



## Examining the relationship of work–family conflict to job and life satisfaction: A case of hotel sales managers

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### ABSTRACT

The study was designed to clarify the ambivalent relationships between work–family conflict (WFC) and measures of satisfaction. Both the direct and indirect effects of WFC on job and life satisfaction were investigated. Job satisfaction was also separated into two components: affective reaction and cognitive appraisal. Data were collected by a field survey of 121 sales managers from 26 hotels in China. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) indicated a critical role of one's affective reaction to his/her job in the relationship between WFC and life satisfaction. Specifically, the present study found that both work interfering with family (WIF) and family interfering with work (FIW) have significant negative association with an individual's affective reaction to his/her job, while only FIW reduced the cognitive appraisal of a job. Further, affective reaction, rather than cognitive appraisal, had a significant positive correlation with life satisfaction. Finally, FIW was negatively associated with life satisfaction. The results suggest the strategic role of family friendly human resource policies in hotels.

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### 1. Introduction

The hospitality industry has been recognized as one where managers sometimes have to sacrifice their family responsibilities and personal lives for ensuring performance and service quality (Cleveland et al., 2007; Karatepe and Uludag, 2008; Mulvaney et al., 2006). Moreover, hospitality managers experience emotional dissonance and exhaustion when confronted with long work hours, irregular and inflexible work schedules, heavy workloads, low wages, and demanding and difficult customers (Karatepe and Aleshinloye, 2009; Karatepe and Olugbade, 2009; Karatepe and Uludag, 2008; Wong and Ko, 2009). They work hard and perform well when their work–family situation includes spare time with family, organizational support for work–family balance, and working schedule flexibility to deal with affairs in various life domains (Karatepe and Bektashi, 2008; Wong and Ko, 2009). Quality of work–life is then a critical concern for hospitality organizations when they try to attract and retain talented managers who anticipate compatible or balanced work and family responsibilities and tasks (Kandasamy and Ancheri, 2009). Hence, researchers and practitioners are increasingly interested in understanding how hospitality managers and their employees' work–family conflict

(WFC) will influence their subjective well-being. However, previous research has found mixed results in the direction, linkages and magnitude of the relationships among WFC, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction.

In this study, Chinese hotel sales managers were sampled to investigate the associations among work–family conflict, job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Specifically, the current study first examines how WFC relates to employees' job satisfaction (i.e., affective reaction and cognitive appraisal). The study also examines the relationship between life satisfaction and job satisfaction, and the connection between WFC and life satisfaction.

The brisk development of the Chinese hotel industry provides a meaningful context for WFC research. Starting with the open-door policy in 1978, hospitality-related industries have developed rapidly in China. For example, the total number of hotels has increased more than one hundred times: in 1978 there were 137, and in 2008, 14,099 (Li et al., 2007; CNTA, 2009). During that time, the hospitality industry in China has encountered several challenges in managing human resources (Kong and Baum, 2006); one of these is WFC, even more so since dual-earner families have become the “typical” family type in China (Ling and Powell, 2001). Moreover, WFC is a concern in hotels internationally (e.g., Albania, Hong Kong, Nigeria, Turkey, and U.S.A.), and often-times a cause of high labor turnover, poor morale, and ultimately low performance and commitment (Karatepe and Aleshinloye, 2009; Karatepe and Bektashi, 2008; Karatepe and Olugbade, 2009;

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Karatepe and Uludag, 2008; Perrewe et al., 1999; Wong and Ko, 2009; Yavas et al., 2008).

Hotel sales managers may have greater WFC concerns than other positions because the job often depends on business activities outside their control. Also, balancing the demands of work and family is critical for a hotel sales managers' career because in China sales management may be the most important qualification in order to become a successful general manager (e.g., over 26.5% GMs have sales experience; see Li et al., 2007). As previous research suggests, WFC is an influential predictor of a sales manager's job and life satisfaction (e.g., Bhuian et al., 2005). Sales managers with excessive job demands, high work–family conflict and low job control usually have higher levels of stress with low satisfaction in job and life (Chiang et al., 2010). This study extends the work done previously on the attitudinal consequences of work–family conflict.

## 2. Theoretical framework

The theory of separate spheres (Kanter, 1977) has been replaced with the belief that work responsibilities influence family life, and family matters affect performance at work (Huang et al., 2004). Work–family conflict (WFC) refers to “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985, p. 77). WFC consists of two dimensions (Frone et al., 1992a, 1997): work interfering with family (WIF), and family interfering with work (FIW). WIF and FIW were traditionally modeled with distinct antecedents and outcomes: WIF represented the impacts of the work domain on the family; while FIW reflected the effects of the family domain on work outcomes (e.g., Boyar et al., 2003; Frone et al., 1992a; Netemeyer et al., 1996). Job and life satisfaction were treated as two attitudinal consequences in previous WFC studies (Kossek and Ozeki, 1998), and studies examining the effects of WFC on job and life satisfaction found mixed results.

