

Family-supportive organization perceptions, multiple dimensions of work–family conflict, and employee satisfaction: A test of model across five samples[☆]

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Abstract

Using samples of managers drawn from five Western countries, we tested a theoretical model linking employees' perceptions of their work environment's family-supportiveness to six different dimensions of work–family conflict (WFC), and to their job satisfaction, family satisfaction, and life satisfaction. Our results are consistent with a causal process whereby employees working in an environment viewed as more family-supportive experience lower levels of WFC. Reduced WFC then translates into greater job and family satisfaction, followed by greater overall life satisfaction. These findings were generalizable across the five samples.

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1. Introduction

Work–family conflict (WFC) is recognized as a major issue affecting both individual employees and their employers. Preliminary research shows that the more employees perceive their work environment as

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family-supportive, the less they experience WFC (Allen, 2001). Moreover, there are theoretical and empirical reasons to expect that by reducing WFC, a family-supportive work environment would enhance employees' satisfaction with their job, family, and life in general. In addition, despite the impressive body of research that has been devoted to WFC, there have been few studies that have assessed WFC as a multidimensional construct, other than those that distinguish between directions of conflict, namely work interference with family (WIF) versus family interference with work (FIW). Based primarily on Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) seminal theoretical work, Carlson, Kacmar, and Williams (2000) developed a six-dimensional measure of WFC designed to capture three forms of WFC (time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based) in each direction (WIF and FIW). Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, and Brinley (2005) noted that more research on this multidimensional conceptualization of WFC would be valuable in providing a finer-grained understanding of this phenomenon.

In the present study we investigated relationships between family-supportive organization perceptions (FSOP, i.e., the extent employees view their work environment as being family-supportive), the six WFC dimensions, and satisfaction with the job, family, and life. Fig. 1 provides a graphic depiction of our proposed theoretical model integrating the relationships among these variables. To increase the model's generalizability, we collected data from samples of managers in five countries, and conducted tests of invariance for both the measurement model and the theoretical structural model.

1.1. Family-supportive work environments

There has been a growing recognition by scholars that making family-friendly benefits (e.g., flextime, part-time work, onsite daycare) available to employees or providing them with family-supportive supervision is insufficient to significantly reduce their WFC (Allen, 2001; Friedman, 1990; Friedman & Galinsky, 1992; Perlow, 1995; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). What is needed, according to these authors, is a family-supportive organizational culture or work environment—one that openly acknowledges employees' family and personal situations by promoting flexibility, tolerance, and support for family needs and obligations. The guiding philosophy in organizations offering such a work environment is that success is not contingent upon employees making work their top priority in life. Thus, in such environments, physical presence at work ("face time") and long hours spent at work would not be relied upon as the sole indicators of employees' organizational commitment and value to the firm (Friedman & Galinsky, 1992; Perlow, 1995). This philosophy would

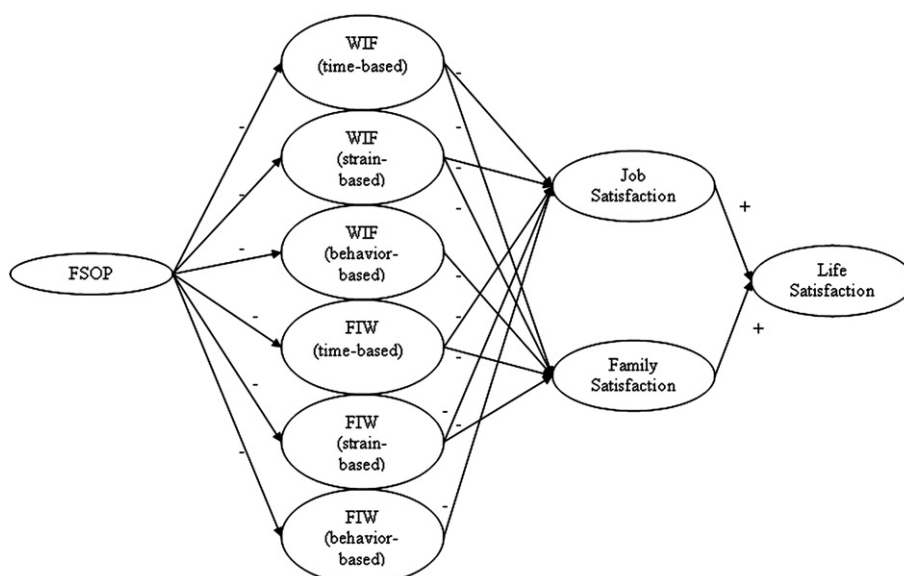


Fig. 1. Proposed theoretical model.

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