Linkage Between Worksite Support with Work Role Expectation, Role Ambiguity and Its Effects on Work-Family Conflict

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Abstract

As more married women participate in the labour force and occupy both work and family roles simultaneously, they tend to experience conflict between work and family roles. This study examined the intensity of work-family conflict experienced between married female personnel in the office of Ahwaz. The study also analyzed the social support that the secretaries received at the workplace from supervisors and co-workers and friends and relatives. Data were gathered through self administered questionnaires from 368 personnel office. The personnel in this study experienced work-family conflict with varying intensities as they to fulfill the conflicting demands of work and family roles. They received the most social support from their supervisors. Implications of these findings for married working women in terms of facilities, support services and social support are discussed.

Key words: Work role Expectation; Work role ambiguity; Work-family conflict; Social support; Working women

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the increase of dual-earner couples, more and more women and men are struggling between the Expectation of a family and a career. At the same time, working life has been undergoing rapid changes as a consequence of new technologies, globalization, increased time pressure and job. The competing Expectation of work and family can easily lead to feelings of conflict between these two Expectations. Work–family conflict reflects the degree to which participation in one role interferes with one's ability to meet the responsibilities of the other role (Greenhouse & Beutell, 1985). Conflicts can stem from time problems, strain from one role hindering performance in the other role, or incompatibility in behavioral styles used in these roles (Ibid). The present study focused on time-based conflict resulting from work interfering with family life (work interference with family; W/F). Specifically, we were interested in whether perceptions of fairness in decision making and management in the employer organization (organizational justice) are able to diminish the negative effects of high work-based stress on family life. Therefore it is clear that improving work life balance is an important component of the policy agenda for many industrial countries, and the issue is likely to become even more important in the future Examples Ireland's *Work Life Balance Day* and the U.S. resolution to proclaim *Work and Family Month* (Tarja, 2008).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Although the work–family literature lacks an overall comprehensive theory to guide research, several theoretical approaches exist that suggest the importance of a family-supportive work environment. One of the most popular theoretical perspectives to work and family is that of role theory. Role theory predicts that multiple life roles result in inter role conflict as individuals experience difficulty performing each role successfully because of conflicting demands. Work–family role strain is the result of the combined influence of demands and coping resources derived from individual, family, and work-related sources.

According to the theory, whereas the cumulative Expectation of multiple roles can result in role strain, available resources may prevent or reduce role strain by enabling individuals to cope with these demands. Multiple theories have been used to help explain the processes underlying work-family conflict and how work-family conflict relates to other variables; role theory is especially relevant because it takes into consideration the individuals' perception while acknowledging that their view is affected by their own as well as others' role expectations. This is especially important in work and family research where attitudes and behaviors are clearly impacted by societal expectations. The comprehensive nature of role theory makes it a valuable framework to use when studying work and family (Amazue, 2008).

Spillover Theory

This theory asserts that there is a similarity between what occurs in the work environment and what occurs in the family environment (Staines, 1980), such that happiness at work leads to happiness at home. In addition, a person's work experiences are assumed to influence what he or she does away from work. It is also assumed that attitudes at work become ingrained and carried over into home life or that work attitudes effect a basic orientation toward self, others, and children. Each environment indulges similar structural patterns in the other environments. In other words, there are no boundaries for one's behaviors. According to Zedeck and Mosier (1990), most of the research in the work-family arena has been done on the spillover theory and has resulted in some refinements and extensions. Payton-Miyazaki and Bray field (1976) offered the following amplifications:

(a) The notion that work is additive, that is feelings about a job are a component of feelings about life in general, and thus satisfaction with the job increases life satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the job lessens general satisfaction; (b) the view that work can lead to alienation, that is, negative feelings about a job directly influence feelings about life in general; for example, a person who feels belittled by a job will belittle himself' or herself or others; and Spillover is generally discussed in terms of positive relationships, but it is also possible to have negative spillover. Job stresses can displace the potential .for positive family interactions, while requiring family members to expand their personal resources in assisting the worker to manage the stress. Alternatively, the spillover in situations in which the work is boring or monotonous can result in an "energy deficit" making the worker "lazy" which in turn leads to the worker's not doing certain things at home or with family members (Piotrkowski, 1978).

