

# Relationship between role overload and the work–family interface

Role  
overload and  
work–family  
interface

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Received 29 September 2019

Revised 31 March 2020

4 June 2020

Accepted 13 June 2020

## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between role overload (RO) and the work–family interface (work–life conflict and work–life enrichment) among bank employees and the moderating effects of personal life characteristics and commitments on this relationship. It aimed to bring out the importance of contextual factors in individual's interactions across various roles.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A structured questionnaire based on validated instruments was designed and administered to 279 employees from the banking sector in India. The instrument was adapted to the local language to ensure ease of comprehension.

**Findings** – RO was positively correlated with both work interference with personal life (WIPL) and personal life interference with work (PLIW), and negatively correlated with work–personal life enrichment (WPLE). Gender, number of children and age of the youngest child significantly moderated the relationship between RO and WIPL.

**Research limitations/implications** – This study was limited by the use of self-reported data and its cross-sectional nature. Future studies will need to include a larger sample with people from across the workplace hierarchy.

**Practical implications** – This paper provides valuable insight into the influence of personal life characteristics and commitments on RO and the work–family interface.

**Originality/value** – The banking sector is among the top 10 most stressful workplaces in India due to high work pressure and the threat of competition. These working conditions make it important to understand employee perceptions of RO and its impact on the work–family interface.

**Keywords** Role overload, Work–life interface, Work interference with personal life, Personal life interference with work, Work–personal life enhancement, Gender, Dual income couple, Married, Children, Dependents

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Every individual in society plays multiple roles with a diverse set of role partners, both personally and professionally. Each role originates from the expected behavior in the social organization and carries its own demands and challenges. Individuals may desire to be effective in multiple roles simultaneously, which can result in conflict and psychological stress (Grönlund and Öun, 2010), especially when these roles compete for the same resources. Among the various roles people play, work and family tend to be the most important (Grandey *et al.*, 2005), and conflict between these two roles is likely to have significant personal repercussions.

Due to demographic and social changes (e.g. more women entering the paid workforce, a growing number of dual-earner couples, changing gender role expectations and blurring boundaries between work and personal life), employees of both genders have to simultaneously balance considerable household and work responsibilities (Matthews *et al.*, 2014). If these roles can be balanced with minimum role conflict, the employee can experience satisfaction and better performance in their roles (Clark, 2000). However, these changes have tended to create substantial role overload (RO) as people struggle to cope with the demands placed on them by both their work and personal lives (Matthews *et al.*, 2014).

The various roles that people play may have either positive or negative influences on each other and the consequences of these effects depend on a variety of other factors



South Asian Journal of Business  
Studies

© Emerald Publishing Limited  
2398-628X

DOI 10.1108/SAJBS-09-2019-0167

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(Perrone-McGovern *et al.*, 2014). Personal life commitments such as marriage, children, ages of children, a working partner and dependent care responsibilities may significantly affect an individual's perception of RO and its impact on the work–family interface (Byron, 2005). To fully understand RO and its association with the positive and negative dimensions of the work–family interface, greater attention must be paid to personal commitments in modern society.

This paper explores the relation between perceptions of RO and its impact on the work–family interface depending on the personal characteristics and commitments of individuals in Indian context.

#### *The Indian context*

Work–family interface is affected by national, social and cultural context (Ollier-Malaterre and Foucreault, 2017; Trefalt *et al.*, 2013). Indian society is a complex blend of tradition and modernity that can be confusing and challenging to understand, especially from Western perspective (Musselman, 2008). Family roles being central to the identity for Indians, the demands of various roles such as employees, parents and care-givers may exert a lot more pressure on them (Palanivel and Sinthuja, 2012).

Evidence suggests that due to its family structures, societal institutions and cultural traditions, Indian employees face greater challenges while balancing work and personal life spheres (Buddhapriya, 2009). India thus provides an interesting context for work and family study since both roles may exert a strong pressure on the individual.

#### *Managing multiple roles and role overload*

When individuals play more than one role, simultaneous demands are created. Role theory proposes that due to constrained resources (e.g. time, energy, attention) and incompatibility among various roles, individuals often find it difficult to meet the demands of their roles (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000). Role overload occurs when the collective demands of multiple roles exceed available time and energy resources, leading to an inability to adequately fulfill the requirements of various roles (Higgins *et al.*, 2010).

