

Research Article 04

Impact of Work-Family Conflict on Women's Career Development with the Moderating Role of Perceived Supervisor Support

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to examine the impact of work-family conflict on women's career development of senior executive and above-level female employees in the insurance sector in the Colombo district, Sri Lanka. This was carried out as a cross-sectional field study among a sample of 136 senior executive and above-level employees in the insurance sector in the Colombo district, Sri Lanka. Simple random sampling was applied to select the sample. Primary data was collected through a standard questionnaire as a Google form via online mode through survey. The collected data were analyzed with the support of the SPSS employing regression, correlation, and descriptive statistics. Further, work-family conflict acts as the independent variable, women's career development acts as the dependent variable and perceived supervisory support acts as the moderator. While work-family conflict is evaluated using indicators such as work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict. Women's career development is evaluated using the indication of career goal process, professional ability development, promotion speed, and remuneration growth. The finding discovered that work-family conflict was a reason for the poor career development of female employees in the insurance sector and also this was significantly impacted by the moderator, perceived supervisor support. It is recommended that the insurance sector take necessary actions to develop the careers of female employees while reducing their work-family conflict.

Keywords: Insurance sector, perceived supervisor support, women's career development, work-family conflict

Introduction

Gender inequality or discrimination is one of the most common confrontations faced by women all around the universe. A report published by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2018 specified that despite Sri Lanka being renowned as a region with gender equality pertaining to education and other social indicators, women's participation in the workforce has nailed only 30 – 35 per cent in the past two eras. Social norms are the largest barrier to female labour force participation in Sri Lanka.

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Child care, elderly care, and housework are the socially designated jobs for women. However, the past twenty years have beheld changes in women's participation in work and gender impartiality. Women's education and literacy rates have increased compared to past decades (UNESCO 2022). The Literacy rate of Sri Lankan women has escalated, and 99.12 per cent was the reported literacy rate for females between the ages of 15 – 24. As per the World Bank report, women's labour force participation in the world in 2019 was 52.4%. It manifests that women's labor force participation has boomed which indirectly affects to shrink poverty and boosts economic development. It is observable that today, women have risen from the ashes to stand up for themselves.

In the research history, women's career development has become the mostly addressed topic. New Business Ethiopia (2023) reported that as per the results of a global survey, women's career development in the past two years has been hit negatively because of fine reasons such as covid-19 pandemic, cost of living crisis, skill deficiencies, and lack of mentorships. Fifty-six percent of respondents supposed that due to the effects of covid-19 and the economic crisis, females have missed work opportunities where they have stepped down work and take more time to care for children, husbands, and household routines.

In the 21st century, women's role as a housewife has shifted to career women who is always outside the traditional women's role. Higher positions in the corporate sector and government are now invaded by women leaders who engage in strategic decision-making. Yasmin and Husna (2020) found out that in the 21st century, women are more concerned about their careers than before and countless opportunities have been created for them to utilize. The dual-career household is the role that the majority of women right now are playing. As a result of the growing number of working women who are playing both work and family roles consecutively, conflicts between these two roles are inevitable. The contemporary economy is comprised of organizations and working environments that pave the way for emerging concepts like increasing female employees in the workplace, dual-career families, and single-parent families (Yusaf & Hasnidar, 2020). Madson and Hammond (2005) stated that this identifiable change in the organizational or workforce demographics has cleared the path for increasing research on work-family issues.

McKinsey and LeanIn (2022) suggested that women are given rarer opportunities for promotions when compared to men in workplaces. When 100 men are promoted from entry-level positions to managerial-level positions, only 87 women get that opportunity. It is a red notice for the employers that they need to increase workplace mobility and inclusivity so that female employees could reach the highest in the corporate career ladder. Thoyib et al. (2018) found out that in order to women to be successful in their careers, cordial core worker relationship is a must. Women should be more proactive in properly managing their careers. A successful woman is always a risk taker who accepts the risk associated with a career as a part of her role. The majority of female workers accept to reduce time spent with family, in order to cope with career risks. Wang (2022) suggested that work and family have interconnecting and reciprocal influences on each two domains. The nature of conflicts a woman experiences in her roles as a housewife and a career woman is defined based on the joint effects of career orientations of both husband and wife. A career-involved husband provides limited emotional support and time to his wife and children. If he makes the work more important, the home role will be less attended. As a result, his wife has to tolerate conflicts as she has to accomplish dual careers. The end result of the incongruity of work-family roles would be inter-role conflict.

