

Impact of spousal support on Work-family/family work conflicts: A qualitative study of married working women in Mauritius

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Abstract

With free education, empowerment, and the escalating female labour force, women have been acquiring visibility in many professions which were once reserved for men. There is no denying the fact that there are societal pressures to either attune to the 'family manager' role or remain in the public sphere as working women. This study foregrounds women's experiences at the individual level and employed either on shift or non-shift systems. The primary aim of this study is to investigate how spousal support (or lack of support) impacts on women's work and family life. A qualitative method was favoured probing whether women encountered any conflict in carrying out the dual roles of homemaker and income earner, and how they interpret their experiences in tackling these roles. The research findings predominantly draw upon the interviewees' narratives. In-depth, face-to-face interviews were carried out with married working women working under shift and non-shift systems. Thematic analysis was used to identify the cultural dimension between the office environment and household environment, which have been one of the prominent reasons for family-work or work-family conflict.

Key words: *work-family conflicts, work demands, spousal support family demands*

Introduction

There are two significant focal points in an individual's life, namely, work and family that have become crucial for organizational researches (Dou et al., 2020; ŽNIDARŠIČ & MARIČ, 2021). But, some circumstances depicted that these two terms 'family' and 'work' would never be compatible with each other (cited some references here) thus, raising conflicts between family and work life. The outcomes related to these disputes included low turnover rates, job boredom, and job dissatisfaction, consequently linked to mental distress (such as depression), and spousal dissatisfaction with a subsequent negative impact on job performance in the workplace (Bilodeau et al., 2020).

Mauritius witnessed tremendous changes during the past decades in the socio-economic context and recent decades, there had been an augmenting number of women accessing the labour market. After achieving independence, later governments had pledged to safeguard women's rights in Mauritius and to upgrade women's standard of living as well as the quality of life. Furthermore, progressive changes occurred regarding laws and policies which eventually led to increased equality between women and men and an improvement in the status of women in Mauritius. Girls and women had access to education, health services, and pensions, thanks to the prevalence of a universal welfare state in the country. Throughout yearly surveys in the education sector, it has been noticed that girls surpass boys in education, especially at the secondary level. With the advent of industrialization in the 1970s, employment opportunities were created for women from exposed economic environments and with basic education, with the setting up of the Mauritius Export Processing Zone (MEPZ).

The role of women in Mauritius changed expeditiously principally due to industrialization where an extensive inflow of women was engaged by the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) sector during the 1980s. Although Mauritian women were essentially recruited for cheap labour, their employment provided them a certain degree of skill and social freedom. These women were then more present in the professional world owing to their distinguished qualifications and achievement at work. However, even though they were devoting longer hours outside the home, their domestic obligations had not decreased. In Mauritius, given the traits of its patriarchal society, it was generally acknowledged that women had to play an active role in the professional world while simultaneously managing family issues without endangering family stability.

The aim of this paper is to investigate factors which triggers work-family and family-work conflicts.

Literature Review

The field of work-family conflict interface had been overshadowed by various researchers and samples from the United States. It was somewhat later that investigations had been carried out to conceptualize (e.g Loscalzo et al., 2019) and examined the work and family realms in other national contexts (e.g Gözükarar and Çolakoğlu, 2016). National culture symbolized the fundamental and indistinct values held by most of the population. This culture was acquired in early childhood, whereby it changed at a very slow pace (Al Azzam et al., 2017). It was measured through a plethora of cultural dimensions such as individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance.

Work demands

It had been recognized that the work-family conflict was affiliated with the negative resulting of the work within the organisations. The increased work demands such as overtime, and workload affects an individual's health and wellbeing or can lead to depression (Notten, Grunow, and Verbakel, 2017). Increased work demands played a negative role in work-family conflicts. Besides, the other practices could be the family characteristics or the individual differences which could be in form of family support, the number or the age of children and the differences among the individuals for instance; extraversion could have mixed effects on the work-family conflicts which could be either positive or negative. In this regard, the inconsistent workload of working hours veered towards work-family conflicts (Zhang, Wang, and Das, 2020).

Family Demands

Major conflicts were due to the limitations of resources, which reflected on the competitive environment of the individual. The emergence of work-family conflict had been due to the fight over resources such as home expenditures, objects, conditions, personal characteristics, and energies that strived for retaining protecting and creating valued resources in terms of the reduction of conflicts (Ajala, 2017). The demands of the family varied upon the number of people living and their age. Moreover, the family demands could also be expanded if the family was more dependent on the individual in terms of the dependency of the childcare or the parental role that could leave an absence; however, the unfulfillment of these demands had a negative influence on work-family conflicts (Bennett, Beehr, and Ivanitskaya, 2017).

Spousal support:

A spouse could be either a husband or wife who could be in the relationship as a partner. Under the traditional way, the family structure shifted from a single income to a double income family. It had been observed that spousal support was considered as a potential mediator in the interrelationship among the perceived stressors and role strain, health, and quality of married life (Chrisangika Perera, and Kailasapathy, 2020). It determined that there was a huge role between the relation of spousal support to psychological wellbeing and marital satisfaction. This was mainly because work-family and family-work conflicts could be minimized effectively with mutual support and understanding.).