Compensation Theory

This theory postulates that there is an inverse relationship between work and family such that work and non-work experiences tend to be antithetical (Staines, 1980).

Individuals of themselves in two settings and make up in one for what is missing in the other. Components theory also has been discussed in terms of components. Supplemental compensation occurs when desirable experiences, behaviors, and psychological states that are insufficiently present in the work situation are pursued in family activities. Reactive compensation occurs because deprivations experienced in work are made up or compensated for in non-work activities. Resting from fatiguing work or seeking leisure activities after work are examples of this process. In yet another version of compensation theory, events at home provide "shock absorbers" for disappointments at work and vice versa (ibid, 2008).

Segmentation Theory

This theory postulates that work and family are two distinct and an individual can function successfully in one without any influence on the other (piotrkowski, 1978).

According to this theory, the two environments exist side by side, and for all practical purposes, are divorced from each other. The separation in time, space, and function allows the individual to neatly compartmentalize his or her life. The family is seen as the realm, of affectivity, intimacy, and significant ascribed relations, whereas the work world is viewed impersonal, competitive, and instrumental rather than expressive. In addition, segmentation is not an inherent barrier between work and family but instead results from active efforts of the person to manage the boundary between work and family. Segmentation is central to research on the work-family interface and has been identified as an important human value. Segmentation is relevant to research on stress and well-being, as it enables the person to suppress the transfer of stressful experience between work and family. Nonetheless, Edwards and Rothberg (1999) noted that excess segmentation could be conserved if it prompts others to adjust the demand they place on the person. For example, an employee without children may unilaterally refuse to take work calls at home, even when such calls would not be disruptive. This pattern may reduce the likelihood that work will intrude on family time if the employee ultimately has children. Conversely, excess segmentation can be depleted if it rests on the good will of others. For instance, an employee with no pressing deadlines at work May nonetheless refuse to let family concerns intrude on work time. This behavior may exhaust the patience and grace of family members, who may subsequently demand greater attention from the employee irrespective of his or her workload. Excess segmentation may produce carryover by allowing prolonged, uninterrupted focus on the various role demands within a domain. However, these benefits may be offset by interference, in that excess segmentation may prevent the person from knowing whether problems have emerged in the other domain. For example, during travel an employee

may be out of contact with family members and worry about their safety and well-being. Excess segmentation may also prevent the integration of work and family into a coherent view of life as a whole (Amazue, 2008).

Work Expectation

One of the major causes of work/family stressors has to do with not having insufficient time to dedicate to both domains (Greenhouse & Beutell, 1985). Several studies have found that working hours are positively related to WFC, although these relations are generally weak. Working overtime and shift work are also related to WFC (Pleck *et al.*, 1980). It seems that working hours and quantitative workload as important indicators of work demands may be antecedents of WFC. As past research showed that domain-specific antecedents were related to different directions of work/family conflict, working hours and workload can also be expected as antecedents of FWC. Furthermore, the changing U.S. labor pool has dramatically altered the relationship between work and family, increasing the potential for work and family to conflict. In particular, the population is aging, women are entering the workforce at an increasing rate, a majority of married couples and those with young children are dual-worker families (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 1999), and there has been an increase in working single mothers, which can each create dual Expectation of work and family roles. Increasing levels of work demand may potentially increase the chance that one domain (e.g., work or family) can spill over into the other, resulting in WFC. WFC is defined as "a form of inter role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhouse & Beutell, 1985). As demands in one domain (Be it work or family) inhibit an individual from meeting the demands of the other, there may be unmet role responsibilities, which results in WFC. Thus, the interface between work and family does not exist until one domain actually affects another. (Boyar, 2007).

