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Role Stressors as Predictors and Job Attitude and Turnover Intention as Outcomes of Work Family Conflict

Nadia Newaz Rimi[1], Mohammad Rabiul Bashar Rubel[2]

[1]Ph.d Candidate, School of Management, Universiti Sains Malaysia,
nnrimi@gmail.com H/P +6 01114623923

[2]Ph.d Candidate, School of Management, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to provide a qualitative review of the predictors and outcomes of work–family conflict that: (a) provides a theoretically sound model of work–family conflict and role stressors as its antecedents and job attitude and turnover intention as outcomes; (b) disentangle the categories of role stressors (e.g., role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload) having influences on increasing work family conflict; and (c) discusses job attitude in terms of job satisfaction and organizational commitment and turnover intention that are further influenced by work family conflict. From the review of previous literatures a relationship among these variables are shown that can be empirically tested in future study.

Keywords Role stressor, Work family conflict, Job attitude, Turn over intention
Paper type: Conceptual Paper

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1. Introduction

Recent changes in the workplace and demography of the employees have contributed more to study the interaction between work and family (Ahmad, 2008). Work family conflict has also been emerged as a research area over the last few decades and has generated a number of studies focusing on developing model, identifying predictors and outcomes of such conflict on work and family life along with a possible organization strategy to balance work and family life. Organizations attempt to help employees manage the balance between work and family demands as job pressure often instigates work family conflict leading to various negative outcomes such as employee behavioral cognition problems, attitudinal problems (Greenhaus, & Powell, 2006; Dilek Yildirima, & Aycanb, 2008; Ahuja, Chudoda, Kacmar, McKnight and George, 2007; Michel, Kotrba, Mitchelson, Clark, & Baltes, 2011). Such negative outcomes have become so critical that researchers are studying organizational strategies considering lessening job pressure on work life and subsequent family life. The present research focuses on relating how job-related factors such as role stressors work as predictors of work family conflict and how both job attitudes (job satisfaction and organizational commitment) and behavioral cognition (turnover intention) of employees are influenced by work family conflict. Based on the literature reviews, propositions among the study variables such as, role stressors, WFC (work family conflict), job attitude and turnover intention are developed and recommended for future empirical study.

2. Work family conflict

Work–family conflict is commonly defined as ''a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures of the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect'' (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985: p. 77; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal 1964; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1992; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Although numerous links have been identified to explain the interdependence between work and family domains (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Parasuraman et al., 1992), most research studies refer to the early work of Kahn et al., (1964) to examine work-family links from the conflict perspective stemming from organizational stress. In applying the role conflict perspective of Kahn et al. (1964) to this area of work and family, researchers see work-family conflict as a form of inter role conflict in which the demands of

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work and family roles are mutually incompatible so that meeting the demands in one domain that makes it difficult to meet the demands in the other domain (Greenhaus et al., 1985).

Work–family conflict is generally seen as time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based (Greenhaus et al., 1985). This conflict exists when: "(a) time devoted to the requirements of one role makes it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another; (b) strain from participation in one role makes it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another; and (c) specific behaviors required by one role make it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another" (Greenhaus et al., 1985, p. 76). Later on, empirical evidences have also supported the time-based, strain based, and behavior-based categorization of the work–family conflict construct (Bruck, Allen, & Spector, 2002; Frone, 2000).

In addition, Netemeyer, Boles and McMurrian (1996) suggested that there are two distinct forms of work-family conflict: work-to-family and family-to-work conflict (Byron, 2005; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux & Brinley, 2005; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). Work-to-family conflict is "interrole conflicts in which the general demands of time devoted to, and strain created by the job, interfere with performing family-related responsibilities" (Netemeyer et al., 1996, p. 401). Family-to-work conflict refers to the reverse. There is the distinction between work-family conflict (WFC), which is work influencing family and family-work conflict (FWC), which is a family influencing work (Frone et al., 1992; O'Driscoll, Ilgen & Hildreth, 1992; Williams & Alliger, 1994; Michel et al., 2011). Work influences family more than vice versa (Greenhaus et al., 2006). However, Frone et al. (2000) found that work interferes three times more with family than vice versa. The same authors found different antecedents and consequences in the work-family interface and the family- work interface. Overall, researchers are recognizing that work-family conflict is a complex, multi-dimensional construct (work-to-family and family-to-work) with multiple forms (time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based).

