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Work–home conflict and facilitation across four different family structures in Norway

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The purpose of this study was to examine how work–home conflict and facilitation vary among people living in different family structures in Norway, here conceptualized as: two-parent families; single parents; childless couples; and singles. The study used data from a Norwegian study on occupational health ($N=2414$). We hypothesized that respondents living in two-parent families experience more work–home conflict *and* facilitation than others due to more complex role expectations. Similarly, we hypothesized that the effect of workload and autonomy on work–home conflict and facilitation would be stronger among this group. The results indicate that conflict between work and home life are more profound among those living in two-parent families and among single parents than among childless couples and singles. Work-to-home facilitation did not vary by family structure, whereas the childless couples reported more home-to-work facilitation. Furthermore, with a few exceptions the effects of workload and autonomy on work–home conflict and facilitation did not differ by family structure.

Keywords: work–home conflict; work–home facilitation; family structure; workload; autonomy; conservation of resources theory

Le but de cette étude était d'examiner les variations en termes de conflits et de facilitation entre vie privée et vie professionnelle entre personnes vivant dans des structures familiales différentes en Norvège, ici conceptualisées comme: familles à deux parents, parents isolés, couples sans enfants et célibataires. L'étude a utilisé les données d'une étude norvégienne sur la santé professionnelle ($N=2414$). Nous prenons comme hypothèse de travail que parmi les personnes interrogées, celles vivant dans des familles à deux parents éprouvent plus de conflits entre leur vie professionnelle et leur vie privée *et* plus de facilitation que les autres groupes, du fait qu'on s'attend à plus de complexité de leurs rôles. Nous supposons aussi que les effets de la charge de travail et de l'autonomie sur les conflits entre vie professionnelle et vie privée et la facilitation seraient plus fort pour cette catégorie de personnes. Les résultats indiquent que le conflit entre vie privée et vie professionnelle est plus profond parmi les familles à deux parents et les familles

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monoparentales que parmi les couples sans enfants et les célibataires. La structure familiale n'a pas d'impact sur la facilitation de la vie privée par la vie professionnelle, alors que les couples sans enfants font ressortir une facilitation de leur vie professionnelle par leur vie privée. A quelques rares exceptions près, les effets de la charge de travail et de l'autonomie sur les conflits entre vie professionnelle et vie privée et sur la facilitation ne changent pas avec le type de structure familiale.

Mots clés: conflits vie professionnelle/vie privée; facilitation vie professionnelle/vie privée; structure familiale; charge de travail; autonomie; théorie de la conservation des ressources

Introduction

Numerous studies have explored the work–family interface since ‘work and family’ emerged as a distinct area of research in the 1960s and 1970s (Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2000). Following the entrance of ‘working mothers’ on the labor market there has been a focus on dual career families and how they manage to juggle work and family life. The basis for the majority of work–family research has been the assumption of a nuclear family with routine, full-year, nine-to-five, paid jobs (Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood, & Lambert, 2007a; Marks, 2006; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002; Young, 1999).

However, as society and the workforce have changed, so have household compositions. Shifts in women’s employment patterns have been accompanied by postponement of marriage and childbirth and declines in marital stability (Williams, 2003). In Norway, from the beginning of the 1970s, decreasing marriage rates and increasing divorce rates (Nielsen, 2008) have resulted in more one-person homes and more single parents. Today, 38.9% of all households in Norway consist of singles living alone (SSB, 2007). The corresponding EU figure (based on data from 25 member states) was 29%, whereas 13% of all households consist of single parents (Eurostat, 2006). This trend may partly be explained by the wish and possibility to create a life for oneself. The educated and employed women of today are more independent than previous generations. Social welfare improvements have enabled both singles and single parents to manage by themselves. Moreover, there is also a snowball effect: the more singles and single parents there are, the less they are socially stigmatized (Noack & Seierstad, 2003). Thus, the increased rates of female employees have created not only a new workforce with dual career families juggling the demands of work and family, but also a higher number of singles and single parents. This new group of workers certainly has a private life that interacts with their work life (Brotheridge & Lee, 2005; Brough & O’Driscoll, 2005; Casper, Weltman, & Kwesiga, 2007b; Geurts et al., 2005; Premeaux, Adkins, & Mossholder, 2007).

