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Research paper



Relationship between work-family conflict and work, family and community domains demands and resources: A longitudinal study

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Abstract

Shifting from Western-dominated perspectives, demands and resources from the community domain were investigated, together with work and family domains to predict work-family conflict and family-work conflict. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted on data obtained through two self-report questionnaires completed three months apart by 277 executives and non-executives from three public and private sector organizations in Sarawak, East Malaysia. After controlling for conflict at Time 1, work demands were positively related; while work resources were negatively related to work-family conflict and family work conflict at Time 2. In addition, community demands were related positively to work-family conflict and family work conflict at Time 2. This study underscores the roles of community which has been neglected in Western studies, as important in affecting work-family conflict and family-work conflict in Malaysia. Therefore, to improve our understanding on work-family conflict in a society which is predominantly collectivist, aspects of community should be included.

Keywords: *community; demands; family- work conflict; resources; work-family conflict.*

1. Introduction

The work-family interface (WFI) has been broadly examined from Western perspectives. However, the environment in non Western countries is also changing , but not in cultural values, and this tend to increase stress and work-family conflict (Joplin et al., 2003). This study, which was conducted in Malaysia, an East Asian country, set out to further our understanding of work-family conflict in a non-Western culture. Using longitudinal data at three-month intervals, the study aimed to identify work-family conflict and family-work conflict from demands and resources (support) from work and family, as well as from community domain. We believe the study will contribute significantly to the work-family literature in two aspects.

Firstly, we used longitudinal data following a call for more longitudinal designs to understand the process of the work-family interface (Poelmans et al., 2005). Steinmetz, Frese, and Schmidt in 2008 reported on 11 longitudinal studies could be located and none were from the Asian region. Moreover, some previous studies have also used a three-month period in their longitudinal design (e.g., Brough et al., 2005; Korabik et al., 2003).

Secondly, we investigated community demands and resources in relation to work-family and family-work conflict. Calls have been made for researchers to examine other life domains besides family, such as community and leisure, to capture more comprehensively the roles played by individuals (Frone, 2003; Voydanoff, 2001). As community plays a more significant role in collectivist societies (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005), it was included in this study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Demands and WFC and FWC

In general, antecedents of conflict tend to emerge from the same domain, that is, work-related antecedents tend affect more on WFC than on FWC, while family-related antecedents tend to affect more on FWC than on WFC (Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005; Frone, 2003).Community-related antecedents have weaker associations with WFC and FWC than do work and family–related antecedents (Voydanoff, 2004, 2005).Among the antecedents, demands have consistently shown a positive relationship with conflict: excessive demands at work, family and / or community lead to high levels of WFC and FWC (e.g., Gryzwacz & Marks, 2000; Voydanoff, 2004).
Byron (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of more than 60 studies and concluded that employees who had higher job involvement and longer working hours, experienced more WFC than FWC. Similarly, less supportive co-workers or supervisors, or lesser amount of flexible schedules also contribute to more WFC and FWC. Others have discovered that work overload (Aryee et al., 2005; Boyar et al., 2003) and less work support (Byron, 2005) were positively related to WFC.

Antecedents to FWC usually live within the family domain (Eby et al., 2005; Frone, 2003). Antecedents of FWC include time spent

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on household activities (Byron, 2005; Fu & Shaffer, 2001), family stress, conflict within the family (Byron, 2005), parental overload (Frone et al., 1997; Fu & Shafer, 2001) and high family involvement (Frone, 2003).

2.2. Resources and WFC and FWC

In relation to resources**,** social support at work and at home has consistently been found to correlate negatively with WFC (e.g..Lapierre & Allen, 2006). Specifically at work, supervisors and co-worker support are the most critical in reducing conflict, although some studies have found differing effects of these forms of social support for men and women (van Daalen, Willemsen & Sanders, 2006). Supportive work-family culture is also critical in reducing WFC and FWC (Gordon et al., 2007). In sum, high demands and fewer resources (support) at work and at home seem likely to lead to more WFC and FWC.

In classifying antecedents of conflict, work and non-work domains have been distinguished in the literature, but the non-work domain typically refers only to the family domain (Byron, 2005; Kinnunnen & Mauno 2008), neglecting other important non-work domains such as the community. Very limited research on community demands and resources on work-family conflict and family-work conflict is available. In previous Western research, community demands explained only 3.3% of variance in WFC (Voydanoff, 2004) and 2.7% to FWC (Voydanoff, 2005). Thus it is may be tentatively concluded that community demands are not very strong predictors of conflict in the Western context. As community plays a more influential role in collectivist societies (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005), we propose that the community domain is another important antecedent to conflict (Frone, 2003; Voydanoff, 2001), principally involving relatives, neighbours and friends.

Hypothesis 1: Work demands positively related to conflict (WFC and FWC) while work resources negatively related to conflict.

Hypothesis 2: Family demands positively related to conflict (WFC and FWC) while family resources negatively related to conflict

Hypothesis 3: Community demands positively related to conflict (WFC and FWC) while community resources negatively related to conflict.

