

**Reciprocal Relations Between Commitment To Work
And To Family Among Female High School Teachers
In Arab Society In Israel**

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Abstract

Arab society in Israel is undergoing economic, social and cultural changes in which women play an important and integral part. Arab women are acquiring education and professions and **finding their place in the education system and the work force**, and in contrast to the traditions of the past, today they are tending more to stand firmly in matters pertaining to determining how their lives are led. In this they are leading a gradual and moderate change (Herzog & Bader-Aref, 2000; Herzog, 1998).

Their path is not easy. The society in which they live views women as committed fully to their home, that is, to their nuclear and expanded family, i.e., their husband and children. The present study examines the ties between commitment to family and commitment to work among female Arab teachers teaching in high schools in Arab society. These ties are examined against the background of the "Oz Lat'mura" reform that was implemented in high schools, as well as supplemental pedagogical changes and increase workloads placed on the teachers.

The research examines the literature dealing with the characteristics of Arab society and the changes evident in it, which entail conflictual processes between traditional values and liberal values. The literature includes studies that focus on commitment to the family and to work and the conflict between them, the load that the conflict creates and the resulting feelings of pressure, and the effects of the load and the pressures on how working mothers function, both at home and in their place of work. The paper also discusses studies that link reforms in education and management style to load and feelings of pressure at work. Following the review of the literature the research question is presented, which relates to the factors that accelerate and moderate conflicts between commitment to family and to work among teaching mothers in Arab society in Israel.

The research proposes a theoretical model that explains the commitment to work among female teachers in high schools in Arab society and the commitment to family, the conflicts entailed in this double commitment and their effects on the functioning of mothers-teachers at work and in the family. The model combines components that moderate and intensify the conflict, among them the extent of support that the husband provides to his wife-teacher, characteristics of the school load and pressure and the management style in school. This model was tested on two groups of female teachers, one working in the framework of the "Oz Lat'mura" educational reform and the other

of teachers who did not join it. The control variables examined included the following socio-demographic variables: age, number of children, family status and religiosity. The following employment factors were also examined: education, years of teaching experience and percentage of teaching position (from part-time to full-time and more).

Method: The research was conducted in the districts of Haifa, the north, the south, Jerusalem and the center, among female high school teachers in Arab society. The sample included a proportionate number of teachers employed in each program, that is, 50% of the teachers participating in the study were in the "Oz Lat'mura" reform program and 50% of them were not.

Study participants completed questionnaires that examined several aspects of their work (OCB and OMB), commitment and functioning in the family (attitude toward the importance of life roles, family-work conflicts, support and flexibility, division of tasks in the family), pressure at work among the teachers and principal's management style.

The questionnaires were distributed in the schools together with a letter of explanation to the teachers who agreed to participate in the study. They completed the questionnaires during their free time, with no time limitation.

Findings: The model as a whole was confirmed. It contributes to the explanation of the factors that intensify and moderate conflictual reciprocal relations between commitment to family and to work.

Reciprocal relations are evident between functioning at work and functioning in the family and they are explained through a variety of factors, among them attitude to the importance of the role, support from the husband and the school principal, work load and the pressure it creates, management style of the school principal and teacher participation in the "Oz Lat'mura" reform. The reciprocal ties between commitment to family and to work are also connected to socio-demographic factors and to employment factors.

High commitment to work and heavy load there are reflected in a decline in the measure of social involvement of the mother-teacher in daily family life. The importance of this measure lies in the determination of the individual's status in society and is considered a factor that can moderate or intensify the conflict. In parallel, teachers who invest extensive time and social involvement in the family devote less time to their work, and this is evident in the reduction of their OCB. The teachers who

took part in the "Oz Lat'mura" reform were found to be in a state of greater work load and feelings of oppressive pressure than those who did not join the reform.

Some factors were found to intensify the functional conflict between home and work while others were found to moderate it. Among the moderating factors in the family were consideration and assistance by the husband. Among the moderating factors at work was the principal who demonstrated understanding and tolerance for the personal constraints of the teacher-mother. Among the factors that intensified the conflict were the "Oz Lat'mura" reform which increased the work load and the resultant feelings of pressure at work. Certain management styles contributed to moderating the conflict and others intensified it. The overall picture that emerges from the findings indicates that the female teachers succeed in maintaining a high level of functioning in the family and demonstrate high commitment to that framework. At the same time they maintain a high level of functioning at work and avoid excessive tardiness and absences. It can be inferred from this that the moderating factors in the family-work conflict usually apply greater force than the intensifying factors of the conflict. If it seemed that the cultural change affecting Arab society would cause a deep crisis, especially in the family cell, in light of the change in the status and functioning of women and the conflict with the religious and traditional culture, it appears that the society is dealing well with this change, at least from the point of view of the female Arab teachers who are at the center of the process.

The contribution of this study is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it presents and clarifies a system-wide picture of factors that explain the conflict between family and work in Arab families against the background of the cultural, social and economic changes that Arab society is undergoing. In practical terms, the findings indicate ways to balance the dual roles of mother and teacher, while promoting dialogue between women and men and increasing cooperation and equality in the Arab family cell.