In a recent review of methods in work–family research over a period of 24 years, Casper et al., (2007a) did not trace studies focusing on single parents or singles without children. However, in a recent special issue of *Community, Work & Family* (Volume 11, Part 2, 2008), Hill et al. (2008) found life stage (identified by respondent age and the presence and age of children) to be the strongest predictor of family-to-work conflict. The present study expands on this previous work by examining work–home interaction (WHI) both in terms of the direction of influence (work-to-home vs. home-to-work) and type of effect (conflict vs. facilitation). The examination of how work–home conflict and facilitation vary across different family structures like two-parent families, single parents,

childless couples, and singles enhances our understanding of an essential issue among important but previously neglected groups whose voices are seldom heard.

The first objective of the present study was to explore how work-home conflict and facilitation vary by family structure. The second objective was to explore whether the effects of two of the strongest predictors of WHI (workload and autonomy) differ across family structures.

The Norwegian context

Norway has gradually become one of the richest countries in the world, with a gross domestic product (GDP) that is 54% above the average in the EU (Kristiansen, Flatebø, & Modig, 2006). One of the core characteristics of the welfare state is that municipal and state authorities take over responsibility for a variety of services that were previously handled by the families themselves. Compared to other European countries (e.g., the UK and Portugal) where having a child is still conceptualized as a predominately 'private problem,' it is regarded more as a 'public issue' in Norway (Sümer, Smithson, Guerreiro, & Granlund, 2008). Norway has an array of statutory rights such as the right to childcare in kindergartens and other welfare services for those who need it, paid leave (maternity, paternity and parental leave, leave for the care of sick children, and leave for the care of young children), and working time arrangements, including flexible working hours. Almost nine out of 10 children aged 3–5 have a kindergarten place (Kristiansen et al., 2006). In Norway more than 40% of the workforce enjoys some working time flexibility, a slightly larger share than in most European countries (Eurostat, 2008). Such arrangements make it easier for women to combine children and career, as indicated by the high labor force participation and relatively high fertility rate (stable at about 1.8) of Norwegian women (Kristiansen & Sandnes, 2006). In Norway, 47% of the workforce is female (Kristiansen et al., 2006). The traditional family with the male breadwinner and female homemaker has become increasingly less prevalent in the Nordic countries during the last five decades. In a comprehensive cross-national study on work-life balance in Europe, Crompton and Lyonette (2006) found more liberal gender role expectations and less traditional division of labor in the Nordic countries (Norway and Finland) compared to the other European countries. Norway has generally been regarded as one of the most progressive countries when it comes to gender role equality (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2008). Nevertheless, examining work-family conflict in the Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK, Cousins and Tang (2004) found that despite the establishment of gender equality and work-family balance policies in Sweden, higher proportions of Swedish mothers and fathers reported conflict between their work and family lives compared to those in the other two countries. There is reason to believe that work-home issues are as important in Norway, Sweden's closest geographical and ideological neighbor. Unfortunately, research of the WHI in Norway is scarce.

Theoretical framework

Work-home interaction (WHI)

Empirical findings indicate that work-home balance is more than lack of conflict in that both domains may impact positively on the other, referred to as positive spillover,

enhancement, facilitation, or enrichment (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006). The most widely cited definition of work–family conflict describes it as:

... a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role. (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77)

Conversely, facilitation is defined as ‘... occurring when, by virtue of participation in one role (e.g. work), one’s performance or functioning in the other role (e.g. family) is enhanced’ (Wayne, Musisca, & Fleeson, 2004, p. 110).

Conservation of resources (COR) theory may serve as a heuristic model that explains the etiology of the interaction between work and home, and its relationship with family structure, workload, and facilitation (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). COR theory is a resource-oriented stress model based on the supposition that people strive to retain, protect, and build resources and that the potential or actual loss of these resources may cause stress. According to the COR model, conflict occurs because resources are lost in the process of juggling both work and home life (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999), whereas facilitation follows when they contribute to the exchange of gains between the domains (Hobfoll, 1989; Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson, & Kacmar, 2007). Resources are defined as ‘... those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual’ or ‘... that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies’ (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). Both aspects of this definition are captured in the present study, the first one by condition resources attached to the different *family structures* and the second one by the energy resources *workload and autonomy*.

