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Antecedents and Outcomes of Work-Family Interface

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Abstract

This study examines the mediating role of work-family conflict on antecedents and outcomes in a sample of dual career employees. We examine the antecedents and outcomes of work→family and family→work conflict. Our results show that family→work conflict mediated the relationships between career development and job security and work-based family support programs. Similarities and differences from previous findings and implications are discussed.

ANTECEDENTS AND OUTCOMES OF WORK-FAMILY INTERFACE

Work and family conflicts have emerged as an increasingly important research topic in the last few decades. According to Zedeck (1992), this phenomenon is in part due to the increase in number of women in the workplace, the changing attitudes toward work and the changing roles of family members. Furthermore, today's workplace is increasingly populated with working parents, single parents, and dual-career couples (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). The potential for work-family conflict increases as these working parents or dual couples struggle with the everyday work and home responsibilities. This study focuses on dual-career couples because dual career couples, especially those with children, are most affected by work-family conflict (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991). Further, more than 50% of North American work force is married with children, which suggests that information about this group should be extremely relevant for strategic human resource management and employees (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991).

Much of the writing on work-family concerns defines family in the traditional terms of two parents and their children. According to Parker and Hall (1992), elder care should also be included in the definition of "family." Further, single parents, single people without children, married couples with one spouse staying home, and dual career couples have different work-family concerns. When these samples are studied together, it is difficult to isolate the specific issues faced by these diverse groups. Our study focuses primarily on dual-career adults.

Studies have investigated the antecedents and outcomes of work and family conflict (Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Frone & Yardley, 1996; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Higgins, Duxburg, & Irving, 1992; Judge, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1994; Tenbrunsel, Brett, Moaz, Stroh, & Reilly, 1995). In general, work and family conflicts would relate to a number of work and personal outcomes including lower job satisfaction (Bacharach, Bamberger, & Conley, 1991), lower life satisfaction (Adams, King, & King, 1996), absenteeism (Goff, Mount, & Jamieson, 1990), impaired psychological well-being (Burden & Googins, 1987), and other health or strain outcomes (Frone, Russell, & Barnes, 1996; Thomas & Ganster, 1995).

Recent research in work-family conflict proposes that work interference with family (i.e., work→family conflict) and family interference with work (i.e., family→work conflict) have independent effect on outcome domains (of work and family). That is, Frone et al. (1997) suggest that antecedents of work→family conflict reside in work domain and its outcomes in the family domain. Contrarily the antecedents of family→work conflict originate from family domain while its outcomes are reflected in the work domains. For example, it has been hypothesized and found that work→family conflict is negatively related to family performance (Frone et al. 1997), life satisfaction (Adams et al., 1996; Higgins et al., 1992) marital satisfaction, family withdrawal (MacEwen & Barling, 1994), depression and health complaints among health care workers (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). On the relationships of family→work conflict and outcomes, it was found that this conflict is negatively related to work performance (Frone et al., 1997), work withdrawal (MacEwen & Bailing, 1994), job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Wiley, 1987). One objective of this paper is to examine the role of work→family conflict on family outcomes, that is, life satisfaction and the desirability of family support practices, and the role of family→work conflict on work outcomes, that is, absenteeism, and job security.

We also examine the antecedents of family→work and work→family conflict. According to the rational view, the

more hours an individual spends on roles associated with work and/or family domains, the more conflict an individual will perceive (Gutek et al., 1991). Gutek et al. predicted and found support that the number of hours spent in paid work was positively related to work interference with family. However, the number of hours spent in family activities was positively related to family interference with work. Further, Greenhaus, Bedeian, and Mossholder (1987) found that extensive time commitment to work was positively related to work-family conflict.

Bacharach et al. (1991) further note that time conflict occurs when the time devoted to one role makes it difficult to fulfill requirements of another role. Both Gutek et al. (1991) and Bacharach et al.'s (1991) perspectives suggest that time is a limited resource and the conditions of work and other contexts such as family may place competing demands on an individual's time. However, the job-related time demands and family-related time demands have separate links with work→family and family→work conflict.

