

Work-Family Conflict & Quality of Work Life among Veterinary Doctors

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This study investigates the relationship between work-family conflict and QWL by using a sample of 322 veterinary doctors. QWL depends not only upon work place factors but also up on non-work life. The study reveals that a large number of respondents have been experiencing work-family conflict as compared to family-work conflict. It was further revealed that only work-family conflict variable was found to be significant and had negative impact on QWL. The findings of the study suggest that both types of conflict affect the QWL of the veterinarians but work to family has been found more prevalent among them.

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Introduction

Today's educated workforce expects more than just pay from their work. The dynamic work environment demands equal importance to both technology and human needs, where the individual perspective play a key role in humanization of work atmosphere and democratization of work relations. Such a holistic approach can contribute to high employee perception of "Quality of Working Life" in an organization (Anbarasan & Mehta, 2009). The term quality of work life (QWL) can be conceptualized as a subset of the quality of life as both are closely related to each other. Work life is an integral part of total life space (Lawler, 1982). The term QWL has been defined by various scholars and management practitioners but did not find a common definition. Serey's (2006) work on quality of work life is quite conclusive and best meets the contemporary work environment. The definition has been related to a meaningful and satisfying work. It includes: (i) an opportunity to exercise one's talent, capacities and face challenges/situations that require independent initiative and self-direction; (ii) an activity thought to be worthwhile by the individuals involved;

(iii) an activity in which one understands the role the individual can play in the achievement of the overall goals; and (iv) a sense of taking pride in what one is doing and in doing it well. This issue of meaningful and satisfying work has been merged with the discussions on job satisfaction, and believed to be more favorable to quality of work life. QWL depends not only on work place factors but also on quality of non-work life and employee specific attitudes developed over a period of time. These variables enhance the human input at work place and ultimately raise the QWL. A perfect QWL in fact promotes the employee well-being and thereby the well-being of the organization. The present study analyzes the effect of work family conflict on QWL on account of fluctuating work environment with competing job and family commitments.

Work-Family Conflict & QWL

Ideological, political, economic and social developments have led to changes in the structure of the labor market and the industrial landscape more generally over the last few decades. In turn these changes have resulted in reforms at the workplace that have long since raised concerns amongst individuals, families and researchers (Allan et al., 2005). The increase in the occurrence and importance of work-family issues mirror the changes witnessed in both family structures and the nature of work in most of the developed world (Watson, Buchanan, Cambell & Briggs, 2003). Family is indeed an important supporter for everyone and probably the family support is

able to provide motivation and strength to employees to perform better (Azril, 2010). But if someone fails to devote adequate time and attention to one's family, may lead to work-family conflict. Greenhaus & Beutell's (1985) defined work-family conflict as "a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect". This conceptual framework has been consistently used by many researchers to study work-family conflict (Gutek, Searle & Klepa, 1991; Frone et al, 1992; Huang, Hammer, Neal & Perrin, 2004) and the same has been used in the present study.

Conflict between work and family is bi-directional. Role pressures from work and family can occur simultaneously in both the directions. That is, excessive role demands from the work domain (e.g., hours worked, inflexible work schedules, etc.), can result in work-to-family (W-F) conflict. Similarly, excessive role demands from the family domain (e.g., childcare duties, domestic chores, etc.) can result in family-to-work (F-W) conflict. Therefore, it is the combined effect of W-F and F-W conflict that ultimately results in the overall level of work-family conflict experienced by an individual (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Netemeyer et al., 1996; Gutek et al, 1991).

Review of Literature

In early 1960s, researchers had begun to study and connect the dots between work and family. Numerous studies on work life thereafter proved that

what happened in the workplace have significant impact on individuals and their families (Lewis & Cooper, 1987; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Sirgy et al. (2001) analyzed the predictive effect of QWL on satisfaction in non-work life domains, like leisure, family, financial, health, education, friendship, neighborhood, community, spiritual, environment, housing, cultural and social status, because satisfaction from one life domain tends to spill over to other life domains. QWL contributed significantly to the satisfaction/dissatisfaction in other life domains, such as family, leisure, health and so on.

