



## **The direct and interactive roles of work family conflict and work family facilitation in voluntary turnover**

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### **Abstract**

The direct effect of work family conflict on turnover has received much attention in organizational studies. However, neither the direct effect of work family facilitation on turnover nor the effect of its interaction with work family conflict on voluntary turnover has received similar attention. This has resulted in low explained variance in turnover in models that excluded these relationships. Using 450 participants drawn from employees in Nigeria, I found a significant direct and interaction effect of work family facilitation on turnover. These results support the view that work family facilitation buffers the effect of work family conflict on turnover.

**Keywords:** Work family conflict; work family facilitation; voluntary turnover

## Introduction

Cost associated with employee turnover has become a substantial portion of the operating cost of most organizations (Hom & Griffeth, 1995). High turnover rates also lead to the exit of valuable human resources from the organization, which will ultimately affect organizations' competitive advantage because leavers take with them tacit knowledge which is hard to transfer. This explains the existence of many studies aimed at understanding the various pathways to employee turnover (Carr, Boyar & Gregory, 2008; Huselid, 1995; Wright & Bonett, 1992, 2007; Zimmerman, 2008). The pathway involving work-family conflict and voluntary turnover has attracted considerable interest resulting in the establishment of positive relationship between work family conflict and turnover (Carr et al., 2008; Good, Page & Young, 1996; Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley & Luk, 2001). However, the variance in voluntary turnover explained by work family conflict alone is low, necessitating a call that researchers should consider all possible roles of the components of work family interface in determining work outcomes including voluntary turnover (Frone, 2003; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Work family interface has two components, conflict and facilitation (Frone, 2003). These components are distinct, and are experienced by employees in the same domain (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Therefore, the behavior of employees will reflect their cognitive interpretation of the joint effects of the levels of conflict and facilitation experienced in the work and family domains.

For example, in a situation where there are differences in the levels of work family conflict and work family facilitation experienced by an employee, how do such employees make a decision as to their continuous stay in the organisation? Do employees base their decision on the level of one of the components of the work-family interface? If so how do such employees arrive at the domineering component? If employees decide to consider the two components, how do they combine the effect of the constructs? These complex questions have not been adequately addressed in studies on work family interface. This is surprising considering the finding that some variables affect the relationship between work family conflict and turnover (Carr et al., 2008), and the call by Greenhaus and Powell (2006) for researchers to study the effect of the interaction of conflict and facilitation.

I achieved three aims in this study. First, I utilized confirmatory factor analyses and established the uniqueness of work family conflict and work family facilitation using participants from Nigeria. Secondly, I confirmed the direct relationships among work family

conflict, work family facilitation and turnover, and thirdly I established the effect of the interaction of work family facilitation and work family conflict in predicting turnover. The components of the work interface operate in two directions; however, the current study is on the conflict and facilitation from the work domain to the family domain.

## **Theory and Hypotheses**

### **Direct Relationship between Work family conflict and Turnover Intention**

The concept of work family conflict is based on the scarcity model (Goode, 1960). One assumption of the model is that an individual has a fixed amount of resources, such that investment in a role will reduce the level of resources available for investment by the same individual in another role. Thus, simultaneous involvement in multiple roles will give rise to conflict, a form of interrole stress, which occurs when role pressures from work and family are "... mutually incompatible in some respects" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985:77). For example, time is a scarce resource, and time involvement in a work role will leave less time for an individual's involvement in the family roles. The antecedents of work family conflict are in the work domain, and according to Frone, Russell and Cooper (1992), voluntarily leaving the work setting will eliminate the antecedents, and result in the reduction of work family conflict. Consequently, a positive relationship is expected between work family conflict and turnover intention.