Role overload may lead to burnout, anxiety, psychological distress, role strain and decreased satisfaction with work and family life (Amstad *et al.*, 2011; Haar *et al.*, 2014; Rathi and Barath, 2013). Role overload can also lead to poor physical and mental health, a higher rate of absenteeism and lower commitment (Matthews *et al.*, 2014).

However, participation in multiple roles has also been found to be beneficial, since it provides individuals with psychological benefits like higher self-esteem, ego gratification and well-being (McNall *et al.*, 2010).

#### *Work–family interface*

The work–family interface can be understood in terms of two approaches – conflict and enrichment. The conflict approach is supported by the scarcity or role stress perspective, which assumes that people have limited resources and energy (Weer *et al.*, 2010) and the need to fulfill multiple roles, may lead to conflict and stress for the individual. The enrichment approach is supported by the multiplicity or expansionist perspective, which argues that multiple roles can work together to create a positive synergy in terms of skills and capabilities leading to various benefits for the individual (McNall *et al.*, 2010).

#### *Work–family conflict (WFC)*

According to this view, the spheres of work and personal life compete for limited resources, and if more resources (e.g. time, energy, attention) are allotted to one domain (work/home),

fewer resources will be available for the other domain, creating a conflict between the two domains. The work–family conflict (WFC) approach assumes that the demands and responsibilities that arise from work and nonwork spheres are incompatible (Allen *et al.*, 2000) and focuses on coping with RO and conflict.

WFC is bidirectional, in that the work role can interfere with the family role vice versa (Grzywacz *et al.*, 2002; Voydanoff, 2004). Work interference with personal life (WIPL) occurs when the responsibilities and demands of work interfere with those of personal/family life. In contrast, personal life interference with work (PLIW) occurs when personal-life demands and responsibilities interfere with those of work.

Meta-analytic evidence has suggested that RO is the primary cause of WFC (Michel *et al.*, 2011). Work-related factors such as hours spent at work and schedule inflexibility tend to create WIPL. Family-related factors such as the characteristics of the partner and number and ages of children are good predictors of PLIW (Byron, 2005; Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran, 2005).

Substantial empirical evidence suggests that both types of WFC (WIPL and PLIW) are associated with several negative outcomes like higher stress, depression, job dissatisfaction, reduced life satisfaction, family and marital satisfaction and increased somatic complaints (Esson, 2004; Yavas *et al.*, 2008). In this study also, we expect that

*H1a.* If role overload is high, perceived WIPL and PLIW will be high.

#### *Work–personal life enrichment (WPLE)*

A theory of work–personal life enrichment maintains that participation in multiple roles can be beneficial. Role accumulation makes individuals generate more resources that can be used to function better in all of their roles and may actually enhance their experiences in other roles (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). Essaying multiple roles can have a positive impact not only on the role holder but also other people influenced by the role holder (McGinn *et al.*, 2019). Thus, the work–personal life enrichment approach focuses on a positive balance and psychological functioning across all roles.

Like conflict, enrichment is also bidirectional. Work-to-family enrichment occurs when work experiences improve the quality of family life, and family-to-work enrichment occurs when family experiences improve the quality of work life (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). The present study looked at the overarching concept of work–personal life enrichment.

Work-related outcomes of enrichment include job satisfaction and affective commitment to the organization (McNall *et al.*, 2010). Personal life-related outcomes of enrichment include family and life satisfaction (Van Steenbergen *et al.*, 2007), better physical health (Williams *et al.*, 2006) and generation of resources that are essential for coping with stress (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006).

However, RO can lead to anxiety, fatigue, stress, burnout (Posig and Kickul, 2003; Vullings *et al.*, 2018) and reduce feelings of enrichment in both the work and life spheres. Therefore, it is expected that

*H1b.* If role overload is high, perceived WPLE will be low.

Traditionally, men are considered to be the primary breadwinners of the family, and hence their sense of identity and self-esteem are associated with their work roles. On the other hand, women are primarily responsible for organizing family life and care-providing activities (Kalliath *et al.*, 2011). Men can compartmentalize work–family responsibilities better than women, leading to less conflict among their roles. In contrast, women tend to find the boundaries between work and family more blurred. Hence, women who are engaged in paid work are likely to experience higher WIPL and PLIW (Bhatia and Srilatha, 2015; Mohanty and Jena, 2016).