Work Role Ambiguity

Role ambiguity has been described by Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal (1964) as the single or multiple roles that confront the role incumbent, which may not be clearly articulated (communicated) in terms of behaviors (the role activities or tasks/priorities) or performance levels (the criteria that the role incumbent will be judged by). Naylor, Pritchard, and Ilgen (1980) State That Role Ambiguity exists when focal persons (role incumbents) are uncertain about product-to-evaluation contingencies and are aware of their own uncertainty about them. Breaugh & Colihan (1994) have further refined the definition of role ambiguity to be job ambiguity and indicate that job ambiguity possesses three distinct aspects: work methods, scheduling, and performance criteria. In addition, role ambiguity has been

hypothesized to possess multidimensional properties (Bedeian & Armenakis, 1981; Sawyer, 1992; Singh & Rhoads 1991).

Multidimensional Aspects of Role Ambiguity

The multidimensional approaches to the study of role ambiguity began with Bedeian and Armenakis (1981) and have continued with Sawyer (1992) and Singh, Verbeke, and Rhoads (1996). Based on their findings and the foundation provided by these works there are four (4) widely accepted dimensions to role ambiguity, which may be experienced by the role incumbents, and are based on the role Incumbents perspective. The dimensions include:

1) Goal / Expectation / Responsibility Ambiguity - What is expected? What should I be doing?

2) Process Ambiguity - How to get things done. The ways of achieving organizational

Objectives.

3) Priority Ambiguity - When things should be done and in what order.

4) Behavior Ambiguity - How am I expected to act in various situations? What behaviors will lead to the needed or desired outcomes?

As noted previously, Thomas and Ganster (1995) described two family supportive elements of the workplace: family-supportive policies and family supportive supervisors. Family-supportive policies are services such as flextime and child care that help make the management of everyday family responsibilities easier. The family-supportive supervisor is one who is sympathetic to the employee's desire to seek balance between work and family and who engages in efforts to help the employee accommodate his or her work and family responsibilities (Bauer, 1976).

Social Support at Work

The role of social support at work in enhancing employees' health and wellbeing has been well-documented. In particular, supervisor support has been found to facilitate employee job satisfaction, staff development; on-the-job learning (McCall, Lombardo and Morrison, 1988); and organizational commitment. Supervisor support has also been linked to lower levels of absenteeism and burnout. It appear that the support of the immediate supervisor, typically the key individual or agent responsible 80 Equal Opportunities International for the maintenance of the psychological contract at work, has a central impact on the experience and perception of workplace well-being (Boyar, 2007).

In relation to work-family balance, many investigations into the role of social support at work have indicated a negative relationship between support and work-family conflict. Further, organizational support mediated the relationship between work-life benefits and influenced more distal outcomes such as intention to leave the organization. Indeed, when two-parent working

families were asked what changes would improve their quality of life while maintaining productivity, a frequent suggestion (second only to merit increases) was that organizations train supervisor to be more accommodating when family needs arose (Clark,1997). Thompson et al. described a dimension of the family -friendly culture referred to as managerial support that included both specific management behaviors and general organizational perceptions. In the present study, all three elements of a family supportive workplace environment are measured: family-supportive policies, family-supportive supervisor, and family-supportive organization (Allen, 2001).

Coping with Work-Family Conflict: The Role of Social Support

There is growing evidence indicating that experienced social support is positively related to increased general health and well-being. In particular, social support has been proposed to moderate the effects of work-family role conflict on the well-being of dual-career couples. Although the most commonly cited typology of support is that of House (1970) who distinguished between emotional, instrumental, informational and appraisal support, empirical work on distinguishing types of support is mixed (House, 1970). Some studies suggest that instrumental support has the greatest impact on well-being, but others found emotional support to be the most important and still further studies suggest both are equally beneficial. Another study found that emotional support was perceived, regardless of what the support-provider offered, while Beehr (1985), found that it was the actual provider of support, rather than the type of support offered, which had the greatest impact on the recipient of support. In line with person-environment fit theory, many writers have suggested that support is most effective when it emanates from the domain providing the strain. However, there are also results to suggest that support received in one domain (e.g., family) may enhance well-being within other domains. Indeed some studies have suggested that the nature of the demand is the strongest factor in determining the effectiveness of the support. (Boyar, 2007).

