A Pilot Study: Comparing Inter-Role Conflict, Self-Efficacy, and Home Environment in Early Adulthood Females

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ABSTRACT

Societal happenings of women's lives showcase an array of responsibilities being performed by them, including their chores and associative chores of their family members, etc. Inter-role conflict, self-efficacy, and home environment are critical factors influencing the mental health and well-being of women, particularly during early adulthood (ages 20 to 40). This study investigates the interplay between these variables among homemakers and employed females, exploring how conflicting role demands impact their psychological health and ability to manage responsibilities effectively. The study found that homemakers reported significantly higher self-efficacy (M = 36.88) than employed individuals (M = 34.45, p < .001), suggesting greater perceived control over responsibilities (Bandura, 1997). However, no significant difference was found in role conflict between the two groups (p = .120), indicating that both experience similar levels of work-family dynamics (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Employed individuals reported a significantly more positive family environment (M = 437.57) compared to homemakers (M = 427.21, p < .001), possibly due to financial stability and structured time management (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Perry-Jenkins et al., 2013). These findings suggest that employment status influences self-efficacy and family environment but does not significantly impact role conflict.

Keywords: Pilot study, Inter-Role Conflict, Self-Efficacy, Home Environment, Early Adulthood Females, Chhattisgarh

1. INTRODUCTION

Early Adulthood and Role Demands

Early adulthood, typically defined as ages 20 to 40, is a dynamic and transitional life stage where individuals establish careers, build families, and develop personal identities **(Arnett, 2000)**. Women in this phase often face multiple, overlapping responsibilities that include professional work, domestic duties, and individual aspirations. As they strive to balance these demands, they encounter unique psychological and emotional challenges that can affect their overall well-being. Research indicates that societal expectations and gender roles further intensify these pressures, as women are often expected to maintain both caregiving and professional responsibilities **(Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985)**. The strain of navigating these obligations highlights the importance of understanding the factors that shape women's ability to

cope during this crucial life stage.

Inter-Role Conflict and Its Psychological Impact

Inter-role conflict occurs when the demands of two or more roles are incompatible, leading to stress, reduced performance, and emotional exhaustion (**Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985**). This type of conflict is particularly relevant for women in early adulthood, as they frequently manage multiple role transitions, such as becoming a parent while maintaining a career or pursuing personal growth alongside familial obligations. Studies suggest that heightened inter-role conflict is linked to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and burnout (**Bakker & Demerouti, 2017**). For employed women, workplace demands may interfere with personal responsibilities, whereas homemakers may experience a different form of conflict, where the lack of external professional engagement creates internal struggles related to identity and fulfilment (**Cinamon & Rich, 2002**). Addressing mental health issues and creating support networks that encourage balance requires an understanding of these role tensions.

The Role of Self-Efficacy in Coping with Stress

Self-efficacy, defined as an individual's belief in their ability to handle challenges and achieve desired outcomes, is a key psychological resource in mitigating stress (**Bandura, 1997**). Women with higher self-efficacy tend to manage inter-role conflict more effectively, as they are more likely to employ problem-solving strategies, maintain a sense of control, and adapt to changing circumstances (**Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008**). Research suggests that self-efficacy serves as a protective factor against stress-related disorders, enabling women to maintain emotional resilience despite competing role demands (**Luszczynska et al., 2005**). In contrast, lower self-efficacy is linked with avoidance behaviours, heightened emotional distress, and challenges in managing work-life balance. By fostering self-efficacy, interventions can empower women to steer role conflicts with confidence and adaptability.

Home Environment as a Support System

The home environment plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's ability to manage multiple roles. A supportive home setting, characterized by emotional support, shared responsibilities, and open communication, can buffer the negative effects of inter-role conflict (**Perry-Jenkins et al., 2013**). For employed women, family support has been linked to greater job satisfaction and reduced stress, while for homemakers, an engaging and affirming home environment contributes to a sense of fulfilment and stability (**Allen et al., 2000**). Conversely, a home environment marked by high levels of conflict, lack of emotional support, or rigid expectations can exacerbate psychological distress and increase role strain. As a central factor in well-being, the home environment must be considered when evaluating strategies to help women effectively balance their multiple responsibilities.

