

Poster

TITLE

Multi-Method Approach to Investigate Work-Family Conflict

ABSTRACT

We investigated the phenomena of work-family conflict using two methodologies. First, a qualitative approach was undertaken using focus groups. Second, a survey was used to investigate insights reported by participants previously. The paper emphasizes the importance of a multi-method approach for better understanding intricacies of the construct under investigation.

PRESS PARAGRAPH

Work-family conflict is omnipresent in today's working world. We examined the phenomena of work-family conflict using a multi-method approach. The uniqueness of this research comes from the methodology utilized to better understand intricacies, which oftentimes are left uncovered in the usual survey approach. One study was conducted using focus groups to understand in participants' own words how they experience work-family conflict. Using insights gained through the focus groups, various relationships were examined through a survey measure. Findings confirm the importance of better understanding the work-family conflict relationships. In addition, the study points out to several possible points for future research.

Currently most of a person's time is spent either at work or at home. Being able to juggle double roles between family, work, and other responsibilities often causes stress. Problems arise with time, schedules, fatigue, and irritability (Pleck, Staines, & Lang, 1980). Stress associated with role demands of work/non-work environments is called work-family conflict. Work-family conflict in the past was considered to be unidimensional. Currently, researchers agree that conflict may arise when work interferes with family (WIF) and family interferes with work (FIW). Research for many years now has supported the multidimensional view of work-family conflict. The dimensions include: strain-based, time-based, and behavior-based. Research, however, has not yet found strong enough support for behavior-based measurement of the work-family construct. Consequently, in this paper we concentrated on the measurement of work-family conflict to include time- and strain-based scales.

Specifically, we focus on four dimensions of work-family conflict: time-based WIF, time-based FIW, strain-based WIF, and strain-based FIW. Time-based conflict occurs when time devoted to one role makes it difficult to participate in, or comply with, the expectations of another role (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985, as cited in Rotondo, Carlson, & Kincaid, 2003). An example might be where a parent-teacher conference conflicts with an important meeting at work. Strain-based conflict is viewed as strain from the demands of one role intruding into and interfering with participation in another role (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985, as cited in Rotondo, Carlson, & Kincaid, 2003).

Utilization of Two Diverse Methods

The uniqueness of this research comes from the methodology utilized to better understand the work-family construct. The intricacies that could have been potentially

missed by using the traditional quantitative approach were brought to our attention through a qualitative method. Specifically, focus groups were utilized to explore the entire phenomenon of work family conflict. Through the focus groups, hypotheses were identified and tested through a quantitative approach.

Qualitative approach identified the importance of support from both work and family. Organizational support can take on the form of a formal process such as organization family friendly policies or informal support networks from supervisors and other sources. As a result, the variables we concentrate on in our research include: availability of organizational policies and informal networks of support.

Social Support and Availability of Organizational Policies

One possible strategy to cope with inter-role conflict, specifically, work family conflict, is social support, informal type of support. The most salient support sources come from family and work domains (Polasky & Holahan, 1998). The distinct sources that have been endorsed by many investigators are the supervisor, coworkers, and friends or family (e.g., Caplan, Cobb, French, Harrison, & Pinneau, 1975). Further categorization can encompass friends and family as one category. While supervisors and coworkers form another category.

Hypothesis 1a. *Social support (informal) will minimize the experience of stress relating to Work Family Conflict.*

The availability of family friendly work policies (e.g., telecommuting, and flexible work schedules) have been thought to have an impact upon the strength of stress experienced due to work family conflict (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Having the possibility of utilizing both informal and formal support mechanisms will have a greater effect on the experience of work family conflict as opposed to looking at a single type of support.

Hypothesis 1b. *The availability of organizational policies will minimize the experience of Work Family Conflict.*

Hypothesis 1c. *Having both formal and informal sources of support will result in a greater decrease in the experience of work-family conflict as compared to the effect of a single type of support.*

Role Conflict and Gender Role Ideology

In contemporary theories, the self-concept is seen as multifaceted, dynamic structure involving a multiplicity of identities (Polasky & Holahan, 1998). Multiple selves and related terms, such as sub-identities have been applied to the experience of multiple roles and the phenomenon of inter-role conflict. One example of inter-role conflict is seen in the domain of work and family (Work Family Conflict). Some of the roles faced in today's society include but are not limited to: worker, friend, spouse, child, and/or sibling. A potential construct that influences the importance one role takes over another is gender role ideology.