*Hypothesis 1: Work family conflict is positively related to turnover intention*

### **Direct Relationship between Work Family Facilitation and Turnover Intention**

Past work family studies were dominated by the concept of conflict. However, based on the concept of positive psychology as postulated by Seligman (2002), involvement in multiple roles can also lead to resource gain, which enhances individual's performance. For example, Grzywacz and Marks (2000) and Wayne, Musisca and Fleeson (2004), stipulated that resources gained in a work role can enhance performance in a family role. Work family facilitation occurs when participation in a role enhances or provides resources that enhance participation in another role (Wayne et al., 2004). Research on work family facilitation was initially hampered by lack of appropriate measures, a situation that has been remedied by present researchers (Hanson, Hammer, & Colton, 2006). Grzywacz and Marks (2000)

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established that work family conflict and work family facilitation are orthogonal and not opposite effects in a continuum. These researchers stated that the constructs are thus, distinct and may have different effects on work outcomes. I did not locate any study that tested the relationship between work family facilitation and turnover. However, work family facilitation operates on the premise that individuals, and social systems, are driven by the propensity to move to higher levels of satisfaction, by making use of the individual and contextual resources available in the whole system. Consequently, individuals will see an organisation that provides a higher level of satisfaction (through provision of resources) as providing valuable social exchange currency which must be reciprocated. Thus, when individuals perceive they can enhance their level of satisfaction by any role involvement, they may not consider voluntarily leaving the sources of these advantages. The above assertions could provide a basis for stipulating a negative relationship between work family facilitation and turnover.

*Hypothesis 2: Work family facilitation is negatively related to turnover intention*

### **Interaction of Work family conflict and Work family facilitation to predict Turnover Intention**

Time available to an employee is limited and so voluntarily exiting the organisation will conserve time, and reduce the effect of work family conflict on the family roles. Alternatively, resources derived from work involvement can enhance performance in the family, and act as a buffer against the inevitable negative effects of work family conflict, just as social support acts as a buffer against the negative effects of stressors (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1994). For example, monetary resources derived from work involvement, can be used by individuals to provide house helpers who take care of family roles and reduce the negative consequence of work involvement. Availability of house helpers has been linked to perceptions of low work family conflict and better family functioning (Kossek & Nichol, 1992; Wang & Walumbwa, 2007). In a buffer mechanism, the family is protected from the negative effects of work involvement by the use of the resources obtained through work involvement. A buffer technique is similar to the hedging technique used by financial investors to reduce the inevitable business risks involved in financial investments (Corrado & Jordan, 2002). Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1999) actually postulated that facilitation

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such as social support could have a buffering effect by protecting the individual from the negative effects of work family conflict.

Barnett, Marshall, and Pleck (1992) and Voydanoff and Donnelly (1999), did not specifically mention hedging technique and buffer effects, but the results they obtained support the operation of these techniques. These researchers found that when individuals have high quality work and family experiences, the negative relationship between work and family stress and wellbeing weakened. Work family conflict is a form of stress, and thus, its positive effect on turnover can be hedged or buffered when individuals perceive high work family facilitation arising from multiple role involvement.

*Hypothesis 3: Work family facilitation will interact with work family conflict such that the relationship between work family conflict and turnover intention will be weaker for individuals who perceive high work family facilitation when compared to that of low family facilitation individuals.*

## **Method**

### **Sample and Procedures**

I approached an oil company and a local bank based in Lagos, Nigeria, for participation. The oil company is a joint venture operation between the Federal Government of Nigeria, represented by the National oil company, and a multinational oil company. The joint venture is operated by the multinational oil company, and profits are shared based on the equity contribution of the joint venture partners. The Oil Company has its head office in Lagos, with operational bases in two locations in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The company has staff strength of 2,500. It started operations in the country in the early sixties, and currently produces over 50% of the daily oil and gas production of the country.

The Bank is one of the new generation banks in the country. The new generation banks are differentiated from the old ones by their aggressive marketing, human resources practices and employment strategies. The bank has branches all over the country. The bank offers both commercial and investment banking services, and is a publicly quoted company with shareholders from the entire country.

The contents of the questionnaires were reviewed by the human resources managers of each organization prior to the administration of the questionnaires. After a series of discussions with the oil company's human resources manager, we agreed that only

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employees in the head office should participate in the study. This decision was based on the logistic and security problems involved in getting to the operational base of the company. At the time the study was undertaken, there were restrictions on travels to the operational bases due to some identified security issues. The participants from the oil company were drawn from the 600 people based in the head office of this organization. Participants from the bank were drawn from the employees in the bank's head office.