Social Support as an Antecedent

A third perspective on the role of social support in the stressor-strain relationship which has not received as much attention in the literature is that of an antecedent. It is plausible that social support may have a direct effect on perceived stressors and have only an indirect effect on strains through these stressors.

Evidence for social support as an antecedent to perceived stressors has been demonstrated in some previous studies. Thus, individuals who perceive themselves to have strong social support networks may be less likely to perceive demands in their environment as stressors.

In this situation, social support can serve as a protective function which instills an ongoing sense of

emotional concern prior to the actual stressful event. This perspective is believed to be more effective in examining chronic or ongoing stress, although it is often difficult to determine exactly when the stressor started occurring. Thus, Brown suggests that social support needs to be studied in chronic conditions. Furthermore, Pearlin (1985) defined chronic stressful experiences as coming from the fabric of daily life through the participation in major roles. Finally, Cohen and Wills (1985) argue that if social support affects the appraisal of the environment, the environment may be perceived as less threatening, and perceived stressors may be weaker and/or fewer.

Therefore, it is logical to study this process of social support as an antecedent in relation to work-family conflict which can easily be seen as a chronic stressful experience of everyday life (Boyar, 2007).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Greenhouse and Beutell (1985) defined work-family conflict as "a form of Inter role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect". Netemeyer *et al.* (1996) pointed out that work-family conflict was different from family-work conflict. Netemeyer *et al.* (1996) define work-family conflict as a type of inter-role conflict, wherein some responsibilities from the work and family areas are not compatible and negatively influence the employee's family responsibilities. Three different forms of work-family conflict have been identified and defined as time-based conflict, strain-based conflict, and behavior-based conflict. According to Greenhouse and Beutell (1985), time-based conflict occurs when time contributed to one role inhibit participation in another role; strained-based conflict states that a trained experience in one role intrudes into and intervenes with participation in another role; and behavior-based conflict happens when certain behaviors required in one role are incompatible with behavioral expectation in another role. Studies indicate that work-family conflict influences a number of outcomes including psychological distress, job satisfaction, organization commitment, and ultimately, turnover (Adams, 1996). Furthermore, conflict between work and family roles alters employee's perceptions of the quality of work life and the quality of family life. In addition, work-family conflict has been shown to affect employees' work-related behaviors such as absenteeism, tardiness, organizational commitment, turnover intentions, and turnover. In the hospitality industry, work-family conflict has been one of the major causes for turnover of both the management level and lower-income employees. Good, Page and Young (1996) found that work-family conflict has a direct effect on entry-level managers' intent to leave, regardless of satisfaction or commitment levels. Much of this is due to long hours and low pay (Gahan, 2000).

Role Ambiguity

As defined by Spector (1997), "role ambiguity is the degree of certainty the employee has about what his or her functions and responsibilities are" (p.39). According to classical theory, every position in a structured organization should have a specified set of tasks or position responsibilities, and role ambiguity reflects the degree of employees' uncertainty regarding the appropriate actions in performing job functions (Bauer, 1976).

Work Expectation

Yang *et al.* (2000) defined work demands as "pressures arising from excessive workloads and typical workplace time pressures such as rush jobs and deadlines" (Boyar, 2007).

HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis1: worksite support is significant related to work-family conflict.

Hypothesis2: work role Expectation is significant related to work-family conflict.

Hypothesis 3: Role ambiguity is significant related to work-family conflict.

Hypothesis4: worksite support is significant related to work Role Expectation.

Hypothesis 5: worksite support is significant related to role ambiguity.

METHOD

First, the survey was provided to all (4,768) office employees married female; sample (N=368) for the data analysis in this study. in the second stage,7 organizations were randomly selected from between total organization and chosen random response of between this 7 organization.

WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

The measure was derived from Stephens, Sommer (1996, p.457). And Netemyer, Gutek (1996, p.400-410), and it focused on time-based conflict. W/F was measured with three items assessing how often a respondent's job interfered with family life ("How often does your job or career interfere with your responsibilities at home?" "How often does your work keep you from spending the amount of time you would like to spend with your family?" "How often do you feel overloaded or time-pressure due to your work?"). The items were rated on a 5-point Likert-scale, ranging from 1 (disagree) to 5 (agree often). The reliability in the present sample was .76. work Expectation were measured by using a 4- item work Expectation scale derived from Boyar (2007), such as "My job requires all of my attention". The items were rated on a 5-point response scale ranging from 1disagree to 5 agree often.