Early adulthood presents women with a complex interplay of professional, domestic, and personal roles, each carrying unique challenges. Inter-role conflict remains a significant stressor, influencing mental health and life satisfaction. However, factors such as self-efficacy and a supportive home environment serve as critical protective elements, enabling women to navigate these pressures more effectively.

Aim: This study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how women in different life roles experience and cope with inter-role demands, ultimately informing targeted interventions for mental health and well-being.

Objectives:

1. To compare the levels of general self-efficacy between employed and homemakers of early adulthood females.
2. To examine the differences in role conflict experienced by employed and homemakers of early

adulthood females.

3. To analyze the impact of family environment on employed and homemakers of early adulthood females.

Hypotheses:

H_1: There is no significant difference in self-efficacy between employed and homemakers of early adulthood females.

H_2: There is no significant difference in role conflict between employed and homemakers of early adulthood females.

H_3: There is no significant difference in family environment between employed and homemakers of early adulthood females.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Inter-role conflict occurs when demands from multiple roles become incompatible, leading to stress, emotional exhaustion, and decreased well-being (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Women in early adulthood often find themselves balancing professional, familial, and social expectations, which can result in significant psychological distress (**Cinamon & Rich, 2002**). Studies suggest that prolonged exposure to inter-role conflict may lead to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and reduced life satisfaction (**Bakker & Demerouti, 2017**).

Research indicates that working women experience higher levels of inter-role conflict due to balancing workplace expectations with family responsibilities (**Allen et al., 2000**). The stress of managing career growth while fulfilling caregiving roles contributes to burnout and work-life imbalance (**Kossek & Ozeki, 1998**). Conversely, homemakers face a different kind of role conflict—often struggling with a lack of professional identity and societal undervaluation of unpaid domestic work (**Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020**). Role overload occurs when individuals are expected to fulfil multiple high-demand roles simultaneously, leading to stress and inefficiency (**Michel et al., 2011**). Societal expectations reinforce traditional gender roles, often placing more caregiving and household management responsibilities on women (**Eagly & Wood, 2012**). The expectation for women to "do it all" often results in work-life imbalance, making it difficult to maintain mental and emotional well-being.

Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1997), is an individual's belief in their ability to achieve goals and manage challenges effectively. Higher self-efficacy enables individuals to develop adaptive coping strategies, making them more resilient to stress and role conflicts.

Studies have consistently shown that individuals with higher self-efficacy experience lower levels of stress and depression, as they are more likely to engage in proactive coping behaviors (**Luszczynska et al., 2005**). Schwarzer and Hallum (2008) found that self-efficacy buffers against work-related stress and burnout by promoting a sense of control over one's environment.

For working women, high self-efficacy is associated with better time management and problem-solving abilities, allowing them to navigate career and family demands more effectively (**Cohen & McKay, 1984**). Homemakers with strong self-efficacy tend to report higher levels of satisfaction with their roles, despite societal pressures (**Perry-Jenkins et al., 2013**). This highlights self-efficacy as a critical factor in mitigating the negative effects of inter-role conflict.

The home environment includes physical, emotional, and social conditions that shape an individual's well-being (**Bronfenbrenner, 1986**). A supportive home environment provides emotional security and contributes to better stress management and mental health outcomes.

Employed women often rely on their partners and extended family for childcare and household support, which significantly impacts their ability to manage inter-role conflict (**Pleck, 1985**). In contrast, homemakers may experience isolation if they lack external support systems, leading to heightened stress levels (**Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020**).

Studies have shown that emotional and instrumental support from family members can reduce the psychological strain caused by role conflict (**Allen et al., 2000**). **Perry-Jenkins et al. (2013)** found that strong familial support enhances well-being by fostering a sense of belonging and reducing feelings of burden. A well-balanced home environment acts as a stress buffer, enabling women to manage their roles with greater ease.

Several studies have compared the mental health and stress levels of homemakers and employed women, with mixed findings. While some research suggests that working women experience greater role conflict but also higher self-efficacy (**Kossek & Ozeki, 1998**), others indicate that homemakers may have lower stress levels due to fewer external pressures but struggle with identity and autonomy issues (**Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020**).