Shift work

There was growing support for the notion that conflicting working time arrangements including shift work, night shifts, inflexible work schedules, fluctuating hours, and long and unsocial hours make up major work-related psychosocial threats (WHO, 2008). It was argued that night or evening work shifts were correlated with work-family interference, notably among women (van Amelsvoort et al., 2004). Moreover, this liaison might be incited by various factors, for instance, rewards, sharing of housework, family support, childcare opportunities, and gender role attitudes to long schedules at work as well as time spent with the family. It was contended that long working hours, most specifically in the absence of a proper work-time control (Hughes & Parkes, 2007; Rupert, 2009), were found to interpose with home activities (Loudon, 2008). Contrarily, 'consistency overworking time' seems to be in favour of work-family adjustment (Taris et al., 2006).

Methodology:

This research examines women's lived experiences of work-family/family-work conflicts. In particular, it investigates the following research questions: What is the impact of different work schedules on work-family/family-work conflicts? Do spousal support from work and family domains differentially relate to work-family conflict/family-work conflict? Is working either on shift or non-shift systems impinge directly on work-family/family-work conflicts? Is Hofstede Cultural Dimensions a common feature of the Mauritian society?

A qualitative approach was chosen for this research study by collecting and compiling data from various avenues such as in-depth face to face interviews. The unit of analysis was employees working on shift and non-shift systems, namely nursing officers, woman police officers, educators and officers of the Ministry of Social Security. With regards to this current research study, purposeful sampling was adopted. It proved to be a convenient technique to profoundly scrutinize, explore, discern and interpret the phenomenon under study through a sample that gave exhaustive information (Merriam, 2002). In depth face to face interviews were conducted with 12 working married women from the four above-mentioned institutions. Furthermore, interviewees were requested to fill up a consent form prior to the start of interviews wherein the purpose and rationale of the research study were clearly described. In-depth and semi-structured interviews were conducted with twelve (12) working married women from the four above-mentioned institutions. The language used was either English or Creole. The inclusion criteria for the study were chosen based on their marital status and should have at least have one child. These criteria were outlined in order to ensure the samples had near similar work and family roles (Aminah, 1996).

Findings

After conducting the in-depth face-to-face interviews, they were all transcribed verbatim in English. However, while some interviewees replied in Creole, caution was taken in order to translate and capture the exact meaning of the sentence. The findings of the transcripts were elaborated under different subheadings relating to the

questions asked to the interviewees. Additionally, the generation of codes was done using qualitative data analysis software, namely Atlas.ti 9 for data management.

SHIFT WORK

(a) Work Demands

Firstly, participants were inquired about their work demands and their work management. This theme was created to assess the initial level of difficulty working Mauritian women experience/perceive regarding their professional job. To this, one respondent averred:

"Work demands are usually appropriately manageable since we all receive training from time to time. Plus, as time progresses, we adapt to increased stresses. However, workplace conflicts exert tremendous mental stress. It also affects our professional relationships as well as job performance gradually. I consciously try to put my family over any of the work-related conflicts, however, sometimes family conflicts act as double-ended swords".

A respondent postulated:

"I give theoretical lectures and do clinical teachings with the medical students at Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, Rose Belle. I also do private consultation as a specialist at Chisty Shifa Clinic and City Clinic"

Another participant construed her views,

"Work stress has many facets, and we cannot simply compartmentalize them. Stresses related to workplace conflicts are disturbing for anyone, but women become more vulnerable to them due to their usually agreeable nature and that they want to resolve conflicts. In such a case, I prioritize my family health over my work".

(b) Work-family/ Family-work Conflicts

Under the theme work-family/family-work conflicts, participants were investigated regarding their work and family responsibilities, and which realm created conflicts with the other. With regards to a question about family or work generated conflict with the other domain, one participant replied,

Work demands under shift system with spousal support leads to lesser work-family/family-work conflicts

"It is usually the stresses created at the workplace which get translated into stress into the family. At times of extreme professional burdens, my professional responsibilities create conflicts with my family duties. Such scenarios slowly even start deteriorating your overall being, to the point that you become unable to make good and sound decisions either about your family or about your work".

Moreover, another respondent expounded,

"I think these two dimensions are interrelated. A conducive, efficient, and appropriate workplace does not exert a tremendous extra burden on any employees. Similarly, a conducive family environment does not lead to conflict. However, it is when these two become dysfunctional at conflict management, does friction arise".

(c) Family Demands and Spousal Support

H₁: Work demands under non-shift system with spousal support leads to decreased work-family/family-work conflicts.

