

The Divergence of the Term of ‘Supports Received by Employees in Organization’ in the Context of Work-Family Conflict**

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Abstract

Work-family conflict is a problem experienced by many employees, particularly married female employees. Schedules and work demands can make it difficult for workers in doing family tasks, or conversely, excessive family demands could complicate the fulfillment of the demands of the job. This can lead to work-family conflict. There are many studies that examined supports given in organizations to reduce work-family conflict. Uniquely, each study used their own terms in naming variables. These divergences can make it difficult for the readers and researchers who are interested in the same topic to categorize the variables. This literature review aimed to examine and classify the various terms in the variables used in these studies into specific categories related to the support received by employees in the organization. This study was conducted on 60 articles published between 1991-2022. Results showed that there were 62 terms on ‘supports received by employees in the workplace’ which each research could use more than one support variables or the parts of it. These terms were analyzed to be put into four categories: perceived organizational support, social support, family friendly policy, and family friendly culture. However, some categories used to group these variables still have the sense of overlap, although the categories are pretty popular in human resource management researches, especially those related to efforts to deal with stress or conflict. Implications of work-family conflict research are discussed.

Keywords: support received by employees in the workplace, perceived organizational support, social support, family friendly policy, family friendly culture, literature review.

Introduction

Work-family conflict is a common problem experienced by employees, particularly married female employees. The double burden faced by women can hinder the realization of work-family balance. Work schedules and demands can make employees feel the difficulty in finishing the family tasks, or conversely, excessive family demands can complicate the fulfillment of the demands of the job (Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991). This can lead to work-family conflict.

In many developed countries, organizations are very much aware that this problem greatly affects employees’ performance. To address this, organizations provide support to help their employees reduce the conflict and eventually help them perform better in the workplace. The family friendly policies was considered very important

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that during the economic crisis in the United States of America in 1990s, which forced many organizations to cut their operational budget, the employers still continued to provide the program to support work-family balance (Greenberg & Baron, 2000).

There are many studies that examined supports provided by organizations to reduce work-family conflict, but each study used their own terms in naming variables. The divergences can make it difficult for readers and researchers to categorize the variables.

This literature review aimed to examine and categorize the various terms on variables used in those studies into specific categories related to the support received by employees in organizations.

Literature Review

Work Family Conflict

Role conflict was initially formulated by Katz & Kahn (as cited in Wiersma, 1990) as one of the causes of role stress. According to them, role conflict is the simultaneous occurrence of two or more role demands, where fulfilling one role creates difficulties in fulfilling another. Role conflict is the result of having multiple roles—both in the context of an individual's work and in the interaction between major life roles, such as work and family responsibilities (Wiersma, 1990).

Work-family conflict can arise when efforts to fulfill family role demands are disrupted by efforts to fulfill work role demands, for example, spending long hours working in the office leading to neglect of tasks at home. This conflict can also occur when efforts to fulfill work role demands are disrupted by efforts to fulfill family role demands, for instance, when a child is sick, parents cannot go to work (Gutek et al., 1991; Rice, Frone, & McFarlin, 1992). Thus, work-family conflict can essentially be divided into 2 forms (Gutek et al., 1991), namely work to family conflict (wfc=work-family conflict; work-related problems that interfere with family) and family to work conflict (fwc=family-work conflict; family-related problems that interfere with work).

Many researchers argue that the elements of work-family conflict include the general demands of a role, the time allocated to that role, and the tension generated by that role (Cooke & Rousseau, 1984; Gutek et al., 1991). The general demands of a role refer to the responsibilities, requirements, expectations, tasks, and commitments associated with that role. Time-based conflict arises when the amount of time allocated to work/family roles makes it difficult to fulfill family/work responsibilities. Pressure-based conflict arises when the pressures created by work/family roles interfere with the fulfillment of family/work responsibilities. For example, anxiety created by work roles can interfere with the performance of family tasks (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996).

The cumulative demands of dual roles can result in role strain in two types, namely overload and interference (Kelly & Voydanoff, as cited in Duxbury & Higgins, 1991). Overload occurs when the total time and energy related to being in dual roles are too great for the individual, making it difficult for them to perform their roles effectively. Interference arises when conflicting demands hinder the fulfillment of responsibilities for dual roles (Duxbury & Higgins, 1991).

Support

Perceived Operational Support

Perceived organizational support refers to employees' belief concerning the extent to which an organization's management values their contribution, cares about their well-being, considers their goal and values, listens to complaints, helps them when they have a problem, and treats them fairly (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis-LaMastro, 1990).

