team leaders	30	21.1%
02.	Age		
	18- 25	75	52.8%
	26- 35	60	42.3%
	Above 35 Years	7	4.9%
03.	Education Level		
	Below O/L	51	35.9%
	O/L qualification	70	49.3%
	A/L qualification	21	14.8%
04.	Marital Status		
	Single	72	50.7%
	Married	70	49.3%
05.	Number of Children of Married Respondents		
	No children	9	12.9%
	1-3 children	51	72.9%
	Above 4 children	10	14.2%
06.	Number of Family Members		
	1-3 members	17	12.0%
	4-5 members	89	62.7%
	Above 5 members	36	25.3%
07.	Working Experience		
	1-6 months	42	29.5%
	6-12 months	69	48.6%
	1-2 years	17	12.0%
	Above 2 years	14	9.9%

(Source: Survey Data)

From the above table, it is revealed that out of the total sample size of 142, 79% (112) were found to be machine operators and the rest of the respondents are team leaders. Among the sample 52.8% (75) of the employees are come under the age group of 18-25 and there are very less number of employees responses come under the age above 35 years. Also 49.3% (70) of employees are with the qualification of ordinary level while very few employees (14.8%) have the advanced level qualification. Another important fact is there are 49.3% (70) married employees. Among them 72.9% (51) employees have 1-3 numbers of children

and it is noted that very few have no children. Moreover, 62.7% (89) employees are having 4-5 numbers of members in their family. Among the selected sample 48.6% (69) of the employees are having 6-12 months working experience, and most of the employees are having less than 1 year of experience as the firm was established recently in a new location.

Mean and Standard Deviation of Work-Family Conflict

Work-family conflict is the only one variable considered in the present study and it is measured with six indicators. For this analysis mean values and standard deviation of the variable was taken into consideration in order to find out the level of respondents work-family conflict. These indicators have the mean values of 4.18, 4.17, 4.11, 4.05, 4.01 and 4.09 respectively (see Table 3). These indicators show high level in work-family conflict. The overall mean value of work-family conflict is 4.1 and it is deviated from 0.51.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Work-Family Conflict

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation
My work schedule often conflicts with my family life.	4.18	0.611
After work, I come home too tired to do some of the things I would like to do.	4.17	0.663
On the job I have so much work to do that it takes away from my personal interests.	4.11	0.702
Because my work is so demanding, at times I am irritable at home.	4.05	0.718
The demands of my job make it difficult to be relaxed all the time at home.	4.01	0.652
My job makes it difficult to be the kind of spouse or parent I would like to be.	4.09	0.570
Work-family Conflict	4.1	0.510

(Source: Survey Data)

Table 4: Frequency Level of Work-Family Conflict

Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Moderate	15	10.6%
High	70	49.3%
Very High	57	40.1%
Total	142	100.0%

(Source: Survey Data)

Table 4 shows the overall frequency level of work-family conflict. It explains that among the 142 respondents nearly 10.6% of the respondents have moderate level, 49.3% have high level and 40.1% have very high level in determining the level of work-family conflict.

ANOVA Testing and Independent Sample t Testing

ANOVA testing was used to investigate whether the level of work-family conflict differ based on the age, education level, number of children if married, number of family members and working experience of the employees in the organization and independent sample t test was used to investigate whether the level of work-family conflict differ based on the job position and marital status of the selected sample.

Table 5: ANOVA and Independent Sample t Test Results for Demographic Variables and Work-Family Conflict

Factors	Variable	Work-Family Conflict
p value		
Job Position		0.389
Age		0.521
Education Level		0.385
Marital Status		0.000
Number of Children of Married Employees		0.000
Number of Family Members		0.397
Working Experience		0.000

(Source: Survey Data)

Of all the seven main hypotheses formulated, only four hypotheses were supported by the results, namely hypotheses 1, 2, 3 and 6. These hypotheses were supported by finding that there is no significant different in the level of work-family conflict based on job position, age, education level and number of family members of the selected sample. Meanwhile, the p value of hypotheses 4, 5, and 7 are less than 0.05 value and the present study proves that the marital status of the employees, number of children of married employees and working experience may influence to vary the level of work-family conflict among the selected female employees of the apparel organization in Batticaloa District.

5. Discussion

Table 3 presents among 142 employees rating the mean value of work-family conflict is 4.1 with 0.51 standard de

viation. This means, work-family conflict is in high level the selected apparel organization. However a study conducted by Mansour & Tremblay (2016), indicated a moderate level of work-family conflict (Mean = 3.3) in their study which were lower than the results of the current study.

The work-family conflict variable is measured through six indicators namely, work schedule conflict with family, tiredness, too much work, irritable at home, difficulty to relax and difficulty to be the kind of person like to. The indicators show mean values of 4.18, 4.17, 4.11, 4.05, 4.01 and 4.09 respectively.

All these indicators are having high levels of work-family conflict of the selected apparel organization in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka. Among 142 employees 49.3% of employees are having high level and 40.1% of employees are having very high level of work-family conflict in the apparel organization. The high level of work-family conflict is due to continuous and stressful work for long hours make the employees tired and irritable to work with full effort in both work and family domains.

Moreover the results of ANOVA testing and independent sample testing explicit that the level of work-family conflict may differ based on the employees marital status, number of children of married employees and working experience. Therefore the findings of the present study is supported in the previous literature by Opie and Henn, 2013 said that the married women and mothers experience more work-life conflict than unmarried single females. Hence, the employees who have children have more responsibilities at home; therefore they need childcare in the workplace to reduce their difficulties in reconciling work and family life.

6. Conclusion

The present research was conducted with the purpose of investigating the level of work-family conflict and to investigate whether the level of work-family conflict differs based on the demographic factors among the machine operators and team leaders in the selected apparel organization. The study findings clearly shows work-family conflict mean value ($M = 4.1$) is in higher level among the sample of the selected apparel organization. Further, there is a significant difference in the level of work-family conflict based on the marital status, number of children of married employees and working experience of the female employees of the apparel organization in Batticaloa. Therefore, it is clear that these female employees are facing many difficulties in balancing both work and family domains and especially some demographic facts have a influence over the degree of work-family conflict.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

Despite the interesting findings in this study, a number of limitations should be acknowledged. First of all, data is only obtained in the selected apparel organization in Batticaloa Sri Lanka in a quite small sample ($N=142$). Also this study focused on the Batticaloa region only and nothing can be said about other cultures. It is crucial for the organization to implement effective policies to help their employees to reduce the stress come out due to work-family conflict. Family-friendly policies, family get-togethers, allowing employees to get leave for family needs and not breaking the promises given to employees by the management are some of the strategies that could be used to balance the work and family domains by the employees experiencing work-family conflict. Flexible timework arrangements could be implemented in the organization and reducing compulsory overtime work may reduce the level of work-family conflict.

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