

Work and Family at War: Does Individual Difference Matter?

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Abstract

Work-family conflict has become a central focus of research in research times due to significant changes in organizational demography. In view of this, we sought to investigate individual differences in work-family conflict in the Ghanaian context. We examined differences in work-family from the perspective of managerial status (i.e. manager versus non-manager); sex (i.e. male versus female workers); and marital status (i.e. married versus non-married workers). Using cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from a convenient sample 100 participants. The participants were selected from 5 banks in the Ghanaian business environment. Independent t-test was used to test the hypotheses. In addition, partial eta square was calculated to determine the effect size of the independent variables. The results showed that managerial level workers experienced significantly higher level of work-family conflict than non-managerial workers. Similarly, married workers experienced significantly higher level of work-family conflict than non-married workers. However, no statistically significant sex difference in work-family conflict was observed. The findings were consistent with the role and spillover theories of work-family conflict. The implications and limitations of the findings were discussed.

Keywords: work-family, individual difference variables, role theory, spillover theory, Ghana

Introduction

Work and family represents two important spheres of every worker's life (Delle & Kudo, 2014; Esson, 2004). Conflict between work and family has become a major research area for industrial and organizational psychologist because of the adverse effect these conflicts have on employee behaviour in the workplace and at home (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999).

Work-family interface is of grave concern for both work and family researchers that a better understanding will guarantee organizations of their current and future human and intellectual capital (Frone, Yardley & Martel, 1997). Given that the workplace is populated with people with different backgrounds and life experiences emanating from either work or home, this study seeks to investigate the extent to which individual differences account for differences in the experience of work-family conflict in the Ghanaian banking industry.

Statement of the Problem

Does individual difference account for a difference in the experience of work-family conflict? According to Parasuraman and Greenhaus (2002), a major gap in work-family conflict research is that there is limited empirical evidence and understanding about individual differences in reaction to work-family pressures. The present study attempts to fill this gap by providing empirical evidence from the Ghanaian work setting.

The landscape of organization has changed significantly in the 21st century with the entry of women, dual career couples and single parents into the formal place of work (Googins, 1991; Googins, Griffin & Casey, 1994; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1997; Zedeck, 1992). The era when men were preoccupied with career and economic jobs while women settled for household duties such as raising of children or any other assisting roles assigned by their husbands is now a thing of the past (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). The number of hours spent at work on daily basis is more than what is spent at home. In view of this, work and family conflict has become a major problem confronting workers with family issues interfering with work roles and work issues also interfering with family roles.

In organizations, people differ in terms of the position they hold and each position comes with responsibilities of varying degrees and demands. Similarly, the workplace is populated with both married and non-married workers as well as male and female workers. Thus, individuals in the workplace are exposed to varying degrees of pressures, either from the workplace or home. Against this backdrop, we sought to investigate work-family conflict from the perspective of individual difference such as managerial status (e.g., manager versus non-manager), sex (e.g., male versus female), and marital status (e.g., married versus non-married) in the Ghanaian context.

Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to;

1. Investigate sex difference in work-family conflict
2. Determine whether a difference exist in the experience of work-family conflict between married and non-married workers
3. Ascertain whether a difference in work-family conflict exist between managers and non-managers

Literature Review

Role Theory

The role theory states that expectations associated with work and family roles can lead to physical and psychological strain in two ways: first the demand of multiple roles within the work and family domain can lead to overall increase in workload, and second, expectations surrounding either of these roles can evoke pressures that dominate the time of an individual and interfere with expectations associated with the performance of the other role (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991). This theory helps explain why individual difference can account for differences in the experience of work-family conflict. For instance, the expectations of a manager regarding his/her job will be different from that of a non-manager with the manager having huge responsibilities compared to a non-manager. In a similar manner, female workers even at work will still be preoccupied with things of the family since they are perceived to be the head of domestic duties such as cooking, child care etc. Despite their work roles, they still have to think of their personal and family lives. Against this backdrop, the performance of multiple roles becomes a logical consequence (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). Since multiple roles inevitably creates strain, it is expected that managers, women and married workers will experience high levels of work-family conflict than non-managers, men and non-married workers (Allen & Grigsby, 1997; Frone, Russell, & Cooper 1992).