To avoid the conceptual confusion surrounding the work-family conflict variable, the present study will concentrate on work-family conflict (WFC), which is distinct from family work conflict (FWC). There is a distinction between time-based, strain-based and behavior-based

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WFC or FWC (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006). In this study, the researchers will concentrate on "strain-based" WFC, i.e. how work role intensifies WFC that may influence employee to develop a negative attitude toward the job and to induce turnover intention.

In this study specific concentration is given in examining the interactions among how organization-created factors such as role stressors adversely affect WFC that further increases employee problems for instance, negative job attitudes (low job satisfaction and organizational commitment) and turnover intention in the organization. Acknowledging the prevalence of work-family conflict and its negative outcomes (Frone, 2003), it is therefore critical to develop a model of work role factors (role stressors) as predictors of WFC and associated negative outcomes of WFC on job attitude and turnover intention.

3. Conceptual framework

The growing interest in understanding how organizational life influences family life that creates problems in the organization has stimulated the development of model showing predictors and outcomes of WFC. In this paper, it is predicted that the expectations surrounding work role a person performs, can generate inter role conflict. The inter role conflict occurs because it is not possible for the focal person to satisfy all expectations of his or her work role since the role conflict, role ambiguity, and role over-load create tension in the focal person (Khan et al., 1964). As work and family are the two central spheres in most adults' lives and these two spheres or systems are interdependent (Ahmad, 2008), tensions in the workplace have a negative effect on personal family life. Recognizing the bidirectional nature of the inter role conflict constructs, family problem resulting from work stress is predicted to develop negative job attitude and turnover intention. While developing the proposed model such interaction has been considered.

In addition to that the model is developed based on the stress-strain model (Dunham, 1984) with the extension of the outcomes of strain. According to the stress-strain model, the predictors are referred to as stressors, and the conflict as strain. In this model, the relationship between role stressors and strain or WFC is explained with their outcomes in terms of job

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attitude and turnover intention. However, the following framework has been constructed to understand the work family conflict with a more focused view.
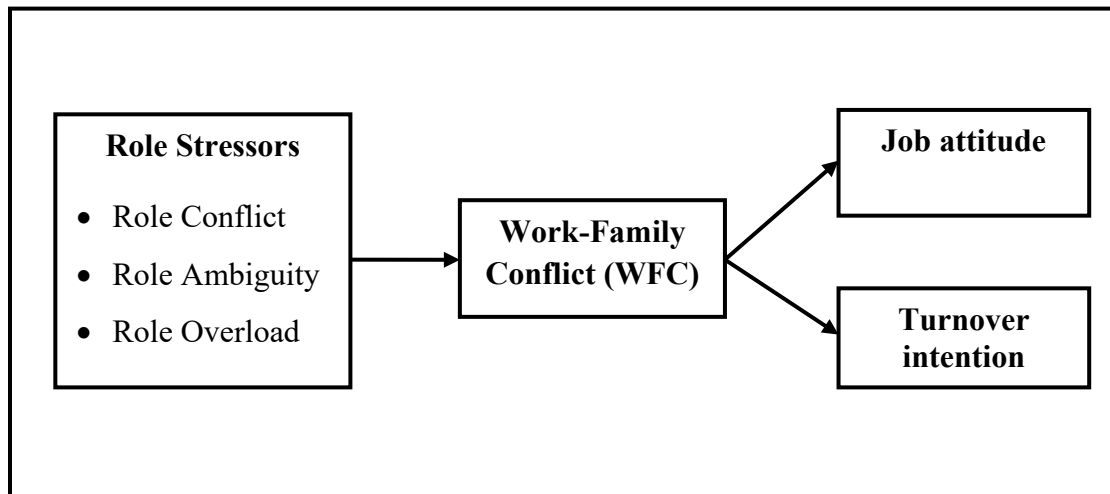

Figure 1: Proposed Framework

4. Role Stressors as predictors of WFC

Stress is considered to be a response to a loss or lack of control over the work performance (Schabracq, 2003). According to the authors stress evolves when we must do something that we are not able and/or willing to do. In the organization, stress is mostly related with job responsibility or work role the employee needs to perform. Role stress theory conjectures that employees are required to perform divergent roles (patterns of behaviors) to meet the demands of distinct organizational stakeholders (Kahn et al. 1964; Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman 1970). Gilbert, Winnie and Sels (2011) explain how the HR role along with business role of line managers creates role stressors for them in meeting the expectations of HR managers and employees. Thus, role stressors lessen an employee's ability to perform by diverting effort away from focal tasks, thus reducing the mental resources available for job duties (Tuten & Neidermeyer, 2004; Harris, Artis, Walters, & Licata, 2006). Role stressors lead to negative work attitudes, less well-being and reduced individual performance (e.g. Jones, Chonko, Rangarajan, & Roberts, 2007) as well. Within the stressor framework Khan et al. (1964) consider role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload as the primary sources of stress.