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Littlefield (2004) assessed the perception of 278 members of dual career families from 14 organizations related to healthcare, education, banking, insurance, tourism and manufacturing industries in Northern Michigan. The purpose was to examine how supportive members of dual-career families perceive 18 practices in alleviating work-life conflict. The study suggested that the members of dual career families perceive health insurance and dental insurance as most supportive in alleviating work life conflict. It was found that increased satisfaction with QWL programs that helped members balance the stress of work-life conflict, may increase productivity, employee morale and overall corporate productivity. Mott et al. (2004) attempted to identify the variables influencing work life of

1737 actively practicing pharmacists in the United States. The results revealed that 48 percent of practicing pharmacists experienced work-home conflict leading to poor quality of work life. Beh (2006) examined career related dimensions which were; career satisfaction (9 items), career achievement (13 items) and career balance (15 items). The sample consists of 475 managers from the free trade zones in Malaysia. All these dimensions were found to be significant and further concluded that balance between work and family deemed to be a very good indicator to predict QWL in relation to career related dimensions.

Che Rose et al. (2006) concluded from the data of 475 executives from the electronic and electrical industry in Malaysia that in addition to career satisfaction and career achievement, career balance (individuals' family life) correlates significantly with his/her level of quality of work life. This further suggested that a successful family life carries over into one's career and makes one more satisfied with personal achievements. Khani et al. (2007) explored how a sample of 200 nurses in an Iranian state rate the quality of work life. One of the four sub scales used in quality of work life tool was work life/home life. The findings from the study were consistent with the findings from a previous study on the acute care nurses by Brooks & Anderson (2004) in a mid western state. Respondents had little energy left after work, were unable to balance their work and family lives and stated that rotating schedules negatively affected their lives. Moreover 76 percent of them were un-

able to balance their work and family lives. Sale & Smoke (2007) attempted to assess the QWL of four employee groups (physicians, nurses, physicists, radiation therapists) by identifying the problem areas in the cancer centre. These problem areas were articulated as four domains that could be measured with existing work place tools; burnout, social support, job satisfaction and work family conflict. QWL scores were moderate in two years in consideration but there were considerable variation amongst four employee groups.

Saraji & Dargahi (2006) considered balance between work and family life as one of the dimensions to measure the positive and negative attitudes from QWL of 908 hospital employees in Iran. It was found that 82 percent of the workers expressed dissatisfaction with the balance between the time they spent working and the time they spent with their family and friends. The same feelings of employees were endorsed in a study by Dargahi and Yazdi (2007). Dhar (2008) conducted a qualitative study with the help of fifteen bus drivers from four different Pune Municipal Corporation depots. The objective of the study was to see how QWL of the drivers could be improved and ultimately leading to better transport service to the citizens and a reduction in the rates of accidents. It was concluded that QWL initiatives can provide certain positive experiences for staff, especially when they promote the opportunity to socialize and build connections with co workers and help to fulfill employee needs for humor and balance. Azril (2010) included individual and family life

as one of the nine aspects of QWL of 180 government extension employees to assess its relation with work performance. It was found that individual and family life has been proved to be the highest contributor to work performance amongst agriculture extension officers.

Rationale of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between work-family conflict and quality of work life of veterinarians who provide technical services, for example; vaccination, disease treatment, controlling different types of outbreaks, providing artificial insemination for breed improvement and advising farmers and owners in rearing and maintaining the health status of animals. All the veterinary officers, who act as the promoters of human health in taking the responsibilities for hygienic production of meat, eggs, milk etc., at many a times, have to be prepared to work in unhygienic conditions without appropriate protective clothing. They have to work outdoor in all kinds of weather and treat the animals or may have to perform surgeries under unsanitary conditions. They are more exposed to fatal infections and physical risks of being bitten, kicked or scratched. In brief, duties of veterinary officers while providing treatment are hard, arduous and tedious due

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to objective patients who are non-cooperative. The work environment in which veterinarians are working seems to be leading to work-family conflict which further affect their QWL adversely.