Spillover Theory

The spillover theory posits that, the satisfaction of work roles has the tendency to affect the satisfaction of family roles and the satisfaction of family demands also has the tendency to affect work roles. The interference with respect to the satisfaction of either of these roles may have negative or positive effect on either of this domain of a person's life (Bartolonme & Evens, 1980). Consistent with this, Zedeck and Mosier (1990) advanced that increased satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the work domain leads to increase satisfaction or dissatisfaction with life. Thus, any problem arising from your work as a manager or non-manager has the likelihood of affecting your family roles negatively. In view of this, it can be said that people whose work roles or family roles are demanding are more likely to experience more work-family conflict than those with less demanding roles from either of this domain of life.

The Concept of Work-Family Conflict

A plethora of definitions of work-family conflict have been proposed to facilitate better understanding of the construct. For instance, Greenhaus and Beutel (1985) view work-family conflict as a conflict arising from the opposing demands of work roles and family roles that are mutually incompatible in some respects. The demands made by these two important aspects of a workers' life are not negotiable and often requires some amount of satisfaction to bring the person some level of balance. Similarly, Kahn (1964) viewed work-family conflict as a form of inter-role conflict in which role pressure from work and family domains is mutually incompatible to some degree. Work-family conflict has been conceptualized as a bi-dimensional construct comprising work-family conflict and family-work conflict (Frone, Yardley & Marshall, 1997; Frone et al., 1992; Jayaweera, 2005; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998). Hammer (2003) expressed that the antecedents of work-to-family (WIF) conflict and that of family to work (FIW) conflict are different.

Work-family conflict occurs when the participation in a work role inhibits the participation in a family role (work-to-family interference), or when family roles inhibit performance at work (family-to-work interference) (Duxbury et al., 1994; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998). Although these two forms of conflict – WIF and FIW are strongly correlated with each other, however, individuals typically report more WIF rather than FIW (Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Frone et al., 1992).

Accordingly, the present study investigated the tension felt when work interferes with family roles (i.e. Work-family conflict).

Review of Related Studies

With notable exception of Delle and Kudo (2014) research on work-family conflict, the majority of studies testing individual differences and work-family conflict originates from Western cultures. Using a convenience sample of 121 respondents from the Ghanaian service sector, work-family conflict was found to significantly and positively predict turnover intentions ($\beta=.280$, $p=.01$) and managerial status significantly moderated the relationship between work-family conflict and turnover intentions ($\beta=-.182$, $p=.05$).

Job related factors have been associated with the experience of work-family conflict. For example, managerial and professional level position holders were found to report significantly higher work-family conflict than their counterparts in non-managerial and non-professional positions (Duxbury & Higgins, 2003). Similarly, a Spanish research revealed that a positive association existed between job category and work-family conflict with managers experiencing greater work-family conflict than lower category employees (Carnicer de Luis, Sanches, Perez & Jimenez, 2004). Time commitment has also been associated with the experience of significantly high level of work-family conflict. It has been reported that time commitment to work contributes significantly to conflict between employees' work and non-work roles (Beauregard, 2006; Major, Klein & Ehrhart, 2002; Nielson, Carlson & Lankau, 2001) with long hours of work accounting for more negative consequences for families and for workers who struggle to establish a balance between the demands of work and family roles.

Gutek, Searle and Klepa (1991) used the rational view and gender role expectation principle to explain sex differences in the experience of work-family conflict. The rational view posits that, the probability that an individual will perceive work-family conflict is linearly explained by the number of hours the individual spends in paid and unpaid work, e.g., household and family tasks. Logically, it can be inferred from the rational perspective that both men and women would face the same amount of conflict given that they have similar job and household demands, and similar resources to address these demands. However, gender role orientation measures the degree to which one identifies with the traditional conceptions of his or her gender role (Livingston & Judge, 2008: 208). In this regard, gender and the roles individuals adhere to not only impacts the number of hours spent at the respective roles, but also mutes the relationship between the hours spent and the conflicts perceived (Gutek, et al., 1991; cited in Ahmad, 2008). Accordingly, the gender role approach asserts that, the demands and resources one has may impact men and women differently such that the time spent working in the opposite sex's domain would have a greater impact on individual's perception of work-family conflict than time spent on one's own domain (Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998). In addition, we could expect that women may be impacted stronger by job demands than household demands given that paid work is traditionally the spheres of men. On the other hand, women can be impacted more by family demands due to the fact that women are the domestic managers with the responsibility of child care, home management, cooking etc and are expected to be the main person to address demands arising from the family domain.