Spousal support:

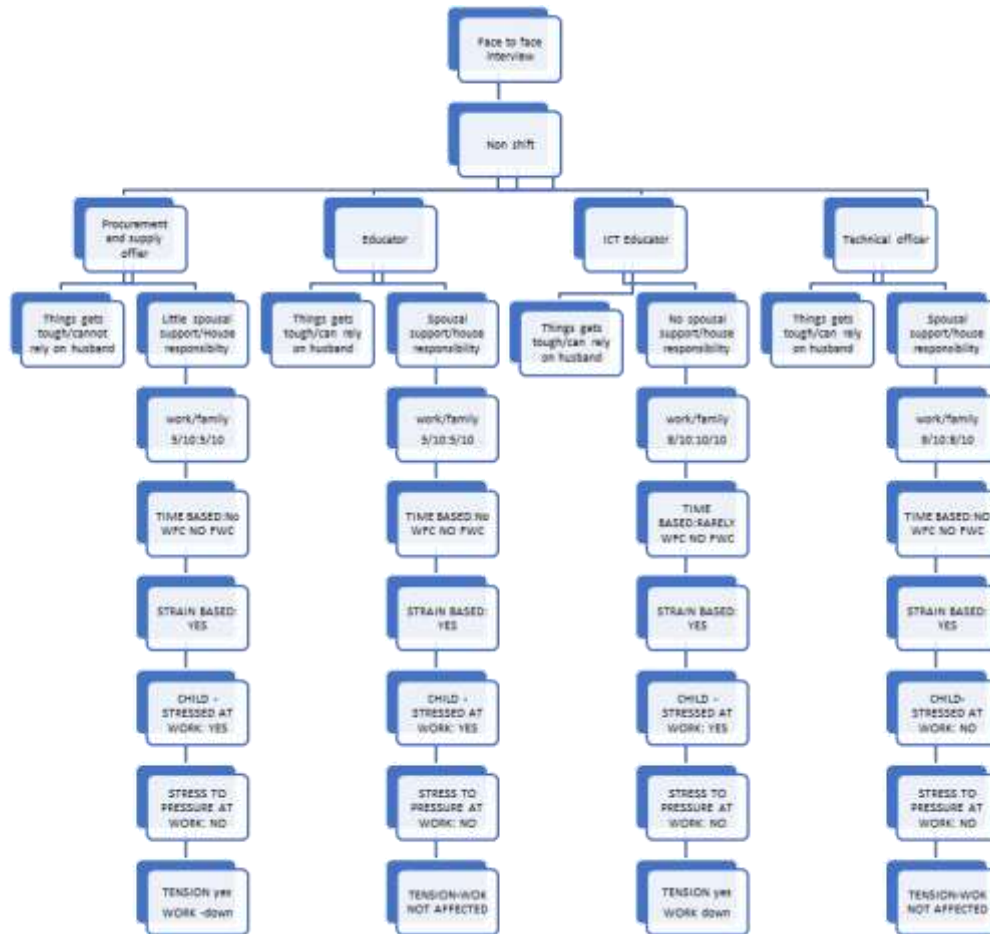
Of the five candidates interviewed, only two of them declared that they got spousal support when things got tough at work or for house responsibilities whereas the other three cannot rely on their husbands.

Another participant responded about spousal support:

"My spouse is usually very considerate of my work, and supports me emotionally and morally. However, sometimes I am unable to provide sufficient attention to my children, which causes emotional stress".

When inquired about family demands, a participant declared:

"My family is a rather conservative one and endorses familial duties over the profession. However, through help from a cultural standpoint, I can balance both aspects up till now".



Step 3: Search for Themes

At the end of this step, the codes were classified into comprehensive themes that implied to say something distinct about the research question. The themes thus obtained were essentially revealing, that is they described patterns in the data consistent with the research question.



Diagram 2: Demonstrates the multi-dimensionality of the subject

The word cloud showed the most occurring words in the quotations made in the analysis which meant that the bigger a word the more it was captured in the quotations made.

Step 4: Review Themes

During this phase, the preliminary themes identified in step 3 are reviewed and developed.

