

Work-to-Family Conflict and Family-to-Work Conflict in a Developing Country

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Abstract

Over the years several researchers have attempted to establish the link between the dimensions of work family conflict and other variables across cultures and work categories. This study focuses on the formal workers in Ghana and the strength of association or significance between and among some demographic variables. Cluster, convenience and snowball techniques of sampling were adopted for the study which employed the questionnaire approach using 207 respondents from private and public organisations in the Ghanaian formal sector of the economy. For family-to-work conflict, no significant difference was found between male and female formal workers who are married; managers experience more of work-to-family conflict than non-managers; generally, formal workers who are single experience more work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict than those who are married.

Keywords: Work family conflict; Work-to-family conflict; Family-to-work conflict; Formal workers; Ghana

1.0 Introduction

As far back as the 1970s, some researchers (Andrews and Withey, 1976; Whitely and England, 1977) identified two important domains of the life of the contemporary worker, which are work and family. This view further led to the focus of researchers on work family conflict (Parasuraman and Greenhaus, 2002). Compared to the informal sector, the formal sector (hence formal workers) form a smaller proportion of employed persons in Ghana. It is estimated from the 2010 population and housing census that about 13.3 percent of persons employed in Ghana fall within the wage or salary bracket in the formal sector (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). Formal workers are the class of workers governed by rules and regulations and systems of industrial relations and labour laws. Informal work therefore involves unregulated work (Obeng-Fosu, 2007).

Since individuals are social beings interacting frequently, one set of social interaction in one place can affect social interaction in another, either positively or negatively. Therefore, problems originating from the family may have negative organizational consequences, such as when the illness of a parent or other close relative prevents one from going to work early or not going at all (Gutek *et al.*, 1991). Similarly, problems originating from the place of work may have an effect on the family, for instance, staying at the workplace for very long hours which prevents the performance of domestic tasks or duties.

Research into work family conflict has indicated that there are two directions of this phenomenon, which have been given as work interference with family (WIF) or work-to-family conflict, and family interference with work (FIW) or family-to-work conflict. These have been said to have distinctive antecedents, with those for family-to-work conflict coming from the family domain and those for work-to-family conflict coming from the work domain (Adams *et al.*, 1996; Thomas and Ganster, 1995).

The classic definition of the construct has been given by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985, p.77) as “inter-role conflict in which responsibilities from the work and family domains are not compatible”. This means that work-to-family conflict comes about when the performance of roles and commitment at the place of work makes it difficult to effectively and satisfactorily perform family responsibilities or roles. Family-to-work conflict, on the other hand, occurs when “the role pressures from the family and work domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985, p.77). Family-to-work conflict comes about when the demands from the family are such that the individual’s work-related duties are compromised.

1.2 Problem statement

Work family conflict has become an important construct in the study of individual differences at work (Blanch and Aluja, 2009). Recent years have seen an increased interest in the work family interface in human resource literature, with special emphasis on the antecedents and consequences of conflict between two domains (Adekola, 2010). The issue of the effect of work family conflict is increasing in importance (Howard, Donofrio and Boles, 2004).

This study has been motivated by the fact that only a few studies exist generally in the African context and in particular, Ghana. It therefore seeks to expand the literature on the relationship between work

family conflict and environmental antecedents (demographic variables) with specific reference to the Ghanaian situation.

1.3 Aim of the study

The study uses a number of demographic factors to explore the concept of work family conflict among formal workers in Ghana.

1.4 Objectives of the study

Three objectives are put forward for this study as follows:

- i. To ascertain whether significant differences exist in work family conflict between male and female formal workers in organisations in Ghana;
- ii. To ascertain whether formal workers in public and private organisations differ in their experience of work family conflict;
- iii. To establish the order in which the “marital status” experiences affect work family conflict.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

H₁: Females who are married will experience a significantly higher level of family-to-work conflict than males who are married;

H₂: Holders of managerial positions will experience a significantly higher level of work-to-family conflict than workers who hold non-managerial positions.