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4.1 Role Conflict

Role conflict refers to the incompatibility in communicating expectations that impinge on perceived role performance (Rizzo et al., 1970). Boles, Johnston and Hair, Jr. (1997) have asserted that an employee experiences role conflict when he/she receives incompatible sets of expectations that need to be satisfied simultaneously. Khan, et al. (1964) define role conflict in terms of discrepant role expectations sent by members of an individual's role set.

Kahn et al. have defined role conflict as the "simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other" (1964, p. 19). Thus, it can be clarified that role conflict is the outcome of uncertainty regarding what the role the individual has to perform in the organization. Role conflict is an incompatibility in expectations towards the behavior of a person in his/her role (Gilbert et al., 2011). Therefore, it can be claimed that role conflict exists when an employee faces differing expectations as such that compliance with one expectation would make it difficult or impossible to effectively comply with the other expectations.

4.2 Role Ambiguity

Role ambiguity is the situation where the employees are not able to continue a specific task due to unavailability of information. According to Khan et al. (1964) role ambiguity is prescribed as a lack of clear understanding about the actions one is required to perform in order to do one's job correctly and efficiently. The authors further propose that role ambiguity may include: (1) what tasks are expected to perform, (2) how the tasks are to be performed, (3) how the performance will be evaluated, and (4) the consequences of completing or not completing the tasks. Hardy and Conway (1978) also clarify that role ambiguity is the lack of clarity in role expectations and disagreement on relevant norms to perform the task.

Further, role ambiguity refers to the lack of necessary information (specificity and predictability) about the duties, objectives and responsibilities needed to perform a particular task or role in the organization or the lack of role clarity (Glazer & Beehr, 2005). Therefore, it

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can be said that role ambiguity is considered as an obstacle faced by the employee in completing a task properly.

4.3 Role overload

If an employee in the organization is expected to have high involvement in multiple work roles (Hang-Yue, Foley & Loi, 2005), they are likely to suffer from role overload. Again, role overload refers to the absolute amount of work required and the time frame in which it must be completed by the individual (Cooper, Dewe & O'Driscoll, 2001). In a normal sense role overload occurs when work role requires more time and effort than an individual has for them so that roles cannot be performed adequately and comfortably (Markham and Bonjean, 1996). Further, Michel et al. (2011) define role overload as the perception of having too much work-role tasks and minimum time to do that. The authors also reveal that role overload and role time demands are unique, and role time demands are often considered as the precursor of role overload.

The workload has received increased attention in the stress literature (Babakus, Yavas, and Ashill 2009; Tucker, Sinclair, Mohr, Adler, Thomas & Salvi, 2009). A study of Japanese employees shows that problems like *Karoshi* (working to death) and *Karo-jisatsu* (suicide by overwork) resulting from role stress have become more serious in recent years (Kanai 2009). Work overload results in uncertainty for an employee about his or her ability to complete job tasks adequately and in time (Spector and Jex 1998). When employees face a demanding workload, they allocate more effort to the task at hand and, thus, have fewer opportunities to engage in the human relationship with other employees (Jex and Thomas 2003). For role overload, an employee may need to work with an asymmetrical schedule that involves unpaid overtime. Overtime in the workplace reduces time demand in family that further intensifies WFC.

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5. Role stressors and work family conflict

Work stressors such as role conflict, role overload, and role ambiguity have been found to increase levels of work-family conflict (Foley, hang-Yue, & Lui, 2005; Fu & Shaffer, 2001; Michel, Mitchelson, Pichler, & Cullen, 2010). This finding is consistent with similar other studies, too (Dilek Yildirima, & Aycanb, 2008; Parasuraman, et al., 1992; Hoge, 2009). Foley et al. (2005) find that work stressors lead to both time-based and strain-based forms of work-family conflict. In several researches, work stress is proposed as an antecedent or predictor of work-family conflict (Wang, Lesage, Schmitz & Drapeau, 2008; Matthews, Bulger, & Barnes-Farrell, 2010). Examples are less available to and involvement with family members and increased signs of anger and aggression in the family of the employed person (Ford, Heinen & Langkamer, 2007).

