

Effects of Work-Family Conflict on Working Women

Jean Kim

Lumiere Education

ABSTRACT

This paper is mainly about the work-family conflict women face in this society. This paper shows the relationship between work-family conflict and various factors such as social support, turnover intention, and low job engagement. To find the effects of work-family conflict on working women, the survey was sent out to the people who currently have a workplace. The majority of the participants were women, as the research's main focus was on working women. The results proved the positive correlation between work-family conflict and turnover intention. In addition, surprisingly, the survey showed that the control variables such as age, tenure, gender, and the number of children had insignificant impacts on the work-family conflict.

Introduction

As time passes, women have emerged in society and taken on more active roles in businesses rather than family roles at home. However, societal change is slow, and the fight for change has been difficult. Since traditional gender norms and societal expectations stay the same in people's minds but how women act changes, work-family conflicts increase - as men continue to expect women to work and raise the family (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991). The disconnect between the massive shift in women's roles and traditional gender norms has yet to balance.

Some scholars have studied the values women and men hold but found opposing results that women consider external motivators, such as payment and working conditions, more important than internal motivators. In contrast, men consider the opportunity and job satisfaction more crucial (Rowe & Snizek, 1995). However, a recent study demonstrated that both men and women thought job income, accomplishment, and opportunity were more important than job security or working hours (Rowe & Snizek, 1995). This suggests that as time has passed, women's work values have become more similar to men's.

There are some existing theories about how gender categories shape people's perceptions. Gender Schema theory, first introduced in 1981, is the theory about how people's mental structures receive information by gender categories which causes them to see the world in terms of gender (Zosuls & Ruble, 2008). Gender Schema theory affects not only people's procession of information but also their attitudes. According to this theory, once children identify as a girl or a boy, they tend to remember their gender-related information, behave, and make judgments. (Zosuls & Ruble, 2008). For example, if a child is grown up in a traditional culture, he/she might believe that women's role in society is inside the house and men's role is outside (Cherry, 2020).

In addition, another study found that people's attitudes towards women are positively correlated to their critical thinking skills. The more they had critical thinking skills, the more flexible their attitudes towards women's societal roles, as they tended not to accept any stereotypical information from traditional mindsets (Loo & Thorpe, 2005).

Existing research showed the perceptions of gender roles of general people with traditional mindsets and the values men and women pursue when they work. This research paper focuses on why the perceptions of women do not appear to change as much as the roles themselves and what difficulties they would face due to double expectations.

Traditional perceptions are one of the main factors that make people expect women to take responsibility for family and chores at home and men to get out and work. Since ancient times, women staying at home was conventional, which caused many people to believe that women's responsibilities were to do housework and raise children. Even though the time era has changed as people's lifestyles have changed, many people cannot eliminate this old perception. In addition, the traditional mindsets pass on to the next generation due to many factors, including gender schema theory. As mentioned above, children form mental structures by getting information by gender categories, which are highly influenced by the background they have grown up in. Therefore, traditional mindsets are rigid to eliminate and cause stereotypes in people's minds.

Women have similar attitudes as men in businesses, but there is a gap in progress due to a lack of opportunities for women (Hood & Koberg, 1994). Historically, only a few women started their businesses or even participated in the public world. However, there has been a massive change in recent decades in women's participation in businesses globally (Avolio & Laura, 2017). According to The International Labour Organization, the estimated female labour force is 1.3 billion, about 40% of the total labour force of 3.3 billion (ILO, 2012). After two years, in 2014, the female participation rate was 50% (ILO, 2014). These statistical values indicate the narrower gap between men and women in workplaces.

Double Bind theory is a dilemma that comes from a conflict between two or more messages. No matter what decision the person makes, it might be wrong, leading them to suffer from mental disorders (Bateson, 2018). Many working women suffer due to this phenomenon. They must choose between work and family, and often neither decision is correct. Especially many Asian women suffer more due to implicit gender stereotypes.

