

The Stressors in Professional Women's Work-family Conflict:

A Chinese Study

L'ORIGINE DE STRESS DANS LE CONFLIT TRAVAIL-FAMILLE CHEZ LES FEMMES PROFESSIONNELLES: UNE ÉTUDE CHINOISE

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Abstract: On the base of some existing studies on the "work-family conflict", we investigated 121 professional women on role conflict. It summarizes the actuality of the professional women's work-family conflict, discusses the relation of the women's work-family conflict and their stressors, analyses the self-factors that effect the professional women's work-family conflict. The result showed that (1) professional women's self-role perceived and social-role perceived have conflicts;(2) education, incoming ratio, professional experience can influence the stress;(3) domesticity satisfaction, family activity, spouse stress, work devotion and work load are stressors of professional women's work-family conflict.

Key words: professional woman; work family conflict; stressor

Résumé: Sur la base des études existantes sur le "conflit travail-famille", nous avons enquêté sur 121 femmes professionnelles sur le rôle des conflits. Il résume la réalité du conflit travail-famille des femmes professionnelles, traite de la relation entre le conflit travail-famille et leur origine de stress et analyse des facteurs qui ont des influences sur le conflit travail-famille des femmes professionnelles. Le résultat a montré que (1)il y a des conflits entre le rôle personnel et le rôle social chez les femmes professionnelles; (2) l'éducation, les revenus, l'expérience professionnelle peuvent influencer le stress; (3) la satisfaction de la domesticité, les activités familiales, le stress conjugal, le dévouement pour le travail et les charges professionnelles sont des origines de stress des femmes professionnelles dans le conflit travail-famille.

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1. BACKGROUND

Nowadays, it's important for women to participate in the social development with abroad occupational modes, and it's meaningful for women's development. However, we still have two expectations for women. One side we hope women can attach themselves to social job and pay out for the society. The other side we still hope they can play their family roles well. Because of the limited time and energy, it's very difficult for women to act each roles well, and it will bring work-family conflict easily(TONG ShaoSu,1995).

Several researches have indicated that work-family conflict can make negative influence for individual mentality and physiology, including individual body health was damaged, emotion descend and can't play family role employable, then reduce the family, marriage quality and well-being^[2]; in work field, it behave as late, absent, turnover , and reduce the productivity, work satisfaction and organizational commitment(Greenhaus J H, et al., 1985;Higgins C A, et al., 1992; O'Driscoll M P, et al., 1996). Thus it can be seen that it's very important for both company and women to study the work-family conflict.

Robbins(1993) defined the work-family conflict as: when the people faced to the branching role expectation, work-family conflict appears. Here, you will find if you obey one of the roles' request, you can't obey another role request. When people can't meet several roles' requests at one time, the role conflict comes into being(Robbins S P.,1992). Higgins(1992) bring forward work-family conflict model. He considered that stress is the causation to make one's mentality unbalanced, and named the factors to bring stress as stressor.

Based on the former studies, our research try to realize the relationship between work-family conflict and role stressor more, then find the professional women's work-family conflict development rules, help the women adjust the attitudes to their work and living status, and provide research evidence to improve the professional women's mental healthy.

2. METHOD

2.1 Participants

Participants were from 22 organizations in the HangZhou City, including financial, manufacturing, education, medical and civil servant. A total of 121 responses out of 150 surveys (80.7%) were received and only 103(68.7%) availably. 89% of participants were female, 11% were male. 49 participants age was under 30, 32 participants was from 31~40, 22 participants was above 40. The averaged was 33.6 years of age. And 46 participants of 103 got the bachelor degree.

2.2 Interview

To make the work-family conflict questionnaire and understand the state of professional women work-family conflict and stressor, we firstly interview 15 professional women, following is the interview syllabus.

- (1) Did your work and family role make your life more conflict, Have you thought about it?
- (2) Which stress in your work would bring work-family conflict?

- (3) Which stress in your family life would bring work-family conflict?
(4) How did you deal with these stresses?

2.3 Questionnaire Structure

After the interview, we made the work-family conflict & stress questionnaire. The questionnaire included three parts:

Part I : Role-Stressor Inventory (work stress, family stress, work devotion, family devotion)

Part II : Work-Family Conflict Inventory (Work interfere Family, Family interfere Work, Work-Family interfere one another)

Part III: Personal Background

3. ANALYSIS

3.1 Descriptive statistic for the variables

After the explore factor analysis, we got the following factors and the Cronbach's coefficient α . The descriptive statistics showed in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's coefficient α

Factor	M	s	α	Factor	M	s	α
I. Work Stressor	2.57	0.62	0.77	Work-Family Conflict	2.87	0.72	0.74
Initiative Lack	2.44	0.55	0.80	Work interfere Family(W-F)	3.09	0.58	0.58
Role Puzzle	2.53	0.69	0.58	Family interfere Work(F-W)	2.37	0.65	0.87
Work Load	2.76	0.58	0.81	Work-Family interfere one another(W↔F)	2.66	0.77	0.73
Family Stressor	2.73	0.71	0.66	II. Family Devotion	3.21	0.74	0.71
Housework Stress	2.82	0.72	0.57	Family Activity	3.54	0.52	0.70
Spouse Stress	2.47	0.63	0.73	Domesticity Satisfaction	2.85	0.66	0.63
Children stress	2.99	0.67	0.56	Work Devotion	3.00	0.97	0.89

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

The factor of Spouse Stress filled by married women, and Domesticity satisfaction, Children stress filled by the women that have children

In Table1, we can find that the professional women's score in role stressor is not high (Work stressor $m=2.57$, family stressor $m=2.73$), only the score in Children stress was a little high relatively (Children stress $m=2.99$), these means that they consider that the stresses in their work and family were not very hard. And the score in devotion was high(work devotion $m=3.00$, family devotion= 3.21), these means that the professional women can keep their balance between work and family, and relatively the devotion to family take up women's energy mostly.