Work overload has been shown to directly and positively affect work-to-family interference (Boyar, Maertz Jr, Pearsonl & Keough, 2003; Fu 7Shaffer, 2001). These authors have claimed that too much pressure on the organization makes the employee tensed and consequently increase their level of conflict within the family. In a recent study Nasurdin and O'Driscoll (2012) find a positive relationship between work overload and work family interferences both in Malaysian and New Zealand respondents. According to the authors WFC can be reduced if the organization can control the role overload of the employee.

In this study the relationship between specific role stressors and WFC is explored based on previous research works. Identifying specific role stressors that are related to WFC can help to understand the delicacy of role stress spill over. This in turn can be important in the prevention of a negative impact of work on the job and family as well. However, the present focus is on the role stress spillover effect on the job (attitude and turnover intention). Thus, the following proposition can be developed.

Proposition 1: Role stressors can influence work family conflict (WFC).

   Proposition 1a: Role overload can influence work family conflict (WFC).

   Proposition 1b: Role conflict can influence work family conflict (WFC).

   Proposition 1c: Role ambiguity can influence work family conflict (WFC).

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6. Job attitude and turnover intention as outcomes of WFC

Attitude can be defined as a positive or negative evaluation of people, on an object, events, activities and ideas or about anything regarding the environment. Eagly & Chaiken (2007) define attitude as a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor. As such job attitude is the feeling of individual employee about the job in a particular organization. Job attitudes are evaluations of one's job that express one's feelings toward, beliefs about, and attachment to one's job (Judge & Kammeyer-Muller, 2012). Two most commonly studied job attitudes are job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Harrison, Newman & Roth, 2006). Reviewing early works on job satisfaction and commitment, Harrison et al. (2006) conceptualize both job satisfaction and organizational commitment as indicating overall job attitude.

Ivancevich, Olelans and Matterson, (1997) define job satisfaction as the reaction and perception of the employee regarding his/her job and the expectation of employee in the organization. Job satisfaction is an emotional situation related to the positive or negative judgment of job experiences (Locke, 1969). Putting in another way, Job satisfaction is a positive feeling an individual has towards his or her job (Daft, 2003). Therefore, it can be stated that employee job satisfaction is the pleasure that an employee receives from his or her job. Diaz-Serrano and Cabral Vieira, (2005) consider the concept of job satisfaction as the overall well-being of employees in the organization, where it is considered as the decision making tool for the employees to stay or to leave a job (Gazioglu & Tansel, 2006). Job satisfaction is the combination of intrinsic and extrinsic components of a job (Rose, 2005). Therefore, it can be clarified that job satisfaction is the feeling or emotional expression of employees which is derived from the job itself. Employees, who are highly satisfied, feel organization as a part of their family and try to make them more committed to the organization's objectives.

Organizational commitment refers to an individual's emotional affection to and connection with an employing organization. Organizational commitment is the much studied phenomenon in the organizational and management literature (Bentein, Vandenberg, Vandenberghe, & Stinglhamber, 2005; Vandenabeele, 2009; O'Neill, Haririson, Cleveland,

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Almeida, Stawski & Crouter, 2009). The issue of organizational commitment can be defined from both attitudinal and behavioral aspects. In this study commitment is considered as attitudinal aspects of employee in the organization. According to Mowday Porter and Sreers (1982 p. 26) "attitudinal commitment focuses on the process by which people come to think about their relationship with the organization". The authors also explain that in many ways it can be thought of as a mindset in which individuals consider the extent to which their own values and goals are congruent with those of the organization. Allen and Meyer (1990) proposed a three-component model of organizational commitment (TCM), on the basis of the idea that organizational commitment comes in three distinct forms of affective commitment which denotes 'an emotional attachment to, identify with, and involvement in the organization' (p. 21).

Vakola and Nikolaou (2005) characterized commitment by at least three related factors; a strong acceptance of the organization's values and goals, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization. Individuals come to organizations with certain needs, skills, expectations and they hope to find a work environment where they can use their abilities and satisfy their needs (DeConinck, 2011). The author also reveals that when an organization can provide these opportunities, the likelihood of increasing commitment is enhanced. Therefore, it can be asserted that commitment is the feeling of employee in the organization which pursues them to think themselves as part of the organization and such thought is reflected in the their improved performance, long term attachment to the organizational goal and also in reduced turnover intention.