Relationship Between Work-Family Conflict and Turnover Intentions

A study researched the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intention in primary and secondary school teachers. This study showed a positive relationship between turnover intention and work-family conflict. Since teachers have to play various roles between work and family, the incongruity between them negatively impacts their behaviours, leading to work-family conflict. (Obrenovic et al., 2020). The conservation of resource theory is a stress theory about the motivations that cause humans to maintain their current resources and pursue new resources. It provides people with how to understand responses to stress and suggests that stress may be caused by situations where they may be threatened or lose valuable resources. Also, it causes people to try to defend valued resources which causes humans to face stress. (Holmgreen & Tirone & Gerhart & Hobfoll, 2017) These studies show that work-family conflict causes stress, making people want to turnover.

Relationship Between Low Job Engagement and Work-Family Conflict

A study confirmed the relationship between work-family conflict and work engagement. Work engagement measures the employee's feelings about the organisation; the connection between the organisation and the employees. Highly engaged workers think positively about their workplaces, try their best to help the organisation succeed and encourage other workers. On the other hand, disengaged employees are not connected to their organisation and lack commitment and responsibilities. They do not have positive opinions about their workplaces. (Ryba, 2022).

Work-family conflict prevents individuals from concentrating and dedicating time and energy to their work, which is likely to reduce engagement in a person's work (Opie, Henn, 2012). When an employee works hard at work, he or she has to spend lots of time and energy on it. This makes it difficult for that employee to take a role as a family member, eventually causing work-family conflict. In many situations, employees have to choose between work or family. Either choice causes low job engagement or work-family conflict. Therefore, the relationship between work-family conflict and job engagement is negatively correlated.

Relationship Between Social Support and Turnover and Work Conflict

A significant relationship was found between work-family conflict and social support. The high job demands and workload pressure in workplaces cause female workers to experience a decreased level of mental well-being and even cause other health issues. This suggests that female workers who face high job demands and home responsibilities are likely to suffer from work-family conflict. Social support was found important to reduce work-family conflict since support from others affects female workers positively. (Akram & Ch, 2020).

Social support from the workplace and family may prevent negative emotions that result from workplace stress, such as work overload, which damages attitudes and behaviour in the workplace. Social exchange theory is that people make decisions by measuring the costs and rewards of their actions. (Bajaba & Azim & Uddin, 2022).

The ultimate purpose of people acting according to this theory is to maximise their reward. This theory suggests that social support in the workplace develops a strong sense of comfort and security in employees and an emotional bond with the organisation. A job demand control support model, a theory that explains how job characteristics influence employees' psychological well-being, shows that receiving social support helps boost employees' morale and cope with stress caused by their job. Also, it supports people in developing positive views towards their work. (What Is Social Exchange Theory? - Social Work Theories, 2022).

Social exchange theory and JDCA theory present the relationship between social support and employee turnover intention. People try to quit their job due to stress factors around the workplace, such as work overload or conflict between workers. According to the Conservation of resources theory mentioned in the previous paragraph, social support in both the workplace and family significantly reduces stress. Therefore, it suggests the relationship between social support, turnover intention, and work-family, where social support acts as a mediator. (Zhou & Wang & Heredero, 2017)

Hypothesis

The common assumption is that high work-family conflict will lead to low engagement in their workplaces and high turnover desire. Social support works as an additional predictor, where the existence of social support can moderate people's attitudes. It is a longstanding issue, but many believe social support can make changes.

Hypothesis 1: Work-family conflict will be negatively associated with engagement at work.

Hypothesis 2: Work-family conflict will be positively associated with turnover intention.

Hypothesis 3: Social support will moderate Hypotheses 1 and 2, such that it will buffer the associations of work-family conflict with engagement and turnover intent.

Methods

Participants

The sample included 60 women and 22 men with an average age of 44 years, a total of 82 participants. They live in Korea and have worked in their current workplaces for at least a year and up to 28 years. Almost 80% of the participants were married; the rest were divorced, widowed, or never married. Fifty-six people of the participants have children, most of them having one or two children.