### 2.1. WFC and job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is “an internal state that is expressed by affectively and/or cognitively evaluating an experienced job with some degree of favor or disfavor” (Brief, 1998, p. 86); it is one of the most frequently examined consequences of WFC (Grandey et al., 2005). However, the relationship between WFC and job satisfaction is not always clear. For example, Ghiselli et al. (2001) found that there was a negative relationship between job satisfaction and inter-role conflict. Also, in Allen et al.'s (2000) study, the mean sample weighted correlation coefficient between WFC and job satisfaction was significantly negative ( $r = -.24$ ). However, Bedeian et al. (1988) showed that WIF is positively associated with job satisfaction ( $r = .27$  for married female accountants, and  $r = .29$  for married male accountants), while O'Driscoll et al. (1992) found a slightly weak but positive correlation between FIW and job satisfaction. WFC was also found to have no significant correlation with job satisfaction in several studies (e.g., Aryee et al., 1999; Thompson and Blau, 1993; Wiley, 1987).

Buffardi and Erdwins (1997) demonstrated that one type of inter-role conflict (professional vs. self) among 514 women was significantly associated with global job satisfaction ( $r = -.28$ ), but not with intrinsic ( $r = -.23$ ) and extrinsic job satisfaction ( $r = -.24$ ). They also found that two other types of inter-role conflict (professional vs. parent; spouse vs. parent) were not associated with job satisfaction. One possible reason that the results are not consistent may be that previous WFC research usually examined global job satisfaction but not its components: affective reaction and cognitive appraisal. Overall job satisfaction is the extent to which expectations for a job correspond to what one actually receives from the

job (Bruck et al., 2002; Locke, 1969); the construct is attitudinal in nature (Ilies et al., 2009). However, job satisfaction is composed of an affective reaction component (i.e., like or dislike of a job), and a cognitive appraisal component (i.e., job is valuable or not to them) (Locke, 1976). Most WFC research focuses at the global satisfaction level; very few studies (e.g., Buffardi and Erdwins, 1997; Howard et al., 2004) have examined the association between WFC and these two components of job satisfaction (Ford et al., 2007). Howard et al. (2004) investigated the impact of WFC on job satisfaction by focusing on job satisfaction facets such as job in general, pay, co-workers, the work, supervision, and promotion among 160 police officers. They found that WIF was negatively related to these “facets”, while the relationship with FIW was not consistent. Bruck et al. (2002) also found that for 160 hospital employees, summed-facet job satisfaction measures correlated more strongly with WFC than global job satisfaction inventories; this suggests that follow-up efforts to differentiate affective and cognitive components of job satisfaction may be appropriate.

Another complication is the number of methods used to measure job satisfaction including Brayfield–Rothe Index (e.g., Ilies et al., 2009), the Job Diagnostic Survey (e.g., Kopelman et al., 1983), the Job Opinion Questionnaire (e.g., Grandey et al., 2005), the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (e.g., Perrewe et al., 1999), the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (e.g., George and Jones, 1996; Ghiselli et al., 2001), the Job Satisfaction Survey (e.g., Bruck et al., 2002; Kim et al., 2009), and Lucas et al.'s (1990) scale (e.g., Nadiri and Tanova, 2010), etc. Hence, differentiating affective reaction and cognitive appraisal from global job satisfaction and examining WFC's various associations with them would seem to be an important application in WFC research.

Finally, one plausible explanation for the inconsistent relationship between WFC and job satisfaction is researcher perspective. Some scholars have indicated that WIF and FIW have unique antecedents and outcomes (e.g., Frone et al., 1992a), while others have found WIF and FIW predictors and outcomes are not distinct (e.g., Byron, 2005). Moreover, a few researchers have suggested that the relationship between WIF and job satisfaction is stronger than that between FIW and job satisfaction (e.g., Grandey et al., 2005). Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran's (2005) meta-analysis across 25 independent samples (total  $N = 9079$ ) found that FIW explained more variance (63%) of job satisfaction than WIF (46%). Actually, the spillover theory of WFC suggests that individuals tend to generate similarities between work and family domains (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000), and both WIF and FIW could influence job satisfaction. According to exchange theory (Homans, 1961) and attribution theory, individuals tend to give back commensurately what they have received (or fail to have received) from organizations in the relationship (Siegel et al., 2005). When perceiving strong WIF or FIW, employees are more apt to attribute any negative impacts to management's inability or disinterest in alleviating the impacts of work and family interfaces (Siegel et al., 2005).

Overall, we propose that both WIF and FIW have a negative impact on the two dimensions of job satisfaction: affective reaction and cognitive appraisal. Affective reaction is an employee's feelings about his/her job (e.g., like or dislike), while cognitive appraisal represents the value or utility of the job for an individual. Therefore, affective reaction and cognitive appraisal specifically reflect two aspects of work–family conflict on job satisfaction. When heavy work requirements prevent an employee from fulfilling family responsibilities or excessive family burdens reduce the ability to concentrate on work tasks, an individual may have negative feelings about work (i.e., negative affective reaction) and also believe the current job is less valuable (i.e., low cognitive appraisal). Therefore, the negative impacts of work–family conflict on job satisfaction have been separated into affective and cognitive aspects hypothesized as below.

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