The Mediating Role of Work-Family Conflict in the Relationship between Work Overload Perception and Job Satisfaction

Murat Baş   *murat.bas@erzincan.edu.tr*
Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University,
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Health Management

Selami Güney   *sguney@erzincan.edu.tr*
Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University,
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences,
Department of Accounting and Financing

Abstract

This study aims to investigate whether work-family conflict has a mediating role in the relationship between work overload perception and job satisfaction. In this framework, data were obtained from 250 accounting sector employees working in Erzincan province of Turkey by survey method. The obtained data were analyzed using SPSS and AMOS programs. As a result, it was found that work overload perception has a significant and negative impact on job satisfaction, and a significant and positive impact on work-family conflict, and work-family conflict and job satisfaction variables are significantly and negatively correlated. Also, it was determined that there is a partial mediating role of work-family conflict in the relationship between work overload perception and job satisfaction.

Keywords: work overload perception, job satisfaction, work-family conflict, mediating role, accounting sector.

1. Introduction

In today's more competitive world, organizations that want to keep their operations running at a lower cost adopt a philosophy of producing more and higher-quality work with a small number of employees. However, when they employ less staff than necessary, they can overburden their employees beyond their capacities and abilities. This situation is defined as "work overload" in the literature [1]. Studies have shown that work overload one of the most significant predictors of negative mental health outcomes, job stress, and burnout [44, 41, 5, 20]. Work overload also causes employees to experience work-family conflict that occurs when they are unable to fulfill their family responsibilities due to job demands. Indeed, it is inevitable for employees with excessive workloads to disrupt their family obligations. Moreover, it is considered that employees who cannot meet the family demands due to work

overload cannot develop a positive attitude towards their job and thus their job satisfaction can decrease.

On the other hand, it is known that accountants in many countries work with busy schedules. However, accounting is a job that requires the utmost attention as the small mistake made in the accounting records can bring significant financial and legal liabilities both to the accounting personnel and companies. Therefore, companies must be sure that they employ a sufficient number of accountants. Since it is among the countries where accounting professionals have a busy work schedule, this study explored accounting professionals in Turkey.

The study first examined the links between work overload, work-family conflict, and job satisfaction independently. The study next investigated whether work-family conflict has a mediating role in the relationship between work overload perception and job satisfaction. According to the literature review, there are few previous studies (e.g. [9]) addressing the mediating role in question and no such study has ever been conducted in Turkey before. In this regard, it is expected that the study will contribute to the literature in its field.

2.   Conceptual Framework

2.1.   Work Overload Perception

Work overload is generally defined as "the perception of too much work to accomplish in the time available" [45, p.53]. More broadly, work overload refers to the more number of tasks assigned to employees as compared to their abilities, resources, and the time required to complete these tasks [1]. Work overload occurs when job demands exceed the time and job resources available [22]. Work overload can be in two forms, qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative work overload happens when employees believe that the job requires the ability, skill, or knowledge level beyond what they have. In this situation, employees think they lack the ability to perform the job, regardless of the time they have to do so. On the other hand, quantitative work overload occurs when employees perceive that they are given an excessive amount of work to complete within a period of time [55, 35, 31]. The majority of the authors handled work overload in terms of the latter.

Work overload among employees has been shown one of the most significant predictors of negative mental health outcomes [44], job stress [41], less job satisfaction [19, 3, 40, 16], and burnout [5, 20].

2.2.   Job Satisfaction

There is no uniform definition of job satisfaction in the literature. However, some definitions are as follows: Beer [11] defines job satisfaction as "the attitude of workers toward the company, their job, their fellow workers and other psychological objects in the work environment" (p.34). Locke [36] describes the concept as "the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the perception of one's job as fulfilling or allowing the

fulfillment of one's important job values" (p. 1342). Also, Spector [53] explains it as "the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs" (p.2). Based on these definitions, job satisfaction can be defined as meeting employee expectations and positive evaluations of the employee regarding the job.

Job satisfaction is a subjective concept in nature, with varying levels of satisfaction are experienced by different people. In other words, one of two employees doing the same job may be satisfied with it, while the other may not. The more job features match an individual's desire, the higher job satisfaction, and vice versa. [8].

