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Is work–family balance more than conflict and enrichment?

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Abstract

This study deepens our theoretical and practical understanding of work–family balance, defined as the ‘accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his/her role-related partners in the work and family domains’ (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007: 458). We develop a new measure of work–family balance and establish discriminant validity between it, work–family conflict, and work–family enrichment. Further, we examine the relationship of work–family balance with six key work and family outcomes. Results suggest that balance explains variance beyond that explained by traditional measures of conflict and enrichment for five of six outcomes tested: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, family satisfaction, family performance, and family functioning. We conclude with a discussion of the applications of our work.

Keywords

balance; balance measure; conflict; enrichment; measurement; web-based survey

Helping workers balance their work and family lives is increasingly viewed as a business and social imperative. A decade ago, the US Department of Labor (1999) suggested that successfully combining work and family would become a major issue for the labor force and for the labor market in attracting and retaining high quality workers. Halpern (2005), in a presidential address to the American Psychological Association, suggested that difficulty combining work and family is the major challenge for the current generation of workers. Without social and employer policies that help workers balance work and family, our ability to maintain a strong social fabric was questioned. Fortune 100 companies continue to promote work–family balance as an essential component to corporate success (Corporate Voices for Working Families, 2006; Hill et al., 2006).

Unfortunately, there is a fundamental hole in the argument that businesses should help workers balance their work and family lives. Specifically, there is little empirical research to support the claim that workers or organizations actually benefit from a ‘balanced’ work and family life. True, there is consistent evidence that elevated work–family conflict, or the extent to which responsibilities in one domain interfere with responsibilities in another domain, is associated with poor organizational outcomes (Allen et al., 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). It is also true that evidence is emerging suggesting that organizations might benefit by promoting work–family enrichment, or the degree to which participation in one domain (e.g. work) enhances individual performance or quality of life in another domain (e.g. family) (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Grzywacz & Bass, 2003; Grzywacz et al., 2007; Hammer et al., 2005). However, researchers to date have *assumed* that the absence of work–family conflict or the presence of work–family enrichment is equivalent to work–family balance (Frone, 2003). The conceptual distinction among work–family balance, conflict

and enrichment and the potential necessity of a concept like work–family balance remains underdeveloped and empirically unsubstantiated.

Research focused on work–family balance is needed on both theoretical and practical grounds. Theoretically speaking, as the work–family literature matures, it will become increasingly important to differentiate and clearly understand the interconnection among key concepts like conflict, enrichment and balance. If the absence of work–family conflict, for example, is equivalent to work–family balance as is suggested by the tendency for researchers to use these concepts interchangeably (Greenhaus & Allen, in press; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007), then an additional concept is not needed to characterize and understand the work–family interface. However, if work–family balance is conceptually distinct from work–family conflict and other concepts, then researchers need to clearly delineate how these concepts differ and consistently specify the most appropriate constructs when designing work–family research. Indeed, the absence of conceptual clarity about the meaning of work–family balance and presumptions of isomorphism and distinction with other work–family constructs creates conceptual confusion and undermines the development of sophisticated and useful theoretical models of the work–family interface. Role theorists (Marks & MacDermid, 1996) have provided a framework to begin to address the theoretical distinctions among work–family constructs, but there has been little empirical investigation into whether these theoretical distinctions are real (Greenhaus & Allen, in press; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007).

Practically, research on work–family balance is needed to determine whether ongoing calls to help workers balance their work and family lives are legitimate, or if continued attempts to control work–family conflict and promote work–family enrichment are sufficient. However, the absence of a psychometrically sound measure of work–family balance is a significant barrier to determining the relevance of work–family balance, vis-à-vis other work–family concepts, to individuals and organizations. Research to date has relied on general single item measures of work–family balance (Keene & Quadagno, 2004), measures of satisfaction with work–family balance (Valcour, 2007), or constructed measures that over-emphasize equality in the work and family domains (Greenhaus et al., 2003). Interestingly, none of these existing measurement strategies are based on a solid theoretical understanding of work–family balance. The absence of a strong theoretical understanding of work–family balance and subsequent measures results in a literature driven by diverse empirical findings that are, at best, loosely connected by general notions of the work–family interface. The absence of a conceptually based measure provides researchers and practitioners little opportunity to document workers' level of work–family balance, and impaired ability to identify and evaluate viable organizational strategies for promoting work–family balance.

The goal of this study is to develop a more rigorous, theoretically and empirically informed understanding of work–family balance. Drawing on a recent conceptualization of work–family balance (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007) and Marks and MacDermid's (1996) interpretation of role balance theory, the primary aim of this study is to determine whether work–family balance is distinct from work–family conflict and work–family enrichment. To accomplish this aim and to respond to a recent call for research to distinguish work–family balance from conflict and enrichment (Greenhaus & Allen, in press), we examine the discriminant validity of a new theoretically based measure of work–family balance relative to established measures of work–family conflict and work–family enrichment. Further, we identify whether work–family balance explains variance in key work and family-related outcomes, above and beyond what is already explained by theoretically informed measures of conflict and enrichment.

This study contributes to the extant literature in several ways. First, this study offers a theoretically based and psychometrically sound measure to enable the systematic study of work–family balance and relate this construct to other critical measures of organizational

behavior. Second, this study sheds light on the interrelationships between conflict, enrichment, and balance in the work and family domains. More specifically, this study contributes to the literature by demonstrating the empirical distinction between work–family balance, conflict and enrichment; concepts that are often used in an interchangeable or ill-defined manner. Third, this study builds on existing role theory and empirical research to provide practical and theoretical implications of this work that will help guide the work–family arena in the future. More specifically, a theoretically-based measure is a necessary cornerstone for research in this area and provides a useful tool for the implementation and evaluation of human resource programs.

