



The relationship of work–family conflict, job satisfaction and deviant workplace behavior in the Maldives’ public sector

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Abstract

This research investigated the relationship between work–family conflict (WFC), job satisfaction and deviant workplace behavior (DWB) in the context of the Maldives’ public sector. Furthermore, the moderating roles of family income and gender were also considered in these relationships. To represent the vastly dispersed population of the Maldives, a two-stage sample scheme was used. In the first stage, 11 regions were randomly selected and in the second stage, 200 public sector employees were proportionally selected from those 11 regions. In the initial phase, the reliability of the scale was tested and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the measurement model was performed. To test direct, indirect and moderating effects, model 17 of the PROCESS macro was used. The results of the study revealed a strong positive relationship between WFC and DWB. Additionally, the roles of gender and family income in the direct relationship between WFC and DWB were significant. The effects of having high or low income were stronger for men than for women. Having a low income had a significant effect on the relationship between WFC and DWB, both among men and women.

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Introduction

A single deviant behavior such as workplace theft can cost more than USD 50 billion annually in the United States alone (Statistic Brain, 2018). Other deviant behaviors, such as surfing the internet during office hours,

intentionally slowing the pace of work and wasting resources, are serious concerns for all workplaces, especially in the public sector. In the Asia region including the Maldives, deviant behavior like corruption is more severe than in the rest of the world (Transparency International, 2021). Robinson and Bennett (1995) defined workplace deviance as the “voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organization, its members, or both” (p. 556). In 1982, Hollinger and Clark (1982) divided deviant workplace behavior (DWB) into two broad categories (property deviance and production deviance)

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based on studies conducted from 1950 to the 1980s. According to Robinson and Bennett (1995), this is the starting point of an integrated framework for DWB. They then expanded the concept and added two more broad categories to the model: political deviance and personal aggression.

Even though there are many studies investigating relationships between different internal organizational factors and DWB, the research done on external factors (like income, the role of gender and work-family life) is less common, especially in the context of the public sector (Baharom, Sharfuddin, & Iqbal, 2017; Bennett & Robinson, 2003). The existing research on antecedents of DWB does indicate that stress is one of the most common factors associated with it and, further, that DWB is the individual's way of responding to stress (Bennett & Robinson, 2003; Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001; Omar et al., 2011). WFC and income are among the key elements that are highly related to factors beyond the organization's control. Furthermore, these elements act as a major stressor in the work and family life and impact job satisfaction. Given that the Maldives is among the countries with the world's highest divorce rate, family conflicts among the working population are expected to be high compared to other countries (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020).

Furthermore, income is one of the key factors that are closely linked to most of the other aspects of life domains like housing, health and the wellbeing of the family (Hobfoll, 2001). Additionally, existing research has shown that in many societies, gender plays a key role in dictating individual family responsibilities, as well as career opportunities and level of income (Magadley, 2021). Accordingly, to understand the spectrum of DWB in the context of the Maldives this research aimed to investigate the relationship between employees' work-family conflict (WFC), job satisfaction (JS), deviant workplace behavior (DWB) and the moderating roles of family income and gender using the assumptions of Conservation of Resource theory.

Literature Review

Conservation of Resource (COR) Theory

Conservation of Resource (COR) theory was introduced by Hobfoll (1989) as a theory of stress. According to COR theory, loss or threat of losing resources are the main causes of stress. Hobfoll (1989) defines stress as a “reaction to the environment in which

there is: (1) the threat of a net loss of resources; (2) the net loss of resources; and or (3) a lack of resource gain following the investment of resources” (p. 516). Those resources could be personal characteristics (skills, self-esteem), objects (car, house), conditions (good marriage, job security), or energies (money, credit) valued by the individuals and used to procure more resources.

