Umbrella Summary

Work-Family Conflict

A Summary of Workforce Research Evidence Relevant to the Child Welfare Field

What is work-family conflict?

Work-family conflict is defined as "a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). Work-family conflict is often contrasted with work-family enrichment, which represents the positive spillover that can occur between the work and family domains. The idea of work-family conflict is grounded in resource drain theory, which suggests that individuals have limited physical, psychological, and social resources to draw on while performing in different roles. When individuals devote large quantities of their resources to one domain of life, their performance in other domains may thus decline (Staines, 1980).

Beyond the broad definition, work-family conflict is also more narrowly defined in terms of the direction of the conflict. Specifically, work-family conflict is split into work interfering with family (WIF) and family interfering with work (FIW; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). WIF and FIW are moderately and positively related to each other, but still retain enough unique variance to justify investigating them as separate constructs (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005; Shockley & Singla, 2011). Throughout this summary, WIF and FIW will be used where applicable to indicate findings that are direction specific, whereas work-family conflict will be used to refer to the conflict between the work and family domains more generally.

WIF is most often measured using a four-item scale (Kopelman et al., 1983). Example items include "On the job I have so much work to do that it takes away from my personal interests" and "My work takes up time that I'd like to spend with family/friends". Similarly, FIW is measured using four parallel items, such as "My personal life takes up time that I'd like to spend at work" (Burley, 1989).

Why is work-family conflict important?

Work-family conflict is important because it is associated with an array of attitudinal and behavioral outcomes in the workplace and in the family.

Work Interference with Family (WIF)

In the work domain, WIF has a moderate, negative relationship with job satisfaction and a modest, negative relationship with organizational commitment (Allen et al., 2020; Liao et al., 2019). WIF has a moderate, positive relationship with burnout and is strongly related to greater stress (Amstad et al., 2011). WIF is not significantly related to job performance but is strongly and negatively related to organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), indicating that those facing

greater WIF are less likely to engage in extra-role helping behaviors in the workplace (Amstad et al., 2011; Liao et al., 2019). Additionally, WIF is moderately and positively related to turnover intentions, although the relationship between WIF and turnover remains unknown (Amstad et al., 2011).

Considering non-work outcomes, WIF is moderately associated with less family satisfaction and modestly associated with less marital satisfaction and family commitment (Allen et al., 2020; Amstad et al., 2011; Liao et al., 2019).

Family Interference with Work (FIW)

FIW is modestly associated with less job satisfaction and moderately associated with less organizational commitment (Allen et al., 2020; Liao et al., 2019). FIW has moderate and positive relationships with both burnout and stress (Amstad et al., 2011). FIW is moderately and negatively associated with job performance and has a strong negative relationship with OCB (Amstad et al., 2011; Liao et al., 2019). There are no known meta-analytic findings on the relationship between FIW and turnover, but FIW does have a modest positive relationship with turnover intentions (Amstad et al., 2011). FIW is moderately associated with less family satisfaction and marital satisfaction but is not significantly related to family commitment (Allen et al., 2020; Amstad et al., 2011; Liao et al., 2019).

Despite what the names *WIF* and *FIW* imply, the evidence suggests that both types of work-family conflict involve negative circumstances at home and at work. WIF is associated with numerous work variables, and FIW is associated with family variables. Because the research is only correlational, the underlying dynamics and causal mechanisms are unclear, but it nonetheless seems important to try to limit both types of conflict.

What contributes to work-family conflict?

A number of factors may influence whether an individual experiences work-family conflict, including individual differences, job characteristics, family characteristics, support, and organizational policies.

Work Interference with Family (WIF)

In examining individual differences, personality traits may play a role in the degree to which an individual experiences WIF. Certain negative personality traits like negative affect and neuroticism are associated with greater WIF, whereas certain positive personality traits like self-efficacy, positive affect, and conscientiousness seem to serve as a buffer to limit the degree to which an individual will experience conflict between their work and family (Allen et al., 2012). Additionally, women experience greater rates of WIF than do men (Shockley et al., 2017). However, among dual-earner couples, men experience more WIF than their female partners, since men tend to work longer hours, and greater work hours are positively associated with WIF (Shockley et al., 2017).

Both job stressors and family stressors are significantly related to WIF (Michel et al., 2011). Those who experience higher WIF tend to be those that work a greater number of hours and

face greater demands at work, whereas job autonomy may lessen one's level of WIF (Allen et al., 2020; Liao et al., 2019). Having a good support system in place, including that of coworkers, supervisors, one's organization, family members, and one's spouse may contribute to experiencing less WIF (French et al., 2018). On a policy level, organizations may want to consider giving employees greater discretion about their work location and scheduling and may want to consider implementing family support policies (e.g., childcare, paid family leave), as these are associated with less WIF (Allen et al., 2013; Butts et al., 2013). In the family domain, research indicates that greater time spent with family is associated with less WIF, whereas greater family demands and role stress are associated with more WIF (Allen et al., 2020; Liao et al., 2019; Michel et al., 2011).

Family Interference with Work (FIW)

As with WIF, certain trait-based variables (e.g., positive affect, self-efficacy, conscientiousness) appear to protect individuals from experiencing FIW, while others (e.g., negative affect, neuroticism) appear to make individuals more vulnerable to experiencing FIW (Allen et al., 2012). Women tend to experience greater rates of FIW than men, as women tend to put in more family hours, and family hours are associated with higher FIW (Shockley et al., 2017).

Job stressors and family stressors are related to greater FIW (Michel et al., 2011). Those who experience FIW tend to be individuals who spend a greater number of hours in the work and family domains, have greater demands in the work and family domains, and face role stress in the work and family domains (Allen et al., 2020; Liao et al., 2019; Michel et al., 2011). Flexible work policies do not appear to be beneficial for alleviating FIW, but having social supports in place (e.g., family supports, supervisor supports) may help to mitigate the negative effects of stressors in the work or family domains that lead to FIW (Allen et al., 2013; French et al., 2018).

QIC-WD Takeaways

► Work-family conflict occurs when individuals face incompatible role pressures between their work and family domains; researchers typically distinguish between conflict involving work interference with family (WIF) or family interference with work (FIW).

► WIF has moderate, negative relations to job satisfaction and modest, negative relations to organizational commitment. WIF is strongly related to stress and moderately related to burnout. WIF is not related to job performance, but has strong and negative relations to OCB. WIF is moderately and positively associated with turnover intentions, and the connection with actual turnover is unknown.

► FIW has modest, negative associations with job satisfaction and moderate, negative associations with organizational commitment. FIW has a moderate, positive relationship with both burnout and stress. FIW is moderately and negatively related to job performance and strongly and negatively related to OCB. FIW has a modest, positive relationship with turnover intentions.

- ► Negative personality traits are associated with greater work-family conflict, whereas positive personality traits are associated with less work-family conflict.
- ► Women tend to experience greater rates of work-family conflict than do men.
- ► Greater work and family demands may contribute to experiencing more work-family conflict.
- ► Flexible work policies are most helpful in addressing conflict that occurs from work to family, but do not significantly help conflict that occurs from family to work.
- ► Having good social supports in place at work and with one's family is important for limiting work-family conflict.
- ► Researchers and practitioners seeking to measure work-family conflict should consider using Kopelman and colleagues' (1983) four-item scale for WIF and Burley's (1989) four-item scale for FIW.

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