Theoretical and empirical foundations

Work–family balance

Work–family balance is an underdeveloped concept, despite widespread use in the work–family literature (Greenhaus & Allen, in press; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Valcour, 2007). Historically, work–family balance has been conceptualized, implicitly or explicitly, as the absence of work–family conflict or ‘a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect’ (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985: 77). More recently other definitions of work–family balance have emerged in the literature. Frone (2003) views work–family balance as a state wherein an individual’s work and family lives experience little conflict while enjoying substantial facilitation. Voydanoff (2005) conceptualizes work–family balance as ‘a global assessment that work resources meet family demands, and family resources meet work demands such that participation is effective in both domains’ (p. 825). Similarly, others view balance in terms of an individual’s self appraisal of effectiveness in, and satisfaction with, their work and family lives (Greenhaus & Allen, in press; Valcour, 2007).

Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) raised several concerns about existing conceptualizations of work–family balance. They suggested that there was little evidence indicating that adults think of work–family balance in terms of how well work-related resources satisfy family-related demands (or vice versa) as Voydanoff (2005) suggests. They also raised several critiques about defining balance in terms of ‘satisfaction’. Like broader criticisms of constructs based on hedonistic models, they challenged the value of viewing balance as being ‘in the eye of beholder’, as suggested by Greenhaus and Allen (in press), by questioning whether someone can really be characterized as having balance when their self-appraisal of effectiveness and satisfaction is unsubstantiated (there is little observable evidence of balance), or exists at the expense of another (e.g. a working wife who picks up the slack at home as her husband climbs the corporate ladder). Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) argued that a conceptualization of work–family balance that separates an individual’s experience from the social context wherein it arises cannot capture the dynamic and complex realities of daily work and family life, and whether work and family are truly ‘balanced’.

They further suggested that definitions of work–family balance based on satisfaction are inherently decontextualized and present a variety of theoretical and practical problems. Theoretically, by defining work–family balance in terms of both effectiveness in, and satisfaction with, work and family presumes that satisfaction inherently follows effectiveness, yet evidence indicates only a modest association (Clarke et al., 2004). Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) therefore argued that researchers should uncouple effectiveness and satisfaction in definitions of work–family balance. Doing so enables researchers to theorize about the extent to which individual and contextual circumstances impact effectiveness in the work and family domains and contribute to satisfaction with work and family. There are also several practical problems that arise from conceptualizations of balance that focus on satisfaction. One practical problem is the challenge of designing systematic strategies to promote work–family balance,

if it is in 'the eye of beholder'. There is also the potential problem of 'victim blaming' if responsibility for poor work–family balance is placed squarely on individuals' shoulders, even though there are many social and structural factors that impede achieving balance.

To address the problems associated with existing conceptualizations, Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) suggested an alternative definition of work–family balance: 'accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his/her role-related partners in the work and family domains' (p. 458). There are several important features of this definition. First, the proposed definition is valuable because it shifts the construct from the psychological domain into the social domain, thereby making it observable and subject to observation. Next, there are no requirements imposed on how accomplishment of role-related responsibilities is achieved. This is valuable because it suggests that work–family balance is possible despite experiences of work–family conflict. Finally, the definition differs from others because neither effectiveness, nor overall performance in either the personal or professional spheres of life, are necessary conditions for work–family balance. This feature is important because work–family balance does not mean that an individual is a 'superstar' in both the work and family domains. Rather, upholding mutually agreed upon responsibilities is, in essence, meeting basic or core requirements of the role; it does not necessitate high levels of effectiveness or performance.

Defining work–family balance in terms of an individual's ability to accomplish socially negotiated role responsibilities at work and in the family also has several compelling practical features for organizations. Foremost, such a definition is useful because it simplifies the work–family interface for organizations. Like Valcour (2007), we believe that the growing number of work–family constructs (e.g. time-, strain-, and behavior-based work-to-family conflict; developmental-, affective-, and efficiency-based family-to-work enrichment) has helped to create a better understanding of the interdependencies between work and family. However, the proliferation of work–family constructs has diverted attention from the real concern confronting working adults: a desire to be engaged in both the personal and professional spheres of life. By returning to this basic point, the proposed definition of work–family balance provides organizations with a simple way of characterizing the work–family interface. Further, the definition of work–family balance offered by Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) is firmly grounded in adults' lived experience of the work–family interface, it is focused on the outcomes associated with balance rather than individual perceptions, and it is consistent with emergent, non-hierarchical interpretations of role theory (Marks & MacDermid, 1996), which provides us with a theoretical underpinning for this investigation.

Role theory

Although much of the current role theory literature pre-supposes that role strain is avoided by prioritizing some roles over others, Marks and MacDermid (1996) remind us that the notion of hierarchically organized roles is a theoretical assumption (Goode, 1960), not an empirical fact. Indeed, they point out that Mead (1964) originally conceived roles as operating within a flexible, non-hierarchical system of expanding identities. Under this assumption, the optimally healthy, balanced individual avoids role strain not by restricting the number of roles they identify with or by prioritizing one role over another, but by actively expanding their role identities within a fluid sense of self. This view suggests that it is our ability to attend to and engage in whatever role we are performing in the moment that leads to less strain and more balance. Cultivating this attitudinal flexibility allows individuals to reduce strain by alleviating the stress involved in worrying about one role while performing another, and allows us to engage in and enjoy whatever role-related task being performed at any given moment. Grzywacz and Carlson's (2007) definition is consistent with this theoretical perspective in that

their definition of balance does not depend on prioritizing roles or role performance, but emerges out of ongoing, flexible role-related negotiations.

