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Abstract

The present cross-sectional study aims to investigate (1) the direct effects of perceived organizational support and role overload on work–family conflict and (2) the mediating role of role overload in the relationship between perceived organizational support and work–family conflict using a Turkish sample. The hypotheses were tested with a sample of 344 employees from small and medium-sized enterprises in Turkey. The results demonstrated that perceived organizational support was negatively related to both family to work conflict and work to family conflict of the employees. Role overload was also positively related to both family to work conflict and work to family conflict. In addition, the results indicated that role overload did not have a mediating role between perceived organizational support and work–family conflict.

Keywords

Family to work conflict, perceived organizational support, role overload, work to family conflict

Introduction

The work–family conflict issue has received increasing research attention over the past three decades due to contemporary demographic trends and social transformations in the

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workforce. Employees today are experiencing more difficulties than ever in balancing work and family roles. As a form of inter-role conflict, work–family conflict occurs when work interferes with family demands or family interferes with work responsibilities (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Work–family conflict has both work- and family-related consequences such as work performance, job and life satisfaction, burnout, absenteeism, psychological well-being and dissatisfaction within the family domain (Frone, 2003; Greenhaus and Parasuraman, 1999; Kossek and Ozeki, 1998). Thus, researchers have attempted to understand the possible antecedents that affect work–family conflict in the recent decades (e.g. Ahuja et al., 2007; Byron, 2005; Cinamon et al., 2007; Frone et al., 1997; Parasuraman and Simmers, 2001; Voydanoff, 2005).

Organizational support theory has posited that individuals develop general views concerning to what extent their organizations appreciate their contributions and are concerned about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Though much is now known about the antecedents and consequences of work–family conflict, relatively little research has focused on the role of perceived organizational support in work–family conflict. Several scholars have argued that perceived organizational support has a positive impact on work–family conflict (e.g. Casper et al., 2002; Dixon and Sagas, 2007; Foley et al., 2005).

Role workload is a significant stressor associated with various outcomes. There has been considerable published research on role overload and its impact on the psychological and behavioural outcomes of employees such as organizational commitment and absenteeism (Duxbury and Higgins, 2001; Mulki et al., 2006). However, to our knowledge among the published empirical studies, only three have examined a potential effect of role overload on work–family conflict (Aminah, 2010; Foley et al., 2005; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

The purpose of the current study is fourfold. First, we aimed to explore the impact of perceived organizational support on work–family conflict. Second, we extended the work–family conflict literature by modelling the effects of perceived organizational support and role overload as a role stressor using structural equation modelling. Third, we addressed the gaps in work–family conflict and organizational support literature by examining the mediating role of role overload (to our knowledge, no study has tested this relationship so far). Fourth, the present study attempted to contribute to the growing literature by using a Turkish sample, as most of the previous studies on the main antecedents of work–family conflict were conducted in western societies.

Turkey, as a modern and a developing country, has a dynamic culture which differs from North America and Western Europe. Turkish societal culture has been described as being high on power distance, avoiding uncertainty and collectivism (Gurbuz and Bingol, 2007; Hofstede, 1980). Centralized decision-making, powerful leadership and limited delegation are the other salient cultural characteristics of Turkey (Ronen, 1986). In Turkey, the business sector mostly consists of private holding companies run by family members and state economic enterprises (Gurbuz and Mert, 2011). Turkish firms follow the newest trends and popular workplace practices, although they have experienced some difficulties due to some of the ‘emic’ characteristics of the societal and organizational cultures (Ayca et al., 2000). We have posited that all these salient cultural characteristics might affect work–family interference in the Turkish context. Most studies on work–family interference assume that work and family are two homogeneous and clearly distinct concepts, which reflects the characteristic of western industrial welfare states and cannot be generalized to all countries. Studying the work–family conflict issue in a modern and developing but non-western

country, like Turkey, in this respect could therefore be very fruitful and might extend the growing literature. On the other hand, the Turkish defence industry is a rapidly growing sector which especially employs qualified employees and the work–family conflict issue has attracted both practitioners’ and researchers’ attention. It is therefore appropriate to target the employees of the defence industry as the study sample.

