RESEARCH NOTE

THE RELATIONSHIP OF WORK-FAMILY CONFLICTS AND FAMILY-WORK CONFLICT TO JOB SATISFACTION

Karthik Namasivayam
Daniel J. Mount
The Pennsylvania State University

The issue of work-family conflict has been receiving increased attention in research. This research extends the literature by applying emerging work-family conflict theory in the hospitality industry. The research was done in seven hotels with a primarily Hispanic (91%) workforce. It was found that, expectedly, work-to-family conflict issues were related to lower job satisfaction. It was also found, quite unexpectedly, that family-to-work conflict issues were related to a higher job satisfaction. It is hypothesized that for this group— primarily lower-income Hispanics, work can be seen as a release from family conflict issues.

KEYWORDS: *work-family conflict; family-work conflict; job satisfaction; hotel industry; hospitality industry; Hispanic workforce*

A number of factors, including the increase in the number of dual-earner families, changes in the demographic constitution of the United States, and the changing nature of the job market are drawing attention to work-family role conflicts and consequent stress (Bruck, Allen, & Spector, 2002; Patel, 2002). Two-earner and single-parent family structures mean not only women but also men are susceptible to stresses from work-family role conflicts (WFC) (Eagle, Icenogle, Maes, & Miles, 1998).

Although much research has been conducted among managerial and white-collar professionals, there is very little research that seeks to understand the effects of WFC on lower-level service employees (for an exception, see Boles & Babin, 1996). The hospitality industry, with its characteristics of late hours, long hours, and low wage levels, is particularly vulnerable to the effects of WFC (Berta, 2002).

Research has linked several important organizational outcomes such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions as well as psychological strain to WFC (Frone, 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Martins, Eddleston, & Veiga, 2002). Berta (2002) suggests that WFCs contribute to high turnover in the restaurant industry. Simon (cited in Overman, 2002) notes the connection between providing employees appropriate work–life benefits and customer satisfaction. This finding coupled with demonstrated links between customer satisfaction, loyalty, and profitability has great implications for service industries (Zeithaml, 2000).

Therefore, in this study, we investigate the nature and effects of WFC on U.S. hotel industry workers. We do this by empirically testing the effects of WFC on employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), described WFC as "a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (p. 77). Following more recent work, we treat work-to-family (WTF) and family-to-work (FTW) conflicts as separate but related constructs (O'Driscoll, Ilgen, & Hildreth, 1992). That is, "work can interfere with family life (work-to-family conflict) and family life can interfere with work (family-to-work conflict)" (Frone, 2000, p. 888). Although more studies in this area have investigated the effects of work conflicts on family life, researchers are increasingly paying attention to the effects of family conflicts on work life (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996). The ability of individuals to meet family demands such as caregiving, including child and elder care has an important effect on their satisfaction with their job (Kossek, Noe, & DeMarr, 1999). Studies have demonstrated that WTF conflicts have a greater effect on job satisfaction than FTW (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). We start with the following hypotheses:

> *Hypothesis 1 (H1):* Work-to-family conflict is negatively correlated with job satisfaction.
> *H1a:* Family-to-work conflict is negatively correlated with job satisfaction.
> *H1b:* Work-to-family conflicts will correlate more strongly with job satisfaction than family-to-work conflicts.

Research has shown that WFC and organizational commitment are related and that organizational commitment is an antecedent of psychological withdrawal from the job (i.e., turnover, Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley, & Luk [2001]). Employees who are strongly committed to their organizations are the least likely to leave the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Allen and Meyer (1990) developed a three component model of organizational commitment: affective, continuance, and normative. *Affective commitment* is defined as the extent to which an "individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership in, the organization" (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 2). When work roles interfere with family roles (for example, child or elder care) individuals may reduce their levels of affective commitment to

their organizations. On the other hand, individuals who have a strong affective commitment to an organization may not perceive their family roles in conflictual terms. Therefore, their family roles will have a weaker effect on their work roles. This leads to the following hypothesis:

> *H2:* Work-to-family conflicts will have a stronger negative correlation with affective commitment than family-to-work conflicts.

The second component of Allen and Meyer's (1990) model is continuance commitment and refers to individuals' commitment to an organization that stems from their perceptions of loss if they leave having already invested substantial resources, such as years of service or acquired specialized knowledge, at the present job. Job-mobility also influences continuance commitment. Individuals who perceive high job mobility will likely have lower levels of continuance commitment to the organization. When family roles interfere with work roles, individuals are less likely to leave their jobs, given their investments in their jobs. However, when work roles engender conflict with their family roles then individuals may consider leaving their jobs, especially if they perceive high job mobility. We therefore hypothesize:

> *H3:* Work-to-family conflicts will have a stronger negative correlation with continuance commitment than family-to-work conflicts.