Work–family balance versus work–family conflict and enrichment—Work–family balance is believed to be conceptually distinct from work–family conflict and work–family enrichment, but research and theorizing is needed to substantiate this belief (Greenhaus & Allen, in press). Role theory suggests that work–family conflict and enrichment are fundamentally distinct from work–family balance. While conflict and enrichment act as linking mechanisms between work and family, work–family balance reflects a summative characterization of an individual's engagement in and enjoyment of a multitude of roles across the work and family domains (Marks & MacDermid, 1997; Valcour, 2007). Put plainly, balance is more global in perspective than an individual's experiences of conflict and enrichment. The experience of work–family conflict and enrichment, on the other hand, reflects the extent to which particular roles impact others either negatively or positively. Emphasis is placed on the transmission of agents from one domain to another and its subsequent implications, as when a foul mood from a lousy day at work spills over into the family and results in snappy parent–child interactions (work-to-family conflict). By contrast, work–family balance places no emphasis on the extent to which work shapes family life or family life affects work. Rather, emphasis is placed on an individual's ability to engage in and meet responsibilities in both the work and family domains. Although the ability to simultaneously meet responsibilities in both the work and family domains might be influenced by work–family conflict and enrichment, it is also likely shaped by a myriad of other factors, not the least of which is an individual's ability to negotiate feasible role-related responsibilities. Thus, just as well-being reflects more than the absence of disease, role balance reflects more than the presence of enrichment and absence of conflict (Marks & MacDermid, 1997). This fundamental distinction suggests that work–family balance is a quantitatively different construct than work–family conflict and enrichment. Based on these arguments, our first hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 1: Work–family balance is distinct from work–family conflict and work–family enrichment. (H1)

Work–family balance and outcomes

Several strands of role theory suggest that work–family balance, or meeting both work and family responsibilities, will yield beneficial consequences in both the work and family domains. Role theory, as it has been applied to organizations (Kahn et al., 1964), fundamentally argues that organizational success is a function of the extent to which each role occupant meets the obligations required of that office. Organizations provide valuable incentives (e.g. pay, bonuses, privileges) to role occupants for meeting their role-related obligations as a way of minimizing breakdowns within the system and ensuring success. Role theory therefore posits that effectively meeting role-related responsibilities yields benefits for both individual role occupants and the larger system. Sieber (1974) then argued that the rewards or incentives earned from meeting role-related obligations can create beneficial synergies across role domains that result in improved individual and social circumstances. Most recently, Marks and MacDermid's (1996) model of role balance suggests that individuals who approach all of their role-related responsibilities with even-handed alertness produce beneficial consequences for both individuals and the people around them. These distinct expansions of role theory all suggest that work–family balance is favorably associated with desirable outcomes in the work and family domains, although we might expect that the magnitude of these associations will vary depending on the type of outcomes considered (i.e. affective versus behavioral) in the work and family domains. However, despite widespread interest and recent theoretical development, there are few studies that assess work–family balance directly, thereby making it ripe for empirical investigation.

Organizational outcomes of work–family balance—The vast majority of work–family research to date has operationalized work–family balance in terms of the relative level of work–family conflict. This practice assumes that the absence of work–family conflict is equivalent to work–family balance: a theoretically unsubstantiated assumption. Nevertheless, in the absence of previous research using direct measures of work–family balance, it is reasonable to assume that high work–family conflict is counter-productive to, and therefore an indirect albeit imperfect indicator of, work–family balance. Consequently, we draw on the large work–family conflict literature along with role theory assumptions outlined above, to develop a foundation for our hypotheses.

Consistent with role theory predictions that meeting job-related expectations should be associated with positive benefits for the organization (Kahn et al., 1964), individuals with lower levels of work–family conflict are consistently found to report greater employee commitment and job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999; Tiedje et al., 1990). Similarly, Aryee and colleagues (2005) reported that greater work-to-family facilitation or enrichment was associated with greater organizational commitment and job satisfaction. To the extent that less work–family conflict and greater work–family enrichment are indirect indicators of work–family balance, these results suggest that greater work–family balance might contribute to valued affective outcomes in the workplace. Similar, albeit less consistent, evidence indicates that high levels of work–family conflict is associated with greater turnover intention (Allen et al., 2000; Barnett et al., 2004; Greenhaus et al., 2001; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999), suggesting that poor work–family balance might contribute to turnover intentions. These findings are consistent with early and more recent role theorizing (Marks & MacDermid, 1996; Mead, 1964) arguing that even-handed involvement across roles produces optimal outcomes for both individuals and the systems they occupy. Thus, work–family balance should contribute to beneficial work-related outcomes. Based on multiple strands of role theory, clear conceptual distinctions among work–family balance and other work–family constructs, and indirect empirical evidence, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2: Independent of work–family conflict and work–family enrichment, work–family balance is positively associated with desirable organizational outcomes, such that:

Hypothesis 2a: Work–family balance is positively associated with job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2b: Work–family balance is positively associated with organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 2c: Work–family balance is negatively associated with turnover intention.
(H2)

Family outcomes of work–family balance—Despite role theory predictions that suggest meeting role expectations might result in positive outcomes in the individual and social domains (Sieber, 1974), few studies have examined the association of work–family balance with the social domain of the family. As with the organizational outcomes, most research has operationalized work–family balance in terms of low work–family conflict, high enrichment or used poorly defined measures. Nevertheless, results from these studies suggest that greater work–family balance is associated with better marital and family satisfaction (Allen et al., 2000), and greater family performance (Frone et al., 1997). In one of the few studies that measured work–family balance, Milkie and Peltola (1999) reported that greater work–family balance was associated with more marital happiness and a more equitable division of household labor. Similarly, Clarke and colleagues (2004) reported that greater work–family balance was associated with greater marital satisfaction and more time spent in family activities. In addition, role theory suggests that even-handed involvement in all roles can lead to positive outcomes (Marks & MacDermid, 1996; Mead, 1964; Sieber, 1974). Thus, it is reasonable to believe that

higher levels of balance would be associated positively with favorable family outcomes. Based on previous research and theory, including the presumption that work–family balance is distinct from other work–family constructs, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3: Independent of work–family conflict and work–family enrichment, work–family balance is positively associated with desirable family outcomes, such that:

Hypothesis 3a: Work–family balance is positively associated with family satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3b: Work–family balance is positively associated with family performance.

Hypothesis 3c: Work–family balance is positively associated with family functioning. (H3)

Method

Sample and procedure

The data for this study are from a community-based sample of individuals employed full-time who were recruited from the Study Response service (Stanton & Weiss, 2002). Study Response is a non-profit academic service that attempts to match researchers in need of samples with participants willing to complete surveys and has been successfully used in the management literature (Judge et al., 2006; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). A total of 1159 individuals from the Study Response database who self-reported working 40 hours per week or more were sent a recruitment e-mail that included a link to our online survey. Individuals who did not meet the criteria of full-time employment (i.e. less than 40 hours per week) were not invited to participate in the study. Potential respondents were asked to complete a survey on work–life issues and were guaranteed confidentiality. In the solicitation e-mail, potential respondents were also told that all respondents who completed the survey would be entered into a drawing to win one of 10 cash rewards valued at \$95. Potential respondents were sent reminder e-mail messages after seven and 14 days had elapsed. Respondents signed on to the online survey using their Study Response ID number, which was the only identifier included in the data. A total of 685 individuals completed the survey for an overall response rate of 59.1 percent.

The final sample was 43 percent male and 56 percent female with an average age of 46 years. Fifteen percent had a high school diploma, 29 percent had some college, and the remaining 56 percent had a college or higher level degree. Participants averaged 8.92 years in their current job, 52 percent were hourly employees, and 57 percent supervised other people. Forty percent of the people characterized their job as managerial or professional, 18 percent as technical or production, 7 percent as sales, 13 percent as service, 15 percent as administrative support, and 7 percent said none of the above. The majority (66%) of participants were currently married or living with a significant other, had spouses that work (79%), were white (86%) and had co-resident children (51%).

Measures

All measures in this study used a five-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree, unless otherwise indicated. Items were averaged within the scales to create composite measures for each variable. Items were coded such that higher scores equate to higher levels of the construct of interest.

Work–family balance—A six-item scale was created for this study. The six items were designed to represent the definition developed by Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) of work–family balance that refers to the extent to which an individual is meeting negotiated role-related

expectations in both the work and family domains. Therefore, each item includes a reference to the expectations or negotiation of roles (negotiation, expectations, etc.) and each item taps the perspective of an external party to capture what other people expect from the focal individual (people, supervisors, family members, co-workers). A sample item is 'I do a good job of meeting the role *expectations* of *critical people* in my work and family life.' The full set of items can be found in Appendix A. An exploratory factor analysis using Principal Axis Factor Analysis was conducted on the six items. All six items loaded at .77 or above on a single factor, the Eigen values was 4.49 and 74.9 percent of the variance was explained. The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .93.

Work–family conflict—We used the 18-item work–family conflict scale developed by Carlson et al. (2000). This scale consists of nine items that measure the work to family direction of conflict. An example item is, 'My work keeps me from my family activities more than I would like.' The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .91. The other nine items measures the family to work direction of conflict. An example item is, 'Due to stress at home, I am often preoccupied with family matters at work.' The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .92

Work–family enrichment—We used the 18-item work–family enrichment scale developed by Carlson et al. (2006). This scale consists of nine items measuring the work to family direction of enrichment. An example item is, 'My involvement in my work helps me to acquire skills and this helps me to be a better family member.' The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .94. This scale also consists of nine items measuring the family to work direction of enrichment. An example item is, 'My involvement in my family puts me in a good mood and this helps me be a better worker.' The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .93

Job satisfaction—We used the three-item job satisfaction measure designed by Cammann et al. (1979). An example item for this scale is, 'All in all, I am satisfied with the job.' The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .93.

Organizational commitment—We used a nine-item scale of organizational commitment designed by Balfour and Wechsler (1996). An example item for this scale is, 'I am quite proud to be able to tell people who it is that I work for.' The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .87.

Intention to turnover—Turnover intentions were measured with a three-item scale developed by Seashore et al. (1982). An example item for this scale is, 'It is likely that I will actively look for a new job in the next year.' The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .92.