Role ambiguity was measured using eight items from the Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970) questionnaire (Glissmeyer, 2000) variables of role ambiguity, such as "I have clear, planned objectives for my job". The answers ranged from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). The coefficient alpha for this construct is ($\alpha = 81. 84$)

Social support at work was assessed using the nine-item scale originally developed by Kottke, Sharafinski and Ziemer (1991) as reported and used by Thomas and Ganster (1995), such as "Help is available from my supervisor if I have a problem". The items ere rated on a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 Degree to 5 no Degree often. Higher scores indicated a greater degree of supervisor support. Coefficient in the present study was .80.

RESULTS

First, we examined the effects of potential confounding variable via Pearson correlations of the study variables in Table 1. Correlation analyses revealed that worksite support was related to work-family conflict (r =.308; sig<0.01) and work Role Expectations (r = 0.286; sig<0.01) the correlation coefficients, to work-family conflict. There was significantly negatively associated between worksite Support to work Role Expectations and Role ambiguity.

Table 1
Relationships Between Variable Independent and Conflict Work- Family

Relationship	r	p-value
Worksite support and work-family conflict	0.308**	0.000
Work role expectations and work-family conflict	0.286**	0.000
Role ambiguity and work-family conflict	0.209**	0.000
Worksite support and work role expectations	0.173**	0.000
Worksite support and Role ambiguity	-0.186**	0.000

Second, The Sequence of Regression Equations That we used for testing a Hypothesized Mediator Effect of Work-Family conflict.

A simple linear regression was used to analyze the data. Association between Work-Family conflict is the dependent variable with worksite support, work role Expectations and role ambiguity entered as the independent variables.

Table 2
ANOVA on the Overall Model

Model	Regression	Mean square	F	Sig
1	0.101	0.417	12.965	0.000

Shows Significance (F = 12.965, p < .001). The overall R^2 is .417 suggesting that work Role Expectations and work role ambiguity combine to explain approximately 42% of the variance work-family conflict.

Table 3
Multiple Regression Predicting Variable Independent Research

Model	B	Std. error	Beta	t	Sig.
Work role expectations	.601	.133	.248	4.519	.000
Work role ambiguity	.240	.082	.161	2.933	.004
Worksite support	.058	.104	.031	.560	.576

Hypothesis 1: work role Expectation is significant related to work-family conflict. Work Role Expectation to ($\beta = 0.248$, t = 4.519, p < .001) related direction to work-family conflict.

Hypothesis 2: work Role ambiguity is significant related to work-family work role Expectation is significant related to work-family conflict. This construct suggest statistical significance ($\beta = 0.161$, t = 2.933, p = 0.004), as hypothesized 1 related direction.

Hypothesis 3: worksite support is significant related to work-family conflict. This construct did not suggest statistical significance ($\beta = 0.031$, t = 0.560, p = 0.576), however, as I hypothesized direction.

Table 4
Direct Effects and Indirect Research Variable

Variable	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect
Work role expectation	0.248	0	0
Work role ambiguity	0.161	0	0
Worksite support	0.031	-0.07	-0.04

The direct relationship of work role Expectation and work-family conflict were strong and Significant and Work Role Expectation increases in may contribute to WFC.

The finding of significant directs effects for work Role ambiguity (0.161) and implies that increases in Role may contribute to WFC.

