

Work-family among knowledge workers – can work-place culture reduce the conflicts?

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NATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE
FOR THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

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Part of Job - advertisement

You have:

”.... the ability to keep more ”balls” in the air simultaneously and now and then to work under a high work- and time pressure”

(Trafikstyrelsen, Politiken, September 2007)



Background

- Employees with knowledge-work experience, compared to other occupational groups, a high degree of work-family conflicts
- Long hours and high work-load are some of the main reasons
- A family friendly work-place culture may reduce the problems

Work-family conflicts

- "Do you feel that your work drains so much of your energy that it has a negative effect on your private life"?
- "Do you feel that your work takes so much of your time that it has a negative effect on your private life"?
- "Do you often feel a conflict between your work and your private life, making you want to be both places at the same time"?
- "Do your friends and family tell you that you work too much"?
- Response categories: always, often, sometimes, seldom, never/almost never.

Purposes:

- Traditional factors in the psychosocial work environment and “new” psychosocial exposures associated with or predictive of work-family conflicts
- Can a family-friendly workplace culture can reduce work-family conflicts among knowledge workers
- Can it moderate the negative effects of workload and other work environmental factors?

Design and sample

- 853 knowledge workers received questionnaires and saliva kits for cortisol
- 396 questionnaires returned (response rate 46%) and 265 cortisol responses (response rate 31%)
- One year follow-up: response rate 86% of the responses from 1. round

Participants' were

- professionals, physicians, dentists, engineers, architects, staff within IT and media, teachers, researchers, managers and leaders, social workers, librarians, accountants, bank clerks, salesmen.

Groups of variables regressed on work-family conflicts

- Background: *age, gender, family status*
- Work-environmental factors: *quantitative demands, influence, predictability, social support from management, sense of community, role conflicts*
- Temporal and spatial flexibility: *influence on when and where to work*
- Blurring boundaries between work and private life: *adjustment to meet deadlines*
- Work-place culture: *family friendliness and demands to availability*

Cross-sectional associations with WFC– final model

Parameter	B-estimates
Women vs. Men	3,27*
Single parents vs couples without children	-0,52(NS)
Couples with children < 7 vs couples without children	-5,01*
Couples with children > 7 vs couples without children	-1,80(NS)
Singles without children vs couples without children	1,10(NS)
Working hours	0,52***
Quantitative demands	0,34***
Deadlines	0,38**
Family friendly culture	-0,01
Intercept	3,68(NS)
R ² for the total model (N)	0,40(356)

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Women vs. Men	3,27*
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Quantitative demands	0,34***
Deadlines	0,38**
Family friendly culture	-0,01
Family friendly culture x deadlines	0,004*
Intercept	3,68(NS)
R ² for the total model (N)	0,40(356)

Predictors of WFC over 1 year

Parameter	<i>B</i> - estimates Step 1
Working hours	0,29*
Quantitative demands	0,14*
Deadlines	0,26***
Family friendly culture	-0,18***
R ² for the total model (N)	0,25 (294)

Predictors of WFC over 1 year

Parameter	<i>B</i> - estimates Step 1	<i>B</i> -estimates Step 2
Working hours	0,29*	0,11(NS)
Quantitative demands	0,14*	0,34(NS)
Deadlines	0,26***	0,14 *
Family friendly culture	-0,18***	-0,12 **
Work-family conflict time 1		0,40 ***
R ² for the total model (N)	0,25 (294)	0,34 (294)

Adjustment to meet deadlines

- “How often does it happen that you in order to meet a deadline.....”:
 - “...work in evenings or during weekends”
 - “...skip vacations”
 - “...skip lunch-breaks”
- Response categories: always, often, sometimes, seldom, never/almost never.

A family-friendly culture :

- "Is it possible to take care of the family, when it is needed"?,
- "Is it acceptable to go early in order to take up children?"
- "Is it acceptable to adjust the work to the needs of the family?"
- Response categories: always, often, sometimes, seldom, never/almost never.

Results

- **Workload and working hours** important in the cross sectional analyses, but lost importance in the prospective analyses after control for WFC t1
- **Adjustment to deadlines** contributed significantly both in cross sectional and prospective analyses
- **A family-friendly work-place culture** had independent effect on WFC and moderated the effect of adjustment to deadlines
- Couples with small children had less conflicts than couples without children

Conclusions

- Workload has an immediate effect on the level of work-family conflicts
- Changes in work-family conflict level are more likely to occur, when the culture are family-friendly
- Tendencies to skip private time in order to meet work-demands may cause work-family conflicts
- The effect is worse, when the culture is not family-friendly
- Small children may not necessarily cause conflicts

Thank you for your attention!



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