Studies in work-family conflict typically use work and family related role stress, role overload, or social support as antecedents. Other work domain antecedents such as job complexity or career development issues have not been examined. Without specifying work-related antecedents, it is difficult to identify what needs to be modified in order to minimize the negative impact of work-family conflict. In this study, we employ family responsibilities or parenting demands as the antecedent to family→work conflict and job complexity and the number of internal job promotions as the antecedents to work→family conflict.

Antecedents and Outcomes of Work-Family Interface

The conceptual model that guided the present study is presented in Figure 1. Work-family conflict results from incompatible work and family demands (Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly, 1983). There are two forms of work and family conflicts, namely, work interference with family (work→family) and family interference with work (family→work) (Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991). Work can interfere with family when work demands prevent the fulfillment of family demands. For instance, when one's job requires long work hours, this may prevent one from performing duties at home or spending time with one's family. Family can interfere with work, on the other hand, when family demands prevent the fulfillment of work demands. For instance, when a dependent is ill, this may prevent attendance at work, or just the thoughts of family affairs may represent distractions at work. These negative outcomes from both types of work-family conflicts can be detrimental to an individual's career.

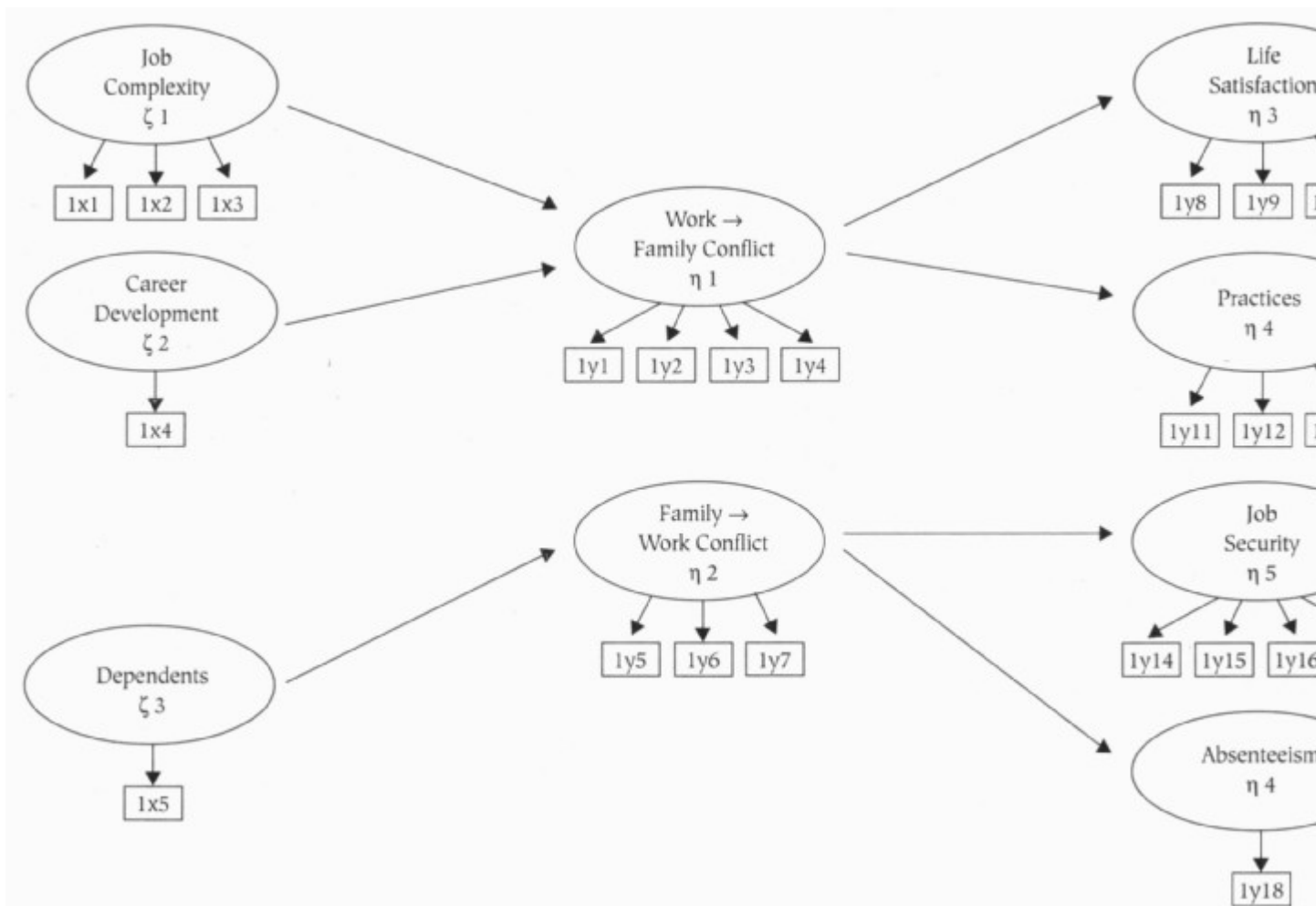
As noted below and shown in Figure 1, the two types of work-family conflict indicates that they are associated with unique work- and family-related antecedents and outcomes. As in Frone et al. (1997), the two work-family conflict measures are conceptualized as mediators linking variables in both the family and work domains.

