

## **The Effect of Job Demands on Work-Family Conflict (W-FC) and Family-Work Conflict (F-WC) among Female Nurses**

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**ABSTRACT:** The present study highlights the significance of job demands as one of the most important work factor on W-FC and F-WC. Nurses working in public hospitals in Shiraz-Iran are the respondents for this study; sample are including of 198 married female nurses. The findings revealed that married female nurses who experience an increase in job demands would result in an increase in W-FC and F-WC. Implications are discussed and recommendations are made regarding future researches in this area.

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### **1. Introduction**

Women's participation in the workforce has increased all around the world. This movement of women into paid work and the rise of dual earner family as the norm have had a significant impact on women's work and family roles (Davidson & Burke, 2004). Woman who are employed have higher combined pressures from outside and inside of the home which both are the most central domains of her life, and each containing its own duties may lead them to experience conflict between work and family demands (Livingston & Judge, 2008; Rexroat & Shehan, 1987). According to Pleck (1977) work and family are two fundamental and interdependent systems for dual-career live that inconsistency in any one system may consequently influence the other one as well. These bidirectional influences of work and family can lead individuals to two types of conflict, namely, work- family conflict (W-FC), family-work conflict (F-WC).

Karimi and Nouri (2009) stated that recently, Iranian society has been experiencing similar socio-demographic changes in the workforce as Western societies. For example, the participation of women in the workplace has increased in Iran. Statistical Bureau of Iran, (2004) reported that 79.5% of Iranians women were employed in 2004, as compared to statistics from 1956 to 1986 which showed that about 9% of women in Iran were employed (Moayedi, 1994). The increase in the number of women in Iran in the formal employment sector may be related with an increase in the number of highly educated women and also the need to enhance family economy due to high cost of living

(Karimi & Nouri, 2009) rather than a change in the traditional way of thought. In Iran despite the participation in the workplace, women are expected to give priority to family responsibilities (Karimi & Nouri, 2009). Therefore, it seems quite logical that, they are more likely to experience conflict with their work obligations and their family responsibilities

Nurses, like other female employees are faced with the demands of work and home responsibilities as their main daily tasks. According to Ministry of Health, nurses in Iran are mainly women. As of 2009, it was reported that 79.5% of Iranian nurses are female (ISNA, 2009). In addition, Adibhajibagheri et al. (2004) has declared that nurses basically have to work in critical situation, that includes dealing with high workloads and time pressures, number of hours worked, shift work, death and life situation, and stressful and demanding responsibilities have been denoted as the major issues in the nature of nurses' job. Nursing is a female-dominated profession practiced under demanding work conditions. Thus, examining W-FC and F-WC in the nursing context is important for both its theoretical and practical implications (Yildirim & Aycan, 2008).

The demand and responsibilities of nurses in both work and family vary in different situations. For example, there will be an increasing job demand for nurses when there is prevalence of contagious diseases. When pressures arise from job demands in a workplace with a lack of flexibility to adapt to change, increasing job demands might result in work interfering with family system because it is unable to adapt to this change. Overall, it appears that

increasing job demand in work system will impact family system. Hence, the present study aimed to consider relationships between job demands and W-FC and F-WC among married female nurses in Shiraz-Iran as one of the developing country with specific culture.

## 2. Job Demands and W-FC and F-WC

Job demands have been shown to influence conflict between work and family (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Karimi & Nouri, 2009; Richey-Strickland, 2006; Voydanoff, 2005). Those with high job demands tend to experience higher conflict between work and family domains.

Grzywacz and Marks (2000) examined the correlates of positive and negative spillover between work and family based on an ecological perspective. The results of this study showed that a low level of job demands was associated with a low level of experience of work-family conflict among adult employees in the United States. Karimi and Nouri (2009) examined the effects of work demands on two dimensions of work-to-family interface among Iranian employees. The respondents of study were 250 male employees from two organizations in Iran. The result of this study found a significant positive relationship between job demand and work-to-family conflict. The results also show that respondents with higher work demands also have higher work-to-family conflict.

Montgomery et al. (2006) examined the relationship between job demands and burnout, and the mediational role of work-family interference (WFI). Respondents of the study were 162 Greek doctors. This study focused on the quantitative and emotional job demands. "Quantitative job demands was defined as work overload or work pressure or too much work to do in too little time, while emotional job demands refer to the affective component of work and the degree to which one's work puts one in emotionally stressful situations" (Montgomery et al., 2006, p. 205). The finding by Montgomery et al. 2006 indicated that two types of demands were correlated with WFI. The results showed that when employees experience an increase in job demands (quantitative and emotional demands) they are more likely to experience an increase in W-FI.