7. Turnover intention

Intentions are the statement or actions about a specific behavior of interest (Berndt, 1981). Turnover intention is defined as the willingness of leaving from the organization. Turnover intention indicates the probability of changing job by individuals within a certain time period (Souse- Poza & Henneberger, 2004) and for this reason it is treated as the immediate precursor of actual turnover (Griffeth & Hom & Gaertner, 2000; Kovner, Brewer, Greene & Fairchild, 2009). According to Mobley, Griffeth, Hand and Meglino (1979) turnover intention

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increases the individual observation and evaluation of job alternatives. Intent to leave refers to the self termination of membership of employees from the organization whereas intent to stay refers to the extent of that membership with the organization (Kim, Price, Mueller & Watson, 1996). Therefore, turnover intention is an indicator of problems either in the employees or in organizations that instigate thinking of leaving the organization reflecting the negative relation with the organization. However, work related factors that create WFC may induce turnover intention, too, that further indicates workplace problems in the organization.

8. WFC, Job Attitude, and Turnover Intention

Work-family conflict arising from the work domain have been associated with lower job satisfaction (Anderson, Coffey & Byerly, 2002; Aycan & Eskin, 2005), higher rates of absenteeism (Anderson et al, 2002) and employee turnover (Henly, Shaefer & Waxman, 2006). Literatures on WFC have also been shown to affect employees' work-related behaviors such as absenteeism, tardiness, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996; Kinnunen, Geurts, & Mauno, 2004; Zhang, Griffeth & Fried, 2012). For example, employees who experience work-family conflict are prone to frequent absence and, as a result, are less committed to the organization. Such employee may search for alternative job to overcome family life turmoil resulting from work problem. Thereby employee turnover intention increases and ultimate turnover occur.

A recent study by Blomme, Van Rheede and Tromp (2010) finds that both work family conflict and organizational support are the predictors of employee turnover intention in the hospitality industry. In earlier meta-analytical studies, researchers have found that work-family conflict and family-work conflict positively influence employee's turnover intention (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2005).

In a very recent study, Zhang et al. (2012) also notify the same consequences regarding work family conflict and turnover intention. According to the authors work family conflict is positively associated with emotional exhaustion and turnover intention whereas, negatively related with employee life satisfaction and organizational commitment. In another study Ahuja et

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al. (2007) find that work family conflict is the predictor of both organizational commitment and turnover intention of IT road warriors employees. The authors find a mediating influence of organizational commitment between the relationship of work family conflict and turnover intention. Oredein and Alao (2009) conduct a study in Nigeria to measure the impact of work-family conflict on both job satisfaction and turnover intentions of lecturers. The authors have found a significant positive impact of work to family conflict on turnover intentions of lecturers.

Furthermore, conflict between work and family role alters employee's perceptions of the quality of life and the quality of family life (Md-Sidin, Sambasivan & Islam, 2010; Michel, Mitchelson, Kotrba, LeBreton, & Baltes, 2009). This, in turn, can impact organizational outcomes such as productivity, absenteeism, and turnover. For example, if employees are causing problems at home due to the stress at work (i.e., long hours, weekend or holiday hours, etc.), the employees are likely to leave their job in an effort to prevent turmoil in their home lives. From such reviews it can be proposed that.

Proposition2a: WFC can influence job attitude (job satisfaction and organizational commitment) and turnover intention.

Proposition2b: WFC can influence turnover intention.

9. Conclusion

Organizational role embraces a large percentage of most individuals' time and activities that are often unclear, conflicting and over demanding but constitutes a fundamental aspect of most people's lives. As a result, work activities and experiences have important implications for individuals' off-work experiences and behaviors. On the other hand individuals cannot put aside their off-work experiences outside the work arena. Such spill over effect is creating WFC and FWC. As the present study focus is on WFC, work experiences in terms of role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload are studied having influences on WFC which affect an employee relationship with an organization in terms of satisfaction, commitment and turnover intention. The propositions developed from the qualitative study in this attempt are anticipated to advance

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the theoretical understanding of the interactions among role stressors, WFC and employee outcomes.

10. Recommendations

In the stressor-strain process, role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload play important role that affect interpersonal conflict, emotional exhaustion, job attitudes, and behaviors (Jaramillo, Mulki & Boles, 2011). This finding can be related to the interactions among role stressors, WFC and job attitude and turnover intention. Referring to this thought, Jaramillo et al., (2011) study suggests empirical investigation of the conceptual model showing the relationship among role stressors, WFC, job attitude and turnover intention. The study findings may help to guide practitioners and managers to create a stress free work climate to improve the balance between work and family life of employees as to reduce negative job attitude and turnover intention of employees.

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