Also, when considering the research's antiquity, it is detectable that few research studies have been directed to identify the relationship between work-family conflict, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and job performance. On the other hand, few research studies have been conducted to identify the relationship between women's career development/ career orientation and work-family conflicts in different industries around the world (Aryati et al., 2018). Yusuf and Hasnidar (2020) conducted a research study on the topic of the "impact of work-family conflict on the career development of married women" by gathering data from the banking industry. Zhou and Wen (2016) conducted a research study on the topic of the "impact of work-family conflict on female staff's career development" by gathering data from the hotel industry. As per their research limitations, the impact should be tested using other variables such as organizational justice, communication, etc. Moreover, they emphasized the need to conduct the study in some other service sectors.

Nurak et al. (2018) conducted research to identify the impact of work-family conflict on career success orientation and career development of females in Indonesia. Above all, it evidently proves that there is an empirical gap, confirming the need to conduct this study. Generally, if women are unable to manage both work roles and family roles consistently, then work-family conflicts will be inevitable, which will have a negative impact on their career development. This impact may have positive impacts on their career development in some circumstances. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the impact of work-family conflict on women's career development in the Sri Lankan Insurance Sector.

Research Objectives

General Objectives

1. To assess the impact of work-family conflict on women's career development in Insurance companies in the Colombo district, Sri Lanka.

Specific Objectives

2. To examine the moderating effect of perceived supervisor support on work-family conflict and women's career development.

Literature Review

Work-Family Conflict and Women's Career Development

The research on women begins with a review of women's discrimination in their main duties and responsibilities at work (Yusuf & Hansidar 2020). Psychologist Dan and sociologist researchers further reinforced this. It presented a vocational theory that divides the three-part theory of women's vocational development, such as career-oriented, marriage-oriented, and homemaker-oriented women (Woods, 2020). Racene (2014), has presented two models of women's career patterns based on gender, such as home activities and work activities. Yusuf and Hansidar (2020) found that work was the only male career pattern. Many women's job-related decisions and career results have been impacted by marriage and family in different ways that are difficult to understand (Wang, 2022). When work effort is controlled, the negative effect of family duties on merit gains will be stronger for women than men. Therefore, women may perform worse at work, in turn negatively affecting their chances of getting promoted and receiving pay raises.

Anderson et al. (2002) suggested that numerous studies related to Work-Family Conflicts prove low career and perceived career success levels. Cohen et al. (2007) identified that there is a link between Work-Family Conflict and job advancement with regard to secondary education careers. However, the work-family conflict and women's career advancement are supported when the family and professional spheres are reconciled (Ugwu, 2019). Domenico and Jones (2006), per their findings, identified that time constraints, husbands favoring their careers, and a lack of other family members' support as the key ground sources of work-family conflict. Therefore, the researcher developed the following hypothesis (H1) based on the above justifications.

H1: There is a significant impact of work-family conflict on women's career development.

Perceived Supervisor Support, Work-Family Conflict and Women's Career Development

Work-family conflict can be seen in any organization, but perceived supervisor support will act as a shield against work-family issues. According to Tziner et al. (2015), this process of work-to-family spillover is known as negative spillover. It is believed to be the result of the additional time employees devote to their jobs to handle their workload. As a result, work-family conflict arises, which leads to stress and burnout (Tziner et al., 2015). However, today many organizations have initiated family-supportive initiatives to reduce work-family conflicts. Even though some studies have specified that the establishment of supposed "family-friendly" policies provides positive benefits for employees and eventually for the organization, other studies have indicated that establishing and practicing such policies and procedures might not be adequate to yield a substantial mitigation of the stress resulting from work-family conflict. Over, the formal policies and procedures, great support from the managers and supervisors is much needed for any realistic reduction of work-family conflicts.