Finally, "the normative component of organizational commitment will be influenced by the individual's experiences both prior to (familial/cultural socialization) and following (organizational socialization) entry into the organization" (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 4). Organizational commitment that results from family, cultural, and organizational influences on individuals' beliefs about what is right (for example, loyalty to the organization) is termed *normative commitment*. The extent to which an individual believes work to be more important than family or vice versa will influence the effect of WFC on normative commitment. Individuals from cultures strongly oriented to the family will likely construe WTF conflicts as having a greater impact. When individuals believe work is paramount, FTW conflicts will have a greater effect. Some cultures have a stronger family orientation than others. In this study, our sample was made up of a largely Hispanic population. The Hispanic culture is characterized as a collective culture in which the family and the group play a large role. Triandis (1994) suggests, "Hispanics are more comfortable within their family than in work situations" (p. 247). It is to be expected that WTF conflicts will have a stronger negative effect on normative commitment, and Hispanic individuals will perceive greater stress if their work roles interfere with their family roles.

> *H4:* Work-to-family conflicts will have a stronger negative correlation with normative commitment than family-to-work conflicts.

METHOD

Sample

Data for this study were collected at a major Southwestern hotel company site. We surveyed employees at seven hotel sites owned and operated by this firm. The survey instruments were distributed as part of an annual job satisfaction survey exercise and were collected back immediately after the employees filled them out, ensuring a high rate of return (76%). The high response rate is also due to the fact that the hotel company conducts annual surveys on company time, and the employees are familiar with the procedure. A total of 555 employees were surveyed of whom 419 returned the surveys. Of these, 59 surveys were unusable because the data were not completely filled out. It was known that the majority of the participants were of Hispanic descent, so the survey was translated into Spanish using a back-translation method.

Organizationally mandated restraints precluded surveying the gender of the respondents. We believe that a strength of the study is that the sample was drawn from a single organization, thus controlling for variance due to differing human resource practices.

Variables

Job satisfaction was measured using a single-item global measure, "Overall, how satisfied are you with the job?" To measure organizational commitment, we adapted scales developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). Each component of the scale had adequate Cronbach's alphas: affective commitment (3 items) had an alpha of 0.86, whereas normative commitment (3 items) and continuance commitment (2 items) had alphas of 0.72 and 0.76, respectively.

WTF and FTW were measured using scales developed by Boles, Howard, and Donofrio (2001). The scales had high Cronbach's alphas (WTF: 5 items, alpha 0.93; FTW: 4 items, alpha 0.89).

The analysis controlled for tenure with the hotel, part-time or full-time employment, and age of the individual. These variables are related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Spector, 1997). Job tenure was coded as 0 for those with less than one-year tenure with the hotel and 1 for those with more than one year. Respondents were coded 0 if they were full-time and 1 if they were part-time employees. Age was measured as a continuous variable.

RESULTS

The respondents were overwhelmingly Hispanic (91.5%) and employed full-time (95.1%). The sample was made up of 78.7% hourly employees and 21.3% salaried employees. Tenure at the individual hotel property ranged from less than 3 months (8.7%), 3 months to a year (28.7%), a year to 3 years (24.9%) and more than 3 years (37.7%). About 48% of the sample had none or 1 dependent child, 22.3% had two children, 17.6% had three children, and about 11% had four or more children. About 43% of the sample had one or more adult dependents.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and correlations for the variables included in the model.

Table 2 presents the results of the regression analyses. Of the control variables, only age had a significant effect on the dependent variables as shown in Table 1 ($p < .001$). We found no effects for tenure and employment status on job satisfaction or organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 1, which states that WTF conflicts will be negatively related to job satisfaction, received strong support (see Table 2). The greater the WTF conflict experienced by an individual, the lower was the individual's job satisfaction ($p < .001$).

Hypothesis 1a, which states that FTW conflicts will be negatively related to job satisfaction, was not supported. There was significant support, however, for a positive relationship with FTW conflicts. This counterintuitive finding will be discussed in more detail later in the article.

Hypothesis 1b, which states that WTF conflicts will be more strongly related to job satisfaction, was supported (see Table 2). WTF conflicts related to satisfaction in the expected direction and more strongly ($p < .001$) than FTW conflicts ($p < .05$).

Hypothesis 2 stated that WTF conflicts will be more strongly and negatively correlated with affective commitment than FTW conflicts. The results do not support this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3, which states that WTF conflicts will be more strongly correlated with continuance commitment, was not supported. Although the direction of association of WTF with continuance commitment was in the hypothesized direction, the correlation was not significant.

Finally, hypothesis 4, which states that WTF conflicts will be more strongly correlated with normative commitment, received strong support. Higher levels of WTF conflicts are related to lower levels of normative commitment to the organization ($p < .001$).

DISCUSSION

Job satisfaction is related to customer satisfaction (Schneider, White, & Paul, 1998). It is, therefore, important for hospitality organizations to understand what factors lead to employees' job satisfaction. One factor that has gained prominence in recent research is the concept of work-family conflict (for example, Boles & Babin, 1996). In this exploratory study, we investigated the effects of both FTW and WTF, conflicts on job satisfaction and the three facets of organizational commitment.