Family satisfaction—The three-item family satisfaction scale used was the job satisfaction scale described above adapted to deal with family. This adaptation has been successfully used by other work–family researchers (Brough et al., 2006). An example item is, 'Generally speaking, I am very satisfied with my family life.' The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .94.

Family performance—Family performance was assessed by modifying the five items developed by Williams and Anderson (1991) to assess in-role work performance and has been used in previous work–family studies (Frone et al., 1997). A sample item is, 'On average, how often do you feel you fulfill your family responsibilities?' The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .79.

Family functioning—The family functioning was assessed using the 12-item summary scale from the Family Assessment Device (FAD) based on the McMaster model of healthy family functioning (Epstein et al., 1993). The FAD is a multidimensional instrument assessing six distinct domains of family functioning such as affective involvement among family members

and behavioral control. The summary scale includes two items from each domain of functioning, and is scored such that higher values indicate better overall functioning. A sample item is, 'In times of crisis we can turn to each other for support.' The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .91.

Control variables—Control variables of gender, age, marital status, number of children living at home, and job tenure in years were included in this study to reduce spurious results owing to the potential influence of demographic characteristics.

Data analysis

Discriminant validity, or the degree to which each construct is unique between balance, conflict and enrichment, was examined using three different approaches. First, we followed the procedure used by Carlson et al. (2000) in which correlations of the measures are examined and discriminant validity is demonstrated if the correlations are below .60. Second, confirmatory factor analysis using structural equation modeling was conducted on the balance scale along with the conflict and enrichment scales. A five-factor model was specified using LISREL 8.3 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993), where the factors represented work–family conflict, family–work conflict, work–family enrichment, family–work enrichment, and work–family balance. To determine if the work–family balance items were performing well we applied three criteria found in the scale development literature (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; DeVillis, 1991). First, we looked to see if the model fit the data by examining the comparative fit index and the root mean square error of approximation. Second, we examined the completely standardized factor loading to make sure they were greater than .50. Finally, we inspected the modification indices and expected change values for all the factor loadings to ensure that an item was not more strongly associated with any factor other than the one for which it was intended. The final approach we used to establish discriminant validity was determined following the procedure outlined by Fornell and Larcker (1981) in which the square root of the average variance explained is calculated for the items of each scale. Average variance explained (AVE) is the variance in indicator items captured by a construct as a proportion of variance captured plus error variance. AVE is calculated as the sum of the squared standardized individual indicator item loadings on the factor representing the construct, divided by this sum plus the sum of indicator item error. To demonstrate discriminant validity, the average variance explained for each construct must exceed the corresponding latent variable correlations in the same row and column that represents the shared variance in the constructs. If this condition is met, then we have evidence that the variance shared between any two constructs is less than the average variance explained by the items that compose the scale.

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to determine if work–family balance added significant variance above and beyond the bi-directional elements of work–family conflict and work–family enrichment. Control variables are entered in the first step of the modeling strategy, followed by inclusion of the four elements of conflict and enrichment (i.e. work-to-family conflict, family-to-work conflict, work-to-family enrichment, and family-to-work enrichment) in the second step. Work–family balance was entered in the third and final step. This modeling approach was used for each of the six dependent variables. Furthermore, usefulness analysis (Darlington, 1968) was conducted to assess the unique contribution of each variable to the outcomes. Usefulness analysis is a procedure utilizing a set of regressions including a common set of independent variables entered in alternating sequences such that each independent variable of interest is entered in the last step of a regression.

Results

Differentiating conflict, enrichment, and balance (H1)

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for the variables of interest appear in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, work–family balance is significantly but moderately correlated with elements of enrichment and conflict ranging from .198 to .569. This finding would suggest low correlation with conflict with moderate correlation being between work–family balance and family-to-work enrichment and the highest correlation with work-to-family enrichment. However, because each of these correlations is below .60, discriminant validity between balance and conflict and enrichment was demonstrated. The confirmatory factor analysis suggested the model fitted the data well ($CFI = .98$, $RMSEA = .052$). Further, each of the items loaded on its respective factor with the lowest loading for the six balance items being .73. In addition, the modification indices and expected change values suggested no evidence of strong association with other factors. Finally, in addition to the correlation of all the scales, which can be found in Table 1, the square root of the AVE value for each work–family scale is presented on the diagonal. In each case the AVE value exceeded the corresponding latent variable correlation, thus demonstrating discrimination. Therefore, all three approaches support the discriminant validity of work–family balance from the existing work–family conflict and enrichment scales. Thus, H1 is supported as conflict, enrichment, and balance are differentiated.

Balance and outcomes (H2 and H3)

Consistent with usefulness analysis we examined balance alone with each outcome and reported the results below. Next, we examined the impact of balance when entered after all the other work–family elements were included. The results for the final regression analyses on all of the work related outcomes can be found in Table 2.

Examining job satisfaction as the dependent variable, when work–family balance was entered in Step 2, 35 percent of the variance was explained. However, when the work–family elements are entered in Step 2 prior to balance, the results indicate that 41 percent of the variance in job satisfaction is accounted for by each direction of work–family enrichment as well as work-to-family conflict. Consistent with Hypothesis 2a, however, when added at Step 3 greater work–family balance was associated with greater job satisfaction, and it contributed an additional 9 percent of explained variance.