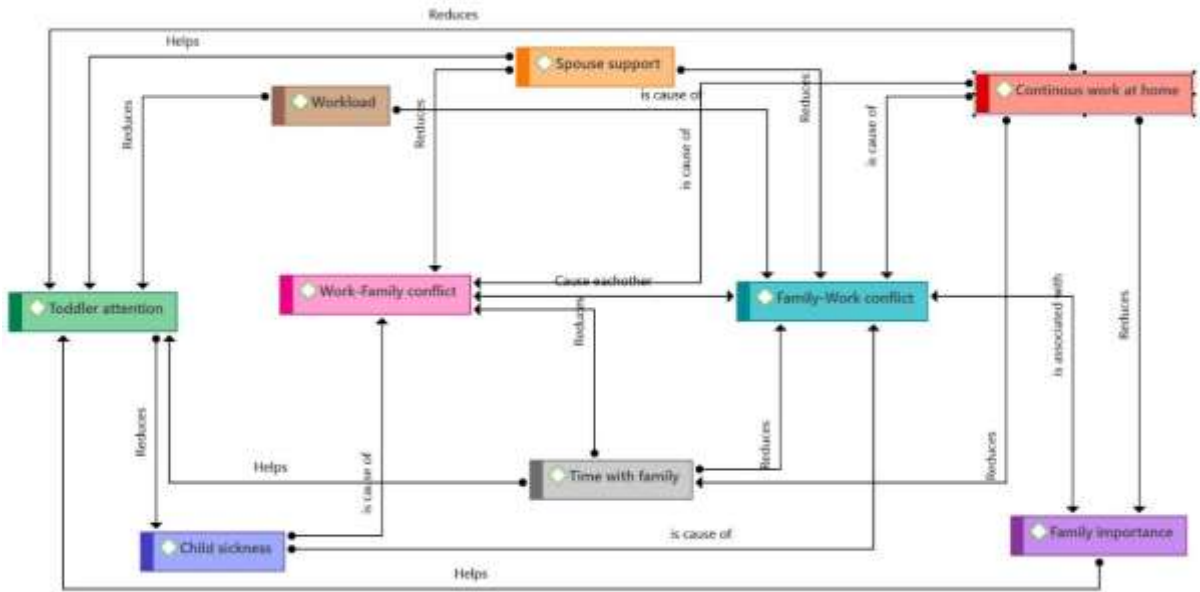


Diagram 1: Illustrates the themes and sub-themes being interrelated

Step 5: Define Themes

This is the final processing of the themes and the aim is ‘ identify the essence of what each theme is about’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92)

Network Linkages

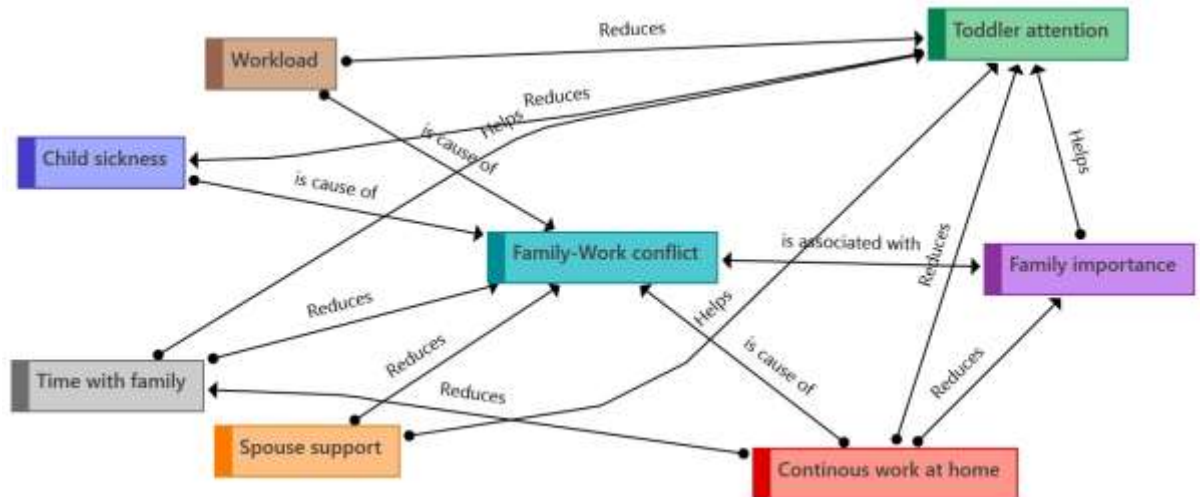


Diagram 2: Demonstrates the different aspects of work-family/family-work conflicts

Step 6: Writing up

The goal of the research was to produce a report.

Experiencing work-family/family-work conflicts and spousal support

The extent of experiencing work-family/family-work conflict was asked to the interviewees. One respondent acknowledged that she had to preplan and make good time management in order to juggle between work and family commitments. Her spouse was a Police Officer too and they both got cognizance of their respective rosters three weeks before. Consequently, she preplanned the various family commitments which they had to attend according to their availability. She opined that when she was on duty, her spouse took on the full responsibility of the home and children. The majority of the interviewees advocated that they did get spousal support and without it, handling work and family would be impossible. One respondent affirmed:

“I do sometimes experience work-family conflict. For instance, if I have to stay back in the office after normal office hours and coincidentally my husband who is a Sub Inspector of Police has to stay back too, then the situation becomes quite difficult to manage. We need to inform the children and the latter will manage on their own to prepare dinner for them. More importantly, we do not have the exact time to get back home”.

(Interviewee 2)

This affirmation exposes a genuine situation of work-family conflict. Long stretches of work, inflexible hours of work, and no fixed time to get back home highly contributed to the occurrence of work-family conflicts.

Likewise, a Charge Nurse affirmed:

"As a Charge Nurse, my roster is a fixed pattern of work. For instance, sometimes I have to take leave from work to attend important commitments such as a funeral, accompanying my in-laws to visit a doctor. With regards to family-work conflict, it is always the wife who has to take leave from work, for instance, if a child is ill or during school holidays".