Research Methodology

The universe of the study consists of 649 veterinary doctors employed by Punjab Government on permanent basis for the veterinary hospitals/clinics and Punjab Veterinary Vaccine Institute (PVVI), Regional Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (RDDL), farms and semen banks. In order to collect the sample the questionnaire was e-mailed to all the veterinary officers. A sample of 322 respondents was collected partly through personal approach and the rest in monthly meetings at district level.

Quality of Work Life Scale: QWL has been measured by considering six life domains including; health, happiness, relationship with spouse, children and other important people, satisfaction with job and with family. For health and Quality of relationship with spouse and children and with other important people, respondents were asked to rate their responses on a three point scale 3, 2 and 1 for 'good', 'average' and 'poor' quality. Similarly, happiness and satisfaction with job and with family were measured on a three point scale 3, 2 and 1 for 'high', 'moderate' and 'low' quality. The value of alpha, a measure of internal consistency of the scale is 0.79.

Work-Family Conflict Scale: The work-family conflict has been measured

with a ten-item scale developed by Gutek et al. (1991) and Carlson and Perrew (1999). The scale has been divided into two parts; first part measures the interference of work in family life and second part assesses interference of family in work life. The responses were sought on a five point scale 5 for 'Strongly Agree', 4 for 'Agree', 3 for 'Undecided', 2 for 'Disagree' and 1 for 'Strongly Disagree'.

Results and Discussion

Quality of Work life: For measuring QWL of the respondents a single score has been calculated for each respondent by adding the weights assigned to original responses of the respondents about the six dimensions considered for measuring quality of life among the veterinary doctors. The actual range of scores in the present sample has been calculated to be 6 to 18 with a mean of 2.69 and S.D of 2.03, which indicate superior quality of work life being enjoyed by the respondents.

Table 1 shows the mean score and standard deviation of each item of the quality of work life scale which reveals that the respondents have been found satisfied with the variables 'Good quality of relationship with spouse and children' with the highest mean value of 2.86. This is being followed by 'quality of relationship with other people (who are important for you)' with mean value 2.83, 'Health' with mean value 2.76, 'Satisfaction with family with mean value 2.72, 'Happiness' with mean value 2.57 and 'Satisfaction with job' with mean value 2.43.

Table 1 Quality of Life: Frequencies, Percentage, Mean and Standard Deviation

Variable	Good(3)	Average(2)	Poor(1)	Mean	Std. Deviation
B ₁	251 (77.95)	65 (20.19)	6 (1.86)	2.76	0.47
B ₂	188 (58.39)	129 (40.06)	5 (1.55)	2.57	0.53
B _{3-I}	282 (87.58)	34 (10.56)	6 (1.86)	2.86	0.40
B _{3-II}	273 (84.78)	42 (13.04)	7 (2.18)	2.83	0.43
B _{4-I}	168 (52.14)	123 (38.20)	31(9.63)	2.43	0.66
B _{4-II}	249 (77.33)	56 (17.39)	17 (5.28)	2.72	0.55

Note:-Figures in Parenthesis indicate the percentage of respondents

In order to find out the number and percentage of respondents who have been experiencing 'High', 'Moderate' or 'Low' level of quality of work life, all the 322 respondents have been distributed according to their mean values and are reported in Table 2. As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the range of mean scores could vary from 1 to 3 and thus are interpreted accordingly. Around two percent of the respondents have been experiencing poor quality of work life; around 28 percent of them have reported moderate level of quality of work life; and about 70 percent of the respondents have indicated a supe-

rior quality of work life. The results reveal that a very large number of veterinary doctors have been enjoying a good or high level of quality of work life. They are government employees with grade A officers rank, guaranteed good salary, job security and pension scheme which was applicable till 2004. The level of satisfaction at the work place does affect other life domains and ultimately QWL.

