



Work–family conflict and enrichment from the perspective of psychosocial resources: Comparing Finnish healthcare workers by working schedules



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 19 June 2014

Accepted 17 November 2014

Available online 12 December 2014

Keywords:

Work–family conflict

Work–family enrichment

Shiftwork

ABSTRACT

We examined work–family conflict (WFC) and work–family enrichment (WFE) by comparing Finnish nurses, working dayshifts (non-shiftworkers, $n = 874$) and non-dayshifts. The non-dayshift employees worked either two different dayshifts (2-shiftworkers, $n = 490$) or three different shifts including nightshifts (3-shiftworkers, $n = 270$). Specifically, we investigated whether different resources, i.e. job control, managers' work–family support, co-workers' work–family support, control at home, personal coping strategies, and schedule satisfaction, predicted differently WFC and WFE in these three groups. Results showed that lower managers' work–family support predicted higher WFC only among 3-shiftworkers, whereas lower co-workers' support associated with increased WFC only in non-shiftworkers. In addition, shiftworkers reported higher WFC than non-shiftworkers. However, the level of WFE did not vary by schedule types. Moreover, the predictors of WFE varied only very little across schedule types. Shiftwork organizations should pay more attention to family–friendly management in order to reduce WFC among shiftworkers.

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1. Introduction

There is already evidence that shiftwork/nonstandard working hours, referring to working outside normal 'office' daytime hours 8.5, is associated with challenges in work–family interface. One much used indicator of work–family interface is work–family conflict, which has so far received some attention in shiftwork research (Davis et al., 2008; Haines et al., 2008; Pisarski et al., 2008; Staines and Pleck, 1984). However, even less is known about what resources help shiftworkers in work–family interface, for instance, to reduce their work–family conflict. Our study focuses on this question by approaching work–family interface via work–family conflict and enrichment.

Work–family conflict (WFC) refers to a form of inter-role conflict in which role pressures from work and family are incompatible in some respect (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985), whereas *work–family*

enrichment (WFE) describes positive work–family interface by referring to the extent to which the quality of one's work (family) role enhances the quality of one's family (work) roles (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). Both WFC and WFE are bidirectional experiences (from work to family and family to work) but here we concentrate on the work-to-family direction because schedule arrangements very likely affect more the experiences aroused at work (see Michel et al., 2011, for a meta-analysis). Earlier studies on the effects of shiftwork on work–family interface have focused on negative phenomena, e.g. WFC, marital dissatisfaction, and positive experiences have been neglected. However, there is some evidence that the effects of shiftwork are not totally negative for employees (Merkus et al., 2012; Saksvik et al., 2011) or for their families (Mauno et al., 2014). Consequently, it is crucial also to investigate positive experiences as outcomes. WFE is one important indicator of life quality and role engagement (Kinnunen et al., 2014; McNall et al., 2010) and the phenomenon also deserves attention in shiftwork research.

Here we examine WFC and WFE by comparing Finnish nurses ($N = 1634$), working both dayshifts ($n = 874$, non-shiftworkers) and non-dayshifts. The non-dayshift workers/shiftworkers worked either two different dayshifts ($n = 490$, 2-shiftworkers) or three

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different shifts including nightshifts ($n = 270$, 3-shiftworkers). First, we compare whether WFC and WFE vary in these three groups. Second, we investigate whether different psychosocial (i.e. job control, managers' support, co-workers' support, control at home, personal coping strategies) resources are connected differently to WFC and WFE in these three groups. One additional resource factor we examine is *schedule satisfaction*. Specifically, we investigate whether these resources are equally beneficial in different schedules by comparing their relative contribution to WFC and WFE. We propose that employees with different work schedules may benefit differently from these resources in work–family interface. If so, this needs consideration in work design and interventions, particularly in organizations with variable working hours.

1.1. Shiftwork as an antecedent of WFC and WFE

The effects of shiftwork on work–family interface began to attract the attention of work–family interface scholars in the 1980s. A pioneer study by [Staines and Pleck \(1984\)](#) demonstrated that shiftwork (working weekends or variable days) was related to high WFC. Much later, [Davis et al. \(2008\)](#) showed that nightshift predicted higher levels of WFC. However, their study showed no association between working weekends, without nightshifts, and WFC or other negative family-related consequences. [Barnett et al. \(2008\)](#) published a study on working couples where the wife worked either dayshifts or evening shifts. They found that the wife's evening shift predicted her own elevated WFC, but not her husband's WFC. [Haines et al. \(2008\)](#) published a study on the effects of various shift types on WFC and depression, and found that shift schedules were related to high WFC, which, in turn, was linked to elevated depression. [Pisarski et al. \(2008\)](#) also indicated that WFC mediated the effects between poor organizational resources (support, control, team climate) and poor psychological well-being and physical symptoms in shiftworkers.

