

Harnessing emotional intelligence to bridge the gap in work family conflict for teachers

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Abstract: This study explores the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and work-family conflict (WFC) among 120 self-financing college teachers in Palakkad, Kerala. The research aims to determine if teachers with higher levels of EI are better equipped to manage the pressures of balancing professional and family responsibilities. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected and analysed through descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analysis. Findings reveal that EI significantly contributes to reducing WFC, with emotional self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation emerging as key predictors. The study demonstrates that teachers with higher EI are better at managing stress, fostering healthier professional and personal relationships, and minimizing work-family conflict. The results suggest that emotional intelligence training could be a valuable intervention for mitigating work-family conflict among teachers, improving both their well-being and job satisfaction.

Key Words: Emotional Intelligence, Work Family Conflict, Teachers.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary educational environment, teachers encounter progressively challenging roles that necessitate the equilibrium of emotional, intellectual, and practical demands of teaching alongside the equally difficult obligations of family life Atteh et al., (202) [1]. The simultaneous demands of classroom management and familial obligations frequently result in considerable stress, culminating in a phenomenon termed work-family conflict. This conflict arises when the requirements of professional and familial roles are incongruent, leading to stress, diminished job satisfaction, and possible burnout Senthilkumar et al., (2022) [2]. For teachers, whose responsibilities encompass lesson planning, grading, and extracurricular activities, these pressures are especially acute. The emotional burden of attempting to fulfill the demands of both professional and personal responsibilities can render teachers feeling inundated, fatigued, and less proficient in their occupational and domestic spheres (Mwakasangula & Mwita, (2020) [3]. Work-family conflict is not a novel issue; however, it has become increasingly pronounced in recent years due to heightened societal expectations for teachers. Educational reforms, enlarged class sizes, elevated accountability standards, and the incorporation of technology into the classroom all augment teachers' workloads Iqbal et al., (2020) [4]. Simultaneously, familial responsibilities—such as child-rearing, caregiving, and household management—require considerable attention and emotional commitment. The interaction of these demands frequently results in emotional and physical fatigue, impacting teachers' overall well-being and their efficacy in both professional and personal domains Erdamar & Demirel, (2014) [5]. Considering the significant influence of work-family conflict on teachers' lives, it is crucial to investigate effective strategies for alleviating this stress. A strategy involves the development of emotional intelligence (EI), which includes the capacity to identify, comprehend, regulate, and affect emotions in oneself and others Efendi et al., (2021) [6]. Emotional intelligence is a complex skill set comprising self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills Goleman, (2013) [7]. These competencies are essential for teachers, who must regulate their emotional reactions to classroom difficulties and adeptly handle intricate relationships with students, parents, and colleagues. Teachers possessing elevated emotional intelligence are more adept at managing the pressures of conflicting demands, as emotional intelligence enables them to regulate their emotions and confront stressful circumstances with enhanced resilience. Moreover, emotional intelligence cultivates empathy, thereby improving communication and comprehension in both professional and familial settings, diminishing interpersonal conflict and facilitating a more balanced work-life dynamic Pervaiz et al., (2019) [8]. Through the cultivation and implementation of emotional intelligence, teachers can

establish coping strategies to navigate the stress associated with work-family conflict, enhance their emotional well-being, and ultimately improve their efficacy as both teachers and family members Chakravorty & Singh, (2020) [9]. This paper seeks to examine the influence of emotional intelligence on teachers' management of work-family conflict. This study will elucidate how emotional intelligence can be an essential asset for teachers managing the competing demands of their professional and familial responsibilities by exploring the correlation between emotional intelligence and work-life balance. The study will examine how the development of emotional intelligence can aid teachers in promoting emotional regulation, enhancing resilience, and improving interpersonal relationships. The objective is to furnish actionable insights and recommendations for teachers, school administrators, and policymakers to enhance support for teachers in attaining an equilibrium between professional duties and familial obligations.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The teaching profession is intrinsically challenging, necessitating teachers to dedicate considerable time, effort, and emotional investment to their responsibilities. Many teachers encounter considerable difficulties in reconciling the stringent demands of their professional duties with the obligations and emotional requirements of their familial life. The disparity referred to as work-family conflict has emerged as a significant issue in education, adversely affecting teachers' well-being, job satisfaction, and overall performance. Teachers frequently encounter significant stress, burnout, and emotional fatigue while attempting to meet their responsibilities both professionally and personally. This conflict may result in diminished motivation, reduced classroom engagement, and an increased rate of teacher attrition, ultimately impacting educational quality and the stability of educational systems. Despite extensive research on work-family conflict across diverse professions, there is a notable deficiency in targeted studies examining how teachers can adeptly navigate this tension. Moreover, conventional methods for mitigating work-family conflict such as improved time management or decreased workload frequently neglect the fundamental emotional difficulties encountered by teachers. In this context, emotional intelligence has emerged as a significant factor that may alleviate the effects of work-family conflict. Emotional intelligence, encompassing skills such as emotional regulation, empathy, and resilience, has demonstrated efficacy in enhancing stress management, interpersonal communication, and overall emotional well-being. Nonetheless, its capacity to specifically tackle the distinct challenges teachers encounter in reconciling their professional and personal lives remains inadequately examined Kappagoda, (2013) [10]; Olatunii et al., (2020) [11]; Wijayati et al., (2020) [12].

