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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPERVISOR SUPPORT AND WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AND THE MEDIATING ROLE OF WORK OVERLOAD PERCEPTION ON THIS RELATIONSHIP*

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to investigate the mediating effect of work overload perception on the relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict experienced by employees.

Methodology: The created models and hypotheses were tested on a sample comprising 401 research assistants working at a public university. The data obtained were analyzed using statistical programs.

Results: According to the results of the analyses, it was concluded that supervisor support had negative correlation with work-family conflict and work overload perception. In addition, a positive relationship between work overload perception and work-family conflict was observed.

Conclusion: Based on the mediation model that was used to test the main hypothesis, it was concluded that work overload perception has a partially mediating effect on the relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict.

Keywords: Work overload, work-family conflict, supervisor support, mediating role, structural equation modeling

1. Introduction

Working life has an essential place in the lives of employees and their families. Therefore, attitudes, behaviors and emotions towards work are important for both individuals and their families. The positive and negative situations experienced by employees

* This study is derived from the master's thesis titled "THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK OVERLOAD AND WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AND THE ROLE OF SUPERVISOR SUPPORT IN THIS RELATIONSHIP", under the supervision of Dr. İlhami YÜCEL, at Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University, Institute of Social Sciences

in their working life affect them in a multidimensional way. Regardless of whether they work in the private sector or in public institutions, employees are faced with many problems in their working life. One of these problems is work overload perception. The concept of work overload perception is associated with the organization and the number of staff involved in the organization. Perceived work overload is a situation that has a detrimental effect on employees and may have negative consequences for both the staff and the organization (Fights, 2015). Work overload is a perception that the workload one has to deal with in the workplace or institution is above the required level (for example 40 hours of work per week). Work overload also means that work is too demanding and puts the individual under pressure (Greenberg et al., 2005). Conflict is a result of the incompatibility of goals, aspirations and aims of two or more people.

A role conflict is a situation emerging as a result of the discrepancy between the missions that individuals have and the lack of resources such as time, and energy to achieve these missions (Çarıkçı & Çelikkol, 2009). Kahn (1964) described the role conflict as the pressures on the different roles of a person such that compliance with one makes it difficult to comply with the other. One of the factors affecting work-family conflict cited in the literature is work overload perception. An increase in work overload affects both the employee and his/her family and indirectly the organization (Ilies et al., 2007). In this context, supervisor support can affect the perception of work overload and thus reduce the work-family conflict. Based on the existing literature, the study seeks to investigate the mediating effect of work overload perception on the relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict.

2. Literature review and hypotheses

Based on the spillover and social exchange theories, it can be concluded that supervisor support is related to work-family conflict. How a person perceives the support they receive from their supervisors may vary depending on employee perception of the facts (Broadbent, 1958). Therefore, if employees perceive supervisor support negatively, they may develop negative perceptions of work-family conflict as

well. Supervisor support reduces work-family conflict (Adams et al., 1996; Byron, 2005; Michel et al., 2010). Supervisor support is defined and measured as the help given to employees striving to avoid work-family conflict, i.e., to achieve work-life balance. Support for employees seeking balance between work and family life includes work-related assistance, such as extending the deadline of the project, as well as emotional support, such as empathizing with an employee and showing interest in his/her well-being and family. Support in this context will have an effect similar to the effect of flexible working hours, that is, it will make it easier for employees to achieve balance between work and family roles. Once that balance has been achieved, the individual will be able to focus on tasks at hand, feeling emotionally relaxed and more energetic in the time allocated to the work. This is consistent with the theory of spillover (Staines, 1980), which argues that attitudes toward work can spread to the family sphere and affect perceptions of work-family conflict. Furthermore, the Social Exchange Theory, which studies human behavior in social interactions (Blau, 1964), offers another explanation for this relationship. The underlying assumption of the Social Exchange Theory is that people exchange resources to derive benefits for themselves (Emerson, 1976).

This theory is based on the idea of a subjective cost-benefit analysis in a relationship (Reiche et al., 2011). Within the scope of this study, the social exchange theory can be used to explain how employees balance the perceived exchanges between work and family. For example, people who are more satisfied with their salary experience fewer work-family conflicts (Bhave et al., 2013). Accordingly, if employees' perceptions of supervisor support are positive, they perceive social exchange positively and work-family conflict decreases.