Work-Family Conflict (WFC) and Deviant Workplace Behavior (DWB)

A WFC can be defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). It is a bidirectional phenomenon: it could be either family interfering with work (FIW) or work interfering with family (WIF). The conflicts that arise could include a) time-based conflicts, b) strain-based conflicts, and c) behavior-based conflicts. In the work domain, WFC affects job satisfaction (JS), turnover intention, organizational commitment and so on (Amstad, Meier, Fasel, Elfering, & Semmer, 2011; Boyar, Maertz Jr, & Pearson, 2005; Kusumanegara, Asmony, & Numayanti, 2018). In the life domain, it can affect marital life, family satisfaction and more (Amstad et al., 2011; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). According to COR theory, a good family or marital life is an important resource that individuals strive to acquire and maintain. When these important resources start to deplete, individuals experience burnout and strain. DWB has been shown to be a way of responding to these stressful experiences. (Bennett & Robinson, 2003; Fox et al., 2001; Omar et al., 2011). With reference to these discussions, the following hypothesis was derived:

Hypothesis 1: WFC has a positive influence on DWB.

Job Satisfaction as a Mediator in the Relationship between WFC and DWB

Job satisfaction (JS) is the feeling individuals have about their job. These feelings could be good or bad. According to the two-factor theory by Herzberg, job satisfaction is mostly related to motivation factors like recognition, achievement, growth; while dissatisfaction is related to hygiene factors like income, working conditions, policies, and more (Herzberg, 1986). Given that the hygiene factors that contribute to the dissatisfaction are also the common causes of WFC, most of the existing research has shown a negative relationship between WFC and JS (Bruck, Allen, & Spector, 2002). Similarly, the mediating effect of JS in the relationship

between WFC and different outcome variables like turnover intention has shown positive effect (Chan & Ao, 2019). Furthermore, cross-cultural studies have indicated that the effect of WFC on JS varies based on the cultural values of the country. In collectivist societies, the relationship between WFC and JS is weaker than in individualist societies (Allen, French, Dumani, & Shockley, 2020). Even though the Maldivian societies traditionally hold collectivistic values, the large-scale urban migration and modern living has impacted these values in the past decades (Moosa, 2019).

Based on above stated discussion, the following hypothesis was derived.

Hypothesis 2: JS mediates the relationship between WFC and DWB.

The Moderating Roles of Gender and Family Income

In most cultures, gender is an important factor that influences the role of individuals in society. Even today, many societies expect women to undertake most of the family-related responsibilities (i.e., taking care of children and dependent parents). Having more family responsibilities than men, in addition to workplace stress, could put women in a more vulnerable position. The COR theory identifies career opportunities and tenure as condition resources that individuals strive to achieve, and for women, these resources are harder to attain compared to men, which leads to more stress among women (Hobfoll, 2002). The existing research also indicates that women are more prone to workplace bullying (Attell, Brown & Treiber, 2017) and get more stressed due to interpersonal conflicts (Narayanan, Menon, & Spector, 1999).

The COR theory indicates money or income as an energy resource that could be used to obtain additional resources. Similarly, individuals with low income face the threat of losing those limited resources, which makes them more vulnerable to psychological distress (Hobfoll,

1989). Overall, high-income families are in a better position to deal with most of the stressful situations in work and life domain than low-income groups. In line with these assumptions of COR theory, the existing research does indicate that individuals with a low income experience more WFC than the high-income group (Ford, 2011). With reference to the above discussion, the following hypotheses were derived.

Hypothesis 3: Family income and gender moderate the direct effect of WFC on DWB such that the effect is stronger for low-income groups and women.

Hypothesis 4: Family income and gender moderate the indirect effect of WFC on DWB through JS such that the effect is stronger for low-income groups and women.

Methodology

Data Collection and Sampling

For this research, data were collected from civil service employees in the Maldives. The civil servant pool consists of employees who have different levels of income and standards of living and who are distributed across 21 regions (20 atolls and one city). Given its geographical displacement, this research applied a two-stage sampling scheme. In the first stage, 11 regions were selected randomly from 21 regions. Considering the type of analysis and indicators per factor (Marsh, Hau, Balla, & Grayson, 1998; Wolf, Harrington, Clark, & Miller, 2013), the target number of participants for the second stage was 200. Hence, a proportionate number of participants were randomly selected in the second stage from those 11 regions selected in the first stage. The survey questionnaire was distributed online with the help of the government offices using SurveyMonkey. A total of 314 samples were received, and 200 samples were randomly selected in proportion with the total number of public servants in those regions.

