Critique of Research Article

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Telework has become a notable trend worldwide during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Many may not have thought that working from home would be a topic of discussion before the spread of the deadly virus, possibly due to the commonality of commuting to work in-person, but there has been research on telecommuting since before then. In the article titled Telecommuting's Differential Impact on Work-Family Conflict: Is There No Place Like Home, Timothy Golden of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, John Veiga and Zeki Simsek of the University of Connecticut conduct research to gage the impact of telework on employees as they are working in the comfort of their own home compared to a daily commute to the office for work.

The researchers surveyed 454 professionals, all of which took time to distinguish between working in-person, at the office, and working at home, in the presence of their families. In the article, work-to-family conflict, or WFC, and family-to-work conflict, or FWC, are presented, describing a bidirectional nature of the possible issues that come along with telecommuting. The two conflicts derive from the reality of familial roles versus occupational roles, being that the two can collide and cause disruption within an employee bouncing between working in their house with family members versus working with other professionals in an independent setting (Golden et al., 2006, pp. 1340). In these two different settings, it is natural to fulfill expectations and have pressures to complete tasks. WFC refers to work interfering with family (e.g. a revered supervisor coming home from work stressed, drained and angry from a busy day), and FWC refers to family interfering with work (e.g. not being able to be on camera or having the microphone on during an important meeting because a mother must tend to her crying baby). The researchers of this study wanted to see which conflict affected more employees.

Before the study began, the three researchers made hypotheses concerning WFC and FWC. The hypotheses were as follows:

1. Extent of telecommuting will negatively relate to WFC.

2. Extent of telecommuting will positively relate to FWC.

3. a. The negative relationship between telecommuting and WFC will be moderated by job autonomy and WFC will decrease faster with greater autonomy.

    b. The positive relationship between telecommuting and FWC will moderate by job autonomy such that FWC will increase slower with greater autonomy.

4. a. The negative relationship between telecommuting and WFC will be moderated by scheduling flexibility and WFC will decrease faster for employees with greater flexibility.

    b. The positive relationship between telecommuting and FWC will be moderated by scheduling flexibility, and FWC will increase slowly for employees with greater flexibility.

5. a. The negative relationship between telecommuting and WFC will moderate by household size and WFC will decrease slowly for employees with bigger hosueholds.

    b. The positive relationship between telecommuting and FWC will be moderated by household size, and FWC will increase faster for employees with bigger households (Golden et al., 2006, pp. 1341-43).

Golden, Veiga and Simsek made hypotheses of the impact of the two conflicts, but did not initially take the professional-level employees' scheduling flexibility, household size and job autonomy. These three factors can greatly influence the outcome of the research due to the influences they would have on work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict and therefore have been incorporated.

In order to conduct proper research, methodology is a key concept needed to collect data for the study. Golden, Veiga and Simsek chose to study a large high-tech firm of over 34,000 people, there being 12,610 telecommuters from the total. The study used a random sample of 10% from the telecommuting group, sampling 1,261 employees in total. The researchers used a confidential and anonymous Web-based survey and received useful information from 454 participants, representing a 36% response rate (Golden et al., 2006, pp. 1343). This was the sample and procedure on obtaining responses to collect data.

The method used to acquire information for this study is appropriate. The use of surveys, particularly anonymous and confidential, creates an unbiased system of retrieving information based on tailored questionnaires to receive specific, to avoid vague, responses. The hypotheses aforementioned may cause discomfort for participants if asked in-person, especially at the workplace, or dishonest if the surveys were not confidential, making the anonymous survey-giving route suitable for this type of study.

The researchers used statistical methods to draw in results from the participants. All respondents were college graduates, 65% were men, and 35% were women. 54% were married and the average age of the responder was 37 years old. Those who participated had been telecommuting for four years on average (Golden et al., 2006, pp. 1343). To assess the extent of telecommuting, the surveys given had formulated questions that asked specifics (ie. how many hours were spent working from home in a typical week). The responses to this particular question brought in a variety of answers, ranging from 3 to 43 hours per week, and to make sure of reliability, a similar question was asked to see if participants would answer the questions the same (Golden et al., 2006, pp. 1343) To assess job autonomy, Golden, Veiga and Simsek used a five-point scale, 1 meaning very little and 5 meaning very much, to discern the amount of

discretion and control the employees believe they have to influence the assigned work tasks they receive. After careful consideration, testing and comparisons to different measures, the researchers found their questions for this section reliable and consistent. Scheduling flexibility was assessed through a five-point scale, similarly to how job autonomy was assessed. The question for this section focused on how independent the participants' schedules were compared to their coworkers, as well as if they were left to create their own work schedules. To assess household sizes, the three researchers asked employees to include all family members in the home. By including all family members, this allows different ranges of potential role expectations and pressures that an employee can experience at home.

The results of this study showed that the first hypothesis the researcher made was supported, suggesting that the more employees telecommute, the lower is their work-to-family conflict. The second hypothesis was also supported, suggesting that the more employees telecommute, the higher their family-to-work conflict. The remaining three hypotheses are broken into two parts each. The first part of the third hypothesis predicted that job autonomy had influence on the negative relationship between work-to-family conflict and the study partially supported this. The second part, hypothesis 3b, which predicted that job autonomy would influence the relationship between family-to-work conflict and telecommuting, had no support found in the research conducted. The first part of the fourth hypothesis was supported by the study, indicating that scheduling flexibility would influence the negative relationship between telecommuting and work-to-family conflict, while the second part of the hypothesis was not supported. The first part of the fifth hypothesis predicted that telecommuting and work-to-family conflict would be moderated by household size due to its negative relationship, but this was not supported; yet there was moderation between the positive relationship between telecommuting

and family-to-work conflict due to household size, which supported the last part of the fifth hypothesis (Golden et al., 2006, pp. 1344-45). This evidence suggests that there are costs and benefits to telecommuting.

Conducting studies and research such as this is important for the workplace, as well as clinicians. It will give employees a better understanding of what telecommuting may entail and gives supervisors and bosses keys of navigation to having successful workplaces, whether the workplace is an office or if it is at home. Doing more research on this topic would be beneficial, as well, to further explore the different nuances professional-level employees may possess. Clinicians would also have a clearer understanding of a professional- level working client's needs who may be telecommuting and finding tailored strategies to help them reach their goals.

References

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