Perceived organizational support can help meet social-emotional needs, which will in return lead to employee's sense of obligation to give back to the organization (Armeli et al., 1998). Employees who perceive that they get the respect from and are being cared for by the organization have stronger belief that the organization will meet their obligations to acknowledge employee's attitude and behavior and provide reward accordingly for the desirable ones. Reward can be informal, including appreciation and mentoring, or formal such as promotion and salary raise (Wayne, et al., 1997). In this instance, perceived organizational support helps meet the employee's need for appreciation (Armeli et al., 1998).

Social Support

Social support is a particular 'thing' (something given, done, or said) that one person can offer to another (Taylor, Sylvestre, & Botschner, 1998). This particular 'thing' can be in the form of instrumental, informational, emotional as well as emotional supports and appreciation (House; quoted by Parasuraman, Greenhaus, & Granrose, 1992). This particular thing will lead someone to believe that she or he is valued, loved and esteemed as a member of a network of communication (Kelly, 1994).

Social support refers to the existence of others, who people can rely on, be cared for, loved, and respected (Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983). When there is a high level of social support, people believe they can depend on anyone when in need of support.

Social support can come from the workplace and outside of the workplace. However, this research will only discuss workplace-related social support. Many studies have indicated the importance of support from supervisors and co-workers to alleviate work-related stresses. Both supervisors and co-workers are in the best position to provide support since they understand about the stressor they faced in the workplace (Ray & Miller, 1994).

Support from administrators also contributes to reduce work-related stresses. It has more direct rather than moderating impact since, compared to co-workers or supervisors, it has higher likelihood to issue changes-related policy. Administrators' support is provided to all employees regardless of what their problems are. The support is typically structural in nature, such as childcare facilities, flexible working hours, and communication services (Ray; in Ray & Miller, 1994).

Family-friendly Work Environment

Availability of family-friendly work environment is expected to alleviate work-family conflict faced by employees. According to Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran (2006), in general there are two categories of family friendly work environment: 1) family friendly programs, policies or facilities, and 2) family friendly culture.

Family Friendly Program, Policy and Facility

Work-family programs and policies include flexible working hours, childcare support, paid or unpaid family leave, or provision of consultation. Although each of the specific program's objective is less explicitly related to the alleviation of work-family conflict (and more to improved work satisfaction, extra role behavior, etc), the availability and use of the programs can be of benefit to employees in addressing work and family life conflict. Employees with flexible working hours and informal and formal working location, for instance, can find it easier to solve problems on conflicting work and family schedules (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2006).

Family Friendly Culture

Research by Frone (in Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2006) indicated that many employees do not find it comfortable to enjoy family friendly facilities provided by their employers for fear that it would affect their career. In fact, it often costs a lot to make such facilities available and therefore it is such a shame to let them lay idle.

What employees believe about family friendly culture is significant to reduce work-life conflict. Research by Flye et al. (in Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2006) indicates that organization that offer family friendly facilities but fail to establish family friendly culture in the workplace experience high turnover of employees, lower work satisfaction, and high level of work-family conflict. Therefore, it is necessary that family friendly culture becomes part of the family friendly policies.

Family friendly culture refers to the shared perceptions of members of an organization that "they support and values the integration of employee's work and family lives". In general, family friendly organization does not demand employees to prioritize the work above their family. Managers of such organization do not use long hours or unrealistic work schedule as a requirement for career advancement. Employees in the organization believe that their career is not negatively associated with the use of family friendly facilities. Further, employees perceive their workplace as the source for solving problems not the source for intensifying conflict (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2006).

Method

Database

There were initially 180 articles that were identified as relevant with the topic on work-family for the literature review. However, some criteria have been used for the articles to be considered in this literature review. First, the articles should at least contain one support variable related to work family conflict. Second, the articles must be research reports. Third, we didn't select the articles which didn't explain the research method.

Using these criteria, 40 articles from 1991-2015 have been selected to be considered in this literature review, which consists of 9 exploratory research articles and 31 hypothesis testing articles.

Categorization

Analysis is presented through categorization of the identified articles. In the initial report, categorization was conducted based on the focus of the literature review

(explorative vs. hypothesis testing), the journal in which they were published, year of publication, country of research, and focus of discussion on different terms on support received by employees used in the researches. In this paper, we categorized the terms based-on their position as variables in the researches, then we analyzed their definition and then categorized that terms based-on the similarity with the categories assigned: perceived organizational support, social support, family friendly policy, and family friendly culture.