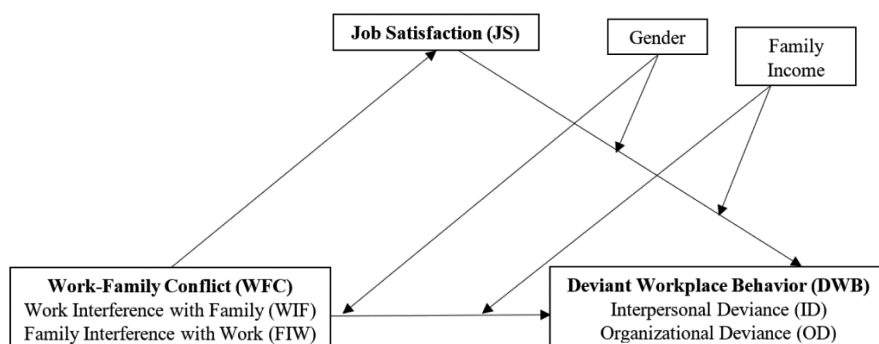


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Measures

All the scales used for this research are well-established and have an acceptable reliability level. For DWB, the 19-item, 7-point scale developed by Bennett and Robinson (2000) was used. This scale has two constructs: interpersonal deviance (ID) and organizational deviance (OD). Interpersonal deviance included 7 items and organizational deviance included 12 items. The response ranges were as follows: 1 (never), 2 (once a year), 3 (twice a year), 4 (several times a year), 5 (monthly), 6 (weekly), and 7 (daily). The Cronbach's alpha values were .81 and .78, respectively.

WFC was measured using the scale developed by Carlson, Kacmar and Williams (2000). The original scale consists of three dimensions (time, strain, and behavior), but only time and strain were measured for the purpose of this research. Behavior was dropped because some authors question the function and conceptualization of this dimension (Korabik, Aycan, & Ayman, 2017). Each dimension was measured with a 5-point Likert scale in two directions: family interference with work (FIW) and work interference with family (WIF). The Cronbach's alpha values for the scale were above .79.

Job satisfaction was measured using the generic job-satisfaction scale developed by Macdonald and MacIntyre (1997). The scale consisted of 10 items on a 5-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha values were .77.

Data Analysis

Once the data were cleaned, the reliability of the scales was tested by computing the Cronbach's alpha. After that (using SPSS version 22; SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed, and the measurement model was tested and adjusted until acceptable model fit indices were achieved. For path analysis and hypothesis testing, the PROCESS macro developed by Hayes (2017) was utilized.

Results

In the initial stage, CFA was performed to test the measurement model for all five latent constructs: JS, DWB, WIF, FIW, OD and ID. The initial test did not yield an acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 984.299$, $df = 517$, $p = .000$, $GFI = .787$, $AGFI = .755$, $CFI = .867$, $RMR = .0609$ and $RMSEA = .061$). To improve the model, loadings of the items were examined to ensure they were greater than 0.5. Further, the redundant items were eliminated. The adjusted model yielded an acceptable level of model fit ($\chi^2 = 229.283$, $df = 178$, $p = .007$, $GFI = .904$, $AGFI = .876$, $CFI = .974$, $RMR = .0526$ and $RMSEA = .038$). See [Table 1](#).

Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypotheses, model 17 of PROCESS macro was computed as suggested by Hayes (2017) using the standardized score of the variables. [Figure 2](#) shows the conceptual framework with path coefficients.