Predictors of Work-family Conflict

A number of variables are hypothesized to be associated with the amount of time spent at work. Working on a complex task takes time and effort. Work challenge or job complexity stimulates work involvement because it requires the exercise of individual judgment and choice as well as the expenditure of effort. This expenditure of effort will, in turn, require commitment to the goals such as career development an individual is seeking. Howard (1992), in a longitudinal study of 422 white male managers, found a positive association of job challenge and work involvement.

Additionally, in attaining internal job promotion for career development purposes also involves time and effort. Consistent with the view that time is a limited resource (Bacharach et al., 1991; Gutek et al., 1991), we propose that task complexity and internal job promotion for career development are time demanding. Thus, we hypothesize that they are associated with work→family conflict.

Figure 1
Hypothesized Covariance Structure Model



In the family domain, parental demands or number of dependents relate to family→work conflict by creating strain within the family and for the individuals. For example, in the case that the dual-career couples have to take care of their children in addition to their elderly family members, such time demands create substantial strain and stress for the couple. Therefore, the number of dependents to care for is also hypothesized to relate positively to family→work conflict.

(H1a) Job complexity and career development will relate positively to work→family conflict.

(H1b) The number of dependents will relate positively to family→work conflict.

Outcomes of work-family conflict

Research on the outcomes of work and family conflicts generally identified a number of negative outcomes. For example, work and family conflicts have been identified as sources of psychological strain in married men and women (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Prone et al., 1992; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Higgins et al., 1992; O'Driscoll, Ilgen, & Hildreth, 1992). Further, work and family conflicts have been found to lead to decrements in psychological and physical well-being of employees (Bedeian, Burke, & Moffett, 1988; Burden & Googins, 1987; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1987; Pleck, 1989).

Research findings suggest that the relationship between work-family conflict with life satisfaction is a negative one (Aryee, 1992; Bedeian et al., 1988; Judge et al., 1994; Parasuraman, Greenhaus, & Granrose, 1992; Wiley, 1987). Bedeian et al. (1988) argue that when work interferes with family life, this conflict is often released on the family, causing poor marital adjustment. Such marital dissatisfaction further contributes to lower levels of life satisfaction. Additionally, in a series of studies investigating dual-career families conducted by Higgins and his colleagues (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Higgins & Duxbury, 1992; Higgins et al., 1992), it was found that work→family conflict had a significant relationship with family domain outcomes. Specifically Higgins et al. (1992) found that work→family conflict was related to lower quality of family life. This quality of family life was in turn related to lower levels of life satisfaction.

Prone and Yardley (1996) suggest that parental demands may interfere with daily job activities and occupational achievement. As stated above, the time demands from multiple roles may increase work→family conflict. In order to minimize the negative influence of dependent care on their work roles, employed parents have the need and desire for work-based family-supportive programs. Thus consistent with previous research findings, we predict that:

(H2a) Work→family conflict will relate negatively to life satisfaction.

(H2b) Work→family conflict will relate positively to the perceived benefit of a work-based family-supportive

program.

With regard to outcomes, family→work conflict is generally associated with negative work domain outcomes such as work-related withdrawal or absenteeism (Golf et al., 1990). Consistent with the time demand perspective, when family interferes with work due to dependent care demands, time off from work is necessary. MacEwen and Barling (1994), in a study of work and family withdrawal, found that family→work conflict was positively related to work withdrawal. Work withdrawal was defined as the extent to which respondents were late for or missed work activities. Therefore, we predict that family→work conflict may relate positively to absenteeism. Additionally, when one is frequently absent from work, occupational growth and stability may also be affected. The relationship between family→work conflict has not been explored in the work-family conflict literature. Therefore, we further predict that family→work conflict may relate negatively to job security.