3.2 Demographic influence to professional women's stressor and conflict

In this part, we use the demographic variables such as age, education, professional experience incoming ratio etc as the independent variable, stressor and conflict as dependent variable, make One-Way ANONA analysis.

Table 2. Demographic influence to professional women's stressor and conflict

	Work Stressor	Work Devotion	Family Stressor	Family Devotion	Work-Family Conflict
Age	0.86	0.76	0.78	0.65	0.33
Incoming ratio	1.75*	1.34	1.71*	0.87	2.13**
education	1.86**	1.03	1.45*	1.67*	1.32
Professional experience	2.04*	1.32	0.89	2.43*	2.16*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

In Table2 we can find Incoming ratio, education and professional experience can influence the stressor and W↔F significant. Furthermore, we still find housework stress can increase along with professional experience, and the women work experience below 5 years have the highest domesticity satisfaction, followed is above 20 years, the lowest is from 6-19 years. In education, graduate and above can deal with spouse stress better than others, but, its domesticity satisfaction is lower than others.

Incoming ratio influence both work and family stressor. The women that their incoming ratio from 40%-60% have the highest role puzzle and spouse stress. Further, incoming ratio still influence W↔F significant. Spouses have equal incoming have high W-F.

3.2 Relationship between Role stressor and Work-Family Conflict

Table 3. Correlation analysis between Role stressor and Work-Family Conflict

	Initiative Lack	Role Puzzle	Work Load	Work Devotion	Housework Stress	Spouse Stress	Children stress	Family Activity	Domesticity Satisfaction
W-F	-0.16	-0.10	0.36**	0.10	-0.02	0.06	0.21	0.20*	0.07
F-W	0.18	0.07	0.02	-0.26**	0.18	0.36**	0.26*	0.16	0.11
W↔F	0.07	0.15	0.36**	-0.07	0.07	0.10	0.20	0.17	0.28*

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

In Table3 we can find work load have significant positive correlation with W-F and W↔F. Work devotion make negative effect to W-F and spouse stress make positive effect. Family Activity and Domesticity Satisfaction can affect the conflict intensity too.

4. DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTION

4.1 The WFC actuality of professional women

Based on our research result, professional women estimated their WFC lowly, but estimated their work devotion and family devotion highly, and estimated W-F highest. These means professional women were not aware of the stress from their work and family, but they had to admit their high W-F stress. These objective and subjective contradiction make some work and family hidden troubles, in the same time it would bring bad influence for professional mental health.

We still find that incoming ratio is an important factor that influences the stresses too. The women that their incoming ratio were in 40%-60% have the highest role puzzle and spouse stress. In our traditional marriage conception, incoming is a sensitivity index. The women have low incoming ratio can orientate their role in family definitely, on the contrary the women have high incoming ratio can orientate their role in work. Moreover the women have equal incoming ratio with their spouse can't orientate their role definitely, hereby bring high stress and conflict.

The most important stressor lead to professional women WFC are work load, work devotion, spouse stress, family activity and domesticity satisfaction. Work devotion make neglect effect to W-F significantly, this means work devotion higher, F-W lower. Because work devotion is an attitude how to distribute roles, work role is the first choice for professional women, so professional women will take most of their time and energy on the career, and their parent and matron will take on the housework mostly, so their family life would not affect their work so much. By farther analysis and back interview, we find that most professional women regard subjective factors include work stress and family stress as objective criterion, we can't quantitate it. And on the contrary, they take objective factors such as work devotion, family devotion as subjective criterion because they make these assessment just through their energy and stamina payment in the daytime. To explain these surprising result, we think professional women have concept puzzle between realistic stress and payment oneself on the one side, on the other side we think it is very passive for women to understand and deal with the stress. To understand the realistic stress is the first step to reduce and solve role conflict, so how to lead women understand the stress better is the key problem to solve professional women's role conflict.

4.2 The countermeasure to reduce professional women's WFC

(1) First we need a sustaining social circumstance, include work condition, media condition and family condition. The sustaining social circumstance can increase women self-identity, reduce role conflict root from the contravention between self role cognition and social role cognition. At the same time, getting family support can make professional women own a free and easy family condition, it's very important and facilitated for women to reduce their WFC.

(2) Second we should improve women's education, sparkplug right sex concept. Improving education is propitious for women to establish equality concept, assess realistic stress objectively, deal with mental contradiction and conflict better.

5. CONCLUSION

- (1) Professional women's self-role perceived and social-role perceived have conflicts
- (2) Education, incoming ratio and professional experience can influence the stress
- (3) Domesticity satisfaction, Family activity, Spouse Stress, work devotion and work load are

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