2.0 Literature review

The literature review covers the key themes used in the study. They include work interference with family (or work-to-family conflict), and family interference with work (or family-to-work conflict).

2.1 Related theories

A number of related theories to the work family conflict construct include the role theory, which, according to Kahn *et al.* (1964) is hinged on the notion that the behavior of individuals can largely be explained by the expectations that others have of them. Thus by the demands on the roles an individual performs in both work and family domains, inter-role conflict arises.

The spillover theory Fredriksen-Goldsen and Scharlach (2001) is looked at in two dimensions: positive spillover and negative spillover. Positive spillover refers to the transfer of satisfaction, energy, and sense of accomplishment from one domain to the other while the negative spillover refers to problems, negative moods and emotions carried from one domain to the other. In the context of this study, we further categorise the positive spillover into two: family-to-work positive spillover and work-to-family positive spillover. Thus when one transfers peace of mind resulting from the interactions in the family domain to the work domain, some aspects of work such as inter-personal relations and customer satisfaction are attained, and this is positive spillover from the family domain to the work domain. Also, when one is very satisfied and feels a sense of accomplishment at work, such joys are shared with the family. This latter instance is an example of the positive spillover from the work to the family domain.

The negative spillover is likewise categorized into two: the family-to-work negative spillover and the work-to-family negative spillover. When as a result of a quarrel one had with a spouse or other family member at home fellow workers or subordinates are victimized, this is a negative spillover from the family domain to the work domain. A similar situation exists in the case where as a result of dissatisfaction with situations in the workplace, characterized by anger and rage, one suddenly turns ‘wild’ at home, the work-to-family negative spillover arises.

2.2 Empirical findings

From the work of Zhang and Liu (2011), influential factors associated with work family conflict have been identified broadly from three levels: individual, work and family. The individual level includes gender, level of education, tenure of service and personality factors. At the work level, factors such as characteristics of work, stress from work and work system demanding high levels of commitment were identified.

At the individual and work levels, some of the findings include the following:

Luo *et al.* (2007) found that females experience more work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict than males. Perkins and De Meis (1996) also found that females experience more work-to-family conflict than males. Carnicer *et al.* (2004) noted that females are more likely to experience family-to-work conflict than males. Zhang and Liu (2011), on a different string, found no significant difference in family-to-work conflict.

At the family level, Greenhaus *et al.* (1990) found a positive relationship between family attachment and work family conflict. This was in support of the work of Carlson *et al.* (2000) who found that employees who were very attached to their family experienced more of family-to-work conflict.

3.0 Methodology

The study is quantitative in nature. The population for the study was made up of private- and public-sector

organisations in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. This is because females hold both managerial and non-managerial positions in these sectors, partly due to the advocacy by female activists that seek to empower women in all areas. The Greater Accra Region was used because of its cosmopolitan nature: it is made up of people from all the ten geographical and political regions. The sample space was six selected organisations, two each from service, financial and manufacturing institutions. The cluster sampling of the three sectors was followed by convenience and snowball techniques. Each organisation was given 50 questionnaires. In total, 300 questionnaires were administered, out of which 207 were successfully retrieved, representing a response rate of 69%.

The main instrument used for the study was the *Work Interference with Family (WIF) and Family Interference with Work (FIW)* inventory developed by Gutek, Searle and Klepa (1991). The original measure used eight items to describe the extent to which an employee's work demands interfere with family responsibilities (four items) and the extent to which family demands interfere with work responsibilities (four items). Two additional items were added to each of the subscales by Carlson and Perrewé (1999). The two subscales have also been combined into a composite measure of work and family interference (Carlson and Perrewé, 1999). The present study added two other items, adapted from Bedu-Addo (2010) whose work on work family conflict focused on Ghanaian women in higher status organisations.

