

A Study of Work-to-Family Conflict of Fathers

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine factors associated with work-to-family conflict of fathers with young children. Data came from 700 Korean employed fathers. Factors associated with time-based work-to-family conflict for fathers with young children using a multiple regression method included having a child under age eight, weekly working hours, average daily commute time, family-friendly workplace culture, and job satisfaction. Factors that significantly related to these fathers' strain-based work-to-family conflict were the fathers' income, number of children, weekly working hours, family-friendly workplace culture, and job satisfaction. These findings suggest that a family-friendly workplace culture is the most important factor for reducing fathers' work-to-family conflict. Encouraging policies to enhance a family-friendly workplace culture is recommended.

Keywords: *employment, family-friendly workplace culture, Korean men, work-to-family conflict*

1. Introduction

Korean society has paid increased attention to work-life balance since Korea has experienced rapid changes in families' lives including low fertility, absence of care, and women's career interruption. Research on work-family balance has mainly focused on the experiences of married women since they are mostly in charge of domestic care responsibilities in Korea. However, as men's involvement in family lives has increased, work-family balance has also become an important issue for men [4]. When men participate in their families' lives, the care burden that families experience may be reduced and gender equality could be strengthened in Korean families. However, compared to married women, far less attention has been given to men's experience of work-family conflict [7], [11]. Therefore, investigation of fathers' work-family conflict remains an important research issue.

Fathers' involvement in their children's lives is important for their children's healthy emotional and social development [3]. With Koreans' increasing expectations of fathers' involvement in their families' lives, they face different barriers compared to women including long work hours and a rigid workplace culture that does not allow employees, especially men, to take advantage of the company's family-friendly policy [8]. Thus, it is significant to examine the work-family experiences of employed men who live in a society where there is a

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work-oriented culture and strong embedded social myth that parenting is primarily the woman’s role in the family.

Work-family conflict is negatively related to one’s work and family lives including low job satisfaction, a high turnover rate, and low marital satisfaction [4], [6]. Previous research on men’s work-family balance has reported that only 33.9% of men managed their family and work lives in a balanced way [13]. In addition, men’s work-family conflict has been associated with work-related variables such as job satisfaction and the number of working days in a week instead of their socio-demographic characteristics [5]. Considering that relatively little research on men’s work-family conflict has been conducted, it is necessary to examine what work-related characteristics contribute to reducing men’s work-family conflict.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the factors related to Korean employed fathers’ work-to-family conflict. The research questions in the present study are as follows: (1) What are the experiences of fathers’ work-to-family conflict including time-based and strain-based work-to-family conflict? and (2) What factors are related to Korean employed fathers’ work-to-family conflict? The findings provide implications for reducing fathers’ work-to-family conflict.

2. Methods

2.1. Data

The purpose of this study was to investigate Korean fathers’ experiences of work interference with their families and factors associated with their work-to-family conflict. Data came from 700 fathers who had at least one child younger than elementary-school age and lived in Seoul at the time of data collection. Data were collected from May to November 2015.

2.2. Participants

[Table 1] shows the demographic characteristics of the 700 employed fathers in this study. The average age of the fathers was 39.10 with a range of 23 to 56 years. The fathers’ education levels were finished high school (10.7%) and post-high school education (89.3%). The fathers’ jobs were 41.5% office, 20.2% professional, 12.6% service and sales, and 10.0% management. In terms of the number of children in the household, 53.4% had two children, 39.0% had one child, and 8.5% had more than three children. The majority of the fathers (80.3%) had at least one child younger than eight years old.

Table 1. Characteristics of the participants (N = 700)

Variables		n	%	Variables		n	%
Age (Range:23-56)	20-39	380	54.3	Income (10,000 Won)	Less than 200	49	7.0
	Over 40	320	45.7		200 - 300	213	30.4
Education	High School	75	10.7		300 - 400	226	32.3
	College	494	70.6		400 - 500	108	15.4
	Graduate	131	18.7	Over 500	104	14.9	
Job	Management	70	10.0	No. of Children	1	266	38.0
	Professional	141	20.2		2	374	53.4
	Office	290	41.5		Over 3	60	8.5
	Service & Sales	88	12.6	Child under 8	Yes	562	80.3

	Other	111	15.8	year old	No	138	19.7
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2.3. Variables and analysis