Moreover, contemporary studies have shown that organizations must initiate a family-friendly culture along with an environment where managers and supervisors support and value employees who are struggling for a better balance between work and family life (Allen, 2000 Clark, 2001; Talukder, 2019). Furthermore, Allen (2000) suggested that emotional, practical, and social support from the direct reporting manager or the supervisor is a must in mitigating work-family conflicts. Controlling work –schedules, and satisfaction of work schedules are effectively monitored by supervisory support. These elements are directly related to work-family conflict (Ahmed et al., 2012). O'Driscoll et al. (2003) found out that supervisor support can moderate or safeguard the stress employees' face due to work-family conflicts. Therefore, immediate supervisor or the manager may act as a crucial role in mitigating the negative influences of work-family conflicts. Hence, making supervisors aware of employees' needs might be an essential strategy for forecasting work-family conflicts in advance.

Supervisory support plays a pivotal role in an employee's career progression. Wickramasinghe and Jayaweera (2010) found that employees' careers might probably be enriched by supportive relationships with their managers or supervisors. Moreover, supervisory support includes career-enriching functions such as providing challenging assignments, sponsorships, and visibility, as well as psychological functions such as counselling, acceptance, and friendship. Poisat et al. (2014) suggested that supervisory support is crucial to ensure that female employees are satisfied with their careers. Hence supervisors and managers need to provide female employees with recognition, mentoring, coaching, and a broad range of training and development opportunities to support their career

advancement. Moreover, supervisors must learn about female employees' career goals and aspirations in order to inform them about numerous career opportunities within the organization itself and to support their efforts to advance their careers by attaining supplementary training.

Therefore, as per the above findings, it is clear that perceived supervisory support reduced work-family conflicts and on the other hand perceived supervisory support plays a pivotal role in the female career advancement journey. Hence, according to prior research, perceived supervisory support reduces work-family conflict. Hence work-family conflict negatively affects women's career advancement with the effect of perceived supervisor support that negative impact would moderate.

H2: Perceived supervisor support moderates the relationship between work-family conflict and women's career development.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Nurak et al., 2018 (as cited in Epstein, 1988) introduced three theories to explain gender differences in the workplace. Socialization theory explains gender differences in the society. The gender gap affects personal characteristics, skills, and preferences and greatly affects social activities. Conversely, building a different image of culturally inappropriate or improper social attitudes and behaviors is socialized through media and communication methods. Socialization is a major stimulus in determining the suitable types of work according to gender and greatly influences men's and women's future orientations and decisions about occupations suitable to their skills. It also affects the career development of women and men, in some jobs, the extent to which women promote higher positions is also limited by society itself. Some studies show that adults have higher future expectations for men than women (Nurak et al., 2018).

The human capital theory describes the gender differences in the workplace. This is based on neoclassical economic theory, which states that women are employed in lower-paid job positions and men are employed in higher-paid job positions in financial choices that greatly affect their work performance (Nurak et al., 2018). Moreover, the human capital theory argues that people choose a job in order to maximize their revenue. However, women are choosing low-paid jobs for employment, not considering even their career development. Due to this, women become frustrated, and their work performance decreases.

The structural social theory states that men dominate limited career opportunities for women and jobs. Nurak et al. (2018) suggest several factors affect opportunities and potential barriers to women's career development in public bureaucracy. These factors range from the level of social culture to the internal factors of an organization. According to Nurak et al. (2018) (as cited in Guy, 1993), the three factors that affect the career development of women in a public organization are opportunities, power, and proportion. A person becomes successful in his/her career based on experience and knowledge. Many successful women are achieving high career development, fulfilling their job responsibilities, and working hard full-time (Nurak et al., 2018).

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 01 illustrates the study's conceptual framework. The independent variable is work-family conflict; the dependent variable is women's career development; and the moderating

variable is perceived supervisor support.