Many empirical studies have examined this issue and found that job demand and resource variables impact both men and women (Gallie & Russell, 2009; Steiber, 2009). Some argue that household demands impact women much more (Steiber, 2009; van der Lippe, et al., 2006), although others argue that job demands are more important (Gallie & Russell, 2009; Steiber, 2009). However, it seems that there are differences in the impact of the job demands. Steiber (2009) and Stier et al. (2012) show how working hours and unusual hours (evenings and weekend work) impact women more than men. Gallie and Russell (2009) show how having taken into account working hours and work intensity, the cross-national variance for women across the seven countries under investigation is reduced greatly, whereas for men a distinct variance still remains. Examining these empirical results, we can expect that women may be impacted more by job demands especially by working hours, and this may be the driving source of the cross-national variation in work-family conflict for women.

The demographic distribution of respondents showed that, 52 percent were males while 48 percent were females. The analysis of age also showed that the majority of respondents were within the age range of 26 and 30 years (31%) while 11 percent were within the age range of 22 to 25 years and 46 to 50 years respectively. In addition, 55 percent of the respondents were married while 45 percent were not married. In terms of job position, 56 percent were within the managerial rank while 44 percent were in the non-managerial bracket.

Finally, it was found that 29 percent were First degree holders, 27 percent had professional and Master's degree qualification respectively, and 17 percent had diploma qualification.

Instrument/Measures

Self-report questionnaire was used to collect data. Data were collected on work-family conflict and individual difference variables.

Work-Family Conflict

Gutek, Searle and Klepa (1991) scale for measuring work-family conflict was used. The scale contains 8-items. Four (4) items measure work-to-family conflict while the remaining four items measure family-to-work conflict. The responses to the 8-items were based on 7-point likert scale ranging from strongly agree (7), agree (6), slightly agree (5), neutral (4), slightly disagree (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). In Gutek et al (1991) study, the scale was found to have a reliability coefficient of 0.83. The minimum and maximum scores participants could obtain on the scale ranged from 8 to 40 respectively.

Individual difference variables

We asked questions about managerial status (1=manager, 2=non-manager). We also asked questions about marital status (1=married, 2=non-married). In addition, we asked question about sex (1=male, 2=female). Data were also gathered on respondents' age and level of education.

Data Collection Procedure

Approval was sought from all the participating banks through the Human Resource Department. To facilitate the process of gaining approval, the research instrument and objectives of the study were presented to the various human resource departments to enable them know exactly what the study was about. This was done to satisfy the requirement of institutional approval as required in any ethical research. After permission was granted, we sought the assistance of personnel in each HR department to assist with the questionnaire administration. They were taking through basic requirements of questionnaire administration. Relevant information on how to complete the survey instrument, ethical issues such as informed consent, confidentiality and freedom of participation was provided on the face of the questionnaire. Respondents who consented to be part of the study were required to sign the consent form. To satisfy the promise of confidentiality, each respondent was given an envelope into which completed questionnaire was to be kept and sealed. This was done to ensure that respondents felt comfortable completing the questionnaire and also well assured that the information they were providing was just for the researchers own viewing. Further, no compensation was given to participants in exchange for their participation in the study.

Results

This empirical research sought to investigate individual differences in work-family conflict in the Ghanaian banking sector. The study tested differences in work-family conflict between managers and non-managers, male and female workers, and married and non-married workers. The analysis was facilitated with statistical software. The Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) version 20.0 for IBM was used.

