

# Influence of Age, Social Support and Family-Work Conflict of College Students

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**Abstract:** The study examined the influence of age, social support and work-family conflict of college students. The sample size of the study was 150 participants, 61 males (41%) and 89 females (59%). The participants responded to two instruments, demographic instrument with 10 items and work spillover instrument that had 20 items. The study found a significance difference on age work spillover with older students having higher spillover to younger students. A significant difference was also found on younger students having higher work-conflict than older students. Student with low social support showed a significantly higher overall work spillover than those who had high social support.

**Keywords:** work spillover, social support, work-family conflict, family-work conflict.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Work and family conflict has become a popular issue, receiving much attention, ever since women began entering the work force (Ruppanner, 2013; Radcliffe & Cassell, 2015). In the role of continuum between work and family, one domain leaves fewer time and resources for another domain, this results in conflict as domains compete for lack of resources. There have been studies done that reveal the negative effects of work family conflict on organizational outcomes, such as satisfaction in the work place, job absenteeism, and job turnover (Lim, Morris, & McMillan, 2011; Young & Schieman, 2012). Work family conflict has many different categories such as time based conflict when it comes to juggling work and family, behavior based conflict which occurs when certain types of behavior do not match the type of behavior needed in the opposite domain. There is strain based conflict which occurs when stressors in one area have an impact on the other area (Lim, Morris, & McMillan, 2011; Radcliffe & Cassell, 2015).

Much research has been done to prove that work and family are not separate domains and that they interlinked within each other in many aspects of an individual's life (Seery, Corrigan, & Harpel, 2008). There is often conflict bringing the domains into each other and have been linked to some negative outcomes such as stress, increased job burnout, physical symptoms, such as depression, alcohol abuse, problematic parent child relationships, and negative child outcomes (Seery, Corrigan, & Harpel, 2008; Radcliffe & Cassell, 2015). Some studies show the impact of work family conflict, work family facilitation, and family to work conflict. These studies show that work impacts the family and experiences that what occurs with family influence work (Seery, Corrigan, & Harpel, 2008; Gatrell, & Cooper, 2008).

As more women and single parents enter the workforce, family and work issues have been studied more frequently. Work family conflict in some research refers to when an inter role conflict occurs (Son & Bauer, 2010). These conflicts occur when there are incompatible role demands from work and family. There are many different types of conflicts when it comes to work and family. Single mothers who have low incomes may experience a great deal of conflict with work and family as they have many responsibilities that occur simultaneously due to demands that come from family and work (Son & Bauer, 2010; Crompton & Lyolette, 2006). Pressures are felt from families into the work place, parents who have families at home sometimes feel a great deal of stress and pressure to be at home or at a family function instead of being at work (Seery, Corrigan, & Harpel, 2008). Some parents work non-standard work hours have more job insecurity (Son &

Bauer, 2010). Single parents feel it is most stressful when they do not have adequate resources to fit the demands at home and at work (Son & Bauer, 2010).

Demands from family are felt by single mothers who need to find child care for their children. This can be a struggle since many parents work earlier than childcare facilities open and they have nowhere to take their children before work, causing them to either be late or miss work and this may attribute to single mothers not able to keep a job for prolonged period of time (Son & Bauer, 2010; Radcliffe & Cassell, 2015). Family issues get in the way when it comes to working these low-income jobs. The hours are unpredictable and may require people to work untraditional hours, such as holidays and weekends, leaving them less time for family. There are many resources families can use to maintain employment such as childcare and school, also having the support of the community and family. It is very helpful for mothers and fathers to have the support of family and also having the support of the community in which they live in (Son & Bauer 2010).