(Interviewee 2)

This statement depicts the patriarchal attitude of the spouse which is unfortunately still ingrained in Mauritian society.

Two non-shift interviewees postulate that regarding spousal support, they do not get any help while two others affirmed that they do get spousal support.

For instance, one interviewee replied:

'I get very little support from my husband. I have to do all household chores, especially on weekdays when we have to leave home at 7 a.m.'

'Sometimes I feel like my family's inclination does impact my decision-making at work. This may be because of a subconscious inclination towards family, or probably due to a lenient work environment although, to compensate, I sometimes have to forego family plans for the profession. As time progresses, I feel like I am not doing enough towards my family as I should be, mainly due to my work.'

(Interviewee 1)

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST BETWEEN WOMEN WORKING ON SHIFT AND NON-SHIFT SYSTEMS AS A CAUSE OF FAMILY-WORK CONFLICT

While evaluating the similarities and differences between shift and non-shift systems related to women who experienced family/work conflict, a clear-cut line was drawn between these two. It was described that women working on a shift system needed to work during odd working hours and had to sacrifice family time. As they experienced personal issues with their family due to lack of time for them, this caused distraction during working hours. This distraction led to less productivity at work and conflicts very often arose. Moreover, it was observed that women were often found at a crossroads of choice, they had to choose between being a good wife/mother/daughter or professional. Often women chose family over work. This indicated that women working under the shift system experienced work/family conflict.

"Work demands are usually appropriately manageable since we all receive training from time to time. Plus, as time progresses, we adapt to increased stresses. However, workplace conflicts exert tremendous mental stress. It also affects our professional relationships as well as job performance gradually. I consciously try to put my family over any of the work-related conflicts, however, sometimes family conflicts act as double-ended swords"

(Interviewee 5- shift system)

As compared to women working under shift system, those who worked under a **non-shift system** experienced fewer conflicts as they worked under pre-determined times. They had ample time to properly structure and managed their family whereby they constructed a proper timetable. Therefore, this led to fewer family/work conflicts as everything was pre-determined and planned. Moreover, there was one similarity whereby women, no matter in which working system they worked were often prone to choosing between family and work and they normally chose their family, thus, causing work-family conflict.

"Due to pre-determined timings, I do not usually face issues of time management etc., which also facilitates me in handling work conflicts better. I am also able to provide balanced time between my work and family, which sometimes gets disturbed though, due to obvious stresses. However, I prioritize my family over work almost in every scenario".

(Interviewee 4: non-shift system)

Regarding my family I would opt for a rating of 8/10, even though the family is as important as work. But I try to manage to my level best in order to strike a balance between these two spheres.

(Interviewee 2- shift system)

The similarities and differences between shift and non-shift were thoroughly evaluated in the above comparative thematic analysis which had been done in regards to the research methodology criteria.

"Unfortunately, I get very little support from my husband. He doesn't know how to do household chores or even cook food and even I have to cater for the needs and wants of the children. He only drives me where I need to go".

(Interviewee non-shift system)

According to the findings of the current study, a working couple in a married relationship could assist with spousal progress and used innovative and creative conflict resolution policies and strategies to manage their roles more effectively. According to Lavner, Karney, and Bradbury (2016), useful marital resolving conflicts

trends and favorable spousal support were related to marital satisfaction in couples. Similarly, Sinval et al. (2019) discovered that working couples who used more effective coping strategies not only felt more satisfied with their married relationship but also had elevated job satisfaction and commitment.

"Yes. As a mother, it is very difficult when I have to work on a shift system as I have two children whereby I have to manage to look after my children before attending duty. I have to prepare lunch for my husband as well as my children."

(Interviewee 2: shift system)

In a case study carried out by Yoshioka et al., (2011), professionals from two local governments in Hokkaido, Japan, took part in the study, which lasted from April 2003 to March 2004. All information was gathered through self-administered questionnaires. The Athens Insomnia Scale was used to assess insomnia. Profession, work schedules, days off, shift work, occupational stress, marital status, hours spent on household tasks, childcare, and caretaking were selected as work-family characteristics. Data from 7,451 participants were analyzed (5,951 men and 1,500 women). A logistic regression analysis was performed to determine the extent to which paid work and family obligations explained differences between men and women in sleeplessness. The incidence was significantly higher in female subjects (31.0 percent) than in males (23.2 percent), but the gender difference disappeared after adjusting for paid work and family responsibilities. The findings of stratified analyses indicated that positive gender differences had been found among certain workers with relatively beneficial work and family conditions, such as non-shift work, exposure to low levels of occupational stress, household tasks for less than 1 hour per day, and not living with people who needed services and assistance. These findings implied that sex differences in insomnia are primarily explained by gender differences in work and family attributes.

Relating to the current paper's verbatim to the above case study it is observed that both were in line with the gender differences and expectations.

"Culture within my family sometimes leads to degradation of work performance, which then leads to conflicts and further deterioration. This is because of their oriental and conservative lifestyle."