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While conflict appears to be an obvious outcome of various role demands, it is argued that involvement in multiple roles is beneficial for both men and women. Participation in work tends to increase economic resources and thereby power and control over lives. Paid work positively impacts the well-being of both men and women, though not to the same extent. Participation in family roles is assumed to strengthen family relations and increase overall life satisfaction for both men and women (Nordenmark, 2004). Previous studies have found that employed women tend to experience greater life satisfaction than unemployed women (Berger, 2013). Employment may increase the social integration of women and enhance their personal lives far more than men (Warr, 2011). Hence it is expected that,

- H2a.* Gender will moderate the relationships of RO with WIPL and PLIW, such that women will experience higher WIPL and PLIW than men.
- H2b.* Gender will moderate the relationships of RO with WPLE, such that women will experience more WPLE than men.

Married people are likely to play more roles than unmarried people. They face increased demands at home and have to spend more time in domestic activities, which may contribute to both WIPL and PLIW (Eby *et al.*, 2005) and result in RO (Aryee *et al.*, 2005).

As discussed earlier, when individuals are satisfied with multiple roles, they experience a greater sense of well-being and enhancement than people who are involved in fewer roles (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). Thus, while married people will be more likely to experience greater work–family interference, they should also enjoy greater enhancement than unmarried people.

- H3a.* Marital status will moderate the relationships of RO with WIPL, PLIW such that married individuals will experience higher WIPL, PLIW than unmarried individuals.
- H3b.* Marital status will moderate the relationships of RO with WPLE such that married individuals will experience higher WPLE than unmarried individuals.

As single-income couples tend to have complementary roles, there is less conflict and greater time and energy available to cope with conflicts that arise in the work and nonwork domains (Wayne *et al.*, 2013). The working spouse usually has the support of the nonworking spouse, who acts as a buffer for other demands and helps the working spouse conserve precious resources (Carnes, 2017).

In contrast, dual-income couples have to meet the demands of both the work and domestic domains in the same amount of time as required by single-income couples, and hence are more susceptible to RO (Carlson *et al.*, 2019). It becomes difficult for dual-income couples to reduce conflicts in any domain of life by increasing the time and energy they devote to that domain (Kundu *et al.*, 2016). This lack of control leads to increased feelings of WIPL and PLIW.

Concurrently, increased economic resources may provide a sense of enhancement for the dual-income individuals and provide them with more opportunities than a single income couple. Therefore, it is hypothesized that

- H4a.* The income status of the spouse moderates the relationships of RO with WIPL, PLIW, such that WIPL, PLIW will be higher for dual-income individuals than for single-income individuals.
- H4b.* The income status of the spouse moderates the relationships of RO with WPLE, such that WPLE will be higher for dual-income individuals than for single-income individuals.

Past research has found that the presence of children affects an individual's ability to balance their family responsibilities with the demands of work (Neilson and Stanfors, 2014). It has

been suggested that work–family interference can more accurately be called work–parenting interference, since a greater number of children equals more demands at home. Individuals with young children have fewer time and energy resources to deal with both work and nonwork demands (Hayman and Rasmussen, 2013). In particular, parents with younger children experience more conflict between work and family (Kazley *et al.*, 2016), since young children require extensive care, commitment and resources in terms of time, energy and attention from the caregiver. Evidence suggests that the age of the youngest child in a family is directly associated with the likelihood of experiencing difficulty in balancing work and family responsibilities and the stress of caregiving (Craig and Sawrikar, 2009; Nomaguchi and Brown, 2011).

However, having children provide individuals psychological stimulations and pleasurable and exciting experiences. Children may serve as basis for relationships and social connectedness for parents. Having children increases individual's participation in the local community and brings enhancement to parent's social identity (Pollmann-Schult, 2014). Parents of younger children enjoy highest emotional benefits and exhibit higher level of self-esteem, parental satisfaction and self-efficacy and also report lower level of depression (Nomaguchi, 2012). Hence, it is hypothesized that

*H5a.* The relationships of RO with WIPL, PLIW, will be moderated by the number of children and the age of the youngest child, such that individuals with more children or young children will be more likely to experience WIPL, PLIW than individuals with fewer children or older children.

*H5b.* The relationships of RO with WPLE will be moderated by the number of children and the age of the youngest child, such that individuals with more children or young children will be more likely to experience WPLE than individuals with fewer children or older children.

Many individuals have to play a role of caregiver for dependents for their parent or in-laws, in addition to their other roles. All of these roles have different role-senders with their own set of expectations and demands. Individuals with caregiving responsibilities report a lack of time and energy to meet the demands of other life roles leading to work–family interference (Duxbury and Dole, 2015).