As many women continue to enter the work force, especially married women, social scripts have been changing. Men are now spending more time with their children. More than half of married couples today both are working and feel many pressures from work family conflict (Pedersen & Kilzer, 2014). Being in a healthy marriage is a very important role in work and family. Having a spouse that can be supportive of a career is a key factor in keeping a balance between work and family (Pedersen & Kilzer, 2014). Tuttle and Garr (2012) study show the effect of work and how different hourly shifts affect families in different ways. The study shows that shift workers have a poorer work to family relationship than workers who have regular schedules. Also workers with more control over their shifts have a better work and family balance. How employees who manage to join work and family roles have an impact on health, family satisfaction, and work performance (Tuttle & Garr, 2012).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Lim, Morris and McMillan (2011) work- family conflict is “*a type of role conflict that arises when joint role pressures from work and family domains are experienced as incompatible in some respect, as a result of which participation in one role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the other role*”. Work and family can interfere with each other whether being a positive impact or a negative impact. There are many factors that affect work-family conflict. Many aspects of work and family can be a factor when it comes to work-family conflict. The different types of shifts individuals work at their jobs may have a large impact on how they act at home and at work. When an individual works a fixed day shift, a flexible day shift, or a designated day shift, it can affect their lives differently (Lim, Morris, & McMillan, 2011). People who work flexible shifts seemed to have a better work family enrichment than people who had a day shift schedule. Individuals who worked shift hours and have low earnings and work less hours are less likely to have professional or managerial positions (Lim, Morris, & McMillan, 2011). The likelihood of marriage drops when individuals are shift workers. The younger and if the person is female, they are more likely to have increased work family conflict (Lim, Morris, & McMillan, 2011; Mauno & Rantanen, 2013). The person who works a fixed day schedule is less likely to experience work family conflict than one who has a shift working job (Tuttle, & Garr, 2012). Work family conflict refers to when different role pressures from work and family domains are incompatible and work family enrichment refers to when experiences in one domain improve the quality of experiences in the other (Mauno & Rantanen, 2013). Different structural and psychological factors can impact work family conflict, these aspects are also titled as demands and resources. As resources decrease and demands increase work family conflict such as workload, having children, parenting stress, and long working hours, which may often cause some, work family conflict (Mauno & Rantanen, 2013).

On employees who have more control over their work schedules, women have a greater decrease in work family enrichment than men when they work shift schedules (Tuttle & Garr, 2012). There is quite a bit of stress that comes with work family conflict and keeping a balance between work and family is a serious issue within Western societies, including North American and European countries (Lim, Morris, & McMillan, 2011). Schieman and Young (2011) reported in their study that economic hardship is associated to a greater work family conflict. Men and women experience economic hardship similarly, but it has been researched that women report a larger than average level of economic hardship compared to men (Young & Schieman, 2012). A man seems to have more control over their schedule than women which gives them a more creative work schedule that sometimes leaves them with more work family conflict. Working men are more likely to be married than working women and have at least one child at home under the age of 18 (Byron, 2005). Although men may be more likely to have a family and work, women are more likely to have a job and do

more housework than men (Schieman & Young, 2011). When in times of economic hardship, individuals with jobs with greater authority there is a positive association between economic hardship and family to work conflict (Young & Schieman, 2012). Economic hardship is especially significant among people who have jobs with little authority. Although workers who have higher job pressure seems to report overall higher work family conflict when it comes to economic hardship. Individuals with more creative jobs seem to have a higher level of work family conflict because their jobs do not end in the office and tend to come home with them resulting in bring conflict from work into family life (Clark, 2000).

Ruppanner (2013) research noted that as women increase in the labor force conflict between work and family has also increased. Work and family are two domains that compete for an individual's time. So many families now rely on dual earnings and this has caused the work family conflict to increase since both partners are working, they have less time for family. Work family conflict and family to work conflict differ among countries and on gender (Gornick and Meyers, 2004). Higher position in a job, such as a supervision position corresponds with more work family conflict for both men and women. Research noted that positions with more resources can cause an individual to allow the boundaries to lessen between work and home life (Crompton & Lyonette, 2006).

Job demands in any manner are positively linked to work family and family work conflict for women. For men, there are many factors that indicate family work conflict such as job pressure; job stress, weekly hours, and job dissatisfaction are positively correlated with work family conflict (Hill, 2005). Women seem to be more likely to have more home demands that cause an impact in family work conflict (Fagan & Press, 2008). Divorced women can be more positively linked to a vulnerability to family work conflict than married women. Ruppanner (2013) states that marriage improves some of women's family demands due to the help of a spouse and divorce has a positive correlation with family work conflict for women. Men have a negative association to work family conflict when it comes to housework being affected by their work, while women have a positive correlation between house work and work family conflict (Hill, 2005).