The lack of supervisor support in the workplace affects one's role in the family and at work (Kossek et al., 2011). Increased support will reduce conflict in the family and will improve employee focus and motivation. Prior research shows that there is a significant relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict. In addition, a significant negative relationship was found between supervisor support and work-family conflict (O'Driscoll et al., 2003; Antani & Ayman, 2004; Rousseau et al., 2006;

Thompson & Prottas, 2006; Breaugh & Frye, 2008; Major et al., 2008; Mesmer-Magus et al., 2008; Ng & Sorensen, 2008; Wang et al., 2010; Casper et al., 2011; Shirom et al., 2011). Based on the results of these studies, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There is a significant negative relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict.

Supervisor support is the extent to which employees feel that supervisors value, encourage and support them (Babin & Boles, 1996). Muse and Pichler define a supervisor as the representative force that actually distributes resources by executing the organization's rules and policies. For this reason, the first premise of the general support that employees receive at work will be perceived as supervisor support (Muse & Pichler, 2011). Supervisors, as representatives of the organization, are responsible for guiding employees and evaluating their performance (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In addition, employees often think that after evaluating subordinates, supervisors pass on the information on their performance to senior management, thus influencing senior management's views.

While supervisor support produces a number of positive effects on the employee, it also reduces the negative effects. Work overload perception is one of these negative effects. In order to reduce the perception of work overload, supervisor support to employees should be increased (Weigl et al., 2016). Supervisor support is negatively correlated with the perception of work overload. As supervisor support increases, the perception of work overload decreases. Previous research shows that there is a significant relationship between supervisor support and work overload perception. The relevant literature reports on a significant negative relationship between supervisor support and work overload perception (Kirmeyer & Dougherty, 1988; Carlson & Perrewé, 1999; Glaser et al., 1999; Yoon & Thye, 2000; Fu & Shaffer, 2001). Based on the results of these studies, the following hypothesis is put forward:

H2: There is a significant negative relationship between supervisor support and work overload perception.

Work environment, the content and amount of work, and the number of negative experiences due to work constitute the structure of the work and

cause work overload perception. Theoretically, when tasks are written down, it becomes clear what everyone has to do and how much workload there is. However, because each employee has different skills and capacities, the data on the paper may not always match the actual workload. For these reasons, the allocation of work according to the capabilities of employees will produce better results for both the organization and the employee (Keser, 2006).

Corporations and businesses seek to gain advantage over their competition. One of the secrets to successfully doing that is to make the most of the skills and capacities of their employees. Businesses that want to be successful in this context sometimes demand from their employees more than they can give. This leads to work overload. One of supervisor's tasks is to determine the workload of their subordinates. Role overload is defined as a situation in which employees are overwhelmed since they have too many responsibilities, which need to be performed well, and consequently they have to work longer hours (Greenhaus et al., 1989).

The concept of work-family conflict has been referred to in the literature using various terms such as work-family interaction problems, work-family mismatch and job-family tension. Role conflict was first defined by Kahn et al. (1964), who brought the work-family conflict in the focus of literature. A role is defined as a set of expectations that include variables such as the action, behavior and performance expected from a person in a social structure due to his status, environment and position. Work-family and family-work conflict is a result of the incompatibility of work and family roles and the difficulty to fulfill the requirements of the family role due to the requirements of the work role and vice versa (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). It is defined as the demands of one role that affect and complicate the performance of the other role (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Work-family conflict occurs as a result of a lack of communication between the roles of the person or the incompatibility of the two. It is a conflict arising from a person's failure to give the desired performance in one or both roles when he or she remains between these two roles (Clark, 2000). Greenhaus et al. (2003) argued that the following three elements are needed to achieve a work-family balance:

Time balance - the necessity of allocating equal time to work and family roles; involvement balance - the balance of equal involvement in work and family roles; and satisfaction balance - equal satisfaction with work and family roles.

Increased social support from the organization, providing employees with the possibility of part-time work, flexible working hours, i.e., extending or reducing working hours on particular days are some of the strategies that can be employed to reduce work-family conflict (Albertsen et al., 2008; Joyce et al., 2010; Özmete & Eker, 2012). One of the most impressive aspects of the human cognitive system is the ability to manage and execute multiple concurrent tasks. Concurrent multitasking (or simply multitasking) is a phenomenon that we encounter in our daily life, in our working life, and in our leisure time.