There are three dimensions of job satisfaction that are widely accepted. First, job satisfaction is an emotional reaction to a job situation. As a result, it can only be inferred rather than observed. Second, how well outcomes meet or surpass expectations is typically a determining factor in job satisfaction. For instance, if employees believe they are working harder than others in the department but are receiving fewer incentives, they are more likely to develop a bad attitude about their work, employer, and/or coworkers. Thus, they can be dissatisfied. On the other hand, if people believe they are being treated properly and fairly compensated, they are more likely to have a favorable attitude toward their work. As such, they can be satisfied. Third, job satisfaction refers to a group of attitudes that are the most critical aspects of a job to which employees may effectively respond. For Luthans, these are the work itself, income, promotion chances, supervision, and coworkers [37, 50]

2.3. Work-Family Conflict

Building on conflict theory, work-family conflict is defined as a type of inter-role conflict in which work and family roles are mutually incompatible in some ways. In other words, involving in one of the work or family roles makes it challenging to participate in another [21]. The conflict between the two roles, work and family, is unavoidable since the two realms have different demands, priorities, norms, expectations, and necessities [52].

In the literature, work-family conflict is categorized in different forms: time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based. Time-based conflict occurs when the time allocated to one role makes it difficult to devote sufficient time to another. Strain-based conflict develops when psychological stress caused by work or family interferes with the completion of duties in another. On the other hand, behavior-based conflict arises when the specific patterns of the role behavior at work or family are improper for another [21, 32].

Early studies using work/family conflict measures did not take into account the direction of the conflict. However, it later became clear that the conflict can be bi-directional. That is, the direction of conflict can be from work-to-family or family-to-work. In this context, work requirements that inhibit performance in the family role (work-to-family conflict) and family demands that hinder performance in the work role (family-to-work conflict) are conceptually different [43, 39], and examined separately in the literature. This study only investigated work-family conflict concept.

Work-family conflict is a significant issue for employers because it has the potential to negatively impact both work (e.g., job satisfaction, productivity, and turnover) and family-related results (e.g. stress, family satisfaction) [34].

3.   Hypotheses

3.1.   Work Overload Perception and Job Satisfaction

Work overload, as its name implies, is assigning work to a person beyond his or her capacity. The stress and exhaustion generated by an excessive workload can inevitably lead to a drop in employee motivation and job satisfaction. Because when employees are driven to perform a duty within a given time frame or are expected to accomplish a task beyond their talents and expertise, they can believe they will be unable to match the employer's expectations and experience stress. In this situation, they can be unhappy in their jobs and have negative thoughts about them. In the literature, many studies found that excessive workload reduces employees' job satisfaction [58, 13, 29, 59]. Also, some recent studies on this subject are as follows: The study of Dhurup and Mahomed [14] conducted in South Africa demonstrated that high levels of work overload are the predictor of low levels of job satisfaction. Gökkaya [19], in his research in Turkey, recorded that work overload results in decreased job satisfaction. Ali and Farooqi [3] in their study in Pakistan found that there is a negative relationship between work overload and job satisfaction. Mittal and Bhakar [40] in their study conducted in India detected that role overload has a negative impact on married working women's job satisfaction. The research of Eroğlu [16] made in Turkey revealed that work overload reduces the level of employees' job satisfaction. In this framework, the following hypothesis was formed:

H1: There is a significant and negative relationship between work overload perception and job satisfaction.

3.2.   Work Overload Perception and Work-Family Conflict

In line with previous studies, work overload perception is thought to be positively related to work-family conflict. For instance, the research by Skinner and Pocock [51] made in Austria showed that work overload is the strongest predictor of full-time employees' work-life conflict. Nasurdin and O'Driscoll [42] in their study in both New Zealand and Malaysia detected a positive relationship between work overload and work-to-family interference across the two samples from two countries. Also, Razak et al. [47] in their study in Malaysia found that work overload is positively related to both work interference with family and family interference with work. The research of Lembrechts et al. [34] in Belgium demonstrated that work overload increase work-family conflict. Moreover, in his study conducted in Turkey, Şirin [54] found that work overload is positively related to work-family conflict. Lastly, Ekmekçi et al. [15] determined in their research in Turkey that work overload

positively predicts work-family conflict. In this context, the following hypothesis was created:

H2. There is a significant and positive relationship between work overload perception and work-family conflict.