Work–family balance explained 25 percent of the variance in organizational commitment when entered in Step 2. However, when the work–family elements were entered first, work-to-family conflict and work-to-family enrichment were each independently associated with organizational commitment, and accounted for 35 percent of the variance in this outcome. However, consistent with Hypothesis 2b, when entered after the work–family elements, work–family balance explains an additional 4 percent of the variance in organizational commitment.

The third work outcome considered was intent to turnover. Work–family balance explained 23 percent of the variance when entered in Step 2. However, when the work–family elements were entered in Step 2, each of the elements of work–family conflict played significant roles but work–family balance did not explain any additional variance beyond these variables. Thus, H2c was not supported. Therefore, for the three work domain outcomes tested, support was found for job satisfaction and organizational commitment but not intent to turnover.

Next, we examined three outcomes from the family domain, the final regressions can be found in Table 3. For the dependent variable of family satisfaction, work–family balance explained 22 percent of the variance when entered in Step 2. However, when the work–family elements were entered in Step 2 each direction of work–family conflict and family-to-work enrichment

were independently associated with family satisfaction and accounted for 24 percent of the variance in this outcome. Above and beyond the effects of conflict and enrichment, greater work–family balance was associated with greater family satisfaction and explained an additional 8 percent of the variance providing support for H3a.

Twenty-three percent of family performance was explained when work–family balance was entered in Step 2. However, when entering the work–family element first, the family-to-work direction of conflict and enrichment was playing a role. Balance was associated with greater family performance and increased the level of explained variance in this outcome by 9 percent, supporting H3b.

Finally, work–family balance explained 15 percent of the variance in family functioning when entered in Step 2. However, when we entered the work–family elements first, family-to-work conflict, work-to-family enrichment, and family-to-work enrichment were each associated with family functioning, and accounted for 33 percent of the variance. Work–family balance accounted for an additional 4 percent of the variance in family function. Therefore, support was found for balance being associated with the three family domain outcomes tested: family satisfaction, family performance, and family functioning.

Treatment of common method variance (CMV)

The associations and results observed in these analyses are subject to potential over-inflation because of method variance. As we designed our study, we followed recommendations by Podsakoff et al. (2003) to reduce single-source bias. First, to decrease socially desirable responding and increase respondent candidness, we presented detailed information about the precautions taken to ensure the confidentiality of our respondents. Second, to decrease evaluation apprehension, we assured our respondents that there were no right or wrong answers to the measures in the survey. Third, we pretested and screened the items that we created for this study. Additional analyses, based on recommendations by Podsakoff et al. (2003) were undertaken to evaluate the potential problem of method variance in this study. Building on the confirmatory factor analysis discussed previously a model was specified that included a single unmeasured latent method factor. Thus, items are allowed to load on their theoretical constructs, as well as on a latent common method variance factor. The results of these analyses indicated that the model with the method factor slightly improved model fit ($CFI = .99$; $RMSEA = .042$). However, although a method factor does increase fit it only explains 6 percent of the total variance. This is much less than the typical amount of method variance found in similar studies, which is 25 percent observed by Williams et al. (1989). The results of these analyses suggest that the model tested does benefit from the addition of a method factor. However, the gain in fit is quite small and more importantly, the method factor appears to account for little variation in the data. Therefore, the results suggest that common method variance is not a pervasive problem in this study and that the relationships observed represent substantive effects rather than effects owing to artifact.

Discussion

Using a newly developed measure of work–family balance, based on the theoretical definition of balance by Grzywacz and Carlson (2007), we demonstrated that that balance is distinct from work–family conflict and enrichment. Further, this study demonstrated that work–family balance explained additional variance in several key work and family outcomes, above and beyond that explained by work–family conflict and work–family enrichment. Specifically, we found balance contributed to the explanation of the work outcomes of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, as well as the family outcomes of family satisfaction, family functioning, and family performance after accounting for work–family conflict and enrichment.

Theoretical implications

Based on Grzywacz and Carlson's (2007) work, we defined work–family balance as the 'accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his/her role-related partners in the work and family domains'. Although researchers have historically measured work–family balance with various indicators of conflict or enrichment, we agree with Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) that balance is more than these two elements and thus theoretically distinct. Therefore, we created a new six-item measure that captures Grzywacz and Carlson's theoretically based definition of work–family balance. In so doing, we also were one of the first to meet the call of Greenhaus and Allen (in press) and empirically demonstrate that balance was unique from conflict and enrichment in terms of moderate correlation and discriminant validity. Our results strongly suggest that balance is distinct from more traditional work–family interface constructs. Based on this finding, researchers should avoid the temptation to assume that all indicators of work–family experiences are equivalent to 'balance', and instead use theory to solidly ground their empirical measurement decisions.

Although more systematic research is needed to firmly establish its value, the measure of work–family balance used in this study will be helpful in building greater theoretical understanding of the work–family interface. The measure could be used to extend and test theoretical models of the work–family interface where work–family balance plays a key role. For example, researchers are now equipped to test a core proposition from Voydanoff's (2005) model of work–family balance suggesting that boundary spanning resources such as flexible work arrangements contribute to work–family balance by helping individuals better respond to their family-related demands.