Table 1 Respondent profile

Items	<i>n</i>	Percentage	Items	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Location			Gender		
Male' city	116	58	Male	67	33.5
HDh. Atoll	13	6.5	Female	133	66.5
N. Atoll	8	4	Marital status		
R. Atoll	12	6	Single	47	23.5
B. Atoll	8	4	Married	145	72.5
ADh. Atoll	6	3	Divorced	8	4
V. Atoll	2	1	Monthly Family Income		
L. Atoll	9	4.5	Low (0 to 14,000 MVR)	96	48
GA. Atoll	7	3.5	High (14,000 MVR +)	104	52
Gn. Atoll	6	3	Age		
S. Atoll	13	6.5	18–29	78	39
Total	200	100	30–39	92	46
			40 +	30	15

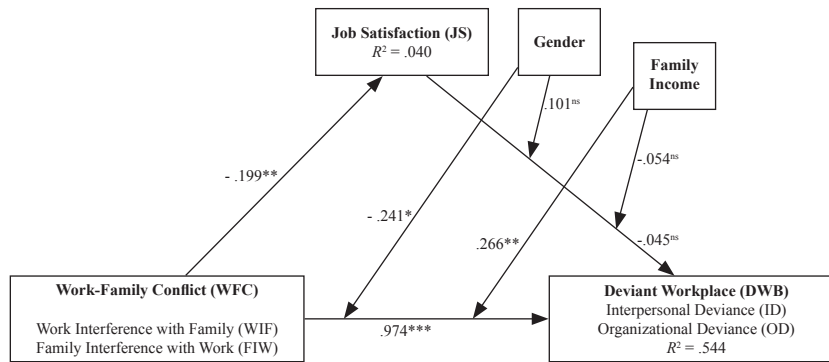


Figure 2 Conceptual framework with path coefficients

The path analysis computed by the PROCESS routine reveals a strong relationship between WFC and DWB ($\beta = .974^{***}$, $R^2 = .544$) and a negative relationship between WFC and JS ($\beta = -.199^{**}$) as projected by the model. Additionally, a negative relationship between JS and DWB is shown ($\beta = -.045$), but this relationship is not significant. The PROCESS routine does not show a significant mediation effect for JS in the relationship between WFC and DWB, even after accounting for the moderating effects of family income and gender. The PROCESS routine shows that in the direct relationship between WFC and DWB, the moderating effect of gender

(male, female) and family income (low, high) were positive in all combinations. For males with low income, the effect is stronger (.974) than for females with low income (.733). And also, for high-income males, the effect is stronger (.708) than high-income females (.467). Table 2 shows the results on the conditional direct effect of family income and gender. Figure 3 shows a graphical depiction of the effects of WFC on DWB at different combinations of family income level and gender. The result does not show a significant moderating effect for family income and gender in the relationship between JS and DWB.

Table 2 Results of conditional direct effect

Gender	Conditional direct effect		Confidence Interval	
	Family Income	Effect	Lower limit	Upper limit
Male	Low	0.974	0.770	1.177
Male	High	0.708	0.487	0.929
Female	Low	0.733	0.583	0.881
Female	High	0.467	0.304	0.630

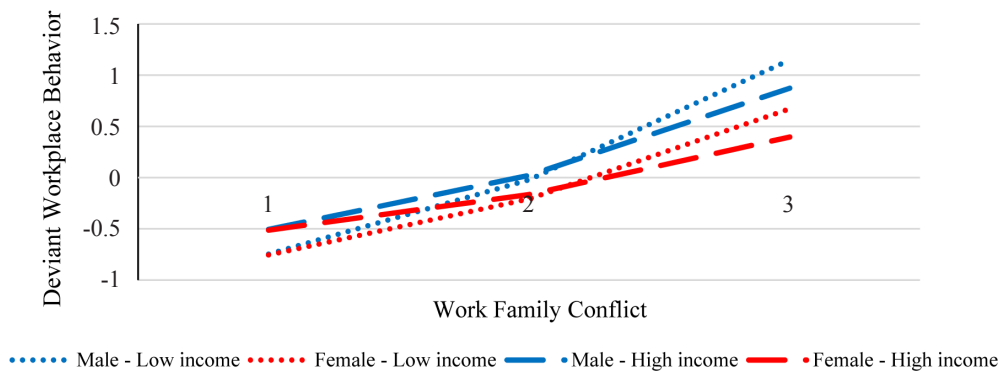


Figure 3 Effects of WFC on DWB at different combinations of family income and gender