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Table 2 Distribution of Respondents according to the Mean Score of Quality of Life

Mean	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1.00	2	0.6	0.6
1.17	2	0.6	1.2
1.67	1	0.3	1.6
1.83	3	0.9	2.5
2.00	6	1.9	4.3
2.17	13	4	8.4
2.33	30	9.3	17.7
2.50	41	12.7	30.4
2.67	54	16.8	47.2
2.83	66	20.5	67.7
3.00	104	32.3	100
Total	322	100	

Work-Family Conflict: Table 3 shows the mean score and standard de-

viation of each item of the work family conflict scale. The respondents have

Table 3 Work-Family Conflict: Frequencies, Percentage, Mean and Standard Deviation

Variable	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Undecided (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	Mean	Std. Deviation
E ₁	38 (11.81)	166 (51.56)	20 (6.22)	90 (27.96)	8 (2.49)	3.42	1.09
E ₂	25 (7.77)	125 (38.82)	33 (10.25)	124 (38.51)	15 (4.66)	3.07	1.13
E ₃	23 (7.15)	99 (30.75)	50 (15.53)	140 (43.48)	10 (3.11)	2.95	1.07
E ₄	32 (9.94)	135 (41.93)	28 (8.70)	116 (36.03)	11 (3.42)	3.19	1.13
E ₅	29 (9.01)	113 (35.10)	39 (12.12)	126 (39.14)	15 (4.66)	3.05	1.14
E ₆	18 (5.60)	89 (27.64)	35 (10.87)	155 (48.14)	25 (7.77)	2.75	1.11
E ₇	16 (4.97)	52 (16.15)	38 (11.81)	179 (55.60)	37 (11.50)	2.48	1.05
E ₈	11 (3.42)	50 (15.53)	42 (13.05)	182 (56.53)	37 (11.50)	2.43	1.00
E ₉	14 (4.35)	63 (19.57)	39 (12.12)	176 (54.66)	30 (9.32)	2.55	1.04
E ₁₀	16 (4.97)	66 (20.50)	27 (8.39)	169 (52.49)	44 (13.67)	2.51	1.11

Note:- Figures in parenthesis are the percentage of respondents

been found agreeing with the statement ‘After work, I come home too tired to do some of the things I would like to do’ with the highest mean value of 3.42, which shows a strong agreement. This is being followed by ‘My work takes up time that I would like to spend with my family’ with mean value 3.19; ‘On the job I have so much work to do that it takes away from my personal interests’ with mean value 3.07; ‘My job or carrier interferes with my responsibilities at home, such as yard work, cooking, cleaning, repairs, shopping, paying the bills or child care’ with mean value 3.05.

No clear response by the respondents has been found about the variables; ‘My family and friends dislike how often I am preoccupied with my work while I am at home’ with mean value 2.95; ‘I am often too tired to work because of the things I have to do at home’ with mean value 2.75; ‘My personal life takes up time that I would like to spend at work’ with mean value 2.55; ‘My home life interferes with my responsibilities at work, such as getting to work on time, accomplishing daily tasks, or working overtime’ with mean value 2.51.

The respondents have been found denying the presence of variables; ‘My personal demands are so great that it takes away from my work’ with mean value 2.48; ‘My superiors and peers dislike how often I am preoccupied with my personal life while at work’ with mean value 2.43.

While 106 (32.90 percent) of the respondents have indicated the presence of

many of these variables, 86 of them (26.70 percent) have been found undecided about some of these variables and 130 (40.40 percent) have clearly denied the presence of some of the variables examined. The analysis further revealed that the mean value of work to family conflict variables varies from 3.42 to 2.95, which is greater than the range of mean value of family to work conflict variables, which varies from 2.75 to 2.43. The mean score for work to family conflict scale was 15.68 with standard deviation 4.447 and the mean score for family to work conflict scale was 12.71 with standard deviation 4.421. About 55 percent of the respondents agree with the presence of work to family conflict variables whereas about 24 percent of respondents agree with the presence of family to work conflict variables. A large number of respondents have been found experiencing work to family conflict as compared to family to work conflict which suggest that work to family conflict is more prevalent than family to work. One reason for the given situation seems to be that majority of the respondents of the present study are males and needs further probe whether this situation holds true for females also or it is family to work conflict which is more prevalent among females.