In some cases, multitasking may seem almost effortless (for example, walking and talking), in others, it may seem very difficult (for example, to read and listen at the same time) Multitasking performance can be highly dependent on the individual or the environment (for example, singing while playing an instrument or talking on the phone while driving). This area of possibilities creates tremendous difficulty in understanding the surprising capacity of the human system for multitasking on the one hand, and sometimes serious constraints on multitasking performance on the other (Salvucci & Taatgen, 2008). In the context of multitasking theory, as the difficulty and the number of tasks increase, the perception of work overload occurs. Studies have shown that there is a significant relationship between work overload and work-family conflict.

Based on these studies, which have shown that there is a significant relationship between work overload and work-family conflict (Voydanoff, 1988; Carlson et al., 1995; Ahuja et al., 2007; Ilies et al., 2007; Lu et al., 2008; Yıldırım & Aycan, 2008; Turgut, 2011; Goh et al., 2015), the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between work overload perception and work-family conflict.

2.1 *Work overload perception as a mediator of the relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict*

Some ideas have been put forward to explain the impact of supervisor support and work overload

perception on work-family conflict. According to multitasking, spillover and social exchange theories, supervisor support reduces the perception of work overload and the likelihood of work-family conflict (Staines, 1980; Salvucci & Taatgen, 2008; Kossek et al., 2011).

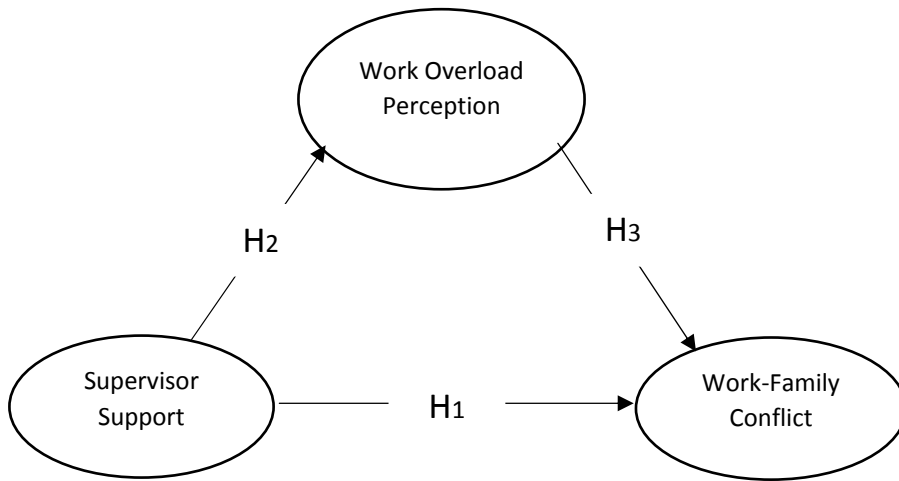
Goh et al. (2015), on the basis of the preservation of resource theory, state that supervisor support helps employees cope with work overload and reduces work-family conflict. Goh found evidence of a relationship between work overload perception and work-family conflict, which had a significant impact on the work-private life balance. A supportive supervisor provides employees with the ability to manage job and family demands and can take supportive actions on certain issues related to the employee's career path or family issues (Kossek et al., 2011).

Experimental research shows that supervisor support is negatively associated with work-family conflict (Lapierre & Allen, 2006; Kossek et al., 2011). In addition, research suggests that supervisor support provides employees with different resources and opportunities to reduce the negative impact of work overload perception. Employees who receive support from their supervisors in dealing with their workload and family issues are less likely to experience family conflict, even if the workload perception is high. In light of this, Shantz et al. (2016) examined the mediating effect of work overload on the relationship between HRM attributions and emotional exhaustion. Neither Shantz et al. (2016) nor other studies in the reviewed literature have looked at the mediating effect of work overload perception on the relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict.

As a result of all these relations, it was concluded that work overload perception could play a mediating role in the relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict. Thus, the following hypothesis was developed.

H4: Work overload perception has a mediating role in the relationship between supervisor support and work-family Conflict.

