

Juggling in Between Work, Home, and University: Female Master Students' Experience of Multi Roles Conflict

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Abstract: Multi roles conflict (MRC) refers to tensions that are created due to incompatible multiple roles and responsibilities. Female master's students face a heightened risk of experiencing MRC, as they must balance academic, professional, and family roles simultaneously. This paper reviews theoretical frameworks to analyse MRC experienced by female students in Indonesia context. Based on literature research, this paper explores the challenges to be faced, psychological impacts, and coping strategies related to MRC. The studies reviewed indicate that the challenges might be faced by female master's students are role overload, time-based conflict, strain-based conflict, behavior-based conflict, and role ambiguity. The psychological consequences of MRC entail stress, anxiety, depression, irritability, lowered self-esteem and social withdrawal. Meanwhile the coping strategies involve structural role redefinition (seeking support from family, supervisors and colleagues, timely communication, and job flexibility), personal role redefinition (cognitive reframing, setting clear expectation), and reactive role behaviour (time management and developing personal hobbies). Understanding the multiple role challenges faced by female master's students may contribute to their institution, workplace, and organization for enhancing their well-being and promoting a more sustainable balance among academic, personal, and professional role.

Keywords: Multi Roles Conflict (MRC), Female Master's Students, Coping Strategies.

Article History:

Received: 01-04-2025

Online : 30-04-2025



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A. INTRODUCTION

People often find themselves juggling more than one role in their lives, and some take on many at once. In the process of fulfilling multiple roles, individuals are highly likely to encounter a variety of challenges. Performing several roles simultaneously indicative of role overload (Coverman, 1989). This is the first challenges. In the evolving landscape of higher education and professional life, female master's students are increasingly required to manage responsibilities across work, academic, and domestic spheres. Unfortunately, role overload tends to cause role conflict, especially when individuals lack alternative resources or strategies to help them meet the demands of their different roles.

The second one, multiple roles often compete for a person's limited time. The time dedicated to one role typically cannot be used to fulfill the demands of another (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The time pressures that come with one role can sometimes make it physically impossible to meet the expectations of another. The pressures also may produce a preoccupation with one role even when one is physically attempting to meet the demands of another role (Bartolomé & Evans, 1979). This concerns the amount of time devoted to a

specific role, such as working, as well as how often and how much overtime is required, and the flexibility of the work schedule. Female master's students potentially face this challenge with the overlapping roles. Since time-based conflict is often associated with excessive working hours, schedule clashes, and the broader experience of role overload (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Third one, role produces strain. Strain in one role affects one's performance in another role. The roles are incompatible in the sense that the strain created by one makes it difficult to comply with the demands of another (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). We can predict what will happen with multi roles. Juggling academic, professional, and household responsibilities, female master's students are particularly vulnerable to being overwhelmed by the strains of their multiple roles. According to Brief et.al 1981, there is strong evidence that work stressors can lead to symptoms of strain, including tension, anxiety, fatigue, depression, apathy, and irritability. Strain-based conflict aligns with these feelings of fatigue and irritability (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

The next challenge is sometimes the way a person is expected to behave in one role doesn't match what's expected in another. For example, research suggests that the male managerial stereotype emphasizes traits like self-reliance, emotional stability, aggressiveness, and objectivity (Schein, 1973). In contrast, family members often expect a person to be warm, nurturing, emotional, and open in their interactions. Naturally, it might be happened to female master's students who have to adjust their behaviour to the exact roles everytime. When someone struggles to shift their behaviour to meet these different expectations, they are more likely to experience conflict between their roles.

Furthermore, role ambiguity also becomes the other challenges of multi roles. It happens when an employee faces unclear expectations and lacks the information needed to perform their job effectively (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzma, 1970). According to role theory, ambiguity should increase the probability that a person will be dissatisfied with his role, will experience anxiety, will distort reality, and will thus perform less effectively. Role ambiguity also leading to confusion and conflict. An illustration created to make it clearer A female master's student working part-time as a project coordinator often finds herself unsure about what is truly expected of her at work. Her manager gives only vague directions, and the expectations seem to shift without warning. At home, her family expects her to take charge of most household responsibilities, but they rarely make it clear what should come first – whether it's daily chores, caregiving, or planning family events. Meanwhile, at university, her professors treat her the same as full-time students, expecting her to meet all academic demands and deadlines without considering the pressures she faces from her job and family life.