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and work-family conflict (WFC) among teachers. Specifically, the research aims to determine whether teachers with higher levels of emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage the pressures and stress that arise from balancing their professional responsibilities with family obligations. While previous studies have examined work-family conflict in various professions, limited research has specifically focused on how EI influences teachers' ability to navigate this challenge. Furthermore, existing literature often overlooks the potential of emotional intelligence as a tool for mitigating work-family conflict in the teaching profession. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating whether EI can help reduce the negative effects of WFC, contributing to teachers' well-being, job satisfaction, and overall effectiveness. By understanding this relationship, the research aims to offer valuable insights into how emotional intelligence might serve as an important factor in supporting teachers in managing the competing demands of work and family life.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study will use a quantitative research design with a simple random sampling technique to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and work-family conflict (WFC) among 120 self-financing college teachers in Palakkad, Kerala. The participants will be randomly selected from a list of self-financing college teachers, ensuring every teacher has an equal chance of being included. Data will be collected using two established instruments: Carlson et al.'s Work-Family Conflict Scale Carlson et al., (2000) [13] to measure the levels of work-family conflict and the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) (Law et al., (2004) [14] to assess emotional intelligence. The data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize demographic characteristics and scale scores, followed by Pearson's correlation analysis to examine the relationship between EI and WFC. Additionally, multiple regression analysis will be conducted to assess whether EI can predict WFC, controlling for demographic variables. Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, will be maintained throughout the study.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents

Variable	Category	No of respondents	Percentage
Age	Below 25	10	8.33
	25-35	73	60.83
	Above 35	37	30.83
Gender	Male	26	21.67
	Female	94	78.33
Marital status	Married	102	85
	Single	18	15
Qualification	PG	49	40.83
	PG with NET	43	35.83
	PG with M. Phil	16	13.33
	PG with Ph. D	12	10
Designation	Lecturer	18	15
	Assistant professor	88	73.33
	Others	14	11.67
Experience	Less than 2 years	28	23.33
	2-4 years	32	26.67
	4-6 years	26	21.67
	More than 6 years	34	28.33
Monthly income	Less than 20000	40	33.33
	20001-30000	45	37.5
	30001-40000	23	19.17
	Above 40000	12	10

Interpretation:

The demographic profile of the respondents indicates that the predominant age group of teachers in the sample is between 25 and 35 years, comprising 60.83%, while those in the younger and older age brackets account for 8.33% and 30.83%, respectively. The sample is primarily female (78.33%), and the majority of respondents are married (85%). Regarding qualifications, 40.83% possess a postgraduate degree, 35.83% have a postgraduate degree with NET qualification, while 13.33% hold an M. Phil and 10% possess a Ph.D. A significant percentage of the respondents are assistant professors (73.33%), while 15% are lecturers. The sample exhibits considerable diversity in experience: 23.33% possess less than 2 years, 26.67% have 2-4 years, 21.67% hold 4-6 years, and 28.33% exceed 6 years of experience. The majority of respondents earn between ₹20,001 and ₹30,000 per month (37.5%), followed by those earning less than ₹20,000 (33.33%). A smaller percentage earns between ₹30,001 and ₹40,000 (19.17%) or above ₹40,000 (10%). This profile reflects a youthful, primarily female workforce possessing a commendable level of academic qualifications, experience, and diverse income brackets.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for emotional intelligence and work family conflict

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation	N
Emotional Intelligence (EI)			
Self- emotion appraisal (SEA)	3.72	0.82	120
Other's emotion appraisal (OEA)	3.65	0.77	120
Use of emotion (UE)	3.58	0.88	120
Regulation of emotion (RE)	3.80	0.75	120
Overall emotional intelligence	3.69	0.72	120
Work family conflict (WFC)			

