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**A STUDY ON THE IMPACTS OF WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT ON JOB AND LIFE SATISFACTION  
AMONG HOTEL SALES MANAGERS IN CHINA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The current study investigated the effects of work-family conflict (WFC) on job and life satisfaction among hotel sales managers in China. Data were collected by a field survey on 121 sales managers in 26 hotels at the Pearl River Delta in China. A hierarchical regression analysis by GLM-Multivariate was conducted to test the hypotheses. The results indicated that in contract to the study hypotheses, hotel sales managers' WIF (work interfering with family) had negative effects on job satisfaction but not life satisfaction, whereas FIW (family interfering with work) had negative effects on life satisfaction rather than job satisfaction. The results suggested the strategic role of family-friendly HR polices in hotel business and also remind potential limitations to the audience when implying the results in other hotels.

**Key Words:** Work-family conflict, Work interfering with family, Family interfering with work, Job satisfaction, Life satisfaction, China

**INTRODUCTION**

The total number of hotels in China has increased from only 137 in 1978 to 10,888 in 2004 an increase of more than 78 times (Li, Tse, & Xie, 2007). Under this fast development, the hospitality industry in China has confronted several challenges in managing human resources (HR) (Kong & Baum, 2006). Because the dual-earner families are common in China, work-family conflict (WFC) issues, a critical cause of high labor turnover, poor morale, and ultimately low performance and commitment popularly in worldwide hotels, has become a big concern among Chinese hotel employees but is lack of awareness for HR practitioners and researchers. Specifically, hotels sales managers may have typical WFC concerns because given the similar family obligations with other employees, their job activities are usually contingent to business environments and exceed their scope of control. Balancing work and role demands is also critical for hotel sales managers' career, because in China, for example, sales manager experience is the most important qualification for being a successful GM and over 26.5% GMs had such experience (Li, et al., 2007). Therefore, the present paper may extend previous studies on the attitudinal consequences of employees' work-family conflict by surveying hotel sales managers in the Chinese context, and also may become interesting for international hospitality practitioners and researchers to understand Chinese hotel employees' work and family concerns.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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Work-family conflict (WFC) refers to “a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77), and is composed of two interdependent dimensions: work interfering with family (WIF) and family interfering with work (FIW) (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). WIF and FIW were modeled with distinct antecedents and outcomes: WIF represents the impacts of work domain factors on family aspects, while FIW reflects the effects of family domain factors on work outcomes (e.g., Boyar, Maertz, Pearson, & Keough, 2003). In WFC research, job and life satisfaction were two common attitudinal consequences in work and family domain respectively (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998), while mixed results exist in the effects of WFC on job and life satisfaction.

Job satisfaction is “an internal state that is expressed by affectively and/or cognitively evaluating an experienced job with some degree of favor or disfavor” (Brief, 1998, p. 86) and is one of the most frequently examined work-domain consequences of employees’ FIW (Grandey, Cordeiro, & Crouter, 2005). However, previous research observed mixed results on the relationship between WFC and job satisfaction. Most meta-analytic studies found that individuals with high levels of conflicts between work and family roles tend to be less satisfied with their jobs. For example, in Allen et al.’s (2000) study, the mean sample weighted correlation coefficient between WFC and job satisfaction was significantly *negative* ( $r = -.24$ ). However, several studies found mixed relationships between two dimensions of WFC (WIF & FIW) and job satisfaction. Bedeian, Burke, and Moffett (1988) showed that WIF is *positively* associated with job satisfaction ( $r = .27$  for married female accountants and  $r = .29$  for married male accountants), and O’Driscoll, Ilgen and Hildreth (1992) found slightly weak but positive correlation between FIW and job satisfaction. WFC was also found to have *no significant correlation* with job satisfaction in several studies (e.g., Wiley, 1987).

Life satisfaction is employees’ overall well-being resulting from their evaluation of his or her life in general (Karatepe & Baddar, 2006), and was most often considered as a family-domain consequence strongly influenced by WIF (Allen, et al., 2000). A *negative* relationship between WIF and life satisfaction was usually demonstrated: greater levels of WIF were associated with lower degrees of life satisfaction (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Allen, et al., 2000). However, three studies (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1982; Cooke & Rousseau, 1984; Karatepe & Baddar, 2006) found *non-significant* relationships between WIF and life satisfaction.