(H3a) Family→work conflict will relate negatively to job security.

(H3b) Family→work conflict will relate positively to absenteeism.

(H4) work-family conflict (both family→work conflict and work→family conflict) mediates the relationships between job complexity, career development, dependent care and outcomes.

METHOD

Respondents and Procedures

This study was conducted at a consumer products company employing approximately 8,000 employees in jobs ranging from research and development, engineering, accounting/finance, marketing/sales, and administration to manufacturing.

Employee names (10 percent of the company's employees) were generated at random by using a computer template. We specified that the computer should randomly generate 10 percent of each ethnic group and 10 percent of males and females. A letter written by the Chairperson of the task force, charged with the mission to examine the quality of work life, was distributed to all the employees whose names were selected. The letter explained the purpose of the survey and insured that their participation would be voluntary. Respondents were assured that all findings would be kept completely confidential and that the company would see only data summaries. Since this survey was administered during the Christmas and New Year holidays, employees were instructed to mail the completed questionnaires directly to the senior author. The response rate was 47 percent (or 378 completed surveys). Since our study focused on dual-career couples, single parent and those spouses are not working were excluded from our analyses. This resulted in a sample of 198 respondents.

The random selection of the company's employees resulted in a proportional representation according to race, gender, tenure and pay levels from the company's records. Average age of the respondents in our sample was 44.7 years (company mean=45.38 years). Our respondents also averaged 17.8 years of tenure with the company (company mean=16.87). There were 149 males and 48 females in our sample.

Measures

Life Satisfaction (5 items) was assessed with the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Research show that this scale displays favorable psychometric properties (Judge et al., 1994). The alpha of this scale in the present study was $\alpha=.77$.

Perceived usefulness of work-based family support program. This scale had 5 items using a 7-point Likert format. Respondents indicated the extent to which they strongly agreed (=7) or strongly disagreed (=1) with the usefulness for: "flexible work hours," "a specified number of days leave for family matters or a child's illness," "financial assistance to help pay for child care," "a parental leave policy," and "sick child care" with their dependent care responsibilities ($\alpha=.98$).

Absenteeism data was provided by the company a year after the survey was collected. It measured the percentage of hours absent in a year. In our study, absenteeism excluded scheduled holidays, vacation, bereavement leave, jury duty, and military leave. This absence measure was collected from archival records that were matched to the employees' internal identification numbers. Since 76 respondents did not provide us with their identification numbers, fewer cases were used for analyses involving absenteeism.

Job Security was assessed using 4 items developed by Caplan and colleagues (1975). Job security reflects the amount of certainty a person has about his/her future job and career security. The items, using a 5-point very uncertain (=1) to very certain (=5) response format, include: "How certain are you about what your future career picture looks like?" or "How certain are you about what your responsibilities will be six months from now?" ($\alpha=.68$). Higher scores represent higher job security.

Work→family conflict and family→work conflict measured with the scales developed by Gutek et al. (1991) and used by Prone et al. (1992) and Judge et al. (1994). The reliabilities reported by Gutek et al. and Judge et al.

were between $\alpha=.76$ to $.83$. However, Prone et al. reported that work→family conflict's scale reliability was $\alpha=.76$ and family→work conflict's scale reliability was $\alpha=.56$. In the present study, the alpha for work→family conflict scale was $.75$ and family→work conflict scale was $.65$.

Job complexity was assessed using 5 items using a 7-point Likert scale format. Respondents indicated the extent to which they strongly agreed (=7) or strongly disagreed (=1) with whether their job gave them opportunity to “use a variety of skills and abilities,” “to do an entire piece of work from start to finish,” “to explore and find the type(s) of work I can do best,” “to do a number of different things,” and “to work on challenging assignments” ($\alpha=.85$).

The second antecedent of work→family conflict was career development operationalized here as the number of internal promotions in the organization. For this indicator, we used the self-report information.