Figure 1 Work overload perception as a mediator between supervisor support and work-family conflict



Note: Based on the mediation analysis, PROCESS MODEL 4 (Hayes, 2015)

Source: Authors

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and procedure

Data were collected to investigate the mediating effect of work overload perception on the relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict. A survey was conducted of research assistants working at a state university in Turkey. Survey questionnaires were sent to the respondents at the university. They were filled out and returned by 401 respondents. Before checking whether the created data set shows normal distribution or not, outlier analysis is applied to understand whether the data set has any outlier values. Extremely high or low values in the data set are called outlier values. These outliers may be caused by data entry errors or sampling errors. Extreme outlier values may cause the data set to deviate from normal distribution and affect statistical analysis (Ovla & Taşdelen, 2012). As a result of the outlier analysis, no outliers were found. The subsequent normality test found that the data showed normal distribution. SPSS 22 was used to conduct the T-test, Anova, and exploratory factor analysis. AMOS 20 was used for the confirmatory factor analysis, bootstrapping and structural equation model. The Bootstrap method is one of the most frequently used methods in statistics. The main purpose of the Bootstrap method or algorithm is to create (generate) large data sets and

to resample the data. In the Bootstrap method, the interpretation is made by redrawing some parameters with statistical inferences. This process is then repeated many times to be more reliable. With the Bootstrap method, variance estimates are successfully obtained and are frequently used for variance estimation (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

3.2 Measures

Work Overload Perception

A one-dimensional 5-item scale, developed by Imoisili (1985), was used as an independent variable to determine employees' work overload perception. Answers were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree). "I often do more work than I have to do" and "I often have to deal with difficult tasks" are some of the statements used in the scale. The Cronbach's alpha value, which shows the reliability coefficient of 0.91, indicates that the scale is within acceptable limits.

Work-Family Conflict

A one-dimensional 5-item scale, developed by Netemeyer et al. (1996), was used as a dependent variable to determine whether employees have experienced work-family conflict.

“Due to the requirements of my job, I have difficulty fulfilling my responsibilities towards my family”, “The time I spend working makes it difficult for me to fulfill my responsibilities in the family” are some of the statements used in the scale. The Cronbach’s alpha value, which shows the reliability coefficient of 0.96, indicates that the scale is within acceptable limits.

Supervisor Support

A one-dimensional 6-item scale, which was developed by Anderson et al. (2002), was used as an intermediary variable to determine whether employees are provided support by the management. “When I have a problem, my department chair will support me”, “My head of department is fair and does not favor certain employees over others” are some of the statements used in the scale. A Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.96 indicates that the scale is within acceptable limits.

3.3 Analyses and results

3.3.1 Supervisor support

The reliability coefficient for the supervisor support scale was found to be 0.96. The value of KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy), which helps to determine whether the data are suitable for factor analysis, is found to be 0.91, while Bartlett Test (Chi-square = 2789.522, degrees of

freedom = 15, $p = 0.000$) seems to be significant. The six items in the scale were grouped under a single factor and the total variance was found to be 0.86 (Table 1).

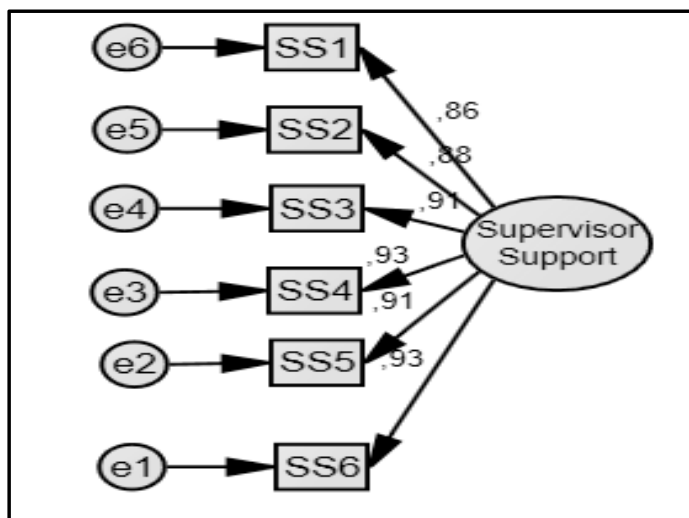
Table 1 Factor analysis of the supervisor support scale

Components	% of variance
Item 1	.862
Item 2	.882
Item 3	.910
Item 4	.932
Item 5	.912
Item 6	.927

Source: Authors

According to the results of the analysis (Chi-square = 5.224, degrees of freedom = 4, $p = 0.000$) chi-square/degree of freedom was found to be 1.306. Values less than 5 are acceptable for the goodness-of-fit of the model (Table 2). Confirmatory factor analysis of the scale is shown in Figure 2 The results of the analysis show that the standardized factor loadings of the model are all greater than 0.5 and all items have acceptable factor loadings.