3.3. Work-Family Conflict and Job Satisfaction

Employees who cannot fulfill their family responsibilities due to job demands can inevitably experience dissatisfaction with their jobs due to the stress that emerges in the conclusion of role conflict. Previous research conducted in various countries confirmed the relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction. For example, the study of Netemeyer et al. [43] showed that work-family conflict negatively correlated with job satisfaction. In their research in the USA, Bruck et al. [12] found that work-family conflict is significantly and negatively related to employees' job satisfaction. Anafarta [7], in her study in Turkey, determined that there is a low, meaningful, and inverse relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction. Alazzam et al. [2] in their study in Jordan detected a negative and significant relationship between both work-family conflict and family-work conflict, and job satisfaction. Lastly, the study of Asbari et al. [6] in Indonesia illustrated that work-family conflict negatively and significantly impacts job satisfaction. Based on these studies, the following hypothesis was formed:

H3: There is a significant and negative relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction.

3.4. The mediating role of work-family conflict

To the authors' knowledge, only one study has previously investigated the mediating role of work-family conflict in the relationship between work overload and job satisfaction. Baeriswyl et al. [9] examined work-family conflict as a mediating variable to study relationships between work characteristics (workload and supervisor support), emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction in 1,127 employees of a European airport. Along with the other results, they found that work-family conflict partially mediates the negative impact of workload on job satisfaction.

On the other hand, some other studies identified may also form the basis for the research hypothesis. For example, Gao and Jin [17] studied the mediating effect of work-family conflict in the relationship between job demands (workload, emotional demand, performance demand) and life and job satisfaction in China. They detected that the impacts of job demands on life and job satisfaction were fully mediated by work-family conflict. However, since they considered the aggregate effect of job demands, they did not give any data on workload separately. In addition, Hill et al. [25], in their research with IBM survey responses from 48 countries, found that job workload is related to increased work-family conflict, and then reduced work-family fit. Also, the reduced work-family fit is related to decreased job satisfaction. Based on these studies, the following hypothesis was created:

H4: Work-family conflict has a mediating role in the relationship between work overload perception and job satisfaction.

3.5.   Theoretical Framework

Goode's [18] scarcity theory can constitute a theoretical basis for the relationships between the research variables. According to this theory, individuals have limited resources in terms of time, energy, and attention. As a result, greater resource commitment to one role can be conflicted with commitments to other roles, resulting in poorer satisfaction with that role [33, 48]. Based on scarcity theory, the literature on work-family conflict claims that employees have limited time and energy resources. Therefore, when they spend most of these resources on their work in case of excessive workload, they cannot find adequate time and energy for other roles (family in this study). Thus, demands from either the job or family domain result in decreased well-being in the workplace [4, 21]. Indeed, work-life conflict is linked to reduced job satisfaction, increased absenteeism rates, and decreased productivity [57]. In this context, the research argues that work-family conflict caused by work overload can lead employees to lose their satisfaction with the work role over time.

4.   The Research Method

4.1.   The Aim and Importance of the Research

The aim of the research is to determine whether there is a relationship between the work overload perception of accounting employees and their job satisfaction and to investigate whether the work-family conflict has a mediating role in this relationship.
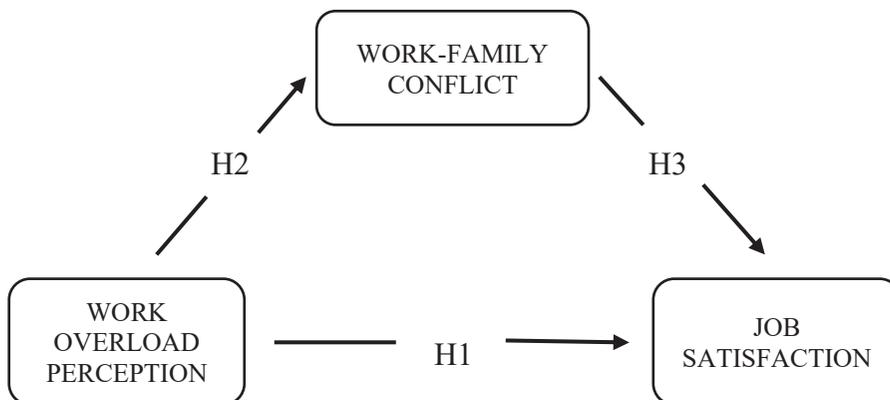

Figure 1. The research model

4.2. Universe and Sample

The research universe consists of 250 accounting employees working in Erzincan province. The research questionnaires were reproduced by the researcher and handed out to the participants. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed to the participants, and 202 questionnaires were analyzed due to incorrect and missing markings on some questionnaires. In the study, the universe is 250, and the sample is determined as 152 in the 95% confidence interval [56].