Number of dependents. Respondents were asked to indicate their dependent care profile: (1) number of infants; (2) number of toddlers/preschool children; (3) number of school age children; and (4) number of elderly family members to care for. In the context of conflicts between work and family, we treat the above four categories as imposing demands on the heads of the family (i.e., the husband and the wife). Thus, number of dependents was indexed by the total of the above four categories.

Analytic Strategy

We employed structural equation modeling using LISREL 8.03 to examine the relationships between antecedents, conflicts, and outcomes in the present study (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1989). Scale reduction is desirable when the number of indicators is large because there are computing limitations using LISREL to fit models with more than 30 indicators, as in case of the present study (e.g., Bentler & Chou, 1987). To reduce the number of indicators, we follow the practice used in the OB literature (e.g., Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997; Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996). We ran factor analyses on individual scales for practices, life satisfaction, job complexity, job security, work→family conflicts, and family→work conflicts, and combined items of highest and lowest loadings by averaging until the final scales were consisted of no more than four indicators. The number of dependents and number of promotions were self-report data and absenteeism was obtained from company records. These variables were single item measures with no indicators. In the model, they were treated as latent variables having no measurement error. The loading of these three variables were set to 1 and error to 0.

Model Specification and Testing

The structural model in Figure 1 is the Full Model in this study. The model consists of the direct effects of the antecedents on the outcomes, and the indirect effects of the antecedents on outcomes via the two types of conflicts between work and family. Model testing follows the test of nested models commonly used and recommended in LISREL applications (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Models are nested when one can derive a second model by eliminating parameters in a first model and/or by imposing equality constraint on the parameters in the first model. Nested models can be compared using the chi-square difference test. If the two nested models are significantly different from each other, we may then conclude that the relationship omitted in the second model contributes significantly to the first model. In the present study, we compared the direct and indirect effects model to the full effects model to examine whether the extent to which the two types of conflicts between work and family mediated the relationship between the antecedents and outcomes. To examine the fit of the models, we reported the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and the Incremental Fit Index (IFI) recommended by Gerbing and Anderson (1993) as the reference for the overall fit of the models.

RESULTS

Because of the maneuver undertaken to reduce the complexity of the model, we first examined the measurement model by conducting the confirmatory factor analysis. The CFA had a chi-square of 230.12 with 197 degree of freedom ($p=.05$), both the CFI and IFI were $.97$, indicating good fit. Examination of the factor loadings indicated that all indicators loaded significantly onto the a priori latent variable. Thus, we concluded that the measurement model was acceptable.

Zero-order correlations of the variables examined in the present study were reported in Table 1. As indicated in Table 1, job complexity, career development and number of dependents were not related to work→family conflict or family→work conflict. Thus, H1a and H1b appeared to be not supported. Consistent with H2a and H2b, work→family conflict was related to life satisfaction and perceived usefulness of family-support practices. Consistent with H3a, family→work conflict correlated negatively with job security. However, inconsistent with H3b, family→work conflict was not correlated with absenteeism. H4 stated that the two types of conflicts between work and family mediated the relationship between the antecedents and outcomes. Since the antecedents were not correlated with either type of conflicts, H4 was not supported.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficients

Variables	Means	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Life Satisfaction	3.31	.70	(.77)								
2 Perceived Usefulness of Family-support Practices	.43	.48	-.07	(.98)							
3 Absenteeism	1.12	3.78	-.03	-.05	-						
4 Job Security	2.87	.81	.21**	-.08	.04	(.68)					
5 WIF	2.86	.80	-.21**	.20**	-.30**	-.06	(.75)				
6 FIW	1.9	.65	-.20**	.25**	-.12	-.17*	.28**	(.65)			
7 Job Complexity	5.48	1.09	.29**	.03	-.19**	.32**	.02	-.11	(.85)		
8 Career Development	3.35	2.89	-.01	-.03	-.02	-.09	-.05	-.14	.13	-	
9 # of Dependents	1.49	1.04	-.04	.22**	.05	.05	.03	.01	-.05	-.12	-

n = 161-197 *p<.05; **p<.01 WIF = Work interference with Family FIW = Family interference with work Gender: 1 = Male; 2 = Female; Note: Numbers on the diagonal are internal consistency reliability estimates