Conceptual background

Perceived organizational support

Although perceived organizational support was introduced into management literature during the 1980s, it has gained much research attention in the past two decades. One of the reasons underlying this interest is that perceived organizational support offers an explanation for the relation between employees and the organization. Employees show heightened performance when their expectations are met by organizations (Organ, 1977). Eisenberger et al. (1986) argued that the most significant factors that influence employee behaviour and attitudes are motives that are reflected onto employees from organizations. The relations between an employee and the organization have been largely conceptualized within the social exchange perspective (Rousseau, 1995; Shore et al., 1999). Employees are in an exchange relationship with their organizations in order to gain benefits and rewards that would result from activities favoured by the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Perceived organizational support might represent employees’ beliefs about the organization in the social exchange relationship between the employer and the employee. It can be defined as ‘employees’ global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being’ (Eisenberger et al., 1986: 501).

Eisenberger et al. (1986) applied the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the reciprocity norm (Gouldner, 1960) to different perspectives of employee–organization relationship. They argued that the employee–organization connection was a social exchange relationship in which the organization offered employees benefits and social rewards in exchange for loyalty and work effort (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). Based on the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), when employees perceived that the organization supported them, they would reciprocate with positive attitudes (e.g. commitment) and favourable work behaviours (e.g. citizenship behaviour, task performance) (Eisenberger et al., 1986, 1997).

Role overload

There are three kinds of role stressors in the existing literature, which are role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload (Kahn and Byosiére, 1990). With changing and intensifying work life, role overload has been the focus of considerable interest since the 1990s (Jones et al., 2007) and it has been a significant concept in explaining some individuals’ outcomes (e.g. job satisfaction, job performance). Role overload is the most frequently cited source of stress in the organizational setting (Robinson and Griffiths, 2005). It has been described as the degree to which individuals perceives themselves to be under time pressure due to the number of responsibilities they have in life (Reilly, 1982). In other words, when an employee perceives that he or she has received too many commitments and duties to complete in a period of time, excessive role overload takes place.

Prior research has shown that role overload is the antecedent of significant employee attitudes and behaviours (Innstrand et al., 2008; Piesah et al., 2009). An employee who perceives excessive role overload tends to receive less job satisfaction and reduces job performance because the role overload forces employees to give their attention and resources to deal with overwhelming demands (Brown et al., 2005). It has been proven that role overload is likely to reduce organizational commitment and increase absenteeism due to illness (Duxbury and Higgins, 2001; Mulki et al., 2006). Duxbury and Higgins (2001) have posited that employees used personal time to cope with work demands and they often were obliged to take work home. That is, role overload might disrupt social and family life and has detrimental effects on employee well-being as well.

Work–family conflict

Work–family conflict has been the subject of much research over the past three decades because of changes in the demographic composition of the workforce (e.g. dual-career couples and increased numbers of working mothers). Work–family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict and has generally been recognized as bidirectional: work interfering with family and family interfering with work. Previous research has demonstrated that work to family conflict (WFC) and family to work conflict (FWC) are connected but empirically distinct constructs (e.g. Casper et al., 2002; Hill, 2005; Kossek and Ozeksi, 1998; Kreitner and Kinicki, 2004). WFC occurs when work interferes with family life, and FWC occurs when family life interferes with work. Recent research depicts that WFC and FWC constructs may have different causes and outcomes (e.g. Frone et al., 1997; Kelloway et al., 1999).

Researchers have highlighted a number of different variables as the possible antecedents of work–family conflict. Perceived organizational support, role overload, work hours, job stress, personality and individual differences such as sex, income and coping style can be considered as significant antecedents that influence work–family conflict (Ahuja et al., 2007; Cinamon et al., 2007; Frone et al., 1997; Parasuraman and Simmers, 2001; Voydanoff, 2005). It has been determined that employees more frequently report WFC than FWC in their life (Frone, 2003; Kinnunen et al., 2004). In terms of gender differences, studies have generally found that women experience higher levels of WFC and FWC than men due to spending more combined time on work and family activities (Brough and Kelling, 2002; Hill, 2005; Kirchmeyer, 1993; Lo, 2003).