There has been both interference and enhancements between work and family. Some of the interferences that work family conflicts can cause may include work family conflict, family and work stress, physical symptoms, depression, alcohol abuse, problematic parent-child relationships, and negative child outcomes (Seery, Corrigan & Harpel, 2008). There have also been positive interactions between work and family such as higher job and life satisfaction, organizational commitment, and psychological well-being (Fagan & Press, 2008). Seery, Corrigan and Harpel (2008) noted the three types of conflict, time based conflict which is when time is needed in one domain which makes time less available to the other domain. Strain based conflict which is stress experienced in either work or family hinders in the participation to the other domain. The behavior based conflict occurs when behavior needed in one domain is inappropriate when brought over to the other domain.

Work family facilitation is when a form of synergy in which resources associated with one role enhances or makes easier participation in the other role, which is a form of positive spillover (Schieman & Young, 2011). Crompton and Lyonette (2006) noted that being married or having a partner had a positive correlation with all three domains, such as work family conflict, work family facilitation, and family work conflict. When there are children in the home, the work family facilitation goes down and strain based family conflict increases. The societal roles have evolved and since women are moving more and more into the work force, men are actively engaging with their children (Pedersen & Kilzer, 2014). Although women are working more and men are spending more time with their children, the equality among childcare in the home is moving slowly. Women still spend more time in childcare at home than men do. Wives spend about twice the amount of time that husbands do on childcare tasks in middle class, dual earner families (Blustein, 2001). Mothers now working full time jobs, they sometimes do what is called "gatekeeping" which is exerting some control over the quantity and quality of contact between fathers and their children (Pedersen & Kilzer, 2014; Gatrell, & Cooper, 2008).

Mothers who have children in the household under the age of 6 it have shown to be negatively correlated with feeling balanced between work and family roles (Crompton, Brockmann, & Lyonette, 2005). When fathers in a household are more actively engaged it seems to have decreased mother's stress, by providing help with family labor. For many mothers who are working paying jobs, it allows them less time and energy to spend at home with their children and families, which can cause mothers to put more pressure on their spouses and have higher expectations of them since they are both working, mothers expect them to contribute more to the family needs (Pedersen & Kilzer, 2014; Radcliffe & Cassell, 2015). Studies show that mothers, when possible will prioritize family matters over work. Women with more flexible schedules seem to have a lower work family conflict (Crompton, Brockmann, & Lyonette, 2005). Son and Bauer (2010)

examined how low income, single mothers balance and manage their family and work lives. The primary concerns that these mothers was to find childcare to go along with the hours of their jobs or dealing with unexpected family issues (Young & Schieman, 2012). It is reported to be a very common concern for mothers to find quality childcare that is accessible and affordable in their communities. When mothers did find childcare that they could afford it was very common for the child care facility to not match the hours of their shifts (Hill, 2005).

Working a schedule that was nonstandard was very typical for these low-income, single mothers. Many mothers had a hard time getting a daycare contract due to the fact that job insecurity and irregular schedules made it very complicated (Blustein, 2001). Extended family members, neighbors, social networks, supervisors, are all very important resources for mothers who had to work (Son & Bauer, 2010). Support is very important for these mothers to be successful from both their workplace and their families (Gatrell, & Cooper, 2008). Informal support from supervisors is very valuable to mothers. If a mother is experiencing conflict between work and family and they have a supportive supervisor, it makes it less stressful on the mothers to handle (Son & Bauer, 2010). Mothers who had a flexible work schedule reported a sense of control over both their work and family lives. Schedules can be hectic with single mothers, trying to balance work and family schedules can be very challenging. Workplaces that allowed mothers to bring their children to work are necessary made it less stressful for mothers when they had no other options. Mothers, who did not have a flexible work schedule, and little support from family and friends, caused them to miss work more often than mothers with larger support systems (Son & Bauer, 2010; Radcliffe & Cassell, 2015).

When resources were available for mothers that met their demands they were less likely to feel the stress of work-family conflict. Despite having resources, many of these single mothers still reported feeling overwhelmed with work-family conflict because they had to do everything themselves. It was often reported that the interrelated conflicts of time constraints, tiredness, and stress made it very hard to retain a job for a long period of time (Radcliffe & Cassell, 2015). The more school activities single mother's children had made it even harder for the mothers to manage their busy lives with work and family. Stress comes from a great deal of time constraint and tiredness. Having a sick child home from school, missing work and an unsupportive supervisor made it hard for single mothers to maintain a good work balance (Son & Bauer, 2010). As single mothers, these women rely solely on their income to support their family, when something comes up and they have to miss work, which many times in these situations cause them to lose their job (Radcliffe & Cassell, 2015).