Figure 2 Confirmatory factor analysis of the supervisor support scale



Source: Authors

Table 2 Fit indices for the confirmatory factor analysis of supervisor support

Variable	X ²	df	CMIN/ DF≤5	GFI ≥.85	AGFI ≥.80	CFI ≥.90	NFI ≥.90	TLI ≥.90	RMSEA ≤.08
Supervisor Support (SS)	5.224	4	1.306	0.984	0.944	0.975	0.994	0.996	0.045

Source: Authors

Goodness-of-fit indices for the model are shown in Table 2. GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI, TLI, RMSEA values are above the acceptable level.

3.3.2 Work-family conflict

The reliability coefficient for the work-family conflict scale was found to be 0.96. The value of KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy), which helps to determine whether the data are suitable for factor analysis, is found to be 0.91, while Bartlett Test (Chi-square = 2412.928, degrees of freedom = 10, p = 0.000) seems to be significant. The five items on the scale were grouped under a single factor and the total variance was found to be 0.86 (Table 3).

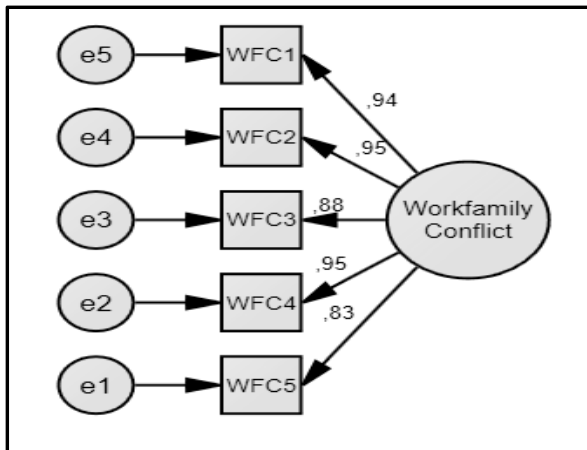
Table 3 Factor analysis of the work-family conflict scale

Components	% of variance
Item 1	.955
Item 2	.954
Item 3	.944
Item 4	.912
Item 5	.832

Source: Authors

Confirmatory factor analysis of the work-family conflict scale is shown in Figure 3. The goodness-of-fit of the scale model is presented in Table 4. According to the results of the analysis (Chi-square = 5.863, degrees of freedom = 4, p = 0.000) chi-square/degree of freedom was found to be 1.466. Values less than 5 are acceptable for the goodness-of-fit of the model. The results of the analysis indicate that the standardized factor loadings of the model are all greater than 0.5 and all items have acceptable factor loadings.

Figure 3 Confirmatory factor analysis of the work-family conflict scale



Source: Authors

Table 4 Fit indices for the confirmatory factor analysis of work-family conflict

Variables	X ²	Ddf	CMIN/ DF≤5	GFI ≥.85	AGFI ≥.80	CFI ≥.90	NFI ≥.90	TLI ≥.90	RMSEA ≤.08
Work-Family Conflict (WFC)	5.863	4	1.466	0.994	0.979	0.999	0.998	0.998	0.034

Source: Authors

Goodness-of-fit indices are shown in Table 4. GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI, TLI, and RMSEA values are above the acceptable level.

3.3.3 Work overload perception

The reliability coefficient of the work overload perception scale was found to be 0.91. The value of KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy), which helps to determine whether the data is suitable for factor analysis, is found to be 0.85, while Bartlett Test (Chi square = 1367.423, degrees of freedom = 10, p = 0.000) seems to be significant. The five items on the scale were grouped under a single factor and the total variance was found to be 0.73 (Table 5).