WFC and FWC constructs have both work- and family-related consequences. Work–family conflict has been associated with job and life satisfaction, burnout, absenteeism and psychological well-being (Allen et al., 2000; Frone et al., 1997; Kossek and Ozeki, 1998, 1999). Furthermore, it has led to psychological symptoms such as higher stress (Chapman et al., 1994), physical ailments (Frone et al., 1997) and lower quality of family life (Higgins and Duxbury, 1992).

Research hypotheses

As Eisenberger et al. (1986) argued, an employee who perceives high organizational support is inclined to demonstrate favourable work behaviours. From this point of view, we propose that the effects of both WFC and FWC may influence the relationship between employee and organization negatively. This is owing to the fact that, when employees have

family-friendly policies or flexible work arrangements as organizational support, they will be inclined to have less WFC. Also, an organization's positive response to illnesses and family needs (e.g. an employee missing work due to childcare issues) is also likely to lessen the FWC level of employees. Recent studies have shown that there is a significant relationship between work–family conflict and perceived organizational support (Casper et al., 2002; Dixon and Sagas, 2007; Erdwins et al., 2001; Foley et al., 2005; Grant-Vallone and Ensher, 2001; Shaffer et al., 2001). Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Perceived organizational support is negatively related to work to family conflict (WFC).

Hypothesis 2: Perceived organizational support is negatively related to family to work conflict (FWC).

The studies examining role stressors have consistently shown a positive relationship between work role stressors (e.g. role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload) and WFC (Fu and Shaffer, 2001; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Jones and Butler, 1980; Kopelman et al., 1983; Voydanoff, 1989). Role workload is a significant stressor related to important variables. For example, Coverman (1989) found that excessive role overload is associated with reduced employee well-being. Employees who perceive that their workload is more than they can cope with face greater work–family conflict (Aminah, 2010; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Lingard and Francis, 2006). A significant relationship between role overload and work–family conflict was reported in a sample of junior physicians by Aminah (2010) and among Hong Kong Chinese employees by Foley et al. (2005). Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 3: Role overload is positively related to work to family conflict (WFC).

Hypothesis 4: Role overload is positively related to family to work conflict (FWC).

Perceived organizational support may also have a negative effect on the role overload of employees who perceive high levels of support due to better resources or information to help them cope with problems; they are not likely to have a stressful situation and their role overload will be diminished (Grant-Vallone and Ensher, 2001). In the existing literature, to our knowledge there are only two studies that investigate the relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and role overload. Foley et al. (2005) found a negative relationship between role overload and perceived organizational support. In a more recent study, Panaccio and Vandenberghe (2009) reported that POS was significantly negatively related to role ambiguity and role conflict. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Perceived organizational support (POS) is negatively related to role overload.

As stated above, studies have pointed out that there is a relationship between role overload and POS (Foley et al., 2005; Panaccio and Vandenberghe, 2009) on the one hand, and between role overload and work–family conflict (Aminah, 2010; Foley et al., 2005), on the other. Based on the prior research findings, we have posited that changes in the levels of POS could lead to changes in the levels of role overload and in turn in the levels of work–family conflict. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

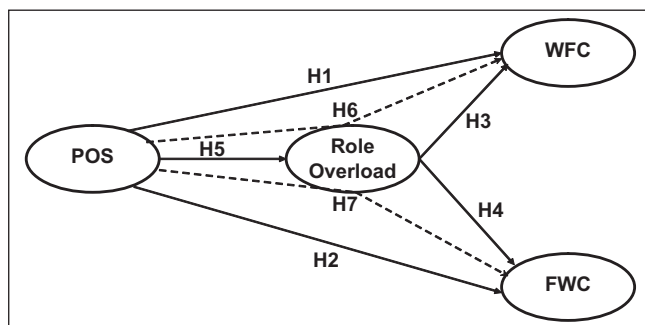


Figure 1. Hypothesized model of the study.

Hypothesis 6: Role overload mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and work to family conflict (WFC).

Hypothesis 7: Role overload mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and family to work conflict (FWC).

The hypothesized model for the present study is presented in Figure 1.

