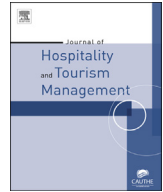




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# The work-family conflict of university foodservice managers: An exploratory study of its antecedents and consequences



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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the issue of work-family conflict (WFC) among university foodservice managers. Multiple regression results showed that Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity were two significant antecedents of WFC. In addition, working on weekends also led to increased levels of WFC. The main finding of the study is that WFC is a significant antecedent of university foodservice managers' intention to leave, indicating that WFC is an important factor that explains the high turnover rate of hospitality employees.

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## 1. Introduction

There are currently over 4700 colleges and universities in the U.S. (Collegestats.org, 2014) and university food service managers and employees undertake important jobs in preparing and serving quality food and drinks for over 2.1 million college students on a daily basis. Their jobs are crucial, yet also challenging and the U.S. college food service sector is facing high employee turnover and labour shortages (Choi & Sneed, 2006). In particular, the average annual turnover rate for foodservice management has been found to be approximately 67% (Ghiselli, Lopa, & Bai, 2001). As an industry that is characterized by low pay and long working hours, managers often exhibit a wide range of physiological symptoms of burnout (Krone, Tabacchi, & Farber, 1989; Niu, 2010) and psychological distress (Rantanen, Pulkkinen, & Kinnunen, 2005). The excessive working hours of the food service industry has also been found to be significantly associated with managers' intention to leave (Berta, 2006; Crandall, Emenheiser, & Jones, 1995). In addition, a great majority of foodservice managers are required to take on more job responsibilities, including on weekends, resulting in higher work interference with personal lives than managers in office settings

(Chikwe, 2009), and in turn, creating conflicts between work and life.

Work-family conflict (WFC) occurs when some work and family responsibilities are not compatible or interfere with each other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Mathieu & Mathieu, 2011). This kind of conflict may have a negative influence on an employee's work situation by creating lower overall job satisfaction (Boles & Babin, 1996), and increasing the possibility of leaving a position (Andres, Moelker, & Soeters, 2012; Good, Sisler, & Gentry, 1988). Traditionally, job dissatisfaction has been regarded as a major cause for voluntary employee turnover. However, several reports have revealed that restaurant managers did not quit their jobs because they were dissatisfied, but because the amount of work time required for their jobs prevented them from being with their families and friends (Parsa, Self, Njite, & King, 2005).

WFC has been suggested as an important factor in predicting employee turnover intention in various contexts, such as health care (Mathieu & Mathieu, 2011), expatriate assignments (e.g. Andres et al., 2012), the sports industry and non-managerial positions in the food industry (e.g. Ryan, Ghazali, & Mohsin, 2011). Within the college and university foodservice literature, an enormous number of empirical studies have explicitly explored the turnover intention of employees (e.g. Dougherty, Bluedorn, & Keon, 1985; Hackes & Hamouz, 1995) and employee job satisfaction (e.g. Duke & Sneed, 1989; Jafté, Almanza, & Chen, 1995; Vyskocil-Czajkowski & Gilmore, 1992). However, to date, there appear to

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be no studies investigating the conceptual antecedents and consequences of WFC among university foodservice managers. A closer examination of the relationships among WFC and its antecedents and consequences is important because university food service is not only an important food service sector it also influences the lives of college and universities students on a daily basis. Therefore, this study aims to explore the issue of WFC for university food service managers, with the following three objectives: 1. Explore the underlying dimensions of WFC in the context of university foodservice; 2. Explore the antecedents of WFC; 3. Explore to what extent WFC determines the turnover intention of university food service managers.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. The concept of work-family conflict (WFC)

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined WFC as “a form of inter-Role Conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (p. 77). This general consensus was espoused from the pioneering work of Pleck (1985). However, Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrin (1996) pointed out that WFC was different from Family-work Conflict (FWC). The authors define WFC as a type of inter-Role Conflict, wherein some responsibilities from the work area are not compatible and negatively influence the employee's family responsibilities. Conversely, they define FWC as being vice versa. However, the former has been dominantly studied by most researchers investigating the work-family interface because of the common premise that individuals are more likely to experience WFC than FWC (Mullen, Kelley, & Kelloway, 2008). In this paper, the term WFC is used to represent the inclusive concept that work and family influence each other.