Potential variations adopted in previous studies may have influenced the direction and magnitude of the relationships between WFC (WIF & FIW) and job and life satisfaction. Cultural differences may lead different individuals with different ethnic background individuals (Americans vs. immigrant Latinos) to experience differently the impact of WFC on job satisfaction (Grzywacz, et al., 2007). Unfortunately, previous WFC research mainly conducted in the western cultures, and only 20% WFC studies were conducted outside of US (Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood, & Lambert, 2007). Thus, an investigation in the Chinese cultural context may contribute to this gap in WFC research. More than 80% of urban Chinese women between the ages of 16 and 54 are employed, accounting for nearly 40% of the total urban labor force and over 90% of urban families are headed by working parents, indicating that China may have similar dual-earner family issues as the U.S.A. (Ling & Powell, 2001). Given the different cultural background to US samples, Chinese employees may experience different impacts of similar WFC issues on consequences in work and family domains.

In addition, the hospitality industry is well recognized as one where managers have to sacrifice their family responsibilities and personal lives for ensuring performance and service quality (Karatepe & Uludag, 2008), while WFC as an increasingly popular field in contemporary organizational research has received little attention

in hospitality journals (Mulvaney, O'Neill, Cleveland, & Groutier, 2006). O'Neill et al. (2009) highlighted that work-family circumstances of 526 employees in 37 US hotels were associated with employees' work outcomes and turnover intentions.

Taken together, the current study would like to hypothesize negative spillover effects both from WIF to life satisfaction and from FIW to job satisfaction among hotel sales managers in China as below.

*Hypothesis 1.* Greater degrees of hotel sales managers' WIF lead to lower levels of life satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 2.* Greater degrees of hotel sales managers' FIW lead to lower levels of job satisfaction

## METHODS

Three hundred questionnaires were distributed at three professional development seminars for hotel sales managers in the Pearl River Delta of China. One hundred and twenty one sales managers from twenty six hotels voluntarily participated in the survey and provided valid responses (response rate = 41%) and constituted research subjects (see Table 1 for detailed description of the sample). Validity of the questionnaires translation was assured by the back-translation processes.

**Table 1**  
**Demographic Description of the Study Sample**

Variables		Number	%
Gender	Female	59	50
	Male	59	50
Education	Below High School	1	.9
	High School	10	8.5
	Diploma	46	39.3
	College	54	46.2
	Graduates	6	5.1
Marriage	Single	51	43.6
	Married	64	54.7
	Divorced	1	.9
	Married but Separated	1	.9
Age	$M = 32.15, SD = 8.08$		
Work experience (Year)	$M = 10.56, SD = 8.28$		
Number of Dependents	$M = 1.32, SD = 1.76$		

*Note.*  $M$  represents mean, and  $SD$  represents standard deviation.

Work-family conflict was measured with eleven items modified from Grandey et al.'s (2005) inventory. The inventory consists of six items measuring work interfering with family (WIF; e.g., my job keeps me from spending time with my family members) and five items measuring family interfering with work (FIW; e.g., my family demands make it hard for me to do my job well). Individuals' magnitudes of job satisfaction was measured by nine questions of the Job Opinion Questionnaire developed by Campell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976) and previously used in Grandey et al.'s (2005) study. Life satisfaction was measured by the five-item inventory developed by Diener and Fujita (1995). The current study measured respondents' gender, education background, work experience, and the number of dependents as control variables.

A hierarchical regression analysis by GLM-Multivariate process was conducted to test the hypotheses, which can take both job and life satisfaction as dependent variables simultaneously and thus reduce potential error variances from separate single regression examination (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). The hierarchical regression analysis had three steps. The first stage was to present the effects of control variables (i.e., gender, education background, work experience, and the number of dependents) on dependent variables (i.e., job and life satisfaction). Then, the analysis demonstrated the effects of independent variables (i.e., WIF and FIW) on dependent variables. Finally, the study tested the effects of independent variables on dependent variables when control variables were taken into consideration.

## RESULTS

Table 2 displays the correlation matrix with means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values of all study variables. Participants' WIF ( $M = 4.20$ ,  $SD = 1.50$ ) is averagely greater than that of FIW ( $M = 2.27$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ) which is consistent with previous research findings (e.g., Adams, King, & King, 1996). Job satisfaction has negative correlations with both WIF ( $r = -.212$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and FIW ( $r = -.206$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Life satisfaction also has significant negative associations with FIW ( $r = -.342$ ,  $p < .01$ ) but not WIF ( $r = -.136$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

**Table 2**  
**Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables**

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cronbach's $\alpha$	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) LSA	4.08	1.23	.786					
(2) JSA	4.70	.97	.853	.280**				
(3) WIF	4.20	1.50	.848	-.136	-.212*			
(4) FIW	2.27	1.10	.746	-.342**	-.206*	.179*		
(5) Work Exp.	10.56	8.28	—	.197*	-.092	-.106	-.080	
(6) Dependents	1.32	1.76	—	.140	-.046	.047	-.110	.334**

*Note.*  $N = 121$ ; WIF = Work interference with family; FIW = Family interference with work; LSA = Life satisfaction; JSA = Job satisfaction; Work Exp. = Work experience; Dependents = the Number of dependents; Education = Education levels; \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