This study is among the first studies focused on considering possible outcomes of work–family balance. We examined the relationship between balance and work outcomes, while still accounting for the effects of conflict and enrichment. The results indicate that balance does explain additional variance in job satisfaction and organizational commitment. These findings corroborate and extend prior work that established a relationship between the absence of conflict, job commitment, and job satisfaction (Allen et al., 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999; Tiedje et al., 1990). Interestingly, our results are inconsistent with prior work linking the lack of work–family conflict to turnover intention (Allen et al., 2000; Barnett et al., 2004; Greenhaus et al., 2001; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999); our findings did not reveal a significant relationship between balance and turnover intentions. Taken together, these findings suggest that meeting negotiated role responsibilities in the work and family domains might contribute to beneficial affective outcomes at work (i.e. satisfaction and commitment) but not behavioral outcomes (turnover intentions). The absence of a significant association between work–family balance and turnover intentions is puzzling. We conjecture that this behavioral outcome is more distal in nature and therefore too indirectly related; however, this supposition awaits future investigation.

Finally, we examined the relationship between work–family balance and family outcomes while controlling for the effects of conflict and enrichment. The results corroborate prior findings suggesting that work–family balance is associated with marital happiness (Milkie & Peltola, 1999), family performance (Frone et al., 1997), family functioning (Allen et al., 2000) and greater satisfaction with family (Clarke et al., 2004). Our results also extend this previous research through the use of a theoretically based measure of work–family balance, and by demonstrating that balance explains additional variance in family satisfaction, family performance, and family functioning above and beyond the effects of work–family conflict and work–family enrichment. The consistent, albeit modest, effects across all three family outcomes suggest that strategies to help workers meet their role-related responsibilities could provide a concrete way to strengthen families.

Practical implications

The findings in this study have important implications for practitioners. The definition and measurement of balance in the work and family domains relieves managers of the implicit pressure to 'get into the business' of nurturing and promoting workers' family lives through the provision of extensive benefit packages. Indeed although concepts like work–family enrichment and work–family facilitation are welcomed additions to the literature, we suspect that organizations are reluctant to embrace these ideas. In essence, we suspect that organizations do not want to get waylaid by possible appearances of engineering employees' families for organizational advantage. By contrast, programs to achieve work–family balance are much more benign. Indeed, targeted programs that help workers negotiate reasonable and acceptable role-related expectations, combined with mindfulness training aimed at honing their ability to be fully attentive to their role-related responsibilities would likely be viewed by workers as helpful. Further, these types of programs are attractive because they are consistent with common training programs offered in many organizations. Another practical value of this study is the creation of a theoretically grounded measure of work–family balance that can be used to evaluate the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of new initiatives designed to promote work–family balance.

The findings of this study demonstrate that balance has a real impact on both work and family outcomes. Thus, in addition to reducing conflict and enhancing enrichment, managers and executives can benefit from creating an environment that allows individuals to achieve balance. They might do this through an organizational culture that allows for individuals to negotiate roles with other members of a dyad. The organization could provide more training and discretion to supervisors to allow them to individualize to the subordinate and be open to role negotiations and renegotiations. Thus, if supervisors can manage departments to provide support this will help foster the subordinate in attaining greater balance.

Strengths and limitations

We believe that our work has several strengths and contributes to the literature in some important ways. First, our work indicates that work–family balance is a construct that is conceptually and empirically distinct from other extant work–family variables. This study considers possible outcomes of work–family balance, and clearly demonstrates how each of these concepts work uniquely with outcomes in both the work and family domains. Although none of the effects is large, they do suggest that work–family balance is relevant to outcomes of interest and might be deserving of attention. It is interesting to note that the Beta for work–family balance (where it is significant) is sometimes of comparable magnitude to work–family conflict and enrichment. This strong Beta suggests that balance actually might be a more important target for intervention than the traditional conflict measures. Future research can begin to focus on balance and examine if organizational policies and practices are effective in promoting work–family balance.

Furthermore, we offer a new empirical measure of work–family balance that is based on sound conceptual foundations and is consistent with prior theorizing in the area. Evidence of discriminant validity and reliability in the current study suggest the measure provides an accurate representation of work–family balance. In addition, our work demonstrates that balance explains variance in some work and family situations but not in others. One important distinction might be the influence of balance on affective versus behavioral outcomes as balance appeared to explain greater variance in more affective outcomes. Finally, we were able to provide evidence for the distinctiveness of the balance construct when considered simultaneously with other related work–family variables. This calls for further theorizing on how the balance construct operates exclusive of conflict and enrichment.

We acknowledge that no work is without its weakness, however. Our findings do rely on single-source data that can result in common method variance. We sought to address this risk both in the design and analysis phases of our research. The results of our subsequent analyses suggest that these efforts were effective because we found only modest evidence that associations are inflated by common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Nonetheless, future research should move beyond self-report data. Another area we think that future research could benefit from is capturing the negotiated and shared expectations between role partners in both the work and family domains. Ultimately, the criterion validity of this construct depends on how individuals negotiate roles and how other people in the role set feel about those negotiation processes, the effectiveness of those roles, and expectations people have regarding the focal individual. Thus, including the perspective of others in the role set such as supervisor, co-workers, spouse, or child will build on this research to examine the complexities of negotiated roles with various role partners. Such research will also provide a mechanism by which the validity and application of the measure can be further established. Future research also might benefit by exploring a broader array of potential outcome variables such as organizational citizenship behaviors and deviant behaviors. Next, although several parameters were imposed on participants in our study (i.e. being employed full-time, invitations were sent to diverse segments of society), our results are based on a convenience sample with unknown generalizability. Future research is needed using more purposefully drawn samples. The affective outcomes appear to have been more directly impacted by balance but more comprehensive models that distinguish between proximal and distal outcomes might provide a more complete picture.