Worksite support is significant related to work-family conflict. This construct did not suggest statistical significance (0.031), however, as I hypothesized direction and indirect effect through work role Expectation and Role ambiguity (-0.07) on work-family conflict. For instance, organizations can reduce workloads, limit the number of roles assigned to employees, and provide resources and encourage support from coworkers and supervisors in completing work assignments.
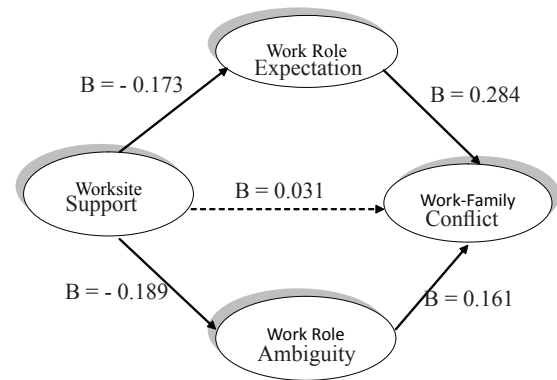
Figure 1
Model with Coefficients and p-Values

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is clear that work-family balance is an increasingly important issue for many industrialized countries. The recent initiatives reviewed in this report demonstrate that various governments are committed to reducing work-life conflict and the effects of this conflict on employees, employers and families, and on social, economic and health systems.

The results of this study suggest that social support may reduce perceived role stressors (conflict and ambiguity) and time Expectations, and thus, indirectly decreases work-family conflict. Four models examining role conflict, role ambiguity, time demands, social support, and work-family conflict were examined. Although previous research has examined social support as an antecedent, an intervening variable, an independent variable, or a moderator in the role stressor and work-family conflict relationship, none have combined all four approaches in the same study. Furthermore, this study includes both the work and the family domains; and the work-family conflict measure accounts for spillover in both directions (work interference with family and family interference with work). The results from the present study suggest that the model with the strongest fit indices which is also most parsimonious is the one in which social support is viewed as an antecedent to perceived role stressors and time Expectations, which is consistent with other research findings (Ganster *et al.*, 1986; Schaubroeck *et al.*, 1989). This report reveals that governments are responding to the issue of work-family conflict through a variety of policies and programs. However, there is no "one size fits all" approach to improving Work/family balance. Societal values and the degree of the state's involvement in policy of this nature will influence the types of initiatives that are developed to improve work-family balance.

Reference in Context

Previous research has clearly demonstrated that supportive organizations can give impetus to positive outcomes, such as increased organizational commitment (Scandura & Lankau, 1993) and reduced absenteeism (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). Given these Findings, Coupled with evidence that organizational role stressors can have negative consequences on the emotional and physiological well-being of employees (e.g., Doby & Caplan, 1995), organizational administrators and managers may find it productive to encourage strong social support networks among supervisors, subordinates, and Co-Workers to reduce the perceived role stressors on the job. For example, establishing formal mentoring programs within organizations may help to increase communication, as well as the social support experienced on the job. Mentoring has been found to increase effective information exchange, productivity, and performance (Scandura, 1992; Whitely & Coestier, 1993). Research on mentoring has found that protégé's benefit from early career success and higher job satisfaction (Kram, 1985; Noe, 1988; Whitely, Dougherty & Dreher, 1992) while mentors experience higher job satisfaction and extended career opportunities (Kram, 1985; Noe, 1988). Perhaps one of the reasons mentoring has been shown to have such positive effects in the workplace is due to the social support experienced by both mentors and protégé's. Results from the present study suggest that social support can help to prevent situations at work and home as even being perceived as stressful. Administrative policy makers may want to consider the multiple roles in which their employees' engage. Allowing flexible working schedules, assisting with employment opportunities for a spouse, and providing assistance with child care options are just a few examples of how organizational managers can help to reduce the role stressor at home.

Thomas and Ganster (1995) findings, that supervisor support and flexible work scheduling were found to reduce work-family conflict, is additional evidence that managerial interventions can have a positive impact on the well-being of employees. Although their findings suggest that support impacts work-family conflict directly, perceptions of role stressors and time demands were not examined in their model. Hence, examining perceptions of these types of stressors as outcomes of social support may increase the predictability of our typical stress and conflict models. The results of this study suggest that social support could be re-conceptualized as an antecedent that serves to reduce the perceived role stressors at work, as well as at home which, in turn, reduces the likelihood of experienced work-family conflict. Given the debilitating effects of role conflict coupled with the findings that work and family social support directly reduce the perceived role stressors in that Domain, Organizational interventions aimed at encouraging Social Support networks is recommended.

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