Family structure and work–home interaction (WHI)

Being part of a family is an example of a highly valuable condition resource which most people are eager to protect. The extent to which conditions are valued by individuals or groups provides insight into their stress-resistance potential (Hobfoll, 1989). ‘Good marriage,’ ‘family stability,’ ‘good relationship with my children,’ and ‘time with loved ones’ are conditions high on a list of COR resources in western societies (Hobfoll, 2001).

One corollary of the COR theory is that individuals must invest resources in order to limit loss of resources, protect resources, or gain resources (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). For example, individuals who experience stress or conflict in their interaction between work and home may need to increase the investment of time, energy, and trust in those relationships. This relates to role strain theory (the scarcity perspective) suggesting that many different role obligations may cause conflicts of time, place, or resources (Goode, 1960). Previous studies have found that the age and number of children living at home and marital status relate to conflicts between work and home (Byron, 2005; Erickson, Nichols, & Ritter, 2000; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Kinnunen, Feldt, Geurts, & Pulkkinen, 2006; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Mattingly & Sayer, 2006; Premeaux et al., 2007).

However, according to the COR model, being married (or cohabitating) can also be considered a valued resource as those living with a partner may have more support to draw on. This is in line with the enhancement perspective which states that having

multiple roles can be beneficial and that multiplicity of roles yields few benefits that might compensate for the burden of manifold or discrepant obligations (Sieber, 1974). Barnett and Hyde (2001) demonstrated beneficial effects of multiple roles, such as increased income, social support, and more success opportunities. Empirical evidence indicates that being married protects against family role stress (e.g., Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999) and that having a spouse or partner reduces family–work conflict (Hill, Yang, Hawkins, & Ferris, 2004). Moreover, Kinnunen et al. (2006) revealed that even though their extensive needs may cause conflict, children seemed to enhance positive interaction between work and family as well. Similarly, Grzywacz and Marks (2000) found that fathers with young children experienced more positive spillover from work to family than did men without children.

Thus, in line with both the scarcity and the enhancement theory, empirical evidence suggests that involvement in multiple roles may cause both conflict and facilitation between work and home. Recent findings indicate that whereas the presence of a significant other may positively influence the employee's ability to balance work with home care and leisure activities, it may also increase work–home conflict. For example, having a partner/spouse is a valuable resource when it comes to dealing with home care issues (e.g., cooking, cleaning, and repairs), but it can also be a resource drain (Premeaux et al., 2007). This finding accords with the conclusion of Williams (2003) that a marital relationship implies both resources and strain. Simon (1997) found that parenthood simultaneously involves benefits and costs and both positive and negative emotions, particularly in mothers.

Since empirical evidence indicates that conflict and facilitation are not opposite ends of a continuum but are orthogonal to each another, meaning that the presence of one does not exclude the presence of the other (Grzywacz & Butler, 2005; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Kinnunen et al., 2006; Wayne et al., 2004), we predicted more work–home conflict *and* more work–home facilitation among those involved in multiple roles:

Hypothesis 1: Two-parent families will report more work–home conflict than those in other family structures.

Hypothesis 2: Two-parent families will report more work–home facilitation than those in other family structures.

Workload and autonomy

Workload and autonomy are examples of *energy* resources that aid the acquisition of other resources such as time for work and family. According to the COR theory, as more strain is experienced in one domain, fewer resources are available to fulfill roles in other domains. Thus, experiencing more demands at work may leave fewer resources available for family demands. Conversely, the COR theory posits that those with greater resources are less vulnerable to resource loss and more capable of resource gain (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). Perceived autonomy, i.e., the extent to which employees have the freedom to schedule work and decide how it should be carried out (Premeaux et al., 2007; Voydanoff, 2004), increases resources and has been shown to reduce work–family conflict and to enhance work–family facilitation (Grzywacz & Butler, 2005; Hill et al., 2004, 2008). The work/non-work literature has consistently demonstrated a negative relationship between workload (working hours and job demands) and work–family balance, and a positive relationship between job autonomy and work–family balance

(Byron, 2005; Geurts & Demerouti, 2003; Voydanoff, 2005). Thus, the following hypotheses were added:

Hypothesis 3: Heavy workload is positively related to work-home conflict and negatively related to work-home facilitation.

Hypothesis 4: High job autonomy is negatively related to work-home conflict and positively related to work-home facilitation.