Method

Sample

The population of the present study is composed of 3000 employees from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the defence sector in Ankara, Turkey. The present work is a cross-sectional study. A total of 341 valid responses from respondents was required to ensure a 95% confidence level based on suggestions posited by Sekaran (1992: 253). A stratified random sampling technique was used to select employees from surveyed SMEs. Of the 400 questionnaires sent out, 380 were returned, representing a response rate of 95%. After elimination of cases having incomplete data and outliers (Burke, 1997; Hair et al., 2006) we had a total sample of 344.

Of the participants 82% ($n = 282$) were male, 18% ($n = 62$) were female. The mean age of the respondents was 36.80 years ($SD = 6.78$). In terms of education level, most of them (85.5%; $n = 294$) have a college degree and above (e.g. master's degree), while 12% ($n = 50$) have high school education or below. The mean tenure of the respondents was 12.80 years ($SD = 3.78$), and 47.7% have children.

Measures

Respondents used five-point Likert-type scales (1 = 'strongly disagree', 5 = 'strongly agree') to respond to the items in the following measures, except demographic variables. All scales were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and goodness of fit indexes are presented at Table 1. It is important to note that the role overload scales have only three items and the CFA model for role overload is just-identified (degrees of freedom equal to zero), and therefore we used additional constraint to test it. We formed a fourth manifest

Table 1. Goodness of fit indexes of the scales.

Variables	χ^2	d.f.	CMIN/DF ≤ 5	GFI ≥ .85	AGFI ≥ .80	CFI ≥ .90	NFI ≥ .90	TLI ≥ .90	RMSEA ≤ .08
1. Perceived organizational support (POS)	40.1	25.06	1.6	.96	.92	.98	.95	.97	.06
2. Role overload (RO)	3.49	1.5	2.3	.99	.97	.99	.98	.96	.01
3. Work to family conflict (WFC)	9.2	4.02	2.3	.98	.93	.99	.96	.98	.08
4. Family to work conflict (FWC)	13.5	5.01	2.7	.97	.92	.98	.97	.96	.09

indicator for the latent role overload variable, by summing randomly chosen cases from other three items of the role overload (Hair et al., 2006). We did this because a minimum of four manifest indicators is required to test fit for the model.

Perceived organizational support scale. Employees’ perceptions of organizational support were measured with 10 items from Eisenberger et al. (1986). Sample items include: ‘The organization cares about my well-being’ and ‘Help is available from the organization when I have a problem’. Previous research has reported good reliability for this scale (Cronbach’s alpha = .93 in Stassen and Ursel [2009] and in Vandenberghe et al. [2007]).

We adapted the items to Turkish by following the method of Brislin (1970), forward-backward translation. Exploratory factor analysis using principle component analysis with varimax rotation was applied to the adapted scale to check the unidimensionality. One item was dropped because it did not pass the .40 criterion of Hair et al. (2006). All nine items were satisfactorily summed up in one factor. Results from a confirmatory factor analysis using the Amos 6.0 program showed that they overall fit the one factor model. Factor loadings of the item ranged from .53 to .88. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the perceived organizational support scale items is .88.

Role overload scale. We took three items from a scale originally used by the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (MOAQ; Cammann et al., 1983) to capture perceived role overload of the employees. Sample items include: ‘I don’t have time to finish my job’. Klein (2007) has reported good reliability for this scale (Cronbach’s alpha = .80).

We adapted the items of the role overload scale to Turkish by the method explained above (Brislin, 1970). Exploratory factor analysis using principle component analysis with varimax rotation was applied to the adapted scale to check the unidimensionality. All three items satisfactorily summed in one factor. Results from a confirmatory factor analysis using the Amos 6.0 program showed the overall fit of the one factor model. Factor loadings of the item ranged from .44 to .70. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of the role overload scale items is .75.

Work–family conflict scales. Work to family conflict (WFC) and family to work conflict (FWC) were measured using two separate scales originally developed by Netemeyer et al. (1996). The scale consisted of 10 items, five for FWC and five for WFC. A sample item from this scale is ‘The amount of time that my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfil family responsibilities’. Adaptation of the scale to the Turkish language and culture was

Table 2. Means, standard deviations and correlations of the study variables.

