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DO WE PREFER WORKING WITH FAMILY MEMBERS? FREQUENCY OF WORKING WITH FAMILY MEMBERS, JOB SATISFACTION AND WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT²³

Abstract

The goal of the current study is to explore if there is a relationship between the frequency of working with family members on one side, and job satisfaction, work-family conflict and relations with coworkers and superiors on the other. 1261 employed residents of Serbia, a subsample of the “Study of diversity of family and job relations in Serbia“, completed the PORPOS battery. Results showed that the frequency of working with family members is positively related to job satisfaction and relations with both coworkers and superiors. Correlations of frequency of working with family members with work-family conflict measures in both directions were found to be low, but positive. Results showed a much stronger correlation between working with family members and relations with coworkers and superiors on entrepreneurs only. Correlation with job satisfaction was due to differences in employment type, as the people working with family were mainly entrepreneurs.

Keywords: family members, job, job satisfaction, work-family conflict.

Introduction

Work-family role relations in people living in western-type nuclear families have been a topic of huge numbers of studies in the recent decades. As the dominant model of work-family role synchronization moved away from specialization inside the family towards despecialization (Bond, Galinsky, & Swansberg, 1998), issues arising from the need to have the same person perform two important, yet often completely different roles became a topic of great importance for psychology. Various authors have proposed theories describing how work and family roles interact with each other (e.g. Zedeck & Mosier, 1990; Clark, 2000; Hedrih, Todorović, & Ristić, 2013). Of these, work-family conflict took a prominent place in psychological research, due to

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its pronounced and negative effects on a person's well-being, job performance, health and family functioning, especially in single-parent families(Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000;Michel, Mitchelson, Kotrba, LeBreton, & Baltes, 2009; Cullati, 2014; Wei, Guo, Ye, Liao, & Yang, 2016).Work-family conflict is “a form of inter-role conflict in which the pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role.” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).Researchers have also proposed that work-family conflict is not a single phenomenon, but that it should be treated as two different phenomena – work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict(Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). These two constructs tend to be related, but the strength of this relationship was found to be highly dependent on the assessment instrument used. A meta-analytical study by Messmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran(2005) reported correlation between these two constructs to range between .10 and .59, across the sample of studies included in their analysis.

Job satisfaction is an affective reaction to a person's job, one that can be either positive or negative. Initially, it was considered to be a function of job properties and characteristics of the work environment on one side, and desires and expectations of the person performing the job on the other(e.g. Locke, 1969). More recent author's and studies have challenged both the view that job satisfaction is an affective reaction only, and that it is purely a function of job characteristics or their fit to one's personal properties. Weiss (2002) argues that, apart from the affective reaction, evaluative judgements about jobs and beliefs about jobs are also important components of job satisfaction. According to him, these components are obscured when job satisfaction is considered only in the context of emotional reaction. As for the causes of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, various studies have demonstrated a strong personality trait and even heritability components in job satisfaction (Arvey, Bouchard, Segal, & Abraham, 1989; Dormann & Zapf, 2001; Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002; Ilies & Judge, 2003). On the other hand, some longitudinal studies pointed to the conclusion that job satisfaction is not stable at all through time if job conditions vary, thus strengthening the view of the importance of job factors (Dormann & Zapf, 2001). The honeymoon-hangover effect, another important notion in job satisfaction research, states that job satisfaction will drop in the year prior to turnover, then grow in the year when the individual starts working at a new job, but will then slowly decline after that. Increase in the job satisfaction in the year when person starts working on a new job is called the honeymoon effect, while the decline is called the hangover(Boswell, Shipp, Payne, & Culbertson, 2009).

Job satisfaction is one of the most important and most widely researched concepts in organizational psychology. It is found to be related and predictive of a number of work related variables, such as job performance (Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001), health (Faragher, Cass, & Cooper, 2005), turnover (Boswell et al., 2009), work family-conflict, job autonomy (Gözükara & Çolakoğlu, 2016) and others.

One other important psychological aspect of job environment are relations with coworkers, and especially relationship with superiors. While the value of social

support is well recognized in other areas of psychology, coworker relations and the social support stemming from these relations has not been explored very much. Nonetheless, there is substantial evidence that coworker relations are an important factor in the workplace, both contributing to job satisfaction and other positive job outcomes and buffering against negative ones (Westat & Martin, 2000; Schieman, 2006; Hedrih & Pedović, 2015).