(Interviewee 5: non-shift system)

Additionally, to provide further discernment based on the research provided within the analysis and the verbatim, it was validated that

"Value of labour and value of familial duties determine whether women are provided a conducive environment for profession and education or not. In my case, although religion is relatively conservative, however, with the support of my spouse and higher education, I can assert my figure as a professional woman, which helps me in managing stresses created by distant family members".

(Interviewee 4: non-shift system)

Therefore, to relate to the case study carried out in Japan, it was observed that women face insomnia due to family demands and therefore, cause work-family conflicts. Moreover, to strongly validate this point, other researchers concluded that shift work, in particular, could have a particularly negative impact on women. Because women frequently had greater levels of family responsibilities, particularly in East Asian societies, women who worked shifts may experience higher levels of work-family role conflict. Females also had lower shift work tolerance and reported more fatigue and sleepiness when working in high-risk environments. Given that more than half of South Korean females were reported to be economically active in 2016, the relationship between shift work and health-related quality of life in working women warrants close examination (Korea, 2016).

Another aspect of family responsibilities was household maintenance, which was particularly important in societies with a high proportion of the female workforce and dual earners households. According to a survey of Taiwanese working women, *"Having too many household tasks to do,"* was a statement that ranked first on the list of various role stressors (Fong, 1992). In a domestic partnership, and partly as a result of societal progress towards gender equality in all aspects of life, husbands were increasingly expected to share responsibilities for family maintenance. Keith and Schafer (1980) discovered a positive relationship between husbands' working time and wives' family-work conflicts.

To support the above research, our findings demonstrate responses stating:

Regarding family-work conflicts, I understand the extent to which my family affects my work life. In this case, again the answer is negative. If I have conflict arising at home, though I may be personally or emotionally disturbed, I definitely do not let this hamper my work.

Also,

My work being of a technical nature is quite demanding and stressful. Though I may be emotionally drained, I am very aware of my responsibilities vis-a vis my family. I know I have kids and a spouse whom I need to feed and look after. I have never shelved my responsibilities. I am someone who does not believe in 'fast food' and as such, I make it a must that I always cook for my family. Similarly, I am always here for my children and contribute to resolving their problem as much as I can.

(Interviewee 4: non-shift system)

WORK DEMANDS

NON-SHIFT SYSTEM

H₁: *Work demands under a non-shift system with spousal support lead to decreased work-family/family-work conflicts.*

As per the verbatim of the current paper, it was observed that women working under a non-shift system confessed to having little or no spousal support. This led to family-work conflicts.

“Unfortunately, I do not get spousal support. I have to manage on my own. Due to a lack of time on his part for dropping and fetching the kids from school and tuition, my husband has bought a car for me. This is because he has no specific time to get back home every day due to his side business”.

(Interviewee 3- non- shift system)

Compared to women getting spousal support

“Yes sometimes I do work on weekends depending on the shift. Thus I have to make arrangements with my husband for him to look after and care for our son who is only five years old. The fact that my husband does not work on weekends, I prefer to work at odd hours during weekends as I know my husband is there to look after our son.”

(Interviewee 3- shift system)

SHIFT SYSTEM

H₂: *Work demands under shift system without spousal support causes increased work-family/family-work conflicts.*

Relating to women having no spousal support with high work demands could certainly generate work-family life.

“I am drained out when I reach home after work on weekdays. I take some 1 to 1½ hours to rest and refresh myself. I also do some gardening which helps me to get back to my normal self so that I can fulfill all my family responsibilities”.

(Interviewee 2- shift system)

This demonstrated that the women felt drained after a hectic working day.

FAMILY DEMANDS

NON-SHIFT SYSTEM

H₃: *Family demands under a non-shift system without spousal support generates increased work-family/family-work conflicts.*

“Yes. My work does impact my family demands as I feel very stressed due to the heavy workload. It so happens that I vent out my anger on my family particularly on my husband.”

This indicates that family demands under a non-shift system without spousal support generates increased work-family/family-work conflicts. Therefore, the findings of the current paper accept hypothesis H₃.

SHIFT SYSTEM

H₄: *Family demands under shift system with spousal support leads to decreased work-family/family-work conflicts.*

“In fact, I very rarely meet with work-family conflicts. Unless there is extreme work overload then it can interfere with my family hence causing work-family conflicts. I do not experience family-work conflict.”

According to Yang et al. (2000), Americans and Chinese may have different perspectives on work and family, owing to differences in their individualism/collectivism values. Spector et al. (2004) recently examined data collected for a large-scale international collaborative project on work stress. They found that Anglos had a stronger positive relationship between work hours and work/family sources of stress than Chinese and Latinos, despite the fact that in all three samples, work-family stressors were associated with lower job satisfaction and emotional health.

DISCUSSION

Considering the fact that this paper aims to look at the relationship between spousal support as a determining factor contributing to work-family/family-work conflicts among married working women under shift and non-shift systems, two main themes, namely shift work and non-shift work and sub-themes relating to work demands, work-family conflicts, family-work conflicts, spousal support, and family demands were revealed.