Test of Hypotheses

Three hypotheses were tested in the study. Independent samples t-test was used to test the hypotheses in the study. The hypotheses tested were:

H1: managers will experience significantly high level of work-family conflict than their non-managerial counterparts

H2: married workers will experience significantly high level of work-family conflict than non-married workers

H3: female workers will experience significantly high level of work-family conflict than their male counterparts

Hypothesis (H1) was tested using Independent t-test because there was a single categorical independent variable (Job position) with two levels (manager and non-manager) and the dependent variable (work-family conflict) was assumed to be measured on an interval scale. The result for this hypothesis is presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Summary of Means, Standard Deviation scores and Independent t-test Results of Difference in Work Family Conflict between Managerial and Non-Managerial Workers

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig	Eta Squared
Managerial	44	3.678	0.937	98	2.061	0.042	0.042
Non-Managerial	56	3.313	0.794				
Total	100	9.991	1.731				

The result in **Table 2** indicates that a statistically significant difference in work-family conflict existed between managers and non-managers [$t_{(98)} = 2.061, p = 0.042$]. Specifically, managers were found to experience significantly higher level of work-family conflict ($M = 3.678, SD = 0.937$) than non-managers ($M = 3.313, SD = 0.794$). The partial eta squared value (0.042) shows that job position accounted for 4.2 percent of the variance in work-family conflict and this variance indicates a small effect size (Cohen, 1988).

Marital Status and Work-family Conflict

The hypothesis that married workers will experience significantly high level of work-family conflict than their non-married counterparts (H2) was tested using independent samples t-test. This statistical test was used because there was one categorical independent variable with two levels (marital status- married versus non-married) and a single dependent variable (work-family conflict) assumed to be measured on an interval scale. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 2: Summary of Means, Standard Deviation Scores and Independent t-test Results of Difference in Work Family Conflict between Married and Non-Married Workers

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig	Eta Squared
Married	53	48.600	7.605	98	2.371	.020	0.0543
Non-Married	47	44.500	4.998				
Total	100	93.100	12.603				

The independent t-test result in **Table 2** shows that, a statistically significant difference in work-family conflict existed between married and non-married workers [$t_{(98)} = 2.371, p = .020$] with married workers ($M = 48.600, SD = 7.605$) experiencing significantly higher level of work-family conflict than their non-married counterparts ($M = 44.500, SD = 4.998$). Marital status accounted for 5.4 percent of the variance in work-family conflict (Partial eta squared = 0.0543). The partial eta squared value obtained in this study suggests that the independent variable (marital status) had a small effect.

Sex and Work-family Conflict

The hypothesis that “Female workers will experience significantly higher level of work-family conflict than their male counterparts”, was tested using independent t-test because there was one categorical independent variable on two levels (male versus female) and a single dependent variable (work-family conflict) assumed to be measured on an interval scale. The result of this analysis is presented in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Summary of Means, Standard Deviation Scores and Independent t-test Results of Difference in Work Family Conflict between Male and Female Workers

Variable	N	Mean	SD	df	t	Sig.	Eta Squared
Male	52	3.382	0.813	98	-0.658	0.512	0.004
Female	48	3.496	0.902				
Total	100	6.878	1.715				

As shown in **Table 4**, no significant difference in work-family conflict was found between female and male workers [$t_{(98)} = -0.658, p = 0.512$]. Specifically, female workers did not experience significantly higher level of work-family conflict ($M = 3.496, SD = 0.902$) than their male counterparts ($M = 3.382, SD = 0.813$).

Sex accounted for 0.4 percent of the variance in work-family conflict (Partial eta squared=0.004). Based on Cohen's (1988) interpretation of effect size, the partial eta squared value of 0.004 suggests that sex had a small effect on work-family conflict.

Discussion

Work-family conflict has become an interesting research focus in recent times due largely to the increase in the composition of women in formal employment. The present study investigated work-family conflict from individual perspectives. The findings are discussed in the preceding paragraphs.

Managerial Status and Work-Family Conflict

As expected, the hypothesis that managerial level workers will experience significantly higher level of work-family conflict than their non-managerial counterparts was supported. This finding corroborated prior literature (Carnicer et al., 2004; Duxbury & Higgins, 2003). The scope of managerial work is broader and more complex than their non-managerial counterparts. The finding obtained in this study is plausible because on the shoulders of managers lies the responsibility and technical organizational decisions. Thus, the level of commitment in terms of time and physical presence at every organizational activity for managers is far more than non-managers (Beauregard, 2006; Major et al., 2002; Nielson et al., 2001). In view of this, becoming a manager further reduces the number of hours one has for personal/family life, hence, resulting in high degree of conflict between work and family roles for the manager than the non-manager.