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Perceived organizational support (POS)	3.22	.78	(.88)			
2. Role overload (RO)	2.75	.77	-.21**	(.66)		
3. Work to family conflict (WFC)	2.84	1.04	-.36**	.42**	(.91)	
4. Family to work conflict (FWC)	2.05	.80	-.22**	.09	.32**	(.88)

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

carried out by Efeoglu (2006) as part of a doctorate dissertation. He reported good reliability for the adapted version of the scales (Cronbach's alpha = .91 for WFC, and .83 for FWC). We executed the confirmatory factor analysis using the Amos 6.0 program to the scale to check fit index. The result showed the overall fit of the one factor model for both the WFC and FWC scale. Factor loadings of the item ranged from .65 to .89. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for items was .83 for WFC and .88 for FWC.

Results

The data gathered were analysed using SPSS 16 and Amos 6.0 programs. We first performed a Kolmogorov–Smirnov analysis to test whether data are normally distributed. As a result of the analyses a few cases were excluded in order to ensure normal distribution of the data. Eventually, it was found that all data used in the analyses fit the normal distribution ($p > .05$). Then, we examined descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations and Pearson correlation analysis of the study variables. In the second phase of analyses, we ran a series regression analysis. Finally, we used structural equation modelling (SEM) to conduct a test of the variables in the hypothesized model to examine the extent to which it is consistent with the data.

Table 2 displays the means, standard deviations and correlations among the study variables. Reliabilities of scales (Cronbach's alpha) are provided in parentheses on the diagonal of Table 2. As can be seen, the participants reported a relatively high level of perceived organizational support (POS), a moderate level of work to family conflict (WFC) and a relatively low level of role overload and family to work conflict (FWC).

Correlation analysis results revealed that the two types of work–family conflict (WFC and FWC) were positively correlated ($r = .32$, $p < .01$). Both WFC and FWC were negatively correlated with POS ($r = .36$, $p < .01$; $r = .22$, $p < .01$, respectively). In addition, WFC was positively correlated with role overload. Moreover, there was a significant correlation between role overload and POS ($r = .21$, $p < .01$). However, there was no significant correlation between role overload and FWC.

After correlation analyses, we employed a series of regression models to test the mediational hypotheses according to statistical procedures described by Baron and Kenny (1986: 1177). Testing for mediation requires the following four conditions: (1) the independent variable significantly affects the dependent variable; (2) the independent variable significantly affects the mediator; (3) the mediator significantly affects the dependent variable; (4) the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable shrinks upon the addition of the mediator to the model. If the independent variable does not affect the

Table 3. Results of regression analyses (main and mediating effects).

	β		
	RO	WFC	FWC
<i>Step 1</i>			
POS	-.21**		
R ²	.04		
Adjusted R ²	.03		
	(F = 7.9**)		
<i>Step 2</i>			
Age		.08	-.03
Tenure		-.01	-.01
POS		-.35***	-.22**
R ²		.13	.04
Adjusted R ²		.11	.03
		(F = 8.5***)	(F = 2.8**)
<i>Step 3</i>			
Age		.03	-.04
Tenure		.02	-.004
POS		-.27**	-.21**
RO		.36***	.05
R ²		.25	.05
Adjusted R ²		.23	.03
		(F = 14.3***)	(F = 2.2)
Sobel test (z)		-2.5	-1.12

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Note: POS = perceived organizational support; WFC = work to family conflict; FWC = family to work conflict; RO = role overload.

dependent variable upon regressing the dependent variable on both the independent variable and on the mediator, then full mediation is established. If, however, the independent variable is reduced in absolute size but is different from zero when the mediator is controlled, partial mediation can then be concluded.

Following Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach, we tested whether role overload mediated the relationship between perceived organizational support and WFC and FWC. The results of regression models are presented in Table 3. In the first step, results showed that perceived organizational support predicted role overload ($\beta = -.21, p < .01$). In the second step, the results indicated that POS predicted both WFC and FWC ($\beta = -.35, p < .01$; $\beta = -.22, p < .01$, respectively). In the third step, both the mediator variable (role overload) and perceived organizational support were added to the model to test the mediation effect of role overload. When including role overload, effects of perceived organizational support on WFC and FWC were reduced. The effect of role overload on FWC was insignificant. We performed the Sobel test (1982) to see whether the role overload significantly carried the influence of an independent variable (POS) to a dependent variable (WFC). The partial mediation of the role overload was not established ($z = -.59$) according to the result of

the Sobel test (1982). Furthermore, the role overload has no mediation effect on the relationship between POS and FWC.

