

The interactive effects of leader–member exchange, gender and spouse’s gender role orientation on work interference with family conflict

Pavithra Kailasapathy^{a*}, Maria L. Kraimer^b and Isabel Metz^c

^a*Department of Human Resources Management, Faculty of Management & Finance, University of Colombo, Colombo, Sri Lanka;* ^b*Department of Management & Organizations, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA, USA;* ^c*Melbourne Business School, University of Melbourne, Carlton, VIC, Australia*

Based on social support and gender role theories, we examined the direct and interactive effects of leader–member exchange, gender and spouse’s gender role orientation on work–family conflict. Survey data were collected from matched dyads from 185 dual-earner couples in Sri Lanka. The results show that leader–member exchange is negatively related to work interference with family. There is also support for crossover effects among couples such that individuals with spouses who have a traditional gender role orientation experience greater work interference with family conflict. Finally, there is a three-way interaction such that a spouse’s gender role orientation moderates the relationship between leader–member exchange and work interference with family conflict differently for men and women.

Keywords: gender role orientation; leader–member exchange; social support theory; work–family conflict

Introduction

In the last several decades, work–family conflict (WFC) emerged as an issue for families as more women entered the workforce, resulting in more dual-earner and single, working-parent families (Aryee, Srinivas and Tan 2005). WFC occurs when the time demands, strain and behaviour of one domain (e.g. work) are incompatible with the time demands, strain and behaviour in the other domain (e.g. family) (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). Examples are a meeting at work that prevents an individual from picking up her/his child from school, or a child’s sickness that prevents an individual from attending work. WFC has been shown to have negative effects on individuals (e.g. life dissatisfaction, depression, substance abuse, guilt), families (e.g. marital dissatisfaction, crossover stress) and organisations (e.g. absenteeism, turnover, burnout, job dissatisfaction) (Carlson, Kacmar and Williams 2000; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux and Brinley 2005). Consequently, a better understanding of how to reduce WFC has become an important issue for individuals, families and organisations.

To that end, a number of studies have been conducted to identify antecedents of WFC. These antecedents can be categorised into family characteristics (e.g. marital status and number of children), background characteristics (e.g. demographics such as sex and age), work attitudes and job attributes (e.g. hours, characteristics of the job) (for reviews, see Carlson et al. 2000; Eby et al. 2005; Shaffer, Joplin and Hsu 2011). These studies have provided important insights to better understand drivers of WFC, yet relatively little research has examined the simultaneous effects of supervisor and spousal factors on WFC.

*Corresponding author. Email: pavithra@fmf.cmb.ac.lk