But what happens when coworkers are family members? Historically, work environments filled exclusively with family members and kin have been the only type of work environment most of the people ever new. This remains so even today in many parts of the world (Goldschmidt & Kunkel, 1971; Bellow, 2004; Hedrih, 2017). But, in modern organizations, hiring and coworking with family members is something that is looked down upon. The term nepotism refers to the preferential treatment of family and kin members in an organization in comparison to employees who are not kin or family. It is a term referring to a practice considered detrimental to the functioning of an organization. It is often considered in pair with cronyism, a practice of favoring personal friends and trusted colleagues. Both are considered to be the opposite of meritocracy, a major concept considered important for fairness and good functioning of an organization (Padgett & Morris, 2005; Jones & Stout, 2015).

While nepotism is not the same as having family members as coworkers, having family members, kin or even people with the same family name as coworkers is often considered a proxy of nepotism in both public discourse and research (Allesina, 2011), in spite of the problematic validity of such an approach (Ferlazzo & Sdoia, 2012).

But how do employees who work with family members feel? How does it influence their work life? Family is for most people a key pillar of social support in life, and it would be plausible to expect that family members one works together with perform that role also. Furthermore, strong ties existing between family members might also serve as a buffer against stressors and other negative aspects of the workplace, and in cases when all the employees are family members (e.g. family companies) it might be so that the nature of work-family relations changes and hence does the issue of work-family conflicts.

The goal of the current study is to explore if there is a relationship between the extent in which people do their jobs together with their family members on one side, and job satisfaction, work-family conflict and relations with coworkers and superiors on the other.

Method

Sample

The sample consisted of 1261 adult residents of Serbia of working age who reported being full-time employed either officially or without regulated legal status. Of these, 46,3% were male and 53,7% were female. Mean age was 38,32 years of

age with age ranging from 17 to 75. 11,5% of participants were entrepreneurs, 31,4% were state employees, 40,0% were employees of private organizations, 8,4% were employed without regulated legal status and 8,6% were employed through short-term or honorarium contracts.

This sample was a subsample of a geographical cluster sample of 2023 residents of Serbia collected in the scope of the “Study of diversity of family and job relations in Serbia”.

Variables and instruments

Participants were asked to complete the PORPOS battery (Hedrih et al., 2013), a compilation of short scales and marker questions created for the “Study of diversity of family and job relations in Serbia”. Data used in the current study included answers on:

- 1) the question about how frequently they do their job together with their family members
- 2) job satisfaction scale,
- 3) work-to-family conflict scale
- 4) family-to-work conflict scale,
- 5) self-evaluation of relations with coworkers scale and
- 6) self-evaluation of relations with superiors items.

The question about the frequency of working with family members is a part of a sub-questionnaire asking participants 10 questions about the arrangements of doing their work. The participant is asked to evaluate the frequency of working with family members on a five-point scale ranging from “never” to “always”.

Job satisfaction is assessed using a 7-item scale that applies an analytic approach to measure job satisfaction.

Work-to family and family-to-work conflict were assessed using a 6-item and a 4-item scale respectively

Scale for assessing relations with coworkers had 4 items, while the relationship with superior was assessed with two items.

All of these measures used 5-point Likert type scales for registering responses.

Apart from this, data on type of employment/source of income was used. This variable was used as a selection variable to create the subsample with people declaring themselves to be working as entrepreneurs, state employees, employees of private companies, people doing short-term contract jobs and people working without official employment included in the sample. This variable is the result of participants’ responses to the question “How do you earn money?” with a number of possible answers being offered, among which were the categories of employment listed above.

Results

Distribution of the frequency of working with family members is presented in table 1. From this table it can be seen that the distribution appears to be bimodal. Most of the participants do not work with family members at all, while a number of participants works exclusively with members of their family.

Table 1. Frequency of working with family members of participants from the current study

Frequency of working with a family member	Number of participants (Male/female)	Percent (Male/Female within gender)
Never	1009 (427/560)	80% (74.8/84.7)
Rarely	58 (38/19)	4.6% (6.7/2.9%)
Sometimes	61 (27/31)	4.7% (4.7/4,7)
Often	35 (25/10)	2.8% (4,4/1.5)
Always	98 (54/41)	7,8% (9.5/6.2)

Next, Spearman correlations between the frequency of working with family members and the other key variables were calculated. These correlations are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Correlations between frequency of working with family members on one side and job satisfaction, coworker relations, work-family conflict. Results on the whole sample and on subsamples by gender

Spearman correlation	Frequency of working with family members (male/female)
Job satisfaction	.108** (.132**/.086*)
Work-to-family conflict	.106** (.069/.133**)
Family-to-work conflict	.104** (.102*/.097*)
Relations with coworkers	.071* (.112**/.025)
Relations with superiors	.151** (.191**/.108**)
* - sig<.05, ** - sig<.01	

Given the bimodal nature of the distribution of the frequency of working with family members, and knowledge of traditional division of organizational structures (Hedrih, 2017) the next question was if the probability of working with family members is related to the type of employment somehow. Crosstabulation of the type of employment and the frequency of working with family members, showed that there is indeed a connection between these two variables. This crosstabulation is presented in table 3.