Overall, these findings suggest that shiftwork predicts high WFC. Unfortunately, we found no studies on the effects of shiftwork on WFE or related constructs, e.g. work–family facilitation. However, shiftwork presumably relates to low WFE because it is a proxy concept for WFC but describes positive work–family interface instead of negative. Accordingly, our first hypothesis proposes:

H1. Shiftworkers report more WFC and less WFE than do non-shiftworkers.

1.2. Contextual resources at work and home as antecedents of WFC and WFE

Research indicates that different contextual resources predict low WFC and high WFE ([Byron, 2005](#); [Kinnunen et al., 2014](#); [Kossek et al., 2011](#); [Michel et al., 2011](#)). These contextual resources have most typically referred to various forms of *support* (emotional or instrumental) and *control* (sometimes called autonomy or flexibility) received either at work or home ([Mauno and Rantanen, 2013](#); [Peeters et al., 2009](#); [Pisarski et al., 2008](#)), which we also focused on. Support and control have generally been found to be crucial for successful work–family interface ([Byron, 2005](#); [Kinnunen et al., 2014](#); [Kossek et al., 2011](#); [Michel et al., 2011](#)) also among nurses ([Mauno and Rantanen, 2013](#); [Peeters et al., 2009](#); [Pisarski et al., 2008](#)), which is the target group in this study. Specifically, contextual resources can be expected to be most effective predictors for experiences arising in the same context. Thus, work-related resources (e.g. managers' support) should show the most robust association with conflict and enrichment in the work-to-family direction. Similarly, family-related resources, e.g. spousal

support or control at home, most likely affect conflict and enrichment in the family-to-work direction. However, occasionally cross-domain effects have also been observed, for example, spousal support has predicted low work-to-family conflict ([Michel et al., 2011](#)). Consequently, we also examine whether home-related resources, here control at home, are associated with WFC and WFE in the work-to-family direction (a cross-domain effect).

Overall, numerous studies have confirmed that emotional support, especially that received from managers/supervisors ([Lapierre and Allen, 2006](#); [Mauno and Rantanen, 2013](#); [Pisarski et al., 2008](#); [Thomas and Ganster, 1995](#)) but also from co-workers/teams ([Mauno and Rantanen, 2013](#); [Pisarski et al., 2008](#)) and job control ([Byron, 2005](#); [Mauno and Rantanen, 2013](#); [Mauno et al., 2006](#)) are associated with low WFC but also with high WFE ([Mauno and Rantanen, 2013](#); [Voydanoff, 2004](#)), particularly in the work-to-family direction. Indeed, support and control are crucial resources in well-established job stress models (e.g. Demand–Control–Support model; [Karasek and Theorell, 1990](#)), and therefore also important in our study. On the other hand, control at home is also a valuable additional resource for work–family interface ([Mauno and Rantanen, 2013](#); [Peeters et al., 2009](#)), and is therefore included in our study.

Even though these resources have gained some attention in shiftwork research ([Pisarski et al., 2008](#); [Pisarski and Barbour, 2014](#)) earlier studies have not compared whether different forms of support and control are equally beneficial in different schedule arrangements in predicting WFC and WFE. We propose that support and control are even more important when schedule arrangements become more challenging, as in shiftwork. In other words shiftworkers may benefit more from these resources than do non-shiftworkers. Organizing one's family/private life can be more demanding in shiftwork arrangements, implying greater needs for coping resources ([Davis et al., 2008](#); [Mauno et al., 2014](#); [Staines and Pleck, 1984](#); [Winwood et al., 2006](#)). Consequently, our second hypothesis proposes:

H2a. The relationship between low levels of managers' and co-workers' support, job control and control at home and high WFC is stronger among shiftworkers than among non-shiftworkers, i.e. lacking support and control is more detrimental to shiftworkers' WFC.

H2b. The relationship between high levels of managers' and co-workers' support, job control and control at home and high WFE is stronger among shiftworkers than among non-shiftworkers, i.e. support and control are more beneficial for shiftworkers' WFE.

1.3. Personal coping strategies as antecedents of WFC and WFE

Studies on work–family interface have recently paid attention to *personal coping strategies* as potential resources that might help an employee to reconcile work and family ([Andreassi, 2011](#); [Lapierre and Allen, 2006](#); [Rantanen et al., 2011](#); [Rotondo et al., 2003](#)). A major distinction between personal coping strategies and contextual resources presented earlier (control, support) is that in the former case an employee him/herself is an active agent applying coping strategies, whereas contextual resources (support, control) are more inherently available at work or home. Research on coping has moved from exploring general coping strategies, e.g. problem-focused or avoidant coping ([Andreassi, 2011](#); [Lapierre and Allen, 2006](#); [Rantanen et al., 2011](#); [Rotondo et al., 2003](#)), towards more detailed coping strategies, specifically encompassing an employee's cognitive and behavioral coping efforts applied when work and family demands need to be combined ([Mauno et al., 2012](#); [Neal and Hammer, 2007](#); [Somech and Drach-Zahavy, 2007, 2012](#)).

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