Gender role ideology (GRI) is an individual's attitudes and beliefs about the proper role of men and women. In other words, how a person judges the appropriateness of behaviors and characteristics of men and women in our society (Fitzpatrick, et. al.,

2004). Typically, GRI is conceptualized in terms of traditional and non-traditional dimension. Traditionally, women prioritize their family responsibilities much higher over work compared to men. While men prioritize their work responsibilities much higher over their family compared to women. Therefore, it can be suggested that people with more traditional views (when men and women score high on the scale of GRI) would prioritize roles in line with traditional concepts. This means that when dealing with inter-role conflict such as work-family conflict, individuals would choose methods in line with their scores on the GRI scale. Such as, traditional men and women will utilize strategies that entail more traditional behaviors.

Hypothesis 2a. *GRI will have a relationship with social support.*

Hypothesis 2b. *Social support (informal) will serve as a mediator between GRI and the experience of work-family conflict.*

Consequences of Work Family Conflict

Work-family conflict has numerous consequences. Allen, Herst, Bruck, and Sutton (2000) outlined some of the outcomes. These consequences include work-related outcomes such as: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to turnover, absenteeism, job performance, career satisfaction, and career success. Non-work outcomes include: life satisfaction, marital satisfaction, family satisfaction, and etc. Workers reporting that their job and family life interfered with each other reported significantly lower satisfaction with both their life and job satisfaction (Pleck, Staines, & Lang, 1980). The more interesting domains affected by work-family conflict can be grouped into either job satisfaction or family satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3a. *The greater the experience of work-family conflict, the lower one's attitudes of job satisfaction.*

Hypothesis 3b. *The greater the experience of work-family conflict, the lower one's attitudes of life satisfaction.*

STUDY 1. - Qualitative

Method

Participants and Data collection

Eighteen participants were used in four separate focus groups. There were two female and two male focus groups conducted. The female focus groups were comprised of five women in each session. Male focus groups were also conducted in two sessions and had four individuals per group. The demographic make up of the samples varied. Overall all the participants were married, working in professional settings, and had at least one child living at home under the age of 18.

The format of the sessions was standardized to maintain that the manner in which and what questions were asked did not influence participants' answers. There were seven main questions not including various probes used per session. Example questions include: "Do you experience that your work interferes with your family responsibilities?" and "What support mechanisms do you use when work interferes with your family?"

Results

Females and males both reported in the focus groups to using various types of social support sources in order to minimize the experience of work family conflict. In particular, types of support that were brought up in the various groups were spousal, family, friend, and coworker sources. Females, however, were more willing to mention the use of social support as a coping strategy as compared to their male counterparts.

Specifically, thirteen females reported receiving support from their partner, family, or friends. For example, one female admitted, “I depend on friends and neighbors to take my kid on outings with them during the day....” Only three males, in contrast, reported to receiving support from the aforementioned sources. One male reported that, “My wife attends most of the daytime activities and takes our kids to their after school activities.” Thus, a major finding of the focus groups samples was in the discovery of a sizeable gender difference in the report of social support used by the participants.

In addition, other notable findings include the extent of negative outcomes associated with the experience of work family conflict. Stress seemed to occur very often for some of the females and males in the focus groups. The experience of stress, as reported by the participants, occurred in both family and work domains. One male explained how he tried to separate his role at work from his role at home, because integrating all the roles leads to stress. Striving to achieve the balance between work and family is very difficult, as reported by most of the participants in the focus groups. The inability to ultimately reach the balance that the participants are striving for is one of the reasons for the experience of stress, frustration, and guilt. As one male reported, “If you give too much attention to your family, then your career could potentially suffer. One never knows. A balance between the two is important.”