Marital Status and Work-family Conflict

The hypothesis that married workers will experience significantly higher level of work-family conflict than their non-married counterparts was supported. This finding is consistent with prior research (Beauregard, 2006; Major et al., 2002; Nielson et al., 2001). Married workers do not have the option to devote more attention to work than family. However, total devotion to these two important spheres of life is practically impossible. To maintain their formal employment, married workers tend to devote more time to their work roles than non-work roles and therefore experience significantly higher level of work-family conflict than their non-married counterparts (Beauregard, 2006; Major et al., 2002; Nielson et al., 2001). The longer the number of hours spent at work, the more uncomfortable the married worker becomes while the non-married worker feels less uncomfortable.

Sex and Work-family Conflict

Contrary to the expectation of the study, the hypothesis that female workers will experience significantly higher level of work-family conflict than their male counterparts was not supported. This empirical finding is consistent with the rational view and gender role expectation explanation of sex differences in work-family conflict (Guttek et al., 1991). The finding is justified because the perception of work-family conflict is linearly correlated with the number of hours devoted to paid and non-paid work. Male and female workers irrespective of their job level or marital status have equal responsibility towards their work and family. This evidence is also substantiated by the gender role expectation theory. Because traditionally, men would invest much of their time and energies to work at the expense of family while women would also devote much of their time to family roles, the probability of them experiencing equal measure of work-family conflict is likely (Livingston & Judge, 2008: 208). Thus, any differences that would have been observed between male and female workers in terms of work-family conflict is mute because while men were devoting more time to work, women were devoting more time to family (Guttek, et al., 1991; cited in Ahmad, 2008).

Limitations of the Study

Despite the significant findings emerging from this study, particularly from the Ghanaian context, it is important to note that a number of limitations were observed. First, the study utilized cross-sectional survey design to investigate individual differences in work-family. Thus, the findings preclude us from drawing causal inferences. In addition, the probability that common method variance could be a problem is high because data on work-family conflict was collected from one source. Finally, the findings cannot be generalized to other workers in other industries in the Ghanaian business sector because of the skewed nature of the sample (i.e. workers from the banking sector).

Implications for Practice

The present study has provided empirical evidence which would serve as an important springboard for dealing with work-family conflict issues at least from the individual difference angle. In the first place, the study has revealed that workers do not experience work-family conflict equally due to their differences in terms of roles and even marital status. In the spirit of this, organizations need to direct family and work friendly policies to some category of people in the organization more than others.

To gain the maximum attention of managers and married workers, organizations need to provide some cushioning for these categories of workers. In addition, workers perceived to be at high risk of experiencing work-family conflict should be encouraged and made to utilize their annual leave to enable them pay attention to the 'family aspect' of their lives. Also, provision of domestic security and house-helps allowances should be made available to such people. All these would guarantee the psychological stability of these categories of workers anytime they come to work.

Recommendations for Future Studies

There is the need to replicate this finding using other sectors such as the extractive, manufacturing, telecommunication and insurance companies in Ghana. It would also be inspiring for future researchers to investigate the extent to which variables such as conscientiousness, psychological resilience and psychological capital mediate or moderate the relationship between work-family conflict and employee behaviour in organizations. Further, there is the need to consider utilizing multiple data source approach in future work-family conflict research to reduce common method variance bias. Finally, the utilization of longitudinal or experimental designs in future studies should be considered.

Conclusion

Work-family conflict has become an issue for the worker and the employer to deal with. The empirical evidence rolled-out in this study suggests that individual difference accounted for some significant experience in work-family conflict. Specifically, managerial workers experienced significantly higher level of work-family conflict than non-managerial workers. Similarly, married workers were confronted more with work-family conflict problems than non-married workers. However, sex difference in work-family conflict was not observed. The findings obtained in this study were consistent with role and spillover theories of work-family conflict.

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