# Work-school Conflict and Coping Strategies in Continuing Education

## Perceptions of Early Child Development Programs Students in China

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*Abstract*—**Continuing education was becoming popular in China. It benefited adults with extra opportunity and promoting job skills that had been working for many years. However, continuing education also imposed burdens on the students. The pressure was mainly from multiple roles they were required to take care of family, schooling, and work simultaneously. The purpose of this study was designed to measure students' perceptions of role conflicts between school and work and subsequent coping strategies, and to determine factors relevant to the role conflict and coping in early child development programs with continuing education. Results of the study were based on useable responses received from 970 working students, with a return rate of 80.83%. This study found marital status had a statistically significant effect on school and work conflict and coping strategies. Single people were better at school and work conflict and married people were better at coping. In addition, maturity which was defined by combining age and years of work experience which had a significant relationship with school and work conflict and coping strategies.**

*Keywords—continuing education; work-school conflict; coping strategies; early child development*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Continuing education provides flexible time for working people to take care of both work and learning [1]. Working people can go to school on Saturday and Sunday, or took evening class from Monday through Friday, and chose the subjects that they wanted to learn or improved in order to meet their needs in their practical life or workplace. Scott and King [2]assert that the addition of student role, the individual can face conflict for assuming multiple roles, such as one person can play the roles of student, spouse, mother, employer, etc. at the same time. The role expectations can cause role conflict with maladjustment, guilt, frustration, and other signs of negative emotional impact. Role conflict was occurred in terms of psychology when a person facing two or more objects with contradicting expectation and yet both cannot be fully performed [3]. The phenomenon of role conflict was almost inevitable when living in the modern highly civilized society for the sake of pursuing higher living standards, or for achieving greater objectives. Without proper way of resolving role conflicting, people would tend to experience negative outcomes that impacted on the society as a whole [4].Hall [5] believed that using coping strategies would help to alleviate the effect of role conflict. Agrawal's [6] thought that coping could help overcome problems, but it only overcame stress, and the problems may or may not be solved. Thus, coping referred to behavior by which an individual tried to deal with stress, and it could relieve himself of the ill effects of the stressor. In other words, the proper coping strategies could reduce or remedy a conflict occurred during multiple role-playing scenarios.

## II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study was to measure continuing education students' perceptions of role conflicts between work and school and subsequent coping strategies, and to determine factors relevant to the role conflict and coping strategies.

### A. Significance of Study

The results of this study may also help school administrators to understand and identify the difficulty during students' learning and thus develop useful plans to help the continuing education students in a better educational environment to achieve their lifelong learning goals.

### B. Statement of the Problem

Those questions below were addressed in the study of continuing education students at early child development programs, focused on:

- What was the relationship among gender, students' perceptions about impact of work on academic pursuit, impact of academics on work, and coping strategies?

- What was the relationship between the individual student characteristics and the perceptions of work and school conflict?

- What was the relationship between the individual student characteristics and the perceptions of coping strategies?

## III. RELATED LITERATURE

This part is a review of the literature support of the major concepts for this study. The continuing education referred to credit and non-credit education programs serving students and professionals of all ages and backgrounds, especially for those working people, children's teachers, housekeepers, businessmen, and employees. Adults typically, have different motivations for learning than children such as those pointed out by Lieb [7] as seen in "Table I".

TABLE I.    LEARNING MOTIVATIONS FOR ADULT LEARNERS

| Adult Learning Motivation |
|---|
| 1. Social relationships: to make new friends, to meet a need for associations and friendships. |
| 2. External expectations: to comply with instructions from someone else; to fulfill the expectations or recommendations of someone with formal authority. |
| 3. Social welfare: to improve ability to serve mankind, prepare for service to the community, and improve ability to participate in community work. |
| 4. Personal advancement: to achieve higher status in a job, secure professional advancement, and stay abreast of competitors. |
| 5. Escape/Stimulation: to relieve boredom, provide a break in the routine of home or work, and provide a contrast to other exacting details of life. |
| 6. Cognitive interest: to learn for the sake of learning, seek knowledge for its own sake, and to satisfy an inquiring mind. |

In Smith's study [8], there were five assumptions underlying andragogy described the adult learner, such as: (1). Adult learner has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning. (2). Adult learner has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning. (3). Adult learner has learning needs closely related to changing social role. (4). Adult learner is problem-centered and interested in immediate application of knowledge. (5). Adult learner is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors. Role conflict is defined as the simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other" [9]. Chuan [10] believed that the society had stereotype conception of the female as lack of working proficiency and capability that in turn would cause the female to work harder to obtain the same level of recognition as of the male. In R. G. Sand and V. Richardson's (1984) study [11] indicated that the younger the students were, the more pressure they had (Zheng, 2000) [12]. Research findings reached by Bender (1990) [13] indicated that the married had obstacles of situational conflict from having less leisure time and having to take care of family and work simultaneously. Hieh (1993) [14] found there's an immaterial relationship between position and role conflict. Cluver (1993) [15] found that the adult students perceived the maturity and experience were more important than that of the formal school education programs after conducting a survey of 139 participants who were degree seeking at adult education programs. Coping was therefore defined as a process of an individual constantly evaluated the changing situation and reduced the pressure where originated by incorporating helpful adjustment actions or resources (Altmaier, 1995) [16].