Considering the comparative nature of the current study, Gregov and Simunic (2012), research is used as a comparison whereby one hundred and twenty-nine nurses (married mothers) working in hospitals in Zadar, Šibenik, and Split were divided into four groups according to their working hours. Participants were asked to complete a survey that included a series of socio-demographic questions, questions about the scope and division of family responsibilities between spouses, and scales that measured the perceived negative effects of working

hours, psychological demands of work, conflicts work, and family. The cognitive-evaluative component of job satisfaction pertains to beliefs regarding one's job whether it was respectable, mentally demanding/challenging, or rewarding. However, the affective component included people's actions in relation to their work such as tardiness, working late, faking illness in order to avoid work.

According to the study findings, nurses who worked morning shifts experienced less conflict between work and family than other groups of nurses who worked the morning, afternoon, and night shifts. Morning shift nurses had the highest cognitive-evaluative component of job satisfaction and the lowest affective component of life satisfaction, while nurses working irregular shifts had the lowest affective component of life satisfaction. These findings supported the notion that shift-work exacerbated the work-family role conflict. They also agreed that the category of shift rotation was important. This was the first study in Croatia that analyzed work-family conflict between caregivers or workers with different shift systems.

Research carried out by Xuanru et al. (2020) observed that female workers, like their male counterparts wanted to play a role that goes further than their family commitments. Nevertheless, a large proportion of women joining the labor force as workers were mothers who were expected to balance their wife/maternal responsibilities with their job responsibilities (Koekemoer & Olckers 2019). Furthermore, they were reckoned to be a mother, a wife, and an employee all at the same time. Working women must balance their family and professional lives. However, due to the complexities of these roles, it could be difficult for women to maintain a satisfying personal life while also successfully performing their jobs (Koekemoer & Olckers 2019).

The overall literature shows that spousal support leads to conflicts resolution and less work-family as well as family-work conflicts (Lavner, Karney and Bradbury, 2016). In line with the findings of this research study, the above-mentioned researchers demonstrate that spousal support relating to the emotional aspect definitely leads to lesser family-work/work-family conflicts. As responded and affirmed by one interviewee:

"My spouse has been very supportive about my career, but the only demand I get is that I do not much increase my job timings to handle home too (Interviewee 3)

This significantly confirmed the results of Lavner, Karney and Bradbury (2016), whereby a lack of spousal support led to an increase in work-family conflicts and family-work conflicts. This was because the working wife was unable to cope with family and work demands simultaneously and therefore, she tended to lose focus on both domains. This loss of focus led to domestic problems in the household as well as at the workplace.

According to Burke, Weir, and DuWors (1980), the partners of senior administrators saw their husbands' occupational demands as having an impact on their home, such as stress in interacting. In Taiwan, work-family conflict was strongly associated with lower job and family satisfaction. According to the findings, there was an increase in stress and the severity of physical ailments (Ali et al., 2011). Minor distinctions could have a negative impact on a person's mental health. There was an understanding of the family in the workplace. According to the researchers, long working hours have a consistent positive relationship. Work-life integration and work-family conflict (Keith & Schafer, 1980). However, the purpose of this paper was to focus on working women who were experiencing work-family/family-work conflicts.

The two themes were compared and contrasted. The theme 'Shift' was critically examined through the eyes of married working women. According to Hofstede (1991), culture was subjective to the interaction of individuals' personality traits and societal culture.

"Yes, I work on a shift system." My weekends are mostly spent at work, and even when I'm not working, I have to deal with household chores and care for my child. I'm responsible for her studies and ensuring that her homework is completed. I also need to think about what I'm going to cook for the coming week".(Interviewee 2: shift system)

V/S

"My husband is and has been extremely supportive up to this point."He contributes to the household's obligations.

(Interviewee 3- non-shift system)

Several people used the terms work-family balance (WFB) and work-life balance (WLB) interchangeably (WierdaBoer et al., 2008). Others had used the two terms in different ways. The degree to which an individual was able to balance work and family life was defined as a work-family balance capable of balancing the temporal, emotional, and behavioral demands of both Working for a living and caring for one's family (Ali et al., 2011). Balance was defined as a person's ability to meet both their work and family obligations, commitments, in addition to other non-work responsibilities and activities (Ali et al., 2011).

The job market was found to be very challenging and tasking. Meanwhile, the men have found a means around it even when they get married as the wife was expected to oversee home affairs. However, this had a great impact on the extent to which women could go in their chosen career path because, aside from involving in careers, women were majorly in charge of home affairs and got disturbed in many areas of home issues. These

home activities had a way of causing conflict between work and home as one of such ways participants mentioned how child health status disturbed concentration at work.

I get preoccupied and anxious whenever she is sick and this consequently causes me to be stressed up at work.

(Interviewee 2- non-shift system)

It was supported by another interviewee who affirmed:

When my children are not well, then this becomes a stress for me at work.

(Interviewee 1- non-shift system)

Getting informed that a child is ill at work also cause stress to another interviewee:

It is indeed big stress when I get a call from the school informing me that my child is ill and needs medical care as soon as possible.