STUDY 2. - Quantitative

Method

Participants and Data collection

Students taking an online class in Organizational Psychology were asked to volunteer to fill out a questionnaire on work/family conflict. Surveys were sent via e-mail to 13 students. Each of the students filled out the questionnaire and had a colleague at

work of an opposite gender take the on-line survey. Total sample consisted of 27 responses; 15 males, 11 females and one respondent did not provide his/her gender. All the participants were working adults, ranging from 20 to over 45 years of age. Majority of the respondents had one or more children. 24 respondents had at least a bachelor's degree and 6 people had a graduate degree. 15 participants are in non-managerial positions and 11 people are in managerial positions, one person did not provide his/her level in the organization.

Measures

Social Support

Social Support was measured by a 19-item scale (Antani, 2003). The participants responded to items using a Likert-type 5-point scale ranging from Almost Never to Almost Always, identifying how often they receive help from various sources. An example item is, "I get help with the daily details of running the house from my..." Social Support came from two main sources: family and work domains. Family domain included: Partner/Spouse, Relatives, and Friends. Work domain included: coworkers, and supervisor. For the current study reliability for family domain was found to be ($\alpha=.96$) and for work domain was found to be ($\alpha=.95$).

Gender role ideology

GRI was measured by a combination of 3 measures. The total scales consisted of 16 items. The participants responded to items by using a Likert-type 6-point scale ranging from Strongly Agrees to Strongly Disagrees. For the current study reliability was found to be ($\alpha=.94$).

Five items came from Treas & Widmer (2000) scale. An example item is, “A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.” Second set of items came from General Social Survey (Mason, & Bumpass, 1975). An example item is, “It is more important for a wife to help her husband’s career than to have a career herself.” The third set of items was created for the purposes of the present and as part of ongoing cross-cultural work family research. An example item from this source is, “Women are expected to change their behavior after they are married and have children.” High score indicates an egalitarian / non-traditional GRI.

Family Friendly Organizational Policies Available

Participants were asked to evaluate the availability of family friendly organizational policies in their organization by specifying which policies are available and to whom. The availability of polices were measured using an 10-item scale created for the purposes of the present and as part of ongoing cross cultural work family research. The measure is on 3 point Likert-type scale. The following anchors were utilized: No = 1, To some =2, To all = 3. An example policy is, “Flexible work schedule.” For the present study, internal consistency was found to be ($\alpha=.66$).

Gender

Gender was based on a single self-report item and coded as male or female.

Work-Family Conflict

Work-family conflict consists of two dimensions: time-based and strain-based. Work-family conflict can be experienced in two domains: work interfering with family and family interfering with work. Carlson et al. (1998) was used to measure the

experience of work-family conflict. Three items were used for work interfering with Family (WIF) time-based. An example item is, “My work keeps me from my family more than I would like”. Three items were used for Family interfering with Work (FIW) time-based. An example item is, “The time I spent on family responsibilities often interferes with my work.” Three items were used for WIF strain-based. An example item is, “The problem solving approaches I use in my job are not effective in resolving problems at home.” Finally, three items were used to measure FIW strain-based. An example item is, “Tension and anxiety from my non-work life often extend into my job.” This measure used a 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. For this sample following reliabilities were obtained: time-based WIF was ($\alpha=.81$), time-based FIW was ($\alpha=.63$), strain-based WIF was ($\alpha=.82$), and strain-based FIW was ($\alpha=.72$).

Satisfaction

Two different types of satisfaction were examined in this study: job satisfaction and family satisfaction. Job satisfaction was assessed using a two-item measure developed by Hackman, J.R., & Oldham, G.R. (1975). An example item is, “Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with this job.” Family satisfaction was assessed using a 4 item scale that was adopted from the job satisfaction scale. An example item is, “Overall, I am satisfied with the development of my children.” The responses were on a 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Reliabilities for this sample were: job satisfaction ($\alpha=.89$) and family satisfaction ($\alpha=.83$).

