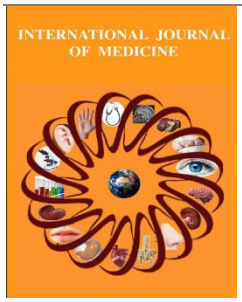

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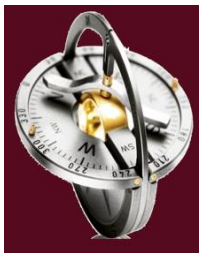

Research Article

Work And Family Conflict Among the Working Men and Women and Their Coping Strategies

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Abstract

Background: Work-family conflict (WFC) occurs when work and family demands are incompatible, making it difficult to balance both the roles. This imbalance can lead to stress, psychological strain, and reduced productivity. Achieving work-life balance is increasingly important with the rise of dual-career families and long working hours. Gender differences influence WFC, as women often manage multiple roles while men prioritize work responsibilities. Coping strategies such as problem focused, emotion focused, and avoidant focused help individuals to manage the stress arising from such conflicts. In the Indian context, where traditional family roles coexist with changing workplace demands, understanding WFC and coping mechanisms is essential to guide employee focused interventions, workplace policies, and stress management programs that enhance the well-being and productivity of the employees. ***Objectives***: The aims and objectives of the present study are to assess the level of work and family conflict among the working men and women and to determine the coping strategies adopted by working men and women. ***Materials and Methods:*** An institution based cross-sectional study was conducted among the working men and women aged above 18 years at a medical college in Hyderabad, Telangana, after obtaining ethical clearance. The sample size (n = 100) was calculated using the formula $n = 4pq/L^2$ (p = 50%, L = 10%), and a total of 110 participants were selected by simple random sampling. Data was collected over a period of six months using a pre-validated, pre-structured questionnaire comprising of the Work and Family conflict Scale and the Brief COPE Scale. Data was analysed in Microsoft Excel using descriptive statistics, Open Epi and the chi-square test; a p-value < 0.05 was considered statistically significant at a 95% confidence level. ***Results***: Among the study participants, 51% were females and 49% were males. Overall, 48.2%, 40%, 11.8% of the study participants reported with high, low and moderate level of work and family conflict respectively with no significant gender difference. Most of the study participants adopted adaptive coping strategies, with 94.5% using problem-focused, 96.4% emotion-focused, and 90.9% avoidant coping strategies. Males showed significantly greater use of emotion-focused ($\chi^2 = 2.22$, p = 0.03) and avoidant focused coping strategies ($\chi^2 = 2.25$, p = 0.03) compared to females, whereas the use of problem-focused coping did not differ significantly by gender. ***Conclusion***: Almost similar levels of work and family conflict was observed in both the males and females. Emotion focused, Problem focused, and Avoidant focused coping strategies were better adopted by males compared to the females.

Keywords: Work Family Conflict (WFC), Coping Strategies, Problem focused, Emotion focused, Avoidant focused

Introduction:

Work-family conflict is defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect”, meaning that balancing both roles is difficult because involvement in work or family makes it harder to manage the other.(1) As a result, many working men and women struggle to balance multiple responsibilities which can cause psychological strain, stress, and health issues, ultimately lowering their work efficiency as workplaces form an integral part of the society. This conflicts also affect the larger community contributing to the declining standards of performance, poorer quality of work efficiency and productivity thus increasing interpersonal tensions. (2)

Work-life balance refers to an employee’s perception of effectively managing the workplace demands, household responsibilities, and personal time with minimal role conflict. In modern employment, achieving work-life balance has become increasingly important, particularly as dual-career families are now common and long working hours have become the norm.(3)

Gender differences also play a significant role. Women often face greater challenges in balancing the professional responsibilities with household and caregiving roles, while men are frequently expected to prioritize workplace demands over family responsibilities. As the participation of women in the workforce continues to grow and men’s involvement in family role gradually increases, the need to address the work-life balance for both genders has greater importance. This demographic and social shifts have led to a more diverse workforce which results in focusing the importance of the need for coping strategies that help both men and women to achieve harmony between their work and personal lives.(4)

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Coping is defined as the thoughts and behaviours mobilized to manage internal and external stressful situations. Coping strategies are commonly of problem-focused, emotion focused and avoidant focused strategies respectively. Problem focused coping strategies refers to

the efforts directed at tackling the source of stress, such as active coping, planning, restraint coping, or suppressing competing activities. Emotion-focused coping aims to regulate the negative emotions associated with stress through approaches like positive reframing, acceptance, humor, or turning to religion while avoidant focused coping strategies focuses on reducing stress by avoiding the situation of stress. Knowing the work family conflict levels and their coping strategies help in the improvement of employee well-being. (5)
Studying Work Family Conflict and Coping mechanisms is important in the Indian context where traditional family responsibilities coexist with rapidly changing work environments. With increasing participation of women in the workforce and evolving roles of men in family life, there is a pressing need to explore how employees manage these dual responsibilities. The findings of the study can guide organizations, policymakers, and mental health professionals to design supportive workplace policies, stress management programs, and family-friendly practices that promote both employee well-being and organizational sustainability.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To assess the level of work and family conflict among the working men and women.
2. To determine the coping strategies adopted by working men and women.
3. To compare the work and family conflict and their coping strategies among the working men and women.