According to results of regression analyses, the hypotheses (H_1 and H_2) testing whether POS has a significant effect on work–family conflict have been supported. Moreover, H_3 (RO \rightarrow WFC) and H_5 (POS \rightarrow RO) have been supported. However, based on the results, H_4 (RO \rightarrow FWC), H_6 and H_7 (mediating effect of RO on POS \rightarrow FWC and mediating effect of RO on POS \rightarrow WFC) have not gained empirical support.

After the series of regression analyses, SEM was used to test the overall research model. The SEM estimates for the hypothesized model are shown in Figure 2. The results of the structural model showed a moderate fit to the data (GFI = .86, AGFI = .81, CFI = .91, TLI = .90, NFI = .88, $\chi^2 = 417.89$, d.f. = 241, CMIN/DF = 1.07 and RMSEA = .06) (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1993; Kline, 1998) and most of the hypothesized SEM in the proposed model were statistically significant, except for the perceived organizational support to role overload. Overall, the structural model showed that perceived organizational support and role overload have a significant effect on both WFC and FWC. The mediation effect of the role overload that was not approved by the series of regression analyses above was also investigated using SEM. As can be seen in Figure 2, the effect of POS on role overload was insignificant and the indirect effects of role overload on the relation between POS and WFC/FWC were negligible (–.001 vs –.003 respectively). This finding confirmed that role overload had no mediation effect.

Discussion and conclusions

The present research was designed to investigate the direct effects of POS and role overload on work–family conflict using a Turkish sample. In addition, the study tested the mediating role of role overload in the relationship between POS and work–family conflict.

The findings of the study revealed that POS is negatively related to both FWC and WFC of employees. Such findings are in line with those of previous studies (Casper et al., 2002; Erdwins et al., 2001; Foley et al., 2005; Grant-Vallone and Ensher, 2001; Shaffer et al., 2001). Also, we found evidence that, as a role stressor, role overload is positively related to WFC. Our finding is consistent with other studies (Aminah, 2010; Jones et al., 2007; Klein, 2007). Contrary to our prediction, role overload is not significantly related to FWC according to regression analysis. However, when all variables are included in the structural model, role overload is positively related to FWC. Also, while POS is negatively related to role overload in regression analysis, it is not significantly related to role overload in the structural model. One possible reason for this is that the effects of all variables were tested simultaneously in SEM and this might influence the relationships among variables. Another possible reason might be indicative of convergence problems for the SEM. However, considering the correlation coefficients among the variables, convergence problems may not be the case (Hair et al., 2006).

We tested the mediating role of role overload in the relationship between POS and work–family conflict (WFC and FWC) using both Baron and Kenny's (1986) approach and SEM. The results, contrary to expectations, indicate that role overload does not have any mediation effect on the relationship between POS–WFC and POS–FWC.