Discussion

This research investigated the relationship between WFC, JS and DWB in the context of the public sector of the Maldives. The results revealed that there was a strong positive relationship between WFC and DWB. The existing research on the outcomes of WFC shows that WFC leads to psychological distress both in the workplace and family life and further to absenteeism, poor work and family performance, physical health risk and more (Amstad et al., 2011; Boyar et al., 2005; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Kusumanegara et al., 2018). The COR theory indicates that when individuals lose resources (like stable work and family life), they experience stress (Hobfoll, 1989). Additionally, there are several studies that support the notion that DWB is an individual's way of responding to stress (Bennett & Robinson, 2003; Fox et al., 2001; Omar et al., 2011). Overall, the strong positive relationship between WFC and DWB identified in this research aligns with the principles of COR theory and other existing research in this area.

The study hypothesized that gender and family income would function as moderators in the relationship between WFC and DWB. The results indicated a significant moderating effect for family income among both males and females. According to COR theory, income is an important resource linked to several other life resources. Having low income could increase the threat to other resources and increase psychological distress. Research indicates that low-income groups experience higher WFC than high-income groups, which leads to more stress (Ciabattari, 2005; Ford, 2011). The finding of this study regarding the moderating role of family income aligns with the assumptions of COR theory. Additionally, this result also supports the study by Koirala and Charoensukmongkol (2020), which reported that individuals who are more satisfied with their financial condition are more positive and committed for their organization and support prosocial behavior.

As far as gender is concerned, the study indicated that having low income has a stronger effect on men than women, which means that men with low income are more prone to DWB when they experience high WFC. In Eastern cultures, the financial burden of the family is mostly assumed by the male member. This could be one of the reasons men with low-income experience high DWB compared to women. Additionally, the COR theory indicates that social support is one of the resources that is used to cope with stress and in general women are in a better position in gaining social support than men

(Hobfoll, 2002; Kneavel, 2021). This could be another reason why women have less DWB than men, regardless of high or low income.

The study showed a negative relationship between WFC and JS as supported in some existing research (Bruck et al., 2002). Contrary to some research findings (Siu, 2002; Wadsworth & Owens, 2007), however, the relationship between JS and DWB was not significant. The existing studies indicate that culture plays an important role in the antecedents and outcomes of JS (Allen et al., 2020). The unique cultural aspects of the Maldives could be one of the reasons why JS did not have a significant direct relationship with DWB and a mediating role in the overall model. A large part of the Maldivian population still lives on isolated islands with small communities holding collectivist values (Moosa, 2019). In collectivistic societies, the work and family roles are more interconnected and overlapping hence role conflicts are handled better when compared to individualistic societies (Allen et al., 2020).

Conclusion and Recommendation

This research provides empirical evidence regarding the strong relationship between WFC and DWB and the roles family income and gender play in this relationship. One of the limitations of this study is that the data collected was self-reported and cross-sectional in nature. Self-reported data, especially about negative behaviors, could be biased as employees may be reluctant to accurately report their negative behaviors.

This research revealed that WFC is an important factor related to DWB and that the effect is stronger especially for men with lower income. These conclusions contribute to the existing need for investigating how external organizational factors like WFC, family income and gender influence the DWB of employees. In light of this finding, organizations could concentrate more on the causes of WFC to address DWB. Additionally, the WFC of men should not be ignored by management in their attempts to address issues with DWB. Furthermore, the reasons why men experience a stronger effect in the relationship between WFC and DWB need to be further investigated with a longitudinal, qualitative inquiry.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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