A large number of respondents have been found experiencing work to family conflict as compared to family to work conflict.

To test whether these scores are statistically significant, paired sample t-test has been used. The results reported in

Table 4, show that there was a significant difference between the two scores ($t = 12.44$, d.f. 321, $p < 0.0005$). It can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the work to family and family to work conflict among the respondents.

In order to calculate the effect size for paired sample t test, Eta squared has been calculated

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Eta squared} &= \frac{t^2}{t^2 + N - 1} \\ &= \frac{(12.441)^2}{(12.441)^2 + 322 - 1} \\ &= 0.325 \end{aligned}$$

According to Cohen (1998) the value of $t = 0.01$ indicate small effect, 0.06 indicate moderate effect, and 0.14 represent large effect. Given the Eta squared value of 0.325, it can be concluded that there was a large effect, with a substantial difference in the work to family and family to work conflict. The large effect of difference in the work to family and family to work conflict supports the conclusion made earlier that work to family conflict is more prevalent than family to work conflict. The present situation can be explained with the help of social identity theory (Stryker, 1968; 1980; 1987; Lobel, 1991; Wiley, 1991; Rothbard & Edwards, 2003) and the associated concept of 'role salience'. Social identity theory encapsulates a methodical approach to illustrate the relationships between gender, work and family roles, stress, and oneself. An identity can be defined as "a meaning one attributes to oneself (or others attribute to the person) by virtue of occupying a particular posi-

Table 4 Paired Samples t-test

Paired Differences	Mean	S.D.	Std. Error Mean	95 % Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Significance Level (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
W – F Conflict	2.966	4.278	0.238	2.497	3.435	12.441	321	0.000

tion” (Wiley, 1991). The degree to which a person views a certain life role (i.e. work) as an important means of self-definition and the extent to which a person is willing to commit personal resources to ensure success in that role is defined as role salience (Amatea, Cross, Clark & Bobby, 1986). However, a person may attach varying levels of importance to work and family roles. Therefore, a person may simultaneously have high salience in both work and family spheres (Thompson & Bunderson, 2001). Parasuraman & Greenhaus (2002) suggested that couple types can usefully be understood as different combinations of role saliencies which aim to categorize couples based on each partner’s role salience as advocated by social identity theory. This approach yields the following five main couple types:

- *Traditional*: where the traditional work and family roles of each partner are observed, (i.e., the male partner is highly work-oriented while the female partner is highly family oriented).
- *Modern 1*: where both partners place a high value on family life and subordinate work roles to family needs and demands;
- *Modern 2*: where both partners seek to place equal value on work and family roles, seeking to find balance through compromises in both of these two domains;
- *Modern 3*: where both partners place a high value on their respective work roles, with family responsibilities/as-

pirations subordinate to work and career goals;

- *Modern 4*: where traditional work and family roles are reversed (i.e., the male partner is highly family-oriented and the female partner is highly work-oriented).

From the five main couple types; it is possible that the greatest level of conflict would be experienced by Modern 1 and 3 couples where both the husband and wife are found to possess high and equal orientations toward their family or work roles. Therefore, couples in which both partners are either family (Modern 1) or work (Modern 3) oriented would experience a lack of time available to perform duties in the opposite life role. However, studies have found work and family domains to be asymmetrically permeable (Rothbard & Edwards, 2003). That is, often individuals are found to draw from family time to perform work demands but not vice versa, implying that family boundaries are more flexible than the comparatively rigid work boundaries.

