The Work-Family Conflict and Subjective Well-Being of College Teachers

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of work-family conflict on the well-being of university teachers, with the following specific objectives: (1) to investigate the specific expression of work-family conflict among university teachers using a structured interview method (2) to propose specific measures and strategies to alleviate work-family conflict and improve the well-being of university teachers. This study provides theoretical and practical results for improving the mental health and well-being of college teachers

Keywords: work-family conflict, emotional exhaustion, subjective well-being

Introduction

Work-family conflict refers to the situation of disharmony between work and family. Work-family conflict has two directions: one is that work responsibilities interfere with the individual's family responsibilities, and the other is that family responsibilities interfere with the individual's performance of work responsibilities, and the other is family-work conflict. Greenhaus et al. (1985) found that work-family conflict is bidirectional. A few years later, other scholars also agreed with the bidirectional view and pointed out that although the two directions are different, they are related to each other (Netemeyer, 1996; Diener et al., 2003). Specifically, the contradiction between work and family in role switching, in other words, is the role pressure formed when the individual employees face the two roles of family and work and find it difficult to achieve compatibility in certain aspects. The essence of work-family conflict lies in the conflict or contradiction between the individual's work and family roles. Since personal energy and time are limited, the role expectations between work and family will occupy each other, making it difficult for individuals to meet the expectations of all roles, thus causing conflicts. One of the main factors for disharmony between work and family is the differences in the demands of each individual. Different individuals may have different values for the importance, priority, and level of investment in work and family. This difference will cause individuals to make different choices when facing the roles of work and family, thus causing conflicts. Employees may not be able to meet their family responsibilities because of work demands, which may make it difficult for them to pick up their children or take care of the elderly on time; or they may not be able to participate in work activities as planned due to family gatherings or emergencies. These situations are all caused by the conflict of time and energy between work and family roles. One of the keys to managing work-family conflict is to help individuals strike a balance between work and family to meet the expectations of different roles. This may involve support provided by the organization in terms of flexible work arrangements, family-friendly policies, and personal coping strategies. (Greenhaus & Allen, 2014)

Based on role conflict theory that work-family conflict is a kind of conflict between roles, which is caused by the incompatibility of the role pressures performed by individuals in the work and family fields. Specifically, the psychological tension and emotional changes formed by individual employees when carrying out activities related to one type of role will have an adverse effect on switching to another role. It can be divided into work-family conflict and family-work conflict. The former refers to the interference of work requirements with the family. For example, due to the heavy pressure of work tasks, individual employees find it difficult to relax when they go home and continue to be in a state of mental tension, which hurts their family life; the latter refers to the interference of family requirements with work, such as being too worried about family members, which causes difficulty in concentrating at work and low work efficiency. Through in-depth exploration by researchers, domestic and foreign scholars have defined work-family conflict from different research perspectives.

On this basis, this article explains work-family conflict as the inevitable contradiction between external work and family positioning, which is a very special contradiction that is closely related to special situations. The change of work and family positioning makes individuals suppress family positioning because of work, or affect external work efficiency due to family trivial matters. In this case, the contradiction problem occurs (Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998).

Research Objective

This study aims to comprehensively explore the impact of work-family conflict on the subjective well-being of college teachers. The specific research objectives are as follows:

(1) Investigating the specific manifestations of work-family conflicts, including temporal, emotional, and behavioral conflicts, among college teachers through the structured interview method.

(2) Propose specific measures and strategies to alleviate work-family conflict and improve the subjective well-being of college teachers.

Literature Review

1. Work-family conflict

The existing literature on work-family conflict and subjective well-being has primarily focused on general populations or specific industries, with limited attention given to the unique context of college teachers. This gap is significant because college teachers face distinct challenges that are not fully captured by existing research. For instance, the dual pressures of academic and teaching responsibilities, combined with the expectations of maintaining a work-life balance, create a complex environment that affects their subjective well-being. The lack of research on how work-family conflict manifests in this specific population means that current interventions and policies may not effectively address the unique needs of college teachers. More over the relationship between work-family conflict and subjective well-being is likely mediated by various factors, such as work stress and emotional exhaustion. Work stress, characterized by coping ability and sense of control, can exacerbate the negative impact of work-family conflict on subjective well-being. Similarly, emotional exhaustion, which includes personal burnout, work-related burnout, and client-related burnout, can further mediate this relationship. (Greenhaus & Allen, 2014)

Understanding these mediating mechanisms is crucial for developing targeted interventions that can mitigate the adverse effects of work-family conflict on the subjective well-being of college teachers. Latent variables and Observable variables in this study, we aim to address the research gap by examining the impact of work-family conflict on the subjective well-being of college teachers, while also exploring the mediating roles of work stress and emotional exhaustion. The latent variables in this study include work-family conflict, work stress, emotional exhaustion, and subjective well-being. By connecting these latent and observable variables, this study will provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between work-family conflict and subjective well-being among college teachers. This will not only enrich the theoretical research on the topic but also offer practical insights for university administrators to develop policies and interventions that can effectively support the well-being of college teachers. (Noor, 2004).