The results support the notion that when work roles interfere with family roles, the individual's job satisfaction is lower. However, counterintuitively, our results show that when family roles interfere with work roles, individuals perceive higher job satisfaction. We can only speculate that individuals perceive work as a means or resource to resolve family conflicts and, as such, work may be a source of satisfaction. This finding calls into question the assumption in much of

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Age (1)	36.66 (11.51)	1								
Tenure (2)	0.91 (0.282)	.110	1							
Employment (3)	0.95 (0.21)	.031	.036	1						
Work to family (4)	3.42 (1.97)	.003	.069	.027	1					
Family to work (5)	2.64 (1.87)	.123*	.057	-.003	.613**	1				
Affective (6)	5.45 (1.53)	.351**	-.042	.008	-.017	.092	1			
Continuance (7)	5.05 (1.82)	.256**	.014	.040	.046	.146**	.644**	1		
Normative (8)	5.13 (1.56)	.270**	-.057	-.002	-.121*	.080	.639**	.674**	1	
Satisfaction (9)	5.83 (1.44)	.188**	-.035	.005	-.193**	-.023	.473**	.280**	.479**	1

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (two-tailed). ** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

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Table 2
Results of Regression Analyses

Dependent Variables	Normative	Continuance	Affective	Satisfaction
Independent				
Age	0.267***	0.225***	0.342***	0.158*
Tenure	-0.104	-0.036	-0.095	-0.049
Employment status	0.002	0.064	0.052	0.38
Work-to-family conflict	-0.208**	-0.40	-0.062	-0.285***
Family-to-work conflict	0.106	0.053	0.044	0.191*
R^2	0.111	0.058	0.128	0.087
Adjusted R^2	0.092	0.04	0.110	0.069
Model F	6.116***	3.094**	7.307***	4.762***

Note: $N = 360$
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

the work-family literatures that stress caused by family roles interfering with work leads to job dissatisfaction.

Cultural influences may account for our nonfindings with regard to the relationship between both forms of WFC and affective commitment. It is possible that the individuals in our study, because they were Hispanic, were more affectively committed to their families and community than the organization (Triandis, 1994). Our data show that WTF conflict reduced affective commitment to the organization, although not statistically significantly.

Again, although we found no statistically significant relationships between the two forms of WFC and continuance commitment, the direction of association is consistent with the other dependent variables. WTF is negatively related and FTW is positively related to continuance commitment. We can only speculate that this nonfinding is because the sample perceives low job mobility and therefore, role conflicts, whether FTW or WTF, do not affect individuals' continuance decisions.

Finally, when individuals believe that their work roles interfere with their family roles, they are less loyal to the hotel. In this sample, at least, it appears that their family roles are paramount. They are less affected by the conflict their family roles engender in their work roles.

Limitations and Implications

Before discussing the implications of our study, a couple of limitations have to be pointed out. First, the sample was largely made up of Hispanic individuals and therefore caution should be exercised in generalizing the findings to a larger population. The study is cross-sectional. A longitudinal study may better allow causal connections to be made. Therefore, the results of this study should be treated as exploratory and used with caution.

Despite its limitations, this study has important research and practical implications. The study results suggest that it is important to recognize that the patterns of WFC cannot be conceived of in global terms. For example, this study has surfaced

an important variable that should be taken into account in future studies: namely, cultural differences. Anecdotal evidence suggests the grouping together of individuals of certain cultures in some departments of a hotel. Culture's role in managing work-family conflicts should be more explicitly investigated.

Implicit in much of the research is the assumption that the work arena is always the source of stress. Preliminary evidence suggests that this may not hold; work may serve as a stress-release mechanism. Stress due to family roles may be negotiated at the workplace. This has important implications for the structuring of workplace policies.

Future research should more carefully model and test the interrelationships among the various sources of conflict. More careful attention should be placed on identifying antecedents, moderators, and reciprocal relationships among the variables. The use of structural equation modeling may allow more complex relationships to be identified.

Organizations invest large resources to create programs such as alternative work schedules, and child- and eldercare assistance programs to ensure family-friendly and supportive work environments. However, "recent assessments of work-family initiatives indicate the potential value of most programs exceed their actual use" (Kossek et al., 1999, p. 103). Understanding the causes and consequences of conflicts between work-family roles will help install more appropriate and rational workplace systems. Workforces in the United States are increasingly multicultural. The effects of culture-dominated preferences should be accounted for in designing programs. More research is needed to identify precisely what aspect of work and family roles affects the hospitality industry worker's job satisfaction.

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Karthik Namasivayam, Ph.D. (e-mail: kunl@psu.edu), is an assistant professor in the School of Hotel, Restaurant, and Recreation Management, The Pennsylvania State University (234 Mateer Building, University Park, PA 16802-1307. **Daniel J. Mount**, Ph.D. (e-mail: dmount@psu.edu), is an associate professor in the School of Hotel, Restaurant and Recreation Management, The Pennsylvania State University (227 Mateer Building, University Park, PA 16802).