CONSISTENT with the trend toward participative management, flexible work schedules have become widespread. “Flexitime” is the most popular and practical of the available systems, and numerous benefits accrue to the flexitime organization.\(^1\) Indirectly, productivity increases as less overtime is required for unproductive work,\(^2\) absenteeism and turnover are reduced,\(^2\) while staff recruitment,\(^2\) job involvement and satisfaction,\(^2\) communication,\(^2\) and perceptions of the organizational climate\(^2\) are enhanced. Research on potential advantages accruing to the employee are sparse, despite suggestions that employees achieve a more balanced life style and less global role conflict.\(^2\) In an attempt to redress this balance, the multidimensional role conflict and depression of working mothers are contrasted.

The volunteer Ss were 54 white working mothers in Johannesburg, South Africa (\(M\) age = 37.32 years, range 21-58; \(M\) length of marriage = 14.85 years, range 1-37); in full-time employment with at least one dependent child, range 1-5. Of these Ss 21 were employed in a flexitime organization, the remaining 33 were not. Holohan and Gilbert's\(^2\) 34-item role conflict scale was used, since it provides information about conflict between the following roles the working mother fulfills: professional vs parent, professional vs spouse, professional vs self, parent vs spouse, parent vs self.

\(^*\) Received in the Editorial Office, Provincetown, Massachusetts, on June 21, 1983. Copyright, 1984, by The Journal Press.


spouse vs self. Depression was assessed with Zung's 20-item Self-Rating Depression Scale.\(^3\) Three factor analytically derived subscales functioned as dependent variables: ideational, physiological, and behavioral depression.

Age was used as a covariate in all analyses, since the two groups differed significantly on age (\(p < .05\)). Compared to their nonflextime counterparts, mothers working full-time in a flextime system suffered significantly less parent vs spouse (\(M_s = 4.36 vs 5.56, F = 4.60, df = 1/52, p < .05\)) and parent vs self (\(M_s = 5.55 vs 6.22, F = 4.82, df = 1/52, p < .05\)) role conflict, and less behavioral depression (\(M_s = 4.67 vs 5.93, F = 5.05, df = 1/52, p < .05\)).

Although previous research has shown that flextime workers experience less role conflict, the present results go one step further, specifying the nature of the role conflict that might be reduced with flextime. Since the effects of flextime on parent vs professional role conflict also approached significance (\(p < .09\)), conflict regarding the parental role may be ameliorated. That flextime mothers experienced less behavioral depression is consistent with their enhanced personal autonomy. Any inferences about the causal role of flextime from static correlational analyses cannot statistically exclude hypotheses about reverse causality. However, it is logically untenable to make such inferences: i.e., that reductions in role conflict and depression lead organizations to introduce flextime. Although the present results are based on a South African sample, work values in South Africa and America are somewhat similar.\(^5\) Consequently, these results are important in understanding the potential impact of different work systems on individual well-being.

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