



**Work family Conflict in Asian Cultural Context:
The Case of India**



Tripti Tripti Pande Desai & Ujvala Rajadhyaksha

Institute for Integrated
Learning in Management

Indian Institute of
Technology Bombay

Social and Cultural Context

(A) Total Population		1000 Million
(B) Women Population	48% of (A)	480 Million
(C) Working Population	36% of (A)	360 Million
(D) % Women in Working Population	32% of (C)	115.2 Million
(E) % Women in Organized Sector	4 % of (D)	4.6 Million

- As per GLOBE - India ranks among the 5 highest countries on in-group collectivism and 5 lowest countries on gender egalitarianism
- Hierarchical society - centuries old caste system, social rights and privileges vary with one's status.
- Patriarchal and male dominated society
- Family - basic unit of society, indulgent towards children and the aged, women encouraged to bear (male) children, extended and joint families are common
- Reduction of uncertainty sought through practice of religious beliefs and customs

Governmental and Organizational Policies

PLUS POINTS

- Maternity Benefits Act (1961) 12 weeks paid leave for child birth.
- Factories Act (1948) - employer must provide a crèche where more than 30 women workers are employed with children below 6 years.
- Indian Penal Code (1869) Section 509 and Vishakha case (Supreme Court) – Prevention of sexual harassment of women in the workplace.

MINUS POINTS

- No national laws specifically covering rights to shared family responsibilities /part-time workers/ home workers
- By passing of legislation by organizations to circumvent laws.
- Factories Act (1948) - prohibits women from being employed on the shop floor in heavy machinery- thus leading to low female employment in thrust areas.
- From 1995 onwards ITES- concerns about the negatives of 24/7 hours of work.

Social and Institutional Support

- Predominant sources: non organizational and non institutional.
- Family, extended family, neighbours, household labor saving technology, paid help.
- Sources of support differ across caste, class and region.
- Socio-economic background of family and attitude of family members moderates support received from spouse.
- Household responsibilities easily subcontracted out to another woman, either paid help or family member.

Research on work and family in India

- Research on work and family in India has followed two separate paths
 - Women's studies: Focus on how structures of patriarchy contribute to subordination of underprivileged women in rural settings at work and at home.
 - Psychosocial research: Focus on working women in urban settings from a role theory perspective.

- Mid 90s –mid 2000: More studies on dual career as opposed to dual worker couples, no significant differences in conflict and stress for men and women, however sources of stress and conflict differed.
- 2000 onwards: Very marginal focus on organizational policies towards women, some concern about how the ITES sector is affecting work-life balance for `all' employees.

Focus group discussion results

- 35 married women mainly from upper middle class families in two cities of India – New Delhi and Mumbai; working full-time with public and private sector companies.
- W-F and F-W conflict was reported. More instances of negative interference reported. Some instances of transferring managerial acumen learnt at work to handling family matters.
- Sources of social support were mainly non-organizational and non-institutional

- Social support included family, extended family, spouse, neighbours and friends, paid help and household labour saving technology - 'web of social support'.
- Coping was mainly in the form of attempting to be a superwoman ('durga' of the many hands) or lowering standards or focusing on quality time.
- However multiple roles could be enervating along with being exhausting.
- Outcomes of conflict included guilt especially over ignoring academic achievement of children.
- Tolerance of marital conflict (arising due to work) in the interests of family harmony.