Regression Analysis

In order to identify the association of W-F Conflict and F-W Conflict with quality of work life of veterinary doctors, correlation analysis has been performed (Table 5). Both work to family conflict and family to work conflict have negative and significant relationship with quality of work life. The correlation coefficient of work to family conflict is bigger ($r = -0.19$) than family to work conflict ($r = -0.12$). Allen

The spill-over between work and personal life has serious implications on QWL.

et al. (2000) confirmed that conflict between work and non-work life is associated with impaired psychological well-being and other negative outcomes. They further emphasized that problems associated with family responsibilities are additional resources that may diminish QWL. It was also asserted that when an employee has higher responsibilities there will be more spill over of negative work outcomes on family life. The demands of managing higher responsibilities at work and home are also a potential source of stress because it allows a spill over to family life thus creating an imbalanced working environment. Burke (1998) concluded that the spill-over between work and personal life has serious implications on QWL. It has also been argued that the conflict related to work and personal demands can lead to negative health outcomes for employees, and may decrease organizational commitment, job satisfaction and increased burn out, which eventually lead to poor QWL. Aminah (2002) also found that inter-role family conflict occurs when the accumulated demand of multiple roles at home and at work becomes too great to manage comfortably. It further suggested that reducing the level of spill over may help to reduce the perceived stress and assist to maintain some amount of balance between the two environments.

Table 5 Correlation between W-F and F-W Conflict and Quality of Work Life

Variable	QWL	W-F Conflict	F-W Conflict
QWL	1		
W- F Conflict	-0.190 **	1	
F - W Conflict	-0.120 *	0.535 **	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level 2-tailed

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level 2-tailed

Multiple linear regression analysis has been employed to assess the relative impact of work to family and family to work conflict on QWL (Table 6). Only work to family conflict has been found to be significant and has negative impact on QL with regression coefficient \hat{a} equals to - 0.081. The value of adj. R^2 is 0.031 which indicate that work to family conflict explains 3.1 percent of variance in Q.L The estimated regression model is as follows:

Table 6 Regression Coefficients: W – F Conflict and F – W Conflict and QWL

Variable	\hat{a} (Non-standardized coefficient)	T	Significance Level
Constant	17.572		
W - F Conflict	-0.081	- 2.717	0.007
F - W Conflict	-0.012	- 0.398	0.691

$R^2 = 0.037$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.031$, F value = 6.085, Significance level = 0.003

QWL = 17.572 - 0.081 (W - F Conflict)

The findings of the present study disclose that there is an inverse relationship between work to family conflict and QL, which indicates that more the level of interference of work in family life, lower will be the QL. It extends the reasoning of the notion that although work interfering with family and family interfering with work have been distinguished at conceptual level (Greenhaus & Beutell 1985), yet majority of research has assessed only work interfering with family under the broad terminology of work-family conflict (Netemeyer et al., 1996). This might be due to the fact that the effects of work to family conflict have been more serious than the effects of

The effects of work to family conflict have been more serious than the effects of family to work conflict.

family to work conflict. It has found adequate literature support, e.g. the former category of conflict is related to various forms of psychological ill effects, like fatigue, distress, job exhaustion, and dissatisfaction at work and home, whereas the latter has most often been found to be related only to fatigue and low family satisfaction (Wayne et al., 2004; Geurts et al., 2005; Kinnunen et al., 2006). Greenhaus et al. (2003) concluded that among individuals with high level of engagement across roles, those reporting the highest quality of life were those who

invested more in the family than in the work role, that is, they showed an imbalance in favor of family. In regard to their level of engagement, the equally balanced individuals scored lower in quality of life than those favoring family over work, but higher than those favoring work over family. Thus, those who invested most in work had the lowest quality of life. In nutshell, it can be concluded that both forms of conflict have been associated with a variety of negative consequences in both the work and the family domains, such as decreased family and job satisfaction, stress, absenteeism, employee turnover and reduced work and family performance (Allen et al, 2000; Byron, 2005; Eby et al., 2005; Poelmans et al., 2005; Stevens et al., 2007).

Conclusions

The study attempts to examine the relationship between work-family conflict and quality of work. The findings of the study suggest that both 'work to family' and 'family to work' affect the quality of work life of the veterinarian, but 'work to family' has been found more prevalent among them and affecting their QWL. The findings of the present study would help the regulatory authorities to frame suitable policies and encourage veterinarians to maintain work-life balance. It also highlights the necessity to examine the various support mechanisms required to maintain a balance between work and family life and a separate study to examine the nature of conflict which is prevalent among the women in India and how they manage it.

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