Likewise, Richey-Strickland (2006) reported a positive and significant relationship between job demands and work-family conflict among women aged 18 years old and older who were employed fulltime outside the home in the United States. This study recognized that when female workers experience an increase in job demands they are more likely to experience an increase in work-family

conflict. Voydanoff (2005) examined relationships between three types of work demands and work-to-family and family-to-work conflict among the civilian U.S. Data were collected via telephone interviews with 2,155 employed adults living with a family member who were interviewed for the 1997 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW). The findings indicated consistent positive relationships between work demands and work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict. The results show that when respondents reported an increase in job demands they are more likely to experience an increase in work-family conflict and family-to-work conflict among respondents.

Proost et al. (2010) examined the moderating effect of achievement striving on the relationship between situational variables, and both work-family conflict and work-family facilitation. The respondents of study were 224 employees in the welfare sector. The finding indicated that job demands had a significant positive relationship with work-family conflict. The direction of relationship indicated that employees who reported high job demand are more likely to reported high work-family conflict.

The brief review above indicates that job demand plays a crucial role in W-FC and F-WC among employees. Most of the above mentioned studies have been carried out in Western countries and only few studies have been conducted in a Middle Eastern country, such as Iran (e.g. Karimi and Nouri 2008). The study by Karimi and Nouri (2009) focused on job demand and W-FC among male employees only. Besides, to best of the researcher's knowledge, studies on contributing factors F-WC is still lacking. Online search using database such as e.g. Science Direct, Sage, Emerald, Springer link, Wiley - Blackwell, Irandoc on related studies in Iran and other Middle Eastern countries showed a few studies in the area W-FC. Therefore, this research was conducted to examine the relationships between job demand and W-FC and F-WC among married female nurses in Iran-Shiraz as one of the developing country.

## 3. Methodology

The main objective of this study is to determine the relationship between job demands and W-FC and F-WC, among married female nurses. This study was conducted in public hospitals in Shiraz, Iran. Shiraz is one of the biggest cities of Iran that is located in the southwest part of Iran. There are many governmental and nongovernmental hospitals in Shiraz. Shiraz is also one of the biggest medical centers in Iran. There are 13 public hospitals in Shiraz and all of them were chosen for the current

study. The population of the study comprised of 647 married female nurses who lived with their husband, have at least one child and a minimum experience of 6 months working in public hospitals of Shiraz, Iran.

The method of data collection used was self-administered questionnaire and the study is correlation in nature. This study used Cochran (1977) method to determine the required sample size. Based on the Cochran's formula, the required sample size for the present study is 248. Nurses working in public hospital are very busy and due to the nature of their work, the response rate may be low. Therefore, the required sample has been increased to 323 in order to have adequate number of respondents for this study. To be representative of all public hospitals in Shiraz, about 50% of the eligible respondents from each hospital were randomly selected. Out of the 323 questionnaires distributed, 61.3% (198 questionnaires) were returned. Thus, the actual sample size of this study was 198.

The respondents were selected by using a simple random sampling method. It is the most commonly used method of selecting a probability sample. Respondents in this study were chosen randomly among name list of the total number of eligible nurses from each 13 public hospitals in Shiraz.

#### 4. Pilot Study

Pilot study is important as they provide guidance and feedback on the adequacy of the questionnaire (Portney & Watkins, 2009). In the current study all instruments were originally in English language. Since, the current study was among Iranian nurses, and their official language is Persian, it was necessary for the questionnaires to be translated into Persian language. Accordingly, before the actual pilot study, the questionnaire was given to Persian expert to ensure that the translation done was accurate and conveys the same meanings as found in the original English instruments. Then the Persian translated questionnaire was again translated to original language. The translation and back translation were conducted by separate translators. Then, the questionnaires in the Persian language were distributed to 30 nurses who fulfill the study criteria. The main objective of this exercise was to identify ambiguities in meaning, misunderstanding of terms, or other inadequacies in the questionnaire. Another objective of the pilot study was to test for the reliability of the instruments. According to Rubin and Babbie (2009) reliability estimate of 0.60 was considered sufficient for basic research. The Cronbach's Alpha for the measures of this study was more than 0.65.

## 5. Measures

### 5.1 Work- Family Conflict and Family- Work Conflict

Work- family conflict (W-FC) and Family-work conflict (F-WC) scale developed by Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian (1996) which consisted of 10 items was used to measure W-FC and F-WC. Responses were obtained using a seven point Likert type scale where 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. A sample item from this scale is "The amount of time that my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities". The scale scores range from 7 to 35 with high score indicating a high level of perceived W-FC and F-WC. The Cronbach's Alpha estimate in the present study for W-FC scale is .88 and for F-WC is .95.

