Contributions to Work-Family Conflict: The effect of Support and Personality among Female Employees

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Abstract

Background. Work-family conflict exists when a person has difficulties to fulfill successfully conflicting demands of multiple roles, like being a worker, a spouse and often even a parent at the same time. Work-family conflict can act in two directions: work-to-family conflict, where work duties interfere with family responsibilities, and family-to-work conflict, where responsibilities from the family domain interfere with work duties. Literature suggests that support, from both the work and family environment, can relieve work-family conflict. At the same time, many researchers emphasize the importance of considering the individual component while studying work-family conflict as the perceived conflict is strongly dependent on one’s personality. This study examined, on the basis of the conservation of resources (COR) theory, the effects of support, personality and their interactions on work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict.

Aim. This study examined the extent to which support, the role of one’s personality and their moderating components influence both directions of work-family conflict amongst female employees.

Participants, procedure, design. The sample consisted of 119 participants, all female employees working at the same location of a multinational health care company in Belgium. The research instrument was a web-based questionnaire, in total containing 51 items, divided in eight categories (general questions, work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, family supportive organizational perceptions, flexible time schedules, supervisor support, spousal support, core self evaluations).
**Measures.** To measure work-to-family conflict the 4-item scale developed by Kopelman, Greenhaus and Connolly (1983) was used; the 4-item scale, as used by Gutek and colleagues (1991), was used to measure FtWC; to measure flexible time schedules, the 5-item scale of temporal flexibility, as put together by Campbell Clark (2001), was used; supervisor support was measured by six items, as developed by Anderson and colleagues (2002); family supportive organizational perceptions was measured by the 14-item scale developed by Allen (2001); to measure spousal support, a 3-item scale was constructed for this study based on existing literature, (Aryee et al., 1999; Matsui et al., 1995; Rosenbaum & Cohen, 1999); personality was measured by the 12-item scale of core self-evaluations, developed by Judge and colleagues (2003).

**Results.** Multiple hierarchical regression analyses showed that the perception of a family friendly organization is a significant predictor for work-to-family conflict. Supervisor support has a significant indirect effect on work-to-family conflict via the perceived supportiveness of the organization. Negative affect was associated with higher levels of work-to-family conflict, whereas the experience of successes was negatively related with family-to-work conflict.

**Conclusion.** This study underscores the importance of personality factors when studying work-family interferences and the value of a family friendly organization to employees as support to alleviate employee’s continuous juggle of conflicting work and family demands. Top management and human resource departments should be committed to create a family supportive working environment in their organizations, and supervisors should be trained on all family friendly benefits offered by the organization and be stimulated to share and offer this to their employees.

Keywords: work-to-family conflict; family-to-work conflict; supervisor support; flexible time schedules; spousal support; core self evaluations.