Table 3. Frequency of working with family members within each of the employment types - crosstabulation.

Type of employment	Frequency of working with family members (% within type of employment)				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Entrepreneurs	38,9%	3,4%	12,1%	10,1%	35,6%
State employees	87,4%	5,5%	4,5%	1,3%	1,3%
Employees of private companies	88,2%	3,2%	2,4%	1,8%	4,4%
Employed without regulated legal status	75,7%	5,4%	5,4%	2,7%	10,8%
Short-term/honorarium jobs	75,7%	8,7%	6,8%	2,9%	5,8%

Results presented in table 3 show that working with family members seems to be a phenomenon typical for entrepreneurs, but quite rare for other types of employees. Entrepreneurs also seem to be the only category with substantial variability in the frequency of working with family members. For this reason, correlations between the key variables of this study were recalculated on the subsample of entrepreneurs. The results are shown in table 4.

Table 4. Correlations between frequency of working with family members on one side and job satisfaction, coworker relations, work-family conflict. Results on the subsample of entrepreneurs.

Spearman correlation	Frequency of working with family members
Job satisfaction	.063
Work-to-family conflict	.008
Family-to-work conflict	-.096
Relations with coworkers	.214**
Relations with superiors	.236**

* - sig<.05, ** - sig<.01

The five groups of employees were also compared on average scores on the job satisfaction scale. Results showed that entrepreneurs have higher mean job satisfaction than all the other groups. When comparing the entrepreneurs with all the other groups taken together point biserial correlation coefficient was .179, $p < .01$.

In the subsample of non-entrepreneurs, work-to-family and family-to-work conflict were in positive correlations of .106 and .122 with the frequency of working with family members (respectively, $p < .01$ for both).

Discussion

Considering the whole sample, the results showed that people working with their family members more frequently tended to be somewhat more satisfied with their job, and to evaluate the quality of relations with coworkers and superiors better.

Considering absolute values, the obtained correlation with job satisfaction is very low. But if the fact that job satisfaction is a function of a multitude of factors, some dispositional and some even genetic (Arvey et al., 1989; Ilies & Judge, 2003), and that these factors account for a large proportion of variance of this variable, is taken into account, the obtained correlation can be considered significant. This is even more so if the fact that the sample used in the study includes participants from very diverse backgrounds, family structures and organizations is taken into account.

As for a possible explanation for this correlation it might be that people are simply more satisfied with the job when they can perform it with close people, i.e. with members of their family or it may be that job environments that permit them to work with their family members have also some other positive properties that lead to higher job satisfaction.

When relations with coworkers and superiors are in question, working with family members means working with people to whom one is much closer and more connected than is usually the case between typical coworkers. This can then result in a higher level of social support an individual receives and in stronger emotional ties.

On the other hand, higher levels of work-family conflict in people working with family members may be explained by the possibility that, when one's coworkers are at the same time their family members, work-family inter-role conflict obtains a new quality. It might be that the border between family and work becomes blurred, it becomes less obvious where work roles stop and where family roles begin. This can create or increase role ambiguity, and role ambiguity is known to be related with work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Observation that the distribution of frequency of working with family members is a bimodal one, pointed to the possibility that working with family members might not be a random occurrence in a workplace, but that there might be special environments that are conducive to having family members as coworkers. For this reason, distributions of frequencies of working with family members were explored in groups of people having different types of employment. This exploration showed that in state and private company employees the variable – frequency of working with family members was almost constant, with “Never” being almost the only value. On the other hand, the biggest percentage of participants who reported always working with family members was among the entrepreneurs.