Results

Descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, ranges, and reliabilities are included in Table 1. The range of responses to the two work-family conflict measures differed across the directional scales. That is, responses to FW seemed to show lower level in the experience of conflict, whereas the responses to WF seemed to represent higher experience of the construct. The pattern of results suggests that WIF occurs with higher frequency as opposed to family interfering with work. Using a one-sample *t*-test, the variable means for each of the WIF and FIW domains of the construct were compared. The mean for each respective work-family construct dimension was placed as a constant in the *t*-test analysis to be compared against the means of the remaining work-family conflict variable dimensions. Support for the greater experience of WIF versus FIW was obtained; refer to Table 2 for details.

In order to test Hypothesis 1a: social support (informal) will minimize the experience of stress relating to work-family conflict, a correlational analysis was performed. Partial support was found. Social support from family sources was negatively related to strain-based WIF, $r=-0.500$, $p<0.05$. For a complete description of the correlations refer to Table 3.

In order to test Hypothesis 1b: the availability of organizational policies will minimize the experience of work family conflict, a correlation was conducted between the four types of work-family conflict and the number of available organizational policies. Again, partial support was found. Organizational policies were found to negatively affect strain-based WIF ($r=-0.495$, $p<0.05$); and time-based FIW ($r=-0.486$, $p<0.05$).

A regression analysis was performed to test Hypothesis 1c. Specifically, since the only work-family conflict dimension that was significantly affected by both formal and informal types of support was strain-based WIF, it was the only variable used in testing the combined effects of both formal and informal support sources. Informal support sources were represented by the social support from family domains since this specific type was the only significant predictor of Work Family Conflict in the previous analysis. The pattern of the relationship between these variables did not provide support for this hypothesis. Specifically, $\Delta R^2=0.104$, $p=.118$. Social support from family explains 25% of the variance in strain-based WIF ($R^2=0.25$, $p<0.05$). Organizational policies do not have influence on the strain-based WIF beyond social support from family.

In order to test Hypothesis 2a: GRI will have a relationship with social support a correlational analysis was conducted. This hypothesis was not supported. An interesting relationship, however, was found between GRI and work--family conflict dimensions. Three out of the four dimensions had a significant negative relationship with Gender Role Ideology. Refer to Table 4, for details.

Hypothesis 2b: social support (informal) will serve as a mediator between GRI and the experience of work-family conflict was not tested because the relationship between social support and GRI was not significant.

Partial support was found for Hypothesis 3a: the greater the experience of work-family conflict, the lower one's attitudes of job satisfaction. Specifically, time-based FIW had a negative relationship with job satisfaction, $r=-0.441$, $p<.05$. Again, partial support was found for Hypothesis 3b: the greater the experience of work-family conflict,

the lower one's attitudes of life satisfaction. Strain-based WIF had a negative relationship with family satisfaction, $r=-0.428$, $p<.05$. Refer to Table 5.

Conclusion and Discussion

The present research provides continued support that work family interference is experienced by a majority of employed individuals. It seems that WIF has a higher frequency as compared to FIW, which was found to hold true in both the focus groups and in quantitative analysis. The results suggest that organizations need to be more conscientious of the deleterious effects that WIF places upon a family. Not only, as our results show in both studies, does WIF cause decreased job satisfaction but it also causes stress, guilt, and feelings of being overwhelmed.

As a way to cope with work-family conflict, social support is an effective mechanism especially from the family source dealing with WIF strain. Organizational policies also decrease the experience of work-family conflict. Specifically, as the number of family friendly organizational policies becomes widely available within a company, the experience of both strain-based WIF, and time-based FIW will decrease. When looking at strain-based WIF, social support does account for more of the variance in the decreased experience of the work-family conflict dimension.

GRI does not have a relationship with social support, but does have a direct relationship with work family conflict. In particular, GRI has a relationship with the following work family dimensions: strain-based WIF, time-based WIF, and time-based FIW.

Work-family conflict has an effect on both the family and work domain. As a consequence of this experience, WIF decreases family satisfaction and FIW decreases job

satisfaction. Specifically, time-based FIW has a negative relationship with job satisfaction; while, strain-based WIF has a negative relationship with family satisfaction.

