

Article Critique

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The article interviewed a total of 454 telecommuting, professional-level employees to gauge the bidirectional impact of work-family conflict (WFC). Researchers Timothy D. Golden, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, John F. Veiga, and Zeki Simsek of the University of Connecticut argued that over 28 million people in the United States work remotely. There needs to be more data to reflect on how well-balanced the demands between work and home are in individual homes. Pre-existing research failed to recognize that the work-family conflict is bidirectional and focused more on work and life. Golden et al. built on those studies to better understand the work-family interface.

Earlier research viewed WFC relative to time and mental strain; telecommuting reduced office-related distractions that detract from the work. By eliminating constant interruptions and office drama, productivity increases. The telecommuter is more available to partake in family activities. The first hypothesis intended to measure the impact telecommuting has had on WFC. Finding access and proximity to family negatively affects work productivity.

Golden et al. considered the positive effects of working remotely on family-work conflict and added variables like household size, job autonomy, and scheduling flexibility to determine the level of influence. Job autonomy refers to the authority or control to define tasks and completion methods and the reliance on others to do the job. The time and emotional energy saved by someone with greater autonomy offset some family pressures that interfere with work.

Scheduling flexibility refers to the autonomy in deciding deadlines, another factor considered in analyzing the positive and negative effects job autonomy plays on telecommuting and the bidirectional work-family conflict. The greater the scheduling flexibility, the more probable that work will be completed as needed. WFC was reduced with greater flexibility as

telecommuters responded to work and family demands, but FWC also increased because increased responsiveness counterweights family stresses that interrupt work. A third factor was the household size, which included everyone living under one roof. In short, telecommuting decreases WFC, but extensiveness increases FWC, augmented in larger households. However, for individuals with smaller families, the FWC remained unaffected irrespective of the amount of time working remotely.

They concluded that their research supported the view of a previous study that argued a “zero-sum trade-off.” Telecommuters redistribute time, attention, and emotional energy made available by working from home to adapt to the family's needs. Work may not interfere with family life, but family will intrude on work. Golden et al. found that their results were not affected by gender when considering the bidirectional model, contrary to the older argument that found prevalence in women for WFC. The study groups also differed, adding some challenges to the reliability of the comparison. One group consisted of university employees whose work hours, office settings, and salaries differed significantly from the professional-level employees of the second group.

Further research is needed to determine if a balance between work and family roles can be found and not negatively affect the counterbalance. An element found worthy of further examination compares individual initiatives that improve collaboration between work and family roles. In research, there are still other factors to consider when considering reconciling the magnitude of the effects of telecommuting on work-family conflict. However, their study showed that household size, job autonomy, and scheduling flexibility play an integral role in how telecommuting affects an individual.

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>