By the use of several tests in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), analyses were made of the data gathered.

4.0 Findings and discussions

The findings and discussions are based on the stated hypotheses as well as the objectives for the study.

4.1 Hypothesis One: Females who are married will experience a significantly higher level of family-to-work conflict than males who are married.

The table of analysis (Table 1) produced the following result: $t_{(95)}=0.51, p>0.05$

At the 0.05 level of significance H_1 is rejected. Thus for family-to-work conflict, no significant difference exists between male and female formal workers who are married although the mean scores show that male formal workers who are married experience more of the family-to-work conflict than female formal workers who are married. Duxbury and Higgins (2003) found that both male and female employees who had responsibilities towards dependents (including spouse and children) experience higher levels of family-to-work conflict. Carnicer *et al.* (2004) reported that the presence of children in the family has a positive relationship with work family conflict. Carlson *et al.* (2000) found that employees who were very attached to their family experienced more of family-to-work conflict. Both male and female formal workers who are married experience relatively the same level of working conditions are so are predisposed to the stressors and demands, not only at the place of work, but also at the family level. This has largely accounted for the non-significant relationship between male and female married formal workers in their experience of family-to-work conflict. Frone *et al.* (1997) noted that with time males would eventually take up additional responsibilities in the home as a result of more females joining the formal sector of labour. Accordingly, this perspective points to the view that males are gradually experiencing the same family-to-work conflict as females are.

It is also now the case that there has been a shift in the cultural phenomenon, which make the home the preserve of women and the workplace the preserve of men. In recent times both men and women are bread winners of the family. For this reason, they both share household expenses as well as household chores, thereby making them more likely to experience similar levels of conflict.

4.2 Hypothesis Two: Holders of managerial positions will experience a significantly higher level of work-to-family conflict than workers who hold non-managerial positions.

By summary, the results obtained from the analysis indicated the following: $t_{(196)}=2.36, p<0.05$ (Table 2).

The p -value being less than the level of significance means that a significant difference exists between formal workers holding managerial positions and formal workers not holding managerial positions. The mean score for those holding managerial positions ($m_1=27.67$) is greater than the mean score for those who do not hold managerial positions ($m_2=25.40$). The mean difference ($m_1-m_2=2.26$) is significant. H_3 is retained, meaning that for work-to-family conflict, holders of managerial positions experience more of the inter-role conflict than workers who do not hold managerial positions. This result can be attributed to the fact that as a worker moves up the organizational hierarchy, additional duties and responsibilities are added. The pressure to fulfill such obligations and to meet set targets make them spend more time on work-related activities than attending to family-level responsibilities, thus a negative spillover from the work to the family domain.

4.3 Research Objective One: Ascertaining whether significant differences exist in work family conflict between male and female formal workers in Ghana.

It was found that no significant difference exists between male and female formal workers in Ghana in terms of their experience of both work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict. This finding was arrived at after an independent samples t-test was ran. For work-to-family conflict, the results were as follows: $t_{(199)}=0.92, p>0.05$

(Table 3), and for family-to-work conflict the results were: $t_{(199)}=0.37, p>0.05$ (Table 4).

Although no significant differences exist in the inter-role conflicts between male and female formal workers, the mean scores showed that comparatively, male formal workers experience more of the conflict than female formal workers.