The COR theory postulates further that those who lack resources are not only more vulnerable to resource loss, but initial loss also begets future loss, providing *loss spirals* (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). Given that many role obligations may tax a person's resources (Goode, 1960), traditional two-parent families may be more vulnerable to the experience of workload. The positive mirror image of this proposal is that those who possess strong resource pools are more likely to seek opportunities in order to obtain resource gain (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2001). For example, Young (1999) found that parents make better use of benefits such as flexible work schedules than non-parents. Similarly, Shockley and Allen (2007) found that the relationship between work-family conflict and flexible time and space arrangements is stronger for those with greater family responsibility. When people develop resource surpluses, they are likely to experience positive well-being, i.e., facilitation. Accordingly, we hypothesized:

Hypothesis 5: The association between WHI and workload is stronger among two-parent families than those in other family structures.

Hypothesis 6: The association between WHI and autonomy is stronger among two-parent families than those in other family structures.

Method

Sample

The data used in the present study were selected from the first survey round of a longitudinal follow-up study on work and family issues. Data were collected from eight different occupational groups in Norway (lawyers, physicians, nurses, teachers, church ministers, bus drivers, and people working in advertising and information technology) in 2003 and 2005. For each occupational group, a random sample of 1000 persons was drawn from the central Norwegian registers of employees and employment by Statistics Norway (SN). Equal numbers of males and females were drawn from all occupations except church ministers, which contained only 401 women, whereas 599 men were drawn.

The questionnaires were mailed to the employee's home address with a one-page cover letter stating the purposes of the survey and ensuring confidentiality. All respondents were offered participation in a small lottery for returning the questionnaire. The number of participants that returned the questionnaire in the first survey round was 5017, giving a response rate of 63%.

In the present study the sample was restricted to two-parent families (married/partnered with young children), childless couples (married/partnered without children), single parents (singles with young children), and singles (singles without children; $N=2414$). Only those with one or more children below the age of six were included in the analysis. Women were overrepresented among single parents (73%), childless couples (59%), singles (54%), and two-parent families (52%). The

mean age was quite similar in the subpopulations, ranging from 34.1 (childless couples) to 36.5 (single parents). The singles reported more working hours ($M = 41.87/SD 9.5$). In Norway the normal working hours per week are 37.5. See Table 1 for more information about age and working hours. Eighty-three percent of those in the two-parent families reported high education (university level) as compared to 80% among single parents, 79% among childless couples, and 71% among singles.

Measures

Work-home interaction (WHI)

WHI was measured by a four-dimensional scale from a study by Wayne et al. (2004) assessing two directions of influence (work-to-home vs. home-to-work) and two types of effect (conflict vs. facilitation). Some of the original items were omitted from the analysis due to poor indicator properties (Innstrand, Langballe, Falkum, Espnes, & Aasland, 2009). The conflict items assessed the extent to which time pressures and strain in one role interfered with performance in the other. They included three statements concerning *work-to-home conflict* (WHC; e.g., 'My job reduces the effort I can give to activities at home') and four statements concerning *home-to-work conflict* (HWC; e.g., 'Responsibilities at home reduce the effort I can devote to my job'). The facilitation items assessed the extent to which the skills, behaviors, positive mood, and support or resources in one role positively influenced the other role. *Work-to-home facilitation* (WHF) was measured by three statements (e.g., 'The things I do at work help me deal with personal and practical issues at home') and *home-to-work facilitation* (HWF) by two statements (e.g., 'Talking with someone at home helps me deal with problems at work'). The items were scored on a five-point scale ranging from *totally disagree* to *totally agree*. The internal consistencies of the four subscales were satisfactory (WHC: $\alpha = 0.71$; WHF: $\alpha = 0.71$; HWC: $\alpha = 0.75$; and HWF: $\alpha = 0.74$).

Autonomy

Autonomy was assessed by four items. How often do you think you have: (1) 'sufficient possibility to discuss the organization of your own work'; (2) 'sufficient influence on decisions regarding your own working plan'; (3) 'so much influence on your own work that you can postpone planned tasks, for example when you have too much to do'; and (4) 'the possibility of taking a day or half a day off at short notice' ($\alpha = 0.75$). The five-point response scale ranged from *never* (scored 1) to *often* (scored 5).