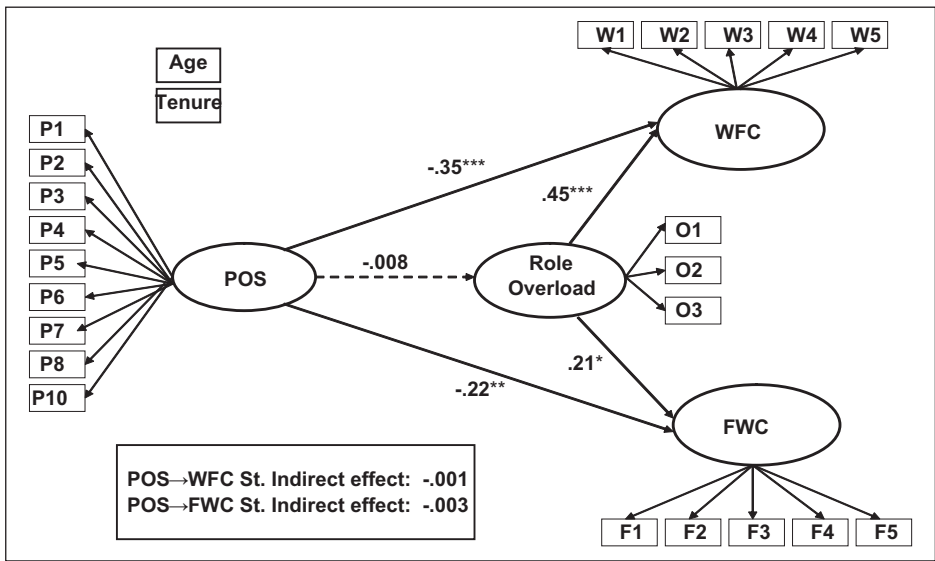


Figure 2. Structural model and path coefficients.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Note: POS = perceived organizational support; WFC = work to family conflict; FWC = family to work conflict; RO = role overload.

It is important to note that prior research found that women experience higher levels of WFC and FWC than men due to spending more combined time on work and family activities (Hill, 2005; Lo, 2003). Our study was conducted within a male dominant sample (82% male), which might have influenced the results. Therefore there could be different mechanisms of work–family interference operating for men and for women.

Theoretical implications

According to both social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986), an employee who perceives high organizational support is inclined to show favourable work behaviours. This study suggests that the employees who perceive high levels of support from their organization will be inclined to have less work–family conflict (both WFC and FWC).

By testing the mediating effect of role overload on the relationship between POS and work–family conflict this study aimed to contribute to the work–family conflict literature by examining the relationship between a work stressor and work–family conflict. Our work–family model extended the current line of research and previous models (e.g. Casper et al., 2002; Foley et al., 2005; Grant-Vallone and Ensher, 2001) by including a Turkish context. However, contrary to our expectation, the mediation role of role overload was not supported. This means that the mediation role of role overload between POS and work–family interference still needs to be studied in future works. Consistent with prior

research, we suggest that POS and role overload should be incorporated for a better understanding of the antecedents of work–family conflict.

Most of the studies concerning the POS and work–family conflict relationship have been conducted in western societies. To our knowledge, limited studies so far have examined the POS and work–family conflict relationship in non-western cultural contexts, thus this study contributes to the literature on the work–family interface in different cultures by targeting a Turkish sample. Turkey, as a modern and developing but non-western country, has some distinct workplace characteristics. Especially in SMEs, the working conditions are very arduous, which is considered the main problem in this industrial sector. Despite the heavy working conditions, employees continue their work due to a high unemployment rate and erratic layoffs. This situation causes the employees to experience more work–family interference. In this context, perceived organizational support does not have any significant effect on role overload of employees working in the surveyed firms. However, the influence of role overload and perceived organizational support on work–family conflicts is clear.

Practical implications

This study has important practical implications for SMEs, as they provide further evidence of the beneficial effects of providing support to employees. Notably, this study shows that the perceptions of support from the organization would lessen the experience of FWC and WFC. In other words, when employees have family-friendly policies or flexible work arrangements as organizational support, they will be inclined to feel less FWC and WFC. Hence, organizations should adopt some favourable procedures to influence employees' perceptions of support such as fair treatment, supervisory support, showing recognition, adapting work schedules to meet individual needs and family-friendly policies, as the recent longitudinal research suggests (Hammer et al., 2010).

Limitations and future work

Several limitations of this study should be noted. First, the study was a cross-sectional one. The sample was made up of employees from SMEs in the defence sector, Ankara, Turkey. Hence, the results of the research may not be considered as representative of all Turkish firms. Conducting future research using a longitudinal design and including larger enterprises might contribute to the generalizability of the link among the variables (perceived organizational support, role overload and work–family conflict) and bring about more reliable results. Second, the perceptions drawn from this study are limited by self-report. As a result, common method bias is always an issue in survey research due to gathering data from a single respondent. In the future, in order to lessen the potential for bias, at the very least data concerning POS should be collected from different sources (i.e. supervisors).

It has been proven that there are many antecedents to work–family conflict in the workplace. In our research model, we only incorporated POS and role overload as the antecedents of work–family conflict and focused on the mediation of role overload. Therefore, it may be helpful for future studies to test the mediating role of work–family conflict in the relationship between job performance and perceived organizational support,

supervisor support and organizational justice. Additionally, future research is needed to assess the generalizability of the findings to employees, sectors and cultures.

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