Results and Discussion

Categorizing Support

There is a bit of overlap between the perceived organizational support and the social support received from a source in the work place. Both categories have the same source of support: the organization. Referring once again to the definition mentioned above, perceived organizational support refers to the employee's belief that organization's management values their contribution, cares about their well being, considers their goal and values, listens to complaints, helps them when they have a problem, and treats them fairly (Eisenberger, et al., 1990). Meanwhile social support is a particular 'thing' (something given, done, or said) that one person can offer to another (Taylor, , et al., 1998). This particular 'thing' can be in the form of instrumental, informational, emotional as well as emotional supports and appreciation (House; quoted by Parasuraman, Greenhaus, & Granrose, 1992). This particular thing will lead someone to believe that she or he is valued, loved and esteemed as a member of a network of communication (Kelly, 1994). Social support can be provided by a source from the workplace or outside of the workplace.

Perceived organizational support actually aims at something more than merely provision of support by someone, which is like the definition social support. Perceived organizational support is related with organization's management. Problems arise when considering the fact that organization consists of persons. When support is received from persons within an organization such as co-worker, supervisor, or administrator responsible for policy making, question remains as to whether it should fall under perceived organizational support or social support categories.

Confusion was also emerged in the research reported by Wadsworth & Owen (2007), in which they defined social support as information that leads a person to believe that she or he is loved, valued and acknowledged as a member of a member of a network of a mutual obligation (quoting from Cobb, 1976). They also defined social support as the extent to which an individual perceives that his or her need for support, information and feedback are fulfilled (quoting from Procidano & Heller, 1983). The explanation continues further with the statement that the third form of social support is organizational, which can be defined as the employee's perception of the values that the organization places on their contributions and the organization's concern for their well being (quoting from Eisenberger et al., 1997). The last explanation is the explanation of the variable of perceived organizational support.

Perhaps because of the overlap such that, in studies on work-family issues both variable name is never used simultaneously unless highlighted of the social support is not derived from sources in the workplace.

In the category of perceived organizational support and social support, the support provided is general support, does not refer specifically to the problem of work-family conflict. In the category of programs / policies friendly or family friendly culture, the provision of support is associated with issues of work-family.



Figure 1. Categorizing Support

Literature Analyses

Analysis of the variables related with the provision of support in the workplace shows a high level of divergence among terms used for naming the variables. From 40 articles, there are at least 61 terms, including dimensions within one variable. Table 1 shows the divergence of terms used and the position of variables in the researches: independent, moderating, and dependent variables.

In the analysis, the terms are grouped into 4 categories:

- Perceived organizational support (POS)
- Social support from a source in the workplace
- Family friendly program/policy, including their dimensions
- Family friendly culture

Table 1. Divergence of terms in researches on supports received by employees in organization in the work-family conflict context and the position of variables in the research

Variable Names	Independent Variables	Moderating Variables	Dependent Variables
Actual organizational family support	1		
Allowance for personal leave	1		
Availability family friendly policy	1		
Balance between work and family	1		
Career consequences	1		
Change work time	1		
Childcare leave	1		
Childcare leave time	1		
Co-worker support	2		
Difficulty of family friendly policy	1		

Family friendly employment practice		1
Family friendly facilities	1	
Family friendly firm	1	
Family friendly policy	3	
Family friendly programs and practices	1	
Family social support	1	
Family supportive supervision	1	
Flexibility of work hours	1	
Flexible working schedule	1	
Flexitime	1	
Formal telework policy user	1	
Home-based teleworking	1	
HR policy to support person or family need	1	
Knowledge of family friendly policy	1	
Leave for Marriage or funerral	1	
Manager support	1	
Managerial support	1	
Maternity leave	1	
Organization time demand	1	
Organizational support	3	
Outonomy of work time	1	
Perceived fairness of work family benefit	1	1
Perceived family friendly policy	1	
Perceived importance of family friendly policy	1	
Perceived importance of family support	1	
Perceived organization family support	1	
Perceived orgaizational family support	1	
Perceived organizational climate (organization work expectation & organization time demand)	1	
Perceived organizational support	1	1
Perceived supervisor support	1	
Perceived supervisory family support	1	
Practice organization family support	1	
Problem focus coping	1	
Satisfaction with supportive management	1	
Sick leave	1	
Social support	1	1
Supervisor support	3	
Supportive work-family climate		1
Take time off	1	
Take work home	1	
Telework	1	
Use of family friendly policy	1	
Volume of telework	1	