Workload

Workload was assessed by three items. How often do you think you: (1) 'work under unacceptable work pressure'; (2) 'have so many job tasks that it prevents you from working effectively'; and (3) 'have problems doing special tasks without being interrupted' ($\alpha = 0.75$). The five-point response scale ranged from *never* (scored 1) to *often* (scored 5).

Covariates

Gender (male = 0, female = 1) and age (years) were included as control variables. Both of them have been shown to predict WHI in previous studies (e.g., Hill et al., 2004; Rothbard, 2001; Voydanoff, 2004). The findings concerning the influence of work hours on non-work life are inconsistent. In a review article Barnett (1998) concluded that long hours will create conflict for some groups of workers under some conditions. Hence, working hours per week were included as a covariate in the present study.

Statistical analysis

All data were analyzed using regression analysis with dummy variables (SPSS 13.0). In line with Hardy's guidelines (1993), the group of two-parent families was chosen as a reference group. The independent variables were regressed on each of the four dimensions of WHI separately in the following manner. In the first model (Model 1), controlling for family structure, gender, age, and working hours, workload was regressed on the dependent variable, followed by the interaction effect of workload and family structure (Kim, Hoskisson, & Wan, 2004; Yip & Tsang, 2007). In the second model (Model 2), workload was replaced by autonomy. Both workload and autonomy were centered in the regression analyses by subtracting the overall mean of all observations, making the new 0 point equal to the mean as recommended for variables whose interactions are being modeled (Garson, 2008).

Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations between the independent and dependent variables in the different family structure subgroups. The highest correlation was demonstrated between workload and WHC among singles ($r = 0.50$).

Predicting effects on work-home interaction (WHI)

If role accumulation produces more strain *and* resources, then the traditional nuclear family with two parents and children should report more work-home conflict and more work-home facilitation than the other family structure subgroups. To test these assumptions, the four dimensions of WHI were regressed on dummy variables that distinguish singles living alone, single parents, and childless couples from two-parent families (reference category). Table 2 displays the results of these regression analyses.

Hypothesis 1, that two-parent families experience more work-home conflict than other family structure groups, was partly supported. Compared to the reference group, the singles and childless couples scored significantly lower on both conflict dimensions (work-to-home and home-to-work). Conversely, the single parents did not differ significantly from the reference group on WHC, but reported more HWC. As suggested by Hypothesis 2 the two-parent families reported more facilitation from home-to-work than the singles and the single parents. However, the childless couples reported more HWF than the reference group. No significant differences were demonstrated regarding WHF.

Table 1. Means, standard deviation and correlations (Pearson R) for the variables used in the analysis.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Intercorrelations						
			2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Single (<i>n</i> = 553)									
1. Age	35.58	9.96	0.11*	-0.07	-0.09*	-0.16***	-0.17***	0.02	-0.07
2. Hour/week	41.87	9.50		0.17***	-0.03	0.03	-0.02	0.22***	-0.06
3. WHC	2.56	0.94			-0.02	0.35***	0.07	0.50***	-0.24***
4. WHF	2.50	0.83				0.17***	0.40***	-0.10*	0.20***
5. HWC	1.94	0.76					0.19***	0.11**	-0.07
6. HWF	3.00	1.11						-0.05	0.09*
7. Workload	3.03	0.85							-0.29***
8. Autonomy	3.17	0.85							
Single parents (<i>n</i> = 60)									
1. Age	36.48	4.91	0.09	0.06	0.10	-0.00	0.15	0.18	-0.03
2. Hour/week	39.42	12.53		0.38**	-0.21	0.28*	-0.19	0.34**	-0.15
3. WHC	2.67	0.99			-0.26*	0.36**	-0.20	0.48***	-0.28*
4. WHF	2.57	0.81				-0.09	0.26*	0.07	0.18
5. HWC	2.48	0.87					-0.15	0.28*	-0.01
6. HWF	2.86	0.97						-0.06	0.05
7. Workload	2.94	0.85							-0.27*
8. Autonomy	2.94	0.80							
Childless couples (<i>n</i> = 653)									
1. Age	34.12	8.73	-0.08	-0.11**	-0.01	-0.08*	-0.13***	-0.02	-0.06
2. Hour/week	41.84	8.85		0.25***	0.03	0.10*	0.04	0.25***	0.05
3. WHC	2.73	0.91			-0.01	0.41***	0.03	0.34***	-0.18***
4. WHF	2.51	0.83				0.10**	0.28***	-0.09*	0.19***
5. HWC	1.88	0.72					-0.08	0.12**	-0.04
6. HWF	3.76	0.91						0.01	0.07
7. Workload	3.01	0.85							-0.27***
8. Autonomy	3.19	0.88							