## IV. RESEARCH DESIGN

The framework of this study was designed from the research purpose and the literature review. The independent variables (the variables of personal background) and the dependent variables (work and school conflict and coping strategies) were components of the framework "Fig. 1". The population for this study was continuing education students enrolling in the evening and weekend sections of early child development programs in Yunnan of China, including useable responses of 970 students were selected from sampling 1200 continuing education students attending four teacher education colleges located in the northern, central, and southern of Yunnan province in 2015.
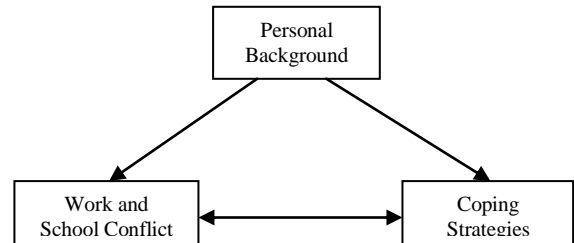


Fig. 1.   Framework of Study

### A. Instrumentation

The questionnaire was divided into three sections of personal background, scale of work and school conflict, and coping strategies scale. In the questionnaire, items were rated on a four-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 4. "1" meant "disagree", "2" meant "somewhat disagree", "3" meant "somewhat agree" and "4" meant "agree". The items that would be chosen by the non-traditional students in early child development programs depended on their situation. The way to count points was "disagree" 1 point, "somewhat disagree" 2 points, "somewhat agree" 3 points, and "agree" 4 points. According to the "scale of work and school conflict", the higher average score meant that a person got more conflict from work and school. According to the "coping strategies scale", the higher average score meant that the strategies were more effective. Inverse relationships pointed this out would occur between role conflict and coping strategies.

### B. Data Analysis

Data analysis procedures for four questions included MANOVA, ANOVA, Stepwise Regression and Pearson Correlation methods

## V. RESULT

Question 1: What was the relationship among gender, students' perceptions about impact of work on academic pursuit, impact of academics on work, and coping strategies?

Results ("Table II") indicated that gender (Wilks' $\Lambda = .99$, $F (3, 470) = 2.36$, $p > .05$) was not significant across dependent variables. Also, this indicated that marital status was significant "Table III". That meant that there was a difference among the impact of work on academic pursuit,

the impact of academics on work, and coping strategies by marital status. Therefore, the effect of marital status on the three dependent variables was conducted to determine the impact of work on academic pursuit, the impact of academics on work, and coping strategies. An analysis of variances (ANOVA) for marital status on dependent variables was conducted as follow-up tests to the MANOVA "Table IV". The ANOVA was tested at the .05 level. The ANOVA was significant on the impact of work on academic pursuit ($F$ (1, 481) = 10.73, $p <$ .05), the impact of academics on work, ($F$ (1, 481) = 14.54, $p <$ .05) and coping strategies ($F$ (1, 481) = 4.33, $p <$ .05). The result indicated that there was difference among the impact of work on academic pursuit, the impact of academics on work, and coping strategies on marital status.

TABLE II.    ACADEMICS ON WORKAND COPING STRATGIES BY GENDER

| Effect | Wilk's Lambda value | df | F | Error df | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | .99 | 3 | 2.36 | 470 | .07 |

a. *p < .05.

TABLE III.    ACADEMICS ON WORKAND COPING STRATGIES BY MARITAL STATUS

| Effect | Wilk's Lambda Value | df | F | Error df | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Marital status | .96 | 3 | 6.07 | 479 | .00* |

b. * p < .05.

TABLE IV.    ANALYSIS VARIANCE OF IMPACT OF WORK BY MARITAL STATUS

| Dependent Variables | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The impact of work on academic pursuit | 1.65 | 1 | 1.65 | 10.73 | 0.001* |
| The impact of academic on work | 4.35 | 1 | 4.35 | 14.54 | 0.00* |
| Coping strategies | .51 | 1 | .51 | 4.33 | 0.04* |

c. * p < .05.

Question2: What was the relationship between the individual student characteristics and the perceptions of work and school conflict? The beta of maturity variable was equal to -.30 "Table V".

TABLE V.    STEPWISE REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR PREDICTING WORK AND SCHOOL CONFLICT (N = 828)

| Independent variable | B | B SE | β |
|---|---|---|---|
| Maturity | -.02 | .003 | -.30* |

d. * p < .05.

The beta weights are the regression coefficients for standardized data. Beta is the average amount the dependent increases when the independent increases one standard deviation and other independent variables are held constant. The beta of maturity was negative which implied that the maturity had negative influence on work and school conflict. It meant that the increasing maturity would decrease work and school conflict.

Question 3: What was the relationship between the individual student characteristics and the perceptions of

coping strategies? The beta of maturity variable was equal to -.24 "Table VI". The beta weights are the regression coefficients for standardized data. Beta is the average amount the dependent increases when the independent increases one standard deviation and other independent variables are held constant. The beta of maturity was positive implying that maturity had positive influence on coping strategies of work and school conflict. It meant that the increasing maturity would use more coping strategies.

TABLE VI.    STEPWISE REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR PREDICTING COPING STRATEGIES (N = 812)

| Independent Variable | B | B SE | β |
|---|---|---|---|
| Maturity | .02 | .003 | .24* |

e. * p < .05.

## VI.    CONCLUSION

That were developed associated with the condition of continuing education students' work and school conflict in early child development programs and their coping strategies based upon the result of this study would provide reference to those continuing education students, schools, employers and further study. The purpose of this study was to measure students' perceptions of role conflicts between work and school and subsequent coping strategies, and to determine factors relevant to the role conflict and coping. The below ones have been drawn from the results of this study:

- For the participants in this study, time conflict was an important factor in the work and school conflict.

- For the participants in this study, marital status had a statistically significant effect on work and school conflict and coping strategies. The single students were better at work and school conflict and the married students were better at coping.

- For the participants in this study, maturity that was defined by combining age and years of work experience had a significant relationship with work and school conflict and coping strategies.

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