Minnotte, (2012) indicated that women who are single reported more work family conflict than men who were single fathers and working. Both genders reported having a high work family conflict than parents who are not single (Radcliffe & Cassell, 2015). If there is a great amount of adults living in a home with the single parent they report having less work family conflict. Single parents who had no other adults living in the home with them showed the highest level of work family conflict. Having a good support system showed a large reduction in work family conflict for single parents. These support systems would help with childcare and financial needs of the single parent which would drastically reduce the stress causing a work family conflict (Minnotte, 2012; Radcliffe & Cassell, 2015).

### 3. METHOD

#### Research Questions:

RQ.1 Does age influence work spillover of college students?

RQ.2 Does age influence work to family and family to work conflict?

RQ.3 Does social support influence work-spill over?

RQ.4 Does social support influence work to family and family to work conflict?

#### Participants and Design:

The data in this study was collected from a total of 150 college students, 61 males (41%) and 89 females (59%) from different majors of study. A convenient stratified sample was used in this study as the participants were individuals selected from different classrooms. Both quantitative and survey designs were used in this study. The survey had three sections, the demographics survey, The Work Spillover scale and the Work-Family Conflict scale. Quantitative design was used as SPSS was used for data analysis.

**Materials:**

The materials that were used in this study to collect data that looked at the level of work-family conflict among families from a college student perspective were three different surveys that were made up of questions displayed to the participants. The surveys consisted of 10 items on demographic questions that looked at age, gender, ethnicity, and marital status. The Work Spillover Scale which was made up of 15 items, which measured marriage/companionship, children, and free time on a 1 to 5 scale, 1 being definitely and 5 being definitely not. The work-family conflict scale consisted of 10 items rating work and family conflicts using a 1 to 6 scale, very strongly disagree to very strongly agree.

**Procedure:**

The collection of the data for this study was from convenient stratified sample. The sample was convenient as participants were requested to respond during usual class time and stratified as the investigator identified various classes in the University Campus to respond to the survey during usual class time. The investigator contacted the professors by email for permission to pass out surveys during their class time. At the time of the email being sent to the professors, attached was a copy of the survey so they were able to see what the survey consisted of before passing it out in their classrooms. The surveys were then taken to the instructor's classrooms who agreed to allow data collection. Once in the classrooms, the consent letters and the surveys were passed out to the class. The participants took 10 to 15 minutes to complete the survey and give it to the investigator. The surveys were then entered individually into SPSS after every class collection

**4. RESULTS****RQ.1 Does Age influence work spillover of college students?****Table 1**

	N	Mean	Std Deviation	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Young	72	16.7361	7.77499	1	1798.572	15.744	.000
Old	75	23.7333	12.87815	145	114.239		
Total	147	20.3061	11.21497	146			

One-Way ANOVA was computed comparing work-spill-over of young and old participants of the study. A significant difference was found among the young and old participants ( $F(1, 145) = 15.744, p < .05$ ). Tukey's HSD was used to determine the nature of the differences between the young and old participants. The analysis revealed that students who are young scored lower in Work-spill-over ( $M = 16.736, sd = 7.775$ ) than old students ( $M = 23.733, sd = 12.878$ ).

**RQ.2. Does age influence work to family and family to work conflict?****Table 2**

	N	Mean	Std Deviation	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
WORKtoFAMILYCONFLICT	Young	72	17.7083	5.54479	1	51.240	1.345	.248
	Old	78	16.5385	6.70085	148	38.110		
	Total	150	17.1000	6.18045	149			
FAMILYtoWORKCONFLICT	Young	72	13.5556	7.39983	1	413.869	10.850	.001
	Old	78	10.2308	4.77799	148	38.146		
	Total	150	11.8267	6.37713	149			

One-Way ANOVA was computed comparing work to Family conflict and Family to work conflict of young and old participants of the study. A significant difference was found among the young and old participants on Family to work conflict ( $F(1, 148) = 10.850, p < .05$ ). Tukey's HSD was used to determine the nature of the differences between the young and old participants. The analysis revealed that students who are young scored higher in family to work conflict ( $M = 13.556, sd = 7.3998$ ) than old students ( $M = 10, 2308, sd = 6.3771$ ). On Work to family conflict, One-Way ANOVA

showed no significant difference was found ( $F(1, 148) = 1.345, p > .05$ ). Both the young and old student did not differ significantly. Young students had a mean of 17.71 ( $sd = 5.54$ ). Older students had a mean of 16.54 ( $sd = 16.54$ ).