Woman's special health leave	1	
Work family benefit utilization	1	1
Work family coping by organization	1	
Work family culture	2	
Work family policy	2	
Work hour	1	
Work schedule flexibility	1	
Work to family facilitation	2	
Workplace flexibility	1	

Perceived organizational support vs. social support from a source in the workplace

Table 2 shows the variables in the studies we were analyzed that can be included in the category of perceived organizational support (POS) and social support. Keyword for the term to put into these categories is 'the support given by organization or sources in the workplace was general supports, that was not referred to the issues of work-family'. To be put into category of perceived organizational support, sources which give the support were organization, while for the category of social support the sources were persons in the workplace.

Table 2. Variables in the category of perceived organizational support (POS) and social support (the amount of research)

POS	Social Support
Perceived organizational support (2)	Co-worker support (1)
	Family social support (1)
	Social support (2)
	Supervisor support (1)
	Organizational support (1)

In the category of social support, there were several more variables with the same name: supervisor support, co-worker support, and organizational support. But after examined from an operational definition of variables, it turns out these variables can not be put in the same category. The study we analyzed explained that the operational definition of the variables and also the variables instruments have already referred to the issues of work-family. So, some terms we put into category of social support, while the other same term we put into category of family friendly culture.

Family friendly programs/policies

Keywords of this category was a program or a family-friendly policies. So that was discussed in this variable was about programs or policies provided by the organization to its employees in order to facilitate the handling of the work-family issues. Included here were the dimensions, that specifically highlighted what programs were provided by the organization.

Table 3 shows the variables included in the category of family friendly policy. It is seen that there were many terms used to name something similar: family friendly

employment practices, family friendly policy, work-family benefit, etc. Moon & Rooh (2010) divided family friendly policies into four variables: knowledge of family friendly policy, use of family friendly policy, difficulty of family friendly policy, and perceived family friendly policy. We put all of them into family friendly programs/policies.

Table 3. Variables in the category of family friendly policy and dimensions (number of studies)

Family friendly programs/policies	Dimensions of family friendly policy
Actual organizational family support (1)	Allowance for personal leave (1)
Availability family friendly policy (1)	Autonomy of work time (1)
Balance between work and family (1)	Change work time (1)
Difficulty of family friendly policy (1)	Childcare leave (1)
Family friendly employment practice (1)	Childcare leave time (1)
Family friendly facilities (1)	Flexibility of work hours (1)
Family friendly firm (1)	Flexible working schedule (1)
Family friendly programs and practices (1)	Flexitime (1)
Family friendly policy (3)	Formal telework policy user (1)
HR policy to support person or family need (1)	Home-based teleworking (1)
Knowledge of family friendly policy (1)	Leave for Marriage or funeral (1)
Organizational support (3)	Maternity leave (1)
Perceived family friendly policy (1)	Sick leave (1)
Perceived fairness of work family benefit (1)	Take time off (1)
Perceived importance of family friendly policy (1)	Take work home (1)
Perceived importance of family support (1)	Telework (1)
Perceived organizational family support (1)	Volume of telework (1)
Perceived organizational climate (1)	Woman's special health leave (1)
Practice organization family support (1)	Work hour (1)
Use of family friendly policy (1)	Work schedule flexibility (1)
Work family benefit utilization (1)	Workplace flexibility (1)
Work family coping by organization (1)	
Work family policy (2)	

There were one variable that was a bit ambiguous: practice organizational support, which contain the word 'practice' that we can put it into category of family friendly policy, but also contains word 'support' that we can put it into the category of support which will be discussed later: family friendly culture. But after we analyzed it turned out it related to organization policies, so that eventually included in the category of family friendly policy. Another variable called organizational support. If we only seen from its name, it contains the word support that should be put into the category of family friendly culture, but it turned out it was associated with the policy, so we put into the category of family friendly policy.

Organizational climate refers to the perception of the policies, practices and organizational procedures adopted by individuals within the organization (Mauno, Kinnunen, & Roukolainen, 2006). Considering this is directly related to the policies and practices in the organization, these variables were included in the category of family friendly program/policy. Another variable that has similar name, supportive work-family climate, turned out to contain different meanings that include into the category of family friendly culture. We discussed in the next session.