Materials and Methods

An institution based cross-sectional study was conducted at a medical college in Hyderabad, Telangana, after obtaining the Ethical Clearance. The sample size was calculated using the formula $n = 4pq/L^2$, with p = 50% (6), q = 50%, and L = 10%, resulting in a total of 100 participants. A total of 110 study participants were selected using simple random sampling method. A pre-validated, pre-structured questionnaire consisting of the Work and Family Conflict Scale (7) and the Brief-COPE Scale (8,9) was used as the study tool. The study included working men and women aged above 18 years, while non-working individuals, those below 18 years of age, and individuals who did not provide consent were excluded. Study participants were administered the questionnaire after being informed about the objectives of the study, and confidentiality of their responses was assured. Data collection was carried out over a period of 6 months. The collected data was entered into Microsoft Excel and was analysed using descriptive statistics, chi-square test, Open Epi and a p-value of less than 0.05 was considered to be statistically significant at a 95% confidence interval.

Results

Table 1: Sociodemographic profile of the Study Participants

Categories	Frequency n (%)
1.Gender	
Male	54(49%)
Female	56(51%)
2.Age Group	
≤ 30 years	60(54.5%)
31-45 years	38(34.5%)
>45 years	12(11%)
3.Marital Status	
Un married	53(48.2%)
Married	55(50%)
Separated/Divorced/ Widowed	02(1.8%)
4.Family Type	
Nuclear	63(57.3%)
Joint	41(37.3%)
Three Generation	01(0.9%)
Living alone/Not living with family	5(4.5%)
5. Duration of work	
1-5 years	69(62.7%)
6-15 years	30(27.3%)
16-25 years	6(5.5%)
>25 years	5(4.5%)
6.Education	
Illiterate	2(1.8%)
1-10th standard	2(1.8%)
Intermediate/Diploma	21(19.1%)
Graduate	45(40.9%)
Postgraduate	40(36.4%)
7.Occupation	
Professional	78(70.9%)
Clerical	15(13.6%)
Others	17(15.5%)
8.Socio Economic Status(Modified B G Prasad Classification 2025)(10)	
Upper	92(83.6%)
Upper middle	8(7.3%)
Lower middle	7(6.4%)
Upper lower	1(0.9%)
Lower	2(1.8%)

A total of 110 participants were studied. Table 1 depicts that among the study participants, 51% were females and 49% were males. Among them, half were aged below 30 years (54.5%) followed by 34.5% (31-45 years) and 11% were above 45 years. About half of the participants were married (50%) and half of them were unmarried (48.2%). Most of them are highly educated (40.9% graduates, 36.4% postgraduates) and worked as professionals (70.9%). Majority (62.7%) had 1-5 years of work experience. Majority of the participants belonged to the upper class (83.6%) according to modified B.G. Prasad classification 2025.(10)

Table 2: Gender wise distribution of the Study Participants according to the level of Work and Family Conflict

Gender	Level of conflict			Total n (%)
	Low level n (%)	Moderate level n (%)	High level n (%)	
Female	24(42.9%)	9(16.1%)	23(41%)	56
Male	29(53.7%)	4(7.4%)	21(38.9%)	54
Total	53(48.2%)	13(11.8%)	44 (40%)	110

Chi square =2.45, p-value=0.2937

Table 2 represents the gender wise distribution of the study participants according to their level of work and family conflict. Among the females, 42.9% reported a low level of conflict followed by high level (41%) and moderate level (16.1%) of conflict. In comparison, 53.7% of males had a low level of conflict, 38.9% reported a high level of conflict followed by 7.4% of moderate level. Overall, 48.2% of participants had low level of work family conflict followed by high level of conflict (40%). No statistical significant difference was observed.