Work to family conflict	3.45	1.02	120
Family to work conflict	2.98	1.15	120
Overall work family conflict	3.21	1.08	120

Interpretation:

The descriptive statistics reveal that the sampled teachers typically exhibit moderate to high emotional intelligence, with the highest mean score recorded in Regulation of Emotion (3.80), and followed by Self-Emotion Appraisal (3.72), Others' Emotion Appraisal (3.65), and Use of Emotion (3.58). This indicates that teachers are proficient in regulating their own emotions and comprehending the emotions of others, which may assist in navigating workplace and personal difficulties. Conversely, work-family conflict is evident, with the Work-to-Family Conflict dimension exhibiting a higher mean score (3.45) than Family-to-Work Conflict (2.98), suggesting that work-related demands exert a more substantial influence on family life. The overall work-family conflict score of 3.21 indicates a moderate degree of conflict encountered by teachers in reconciling professional and personal obligations.

Table 3: Correlation between emotional intelligence and work family conflict

Variable	Work to family Conflict	Family to Work Conflict	Overall Work family conflict
Self-emotion appraisal (SEA)	-0.32*	-0.28*	-0.30*
Other's Emotion Appraisal (OEA)	-0.24*	-0.20*	-0.22*
Use of Emotion (UE)	-0.36*	-0.30*	-0.33*
Regulation of Emotion (RE)	-0.41*	-0.35*	-0.38*
Overall Emotional Intelligence (EI)	-0.37*	-0.31*	-0.34*

Interpretation:

The table indicates that each dimension of emotional intelligence (EI) exhibit a negative correlation with work-family conflict, suggesting that elevated emotional intelligence correlates with diminished conflict. The analysis indicates that these correlations are statistically significant (*). The regulation of emotion (RE) exhibits the most substantial negative correlation with work-to-family conflict ($r = -0.41$) and family-to-work conflict ($r = -0.35$), indicating that teachers with superior emotional regulation encounter reduced work-family conflict. The self-emotion appraisal (SEA) exhibits correlations of -0.32 with work-to-family conflict, -0.28 with family-to-work conflict, and -0.30 with overall work-family conflict, suggesting that enhanced emotional self-awareness is associated with diminished conflict. The utilization of emotion (UE) demonstrates correlations of -0.36 with work-to-family conflict, -0.30 with family-to-work conflict, and -0.33 overall, thereby reinforcing the notion that effective emotional use mitigates conflict. Ultimately, other's emotion appraisal (OEA) exhibits the weakest correlations, with coefficients of -0.24 for work-to-family conflict, -0.20 for family-to-work conflict, and -0.22 overall, indicating that the comprehension of others' emotions contributes to the dynamics, albeit with diminished significance relative to other dimensions of emotional intelligence. These negative correlations indicate that teachers with elevated emotional intelligence encounter reduced work-family conflict.

Table 4: Multiple regression Analysis

Predictor	B	SE B	Beta	t-value	p-value
Self-emotion appraisal (SEA)	-0.20	0.08	-0.24	-2.50	0.01
Other's Emotion Appraisal (OEA)	-0.15	0.07	-0.18	-2.14	0.03
Use of Emotion (UE)	-0.25	0.10	-0.28	-2.50	0.01
Regulation of Emotion (RE)	-0.35	0.09	-0.38	-3.89	0.00
R ² =0.36				F=9.85, p<0.00	

Interpretation:

The findings of the multiple regression analysis indicate that emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of work-family conflict. The model demonstrates statistical significance, evidenced by a F value of 9.85 and a p-value below 0.05, accounting for 36% of the variance in work-family conflict ($R^2 = 0.36$). The regression coefficients demonstrate that self-emotion appraisal (SEA) exhibits a negative correlation with work-family conflict, evidenced by a beta value of -0.24 and a p-value of 0.01, indicating that increased emotional self-awareness correlates with diminished conflict. Other's emotion appraisal (OEA) has a beta value of -0.18 and a p-value of 0.03, signifying that comprehending others' emotions diminishes work-family conflict. The utilization of emotion (UE) exhibits a beta coefficient of -0.28 and a p-value of 0.01, indicating that effective emotional utilization correlates with reduced work-family conflict. The regulation

of emotion (RE) exhibits the most substantial negative correlation, evidenced by a beta value of -0.38 and a p-value of 0.00, indicating that improved emotional regulation markedly diminishes work-family conflict.