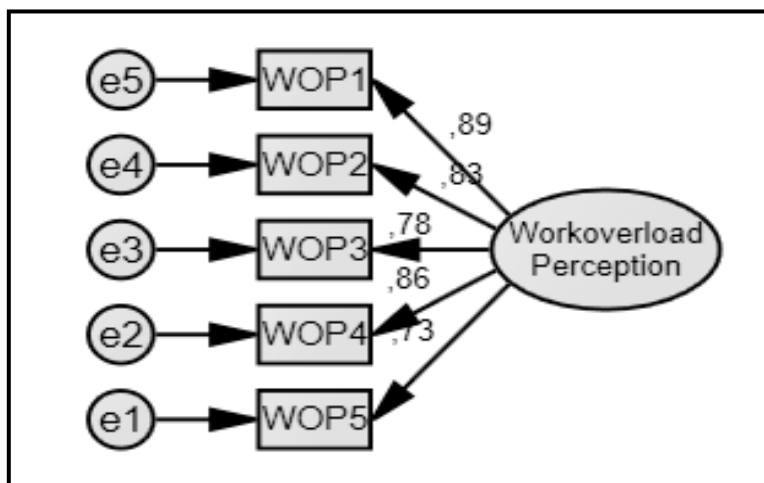
Table 5 Factor analysis of the work overload perception scale

Components	% of variance
Item 1	.814
Item 2	.739
Item 3	.696
Item 4	.792
Item 5	.626

Source: Authors

AMOS 20 statistical software was used for factor analysis. According to the results of the analysis (Chi-square = 5.920, degrees of freedom = 4, p = 0.000) chi-square/degree of freedom was found to be 1.480. Values less than 5 are acceptable for the goodness-of-fit of the model. Confirmatory factor analysis of the scale is shown in Figure 4. The results of the analysis show that the standardized factor loadings of the model are all greater than 0.5 and all items have acceptable factor loadings.

Figure 4 Confirmatory factor analysis of the work overload perception scale



Source: Authors

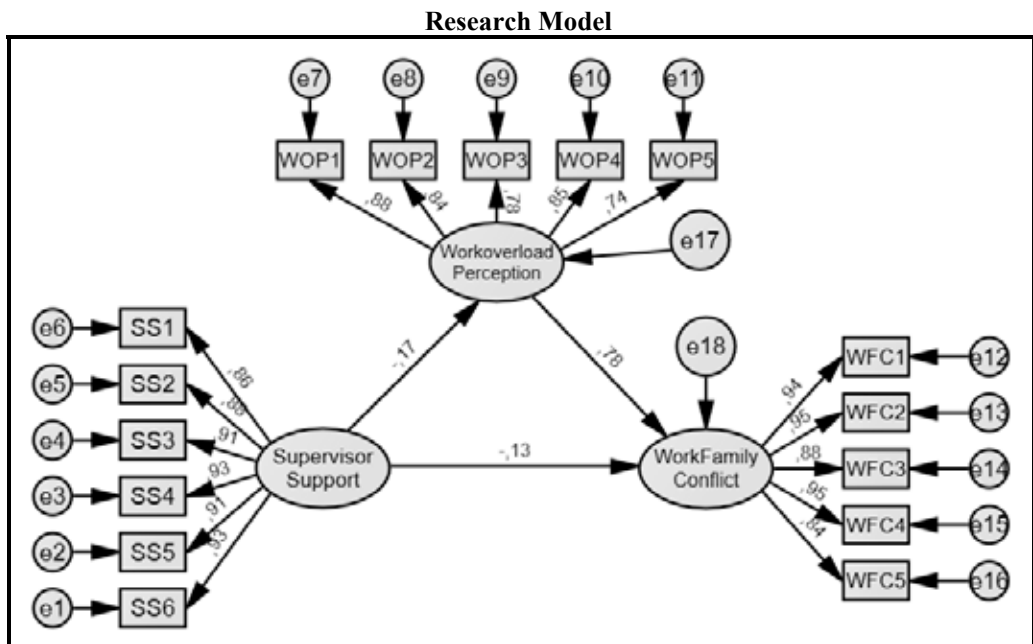
Table 6 Fit indices for the confirmatory factor analysis of work overload

Variable	X ²	df	CMIN/DF ≤ 5	GFI ≥ .85	AGFI ≥ .80	CFI ≥ .90	NFI ≥ .90	TLI ≥ .90	RMSEA ≤ .08
Work Overload (WO)	5.920	4	1.480	0.994	0.978	0.999	0.996	0.996	0.035

Source: Authors

Goodness-of-fit indices for the model are shown in Table 6. GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI, TLI, RMSEA values are above the acceptable level.