2. Subjective well-being

Work and family are two major areas of individual life, and they are vital to everyone's life. A person's time and energy are limited. Due to the different norms and responsibilities of work and family, a person's excessive investment in one area will inevitably lead to a reduction in his investment in the other area, and then work-family conflict will arise. In recent years, with the development of the social economy, dual-income families have become more and more common, and employees' work-family conflict has become increasingly prominent. Work and family compete for resources from time to time, and how to better balance the relationship between work and family is troubling contemporary corporate employees. On the other hand, as living standards continue to improve, people's food and clothing are no longer a problem. The government pays more and more attention to people's happiness, and companies also need to pay more attention to employee happiness. Subjective well-being refers to an individual's perception of overall satisfaction. Although different researchers at home and abroad have different research views on subjective well-being, there is one thing that can be agreed upon: subjective well-being plays a positive role in a person's work (Han & Wu, 2021).

The United States was the first to start research on subjective well-being, and then research on subjective well-being gradually developed around the world. Diener, Oishi, & Lucas (2003) pointed out that subjective well-being includes cognitive evaluation, positive emotions, and negative emotions summarized the research of predecessors and defined subjective well-being as a person's positive emotions in life and cognitive evaluation of life. Subsequently, Diener, Oishi, & Lucas (2003) found through further in-depth research that subjective well-being expresses people's scientific analysis of their evaluation of their lives, including a series of satisfaction and emotional reactions to things. Similarly, domestic researchers have been continuously studying subjective well-being. (Diener, 1984; Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003)

Chen, Zhang & Zhang (2020) conducted a study on subjective well-being from a psychological perspective. They believed that subjective well-being is a comprehensive psychological indicator used to evaluate the overall quality of life of an individual. Xie & Fan (2020) believed that subjective well-being is generally a positive psychological experience. Wright & Cropanzano (2000) also summarized the concept of subjective well-being in their research, believing that subjective well-being focuses more on the individual's inner feelings and does not rely on external judgments. Subjective well-being is the core content of positive psychology research. Positive psychology focuses on studying people's satisfaction with their

current living conditions. Abbreviated as SWB. Scholars have many different views on the concept of SWB. The following is the definition of subjective well-being by relevant researchers: Subjective well-being is the positive emotions and subjective experience of overall life satisfaction expressed by an individual (Wang, Wang & Liu, 2021).

Methodology

This study, after completing the quantitative analysis, the next step is qualitative analysis. Qualitative analysis can be a useful supplement to quantitative analysis. Through semi-structured interviews or focus group discussions, one can deeply explore the personal experiences and opinions of participants, help reveal the complex emotions, deep-seated problems, and complex relationships that cannot be captured by quantitative research, and can more comprehensively understand the research problems, providing a rich background and detailed explanation for this study. In this study, you use qualitative research methods to deeply understand the impact of work-family conflict on the subjective well-being of college teachers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, and the interviewees included college teachers of different disciplines and ranks. The content of the interview revolved around work stress, emotional exhaustion, and the relationship between work-family conflict and subjective well-being. The data analysis adopted the grounded theory method, coded and thematically analyzed the interview content, and extracted the key factors affecting the subjective well-being of college teachers.

In qualitative research, data collection tools play a vital role in obtaining, testing, and interpreting non-quantitative data. These tools can reveal insights that are difficult to quantify through numerical methods. Qualitative research usually uses standard techniques such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to obtain original data. In this study, the researcher will also use these two methods to collect data.

After obtaining quantitative research data, the researcher will use variables and basic statistics to identify respondents. During in-depth interviews, the researcher conducts one-on-one conversations with clients, which allows the researcher to collect a large amount of qualitative information. This method allows the researcher to gain in-depth insights into the participants' thoughts, experiences, attitudes, and opinions. Next, in a focus group discussion, a group of selected participants will be brought together to discuss a specific topic. With this method, the researcher can observe the interactions and common opinions among different participants, resulting in a more comprehensive data set. The researcher will use a recording device or laptop to record the respondents' responses for subsequent analysis and reference.

Results

The results show that work-family conflict not only has a direct negative impact on the subjective well-being of college teachers, but also further amplifies this negative effect through the two mediating variables of work stress and emotional exhaustion. The interview cases indicate that work-family conflict, work stress and emotional exhaustion all have a negative impact on the subjective well-being of college teachers. Work stress and time allocation problems affect teachers' physical and mental health, which in turn affects their subjective well-being, e.g., leading to physical fatigue, psychological anxiety, affecting sleep quality, and ultimately weakening the experience of well-being. This study enriches the relevant literature in the field of work-family conflict and subjective well-being in theory, and

at the same time provides important inspiration for how to alleviate the work-family conflict of college teachers, reduce work stress and emotional exhaustion, and improve well-being in practice. On the basis of summarizing the research contributions, this chapter also deeply analyzes the limitations of the research and proposes development directions for future research.

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