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The Effect of Work-Family Conflict on Psychological Well-Being among South Korean Working Mothers: Focused on the Moderating Effect of Social Support

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ABSTRACT

The Purpose of this study is to explore the effect of work-family conflict on psychological well-being among South Korean working mothers and the moderating effect of social support. The sample of this study consisted of 329 married employed women under age of 50 living in Seoul City and Gyeonggi Province. The results show that the higher the level of work→family conflict, the lower the psychological well-being. The greater the spousal support, the higher the level of psychological well-being. The findings are also show that spousal support was verified to have a moderating effect in relationship between work→family conflict and psychological well-being.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to explore the effect of work-family conflict on psychological well-being among South Korean working mothers and the moderating effect of social support. In this study psychological well-being was defined as emotions related to psychological satisfaction with the overall quality of life. To explore whether the various types of social support provided for compatibility of work and family life actually reduce negative emotions and to promote positive emotions among married women, we examined the support system by mainly categorizing it into spousal support and childrearing support

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Research Question 1. Does the work-family conflict among South Korean working mothers affect their psychological well-being?
- Research Question 2. Does social support have a moderating effect on the impact of

work-family conflict among South Korean working mothers on their psychological well-being?

METHODS

1. Samples

The sample for this study consisted of 329 married employed women under the age of 50 living in Seoul City and Gyeonggi Province in South Korea (Table 1). The survey was carried out from November 1 to 30, 2017.

Table 1. *Demographic Characteristics of the Sample* (N = 329)

Variables	Categories	n	%
Age	20s	65	19.8
	30s	210	63.8
	40s	54	16.4
Educational background	A high school diploma	41	12.5
	A two-year college degree	77	23.4
	A bachelor's degree	158	48.0
	A graduate school degree	53	16.1
Monthly income (KRW) 1 USD = 1,089.71 KRW in February 11, 2018	2,000,000-3,000,000	24	7.3
	3,000,000-4,000,000	41	12.5
	4,000,000-5,000,000	138	41.9
	over 5,000,000	126	38.3
Number of children	None	32	9.8
	1	203	62.5
	2	81	26.5
	3	4	1.2

Note. The number of respondents may differ from non-respondents.

2. MEASURES

1) *Dependent variable: work-family conflict*

To assess role conflict between family and work life, this study used Lee's(2011) scale in which 12 items. The scale comprised a total of 7 items including 4 items on work→family conflict (role conflict in the family domain due to experiences in the work domain) and 3 items on family→work conflict (role conflict in the work domain due to experiences in the family domain). The each item was rated on a five-point scale from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (A lot). Higher scores indicated higher levels of inter-role conflict between work and family domains. The reliability of the scale on work→family conflict was a Cronbach's α of .80. The reliability of the scale on family→work conflict was a Cronbach's α of .82.

2) Independent variable: Psychological Well-being

This study used Shim's (2016) scale of psychological well-being, and the scale consists of 5 items related to emotions related to psychological satisfaction with the overall quality of life. The each item was rated on a five-point scale from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (A lot). Some items were reverse coded so that higher scores indicated higher levels of psychological well-being. Reliability calculated with Cronbach's α was .78.

3) Control variable

Control variables are age, educational background, monthly income and the number of children.

4) Mediating Variable: Social Support

This study used Kim and Yang's (2012) scale of social support after modifying it suitable for the study purpose by dividing social support into spousal support and childrearing support. Family life support was assessed using husband's share of housework (a 5-point scale) and attitude toward work life support (a 5-point scale). Childrearing support were assessed by evaluating the level of childcare and educational services used based on the use of childcare facilities such as daycare centers and kindergartens among preschool children and educational facilities such as extracurricular programs among elementary, junior school and high school students. The reliability of the scale on spousal support was a Cronbach's α of .90. The reliability of the scale on childrearing support services was a Cronbach's α of .88.

ANALYSIS

The collected data were statistically analyzed using the SPSS Statistics 22.0. First, Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess reliability of the scale in each of the measures. Second, the hierarchical regression analysis was used to assess the effect of work-family conflict among working mothers on their psychological well-being and the moderating effect of social support

in the relationship between work-family conflict and their psychological well-being.

RESULTS

1. The effect of work-family conflict among South Korean working mothers on their psychological well-being.

The hierarchical regression analysis was performed to assess the effect of work-family conflict among South Korean working mothers on their psychological well-being. In the first step of the hierarchical regression procedure, control variables (such as age, educational background, monthly income and the number of children) were entered into the model I <Table 2>. In the second step, control variables, work→family conflict, family→work conflict, spousal support and childrearing support were entered into the model II (Table 2).

As a result, in the model II, Age, monthly income and the number of children that showed significant impact on psychological well-being in the first step also had statistically significant effects in the second step. Moreover, work→family conflict and spousal support were found to influence psychological well-being. Thus, the smaller the number of children, the higher the monthly income and the younger the age, the higher the level of psychological well-being. The higher the level of work→family conflict, the lower the level of psychological well-being. The greater the spousal support, the higher the level of psychological well-being.

Table 2. *Relative Influence of Factors Predicting Psychological Well-Being among South Korean Working Mothers (N=329)*

Variables	Psychological Well-Being			
	Model I		Model II	
	<i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	β
Age	-.03	-.12*	-.03	-.12*
Educational background	-.11	-.06	-.14	-.08
Monthly income	.20	.13**	.22	.15**
Number of children	-1.41	-.60***	-1.43	-.63***
Work→family conflict			-.16	-.09*

Family→work conflict			-.06	-.04
Spousal support			.26	.19**
Childrearing support services			.45	.05
VIF	1.15~1.39		1.07~2.55	
Constant	5.94		5.58	
Adjusted R ²	0.405		0.444	
F value	56.02***		32.24**	

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

2. Moderating effect of social support in the relationship between work-family conflict and their psychological well-being among South Korean working mothers.

The effect of a moderating variable was assessed by entering an interaction term into the model III (Table 3). In the model III, age, monthly income, the number of children and work→family conflict that showed significant impact on psychological well-being in the second step also had statistically significant effects in the third step. In the third stage, an interaction term of work→family conflict and spousal support showed significant impact. Therefore, spousal support was verified to have a moderating effect in the relationship between work→family conflict and psychological well-being, indicating that when the level of conflict is high in family life due to experiences at work, an appropriate amount of spousal support was found to mediate psychological well-being.

Table 3. *Moderating Effect of Social Support in the Relationship between Work-Family Conflict and Psychological Well-Being among South Korean Working Mothers*

(N = 329)

Variables	Psychological Well-Being	
	Model III	
	B	β

Age	-.03	-.10*
Educational background	-.08	-.05
Monthly income	.15	.10*
Number of children	-1.32	-.52***
Work→family conflict(a)	-1.12	-.35*
Family→work conflict(b)	-1.14	-.09
Spousal support (c)	.80	.38**
Use of childrearing support services (d)	1.21	1.52
a*c	-.15	-.15*
b*c	-.06	.07
a*d	-.18	-.10
b*d	-1.05	-.08
VIF	1.26 ~ 6.78	
constant	5.18	
Adjusted R ²	.466	
F value	22.72***	

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

IMPLICATIONS

The study results are as follows:

First, when the level of conflict is high in family life due to experiences at work, an appropriate amount of spousal support was found to mediate their psychological well-being among South Korean working women.

Second, spousal instrumental support resource was an important factor in improving the level of their psychological well-being in South Korean working mothers, implying that the implementation of family-friendly policies is crucial in facilitating the coordination of work-family balance in terms of time and labor between spouses in South Korea.

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