This finding is in contrast with that of Duxbury and Higgins (1991) who asserted that there is proof of a significant difference in the experience of conflicts from both domains of work and family. Again the finding of Carnicer *et al.* (2004) is not supported in this study. According to them, females are more likely to experience family-to-work conflict than their male counterparts. According to Luo *et al.* (2007), both work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict are experienced more significantly among females than males. Here again, their findings differ from the current study's. Zhang and Liu's (2011) findings, however, support that of this study. They noted that no gender differences exist in the experience of family-to-work conflict. The current findings (Zhang and Liu, 2011) which is in harmony with that of the current study points to the fact that the change in demand trends from both home and family make all formal workers experience relatively equal amounts of conflicts and stresses. In the past it was held that the burden of family duties make it difficult for females to actively perform their roles at work and this makes it difficult for them to attain a balance of work and family, thereby exposing them to family-to-work conflict (Milkie and Peltola, 1999). Frone *et al.* (1997) earlier predicted that eventually males will assume more domestic duties as many females are moving into the labour market. This perspective thus holds that from the psychological point of view, males are gradually experiencing the same family-to-work conflict as females hence the result of a no significant difference in experience of family-to-work conflict between male and female formal workers. This further explains why both male and female formal workers who are married do not differ significantly in their experience of one of the aspects of work family conflict – family-to-work conflict.

4.4 Research Objective Two: To ascertain whether formal workers in public and private organisations differ in their experience of work family conflict.

Here it was found that a significant difference exists between formal workers in private and public organisations when it comes to family-to-work conflict, with those in the private organisations experiencing more of the conflict than those in the public organisations. Again no significant difference exists in the experience of work-to-family conflict between formal workers in private and public organisations although those in the private organisations have mean scores that are relatively higher than that of those in the public organisations. Thus for family-to-work conflict: $t_{(205)}=3.67, p<0.05$ (Table 5) and for work-to-family conflict: $t_{(205)}=0.75, p>0.05$ (Table 6). A study by Aslam *et al.* (2011) which compared public and private sector workers in terms of the work family conflict perspective concluded a non-significant difference in their level of felt conflict. Aslam *et al.*'s (2011) study is not in consonance with the family-to-work results of this study but rather the work-to-family conflict. This outcome points to the fact that the workload for employees of private and public organisations is not significantly different. Therefore, the negative spillover of work-related tasks to the family domain is common for both workers in the private sector and those in the public sector.

4.5 Research Objective Three: Establishing the order in which the “marital status” experiences affect work family conflict.

The mean scores for each of the options for marital status (single, married, divorced, widowed) were compared and arranged in descending order (that is, from highest to lowest mean score). This is illustrated as follows (Table 7):

Marital Status + WIF: Divorced (27.00) → Single (26.54) → Married (25.91) → Widowed (24.50)

Marital Status + FIW: Divorced (21.43) → Widowed (20.00) → Single (18.31) → Married (17.11)

From the above illustrations, it is observed that in either case of family-to-work conflict and work-to-family conflict, formal workers whose marital status are ‘single’ (that is, Single, Widowed, Divorced) seem to be experiencing more of the conflicts than formal workers who are married, except in the case of work-to-family conflict where those who are ‘married’ experience a slightly higher level of conflict than those who are ‘widowed’.

In testing for the significance of the mean scores (by use of the One-Way ANOVA), the ensuing results were: For FIW: $F_{(3,197)}=1.30, p>0.05$; WIF: $F_{(3,197)}=0.23, p>0.05$ (Table 8).

Thus no significant differences exist in the mean scores, however, they indicate the level of conflict experienced by each category of “marital status”.

5.0 Conclusion

On the whole it can be concluded that environmental forces have a great impact on the nature of conflict felt by formal workers. However, the variables of concern, on their own, cannot be said to fully account for the nature of conflict; they interact with other situations to result in the nature of conflicts. For example, a formal worker who is married and is expected to be experiencing high levels of conflict may be experiencing otherwise as a result of the good support and assistance from the home domain. On the other hand, a married formal worker

who receives good support and assistance from home may have an uncooperative supervisor or boss who can make work life unbearable. In this case, such an individual may be experiencing work-to-family conflict instead of the expected family-to-work conflict.

In recent times in Ghana, there has been strong advocacy from female activists in empowering women. This strong advocacy has challenged many females to venture into areas hitherto populated only by males. For this reason, many more females are not only found working in the financial institutions, manufacturing firms and in the service industry, but are also holding managerial positions. Because of this, their experience of both work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict has been found in this study to be statistically non-significant as compared to that of males.