Table 1 (Continued)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Intercorrelations						
			2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Two-parent families (<i>n</i> = 1148)									
1. Age	35.98	5.16	0.09**	0.00	0.03	0.03	-0.04	0.05	0.03
2. Hour/week	40.04	9.16		0.19***	-0.05	0.01	0.01	0.22***	-0.03
3. WHC	2.86	0.88			-0.16***	0.35***	0.00	0.39***	-0.25***
4. WHF	2.53	0.82				0.05	0.32***	-0.07*	0.14***
5. HWC	2.43	0.79					-0.05	0.23***	-0.13***
6. HWF	3.67	0.85						-0.04	0.08**
7. Workload	3.04	0.82							-0.31***
8. Autonomy	3.29	0.85							

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Note: WHC, work-to-home conflict; WHF, work-to-home facilitation; HWC, home-to-work conflict; HWF, home-to-work facilitation.

Table 2. Effects of family structure, workload, and autonomy on work-home interaction.

Independent variable	Work-to-home conflict		Work-to-home facilitation		Home-to-work conflict		Home-to-work facilitation	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept	2.66***	2.28***	2.20***	2.12***	2.96***	2.78***	3.53***	3.49***
Single	-0.26***	-0.28***	ns	ns	-0.36***	-0.37***	-0.62***	-0.61***
Single parents	ns	ns	ns	ns	0.21*	ns	-0.79***	-0.81***
Childless couples	-0.10**	-0.14***	ns	ns	-0.44***	-0.45***	0.10*	0.11*
Female	0.07**	0.08**	0.12***	0.16***	0.05*	0.06**	0.17***	0.19***
Age	-0.01***	-0.01***	0.003*	0.01***	-0.02***	-0.02***	-0.01***	-0.01***
Hours	0.01***	0.02***	ns	ns	ns	0.003**	0.003*	ns
Workload	0.41***		-0.06***		0.18***		ns	
Single × workload	0.13**		ns		ns		ns	
Single parents × workload	ns		ns		ns		ns	
Childless couples × autonomy	ns		ns		-0.10*		ns	
Autonomy		-0.18***		0.21***		ns		0.08***
Single × autonomy		ns		ns		ns		ns
Single parents × autonomy		ns		ns		ns		ns
Childless couples × workload		ns		ns		ns		ns
R ²	0.22	0.11	0.01	0.05	0.11	0.08	0.06	0.07
F	125.67	54.52	5.19	22.73	54.03	37.48	29.88	31.57

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

Note: Values are unstandardized coefficients. Reference category: two-parent families. Model 1, workload; Model 2, autonomy; ns, not significant. All F values are significant ($p < 0.001$).

Next, we examined the hypothesized differences between the family structure subgroups concerning effects of workload and autonomy on work-home conflict and work-home facilitation. A positive coefficient indicates that it is associated with an increase in WHI relative to the effect in the comparison group. Conversely, a negative coefficient reflects a decrease in WHI.

Model 1 displays the effects of workload on the four WHI dimensions. In line with Hypothesis 3, workload was positively related to both WHC and HWC. Workload was also negatively associated with WHF. Similarly, Model 2 shows that autonomy was negatively associated with WHC and positively associated with work-to-home and HWF, as suggested by Hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 5, proposing a stronger effect of workload on WHI among the two-parent families, was only partly supported. Workload impacted less negatively on HWC among childless couples than among two-parent families. However, contrary to expectations, Model 1 shows that workload tends to increase WHC more strongly among singles than among two-parent families. None of the hypothesized interactions between autonomy and family structure subgroups were significant, i.e., Hypothesis 6 was not supported.

More conflict and facilitation were reported among the younger and female respondents. Working hours impacted significantly on WHC only.