Figure 5 The mediating effect of work overload perception on the relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict



Source: Authors

Table 7 Fit indices for the research model

Variable	X ²	df	CMIN/DF ≤ 5	GFI ≥ .85	AGFI ≥ .80	CFI ≥ .90	NFI ≥ .90	TLI ≥ .90	RMSEA ≤ .08
Model	219.73	100	2.197	0.934	0.911	0.983	0.969	0.980	0.05

Source: Authors

The goodness-of-fit indices for the confirmatory factor analysis of the scale presented in Table 7 show that the data were in accordance with the model. It was observed that supervisor support is negatively correlated with work-family conflict (-0.192) and when adding the work overload perception to the model as a mediator variable, the

relationship was reduced (-0.130) (Table 8). Therefore, work overload perception has a partially mediating effect on the relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict. Thus, the hypotheses H1, H2, H3 and H4 are accepted at a 0.05 significance level.

Table 8 Significance level of the mediator variable

Relation	Direct Effect	Mediated Direct Effect	Indirect Effect
SP-WOP-WFC	-0.192(0.000)	-0.130(0.000)	-0.062

Source: Authors

4. Discussion

Studies on supervisor support and work-family conflict suggest that supervisor support has an effect on life satisfaction through work-family conflict and increases it (Goh et al., 2015). Work overload perception has a mediating effect on the relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict. The relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict was high compared to the situations with low work overload perception.

This study examined the effect of supervisor support on work-family life with the mediating effect of work overload perception. The results suggest that supervisor support has a direct effect on work-family conflict. Work overload perception increases work-family conflict without the supervisor support experienced by the employee. As supervisor support increases, work overload perception and work-family conflict decrease.

Previous studies have investigated the moderator effect of work overload perception. In contrast, this study examines the mediating effect of work overload perception on the relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict. It was found that supervisor support to employees decreases the perception of work overload and therefore they experienced less work-family conflict. In addition, it was found that supervisor support affects work-family conflict and that work overload perception has a partially mediating effect on this relationship.

Another difference between this study and previous research is that this study looks at academic staff and their perceptions. The most important reason

why the sample for this study was drawn from academic staff is the fact that they have multiple roles (they teach courses, write scientific studies, work on their thesis and hold consultations with students at the same time), so their work overload perception is usually higher than in other professions. Particularly, late classes increase the possibility of work-family conflict.

4.1 Limitations

The data for this study were collected by a cross sectional study method. A cross-sectional study is conducted by collecting data at a single point in time from random samples representing subgroups of the population. One-time collection of data is one of the limitations of the study.

All scales used to collect data were prepared using a 5-point Likert scale. Using the same scale type for variables may lead to common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Common method bias is the probability that the relationships determined between the variables as a result of the research have been influenced by the measurement method. In other words, measuring all variables using Likert scale may have an impact on the evaluations of the respondents. Using Likert scale to measure all variables in this study may lead to common method bias. This is another limitation of the study.

5. Conclusion and directions for future research

This study was conducted to investigate the mediating effect of work overload perception on the relationship between supervisor support and work-

family conflict. The study showed that supervisor support has a significant negative relationship with work-family conflict and that work overload perception has a partially mediating effect on this relationship.

Furthermore, the study found that supervisor support decreases work-family conflict experienced by the employee. Thus, the study contributes to the existing evidence on direct relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict. Its findings are consistent with the findings of previous studies. They can be useful for organizations that seek to help their employees to reduce work-family conflict. Another finding of the study is that work overload perception has a significant negative relationship with supervisor support and a significant positive relationship with work-family conflict. The main result of the study is that work overload perception has a partially mediating effect on the relationship between supervisor support and work-family conflict. Work overload perception causes the link between supervisor support and work-family conflict to weaken. In other words, increased perception of work overload increases work-family conflict even if supervisor support is strong. Since supervisor support is closely related to work-family conflict, organizations can develop strategies to

reduce the conflict between individuals' work role and family role.

The research model was tested on research assistants at a state university in Turkey. To generalize the findings, the model should be applied in other sectors. Therefore, it is recommended to carry out studies in different fields.

There are some attitudes and behaviors of supervisors that can reduce the perceived work overload and the work-family conflict.

Supervisors should:

- develop policies to attain the most appropriate level of staff, which will reduce the workload perception of staff
- create an environment that promotes a healthy and sincere communication with their employees and support them in every sense
- distribute workload among their employees in a fair manner, and treat their staff fairly
- develop and promote an institutional culture to minimize the occurrence of work-family conflict among employees.

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