Providing dependent care can also bring many benefits and enriching experiences to individuals such as mutual care relationship between caregiver and dependent (Ingersoll-Dayton *et al.*, 2001), satisfaction of giving to others (Burke, 2017) and higher level of mental satisfaction which protects their mental health and enhances job performance (Zacher *et al.*, 2015). Thus, this study considered that

*H6a.* The relationships of RO with WIPL, PLIW, will be moderated by caregiving responsibilities, such that individuals with dependents will be more likely to experience WIPL, PLIW than individuals without dependents.

*H6b.* The relationships of RO with WPLE will be moderated by caregiving responsibilities, such that individuals with dependents will be more likely to experience WPLE than individuals without dependents

## Methods

Data were collected through a survey of 279 employees from various banks in India. Respondents were contacted either personally or via email. The purpose of the questionnaire was explained and the respondents were assured that their responses would be kept confidential. All scales were translated into the local language using a standard process of back-to-back translation (Rode, 2005) and then tested for face validity with the help of

researchers working in this area. Of the 500 questionnaires that were distributed/emailed, 279 useable responses were received, for a response rate of 56%. The respondents were 77% male and had an average age of 40.36 years. Approximately 50% of the respondents had graduated from college in various fields and 33% had a postgraduate degree. 75% of the respondents were married and residing with their spouse, and either one or both of the partners were engaged in full-time paid occupation. 66% had children, and 48% had dependent-care responsibilities. Of the total respondents, 38% reported having a single household income and 38.3% reported having a dual-income family.

### *Measures*

*Work interference with personal life, personal life interference with work and work–personal life enhancement:* WIPL, PLIW and WPLE were measured with a 15-item work–life balance scale adapted by Hayman (2009) from an instrument reported by Fisher-McAuley *et al.* (2003). When this instrument was tested for face validity with 30 respondents, some of the respondents were confused by the WPLE subscale and hence four items on the WPLE dimension, derived from literature, were added to the original scale of 15 items. Thus, the final scale had 19 items. Each item was rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (never) to 7 (every time), with higher scores indicating greater WIPL, PLIW and WPLE. A sample item from the WIPL scale is “My personal life gets adversely affected due to my work”. A sample item to measure PLIW is “I get so tired in my personal life that I feel a lack of energy for work”. A sample item from the WPLE scale is “I can maintain a good mood in my personal life due to my work”.

*Role overload:* RO was measured using a 13-item scale adapted from Reilly (1982). 13 items measured three indicators of RO such as time related overload, overload related with quality and quantity of work and overload related with personal ability of individuals. Respondents indicated their agreement with given statements on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample item from this scale was “I have to do things for which I do not have time and energy”.

*Demographics:* Information was collected for gender of the respondent, marital status, working status of the spouse, number of children, age of the youngest child and dependents.

*Control variables:* Three variables were included in analysis as control variables; age (in years), education (1 = high school, 2 = graduated college, 3 = postgraduation) and weekly working hours (1 = 36–48 h, 2 = 49–60 h, 3 = 61–72 h). We controlled for these variables as variables like age (Richert-Kaź mierska and Stankiewicz, 2016), education (Addagabottu and Battu, 2015) and working hours (Michel *et al.*, 2011) were found to have an impact on work–life experiences of individuals.

## **Analyses and results**

### *Intercorrelations*

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations and correlations for all the variables in the model. All of the scales had acceptable reliabilities. Moderate to strong correlations were found between RO, WIPL, PLIW and WPLE.

Factors such as gender and a working spouse (dual-income couple) were significantly correlated with RO (RO and gender,  $r = 0.175$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), WIPL (WIPL and gender,  $r = 0.198$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; WIPL and working spouse,  $r = -0.147$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and WPLE (WPLE and working spouse,  $r = -0.119$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

H1a and H1b which predicted that RO would be positively associated with WIPL and PLIW and negatively associated with WPLE, was supported by the data. Even after the data were controlled for age, education and weekly working hours, RO was significantly and