### 5.2 Job Demands

Job Demands was measured by job demands, decision latitude and decision authority (Karasek Jr, 1979). The job demands measure contains 7 items concerning workload and pressures. Each item was answered with a 5 point Likert scale where 1= never to 5= extremely often. A sample item from this scale is "To what extent does your job requires your working hard". The scale scores range from 7 to 35, with high score means higher level of perceived job demands, while low score means a low level of perceived job demands. The reliability Cronbach's Alpha estimate in the present study is .65.

## 6. Results of the Study

The respondents' age ranged from 23 years old to 59 (mean=36.50, standard deviation=7.15). Most of the participants (56.1%) are below 36.50 years old. More than half of the respondents (56.1%) have been married for less than 11.68 years. Number of children of respondents was between one to five children and 51.5% of respondents have one child. Moreover, more than half of the respondents (56.6%) have less than 12.49 years job experience.

Respondents score for W-FC ranged from 8 to 35. The mean is equal to 24.36 with standard deviations of 6.51. Score for W-FC was categorized into low, moderate and high W-FC. A large proportion of the respondents were in the high (44.90%) and moderate (42.90%) W-FC. The remaining respondents (12.10%) have low level of W-FC. Respondents score for F-WC ranges from 5 to 35, with mean equal to 17.45 and standard deviations of 7.89. Large proportions (48.0%) of the respondents were in the low category for F-WC. This is followed by 32.3% who were in the moderate category and only 19.7% in high category. Score for

job demand was categorized into moderate job demand (17.70%), and high job demand (82.30%). The respondent's score for job demand were 20 to 35 (mean = 28.89, standard deviations = 3.54).

The first question examines the relationship between job demands and W-FC. The results demonstrated that there was a significant positive relationship between the respondents' job demand and W-FC ( $r = .243$ ,  $p = .01$ ). The strength of correlation is low. The finding indicates that nurses who experience an increase in job demands would result in an increase in W-FC.

The second question examined the extent of relationships between job demands and F-WC. The finding from Pearson Correlation analyses showed a significant positive relationship between the respondents' job demand and F-WC ( $r = .168$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The strength of correlation is low. The findings indicate that higher level of job demands is associated with higher level of F-WC.

## 7. Discussion

This study aims to determine the influence of job demand on W-FC and F-WC among married female nurses in public hospitals in Shiraz-Iran. The current research established that the respondents with higher level of job demand experienced higher level of W-FC. These findings are in line with the study by Richey-Strickland (2006) who demonstrated that when female workers experience an increase in job demands they are more likely to experience an increase in work-family conflict. Grzywacz and Marks (2000) showed that low level of job demands were associated with a low level of experience of work-family conflict. Voydanoff (2005) and Montgomery et al. (2006) found positive and strong relationships between work demands and work to family conflict. This finding also supports research done by Karimi and Nouri (2009) and Proost et al. (2010) that found workers who experience an increase in job demands are more likely to experience an increase in work-family conflict.

Moreover, the finding indicates that nurses who experience an increase in job demands would result in an increase in F-WC. This direction of relationship is consistent with Voydanoff (2005) who demonstrated that when individuals experience an increase in job demands they are more likely to experience an increase in family-to-work conflict.

Considering the available evidence, it appears that job demand as work related characteristics, has consistently been shown to be the significant factor with W-FC and F-WC. Based on system theory work and family are two central

systems and interdependent domains for dual-career live that conflict in any one system will ripple throughout the system. The finding of current study supported system theory and indicated that increasing job demand in work that lacks flexibility to adopt to change will interfere with family life.

## 8. Conclusion and Implications

This study concludes that greater daily job demands are linked to increase in daily levels of W-FC and F-WC. These findings implied that in order to reduce the conflict between work and family responsibilities, policy related to work and family, as well as programs aimed at helping working women must address the issues of job demand. Therefore, at work place, employers may need to consider individuals' capacities and time limitations, and allow more flexibility in work schedules in order to reduce job demands experienced by women employees. Besides, some rigid rule practiced within the family system such as traditional thinking (e.g. priority to do the family responsibilities only by women) may need to be reviewed and change so that working women may feel less burdened with daily responsibilities, and consequently can balance demands from work and family systems.

## 9. Recommendations for Future Study

There are several recommendations and limitations that have been identified throughout this study that may direct future studies. Primarily, having a low response rate and relying on one city for data collection limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, this study also needs to be replicated with a more heterogeneous population such as other ethnic groups, religions, occupational variations and different cultural values. More studies of this nature should be conducted especially among women in Middle Eastern countries.

This study focused on selected work factor. Future studies should address other variables that are worth examining. For example, coping strategies employed when facing experiences of work-family conflict. Future study should be designed to incorporate all these variables that might give different explanations of work-family conflict. Finally this study used a self-report measure (questionnaire) that entails the problems of common method variance and consistency bias. For less biased findings, future research is suggested to use combine methods for data collection, such as interviews with spouse, family members or colleagues combined with self-report data.

## References