3. Methodology

The study was conducted in six public and private sectors from forestry, manufacturing, telecommunication and the service industry in Kuching, Malaysia. Respondents were approached through their human resource manager and completed a self-administered questionnaire on voluntary basis. Respondents were given two weeks to complete the questionnaire. For Time 1, 506 employees responded**,** representing a response rate of 50.6% and 296 responded at Time 2 (a response rate of 58.5%). Demographics characteristics for Time 1 and Time 2 were not different significantly.

Table 1. The Research Instruments

No	Instruments	Number of Items	Sources	Cronbach Alpha (α) Time 1	Cronbach Alpha (α) Time 2
1	WFC and FWC	18	Carlson *et al*., (2000)	0.85 (WFC), 0.86 (FWC)	0.83 (WFC), 0.84 (FWC)
2	Work demands	11	Voydanoff, 2004; Foley, Hang Ye & Lui, 2005; Carlson & Perrewe, 1999;; and Hyman, Scholarios,& Baldry, 2005.	0.93	-
3	Family demands	5	Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2005	0.83	-
4	Community demands	12	Voydanoff, 2004	0.77	--
5	Work resources	18	Voydanoff, 2005; 4 items – Voydanoff, 2004), usefulness of WF policies (3 items – Lambert, 2000) and work autonomy (6 items – Voydanoff, 1988	0.84	
6	Family resources	11	King, Mattimore, King, & Adams, 1995	0.86	-
7	Community resources	28	Voydanoff, 2004; Procidano & Heller, 1983	0.82	-

4. Results and Findings

4.1. Demographic data

The respondents for this study were male (56%), non-executives (77%), had permanent posts (82%), were in the age group of 35 to 45 (36%), were married for an average of 15 years (53%) with 1 to 9 children (80%), and had a working spouse (50%). Mean length of time working is 12.63 years. About 15% of the respondents had a Bachelor degree. Nearly half (50%) were Muslim and from Malays ethnic (45%).

4.2. Hypothesis Testing

WFC (mean = 2.70) is higher than FWC (mean = 2.51). Work demands related positively to WFC (r = .20, p < .01) and FWC (r = .12, p < .01). Community demands related positively to WFC (r = .18, p < .01), and FWC, (= .14, p < .01). On the other hand, work resources related negatively to WFC (r =.-19, p < .01) and FWC (r= -.12, p < .01). In sum, the two main findings are community demands and work demands relate to conflict (both WFC and FWC) positively. Whereas, work resources (support) were negatively related to WFC and FWC.

In this study, employees who had more demands from relatives, neighbours and friends, reported more conflict in work and family domains. The current findings contradict Voydonoff's (2005) argument that community demands and resources are not as strongly related to WFC as are work demands and resources. A possible explanation may be the collectivist nature of this Malaysian sample, compared to individualistic values of the Western sample in previous studies. The involvement of in-groups (extended family, close friends) in the life of individuals in collectivist societies is well documented (e.g. Hofstede & Hoftsede, 2005), which could lead to conflict. To illustrate,

> 'the right to privacy is a central theme in many individualist societies that does not find the same sympathy in collectivist societies, where it is seen as normal and right that one's in-group can at any time invade one's private life' (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005, pp. 105).

Lifelong relationships and the pressure to preserve 'in-group' harmony may create more conflict (Aycan, 2008; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). In addition, caring for relatives and friends has been identified as the most important social determinant affecting occupational health negatively for working women in Malaysia (Choi, 2005).

Work demands predicted WFC and FWC positively, confirming prior cross-sectional (e.g. Byron, 2005) and longitudinal findings (Demerouti et al., 2004). This finding strengthens the argument that antecedents of conflict can come from the same domain as well as cross domain. Work resources lessen WFC and FWC as documented in previous findings.

5. Implications

Multi-National Companies (MNC) in particular needs to be aware of cultural factors that may produce work-family conflict. In predominantly collectivist society, the community should be incorporated into an organisation's agenda. Management development for supervisors should teach supervisors to appreciate the interdependence of work and non-work domains in influencing an employee's performance at work. Our findings support the argument that management in collectivist organisations involves the management of groups (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005). To a certain extent, relatives, neighbours and friends influence the work and family conflict experienced by employees.

As work demands and resources influences WFC and FWC, it is vital for organizations to consider how work is designed and allocated. Therefore, attention should be given to moderating the demands workers are exposed to, for example, by offering regular training opportunities to keep employees abreast of new knowledge and skills to work effectively. The provision of training demonstrates that organisations care about their employees. Moreover, in collectivist societies, opportunities to learn and improve skills are valued more highly than in individualist societies (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005).

6. Conclusion

In sum, the study underscores the roles of community which has been neglected in Western studies, as important in affecting work-family conflict and family-work conflict in Malaysia. Besides work demands, community demands lead to WFC and FWC. Therefore, to better understand the work-family conflict in a society which is predominantly collectivist and has strong cultural beliefs and values, aspects of the community should be incorporated.

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