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Age (y)	40.36	11.21													
2 Education	2.22	0.644	-0.126*												
3 Working hours	1.67	0.715	-0.003	-0.046											
4 Gender	0.23	0.419	-0.348**	0.129*	-0.036										
5 Marital status	1.24	0.426	-0.634**	0.036	-0.059	0.022									
6 Working spouse	1.85	0.775	-0.429**	-0.102	-0.037	-0.119*	0.825**								
7 Number of children	1.05	0.844	0.704**	-0.086	0.000	-0.187**	-0.696**	-0.505**							
8 Age of youngest child (y)	1.82	1.51	0.832**	-0.086	-0.011	-0.221**	-0.671**	-0.485**	0.786**						
9 Dependents	1.52	0.501	-0.303**	0.064	-0.057	0.296**	0.316**	0.151*	-0.203	-0.216**					
10 RO	2.57	0.81	-0.054	0.097	0.068	0.175**	-0.065	-0.075	0.025	-0.021	0.049	(0.89)			
11 WIPL	2.39	1.29	-0.039	0.136*	0.037	0.198**	-0.084	-0.147*	0.052	-0.033	0.076	0.507**	(0.86)		
12 PLIW	1.57	0.85	-0.014	0.076	0.004	0.075	0.002	-0.018	-0.011	-0.032	0.042	0.319**	0.491**	(0.77)	
13 WPLE	5.68	1.59	0.116	0.023	-0.030	-0.044	-0.091	-0.119*	0.053	0.077	0.009	-0.124*	-0.253**	-0.213**	(0.95)

**Note(s):** \* $p < 0.05$  \*\* $p < 0.01$ , Alpha reliabilities are mentioned in the brackets along the diagonal  
RO – Role overload, WIPL – work interference with personal life, PLIW – personal life interference with work, WPLE – work personal life enhancement

**Table 1.**  
Mean, std. deviation  
and zero order  
correlations among  
study variables

positively related to WIPL ( $\beta = 0.809, p < 0.01$ ) and PLIW ( $\beta = 0.335, p < 0.01$ ), and significantly and negatively related to WPLE ( $\beta = -0.255, p < 0.05$ ). Thus, a greater perception of RO experienced by individuals will be associated with a greater perception of WIPL and PLIW, and a lower sense of WPLE. These findings were consistent with those in previous studies.

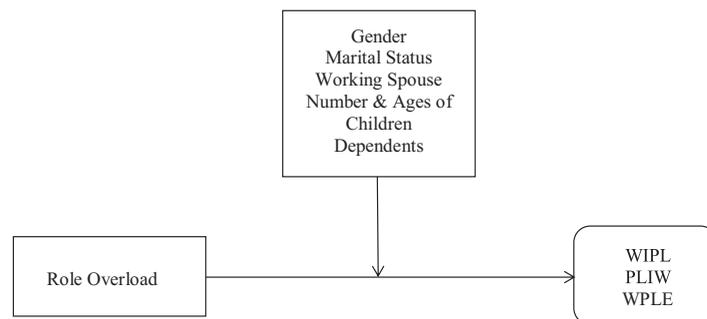
For multiple regression analysis the variables were entered into the regression equation as follows: (1) control variables (age, education and weekly working hours) were entered first, (2) the independent variable (role overload) was added second, (3) moderator variables were added third and (4) the interaction term created by multiplying the moderator variable(s) by the independent variable was entered fourth. The independent variable was centered before testing for moderation (Aiken and West, 1991).

H2a received partial support. While gender significantly moderated the relationship between RO and WIPL ( $\beta = 0.338, p < 0.05$ ), it did not moderate the relationships between RO and PLIW ( $\beta = -0.017, p = ns$ ) or RO and WPLE ( $\beta = -0.148, p = ns$ ), thus not supporting H2b (see Figure 1).

The significant interactions were plotted to make it easier to understand the moderating role played by gender on the relationship between RO and WIPL. As shown in Figure 2, RO leads to higher perceptions of WIPL in women than in men.

Marital status did not have any significant interaction effect on the relationships between RO and WIPL ( $\beta = 0.120, p = ns$ ), RO and PLIW ( $\beta = 0.130, p = ns$ ), or RO and WPLE ( $\beta = -0.347, p = ns$ ). Thus, H3a and H3b were not supported by the findings of this study. Similarly, the income status of the spouse did not moderate the relationships of RO with WIPL ( $\beta = 0.093, p = ns$ ), PLIW ( $\beta = 0.090, p = ns$ ) or WPLE ( $\beta = -0.111, p = ns$ ). Hence, the results also did not support H4a and H4b.