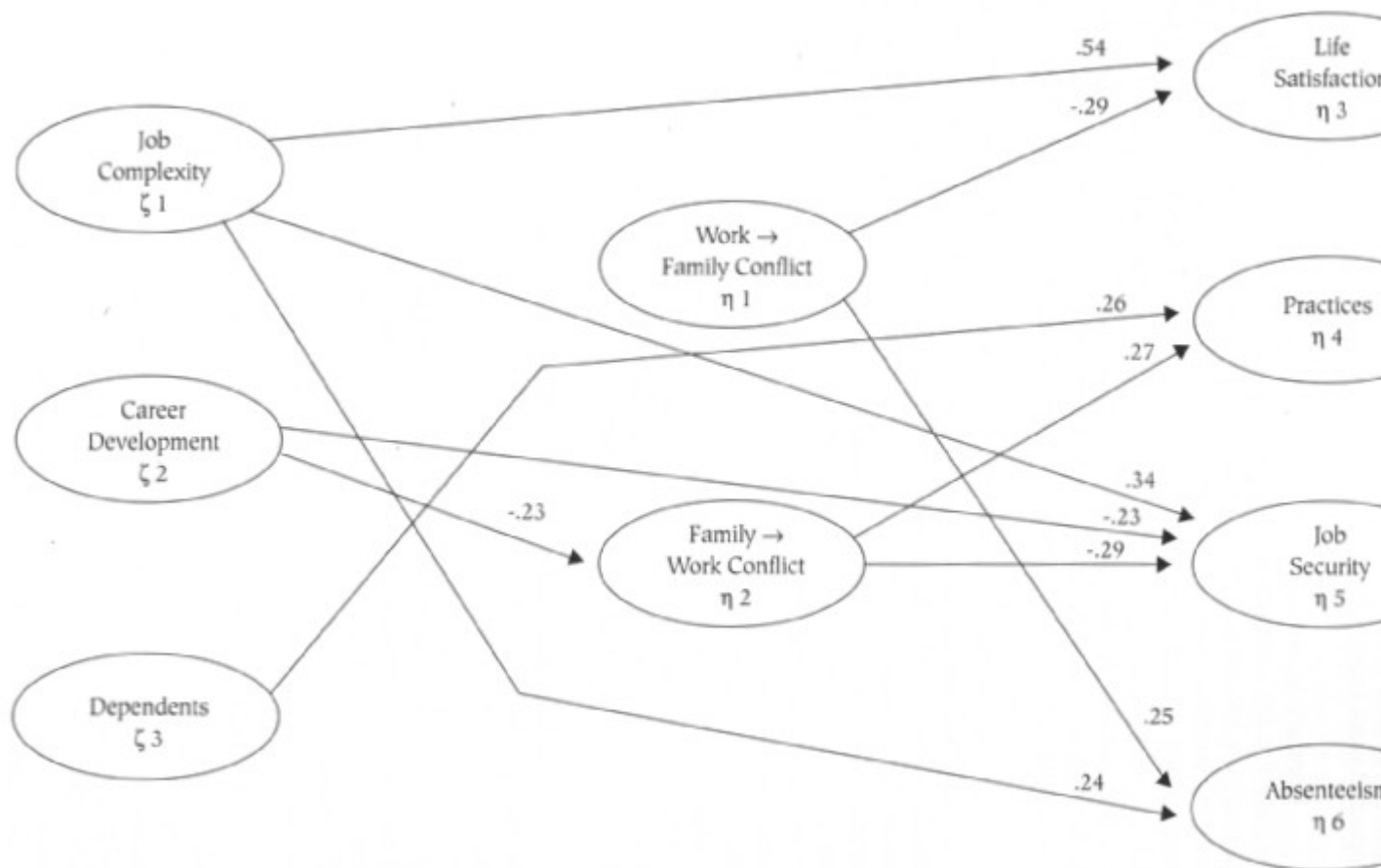
To examine more rigorously the relationships between the antecedents, the two types of conflicts between work and family, and the outcomes, we next conducted the nested model test. The nested model test examined first the H4, that is, the mediating effects of the conflicts between work and family and the antecedents and the outcomes. The full model with both the direct effects of the antecedents on the outcomes and the mediating effects of conflicts and work and family had a chi-square of 249.68 with 204 degree of freedom. The indirect effect model with only the mediating effects of conflicts between work and family had a chi-square of 310.49 with 216 degree of freedom. The chi-square difference was 60.81 with 12 degree of freedom ($p < .001$). This indicated that the direct effects from the antecedents to the outcomes contributed significantly to the model fit, and should not be removed from the model. To examine the mediating effects of the two types of conflicts on the relationship between the antecedents and outcomes, we compared the full effects model to the direct effects model (i.e., the model in which paths from the two types of conflicts between family and work to the four outcomes were deleted). The direct effects model had a chi-square of 281.27 with 212 degree of freedom, and the difference between the direct effects model and the full effects model was significant ($\Delta\chi^2=31.59$, d.f.=8, $p<.001$), indicating that the effects of the conflicts between work and family on the outcomes could not be deleted from the full effects model. The two nested model tests indicated that conflicts between work and family partially mediated the effects between the antecedents and the outcomes examined in the present study. Thus, H4 was only partially supported.