Design and Procedure

All participants completed a survey about work-family conflict, engagement, turnover intention, and social support. There were four sets of scale questions with a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being strongly disagree and five strongly agree. For the background information, respondents had to answer their age, marital status, whether they have children, the number of children, and how long they have worked in their workplaces. The convenience sampling method was used to sample working people in Korea.

The scale used for work-family conflict scale was from The University of Queensland. It included questions like ‘My work prevents me from spending sufficient quality time with my family (Haslam & Filus & Morawska & Sanders & Fletcher, 2015) and ‘Working often makes me irritable or short-tempered at home.’ I used the ISA engagement scale from The London School of Economics and Political Science to measure engagement. Example questions are ‘I focus hard on my work’ and ‘I share the same work values as my colleagues.’(Soane & Truss & Alfes & Shantz & Rees & Gatenby, 2012)To measure turnover intent, I asked questions such as ‘I have active thoughts of leaving my job’ and ‘I am actively searching for another job’(Rosin & Korabik, 1995). Lastly, the social support scale was asked as an exploratory moderator and included questions such as ‘There are people around me when I am in need.’ and ‘There are people with whom I can share joys and sorrows’.

All scales with full questions can be found in Appendix A.

Results

Table 1. Correlation Matrix

		WFC	Engagement	Turnover Intent	Social Support
WFC Conflict	Pearson Correlation	1	-.062	.424**	-.116
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.583	<.001	.301
	N	82	82	82	82
Engagement	Pearson Correlation	-.062	1	-.245*	.549**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.583		.027	<.001
	N	82	82	82	82
Turnover Intent	Pearson Correlation	.424**	-.245*	1	-.162
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.027		.146
	N	82	82	82	82
Social Support	Pearson Correlation	-.116	.549**	-.162	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.301	<.001	.146	
	N	82	82	82	82

Table 1 presents the correlation between four variables, work-family conflict, work engagement, turnover intention, and social support. Work-family conflict was not correlated with engagement, $r(80) = -.062$, $p > .1$; as such, Hypothesis 1 was not supported. However, work-family conflict was positively correlated with turnover intention, $r(80) = .42$, $p < .001$, supporting Hypothesis 2. Work engagement was negatively correlated with turnover intention, $r(80) = -.25$, $p = .03$, but positively correlated with social support, $r(80) = .55$, $p < .001$. Results were robust to partial correlations, controlling for age, tenure, the number of children, and gender. Finally, regression interactions between social support and work-family conflict on either engagement or turnover intent were insignificant, with or without controls. As such, social support did not buffer the effects of work-family conflict on turnover intent, but it was again the better (only) predictor in the case of engagement. Thus Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Discussion

The present study revealed the relationship between work-family conflict, work engagement, social support, and turnover intention. Work-family conflict and turnover intention were positively correlated, meaning as work-family conflict increased, the willingness for workers to quit their jobs increased.

The control variables, age, tenure, gender, and the number of children, did not impact the results. This suggests that regardless of other factors, most workers feel the same about their work. Work-family conflict is a stress factor causing workers to feel less willing to work and struggle to balance work and family. This causes workers to feel less engaged in their work, thus triggering their desire to quit their job. However, social support can help workers cope with these factors. These results prove the hypothesis about the relationships between these four variables. However, it was interesting to see that the control variables did not affect the results.

Limitations

Samples needed to be bigger to capture negative associations between social support, work-family conflict, turnover intention, and positive associations between social support and engagement. The relationship between work-family conflict and engagement is not shown through these results. However, even though social support is not strictly moderating, it predicts engagement, while work-family conflict does not – therefore, social support is an important variable.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my advisor from Lumiere Education for the valuable insight provided to me on this topic.