H5a was partially and H5b was completely supported by the data. The number of children weakly moderated the relationship between RO and WIPL ( $\beta = -0.176, p < 0.1$ ) and significantly moderated that between RO and WPLE ( $\beta = 0.307, p < 0.05$ ), but did not moderate the relationship between RO and PLIW ( $\beta = 0.009, p = ns$ ). Interestingly, the interaction plots (Figure 3) showed that, as RO increased, WIPL for people with more children was actually less than that for people with no children. Similarly, the interaction plots between RO and WPLE showed that, as perceived RO increased, people without children experienced the least amount of WPLE (Figure 4). The number of children and the age of the youngest child weakly moderated the relationship between RO and WIPL ( $\beta = -0.040, p < 0.1$ ), but not those for PLIW ( $\beta = 0.016, p = ns$ ) and WPLE ( $\beta = 0.018, p = ns$ ).

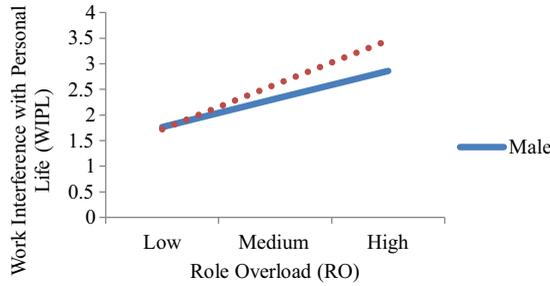


**Figure 1.**  
Research model

**Note(s):** WIPL - Work Interference with Personal Life, PLIW - Personal Life Interference with Work, WPLE - Work Personal Life Enhancement/Enrichment

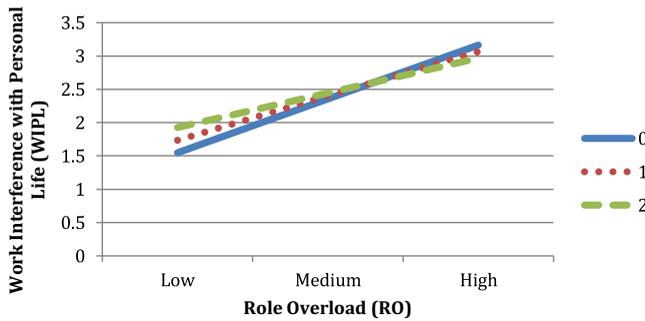
H6a and H6b, which predicted that the relationships of RO with WIPL, PLIW and WPLE would be moderated by caregiving responsibilities, did not receive any support. Dependents did not moderate the relationships RO–WIPL ( $\beta = -0.153, p = ns$ ), -PLIW ( $\beta = -0.063, p = ns$ ) or -WPLE ( $\beta = 0.193, p = ns$ ).

Role overload and work–family interface



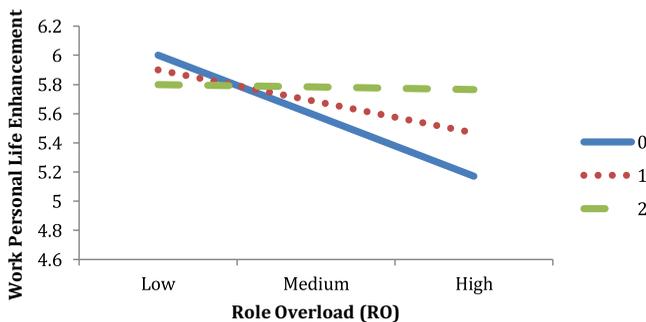
**Note(s):** RO – Role Overload, WIPL – Work Interference with Personal Life

**Figure 2.** Moderating role of gender on the relationship between RO and WIPL



**Note(s):** RO – Role Overload, WIPL – Work Interference with Personal Life

**Figure 3.** Moderating role of number of children on the relationship between RO and WIPL



**Note(s):** RO – Role Overload, WPLE – Work Personal Life Enhancement

**Figure 4.** Moderating role of number of children on the relationship between RO and WPLE

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## Discussion

This research examined the impact of RO on the work–family interface in terms of both conflict and enrichment. As expected, RO led to increased perceptions of WIPL, PLIW and a reduced sense of work–personal life enhancement.