(Interviewee 4- shift system)

The time it took to make arrangements when a child got sick was a major concern as an interviewee claimed:

In a specific case where a child is ill, then I get worried because I have to make arrangements to get someone to look after my ill child.

(Interviewee 5- shift system)

This claim showed that women were always worried when they were informed of their children's health status and they were divided into choosing to look at the child or focusing on their job which many a time the children were given attention due to connections mothers shared with their children.

It was also found that giving attention to children despite the tight schedule could certainly reduce the possibility of getting sick in the first place which would definitely reduce work-family conflict.

I give priority to my family more than my work. This is because my toddler needs me and I need to find time for her.

(Interviewee 1- shift system)

The workload of different professionals also affected family-work conflict since spending more time at work or being overused at the office had a way of weighing individuals down than reducing their activeness to get involved with spouse and children and attend to their needs. One of the participants declared:

I experience more work-family demands due to inflexible work schedules and heavy workload

(Interviewee 1: shift system)

Also, working on a shift system and changing roles from one time to another complicated workload which of course affected attention given to children and spouses and at the same time caused family-work conflict

The fact that I work on a shift system and am constantly on the move and on-call, it proves to be quite difficult for me to engage myself in my family demands

(Interviewee 3: shift system)

A participant also emphasised how the workload can lead to work-family conflict

Unless there is extreme work overload then it can interfere with my family hence causing work-family conflicts.

(Interviewee 4: shift system)

It was corroborated by another participant who averred that the presence of parents at home with more workload caused more family-work conflicts

Family-work conflicts arise when I have to work during the weekend and public holidays and my children are at home.

(Interviewee 2: shift system)

The workload at the workplace also caused an individual to get exhausted to extent of not having the strength to do other things when got home except to rest

I am very often confronted with too much stress at work and when I get back home I feel drained and just want to sleep.

(Interviewee 4: shift system)

This might of course lead to family-work conflicts were spouses and children were neglected and lack of attention can bring more danger to the house.

Comparative assessment regarding situations with spousal support

"In fact, working on a shift system suits my work-family relationship well".

"My family has adjusted well to the demands of my work".

"My spouse handles home meticulously in my absence but does not perform well in providing emotional support and things like that to our child".

"It creates a one-sided pressure on my part to deal with all the emotional stresses within the family".

In one scenario, it can be observed that the situation changes drastically when there is spousal support. As it is observed from the above verbatim quotes, the wife praises her husband's effort in helping to ease the household chores and situation at home. This implies that the wife feels less pressure and less emotional stress, hence reduced work-family/family-work conflicts. However in another scenario, the wife from the above quote speaks

about 'one-sided pressure'. This indicates that the other wives who are left alone with the household responsibilities feel pressurized and left alone to deal with the emotional stresses within the family. Considering the analysis of this paper, it showed that a strong distinction was made between these shift and non-shift system based working women. It was stated that women working on a shift system had to work at unusual hours and sacrifice family time. They were distracted during business hours since they were dealing with personal difficulties with their family due to a lack of time for them.

This distraction reduced productivity at work, and confrontations frequently ensued. Furthermore, it was discovered that women were frequently forced to choose between being a wife/mother/daughter and being a professional. Women frequently prioritized family over employment. This revealed that women who worked shifts experienced substantial work/family conflict.

According to Shakil, Fakhr, and Ahmed (2011) study, working women who were also housewives faced significant challenges. Depending on the sector and area of interest, they must strike a balance between the work domain and the home and family domain. The factors that contributed to work-family conflict for women with obligations, as well as the type of work arrangement they had, were investigated in this study.

CONCLUSION

The study focused on investigating work-family conflicts within a female-centric perspective. It was observed that shift and non-shift work schedules played a major role throughout the investigation and analysis. The study considered women from different fields and different work schedules. They were questioned specifically about spousal support and to which extent the presence or lacking spousal support had an impact on their work-life and family life. As well as to which extent having spousal support led to diminished conflicts and more productivity in a female's life. Therefore, the study constructed four hypotheses based on pertinent literature carried out. These were namely *Work demands under a non-shift system with spousal support leads to decreased work-family/family-work conflicts. Work demands under shift system without spousal support causes increased work-family/family-work conflicts. Family demands under a non-shift system without spousal support generates increased work-family/family-work conflicts. Family demands under shift system with spousal support leads to decreased work-family/family-work conflicts.*

Eventually, all the hypotheses were tested to be significant and in line with research carried out and validated by the comparative research design upon which the study was based. The data were generated through Atlas ti 9 software and concluded that work demands under a non-shift system with spousal support led to decreased work-family/family-work conflicts. Work demands under a non-shift system with spousal support led to decreased work-family/family-work conflicts. Family demands under a non-shift system without spousal support generated increased work-family/family-work conflicts. Family demands under shift system with spousal support led to decreased work-family/family-work conflicts. The above conclusions were derived based on the findings of the analysis.

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