To yield a more parsimonious final model, we omitted the insignificant paths between work and family conflicts and outcomes (i.e., work→family and practice, work→family and job security, family→work and life satisfaction, and family→work and absenteeism) in the full effects model. The chi-square of this final model was 252.61 with 208 degree of freedom. The chi-square difference between the final model and the full effects model was not significant ($\Delta\chi^2=2.93$, d.f.=8, $p<.05$), indicating that the omitted paths could be dropped in the full effects model. Both the CFI and the IFI were .96, indicating good fit. The significant path coefficients between the latent constructs in the final model were reported in Figure 2. A closer examination of Figure 2 indicated that H1a and H1b were not supported, since job complexity and career development were not related to work→family conflict, and the number of dependents was not related to family→work conflict. H2a was supported since work→family conflict negatively predicted life satisfaction. But H2b was not supported since work→family conflict did not predict perceived usefulness of family-support practices. Instead, work→family conflict positively predicted absenteeism. H3a was supported since family→work conflict significantly predicted job security. H3b was not supported since family→work conflict did not predict absenteeism. Interestingly, family→work conflict positively predicted perceived usefulness of family support practices.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide partial support for Frone et al.'s (1997) model. Specifically, only family→work conflict mediates the relationship between career development and outcomes. Further, their claim that the outcomes for family→work conflict reside mainly in the work domain and that the outcomes for work→family conflict reside mostly in the family domain received mixed support. That is, as shown in Figure 2, although work→family conflict relates negatively to life satisfaction as predicted, it was unrelated to the perceived benefit of work-based family support programs. Instead, family→work conflict and the number of dependents were positively related to the desirability of work-based family support programs. It is possible that this pattern of findings suggests “the major motivation underlying parents’ desire for these programs is to reduce family→work conflict and its adverse impact on job-related outcomes” (Frone and Yardley, 1996: 361) especially when career development is concerned. This adverse association of career development on family→work conflict is critical and deserves further attention since Bielby and Bielby (1988) and Chusmir (1982) have documented that family impacted work investment.

Figure 2
Final Model



Contrary to Howard's (1992) finding, work→family conflict also failed to mediate the job complexity and outcomes relationships. The use of different measures on job complexity may result in our findings. Further, Howard measured work involvement while here we measured work→family conflict. Without construct equivalence, it is difficult to compare our results with Howard's (1992). However, job complexity relates positively to work and family domain outcomes of job security, absenteeism and life satisfaction. It is possible that, while complex jobs are high in motivating potential, the time and effort devoted to working on complex jobs may create unnecessary stress and strain thus indirectly increases absenteeism.

Further, instead of family→work conflict, work→family conflict relates positively to absenteeism, a work domain outcome. It is possible that when work interferes with family, the impact on absenteeism may be because one is taking precedence of work demand over family demand. In fact, work interference with family may be an indicator of how much devotion one has for work. It is possible that the stress created from work interference with family could materialize in higher absenteeism. Indeed, Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, and Wethington (1989) posit that family involvement is easier to control than work involvement. They found that a stress compensation process occurred in the home when there is conflict. However, a stressful day resulted in a reduction in involvement at home. This may explain the lower life satisfaction for those with work→family conflict. On the other hand, if one is to maintain involvement at home after a stressful workday, such dual involvement may result in negative outcomes such as absenteeism.