Women tend to experience greater WIPL than men. Women's perception of higher WIPL may be due to the gendered nature of housework, especially in Indian society (Rajadhyaksha, 2012) where commitment to family roles is central to a woman's existence (Bhatnagar and Rajadhyaksha, 2001). Indian women interpret their *Dharma* (Dharma according to Indian philosophy means fulfilling role-related duties and responsibilities) within familial sphere and strongly connect themselves with duties of helping others and taking care of others. They give more salience to their role of homemaker, family duties and household responsibilities (Bhangaokar and Kapadia, 2009). Women are expected to take primary responsibility for domestic tasks like cooking, cleaning, laundry, childcare, etc., which are essential and need to be done on a daily basis. Responsibilities, such as home maintenance, repairs, managing family finances, etc., that fall in the male domain are more flexible and can be performed at their discretion (Shaw, 1988). Hence, for the same level of RO, women are more likely to perceive interference by work in their personal lives compared to men.

Interestingly, unmarried people experienced less WIPL but also less WPLE than single-income or dual-income individuals. The working status of the spouse was predicted to moderate the relationships between RO–WIPL, PLIW and WPLE. Our findings contradict this view, since no differences were found between single- and dual-income individuals. This may be because there are many advantages associated with having a working spouse such as increased family income, better standard of living, increased independence of the spouse, and increased companionship and marital satisfaction (McNall *et al.*, 2010). These advantages may result in a reduced feeling of conflict for dual-earning individuals. Increased level of family income allows individuals to hire domestic help to deal with childcare and other house work responsibilities which is relatively cheaper and easily available in urban India (Chandramouli, 2018). Another possible explanation could be the sample profile. Most of the respondents belonged to the middle or lower management cadre and worked in small cities where work roles may not be very demanding.

In line with previous research (Neilson and Stanfors, 2014), this study showed that individuals with more children experienced higher WIPL and WPLE, and having younger children also resulted in greater WIPL. The correlation between more children and a feeling of enhancement can be explained by role accumulation theory, which suggests that involvement in multiple roles may bring individuals more resources and pleasurable experiences rather than stress and strain (Voydanoff, 2001), and enhances their physical and mental well-being (Barnett and Hyde, 2001).

Contrary to expectations, dependents did not moderate the perceptions of RO for any of the aspects of the work–family interface. A possible explanation for this result is that, while dependents may make demands on limited resources, they also provide support in terms of financial help, childcare support, emotional support and assistance in performing household tasks (Burke, 2017), thus balancing out their impact.

The nonsignificant findings with respect to PLIW may be due to the asymmetrical permeability of work and personal life boundaries. Among both men and women, personal life boundaries are more permeable than work boundaries (Allen *et al.*, 2014) and hence personal life is less likely to interfere with work. Moreover, individuals tend to have more control on their personal activities than work activities (Burke and Greenglass, 2001). Also, in collectivist society like India, individuals can seek help from extended family members for domestic responsibilities (Powell *et al.*, 2009). This reduces the experience of PLIW for individuals (Kossek *et al.*, 2011).

A post hoc analysis was performed which yielded some interesting results. When we tested for additional moderation of all these demographic variables with gender, many of the findings became significant. Though the marital status and working status of the spouse did not individually moderate the relationships of RO with WIPL, PLIW and WPLE, the interactions became significant when gender was added to this equation. Married women experienced higher WIPL than men (RO  $\times$  marital status  $\times$  gender;  $\Delta F = 5.204$ ;  $t = 2.281$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Similarly, working women (dual-income couples) experienced greater perceptions of WIPL than men, though the moderation was weak (RO  $\times$  working status of spouse  $\times$  gender;  $\Delta F = 3.30$ ;  $t = 1.81$ ,  $p < 0.1$ )

Men face lesser difficulty than women in balancing personal and professional life as their participation in paid work satisfies their traditional family responsibility of breadwinner (Wada *et al.*, 2010). However, Indian women continue to play their traditional nurturer role. Participation in paid work does not conform with prescribed social gender role expectation of women that focuses on family responsibilities (Wood and Eagly, 2012) and hence experience higher level of WIPL while fulfilling domestic responsibilities along with paid work demands. Due to India being a patriarchal society, wife's involvement in paid work does not necessarily mean that husband will have greater share in household or child/eldercare work. Women in dual income families thus experience more conflicts than men while balancing paid and unpaid work demands (Mohanty and Jena, 2016). Women who have more children and/or younger children feel more PLIW (RO  $\times$  gender  $\times$  number of children  $\times$  age of youngest child;  $\Delta F = 3.746$ ;  $t = 1.936$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Since traditional gender roles tend to place more childcare demands on women, women who must simultaneously deal with demands of paid work and parenting are more likely to experience conflicts and difficulties as compared to men and are also more likely to adjust their paid work to accommodate childcare demands (Fox *et al.*, 2009).