The results of hypothesis testing are presented in the Table 3 below. First, the control variables (i.e., gender, education background, work experience, and the number of dependents) did not have significant effects on job and life satisfaction as well as WIF and FIW. Second, the study examined the effects of WIF and FIW on job and life satisfaction. The results presented that at  $\alpha = .10$  level, WIF has a significant effect on job satisfaction ( $B = -.117$ ,  $p = .046$ ) but not life satisfaction ( $B = -.063$ ,  $p = .378$ ), while FIW has a significant impact on life satisfaction ( $B = -.365$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and job satisfaction ( $B = -.152$ ,  $p = .057$ ). Finally, the study examined the effects of WIF and FIW on job and life satisfaction after considering control variables. The results presented that at  $\alpha = .10$  level, WIF has a significant effect on job satisfaction ( $B = -.151$ ,  $p = .033$ ) but not on life satisfaction ( $B = -.094$ ,  $p = .241$ ), while FIW has a significant impact on life satisfaction ( $B = -.355$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and job satisfaction ( $B = -.173$ ,  $p = .065$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 but not Hypothesis 1 were supported. In addition, WIF has significant influences on job satisfaction rather than on life satisfaction, whereas FIW has significant impacts both on life and job satisfaction.

**Table 3**

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**GLM-Multivariate Results**

IV	DV	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
		<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>
WIF	LSA	—	—	-.063	.378	-.094	.241
	JSA	—	—	-.117	.046	-.151	.033
FIW	LSA	—	—	-.365	.000	-.355	.001
	JSA	—	—	-.152	.057	-.173	.065
Work Exp.	LSA	.026	.133	—	—	.018	.268
	JSA	.000	.980	—	—	-.006	.694
Dependents	LSA	.135	.159	—	—	.130	.156
	JSA	-.047	.559	—	—	-.031	.697
Gender	LSA	.160	.508	—	—	.214	.362
	JSA	-.074	.719	—	—	-.028	.891
Education	LSA	.013	.939	—	—	.034	.831
	JSA	.127	.371	—	—	.179	.200

*Note.* IV = Independent variable; DV = Dependent variable. Other abbreviations follow those in Table 2.

**DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND CONCLUSION**

The current study was designed to examine the impacts of work family conflicts (WFC) on life satisfaction and job satisfaction among hotel sales managers. The results demonstrated that after controlling the demographic characteristics, WIF has significant effects on job satisfaction rather than life satisfaction, while FIW has significant effects both on life and job satisfaction. Although the results were compatible with the two-component model of WFC by Frone et al (1992; 1997) (i.e., WIF and FIW have distinct effects on work and family domain), the current study found that WIF has significant influences on work domain outcomes rather than Frone et al.'s proposed family domain outcomes, while FIW has significant impacts on outcomes in both Frone et al.'s proposed work domain and family domain. Finally, in contrast to previous studies' results, the current study found that FIW played more critical roles in both family and work domains than WIF.

This new finding may be resulted from diverse reasons. On the exchange theory (Homans, 1961) perspective, when perceiving strong WIF or FIW, hotel sales managers tend to attribute the role interferences between job and family to the domain of the interferences originally generated, and have negative attitudes toward the affairs of the domain in which generates interferences with role demands in another domain (Siegel, Post, Brockner, Fisherman, & Garden, 2005). Employees, then, usually appraise their job or family life as sources of threat in a negative way (Grandey, et al., 2005). Methodologically, although scholars proposed distinct predictors and consequences of WIF and FIW, strong ( $r > .2$ ) and significant ( $p < .01$ ) correlation coefficients were found among WIF, FIW and job attitudes (see, Frone, et al., 1992; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997).

The results contain practical implications for hotel management and HR policies. First, WFC may not be only a concern of family issues, and will also influence in turn job attitudes of hotel employees. Hotel management should pay sufficient attention to help employees balance work and life and conduct an effective family-friendly HR policy. Second, hotels' HR policies should be more strategic and serve for hotel business goals by integrating various types of programs and be suitable for hotel development and business strategies.

The current study is not without limitations for audience to imply the research findings. The present study collected responses of dependent and independent variables in a single self-report questionnaire, which may contain confounding from mono-method bias (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). In order to examine the concern, we conducted a principle component analysis. The analysis extracted six factors (initial eigen-value > 1) from all questionnaire items and the first factor accounted for 23.88% of variation, which indicates that the mono-method bias may be a minor concern in the current study. Further, the samples were from the Pearl River Delta area of China, which may mean that the results of the current study may not be suitable to generalize to other parts of China or hotels worldwide. Finally, the study had relatively low response rate (41%) and small sample size ( $N = 121$ ), which may bias the results ultimately.

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