Table 3: Gender wise distribution of Study Participants according to the adoption of Problem focused coping strategies

Gender	Problem focused coping strategies		Total
	Adopted n(%)	Not Adopted n(%)	
Females	52(92.9%)	4(7.1%)	56
Males	52(96.3%)	2(3.7%)	54
Total	104(94.5%)	6(5.5%)	110

Chi square =0.14 , p-value=0.23

Table 3 depicts the distribution of study participants according to their adoption of problem-focused coping strategies. Among females, 92.9% reported using problem-based coping strategies, while 7.1% did not adopt such strategies. Similarly, 96.3% of males reported using problem-based coping, with only 3.7% not adopting this strategies. Overall, 94.5% of the study participants practiced problem-focused coping, whereas 5.5% did not use any coping strategies. Although the proportion of males adopting problem-focused coping was slightly higher than females, the difference was not observed to be statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 0.14$, $p = 0.23$).

Table 4: Gender wise distribution of the Study Participants according to the adoption of Emotion focused coping strategies

Gender	Emotion focused coping strategies		Total
	Adopted n(%)	Not Adopted n(%)	
Females	52(92.9%)	4(7.1%)	56
Males	54(100%)	0	54
Total	106(96.4%)	4(3.6%)	110

Chi square =2.224 , p-value=0.0318

Table 4 shows the distribution of the study participants according to the adoption of emotion-focused coping strategies. Among females, 92.9% reported using emotion-based coping, while 7.1% did not use such coping strategies. In contrast to this, all male participants (100%) reported adopting emotion-focused coping strategies. Overall, 96.4% of the participants relied on emotion-focused coping whereas only 3.6% did not rely on coping strategies. The difference was observed to be statistically significant ($p = 0.0318$) indicating that males relied more on emotion-based coping strategies compared to the females.

Table 5:Gender wise distribution of the Study Participants according to the adoption of Avoidant focused coping strategies

Gender	Avoidant focused coping strategies		Total
	Adopted n(%)	Not Adopted n(%)	
Females	48(85.7%)	8(14.3%)	56
Males	52(96.3%)	2(3.7%)	54
Total	100(90.9%)	10(9.1%)	110

Chi square =2.25 , p-value=0.03115

Table 5 illustrates the distribution of the study participants based on their use of avoidant focused coping strategies. Among the females, 85.7% reported adopting avoidant coping strategies, while 14.3% did not. In contrast, 96.3% of males adopted avoidant coping strategies, and only 3.7% did not. Overall, 90.9% of participants were found to use avoidant coping, whereas 9.1% did not. The significant statistical difference was observed ($p = 0.03115$) which shows that males were more frequently using avoidant coping strategies than females.

Table 6: Distribution of the Study Participants according to the level of Work Family Conflict and their Coping strategies

Level of Work Family Conflict	Coping Strategies		
	Problem Focused	Emotion focused	Avoidant focused
Low Level	49(47.1%)	51(48.1%)	45(45%)
Moderate Level	12(11.5%)	12(11.3%)	12(12%)
High Level	43(41.3%)	43(41%)	43(43%)
Total	104(94.5%)	106(96.3%)	100(91%)

Chi square =0.2076 , p-value=0.9950

Table 6 and Figure 1 shows the distribution of study participants according to the level of work-family conflict and the coping strategies adopted. Among the study participants with low level of work-family conflict, 49 (47%) adopted problem-focused coping, 51 (48%) adopted emotion-focused coping, and 45 (45%) used avoidant coping strategies. Among the study participants with the moderate level of conflict ,12 (12%) of study participants reported using problem-focused coping and adopted avoidant coping respectively.11% used emotion-focused coping. Among those experiencing high work-family conflict, 43 (41%) participants each used problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping strategies, indicating a balanced use of multiple coping approaches.Overall, across all the levels of conflict, 104 (94%) of the study participants reported the use of problem-focused coping, 106 (96%) adopted emotion-focused coping, and 100 (91%) used avoidant coping strategies.