6. DISCUSSION

This study's findings highlight the crucial influence of emotional intelligence (EI) in forecasting and mitigating work-family conflict (WFC) among teachers. The results of the multiple regression analysis, indicated by a R^2 of 0.36 and a F value of 9.85 ($p < 0.05$), demonstrate that emotional intelligence significantly contributes to the variance in work-family conflict, underscoring its critical role in maintaining equilibrium between professional and personal life. These findings align with previous studies suggesting that emotional intelligence functions as a protective factor against work-family conflict, as it equips individuals to effectively manage emotional challenges in both professional and domestic settings Siallagan et al., (2020) [15]; Speights et al., (2020) [16]. The identified negative correlations between emotional intelligence dimensions and work-family conflict indicate that elevated levels of emotional intelligence correspond to diminished conflict levels. Self-emotion appraisal (SEA), which assesses an individual's awareness of their emotions, was significantly correlated with diminished work-family conflict. This corresponds with the notion that emotional self-awareness enables teachers to recognize stressors promptly, regulate emotional reactions efficiently, and avert their intrusion into familial relationships, thereby reducing conflict. The regression analysis revealed that SEA significantly predicts work-family conflict, with a beta value of -0.24 and a p-value of 0.01, corroborating the idea that emotional self-awareness can alleviate work-family stress. Likewise, other's Emotion Appraisal (OEA), defined as the capacity to perceive and comprehend the emotions of others, and exhibited a notable negative correlation with work-family conflict. The beta value of -0.18 and a p-value of 0.03 indicate that teachers who exhibit empathy towards colleagues, students, and family members are more adept at handling the emotional challenges associated with their various roles. This capacity to comprehend and react suitably to the emotions of others likely fosters improved interpersonal relationships, both professionally and domestically, thereby diminishing overall work-family conflict. The Use of Emotion (UE) dimension exhibited a significant negative correlation with work-family conflict, indicated by a beta value of -0.28 and a p-value of 0.01. This indicates that the adept utilization of emotions to enhance problem-solving, decision-making, and interpersonal relationships is a crucial component of emotional intelligence that mitigates conflict. Teachers adept at utilizing their emotions are more proficient in managing stressful circumstances, both professionally and personally, thereby averting the transfer of occupational stress into familial settings. The strongest predictor of work-family conflict was Regulation of Emotion (RE), exhibiting a beta value of -0.38 and a p-value of 0.00. This discovery is notably important, as it indicates that the capacity to regulate one's emotions effectively managing both negative and positive emotions—is the most potent instrument in alleviating work-family conflict. Teachers capable of managing their emotions are less prone to emotional exhaustion, stress, or frustration, which frequently underlie work-family conflict. This corresponds with prior research highlighting the significance of emotional regulation in preserving well-being and mitigating stress. This study's findings enhance the existing literature on emotional intelligence and its significance in addressing work-family conflict. This study emphasizes the significance of emotional intelligence for teachers, a profession frequently exposed to elevated stress and emotional labor, while acknowledging the broader exploration of the relationship between emotional intelligence and work-family conflict across various occupations Chakravorty & Singh, (2020) [9]. Considering that emotional intelligence, especially emotional regulation, is a significant predictor of work-family conflict, initiatives designed to improve EI among teachers may effectively mitigate work-family conflict and enhance well-being. This study underscores the critical importance of emotional intelligence in addressing work-family conflict. Enhancing emotional self-awareness, empathy, and emotional regulation enables teachers to mitigate the adverse effects of work-family conflict, thereby improving their professional and personal lives Basak, (2016) [17]. Future research may investigate the implementation of emotional intelligence training programs for teachers and their effects on work-family conflict, while also analyzing additional factors that may interact with emotional intelligence to affect work-family dynamics.

7. CONCLUSION

This study emphasizes the crucial function of emotional intelligence (EI) in alleviating work-family conflict (WFC) among teachers. The findings demonstrate that elevated emotional intelligence, specifically in emotional regulation, self-emotion appraisal, and emotion utilization, correlates with diminished work-family conflict. The results indicate that emotional intelligence aids teachers in managing the emotional challenges of their professional and personal lives, thereby alleviating stress and promoting an improved work-life balance. Considering the significant influence of emotional intelligence on work-family conflict, it is advisable for educational institutions to implement emotional intelligence training programs to improve teachers' capacity to manage work and family obligations effectively. Such

interventions may enhance well-being, job satisfaction, and overall productivity among teachers. Subsequent research should investigate the prospective advantages of emotional intelligence training and analyze additional factors that may affect work-family dynamics among teachers.

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