Managing multi roles often gives rise to inter role conflicts. It arising when the demands of one role interfere with fulfilling another (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). A growing body of literature highlights the significant impact of the multi roles conflicts. Balancing multi roles as both employees and parents can significantly impact various areas of individuals' lives – including their professional performance, home life, marital relationships, and overall physical and mental health (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinleya, 2005).

Psychologically, this type of conflict has been linked to reduced life and job satisfaction, as well as diminished quality of family life (Ford, Heinen, & Langkamer, 2007). Other studies conducted by Morin and Gagne (2009) have emphasized the psychological toll of such conflicts, often manifesting as distress—an emotional state marked by anxiety, depression, irritability, low self-esteem, and social withdrawal (Jean & Lachance, 2015). Brief (1981) mentioned work stressors can produce strain symptoms such as tension, anxiety, fatigue, depression, apathy, and irritability (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Should these impacts be experienced by a female master's student, the consequences could extend beyond personal harm, affecting her family as well as the organization or company where she is employed.

Navigating multiple roles, along with the potential conflicts and their impacts, compels female master's students to seek and develop strategies for managing their responsibilities. Coping is often associated with stress given that individuals must continually cope in order to alleviate their stress (Rotondo, Carlson, & Kincaid, 2003). Coping allows individuals to develop techniques and strategies to deal with stressful situations (Kovacs, 2007). Coping defined as thoughts and behaviours that people use to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are appraised as stressful (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Coping research is essential as it offers insights into why individuals respond differently to stress, and why some are more resilient than others in managing life's challenges (Kovacs, 2007).

Hall (1972) defined three types of coping mechanism that would intervene at each: 1. Structural role redefinition - communication between person in social roles; 2. Personal role redefinition - make internal changes in attitude and perception; 3. Reactive role behaviour - satisfy the demands of role senders by improving the quality of one's role performance (Harrison & Minor, 1978). Lazarus and colleagues defined two forms of coping: 1. Problem-focused coping - changing the environment to reduce the stress; 2. Emotion-focused coping - changing our response to or interpretation of the situation; 3. Proactive coping - anticipating potential stressors and acts to prevent them from occurring (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Billings and Moss (1981) proposed a three-factor model of conception of coping consisting of: 1. Active coping - trying to see the positive side or considering several alternatives; 2. Active behavioural - talking with a friend, tried to find out more about the situation; and 3. Avoidance. Amirkhan (1990) developed the 'Coping Strategy Indicator' produced a three-factor solution of: 1. Problem-solving; 2. Seeking support; and 3. Avoidance. Higgins and Endler (1995) grouped coping strategies into three main classes: 1. Task-oriented; 2. Emotion-oriented; and 3. Avoidance-oriented (Kovacs, 2007).

Previous study carried out by Kalliath (2013) to social workers. When the participants asked, "What are some of the challenges you experience in managing your work and family demands?", three main themes emerged: 'work pressures', 'family pressures', and 'time pressures'. Similarly, when they asked, "In what ways do you cope with these challenges?", seven key coping strategies were identified: social support, cognitive reframing, timely communication, setting clear expectations, time management, job flexibility and developing hobbies (Kalliath & Kalliath, 2014). These coping strategies must be useful for female master's students in performing their multi roles.

This study seeks to examine the experiences of female master's students as they juggle the demands of work, home, and university life. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, the research aims to identify the factors contributing to multi-role conflict, explore its psychological, academic, and professional impacts, and analyse the coping strategies that students employ. Ultimately, the study intends to synthesize current findings and propose potential frameworks or recommendations to better support female master's students in managing their multiple roles.

B. METHOD

This study uses a literature review as its primary methodology. A literature review is considered particularly useful when the goal is to provide a comprehensive overview of specific research problems or issues (Snyder, 2019). By systematically reviewing existing studies, this research distilling key themes surrounding multi-role conflict. Given the complex, multidimensional, and context-sensitive nature of the topic, a literature review offers an effective and appropriate approach to deepen understanding. Moreover, a literature review enables the researcher to critically engage with theoretical frameworks such as work-family conflict theory (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), situating the experiences of female master's students within broader academic discourses. Ultimately, the application of a literature review methodology facilitates a thorough understanding of how female master's students experience and navigate multi-role conflict. Furthermore, it establishes a solid foundation for future empirical studies by identifying gaps in the existing literature and highlighting areas that warrant further investigation.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