### RQ.3. Does social support influence work-spill over?

Table 3

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Low social support	46	24.3696	11.68353	1	1105.458	9.288	.003
High Social support	101	18.4554	10.54279	145	119.019		
Total	147	20.3061	11.21497	146			

One-Way ANOVA was computed comparing work spillover on low and high social support of the participants. A significant difference was found among the high and low social support ( $F(1, 145) = 9.288, p < .05$ ). Tukey's HSD was used to determine the nature of the differences between the low and high social support participants. The analysis revealed that students low social support have high work spillover ( $M = 24.369, sd = 11.684$ ) than student with high support ( $M = 18.455, sd = 10.543$ ).

### RQ.4 Does social support influence work to family and family to work conflict?

Table 4

		N	Mean	Std. Deviaton	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
WORKtoFAMIL YCONFLICT	Low support	48	19.7292	5.51107	1	487.94	13.878	.000
	High support	102	15.8627	6.11448	148	35.159		
	Total	150	17.1000	6.18045	149			
FAMILYtoWOR KCONFLICT	Low support	48	13.4375	6.73797	1	183.16	4.613	.033
	High Support	102	11.0686	6.08725	148	39.705		
	Total	150	11.8267	6.37713	149			

One-Way ANOVA was computed comparing work to Family conflict and Family to work conflict of Low and High social support. A significant difference was found among the low and high social support participants on Work to Family Conflict ( $F(1, 148) = 13.878, p < .05$ ) and Family to Work Conflict ( $F(1, 148) = 4.613, p < .05$ ). Tukey's HSD was used to determine the nature of the differences between the young and old participants. The analysis revealed that students who had low social support have high Work to Family Conflict ( $M = 19.729, sd = 5.511$ ) than High Social Support ( $M = 15.863, sd = 6.114$ ). Also student with low support reported high Family to Work conflict ( $M = 13.438, sd = 6.738$ ) than High Social Support ( $M = 11.069, sd = 6.089$ ).

## 5. DISCUSSION

A great amount of research has been done proving that work and family are not separate domains and that they are interlinked with each other in many aspects of an individual's life, such as age, gender, number of children and marital status (Seerv, Corrigan, & Harpel, 2008). This study found that participants who were older experienced more work spillover than younger participants. Many older participants may work non-standard work hours and experience more job insecurity causing a larger influence of age on work spill over (Son & Bauer, 2010). Many single parents are in the older side of participants on this study and single parents feel it is most stressful when they do not have adequate resources to fit the demands at home and at work (Son & Bauer, 2010).

A significant difference was found that students who were younger experienced higher family to work conflict than older students. Another result showed no significant difference on work to family conflict and age. Women have a positive association when it comes to family to work conflict due to stress of household work and time with family (Ruppner, 2013). Work and family conflict refers to when different role pressure from work and family domains are incompatible (Mauno & Rantanen, 2013). Younger participants had a significant family to work impact.

Comparing work spillover on low and high social support showed that students with low social support have high work spillover than students with high support. There is much stress that comes from work and family conflict (Lim, Morris, &

McMillan, 2011). It is helpful for people with more social support to have less work spillover because of the help they can obtain from the social network. Schieman & Young (2011) reported that economic hardship is associated with a greater work spillover and this could be even harder for students with lower social support. This study revealed students who have low social support have high work to family conflict and students with low social support reported a high family to work conflict as work and family are two domains that compete for an individual's time. Many families rely on dual earnings (Ruppner, 2013). Dual earnings create a higher social support, but can also create family to work conflict and work to family conflict if both partners are always working.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Social support is critical for students to successfully balance work and family. Age is a major factor that influences work-family conflict and family- work conflict for most college students. Students with low social support show a higher likelihood to have an increased work spillover. There were many young students in this study, although the older students seemed to face the most difficulty balancing work and family conflict and work spillover. Students who have support systems outside of work are more successful at balancing the challenging concept of work and family conflict.

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