The human resources managers of each organization provided a list of employees with their telephone numbers. Each employee has only one telephone extension and thus has an equal chance in the sampling process. A random sample of participants was drawn using the telephone list. The number sampled from each organization was based on the number of employees in the organization. 1000 questionnaires were distributed to the two organizations. After removing returned questionnaires with substantial missing data, only 450 usable questionnaires were available (45% return rate). The participants average age was 45 years (SD = 0.9); average tenure was 12 years (SD = 1.08); 60% were men; 45% were married, and 65 % were either senior or junior employees.

### **Measures**

*Work family conflict.* This is a four item scale adapted from the work of Wayne et al. (2004), and measures individual's perception that activities in the work place have negative effect on family functioning. Cronbach alpha obtained in Wayne et al. (2004) study is 0.82, compared to 0.71 obtained in the current study.

*Work family facilitation.* This was taken from a four item scale adapted from the work of Wayne et al. (2004). It measures individual's perception that the resources acquired in the work place have benefits in family roles. The Cronbach alpha for this measure obtained in Wayne et al. (2004) study is 0.72, compared to 0.7 obtained in the current study.

*Turnover intention.* This was identified from the three item scale from the work of Aryee, Budhwar and Chen (2002). The scale measures the intention of individuals to voluntarily quit their current jobs. The Cronbach alpha obtained by Aryee et al. (2002) was 0.79, while the value in the current study is 0.77.

*Control variables.* Most studies on voluntary turnover control for some demographic variables (Carr et al., 2008; Wright & Bonett, 2007). The following were controlled in this

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study: Job status was measured as (1. Junior; 2. Senior; 3. Supervisor and 4. Manager); Gender as (1. Male and 2. Female); Age as (1. under 30 years; 2. 31-40 years; 3. 41-50 years; 4. 51-60 years and 6. above 60 years); Tenure (1. less than 5 years; 2. 5-10 years; 3. 11-15 years; 4. 16-20 years and 5. above 20 years); Marital status as (1. Married; 2. Single; 3. Others).

### **Data Analyses**

I performed a confirmatory factor analysis to establish the uniqueness of work family conflict and work family facilitation as separate factors. One and two factor structures were tested. In the single factor model, all the items for work family conflict and work family facilitation were loaded on the single factor, while in the two factor model; items for work family conflict and facilitation were loaded on separate factors. Model fit was judged with Goodness of fit (GFI), Comparative fit index (CFI) and Root Mean Standard error of Approximation (RMSEA). For a model to be judged as having good fit, GFI and CFI must be above 0.9, while RMSEA must be between 0.05 and 0.08 (Bentler, 1990; Bentler & Bonnett, 1980).

I tested the hypotheses involving direct relationships, and the interaction effects using hierarchical multiple regression analyses. The control variables were entered in step 1, the main effects of the study variables in steps 2 and 3, and the interaction term in step 4. I interpreted the regression analyses following the approach by Cohen and Cohen (1983), in which the coefficients for the demographic variables were obtained in step 1, those of the study variables in steps 2 and 3, and those of the interaction terms in step 4. In line with the work of Aiken and West (1991), the variables were centered prior to the calculation of the interaction term so as to avoid multicollinearity.

I assessed the form of the significant interaction term, using the method recommended by Aiken and West (1991). To test the form of work family facilitation and work family conflict interaction, I divided the participants into two groups. The first group contained participants categorized as low work family facilitation (mean minus 1SD), while the second group of participants was categorized as high work family facilitation (mean plus 1 SD). Thereafter, regression analyses were carried out for the various groups using work family conflict as the independent variable and turnover intention as the dependent variable.