Work-to-family conflict was the dependent variable for this research. The variable of work-to-family conflict consisted of time-based work-to-family conflict and strain-based work-to-family conflict depending upon the type of work-family conflict [1]. As a measure of time-based work-to-family conflict, respondents measured their agreement with three statements: “My work keeps me from my family activities more than I would like”; “The time I must devote to my job keeps me from participating equally in household responsibilities and activities”; and “I have to miss family activities due to the amount of time I must spend on work responsibilities.” The responses were coded from 1 to 5 so higher scores indicated higher time-based work-to-family conflict. The score of time-based work-to-family conflict was calculated by averaging the scores of three items. The variable of strain-based work-to-family conflict was measured by three statements: “When I get home from work I am often too frazzled to participate in family activities/responsibilities”; “I am often so emotionally drained when I get home from work that it prevents me from contributing to my family”; and “Due to all the pressures at work, sometimes when I come home I am too stressed to do the things I enjoy.” Scores ranged from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating higher strain-based work-to-family conflict.

Independent variables consisted of the fathers’ socio-demographic characteristics and their work-related variables. The fathers’ social-demographic variables included age, education, income, number of children, and having a child under age eight. The variables of age, education, income, and the number of children were used as continuous variables to predict the fathers’ work-to-family conflict. The variable of having a child under age eight was a dichotomous variable (1 = had child under age eight, 0 = had no child under age eight). The fathers’ work-related variables included weekly working hours, average daily commute time, family-friendly workplace culture, and job satisfaction. Weekly working hours and average daily commute time were treated as continuous variables. Family-friendly workplace culture was measured by 12 items on a 5-point Likert scale [11]. Sample items are as follows: “I can leave work on time”; “My supervisor allows me to adjust my schedule when I have to take care of my family”; and “My supervisor tries not to allow overtime.”

To identify the fathers’ work-to-family conflict, descriptive statistics were analyzed using SPSS 21.0. To investigate the factors that were significantly related to the fathers’ time-based and strain-based work-to-family conflict, regression analyses were conducted. The presence of multicollinearity was tested by examining the VIF scores and correlations.

3. Results

3.1. Work-related experiences of fathers

As shown in [Table 2], the fathers worked an average of 49.98 hours per week. Their average daily commute time was 85.27 minutes. The mean score of family-friendly workplace culture was 3.20 (range: 1-5) which is a moderate level. The mean score of fathers’ job satisfaction was 3.31 (range: 1-5). In terms of work-to-family conflict, the mean score of time-based work-to-family conflict was 3.13 (range: 1-5), and the mean score of strain-based work-to-family conflict was 2.97. The level of work-to-family conflict of the fathers was moderate and their time-based work-to-family conflict was higher than their time-strain-based work-to-family conflict.

Table 2. Summary of major variables (N = 700)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Weekly Working Hours (unit: hour)	49.98	10.76
Average Daily Commute Time (unit: minute)	85.27	51.02
Family-friendly Workplace Culture	3.20	.62
Job Satisfaction	3.31	.78
Time-based Work-to-Family Conflict	3.13	.89
Strain-based Work-to-Family Conflict	2.97	.84

3.2. Work-to-family conflict of fathers

The factors related to fathers' work-to-family conflict is shown in [Table 3]. In terms of the fathers' time-based work-to-family conflict, the variables of having a child under age eight ($\beta = -.04$, $p < .05$), weekly working hours ($\beta = .27$, $p < .001$), average daily commute time ($\beta = .07$, $p < .05$), family-friendly workplace culture ($\beta = -.31$, $p < .001$), and job satisfaction ($\beta = -.10$, $p < .01$) were statistically significant to predict the fathers' time-based work-to-family conflict. That is, the fathers who had younger children under age eight experienced lower time-based work-to-family conflict compared to the fathers who had no child under age eight. In addition, the variables of working hours and commute time were positively associated with the fathers' time-based work-to-family conflict. The variables of family-friendly workplace culture and job satisfaction were negatively related to time-based work-to-family conflict. Of these variables, the fathers' work-related variables such as weekly working hours and family-friendly workplace culture were the most significant variables. This model accounted for 28.4% of the variance in the fathers' time-based work-to-family conflict.