The demographic characteristics of the research participants are as follows: 39.6% of the participants are women and 60.4% are men. In terms of marital status, 58.9% of the participants are single, 41.1% are married. According to education level, 25.8% have high school degrees, 26.2% have associate school degrees, 32.2% have undergraduate degrees, and 15.8% have graduate degrees. In addition, in terms of job tenure, 47% of the participants have 1-5 years, 23.3% have 6-10 years, 23.3% have 11-20 years, and 6.4% have over 21 years work experience.

4.3. Data Collection Tools and Data Analysis

Work Overload Perception Scale: A one-dimensional and 5-item scale developed by Imoisili [27] was used to determine participants' work overload perception level, the independent variable in the study. Also, a 5-point Likert scale was used in the responses to the questions. (1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree).

Work-Family Conflict Scale: A one-dimensional and 5-item scale improved by Netemeyer et al. [43] was used to identify participants' work-family conflict level, the dependent variable in the study. Moreover, a 5-point Likert scale was used in the responses to the questions. (1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Undecided, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly agree).

Job Satisfaction Scale: The scale used in the study was developed by Schwepker [49]. It consists of 3 items.

In the research, frequency analysis, normality test, reliability analysis, and correlation analysis were performed with the SPSS 22 program. Also, AMOS 24 program was used for confirmatory factor analysis and conceptual data model of the scales. On the other hand, the research hypotheses were tested with the Process Macro analysis [23].

4.4. Findings

Since analyzes regarding the validity of the variables were previously made and accepted in many studies, it was not needed to repeat the validity analysis in this study.

	Alpha	Mean	Standart D.	HWP	WFC	JS
WOP	0.939	4.30	0.595	-		
WFC	0.930	4.49	0.579	0.483**	-	
JS	0.961	2.11	1.379	-0.402**	-0.411**	-

** = p<0.01 *= p<0.05 WOP: Work Overload Perception, WFC: Work-Family Conflict, JS: Job Satisfaction

Table 1. Mean, Cronbach's Alpha, Standard Deviation and Correlation Coefficients for the Variables N=202

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation, and reliability coefficients of the scales used in the study. According to the table, the Cronbach alpha values of the WOP, WFC, and JS scales are above the reference value of 0.70, and the reliability coefficients of the scales are high [28]. In addition, there is a positive and significant relationship (r = 0.483; p<0.01) between WOP and WFC at the 99% significance level, and a negative and significant relationship (r =-0.402; p<0.01) between WOP and JS at the 99% significance level. Moreover, there is a negative and significant relationship (r =-0.411; p<0.01) between WFC and JS at the 99% significance level. As a result, the correlation results between the scales were correlated and significant at the p <0.01 level.

	χ2/df ≤5	RMSEA ≤.08	CFI ≥.90	GFI≥.85	NFI ≥.90	TLI ≥.90
WOP	3.097	0.070	0.967	0.993	0.974	0.998
WFC	3.740	0.076	0.996	0.991	0.995	0.962
JS	3.718	0.073	0.906	0.918	0.946	0.931
Model	3.828	0.078	0.962	0.947	0.950	0.950

WOP: Work Overload Perception, WFC: Work-Family Conflict, JS: Job Satisfaction

Table 2. Goodness of Fit Values of the Variables

Table 2 demonstrates that the goodness of fit values of the scales meet the referenced values [26] and are compatible with the Model, thus the Model is accepted.

4.4.1.   The Mediating Effect

In the research, the regression analysis method based on the Bootstrap method was used to analyze whether work-family conflict has a mediating role in the relationship between work overload perception and job satisfaction. Since the Bootstrap method

is considered to be more reliable than the method presented by Baron and Kenny [10] and the Sobel test [24, 46, 60]. In the research, Model 4 and 5000 sample options were preferred in the mediating effect analyzes made with the Bootstrap technique. To support the hypothesis analysis of the research, the value in the 95% confidence interval should not be zero (0) [38].

Work-Family Conflict						
Variables	*B*	*SH*	*T*	*P*	LLCI	ULCI
Work Overload Perception	0.513	0.063	8.045	0.000	0.387	0.639
Job Satisfaction						
Variables	*B*	*SH*	*T*	*P*	LLCI	ULCI
Work- Family Conflict	-0.746	0.178	-4.194	0.000	-1.098	-0.395
Work Overload Perception (Direct Effect)	-0.596	0.180	-3.311	0.001	-0.951	-0.240
Work Overload Perception (Total Effect)	-0.979	0.161	-6.054	0.000	-1.298	-0.660
			Effect	*SH*	LLCI	ULCI
Mediator Effect			-0.277	0.085	-0.438	-0.097

Note: Standardized regression coefficients are specified.