A probable explanation for this lies in the specific properties of entrepreneurial jobs. First, unlike state and larger private companies that follow more or less strict employment procedures for employees and in which hiring of family members is often looked down upon or even outright forbidden in some cases, entrepreneurs and their family members are owners of their company and the ones that are responsible for making it perform. Also, entrepreneurial positions tend to be more stressful and much less secure than other types of jobs. Unlike jobs in state organizations or even private companies, where an employee can expect to receive a monthly salary regardless of the success of the organization at that time, entrepreneur's earnings depend on his/her ability to sell, deliver and secure payment for goods and services provided by his organization in that particular period. Also, when an entrepreneur's organization

market performance declines, and thus his/her financial resources become scarce, employed workers who are not family members tend to leave the organization in search of better jobs, aggravating the entrepreneurs situation even more. In the same situation, an entrepreneur working with family members can expect his family members, individuals to whom he is connected with strong ties (Granovetter, 1973; Ruef, 2002), to stand with him and help him pass through the rough period, even if he is unable to pay them. This support can buffer the very stressful effects periods of low or inadequate market success can have on the entrepreneur and help him drive his organization through these phases with less strain. The higher correlations with relations with coworkers in the subsample of entrepreneurs support this hypothesis.

Furthermore, results showed that when only entrepreneurs are considered, correlation with job satisfaction becomes lower and non-significant, but correlations between the frequency of working with family members and relations with coworkers and superiors increase substantially. This points to the explanation that the correlation with job satisfaction observed on the whole sample is due to a difference between entrepreneurs and other types of employees in job satisfaction –entrepreneurs have higher mean job satisfaction than the other categories. In other words, correlation between job satisfaction and frequency of working with family members appeared because people who work with family members are in large percentage entrepreneurs, who also have higher job satisfaction, while those never working with family members were mostly people in other forms of employment. Hence the correlation. When type of employment is controlled, i.e. when only entrepreneurs are considered, this correlation becomes smaller and non-significant.

It should be noted that, on the subsample of entrepreneurs, correlations with the two work-family conflict variables became non-significant. While correlation with work-to-family conflict became zero, correlation with family-to-work conflict became negative, but nonsignificant. Intensity-wise, family-to-work conflict correlation is almost the same as on the whole sample, but of the opposite direction. It is not significant on this subsample because of the lower number of participants. This points to the conclusion that entrepreneurs working with family members might indeed experience less family-to-work conflict. If that is the case, it might be taken as another indicator of the social support family members working with the entrepreneur provide to him/her, possibly showing more understanding, flexibility and imposing less demands on him/her, thus enabling him/her to experience less family-to-work conflict than entrepreneurs whose family members are not involved in their businesses.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that working with family members is widely found in entrepreneurs, while being very rare in all other types of employment. On the whole sample, it was found to be correlated to job satisfaction, but further analysis revealed that this correlation was due to entrepreneurs having higher job satisfaction than

people from other employment categories. Relations with coworkers and superiors were found to be better in people working with family members, and this correlation was even higher in the subsample of entrepreneurs, possibly indicating increased availability of social support to the employees in job environments in which one is working with family members. In non-entrepreneur subsamples, and on the whole sample, frequency of working with family members was found to be positively correlated with both work-to family and family-to-work conflict.

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DA LI VIŠE VOLIMO DA RADIMO SA ČLANOVIMA PORODICE? UČESTALOST RADA SA ČLANOVIMA PORODICE, ZADOVOLJSTVO POSLOM I KONFLIKT POSAO-PORODICA

Apstrakt

Ciljovogistraživanja je ispitivanje povezanosti između učestalosti s kojom ljudi rade zajedno sa članovima porodice s jedne strane i zadovoljstva poslom, konflikta posao-porodica i kvalitetom odnosa sa kolegama odnosno pretpostavljenima. 1261 zaposleni stanovnik Srbije, poduzorak iz „Studije diverziteta odnosa na poslu i u porodici u Srbiji, popunio je PORPOS bateriju. Rezultati su pokazali da je učestalost rada sa članovima porodice pozitivno povezana sa zadovoljstvom poslom i kvalitetom odnosa sa kolegama i pretpostavljenima. Korelacije učestalosti rada sa članovima porodice i konflikta posao-porodica u oba smera su bile niske ali pozitivne. Dobijeni se dosta intenzivnije kolrelacije između učestalosti rada sa članovima porodice i odnosa sa kolegama i pretpostavljenima, kada su posmatrani samo preduzetnici. Korelacija sa zadovoljstvom poslom je bila posledica razlike u tipu zaposlenja, jer su uglavnom preduzetnici ti koji rade sa članovima porodice.

Cljučne reči: članovi porodice, posao, zadovoljstvo poslom, konflikt posla i porodice.