Table 3. Regression Analysis of Fathers' Work-to-Family Conflict (N = 700)

Variables	Time-based Work-to-Family Conflict			Strain-based Work-to-Family Conflict		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Sociodemographic Characteristics						
Age	-.01	.01	-.05	.00	.01	.00
Education	.02	.03	.03	.06	.03	.07
Income	-.00	.01	-.01	-.03	.01	-.10*
Number of children	-.10	.05	-.07	-.10	.05	-.08*
Having a child under age 8 (Yes = 1)	-.09	.08	-.04*	-.04	.08	-.02
Work-related Variables						
Weekly working hours	.02	.00	.27***	.01	.00	.09*
Average daily commute time	.00	.00	.07*	.00	.00	-.03
Family-friendly workplace culture	-.44	.05	-.31***	-.38	.05	-.28***
Job satisfaction	-.11	.04	-.10**	-.16	.04	-.15***
Constant	4.28	.41		4.60	.41	
<i>R</i> ²	28.4			19.4		

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Regarding the fathers' strain-based work-to-family conflict, the fathers' income ($\beta = -.10$, $p < .05$), number of children ($\beta = -.08$, $p < .05$), weekly working hours ($\beta = .09$, $p < .05$), family-friendly workplace culture ($\beta = -.28$, $p < .001$), and job satisfaction ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .05$) were statistically significant variables. In other words, the fathers who had a higher income and had more children experienced lower levels of strain-based work-to-family conflict. Of their work-related variables, working hours was positively related to strain-based work-to-family conflict while the variables of family-friendly workplace culture and job satisfaction were negatively associated with their strain-based work-to-family conflict. As these results indicate, the fathers' family-friendly workplace culture, job satisfaction, and income were the most important variables to predict the fathers' strain-based work-to-family conflict. This model accounted for 19.4% of the variance in strain-based work-to-family conflict.

4. Conclusion

This study investigated the factors related to employed fathers' work-to-family conflict. Of the two types of work-to-family conflict, the fathers experienced higher levels of time-based work-to-family conflict compared to strain-based work-to-family conflict. Significant variables were different depending on the type of work-to-family conflict. Of the fathers' sociodemographic characteristics, only having a child under age eight was closely related to time-based work-to-family conflict, while income and number of children were associated with strain-based work-to-family conflict. Negative relationships between the child-related variables and work-to-family conflict were inconsistent with previous research that has reported no relationship between child-related variables and work-family conflict [9]. This inconsistency may be due to wives' employment status. Women are more likely to be stay-at-home mothers when they have more children and have a child under age eight. Future research on men's work-to-family conflict needs to address wives' employment status. The negative relationship between income and strain-based work-to-family conflict might reflect men's perception that men's primary role for the family is breadwinner.

In terms of time-based work-to-family conflict, time variables such as weekly working hours and daily commute time were closely related to the fathers' time-based work-to-family conflict. Of the time variables, however, only weekly working hours was associated with the fathers' strain-based work-to-family conflict. Considering that Koreans' working hours are relatively long compared to other OECD countries [10], it is important to reduce working hours to decrease the fathers' work-to-family conflict and to balance their family and work lives.

Family-friendly workplace culture was the most significant predictor in both types of work-to-family conflict. Previous research has also reported that a family-friendly workplace culture is likely to reduce employees' work-to-family conflict [2], [5]. The Korean government has encouraged companies to introduce family-friendly workplace policies including maternity leave, parental leave, and flexible work time. As this study indicates, however, an informal workplace culture including support from the supervisor and colleagues is also important to reduce work-family conflict as well as having a formal workplace policy. In addition, employers could consider adopting a flexible work hour policy since employees might be able avoid heavy rush hour traffic if they have a flexible work hour policy. Therefore, more attention should be given to increase a family-friendly workplace culture in workplaces. Finally, fathers who were satisfied with their jobs were less likely to experience time-based and strain-based work-to-family conflict. Considering this negative relationship, employers should pay more attention to increasing employees' job satisfaction. Like previous

research [5], work-related variables were more important to predict men's work-family conflict.

Although we examined Korean employed fathers' work-to-family experiences and related factors, we only considered the relationships between fathers' work-related variables and their work-to-family conflict. Previous research reported that work-family conflict has two directions: work-to-family conflict and family to work conflict [1]. Future research needs to address both directions. In addition, family-related variables should also be addressed along with work-related variables.

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