Our results suggest that family→work conflict is associated with the perceived benefit of work-based family support program since such services can help reduce the stress associated with family interference with work and can possibly facilitate career development. It is possible that without such company service, the more family interference with work, the more an employee feels that the job is being threatened. Our results here suggest that these two types of work-family conflict can affect both work and family domain outcomes. Future studies should investigate the long-term and short-term benefits of the work-based family support programs on reducing the negative outcomes of family→work conflict.

Apparently, the results of the present study implied a more complicated relationship between the antecedents, conflicts and outcomes than hypothesized. Theoretically, it is reasonable to argue that variables in the work domain would be related to work→family conflict and that variables in the family domain would be related to family→work conflict. Empirically, however, we show that career development related to family→work but not work→family conflict. Furthermore, the two types of conflict also have effects on variables across both the work and family domain. For example, work→family conflict related to life satisfaction as well as absenteeism, whereas family→work conflict relates to job security as well as perceived usefulness of family support practices. In practice, it may be difficult for employees to distinguish family from work domain variables. For example, an employee with work→family conflict may have higher levels of absenteeism if such conflict costs the employee work time to deal with. Furthermore, the relationship some antecedents and outcomes may not be mediated by either kind of conflicts. For example, an employee with a large number of dependents may perceive company support practices to be useful even though this employee him/herself may not experience family→work conflict. For example, this

employee may think that such practices may be helpful to other employees. Thus, researchers may consider theorizing the relationship between the antecedents and outcomes of work→family conflicts from other perspectives.

Recent work on family-work conflicts failed to find evidence that gender moderates the relationship between work-family conflict and employee outcomes (Prone et al., 1996; 1993). Prone et al. (1996) suggests that the sex role expectations have changed. That is, the previous expectations give priority to the breadwinner role among men and give priority to the homemaker and motherhood roles among women (Major, 1993; Thompson & Walker, 1989). Although men and women do allocate their time to employment and family roles according to role expectations, both men and women view their employment and family roles as psychologically important for self-definition. Although the data are not shown, we tested the moderating role of gender in this study. Consistent with previous studies, gender did not moderate work-family conflict and outcomes.

This study has several limitations. Other than absenteeism, we used a number of attitudinal self-report data. It is possible that common method variance biased some of the observed relationships. In order to detect common method variance effects, as in Podsakoff and Organ (1986), we conducted the Harman's (1976) one-factor test on all the perceptual measures. The factor analysis revealed 9 factors. Although this test cannot completely rule out the existence of common method variance, with the low intercorrelations among the variables reported earlier and the use of archival data, method variance effects may not be pervasive and are not likely to explain fully the results of the present study.

Another limitation is the smaller number of dual-career couples represented in our sample. It is feasible that the role of work-family conflicts and family-support practices may impact each group differently. Although we investigated the role of other family-support policies in our study (e.g., dependent services), only a small number of respondents (approximately 130 after listwise deletion of missing data) perceived these services to be of relevance to them. At the time of data collection, this company has initiated childcare support benefits and was considering other family support policies. Therefore, the effects of other family-support policies may be of higher relevance when the company has set up more formal programs.

In a longitudinal study Howard (1992) found that the work involvement/family involvement relationship was fairly stable over a career. Similarly longitudinal design facilitates the assessment of baseline measures of work-family conflict. It is possible that dual-career couples experiencing high levels of family→work conflict may have a stronger need and be more likely to benefit from work-based family support programs. Longitudinal studies can be used to test the usefulness of such programs in reducing work-family conflict. Further, our data was collected from one company with an internal promotion culture. Future studies should replicate our study in another organization with similar and vastly different cultures to examine culture impact on the effects of work-family conflict and outcomes.

Conclusions and Contributions

Our study makes a number of contributions. Especially interesting was the finding that family→work conflict mediates the relationship between career development and job security and work-based family support programs. Further, while family→work conflict shows a negative association with job security and a positive association with perceived benefit of work-based family support programs. Additionally, work→family conflict, while shows a negative association with life satisfaction, is positively related to absenteeism. This study also confirms others that the gender gap in work-family conflicts is narrowing and what applies to one gender is also applicable to the other.

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