Discussion

This study expands knowledge on WHI in three ways. First, using a large sample we could examine WHI across the following four different family structures: two-parent families; single parents; childless couples; and singles. This addresses shortcomings in the WHI literature as a recent review did not trace any studies focusing on single parents or singles without children (Casper et al., 2007a). Second, researchers have explicitly underlined the need to examine both the positive and negative aspects of this interaction (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005; Frone, 2003; Greenhaus, 2008; Heraty, Morley, & Cleveland, 2008), yet most research has focused on the construct of work-family conflict (for a review see Casper et al., 2007a). In this study, WHI was operationalized in terms of the direction of the influence (work-to-home vs. home-to-work) and type of effect (conflict vs. facilitation) as suggested by Frone (2003) among others. Third, by testing theory-driven hypotheses this study addresses the lack of theoretical frameworks in this research (Greenhaus, 2008). Using the framework provided by the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001), more work-home conflict *and* facilitation were hypothesized to be found among those who acquire more roles (two-parent families). Furthermore, the effects of workload and autonomy on WHI were thought to be stronger in this group.

Our findings indicate that single parents and the traditional two-parent families experience the impact of work on home life in about the same way, whereas single parents report more conflict and less facilitation in the home-to-work interaction. Norway has an array of statutory rights such as day care centers and other welfare services for those who need it, paid leave (maternity, paternity and parental leave, leave for the care of sick children, and leave for the care of young children), and working time arrangements, including flexible working hours. Such arrangements may have decreased the differences between single parents and two-parent families

concerning the experience of work interfering with home life. In line with the COR theory's proposition, the single parents may lack the benefit of having a partner/spouse when it comes to dealing with home care issues as suggested by Premeaux et al. (2007). Further, the resource aspect of having a partner is demonstrated by the finding that the childless partners report most WHF.

Compared to the two-parent families, the prevalence of perceived conflict between work and home is less among the singles and the childless partners, in line with previous findings that more conflict is reported among those who have young children (e.g., Hill et al., 2008). According to COR theory, stress or conflict occurs because resources are lost, threatened, or fail to give anticipated return in the process of juggling work and home life (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Thus, whereas work may threaten highly valued resources such as a 'good relationship with children' (WHC); the investment of time and energy to protect these conditional resources may ensue more conflict from home-to-work for the parents.

In line with our proposals, workload was positively related to conflict between work and home (both directions) and negatively related to WHF. The effect of workload on HWF was not significant. Empirical evidence indicates that work-home interference is predominantly driven by demands in the domain in which the interference originates, meaning that job demands are most strongly associated with work interfering with home, and home demands are most strongly related to home interfering with work (Brotheridge & Lee, 2005; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005; Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2005; Shockley & Allen, 2007). The somewhat weaker association between workload and HWC and the non-significant association between workload and HWF could therefore be expected.

Although the singles reported less WHC than two-parent families, the effect of workload on WHC was stronger in singles than in two-parent families. This finding accords with Young's (1999) demonstration that childless employees feel they are more often expected to work overtime and to fill in for parents with child responsibilities, producing a 'work-family backlash' for this group. Casper, et al. (2007b) found that singles feel they get less non-work support than employees with families, and this perception relates to organizational outcomes among singles. Since the singles also reported more working hours in the present study, a 'work-family backlash' for the singles may be a plausible explanation. Relative to the two-parent families, workload predicted HWC less strongly among childless couples. Otherwise the effect of workload did not differ by family structure.

As hypothesized and in line with previous findings (e.g., Grzywacz & Butler, 2005; Hill et al., 2004, 2008), we found that autonomy was negatively related to WHC and positively related to WHF. Moreover, the present study adds to these findings by demonstrating a positive association between autonomy and HWF as well. Thus, in line with the proposition of COR theory that initial resource gain begets further resource gain (Hobfoll, 1998) the present findings indicate that autonomy may contribute to the exchange of gains between the domains. Autonomy did not impact differently on WHI across family structure subgroups. Since autonomy seems to enhance facilitation and reduce conflict this finding implies that autonomy promotes balance between work and home life regardless of family structure.

The regression analyses also indicate that conflict and facilitation are more prevalent among female and younger respondents. This is in line with previous findings (e.g., Hill et al., 2004; Rothbard, 2001; Voydanoff, 2004) that conflict

between work and home is more likely to be experienced by women. Despite the increase of women in the workforce, women still take the main responsibility at home (Eurostat, 2008; Kitterød, 2005; Kristiansen & Sandnes, 2006). Even though the gap between the genders in Norway is among the smallest in the world when it comes to economic participation and opportunities, educational attainments, and political empowerment (Hausmann et al., 2008), principles do not accord with practice concerning the combination of employment and parenthood (Bø, 2008). Nevertheless, the present findings indicate that women also experience more facilitation than men. Similar findings have recently been reported by van Steenbergen, Ellemers, and Mooijaart (2007) who argue that combining the work role with other roles in life may have different psychological meanings for women and men. Whether or not the gender differences found are due to different psychological meanings attached to the different roles needs to be addressed in future studies.