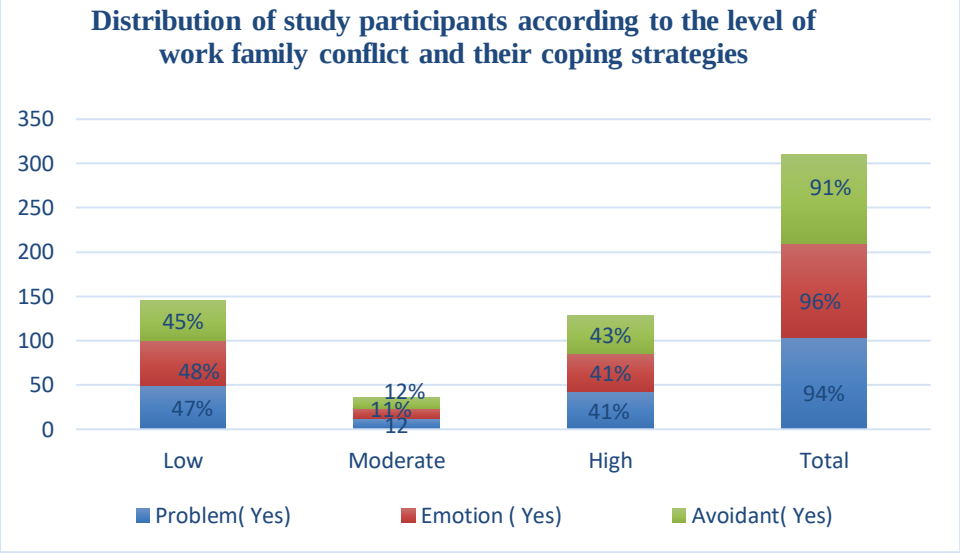

Figure 1

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Discussion

In the present study, Majority of the study participants were young (≤30 years), highly educated, and working as professionals which is similar to the other Indian studies where urban, institutional study subjects include younger and skilled employees.(2) Our study reveals that employees experience high level of Work and Family Conflict similar to the study done by Ratnaprabha et al..(6) In our study, 40% of the study participants reported high level of Work and Family Conflict among which females had a slightly higher proportion of moderate level of conflict compared to the males with low level of conflict, but the difference was found to be statistically insignificant which was similar to the studies done by Allen et al., 2000(8) and Ratnaprabha et al.(6)

Almost all the study participants used problem-focused coping strategies to deal with the work family conflict consistent with its role as an adaptive strategy in managing stressors. Nearly all participants (94.5%) reported problem-focused coping, with no significant gender difference. This reflects the adaptive nature of problem-focused strategies, often associated with better stress management and work life role balance that are aimed at changing the stressful situation which is characterised by the facets of active coping, use of informational support, planning, and positive reframing that indicates the psychological strength and a practical approach to the problem solving skills which is the predictive of positive outcomes. The high percentage of adoption of coping strategies in our study suggests that the employees are increasingly using the proactive coping approaches whereas in other study done by Smrithi Sinha et al, males adopted better problem focused strategies compared to females(11) which is contrary to the other studies,(12) whereas no effect of gender was observed in the study done during 2024. (13)

Interestingly in our study, Emotion-focused coping was used by all men (100%) and 92.9% of women, with a statistically significant gender difference (p=0.03181). This contrasts with the traditional findings in which women usually report more emotion focused coping. (14-16) This might be because of our male participants who are highly educated professionals may have developed stronger emotional coping skills that are characterised by the facets of venting, use of emotional support, humour, acceptance, self-blame, and religion. Adoption such coping mechanisms may help in regulation of emotions associated with the stressful situation.

In the present study, Avoidant focused coping was significantly more common among the men (96.3%) compared to women (85.7%)(p=0.03115) which is similar to the other studies where men were more likely to use avoidant focused coping by externalizing strategies, such as denial or disengagement, when under stress . (2,14-17) This indicates that in our study females have adopted better adaptive coping compared to the males. Males have used better avoidant coping than females may be through self-distraction, denial, substance use, and behavioural disengagement indicating the physical or cognitive efforts to disengage from the stressor similar to the study done by Ptacek et al. (18)

In the present study, the most frequently adopted strategy is emotion-focused coping (96.3%) followed by problem-focused coping (94.5%) and avoidant focused coping (90.9%). Most of the study participants, regardless of the conflict level used the emotion-focused coping slightly more often than the problem-focused coping. Avoidant coping was also common, particularly among those with higher conflict levels, indicating a tendency to disengage from the stressors.

In our study, we found that majority of the study participants with high level of work and family Conflict used avoidant coping strategy and the study participants with low level of work and family conflict used emotion focused coping strategy followed by the problem focused coping strategy which is similar to the study done in China (19) in which majority of the study participants with high level of work and family conflict used avoidant or negative coping. Our study results also suggest that using adaptive coping like solving problems, regulating emotions, and asking for help can lower stress and improves the well-being of employees whereas in other studies done in 2020(20)(21) showed that the study participants with high levels of stress and work family conflict predominantly used problem focused coping strategy followed by the avoidant focused coping strategy which is in contrast to our study..

Conclusion

Almost similar levels of work and family conflict was observed in both the males and females.e Emotion focused, Problem focused and Avoidant coping strategies were better adopted by males compared to the females.

Recommendations:

Regular assessment of work and family conflict through workplace wellness programs can facilitate early identification of employees requiring support and counselling. Organizations should promote adaptive coping through structured stress management, mindfulness, and resilience enhancement programs. Implementing gender-sensitive measures such as mentorship initiatives for women and emotional intelligence training for men can help to address the distinct coping needs and promote balanced responses to stress which might help in strengthening the working capacity of employees.

Limitations:

The study was conducted in a single institution, which may limit the generalizability of findings to other occupational or cultural settings.Data was collected through self-reported questionnaires, which indicate the chances of recall bias.

Conflict of Interest: Nil.

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