The present study had a number of limitations. First, the sample size was small for the quantitative analysis. Therefore, the study had low power. The low power is a potential reason for the lack of significant relationships. Also, the lengthy format of the questionnaire utilized in the quantitative analysis could have caused fatigue effects within our sample, influencing the results. Another possible limitation was that some of the measures were not previously tested and were not validated on any previous samples. There were several measures that had low reliabilities, which were less than $\alpha < 0.7$. A more precise measure may have received different results with our sample.

Future researchers should aim to investigate why and how there is a greater frequency of occurrence in WIF when in comparison to FIW. Furthermore, researchers should investigate why it is that individuals are more willing to let work come into their family lives, but somehow are able to separate their family lives from entering the workplace. In addition, it would be beneficial for future researchers to investigate other possible moderators in the relationship between the experience of work-family conflict dimensions.

The study should be repeated using more reliable measures on a greater sample. Other variables such as cultural and ethnic differences should be considered when looking at the relationships hypothesized within this paper. An interesting relationship that should be further investigated is the influence of GRI on work-family conflict. Even though social support was not found to be a mediator in this relationship, other coping

mechanisms should be investigated in the future. Social support should also be looked at again with a greater and different sample.

We have found the implementation of the multi-method approach to be extremely beneficial to our understanding of the work-family construct. The approach used allowed for insight into a phenomena that is usually confined to being investigated through the use of scales. Therefore, future researchers should continue to investigate, not only this construct, but also many others through the utilization of qualitative and quantitative multi-method approach.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables

	No. of items	M	Sd	Range	α
Strain-based WIF	3	3.19	.98	1.00-5.00	0.82
Time-based WIF	3	3.08	1.10	1.00-5.00	0.81
Strain-biased FIW	3	2.51	.68	1.00-4.00	0.72
Time-based FIW	3	2.64	.79	1.33-4.33	0.63
Social Support from family domain	19	3.26	.86	1.93-5.32	0.96
Social Support from work domain	19	3.08	1.12	1.74-5.53	0.95
Family friendly organizational policies available	10	22.6	3.84	15-30	0.66
Gender role ideology	16	4.26	1.09	2.25-5.69	0.94
Job satisfaction	2	4.65	1.02	1.50-6.00	0.89
Family satisfaction	4	3.74	.64	2.00-4.80	0.83

Sd = Standard Deviation

Table 2. Differences between WIF verses FIW

Comparison value: Strain-based WIF mean (M=3.19)					
Variables	t	df	Mean difference	95% CI	
				Lower	Upper
Strain-biased FIW **	-4.99	24	-.68	-.96	-.40
Time-based FIW**	-3.51	25	-.55	-.87	-.23
Comparison value: Time-based WIF mean (M=3.08)					
Strain-biased FIW **	-4.21	24	-.57	-.85	-.29
Time-based FIW**	-2.82	25	-.44	-.76	-.12

Sd = Standard Deviation

CI = Confidence Interval

* = Difference is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)

** = Difference is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

Table 3. Correlations of Work Family Conflict and Social Support (Informal)

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Strain-based WIF						
2. Time-based WIF	.56**					
3. Strain-based FIW	.46*	.32				
4. Time-based FIW	.67**	.53**	.40*			
5. Social Support from family sources	-.50*	-.29	-.10	-.32		
6. Social Support from work sources	-.29	-.24	-.14	-.18	.73**	

* = Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)

** = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

Table 4. Correlations between Work Family Conflict and Gender Role Ideology (GRI)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Strain-based WIF					
2. Time-based WIF	.56**				
3. Strain-based FIW	.46*	.32			
4. Time-based FIW	.67**	.53**	.40*		
5. Gender Role Ideology	-.59**	-.53**	-.33	-.54**	

* = Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)

** = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

Table 5. Correlations between Work Family Conflict and outcomes: Job Satisfaction and Family Satisfaction

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Strain-based WIF						
2. Time-based WIF	.56**					
3. Strain-based FIW	.46*	.32				
4. Time-based FIW	.67**	.53**	.40*			
5. Job Satisfaction	-.37	-.19	.082	-.44*		
6. Family Satisfaction	-.43*	.057	-.21	-.07	.04	

* = Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed)

** = Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed)

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