Although dependent care did not have any moderating effect, the significant interaction between RO  $\times$  dependents  $\times$  gender ( $\Delta F = 4.129$ ;  $t = 2.032$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) shows that women with dependent care responsibilities experience greater WIPL than men.

Since India is low on gender egalitarianism (Chhokar *et al.*, 2007) and there are strong family and social forces (Banerjee *et al.*, 2005), men and women here are prescribed to maintain traditional gender roles. Unlike women in Western societies, many Indian women, particularly those in joint and extended families are compelled to provide care for in-laws and elderly relatives (Allen *et al.*, 2015). As women show more flexibility in their paid work schedule to accommodate family and dependent care responsibilities they are more likely than men to be absent from work and experience greater WIPL (Hammer and Neal, 2008).

### Implications

The key implication of this study comes from significant interaction of gender with other demographic variables like marital status, working status of spouse, children and dependents. This study found that that women in Indian society who are married, belong to dual income family and have childcare and/or eldercare responsibilities experience higher work interference in personal life than men.

India faces the twin challenges of having one of the lowest female labor force participation rate and falling female labor force participation [1]. While this may be indicative of women being employed in low skill jobs that are being taken over by technology, it is also reflective of the general challenges faced by women when trying to be engaged in paid work. Gender differences in the experience of work–family interface highlights the need to have social structure, organizational policies and community and family support for women for better balancing work and personal life responsibilities.

The institutional and organizational support for balancing work and personal life in India is conditional and very low (Burke, 2017). Even though nuclear family system is on rise in

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Indian society, there is a dearth of institutional support facilities like day care centers and assisted living facilities (Buddhapriya, 2009; Vijaya, 2013). Government policies regarding work–life balance of employees do exist, but are not effectively implemented (Rajadhyaksha, 2004).

Organizational support plays crucial role in reducing the perception of WFC and enhancing the experience of enrichment (Kossek *et al.*, 2011). Gender sensitive initiatives of organizations focusing on individuals with care responsibilities such as flexible work arrangements, providing dependable child care facilities and emergency care for children and elders, support for nonwork commitment will help better manage professional and personal life commitments.

To reduce the RO of women institutional interventions are needed in Indian context. Institutional support such as childcare and eldercare homes, hospice care, assisted living will help in better balance of work and personal life for working individuals.

There is also a need to bring about a change in attitude of women and society at large when it comes to opting for external support system (institutional/organizational) for childcare or dependent care responsibilities. There are evidences showing that Indian women still rely on friends and family to take care of kids and dependents rather than paid help/facilities (Baral and Bhargava, 2011). This may be due to societal pressure and guilt of not being able to devote time for children and dependents. However, in order for women to reduce conflict of managing multiple roles, this approach needs to be changed.

On a larger scale, interventions are needed to alter traditional gender role attitudes of both men and women through training, education and empowerment programs.

#### *Limitations and suggestions for future study*

The results of this study should be interpreted taking into consideration the limitations of the study. The data for this study were collected using convenient sampling, which limits generalizability of results. We recommend future studies to use simple random sampling for better generalizability. A larger sample with higher female representation will help us to interpret some of the findings. Future research needs to consider a sample of individuals in more challenging roles such as senior management where work pressures tend to be the highest. Current study is conducted in urban setting in single location; hence results may not be applicable to nonurban population. Future studies need to consider gender differences in work–family interface for respondents from nonurban areas with data collected from various geographical locations.

#### **Conclusion**

This study provided valuable insight into the role of personal life characteristics and commitments of individuals on their RO and the work–family interface. Further, the study demonstrated that married women, women with childcare and eldercare responsibilities and those from dual income families experienced more conflict while balancing work and personal life demands than their male counterparts. In a masculine society like India, where societal gender norms are deeply embedded and individuals believe in philosophy of Dharma, women need more support from organizations, families and community at large to step out and embrace their role in paid workforce along with their traditional roles. This support will help them satisfactorily enjoy their work role along with conventional roles.

#### **Note**

1. 2019. “Opportunity or Challenge? Empowering women and girls in India for the Fourth Industrial Revolution”. A report by 2019 Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu India LLP & Global Compact Network India.

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