Working hours were only weakly associated with WHC. A recent study by Jacobs and Gerson (2008) suggests that it is the composition of the family with more dual-earner couples and single-parent households rather than changes in the length of the work week per se which have created work–family balance concerns.

Implications

Altogether, these results suggest that work–home issues are likely to affect most employees both positively and negatively regardless of family structure. Hence, WHI should not be seen as an issue in those with family responsibilities only. Despite some significant differences between the subgroups along the various dimensions of WHI, the results indicate that private life and work life significantly impact each other in most employees. Consequently, future studies of WHI should not be restricted to specific family structure subgroups. Measurement scales should include items describing diverse home obligations and working conditions. Despite changing demographics of families and workforce (Halpern, 2005) most research and theories have been based on the notion of the male breadwinner (Lambert, 1990) and the assumption of the nuclear family with a mother, a father, and children. More research on how work and home life interact among singles living alone and single parents is clearly needed.

Practically, the present findings implicate that in order to preserve and develop the health and well-being of the working force, organizations should acknowledge that non-work influences are present and important for all employees, independent of the presence of a partner or a child. Employers should perhaps particularly focus on how work–home facilitation can be developed and cultivated, in line with the development of positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005; Taris, Cox, & Tisserand, 2008). Recent studies have found work–home facilitation to be related to favorable outcomes like improved well-being, affective commitment, less depression and turnover intentions, and improved motivation and productivity (Allis & O'Driscoll, 2008; Hammer, Cullen, Neal, Sinclair, & Shafiro, 2005; Hill et al., 2007; Wayne, Randel, & Stevens, 2006).

This is one of the first studies to document that the positive effects of perceived job autonomy on WHI are the same across different family structures. Thus, job autonomy might contribute to better health for all as it helps workers balance work and home lives. Previous studies have found that both workplace flexibility and

work-home facilitation are negatively related to burnout (Grzywacz, Carlson, & Shulkin, 2008; Innstrand, Langballe, Espnes, Falkum, & Aasland, 2008). The present study indicates that these variables are likely to be connected.

Limitations

The study should be interpreted with some limitations in mind. First, the number of single parents in the sample is small, reducing the statistical power. Replicate studies are needed to verify our findings. Moreover, due to the small number of single parents we could not test the interaction between family structure and gender. Further studies on the interaction between family structures and gender are needed for all the dimensions of WHI. Second, although we examined the work-home interface across a variety of family structures we were not able to control for other important life roles of our respondents (e.g., friend, neighbor, relative, church member, organizational member). The significance of role diversity should be examined further. Another drawback of the study was that the occupational status of the spouse or the partner was not incorporated in the study as suggested in a recent paper by Jacobs and Gerson (2008). A third concern is the use of cross-sectional self-report data. Cross-sectional designs may inflate relationships through common-method variance. However, empirical evidence indicates that even though common-method variance often influences results, the bias is rarely large enough to invalidate findings (Doty & Glick, 1998, as cited in Casper, et al. 2007b). Nevertheless, the cross-sectional design precludes conclusions regarding causal direction. Finally, it should be noted that the analysis is performed in a Norwegian context which differs from that in other countries along various central dimensions related to WHI like social welfare politics and cultural norms (i.e., see Sullivan, Benjamin, & Nilsen, 2009; Sümer et al., 2008). Cross-national studies are warranted.

Conclusion

The present study contributes to the literature by exploring WHIs in a variety of family structures, including employees in traditional two-parent families, childless couples, single parents, and singles. Moreover, by examining the bidirectional dimensions of both conflict and facilitation, the present study presents a more comprehensive picture of work-home balance. This enhances our understanding of an essential issue among important but previously neglected groups. Although there were significant differences between family structure subgroups along the four dimensions of WHI, the present study indicates that the private lives of all these groups interact significantly with their work lives. Therefore, future studies must include not only those with a traditional nuclear family structure, but also samples representative of the total workforce.

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