References

Akram, Ch, M. A. (2020). Relationship of Work-Family Conflict with Job Demands, Social Support and Psychological Well-Being of University Female Teachers in Punjab. Retrieved December 13, 2022, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1158258.pdf>

Avolio, Laura, B. G. (2017). The progress and evolution of women's participation in production and business activities in South America. Retrieved December 13, 2022, from https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/42656/1/RVI122_Avolio.pdf

- Bajaba, S., Azim, M. T., & Uddin, M. A. (2022). Social Support and Employee Turnover Intention: The Mediating Role of Work-Family Conflict, from <https://www.scielo.br/j/rbgn/a/7gmsrYYkGpw5C4WZpxxBNSL/?format=pdf&lang=en>
- Cerrato, J., & Cifre, E. (2018). Gender Inequality in Household Chores and Work-Family Conflict. *Frontiers in Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01330>
- Chang, X., Zhou, Wang, & Heredero. (2017, June 23). How do work-family balance practices affect work-family conflict? The differential roles of work stress - *Frontiers of Business Research in China*. SpringerOpen. <https://fbr.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s11782-017-0008-4>
- Cherry, K. (2020, May 10). Gender schema theory and roles in culture. *Verywell Mind*. Retrieved November 1, 2022, from <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-gender-schema-theory-2795205>
- Duxbury, L. E., & Higgins, C. A. (1991). Gender differences in work-family conflict. *Journal of applied psychology*, 76(1), 60.
- Esson, Patrice L. (2004). *Consequences of Work-Family Conflict: Testing a New Model of Work-Related, Non-Work-Related and Stress-Related Outcomes*. Virginia Polytechnic Institute. M.S dissertation
- Gignac, Monique A.M., Kelloway, E. K., Gottlieb, B. H., (1996). The Impact of Caregiving on Employment: A Mediation Model of Work-Family Conflict. *Canadian Journal on Aging*, 15(4). 525-542.
- Gregory Bateson's double bind theory. *Exploring your mind*. (2018, August 16). Retrieved November 22, 2022, from <https://exploringyourmind.com/gregory-batesons-double-bind-theory/>
- Holmgren, Tirone, Gerhart, Hobfoll, L. V. J. S. (2017). Conservation of Resources Theory - *Wiley Online Library*. Conservation of Resources Theory. Retrieved December 13, 2022, from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781118993811.ch27>
- Kelloway, E. K., Gottlieb, B. H., & Barham, L. (1999). The source, nature, and direction of work and family conflict: A longitudinal investigation. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 4(4), 337-346.
- Loo, R., & Thorpe, K. (2005). Relationships between critical thinking and attitudes toward women's roles in society. *The Journal of Psychology*, 139(1), 47-55.
- Obrenovic, B., Jianguo, D., Khudaykulov, A., & Khan, M. A. S. (2020, February 28). Work-family conflict impact on psychological safety and psychological well-being: A job performance model. *Frontiers*. Retrieved December 6, 2022, from <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00475/full>
- Opie, T. J., & Henn, C. (1970, January 1). Work-family conflict and work engagement among mothers : Conscientiousness and neuroticism as moderators : Original research: *Semantic scholar*. undefined. Retrieved December 9, 2022, from <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Work-family-conflict-and-work-engagement-among-%3A-as-Opie-Henn/fe1f73f187647ecd6d565790c8d9be8125fe22ad>
- Rowe, R., & Snizek, W. E. (1995). Gender differences in work values: Perpetuating the myth. *Work and Occupations*, 22(2), 215-229.

Ryba, K. (2022, July 5). What is employee engagement? what, why, and how to improve it. Employee Success Software. Retrieved December 9, 2022, from <https://www.quantumworkplace.com/future-of-work/what-is-employee-engagement-definition>

What is Social Exchange Theory? - Social Work Theories. (2022, April 21). CORP-MSW1 (OMSWP), from <https://www.onlinemswprograms.com/social-work/theories/social-exchange-theory/>

Zosuls, K. M. Z. & Ruble, D.N. (2008). Gender schema theory. Gender Schema Theory - an overview | ScienceDirect Topics. Retrieved November 1, 2022, from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/gender-schema-theory>