



Role Load, Self-Concept Clarity, and the Buffering Role of Social Support Among Mothers

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Abstract

Being a mother means managing a multitude of responsibilities- such as taking care of your family and household management- which can lead to increased stress. This study examines the association between role load, self-concept clarity, and perceived stress among mothers, while also testing whether social support acts as a protective buffer. A total of 50 mothers (mean age = 38) completed an online survey measuring their experiences with the four variables. It was hypothesized that higher role load would be associated with greater perceived stress and lower self-concept clarity. Furthermore, we predicted that social support would act as a buffer, weakening the negative association between role load and both perceived stress and self-concept clarity. The results revealed a positive correlation between role load and perceived stress, $r(df) = [.XX]$, $p < .001$. A negative correlation was found between role load and self-concept clarity, $r(df) = [-.XX]$, $p < .001$. A moderation analysis indicated that social support significantly buffered the link between role load and perceived stress, but not between role load and self-concept clarity. These findings underscore the psychological challenges associated with role load in mothers and highlight the critical, albeit specific, role of social support in mitigating its stressful effects.

Keywords: role load, self-concept clarity, perceived stress, social support, mothers.

Introduction

1.1 Background

Motherhood involves managing a multitude of responsibilities, including professional duties, childcare, and household management. This extensive role load can lead to increased stress, which is theorized to destabilize a mother's self identity. Research suggests that external

resources, particularly social support, might mitigate the negative psychological effects of role load.

1.2 Theoretical Linkage & Core Concepts

Role Theory: Engaging in multiple, sometimes conflicting, roles (high role load) can lead to strain, stress, and potential identity destabilization.

Self-Concept Theory: Focuses on the structure and content of the self-view, arguing that ambiguity or instability in the self-concept (low SCC) results from external pressures.

The Stress-Buffering Hypothesis: Suggests that external resources, specifically Social Support, can act as a psychological buffer, mitigating the damaging effects of external stressors (like role load) on internal states (like SCC).

1.3 Gaps in literature

While the link between general role stress and well-being is established, there is a specific need to empirically test the direct negative association between Role Load and the specific psychological construct of Self-Concept Clarity in the population of mothers. Previous research often examines social support as a direct predictor, but this study specifically tests the moderating role of social support. This study provides unique empirical evidence confirming the dynamic interaction between these three variables in this specific, high-stress population.

1.4 Objective

The objective of this research was to empirically examine the relationship between role load and self-concept clarity among mothers and to test the potential moderating role of social support.

1.5 Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the study was three fold:

- It was hypothesized that higher role load would be associated with lower self-concept clarity.
- It was also hypothesized that high social support would be associated with high self-esteem concept clarity.
- Furthermore, it was predicted that social support would act as a buffer, weakening the negative association.

2. Methods

2.1 Design

A quantitative, correlational research design was employed to examine the relationships between role load, self- concept clarity, and social support.

2.2 Participants

Data was collected from a total of 100 mothers (Mean Age = 38). Participants were included based on their role as mothers managing multiple life responsibilities.

2.3 Measures

A self-report online survey was administered to measure the three key variables: Role Load, Self- Concept Clarity, and Social Support.

2.4 Data Analysis

Statistical analyses, including correlation and moderation analysis, were conducted to assess associations and test the buffering effect of social support.

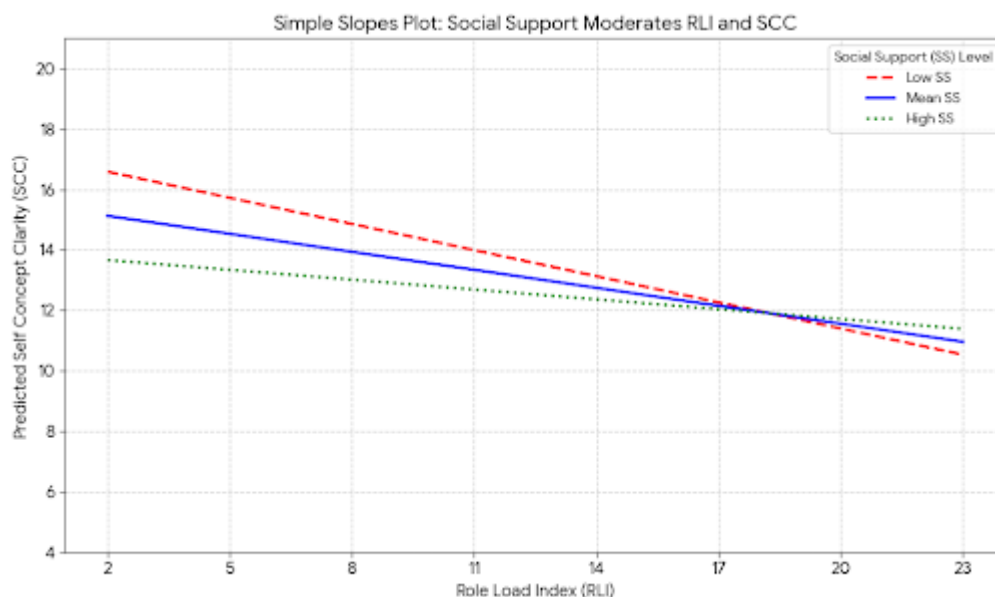
2.5 Ethical Considerations

All data were collected anonymously and stored securely to ensure participant confidentiality and voluntary participation.

3. Results

- The statistical analysis confirmed a significant negative correlation between role load and self-concept clarity ($r = -0.32, p = 0.001$).
- This indicated that as mothers' role load increased, their self-concept clarity tended to decrease, supporting the primary hypothesis.
- Social Support and Self-concept clarity showed a positive correlation ($r = 0.29, p = 0.003$).
- This result demonstrates that the negative effect of role load on self-concept clarity was notably reduced when mothers reported higher levels of social support.
- Thus, supporting the buffering effect of social support.

Moderation analysis



4. Discussion

The inverse relationship between Role Load and Self-Concept Clarity (SCC) aligns with role strain theory, suggesting that juggling conflicting demands fragments the sense of self. Crucially, social support acts as a buffer, validating the individual's diverse roles and providing the psychological resources needed to integrate these identities, consistent with stress-buffering models. Ultimately, high role load negatively impacts a mother's self-concept clarity, but strong social support acts as a crucial protective buffer, helping to maintain a stable sense of self.

This finding resonates with principles found in Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), which emphasize the importance of *sanga* (association/community) for maintaining *dharma* (duty and moral order) and internal equilibrium. The external support system reinforces the mother's capacity to fulfill multiple roles without losing her *svarūpa* (essential nature/identity).

4.1 Limitations

The correlational design prevents causal claims; while moderation was found, reverse causality (poor SCC leading to perceived higher load) remains possible. Furthermore, the reliance on self-report measures for all variables introduces potential common method bias.

4.2 Future work

A planned longitudinal study is needed to establish causality over time. We also intend to explore the specific sources of support (Partner, Peer, Institutional) to determine which is the most potent buffer for SCC.

5. Conclusion

Juggling many roles (like work and family) can make it harder for mothers to take care of themselves and feel sure about who they are. Support from others is a powerful solution. Having help from family, friends, or colleagues can protect moms from feeling stressed and help them keep a strong sense of self.

5.1 Implications

- Policies that facilitate social support networks, such as flexible work arrangements, parenting groups, and accessible community resources for mothers.
- Integrate psychoeducation on role load and self-concept into prenatal and postnatal care to help mothers and families proactively build supportive environments.

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