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Monograph

Work and family research in IO/OB: Content analysis and review of the literature (1980–2002)[☆]

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Abstract

This monograph reviews 190 work–family studies published in IO/OB journals from 1980 to 2002. The results of a content analysis are presented which catalog these articles with respect to the study focus, nature and direction of the proposed effects, and predictor, criterion, and mediator variables examined. Then a narrative review of the articles is presented, organized in terms of the following topical areas: (1) work–family conflict, (2) work role stress, (3) work–family assistance, (4) work schedules, (5) job-related relocation, (6) career and job-related outcomes, (7) gender and the relationship between work and family domains, (8) dual-earner couples, and (9) relationships among life domains. The review concludes with a discussion of recurring themes in the literature and the identification of blind spots in the IO/OB perspective on work and family. Specific suggestions for future research are also provided.

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Keywords: Literature review; Work–family; Work and family; Work and nonwork; Gender

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1. Introduction

The composition of the workforce has changed dramatically in recent decades. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the number of women in the workforce will continue to rise and that by the year 2008, women will constitute 48% of the labor force, as compared to 46% in 1998 (Jalilvand, 2000). In the year 2000, 61% of all married women over age 16 were in the workforce, compared to just 41% in 1970 (US Census Bureau, 2001). Given this trend more employees are engaged in a dual-earner lifestyle where both partners work and share responsibility for family care-giving (Greenhaus et al., 2000). In fact, recent research indicates that 85% of employees report having some day-to-day family responsibility (Bond et al., 1998). These changing demographic trends, coupled with greater family involvement by men (Pleck, 1985) and heightened interest of employers in employees' quality of life (Zedeck & Mosier, 1990) prompted a proliferation of research on the relationship between work and family roles.

Despite increasing numbers of studies examining work and family issues no attempt has been made to content analyze the existing literature and no comprehensive review of the literature exists. Extant reviews focus either on specific relationships between a limited number of work and family variables (e.g., Allen et al., 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998, 1999) or present selective summaries of work–family (WF) research (e.g., Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Rothausen, 1999). While these are useful in highlighting what we know about particular relationships between work and family variables, they do not provide a comprehensive overview of the WF literature published in scholarly industrial organizational and organizational behavior (IO/OB) journals.

This monograph seeks to fill this void by reviewing twenty years of IO/OB research on work and family, from 1980 to 2002. As Brown (1969) noted, it is important for the field to periodically “take a look at itself—where it has been, where it is now, and where it is going” (p. 263). Our goal is to provide such self-reflection for WF research in the IO/OB field. In so doing, a broad net was cast to identify all articles in the IO/OB literature that have examined work domain and family domain variables. First, we content analyze published research in terms of several characteristics including: (1) study focus; for example, whether the study involved hypothesis testing, developed and tested a model, posed exploratory research questions, etc., (2) the nature (i.e., expectation of a favorable, unfavorable, or no relationship between work and family variables) and direction [family-to-work, work-to-family, or bi-directional effects (i.e., work influencing family and vice versa)] of the relationship between work and family variables, and (3) the broad categories of predictors, criteria, and mediators studied. Content analysis is valuable for categorizing the substantive focus of published research and providing a parsimonious perspective on a topic and insight into what is viewed as important to the field.

Following the content analysis we provide a narrative review of the literature focusing on the following topics: (1) work–family conflict, (2) work role stress, (3) work–family assistance, (4) work schedules, (5) job-related relocation, (6) career and job-related outcomes, (7) gender and the relationship between work and family domains, (8) dual-earner couples, and (9) relationships among life domains.

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