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## Results

Table 1 shows the means and the correlations between the study variables. The mean of work family facilitation is 3.85, while that of work family conflict is 3.52. Thus, participants reported deriving more positive benefits than conflict in multiple role involvement. Work family facilitation is negatively correlated with turnover intention (-0.12,  $p < 0.05$ ), while work family conflict is positively correlated with turnover intention (0.19,  $p < 0.05$ ). These results support hypotheses 1 and 2. The bivariate correlation between work family conflict and work family facilitation is 0.24, which is an indication that the two constructs are related but distinct constructs.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlation

Variables	Mean	SD	Alpha	Var. Extr	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Work family conflict	3.52	1.09	.70	51							
2. Work family facilitation	3.85	1.25	.70	61	.20**						
3. Turnover intention	3.45	1.41	.71	66	.19**	-.12*					
4. Organisational status					.01	.01	-.13*				
5. Sex					.02	-.18**	.01	.12*			
6. Age					.11*	.13*	-.14**	.25**	-.01		
7. Organizational tenure					.12*	-.11*	-.18**	.28**	.12*	.50**	
8. Marital status					-.01	-.01	.10*	-.19**	.03	-.09	-.13**

N=450; Var. Extr = Variance extracted

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

The study variables have acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.7 and above, as shown in Table 1 (Cronbach, 1951; Nunnally, 1978). The variance extracted by each factor shown in Table 1 is higher than the square of the correlation the factor has with any other factor. This is evidence of discriminant validity (Koufteros, Vonderembse, & Doll, 2002). Table 2 shows the fit indices obtained in the confirmatory factor analyses. These indices show that the two factor structure made up of distinct work family facilitation and work family conflict factors is better than a single factor structure that combined the constructs. The correlation between the factors is 0.31, ( $p < 0.05$ ). This correlation gives further support to the uniqueness of the factors.

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Table 2. Confirmatory Factor Analyses

Model	CFI	GFI	AGFI	$\chi^2$	df	Difference	RMSEA
One-Factor Facilitation & Conflict combined	0.59	0.85	0.70	218.54*	14		0.191
Two-Factors Facilitation & Conflict Separate	0.94	0.93	0.87	84.75*	13	133.79*	0.065

N=450; CFI= Comparative fit index; GFI= Goodness-of fit index; AGFI=Adjusted Goodness-of fit index;  $\chi^2$  = Chi-square; df= degrees of freedom; df= Degree of freedom; RMSEA= root mean square error of approximation. \* P<0.05

Table 3 shows the results of the hierarchical multiple regressions. After controlling for the effects of the demographic variables in step 1, work family conflict is positively related to turnover intention (0.21,  $p<0.05$ ), while work family facilitation is negatively related to turnover intention (-0.19,  $p<0.05$ ). These results support hypotheses 1 and 2 respectively. Similarly, after controlling for the effects of the demographic variables, and the main effects of the study variables, the effect of the interaction of work family conflict and facilitation is significant (-0.20,  $p<0.05$ ). This result supports hypothesis 3. The interaction term accounted for an additional 4% in the variance in turnover intention.

Table 3. Moderated Regression Analyses Results (Dependent Variable= Turnover Intention)

Variable	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
1. Job status	-.06	-.06	-.06	-.07
2. Sex	.01	.01	.01	.01
3. Age	-.05	-.07	-.03	-.01
4. Organisational Tenure	-.13*	-.15*	-.20*	-.21*
4. Marital Status	.07	.07	.05	.07
6. Work family conflict		.21*	.25*	.23*
7. Work family facilitation			-.19*	-.22*
8. 6*7				-.20*
$\Delta R^2$	.05*	.04*	.03*	.04*
$R^2$	.05	.09	.12	.16*
F(change)	3.829	18.933	13.855	17.414