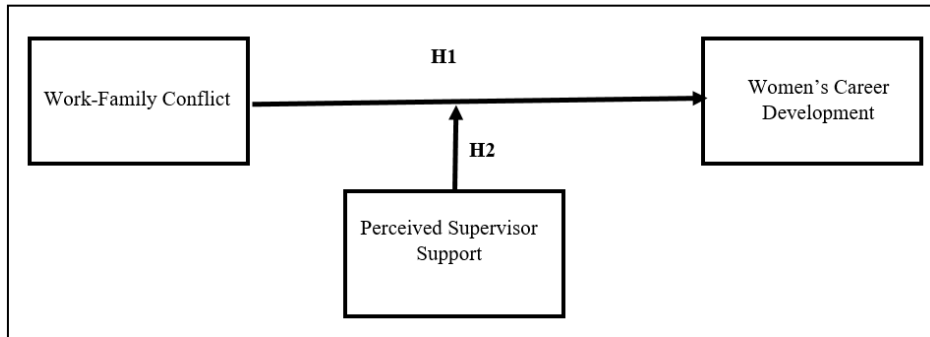


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study
Source: Authors (2023)

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study is designed based on positivist philosophy and is a descriptive and cross-sectional research study (Saunders et al., 2009). A closed-ended questionnaire was used to gather the study's data. The questionnaire included 10 items on work-family conflicts, 15 items to assess women's career development, and 16 items on perceived supervisor support. Additionally, the questionnaire was made to gather respondent demographic data. The information was gathered from the married female executive and above level employees from selected insurance companies in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Pre-tested scales from previous studies were used to collect responses on all research variables.

Population and the Sample

In the current study, the population is known to the author. The present study is about married senior- executive and above-level female employees in the Insurance industry in the Colombo district, Sri Lanka for the population of the study. There are 220 senior-executive and above-level employees in selected three insurance companies in the Colombo district, Sri Lanka. In this study, the sample size is 141 and the confidence interval is 95%, according to the Morgan table. Then, this study applied convenience sampling method for data collection which helps in collecting data from any available respondents which is a convenient method of data collection.

Measurement Scales of Variables

The dependent variable: women's career development was assessed using the measurement scale developed by Developed by Spagnoli & Weng (2017) with 15 items. Career development or career growth was assessed through four dimensions; career goals, professional abilities, promotion speed, and remuneration growth. All the items are anchored on a five-point Likert scale where 1=Strongly Disagree 5=Strongly Agree. Sample items include: "My present job moves me closer to my career goals", "My promotion speed is fast in my present organization.

The independent variable: To measure work-family conflict, Boles et al. (2001) seven-point scale was used (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) with 10 Items. Sample items include, 'The demands of my work interfere with home and family life', 'The demands of my family members interfere with work-related activities'.

The moderating variable: perceived supervisor support was assessed using the measurement scale developed by Eisenberger et.al, (1986) which includes 16 items. All the items are anchored on a seven-point Likert scale where 1= Strongly Disagree 7=Strongly Agree. Sample items include: 'My supervisor values my contributions to the well-being of our department'; 'If my supervisor could hire someone to replace me at a lower salary he/she would do so'.

Data Analysis Tools and Techniques

After being processed, the primary data were imported into SPSS for analysis. First, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient of internal consistency was used to confirm the scales' and the sample's reliability. Factor analysis and the KMO test were used to guarantee construct validity. To analyze each variable's unique behavior, descriptive statistics were created and the dataset's multivariate assumptions were verified. Regression analysis and correlation analysis were used to examine the advanced hypotheses.

Results and Interpretations

Reliability Statistics

The Cronbach's reliability test was used by the researcher to assess the internal consistency or reliability of the research constructs. According to scientific references, an adequate amount of internal consistency is present if the Cronbach Alpha value is higher than the alpha level of 0.70. In here the variables' Cronbach alpha coefficient of internal consistency is greater than 0.7. This indicates that there is an acceptable internal consistency among the items used in the questionnaire.

