

Critique of Research Article

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The amount of telecommunicators in the United states is on a steady and rapid incline. aided by rapid increases in technology. Most telecommuters were found to split their time between two settings; their offices and their homes. It was assumed that telecommuting would be helpful and allow for a more well-rounded mix of work life and personal life, but there has been little to no evidence to support this view. The few studies that have been conducted on that assumption are conflicting. Some argue that the new work-from-home life helps telecommuters balance and cope with work and life. Others claim that working from home adds more conflict due to proximity to those that share their homes.

One reason for these conflicting views is that research has been done focusing solely in one direction, a work-life balance. Another reason is that these studies have not noted the direction of conflict, which causes their findings to be limited in multiple ways. In response to the lack of specificity in the preceding research and in attempt to produce reliable and valid research on this topic, this study addresses limitations of note by creating a new model. They look for, specifically: job autonomy, scheduling flexibility, and household size. All of which are important and previously overlooked factors that may prove significant.

All participants were randomly selected from a single large firm. This firm sent a survey to a randomized selection of 10% of their workforce. From this 10%, 454 participants responded and were therefore included in this study. All of those who did select to participate were college graduates. The extent of their telecommuting was measured numerically in hours per work week (Golden et al., 2006).

All of the participants were surveyed for the three main factors of this study; job autonomy, scheduling flexibility, and house-hold size. Job autonomy was assessed using a

5-point scale. Scheduling flexibility was also assessed using a 5-point scale. Household size was a total of all the family members that were currently living in the household.

The sample used in this study was from a single large firm. They selected this method in order to control for differences between organizations. Although it is beneficial to control for those potential variables, doing so limits other areas in response. Because this study was conducted using this single firm, they limit themselves to a very exclusive sample. There are many factors that are able to influence and skew results to favor one side or another more heavily with such a restricted sample population. For example, the workers at this firm may all be from a single socioeconomic status based on the location of the firm itself. Another limitation of the design to note is the method for gathering responses from participants. They received a 36% response rate from an optional survey. This is something that some telecommunicators may not have had the time to fill out if their work-from-home experience was on the extreme end in any of the three factors examined.

Verifying reliability was a point of note that was done well. When measuring hours of telecommuting each participant did, they asked them to supply both hours per week as well as average hours per week which increases the reliability of the response. Additionally, they removed a question from the survey's job autonomy section in order to increase the reliability of the measure.

The mean and standard deviation was found for each factor and variable were taken. In order to make sure they were measuring what was truly what was being looked for, also known as validity, they completed statistical analysis on their measures. This analysis was conducted on their independent factors. Comparing the single-factor model, the testing on a single factor, to a

four-factor model, which took four factors into account instead of one. Through the conduction of this comparison they found that the four-factor model was the best fit, or most statistically significant. They also ran statistical analysis to ensure that their latent factors, job autonomy, scheduling flexibility, and household size, did not overlap. Specifically, job autonomy and scheduling flexibility. In order to ensure these were distinct from one another, they ran pairwise tests, statistical analysis looking at two factors versus one, and found their measures to be both empirically distinguishable (Golden et al., 2006).

The first hypothesis, predicting a negative relationship between the extent of telecommuting and work-to-family conflict (WFC), was supported by the findings of the statistical analysis. This shows that the more a participant utilized telecommuting, the lower their WFC. Their second hypothesis was also supported, with a $p < .001$, supporting the hypothesis of a positive relationship between the extent of a participant's telecommuting and FWC.

Not all of the study's hypotheses were found to be supported. Both hypothesis 3a and 3b were not found to be statistically significant. These hypotheses looked at predicting job autonomy's moderation of any negative effects between telecommuting on WFC, and predicting that job autonomy would moderate any positive effects on telecommuting and FWC, respectively. The next two hypotheses, 4a and 4b, looked at scheduling flexibility. Only one of these two hypotheses were found to be significant. Hypothesis 4a predicted that scheduling flexibility would moderate, or control to a degree, the negative relationship between amount of telecommuting and WFC. This was found to be true of those telecommuters who had high flexibility ($p < .05$) (Golden et al., 2006). The last factor that the study looked at was household size. They found that households with more members increased the effects of telecommuting on FWC.

The results of this study need to be assessed with caution, as there were many limiting factors. This study was informative and novel in terms of dissecting further into the root of some potentially causal factors impacting WFC and FWC. Overall, it was found that the more an individual from this sample used telecommuting, the less that work interfered with family and the more family interfered with work.

Because this study has limits due to its self-report and cross-sectional methodology, one needs to remain mindful of confidence in its findings. The study does highlight the need for more focus on individual factors impacting WFC. The concept put forth in this study of not assuming that interference comes from one direction is something that should be further tested, especially with today's work and societal needs.

The findings of this study, although potentially limited, can still be assessed and utilized in evidence-based practice. Knowing that the amount of family members living at home, the ability to move one's own schedule around, and not having to rely on others to complete work related tasks will have an impact on how clients balance their work and home life is extremely beneficial. These findings can help practitioners assist their clients in creating a healthier balance, pinpointing the root of their stress related to balancing their work-from-home life, and helping ensure that we as counselors are not looking at factors that do not truly affect our clients.

References

- Golden, T. D., Veiga, J. F., & Simsek, Z. (2006). Telecommuting's differential impact on work-family conflict: Is there no place like home? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *91*(6), 1340–1350. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.91.6.1340>