N=450

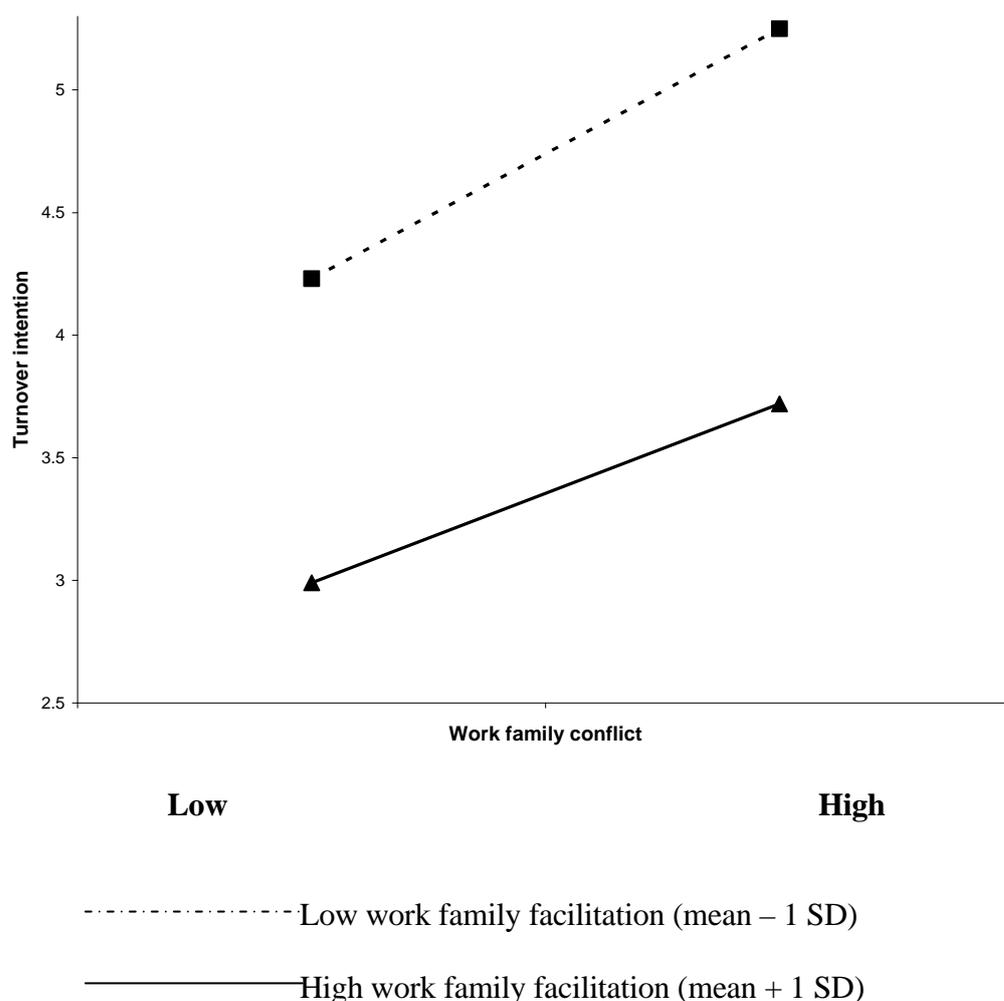
\* P<0.05

Figure 1 shows the graphed regression equations for low and high work family facilitation participants. The slope of the graph of the low work family facilitation participants is (0.32,  $p<0.05$ ) and significant, and that of high work family facilitation participants is (0.23,  $p<0.05$ ). The former slope is larger than the latter, which is an indication that work family facilitation moderates the relationship between work family

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conflict and turnover intention such that participants with high work family facilitation have fewer tendencies to voluntarily quit their job.

Figure 1. Turnover intention: Work family facilitation x work family conflict



## Discussions

According to Grzywacz and Marks (2000) and Frone (2003) it is generally believed that the work family interface has two components, work family conflict and work family facilitation, and both operate in two directions. These components have been shown to independently affect work and family outcomes (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Wayne et al., 2004). The distinct nature of the components of the work family interface was established by researchers using samples from western cultures (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Wayne et al.,

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2004). The results obtained in the current study confirm that this distinct nature applies also to participants from other cultures. The mean values of work family facilitation and work family conflict coupled with the positive correlation between them, confirms the result obtained by Grzywacz and Marks (2000) that employees can experience the constructs in the same environment, and that the constructs are not opposite ends of the same continuum. The fit indices for single factor and two factor models show that the latter has a better fit. This confirms that work family facilitation and work family conflict should be treated as two distinct factors. The square of the correlation between the two factors is 0.04, while the variance extracted by work family facilitation and work family conflict are 0.51 and 0.61 respectively. The fact that the square of their correlation is less than the variance extracted by each factor further confirms the uniqueness of each factor (Koufteros et al., 2002).