Table 3. Regression Analysis Results Related to Mediation Test (N=253)

As can be seen from the coefficients of the multiple regression model in Table 3, it was first questioned whether there is a significant and negative relationship between work overload perception and job satisfaction (H1). As a result of the analysis, a significant and negative relationship (b=- 0.596; p= 0.001) was determined between the two variables. Hence, the H1 hypothesis was accepted.

Secondly, the existence of a significant and positive relationship between work overload perception and work-family conflict was questioned (H2). As a result, a positive relationship (b=0.513; p= 0.000) was found between the two variables. Thus, the H2 hypothesis was accepted.

Thirdly, the existence of a significant and negative relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction was questioned (H3). As a consequence of the analysis, a negative and significant relationship (b=- 0.746; p= 0.000) was obtained between the two variables. Therefore, the H3 hypothesis was accepted.

On the other hand, the significant relationships between the variables made it possible to question the mediation effect. The conditions put forward by Baron and Kenny [10] were taken into account in testing the mediation effect hypothesis. These conditions are as follows:

i) work overload perception should significantly affect work-family conflict,
ii) work-family conflict should significantly impact job satisfaction, and

iii) when the work-family conflict variable is included in the relationship between work overload perception and job satisfaction, the relationship should be insignificant (full mediation), or there should be a decrease in the severity of the relationship (partial mediation) [30].

Lastly, the existence of the mediating role of work-family conflict in the relationship between work overload perception and job satisfaction was questioned (H4) in the research. Results showed that work-family conflict has a partial mediating effect in the relationship between work overload perception and job satisfaction (Effect=-0.277, [-0.438 -0.097]). In this context, the H4 hypothesis was accepted.

5.   Conclusion and Discussion

In this study, the relationship between accounting employees' work overload perception and job satisfaction, as well as the mediating role of work-family conflict in this relationship were explored. Within the context of the analyses, the following results were obtained.

First of all, a significant and negative relationship was found between work overload perception and job satisfaction (H1). In other words, employees who are expected to work beyond their skills, knowledge, and resources become unhappy in their jobs after a while and their job satisfaction reduces. Also, a significant and positive relationship was determined between work overload perception and work-family conflict (H2). Accordingly, employees with excessive workloads spend too much time and energy on their work, so they have difficulty meeting family demands and experience more conflict between work and family roles. Another finding of the research is a significant and negative relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction (H3). Employees, who cannot fulfill their family responsibilities due to their jobs, have less favorable feelings about their jobs. These results are in line with the previous studies mentioned in the hypotheses section. It was lastly found that work-family conflict has a mediating role in the relationship between work overload perception and job satisfaction (H4). This result also confirms the research of Baeriswyl et al. [9].

Scarcity theory clarifies the relationships between the research variables. Accordingly, employees have limited time and energy resources. Therefore, when they spend most of these resources on their work in case of excessive workload, they cannot find adequate time and energy for family roles. This situation results in less job satisfaction with decreased well-being in the workplace over time.

5.1.   Practical Implications

Accounting requires the utmost care of employees since the minor mistake in accounting transactions may cause huge costs for businesses. For this reason, the exposure of workers in this profession to excessive workload can cause them to wear out more. To reduce employees' work overload, organizations should employ sufficient number of personnel and assign the duties fairly to their employees. In

addition, they should know them well and not give them duties beyond their skills and knowledge, thus prevent them from feeling incompetent. Also, organizations should provide adequate vocational training during and after hiring staff, create a good division of labor, and allow existing employees to transfer their experience to new entrants.

On the other hand, to prevent employees' work-family conflict, organizations should develop family-friendly policies as well as reducing their work overload perception. Some of the family-friendly policies are flexible work schedules, allowing employees to work from home when necessary, supporting marriage, maternity, breastfeeding, and parental leaves, and providing childcare in the workplace. Organizations should make their employees feel that they are valuable by involving them in decision-making mechanisms, creating an environment where they can freely express their ideas and problems. Otherwise, their job satisfaction may decrease and they may feel unhappy in their jobs.

5.2. Limitations and implications for future research

There are some limitations to this study. First, the study was limited to a small number of participants in the Erzincan province of Turkey, and only accounting sector personnel were examined. Future studies may yield different results by analyzing distinct industry employees. Furthermore, the study only looked at the work-family conflict component. Future studies could broaden the scope by also using the family-work conflict variable.

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