

Article Critique

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The article selected for critique is Telecommuting's Differential Impact on Work-Family Conflict: Is there No Place Like Home? The article discusses the work- life balance and whether telecommuting has a positive and/or negative impact on employees' competing work and family demands. The research was conducted by Timothy D. Goldman of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and researchers John F. Veiga and Zeki Simek from the University of Connecticut. The article was published in the Journal of Applied Psychology in 2006.

Previous studies examined by the researchers focused mainly on unidirectional work-family conflict, which is defined as the pressure, expectations and demands of work that conflicts with the individual's expected role and duties in the family. The researchers of this study choose to evaluate the bidirectional impacts of both work-family conflict (WFC) and family-work conflict (FWC) because individuals have expectations and demands from both work and families. The researchers focused on the time and psychological strain related to both work and families and how the direction of conflict impacts compliance with the other role.

Using literature from previous studies, five hypotheses were developed. The first hypothesis was that the extent of telecommuting will negatively impact work-family conflict because individuals will be able to alter their work patterns allowing them to accommodate the demands on their family roles and expectations. Telecommuters will be able to shift their normal work routines, providing them the flexibility to reallocate time to be present for their family. Also, by working away from the office there is a reduction of emotional frustration from coworker interruptions and requests from supervisors.

The second hypothesis was that the extent of telecommuting will be positively related to family-work conflict because it will eliminate the social barriers that separate an individual's work from the family, increasing the pressure of family role involvement. This elimination of

work barriers will have a negative effect on how the individual's completes work duties by increasing family interruption and expectations while they are at home.

The third hypothesis was the extent of telecommuting will be moderate by job autonomy such that work-family conflict will decrease at a faster rate, while family-work conflict will increase at a slower rate for telecommuters with greater autonomy. Telecommuters with greater autonomy are less dependent on colleagues to complete their job and able to reduce the strain of workplace interruptions. They are able to use their authority and discretion to prioritize task and the methods to complete the task, lessening the time and emotional strain from work interruptions. This additional time awards them the opportunity to accommodate family demands compared to those with less autonomy.

The fourth hypothesis was that the relationship between the extent of telecommuting will be moderated by scheduling flexibility such that work-family conflict will decrease at a faster rate while family-work conflict will increase at a slower rate for telecommuters with greater flexibility. Individuals with higher scheduling flexibility will be able to allot time to work and family demands when it is needed. This will reduce the work interference with family responsibility but increase greater responsiveness to family expectations.

The fifth hypothesis was the relationship between the extent of telecommuting will be moderated by household size. Telecommuter with larger households will decrease the work-family conflict at a slower rate and family-work conflict will increase at a faster rate.

The study was conducted using full-time employees from a high-tech firm that employs over 34,000 individuals. Of the 34,000 individuals, 12,610 were full-time professionals that telecommute. The firm randomly choose 10% of the professional staff that telecommute to create

a sample group for the study. A random sample of 1,261 of individuals were contacted by a senior executive of the firm via email, and encouraged to participate in the survey. The web-based survey was designed to be anonymous and confidential. The researchers of the study received a response from 454 individuals of the 1,261 individuals encouraged to participate. Each respondent graduated from college and ranged in age, marital status, and years telecommuting for work.

The survey was administered using a 5-point scale to assess job autonomy, extent of telecommuting, scheduling flexibility, household size and work-family conflict. Data collected from the survey was also used to categorize the controlled variables like gender, management levels, age and tenured. The controlled variables were factored because the researcher was able to identify that these variables will have an impact on the results of the study.

Work-family conflict decreased as telecommuting increased as hypothesized in Hypothesis 1. The second hypothesis was also supported showing that family-work conflict increased as a result of telecommuting. There was partial support found for the third hypothesis based on conditional values of job autonomy. Telecommuters with lower job autonomy were impacted negatively on work-family conflict opposed to telecommuters with higher levels of autonomy.

The fourth and fifth hypothesis was also partially supported. Telecommuter with high and low flexibility had a negative relationship with work-family conflict, while the family-work conflict hypothesis was not supported. Also, telecommuters with larger household sizes did not show any significance to a negative relationship between telecommuting and work-family conflict, however the data did support a positive relationship between household size and family-work conflict.

I believe using a survey was appropriate and suitable for the hypothesis theorized in the article. The researcher's primary objective was to determine the direction of conflict stemming from telecommuting. By collecting information using a survey, they were able to gather data from the individuals experiencing either work-family conflict or family-work conflict to assess the direction on a scale. By using a 5-point scale they were able to translate qualitative information into quantitative data.

Limits of this study were that the information gathered was based on how a telecommuter valued their personal experience. This research was exempt from the manipulation of the variables, which prevented the researchers from concluding if telecommuting would have a significant impact on work-family conflict or vice versa.

Using the results of this study, further research can be developed to determine the extent of how telecommuting impacts the work-home conflict and family-work conflict.

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>