Table 01: Reliability Statistics

Variable	Cronbach Alpha
Women's Career Development	0.961
Work-Family Conflict	0.974
Perceived Supervisor Support	0.966

Source: SPSS output (2023)

Validity Statistics

The KMO value should be greater than 0.7 and the significant value should be less than 0.005 to consider the measurement as a valid instrument. According to the KMO coefficients and the respective sig. values for variables given in table 02, the study sample seems statistically adequate to perform an EFA to assess the construct validity.

Table 02: Validity Statistics

Variable	KMO Coefficient	Bartlett's Test [Chi-Square]	Sig.
Women's Career Development	.922	2206.694	0.000
Work-Family Conflict	.940	2102.464	0.000
Perceived Supervisor Support	.953	3444.745	0.000

Source: SPSS output (2023)

Correlation Analysis

According to table 03, it is observed that there exists a strong negative relationship between work-family conflict and women's career development. Hence H1 was accepted.

Table 03: Correlation Analysis

	Work-Family Conflicts	Women's Career Development
Work-Family Conflicts	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-.710**
	N	136

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS output (2023)

Regression Analysis

A regression analysis was conducted to investigate the impact (significance and the relationship) between the study variables. Table 2 demonstrates that WFC has a significant negative influence on WCD where $\beta = -.366, p < 0.05$.

Table 04: Simple Regression Analysis

R	-.710**
R Square	0.503
Adjusted R Square	0.500
Standard Error	0.64088
Observations (N)	136
F	135.854
Sig.	0.000
Regression	Linear
Method	Enter

Source: SPSS output (2023)

Table 05: Coefficients (Work-Family Conflict and Women’s Career Development)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.198	.167		25.198	.000
	Work-Family Conflict	-.366	.031	-.710	-11.656	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Women's Career Development

Source: SPSS Output (2023)

The regression results confirm the statistical validity of the H1 hypothesis (H1 - – There is a significant impact of work-family conflict on women’s career development) that an employee's work-family conflict significantly impacts women's career development. Accordingly, the H1 hypothesis was accepted testifying that the work-family conflict significantly impacts women's career development.

Moderator Analysis

Table 06: Coefficients (Work-Family Conflict and Women’s Career Development)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.763 ^a	.582	.573	.59237

a. Predictors: (Constant), Interaction, Perceived Supervisor Support, Work-Family Conflicts

Source: SPSS Output (2023)

The R Square value of the model summary table is 0.582 which indicate that the independent variable (Work-Family Conflict) explains 58.2% variation in the dependent variable (Women’s career development).

Table 07: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Er	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.921	.205		19.116	.000
	Work-Family Conflicts	-.409	.030	-.794	13.507	.000
	Perceived Supervisor Support	.110	.032	.194	3.381	.001
	Interaction	-.164	.046	-.205	-3.552	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Women's Career Development

Source: SPSS output (2023)

There is a strong causal effect between the independent variable work-family conflict and the dependent variable women's career development (P-value = 0.000). Since the P-value is $P\text{-value} \leq 0.05$, the relationship between work-family conflict and women's career development variables is significant. The interaction has a P-value of 0.001 Since the P-value is lower than 0.05, we can consider that the moderator variable perceived supervisor support has an effect on the relationship between independent variable work-family conflict and dependent variable women's career development. Hence, H2 (Perceived supervisor support moderates the relationship between work-family conflict and women's career development) is accepted.

Discussion

In the current study, the general objective would be to identify the impact of work-family conflict on women's career development in the insurance sector in the Colombo district, Sri Lanka. Furthermore, this study intends to contribute to fill the empirical gap in the existing literature within the service sector in the Sri Lankan context. According to the researcher, there is a significant impact between work-family conflict and women's career development (work-family conflict $\beta = -0.710$); this relationship is significant at a 99% confidence level (Sig. $T < 0.01$), thereby supporting H1. In the present study, the R square value is 0.503, hence it can be concluded that the model has fit to 50.3% of women's career development to depending on the work-family conflicts. Consequently, the results prove that the work-family conflict explains 50.3% of the total variation in women's career development. Yusuf and Hansider (2020) suggested through their findings that there is a negative effect of work-family conflict on women's career development. Similarly, Nurak et al. (2018) found that work-family conflict has a negative impact on women's career development. Hence H1 was accepted.