Turnover intention is positively affected by work family conflict. However, this independent effect of work family conflict, accounts for little variance in voluntary turnover. This situation has been blamed on the inability of researchers to explore the roles of other components and to test all possible relationships between the components of work family interface in predicting work and family outcomes, including voluntary turnover (Frone, 2003; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). The findings in this study demonstrate the importance of the contribution of the direct effect of work family facilitation and also the effect of its interaction with work family conflict in predicting voluntary turnover intention. These relationships are two major contributions of the current study. The results obtained in this study demonstrate that the variance in voluntary turnover is under estimated by 4% when these relationships are excluded.

The positive relationship between work family conflict and turnover intention confirms that voluntarily exiting the organization will eliminate the antecedents of work family conflict, and help the individual manage the conflict between work and family. However, other results obtained demonstrate that employees do not make these voluntary turnover decisions independent of the levels of work family facilitation. Employees make holistic appraisals of all the variables in their work domains before making turnover decisions. The negative relationship between work family facilitation and turnover intention is supported by the social exchange theory. Work family facilitation provides employees with extra resources needed to function effectively in other domains. Employees will thus, see the organisation as in an exchange relationship which must be reciprocated. Thus, voluntary turnover is

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expected to be low, since voluntarily leaving the organisation does not show that employees appreciate the organization's good gesture.

A major contribution of this study is the result of the effect of the interaction of work family conflict and work family facilitation to predict turnover intention. The result obtained indicates that for employees who perceive high work family facilitation, the relationship between work family conflict and turnover intention is weaker. This result implies that individuals do not make voluntary turnover decisions based on the level of work family conflict alone, but individuals also weigh the level of work family facilitation that is accruable to them from the work environment, and make decisions based on their cognitive evaluation of the gains and losses of facilitation and conflict respectively. What may be happening is that employees derive other resources from work involvement that help in buffering the negative effects of work involvement in other domains. This has the effect of reducing the perception of work family conflict, and subsequent reduction in turnover intention.

### **Implication and Limitations**

The results obtained in the current study are indications that participants in non-western cultures identify the work family interface as made up of two distinct constructs that can be experienced by employees. The results also support the postulation made by Grzywacz and Marks (2000) that work family conflict and facilitation are orthogonal and not opposite ends of a continuum. It was also established that voluntary turnover decisions can be negatively affected by work family conflict and also positively affected by work family facilitation. However, the significant interactive effect involving the components of work family interface obtained in the current study is an indication that the independent effects of these components do not capture the complex voluntary turnover decisions employees make in the real work environment characterized by conflict and facilitation. Consequently, overemphasis on the negative effect of multiple role involvement to the detriment of a possible positive effect of multiple role involvement is not justified

Changes in the demographic composition of the workforce resulting from changes in economic status of the family make multiple role involvement inevitable for most family members. Consequently, work family conflict is an inevitable consequence of multiple role involvement. The results obtained in the current study indicate that work family facilitation

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arising from multiple role involvement can buffer the inevitable negative effects of work family conflict. Perception of work family facilitation is enhanced by the resources that employees derive from multiple role involvement. According to Greenhaus and Powell (2006), these resources include psychological, physical, social capital, skills and material resources. Consequently, managers can manage the negative effect of work family conflict on voluntary turnover by creating work environments in which employees can derive some of these resources. For example, self esteem derived from experiences in a role can enhance performance in another role, and based on the results of the current study buffer the inevitable effects of work family conflict on voluntary turnover (Perry-Jenkins, 1994). Thus, organisations will keep the turnover rate low despite the unfavourable operating situations if they manage the environment to enhance the perception of high work family facilitation. Grzywacz & Marks (2000) and Wayne et al. (2004) have indicated that some variables have the capacity to lower conflict and also increase facilitation, while others have opposite effects. Organisations should manage those variables that would simultaneously lower conflict and increase facilitation, so as to help employees to achieve work family balance. For example, social support in the work place has the ability to decrease perception of work family conflict, and also increase the perception of facilitation (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000).

When interpreting the results obtained in this study, some limitations of the study should be borne in mind. The data is cross sectional, and so causal inference cannot be made. Participants were drawn from two organisations in two industries. Therefore, generalization across other industries may be cautiously made. The data was acquired through self reporting, and so may not be devoid of common method variance. However, an unrotated factor analyses indicated that the first factor extracted only 13% of the variance in the items, compared to 53% extracted by the other two factors. This is an indication that common method variance is not severe.

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