Despite extensive research on inter-role conflict and self-efficacy, there is limited comparative analysis examining the interaction between inter-role conflict, self-efficacy, and home environment specifically among homemakers and employed women. Additionally, most studies focus on Western populations, with fewer investigations into cultural and societal influences in different regions. This study aims to bridge these gaps by exploring how these variables collectively influence the mental well-being of women in early adulthood.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design: A 2x3 Factorial design (Early adulthood female; Homemaker & Employed Self-efficacy, Inter-role conflict and Home Environment) is used. The data was collected from a randomly selected population using stratified sampling for the study.

Sample: This Pilot study was conducted with 150 (75 Homemakers and 75 Employed) early adulthood females of Chhattisgarh from the cities of Bilaspur and Raipur aged between 20 to 40. The selected population as Homemakers included married women who had been married for at least one year, with a minimum educational qualification of 12th grade from an English-medium institution. Exclusion criteria for homemakers included unmarried women, employed individuals, or those who did not provide informed consent. The Employed group consisted of married women working as teaching professionals with at least one year of work experience and a minimum qualification of a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree recruited within 1 year excluding unemployed women, and those who did not provide informed consent.

Tools:

1. **Role-Conflict Scale (RCS):** Dr Ashok Kumar Pandey, the questionnaire will be used for attaining data on the role conflict level of early adulthood females. It's a 30-item scale and 5 Likert scale scoring (i.e. strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree) and the statements were written in both positive and negative directions. The test-retest reliability coefficient was found to be very high .87 and the split-half reliability coefficient was also found very high .79. Criterion validity .81.

2. **General Self-Efficacy Scale:** The General Self-Efficacy Scale is a 10-item scale designed to assess optimistic self-beliefs in coping with vivid difficult demands in life. The scale was developed by Matthias Jerusalem and Ralf Schwarzer in 1981. Internal reliability for GSE is reported to be Cronbach's Alpha between .76 and .90. It has established a correlation with emotion, optimism, and

work satisfaction. It has established a negative correlation between depression, stress, health complaints, burnout, and anxiety. The total score is calculated by adding the sum of all items. For the GSE, the range of total scores is between 10 and 40, where a higher score indicates more self-efficacy. It is a 4-point Likert Scale. The age range for administration is 12 to 64 years.

3. **Family Environment Scale:** Developed by Harpreet Bhatia and N.K Chadha, this scale is used to assess the home domain. The age range is 17-50. It consists of 69 items and eight subgroups: 1. Cohesion 2. Expressiveness 3. Conflict 4. Acceptance and caring (relationship dimension) 5. Independence 6. Active recreational orientation (personal growth dimension) 7. Organization 8. Control. This includes positive and negative items and is scored as extremely agree, agree, undecided, disagree, or strongly disagree. The maximum score for a positive item is awarded is 5 and the least is 1. In case of negative items, the scoring procedure is to be reversed.

Procedure: A total of 400 samples were reached out in the initial phase. Out of which 150 suitable samples were selected for the conduction of this study. A good rapport was established while explaining the study and ethical considerations to the participants followed by filling and collection of questionnaire sets consisting of the Consent Form, Demographic Information, Role-Conflict scale (RCS), General Self-Efficacy scale and Family Environment scale. After successful completion of the data collection scoring was done according to the norms given in the manual.

4. RESULT

The study compared inter-role conflict, self-efficacy, and home environment among 150 early adulthood females (75 homemakers and 75 employed women) aged 20 to 40 of Chhattisgarh. The findings revealed significant differences between the two groups, as well as important correlations among the variables.

Demographic Highlights:

1. Age: The age range was 20 to 40 years, with the highest frequency at 31 years (n = 12, 8.0%) and the lowest at 20 and 24 years (n = 2, 1.3% each).
2. Education: Education levels were categorized into five groups, with the majority of participants having completed post-graduation or diploma programs.
3. Job: Participants were evenly split between employed and homemaker roles.
4. Religion: The sample was diverse, with the majority identifying as Hindu (40.0%).
5. Category: The majority of participants belonged to the General category (46.0%).
6. Residence: Most participants resided in urban areas (48.0%).
7. Family: The majority of participants came from nuclear families (58.7%).