The R Square value of the model summary table is 0.582 which indicate that the independent variable (Work-Family Conflict) explains 58.2% variation in the dependent variable (Women's career development). The one-way ANOVA studies the means of the groups in question and evaluates whether any of them are statistically significantly different from one another. In this case, the one-way ANOVA shows significance (Sig. = 0.000). There is a strong causal effect between the independent variable work-family conflict and the dependent variable women's career development (P-value = 0.000). Since the P-value is $P\text{-value} \leq 0.05$, the relationship between work-family conflict and women's career development variables is significant. The interaction has a P-value of 0.001 Since the P-value is lower than 0.05, we can consider that the moderator variable perceived supervisor support has an effect on the relationship between independent variable work-family conflict and dependent variable women's career development. Hence, H2 (Perceived supervisor support significantly moderates the relationship between work-family conflict and women's career development) is accepted.

Adu et al. (2023), done a study and as per their results they concluded that work-family conflict is negatively impacting women's career development (career goal process, professional ability development and promotion speed). Perceived supervisor support which is a sub component of perceived organizational support moderates the association between work-family conflict and both professional ability development and promotion speed. Conversely, as per their results, perceived supervisor support doesn't moderate the relationship between work-family conflict and career goal progression. Hence it is clear that

perceived supervisor support is not only affecting for women's career development. Other than that, certain individual, organizational, and socio-cultural factors can be identified as other factors that affect women's career development. But perceived supervisor support will mitigate the negative effects of work-family conflicts towards women's career development.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In the 21st century, women's role as a housewife has shifted to career women who is always outside the traditional women's role. Even though career development has become a trending topic nowadays, when the Sri Lankan context is taken there have been only a few research on women's career development. When considering different Sri Lankan industries, work-family conflict, job satisfaction, and job performance are the areas where few research studies have been conducted. However, to identify the relationship between work-family conflict and women's career development, very few studies have been conducted. The service sector is the most important sector compared to the agriculture and manufacturing sectors in the Sri Lankan economy. Moreover, the highest female labor force participation also can be identified in the service sector. This study provides several implications for managers and practitioners. If organizations invest in women's career development, in return companies would be able to get an effective combination of workforce. Working females who are bound with many responsibilities compared to men, are always struggling to achieve their career goals. Hence, when a company provides career development opportunities, they feel that their contributions are valued by organizations, so they try to provide their utmost efforts and collaboration in achieving organizational goals and objectives. Hence it is critical to implement and improve more and more career development programs, training and development programs, and coaching and mentoring programs. These studies are important when adopting flexible work arrangements, work-from-home facilities (remote working), implementing family-friendly policies, taking leaves (maternity leaves), and providing foreign vocational training programs for women.

The current research was initiated to assess the impact of work-family conflict on women's career development with the moderating role of perceived supervisor support of married female senior executives and above-level employees in the insurance sector in Colombo district, Sri Lanka. Accordingly, the researcher developed the hypotheses to achieve the present objectives based on the literature. Hence, the researcher conveniently selected a sample from the insurance sector in the Colombo district, Sri Lanka. Primary data were collected using the standard questionnaire as the Google form via online methods. Furthermore, the deductive approach was predominantly applied, and two hypotheses were advanced to test the study results. The researcher analyzed the data set using the SPSS package based on the one hundred and thirty-six responses. The researcher used regression analysis to prove the impact of variables on each other. All two developed hypotheses were accepted (H1 and H2). The results showed a significant impact of work-family conflict (IV) on women's career development (DV). Also, the researcher found that perceived supervisor support significantly moderates the relationship between work-family conflict and women's career development. Therefore, the study will connect the context gap with extensive empirical authentications.

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