5.1 Recommendations for formal workers and organisations

The study has emphasized the fact that inter-role conflicts truly exist, especially, the negative spillover from the work to the family domain. Since it is a negative spillover, it is likely to affect the quality of relationship that formal workers would have with their families. If the relationship with the families is impaired, another negative spillover from family to the work domain will result, which may lead to more stressful and conflicting situations for such workers.

Therefore, there should be the possibility of making work more flexible such that focus will be more on results rather than mere presence at the place of work. Again, the human resource practices within organisations should be more friendly so that workers who are in a poor state of physical and mental health are given some time off to relax. High levels of physical and mental breakdown not only affect the total well-being of workers, but also, the productivity of the organisations.

Formal workers, on their part, should delegate some of their functions so that they are less stressed and pressured to meet growing demands on them. Priorities should be set so as to know what to do at a point in time and what needs to be postponed for another time.

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Table 1 Statistical Summary of married formal workers and family-to-work conflict: $\alpha=0.05$
Independent samples t-test

Gender		N	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	t	df	p
FIW	Male	59	17.3559	0.6717	6.2250	0.5124	95	0.30
	Female	38	16.6842		6.4225			

Levene's Test for equality of variances: $p>0.05$

Source: Field Data, 2013

Table 2 Statistical summary of managers and non-managers and work-to-family conflict: Independent samples t-test $\alpha=0.05$

Status/Rank		N	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	t	df	p
WIF	Managerial	69	27.6667	2.2636	6.13252	2.357	196	0.019
	Non-Managerial	129	25.4031		6.59488			

Levene's Test for equality of variances: $p>0.05$

Source: Field Data, 2013

Table 3 Statistical summary of male and female formal workers and WIF: Independent samples t-test $\alpha=0.05$

Gender		N	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	t	df	p
WIF	Male	125	26.5040	0.8724	6.42905	0.922	199	0.358
	Female	76	25.6316		6.62489			

Levene's Test for equality of variances: $p>0.05$

Source: Field Data, 2013

Table 4 Statistical summary of male and female formal workers and FIW: Independent samples t-test $\alpha=0.05$

Gender		N	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	t	df	p
FIW	Males	125	17.9280	0.3622	6.75991	0.373	199	0.710
	Females	76	17.5658		6.53878			

Levene's Test for equality of variances: $p>0.05$

Source: Field Data, 2013

Table 5 Statistical summary of formal workers in private and public organisations and FIW $\alpha=0.05$

	Sector	N	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	t	df	p
FIW	Public	88	15.8523	3.3242	5.9045	3.666	205	0.000
	Private	119	19.1765		6.8242			

Levene's Test for equality of variances: $p>0.05$

Source: Field Data, 2013

Table 6 Statistical summary of formal workers in private and public organisations and WIF $\alpha=0.05$

	Sector	N	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	T	df	p
WIF	Public	88	25.7159	0.6875	7.1131	0.745	205	0.457
	Private	119	26.4034		6.1193			

Levene's Test for equality of variances: $p>0.05$

Source: Field Data, 2013

Table 7 Group statistics of mean scores: "Marital Status" and FIW and WIF

Marital Status	WIF (mean scores)	FIW (mean scores)
Single	26.54	18.31
Married	25.91	17.11
Divorced	27.00	21.43
Widowed	24.50	20.00

Source: Field Data, 2013

Table 8 Statistical summary of marital status and WIF & FIW: One-Way ANOVA $\alpha=0.05$

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p
FIW	Between Groups	171.990	3	57.330	1.302	.275
	Within Groups	8675.533	197	44.038		
	Total	8847.522	200			
WIF	Between Groups	29.469	3	9.823	.230	.875
	Within Groups	8400.003	197	42.640		
	Total	8429.473	200			

Source: Field Data, 2013