By diving deep into the existing literature, this study highlights the many challenges female master's students face as they juggle multiple roles in their lives. One of the first hurdles is **role overload**, where the sheer number of demands from different roles simply becomes too much to manage (Coverman, 1989). Then there's **time-based conflict**—the unavoidable clash that happens when the time needed for one role eats into the time meant for another (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). **Strain-based conflict** follows closely behind, where the stress, pressure, and emotional exhaustion from one role start spilling over and dragging down performance in other areas (Brief et al., 1981; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). On top of that, **behavioral conflict** can create tension when the way a student is expected to behave at work doesn't align with the expectations at home or university (Schein, 1973). Finally, many students wrestle with **role ambiguity**, feeling lost and frustrated when the expectations in different areas of life are vague, inconsistent, or poorly communicated (Rizzo et al., 1970).

These conflicts don't just make life harder day-to-day; they can deeply impact mental health, academic performance, relationships at home, and even how students show up in their workplaces (Eby et al., 2005; Ford et al., 2007; Jean & Lachance, 2015). Strain can manifest as tension, anxiety, exhaustion, and depression, with the risk of those struggles quietly affecting not only the student herself but also her family and her organization. Still,

the literature offers hope. Across different studies and theories (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Amirkhan, 1990; Kalliath & Kalliath, 2014), students have been found to lean on a variety of coping strategies. Building strong support systems, reframing how they view challenges, mastering time management, negotiating flexibility at work, and setting clear expectations with others all serve as crucial tools that help them navigate the complexity of their lives.

The findings reveal just how intricate and demanding the lives of female master's students can be, as they constantly juggle the competing demands of work, study, and home life. This delicate balancing act places them at a heightened risk of multi-role conflict. Among the challenges, role overload and time pressures stood out most clearly, showing how the weight of multiple responsibilities can easily lead to both physical exhaustion and emotional fatigue. Added to that, the constant need to adjust behaviors across different settings, alongside unclear expectations, only intensifies the stress, making the transition between roles even more difficult. Psychologically, when role conflicts go unresolved, they can take a serious toll—triggering anxiety, depression, and a drop in overall life satisfaction. These struggles don't remain contained; they often ripple outward, straining family relationships and reducing performance and productivity at work.

Yet, the research also points to hope. Certain coping strategies can act as important lifelines. Whether it's redefining roles through better communication and mindset shifts, using problem-solving and emotion-focused approaches, or being proactive about managing stressors, these strategies help lighten the load. Practical steps like seeking social support, honing time management skills, reframing how challenges are perceived, and negotiating job flexibility stand out as particularly powerful tools for female master's students striving to manage their overlapping roles. Interestingly, lessons drawn from studies on social workers (Kalliath & Kalliath, 2014) offer valuable insights that could be adapted to support female students facing similar pressures. However, the burden of coping should not fall on the students alone. There is a clear and urgent need for universities and workplaces to recognize these unique challenges and to build systemic support structures that help students thrive—not just survive.

D. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Female master's students often find themselves balancing demanding responsibilities across their studies, careers, and home lives, making them especially vulnerable to multi-role conflict. Through this literature review, key challenges such as role overload, time pressure, emotional strain, behavioral demands, and role ambiguity have clearly emerged. The impacts of these conflicts reach far beyond the individual, influencing family relationships and workplace performance as well. Coping strategies are essential in helping students manage these pressures, but the findings highlight an urgent need for universities and employers to offer more structured, tailored support that strengthens female students' resilience. Looking ahead, future research should focus on real-world studies that test the effectiveness of various coping strategies across different cultural and organizational settings. The ultimate goal is to design comprehensive interventions that truly meet the needs of

women navigating the complex world of higher education while managing multiple life roles.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Mrs Tina Hayati Dahlan and Mrs Hani Yulindrasari, whose invaluable guidance, insightful feedback, and unwavering support have been instrumental throughout the development of this research. Their encouragement and expertise have greatly enriched my academic journey. I am also sincerely thankful to the faculty and staff of Educational Psychology, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, whose resources and assistance provided a strong foundation for the completion of this study. Special thanks are due to the women whose experiences, documented in the existing literature, inspired this research. Their stories of resilience and perseverance in managing multi roles continue to shed light on an often-overlooked aspect of academic life. Finally, I wish to extend my heartfelt appreciation to my family, friends, and colleagues, whose patience, understanding, and encouragement have been vital in balancing my own multi roles while completing this work. This research would not have been possible without the support, inspiration, and kindness I have received throughout this journey.

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