In conclusion, our research offers a foundational starting block for further theoretical and empirical investigation in the area of work–family balance. By creating a measure of balance grounded in role theory that captures balance as a skill or ability possessed by individual employees, we established the distinctiveness of several common work–family concepts (conflict, enrichment, and balance). Furthermore, results suggest that, conceptualized and measured in this way, balance can lead to valuable organizational and individual outcomes. We hope that our work is valuable to both scholars and practitioners interested in understanding and maximizing performance in the work and family domains.

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Appendix A

Work–family balance measure

1. I am able to negotiate and accomplish what is expected of me at work and in my family.
2. I do a good job of meeting the role expectations of critical people in my work and family life.
3. People who are close to me would say that I do a good job of balancing work and family.

4. I am able to accomplish the expectations that my supervisors and my family have for me.
5. My co-workers and members of my family would say that I am meeting their expectations.
6. It is clear to me, based on feedback from co-workers and family members, that I am accomplishing both my work and family responsibilities.

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Table 1

Correlations, means, standard deviations and average variance explained^a

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Work-family balance	3.61	.826	.83									
2. Work-to-family enrichment	3.30	.926	.569**	.80								
3. Family-to-work enrichment	3.65	.852	.472**	.572**	.79							
4. Work-to-family conflict	2.91	.905	-.271**	-.182**	-.004	.71						
5. Family-to-work conflict	2.41	.883	-.198**	.006	-.054	.658**	.73					
6. Job satisfaction	3.62	1.042	.615**	.643**	.348**	-.265**	-.115**					
7. Organizational commitment	3.42	.813	.488**	.558**	.278**	-.334**	-.185**	.700**				
8. Turnover intentions	2.69	1.324	-.221**	-.293**	.011	.432**	.319**	-.540**	-.589**			
9. Family satisfaction	3.95	.963	.515**	.345**	.528**	-.065	-.135**	.350**	.275**	-.103**		
10. Family performance	3.87	.727	.489**	.261**	.319**	-.277**	-.364**	.296**	.282**	-.179**	.486**	
11. Family functioning	3.80	.779	.403**	.216**	.390**	-.282**	-.456**	.264**	.267**	-.223**	.621**	.522**

Note: Values on the diagonal are the square root of the average variance explained which must be larger than all zero-order correlations in the row and column in which they appear to demonstrate discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

^a N = 685.

* p < .05.

** p < .01.

Table 2

Regression results for incremental variance explained with work outcomes

	Job satisfaction					Organizational commitment					Intention to turnover				
	Step 1 β	Step 2 β	Step 3 β	R ²	ΔR^2	Step 1 β	Step 2 β	Step 3 β	R ²	ΔR^2	Step 1 β	Step 2 β	Step 3 β	R ²	ΔR^2
<i>Step 1: Control variables</i>															
Gender	.102*	.067*	.070*	.03	.03**	.023	-.009	-.003	.01	.01	-.011	-.005	-.005	.00	.00
Age	.057	.024	.031			.015	-.011	-.002			.023	.026	.025		
Marital status	.065	.071*	.065*			.005	.011	.033			-.022	-.039	-.039		
Number of children	.103*	.001	-.018			.083*	.005	-.026			-.014	-.037	-.036		
Job tenure	-.094	-.089	-.090*			-.042	-.035	-.028			.017	.021	.021		
<i>Step 2: Work-family elements</i>															
Work-to-family enrichment		.623**	.471**	.44	.41**		.541**	.457**	.36	.35**		-.366**	-.361**	.27	.27**
Family-to-work enrichment		-.036	-.121*				-.046	-.056				.244**	.247**		
Work-to-family conflict		-.145**	-.100*				-.195**	-.089**				.263**	.262**		
Family-to-work conflict		-.018	.018				-.054	-.014				.160**	.158**		
<i>Step 3: Balance</i>															
Work-family balance			.375**	.53	.09**			.258**	.40	.04**				.27	.00
													-.013		

Table 3

Regression results for incremental variance explained with family satisfaction

	Family satisfaction				Family performance				Family functioning			
	Step 1 β	Step 2 β	Step 3 β	R ² ΔR^2	Step 1 β	Step 2 β	Step 3 β	R ² ΔR^2	Step 1 β	Step 2 β	Step 3 β	R ² ΔR^2
<i>Step 1: Control variables</i>												
Gender	.115*	.059	.062	.06	.094*	.043	.046	.03	.097*	.039	.041	.03
Age	.042	.015	.022		-.060	-.074	-.067		-.013	-.025	-.021	
Marital status	.117*	.083*	.076*		.116*	.090*	.083*		.106*	.068*	.063	
Number of children	.169**	.045	.025		.065	.016	-.004		.056	.005	-.008	
Job tenure	-.046	-.004	-.005		.059	.094	.093*		-.008	.042	.042	
<i>Step 2: Work-family elements</i>												
Work-to-family enrichment		.071	-.077	.30		.162**	.004	.26		.009	-.087*	.35
Family-to-work enrichment		.449**	.365**			.193**	.105**			.346**	.291**	
Work-to-family conflict		.052	.097*			-.021	.026			-.001	.028	
Family-to-work conflict		-.134*	-.098*			-.336**	-.310**			-.442**	-.419**	
<i>Step 3: Balance</i>												
Work-family balance			.370**	.38			.391**	.35			.241**	.39
				.08**				.09**				.04**