If we look at to the dimensions using in some researches, we found there were several dimensions that actually have the same meaning. E.g. change work time, flexibility of work hours, flexible working schedule, flextime, work schedule flexibility was actually referring to the same thing: their flexibility in managing working time.

Family friendly culture

Family friendly culture related to shared perceptions of organization members that they “support and appreciate the integration of the employee's job and family life” (Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2006). So, the keyword for this category is "the support from the organization members". The support provided was referred to the issues of work-family.

Table 4 shows there was a wide variety of terms put into this category: perceived organization family support, perceived supervisor support, problem focused coping, work-family culture, etc. Actually, these terms refer to the same thing, that the organization and its members provide support for work-family issues.

However, there are some terms that seemed a bit out of context, namely consequences career and the organization time demand. But after we traced it, both of these things and another term, managerial support were the dimension of family work culture in a study conducted by Thompson, Beauvais & Lyness (1999). Thompson et al. (1999) developed work family culture instrument measure respondents' perceptions of all the organization's efforts in facilitating the efforts of employees in balancing work and family responsibilities. Dimensions of this instrument is managerial support, negative consequences associated with the distribution of time for family responsibilities (termed as the career consequences), and organizational time demands that could interfere with family responsibilities.

Terms related to the climate has actually been discussed in the category of family friendly programs/policies. Yet another study brought up a similar term, supportive work family climate, that has a different meaning to the term before. Work family climate refers to how supportive work environment with the needs of work-family employees. The most important issue in perceived organizational climate is whether employees perceive their organization supports the reduction of work-family issues or not. The concept is actually similar to perceived organizational support, but targeting specific forms of organizational support, which is measured as a separate phenomenon (Cleveland, Coldeiro, Fisk, and Mulvaney, 2006). According to Cleveland, et al. (2006), researchers have occasionally used the concept of work-family culture in reference to this very same phenomenon. However, they prefer the concept of work-family climate to that of culture, as in the majority of studies (including their's) a quantitative methodology has been applied. So, we put their work into the category of family friendly culture.

Table 4. Variables in the category of family friendly culture (number of studies)

Family friendly culture
Career consequences (1)
Co-worker support (1)
Family friendly firm (1)
Family supportive supervision (1)

Manager support (1)
Managerial support (1)
Organization time demand (1)
Organizational support (1)
Perceived organization family support (1)
Perceived supervisor support (1)
Perceived supervisory family support (1)
Problem focus coping (1)
Satisfaction with supportive management (1)
Supervisor support (3)
Supportive work-family climate (1)
Work family culture (2)

One variable named family friendly firm, refers to firm that offer facilities and incentives to help employees to balance work and family conflict they faced. This variable measures how much an organization provide support to the work-family culture, flexibility in setting work hours, and the provision of reasonable workload (Wallace & Young, 2007). So this variable can be put either into the category of family friendly and family friendly policy culture.

Uncovered Variables

Work to family facilitation was originally thought to be related to the facilitation provided by the organization in reducing the likelihood of work-family conflict. But the definition put forward by Voydanoff (2004, in Seery, Corrigan, & Harpel, 2008) showed that work to family facilitation is a form of synergy where the sources associated with one role, enables participation in fulfilling another role. The shape such as increasing self-esteem, income, knowledge, or skills. Examples of statements that are used to measure, among others, is "having a good day at work made me feel like a better person when I got home." It is clear that this term did not become part of the support received by employees in the workplace.

Conclusion

The terms used in the study of the support received by employees in the organization in the context of work-family conflict had a high divergence. Of the 40 studies contained 62 terms which each research could use more than one support variables or dimensions. Each study we were analyzed used their own term. The big variation of the terms used and the lack of uniformity in the meaning cause there were some terms that can be put in multiple categories.

The lack of uniformity of the terms often causes confusion to the readers or researchers who want to do research using these variables. That's why we tried to analyze and categorize the terms into the smaller groups using some certain keywords. Implication of this research, when these terms are categorized, the reader will be easier to understand that although these variables have different terms but they have similar meaning, so the reader could use it as reference material.

Some categories used to group these variables still have the sense of overlap, whereas the categories used are pretty popular in human resource management research, especially with regard to the study of efforts to deal with stress or conflict, e. g. perceived organizational support and social support from sources in the workplace.

Our research suggest as the development of the body of knowledge there is an attempt to unify these terms, or at least attempt to reduce the variability.

Limitation

Limitation of our study is related with the number of the study included. Reseach is still needed using the bigger amount of studies and focusing on the overlapping explanation of the terms.

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