Table 1 Group Statistics and Independent Samples Test:

Variables	Group	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	t-test	P-value
GSE (General Self-efficacy)	Employed	34.45	2.44	-6.90	< .001
	Homemaker	36.88	1.89		

Role Conflict Scale	Employed	96.29	2.48	1.56	.120
	Homemaker	95.72	1.98		
Family Environment Scale	Employed	437.57	17.48	3.94	< .001
	Homemaker	427.21	14.6		

The table presents statistical results comparing two groups (Employed and Homemaker) across three scales: General Self-Efficacy (GSE), Role Conflict Scale, and Family Environment Scale.

1. There is a statistically significant difference in General Self-Efficacy between the Employed and Homemaker groups ($p < .001$).
2. Homemakers report higher self-efficacy (M = 36.88) compared to employed individuals (M = 34.45).
3. There is no statistically significant difference in Role Conflict between the Employed and Homemaker groups ($p = .120$). Both groups report similar levels of role conflict.
4. There is a statistically significant difference in the Family Environment Scale between the Employed and Homemaker groups ($p < .001$).
5. Employed individuals report a more positive family environment (M = 437.57) compared to homemakers (M = 427.21).
6. General Self-Efficacy: Homemakers have significantly higher self-efficacy than employed individuals. Role Conflict: No significant difference between the two groups.
7. Family Environment: Employed individuals report a significantly more positive family environment than homemakers.

These results suggest that employment status may influence self-efficacy and family environment but does not significantly affect role conflict.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this pilot study provide important insights into the relationship between employment status and three key psychological and environmental factors: general self-efficacy, role conflict, and family environment. The results suggest that homemakers report significantly higher self-efficacy than employed individuals. This aligns with **Bandura's (1997)** theory on self-efficacy, which posits that individuals with a greater sense of control and mastery in their roles tend to report higher confidence in their abilities. Homemakers may experience greater perceived control over their household responsibilities, leading to enhanced self-efficacy **(Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008).** On the other hand, employed individuals may face work-related stressors that challenge their confidence in managing various responsibilities **(Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).**

Interestingly, no significant difference was observed in role conflict between homemakers and employed individuals. This suggests that both groups experience similar levels of inter-role conflict, despite their differing occupational statuses. This finding is consistent with prior literature, which highlights that role conflict is influenced by multiple factors, including societal expectations, personal values, and available support systems, rather than employment status alone **(Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998).** This result underscores the importance of considering additional moderating variables such as social support, coping mechanisms, and cultural norms when examining role conflict.

However, the study found a significant difference in family environment scores, with employed individuals reporting a more positive family environment compared to homemakers. This finding contrasts with traditional assumptions that homemakers may have more time and resources to invest in family relationships. Employment may provide individuals with financial security, structured time management, and opportunities for personal growth, which may positively influence their family interactions (**Perry-Jenkins et al., 2013**). Conversely, homemakers may experience increased stress due to the blurring of household responsibilities and personal time, leading to lower family environment scores (**Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020**). **Bronfenbrenner's (1986)** ecological systems theory also supports this perspective, emphasizing how external factors, such as workplace engagement, can impact family dynamics.

These findings contribute to existing literature on work-family dynamics by highlighting how employment status differentially affects psychological well-being and family relationships. The results indicate that employment may foster a more positive family environment, whereas homemaking may enhance self-efficacy. Future research should explore the underlying mechanisms driving these differences and assess the role of additional factors such as social support, financial stability, and cultural expectations.

6. CONCLUSION

This pilot study examined differences in inter-role conflict, self-efficacy, and family environment between early adulthood employed and homemaker females of Chhattisgarh. The results indicate that homemakers have significantly higher self-efficacy, while employed individuals report a more positive family environment. No significant differences were found in role conflict between the two groups. These findings suggest that employment status influences self-perceptions and family dynamics but does not necessarily impact role conflict.

The implications of these findings highlight the importance of tailored interventions to support both employed individuals and homemakers. Workplace policies promoting work-life balance and stress management may benefit employed individuals, whereas social support programs and personal development initiatives may help homemakers enhance their overall well-being. Future research should expand upon these findings with larger, more diverse samples and longitudinal analyses to better understand the long-term effects of employment status on psychological and family outcomes.

By integrating theories of self-efficacy (**Bandura, 1997**), work-family conflict (**Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985**), and ecological systems (**Bronfenbrenner, 1986**), this study provides a nuanced perspective on the complex interplay between employment, self-perception, and family environment. Further exploration of these relationships can help form policies and practices aimed at improving the well-being of women navigating multiple roles in contemporary society.

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