In addition to the bi-directional nature of WFC, researchers have also begun to consider the different forms of WFC (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Netemeyer et al., 1996). Three different forms of WFC have been identified and defined as time-based conflict, strain-based conflict, and behaviour-based conflict. According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), time-based conflict occurs when time contributed to one role inhibits participation in another role; strained-based conflict states that a strained experience in one role intrudes into and intervenes with participation in another role; and behaviour-based conflict happens when certain behaviours required in one role are incompatible with behavioural expectations in another role. Each of the three conflicts are bi-directional (Guttek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991), resulting in 6 dimensions of WFC and FWC. To date, these forms of conflict have been prevalently employed as the theoretical framework in the majority of work-family research.

### 2.2. Consequences of work-family conflict

Previous studies have indicated that WFC can lead to a number of consequences, including physical and psychological distress, job dissatisfaction, loss of organizational commitment, and turnover intention (e.g. Adams, King, & King, 1996; Aryee, Luk, & Stone, 1998; Boles, Howard, & Donofrio, 2001; Karatepe & Baddar, 2006; Kinnunen, Geurts, & Mauno, 2004; Zhang, Griffeth, & Fried, 2012). Furthermore, WFCs significantly alter perceptions of employees regarding the quality of their work life and the quality of their family life, which can lead to lack of satisfaction with their present life (Md-Sidin, Sambasivan, & Ismail, 2010). Based on a meta-analytic review of work-family literature, Specifically in the hospitality industry, WFC has been found to be one of the major causes of turnover at the management level (Blomme, Van Rheede,

& Tromp, 2010; Magnini, 2009; Stalcup & Pearson, 2001). High employee turnover implies a high cost to companies because it can seriously hinder efficient, effective customer service, and undermine competitiveness, which means that employee retention is as important to business success as customer retention (Baldrige National Quality Program, 2005; Frank, Finnegan, & Taylor, 2004).

Ahmad, Fakhr, Ali Shan, and Zaman (2010) reviewed various research studies and summarized that the reasons for employee turnover can be classified into the following:

- Demographic factors: Various studies have investigated turnover across age, marital status, gender, number of children, education, work experience and employment tenure.
- Personal factors: Health problems, family related issues, children's education and social status contribute to turnover intentions however, very little empirical research work is available on personal factors.
- Push factors: These include organisational factors and attitude factors. Organisational factors consist of salary, benefits and facilities, size of the organisation, location of the organisation, nature and type of organisation, stability of the organisation, communication systems, management practice and policies and level of employee empowerment.
- Attitudinal factors consist of job satisfaction which include extrinsic variables such as job security, physical conditions/working environment, fringe benefits, and pay and intrinsic variables such as recognition, freedom, position advancement, learning opportunities, nature, and kind of job, job stress, ambiguity, Role Conflict, work-overload and work-family conflicts.
- Pull factors: The reasons that attract employees to a new place of work. In some research papers pull factors are named as uncontrolled factors because they are out of the control of organisations. Various pull factors derived from the literature are high salary, career advancement, new challenges and interesting work, job security, good location of the company, better culture, improved life-work balance, more freedom/autonomy, high reputation of the organisation, values, more benefits, a supportive boss.

It is clear that employee turnover can be caused by many reasons. Interestingly, Good, Page and Young (1996) underscored that due to long hours and low pay, WFC has a direct effect on entry-level managers' intent to leave, regardless of job satisfaction or commitment levels. Therefore, this study will investigate the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis One: *Work-family conflicts significantly impact on university foodservice managers' turnover intentions;*

### 2.3. Antecedents of work-family conflict

According to a meta-analytic review of WFC studies, Michel, Kotrba, Mitchelson, Clark, and Baltes (2011) indicated that work role stressors, work role involvement, work social support, work characteristics and employee personality were the antecedents of WFC. In particular, Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity were the two major components of job-related stress (Fisher & Gitelson, 1983; Harris, Artis, Walters, & Licata, 2006; Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). In order to understand the relationship between work stresses and WFC, it is necessary to consider both Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity in the unity of the work-family domain (Greenhaus, Bedeian, & Mossholder, 1987; Williams & Alliger, 1994). It has been well established in the literature that Role Conflict, Role Ambiguity, and time demands are

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