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Social support and work–family conflict: A test of an indirect effects model

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ABSTRACT

Most work–family research on social support is based on matching domain relationships, that is, social support in the work domain is related to work interfering with family conflict (WIF) and social support in the family domain is related to family interfering with work conflict (FIW). In this research, based on the conservation of resources (COR) model, we examined the cross domain indirect relationship between social support in the work domain and FIW and the cross domain indirect relationship between social support in the family domain and WIF. We tested this model across three samples in two studies. In Study 1, we examined the cross domain influence of supervisory and spouse support on work–family conflict using two large random samples (N = 1130; N = 2769). In Study 2, we tested an expanded model of social support to include both generic and work–family specific support, and examined the cross domain indirect relationships between these two types of support on work–family conflict using a sample of 435 employees. Specifically, we proposed that social support systems in the work domain such as family friendly organizational policies, family supportive organizational climate, perceived organizational support, and perceived supervisory support will be indirectly and negatively related to FIW via WIF and that spouse/partner support will be indirectly and negatively related to WIF via FIW. Results for Study 1 provided support for the cross domain indirect effects model and results for Study 2 provided support for the cross domain indirect effects for work–family specific social support systems. We discuss implications of these results for the theory and practice of managing work–family conflict.

1. Introduction

The National Study of Changing Workforce (NSCW) has reported that only 20% of US employees have the necessary workplace flexibility to manage their work and family roles (Tang & Wadsworth, 2008). This finding indicates that organizational support for managing work–family conflict is a scarce resource. Given that a vast majority of employees with dependent children hail from households with either dual earning couples or single parents (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000), social support in the family domain is a scarce resource as well.

Scarcity of resources is one of the underlying assumptions of role theory (Goode, 1960; Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964), and provides an important theoretical basis for work–family research. According to role theory, role conflict occurs when individuals engaging in multiple roles (such as work and family roles) face resource constraints in terms of time or energy and have difficulty successfully fulfilling their multiple role responsibilities. Within work–family research, two distinct forms of conflict have been identified: work interfering with family (WIF) conflict and family interfering with work (FIW) conflict. WIF conflict occurs when demands of the workplace impede family role performance, while FIW occurs when demands of the family impede work-role performance (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992).

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Previous family research has focused extensively on the role of social support in buffering work–family conflict faced by employees (e.g., Allen, 2001; Carlson & Perrewé, 1999; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Michel, Mitchelson, Pichler, & Cullen, 2010; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). However, research in this area, for the most post, has focused on matching or same domain relationships (Michel, Kortba, Mitchelson, Clark, & Baltes, 2011; Seiger & Wiese, 2009; Van Daalen, Willemsen, & Sanders, 2006). In other words, work–family research primarily has examined relationships between a) work-domain social support (e.g., supervisor support) and WIF, and b) family domain social support (e.g., spousal support) and FIW (work–family scholars have used the term same/matching domain relationship to refer to the relationship between WIF[FIW] and variables in the work[family] domain and cross domain relationship to refer to the relationship between WIF[FIW] and variables in the family[work] domain e.g., [Amstad, Meier, Fasel, Elfering, & Semmer, 2011; Michel et al., 2011]). In a recent meta-analytic study on social support and work–family conflict, Michel et al. (2011) argued that future researchers should focus on cross domain effects when examining social support and work–family conflict. Additionally, Frone et al.'s (1992) research suggests that such a cross-domain relationship can be indirect in nature, whereby workplace variables affect FIW via WIF, while family domain variables affect WIF via FIW. Accordingly, the primary objective of this research is to examine these indirect cross-domain relationships, that is, the indirect influence of workplace social support on FIW via WIF, and the indirect influence of family social support on WIF via FIW.

Within the work–family social support research, scholars have recently differentiated between generic and work–family specific social support (Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hemmer, 2011). Generic workplace support refers to supervisory or organizational support that results in global employee well-being, whereas, work–family specific social support is context-specific support aimed at promoting employee well-being within the work–family interface (Kossek et al., 2011). In their meta analytic review, Kossek et al. (2011) recommended that future researchers should take a more nuanced approach to research on social support and work–family conflict that distinguishes between generic and work–family specific forms of social support (Kossek et al., 2011). Accordingly, the second objective of this research is to examine the abovementioned cross-domain effects in relation to both generic and work–family specific workplace social support.

Building upon Hobfoll's (2001) framework of conservation of resources theory (COR) and Frone et al.'s (1992) model, we propose a research model as presented in Fig. 1. The model includes two types of work–family specific social support systems, namely, family friendly organizational policies (FFOP) and family supportive organizational climate (FSOC), and two types of generic support systems, namely, perceived organizational support (POS) and perceived supervisory support (PSS). Further, PSS is generic support at supervisory level and POS is generic support at the organizational level. Consistent with previous research, the model posits that WIF and FIW are positively and reciprocally related (Frone et al., 1992). The model suggests that social support in the work domain is indirectly related to FIW via WIF. Likewise, social support in the family domain is indirectly related to WIF via FIW.

We tested the model using three samples across two studies. In Study 1, spousal support and only one type of work-support (i.e., supervisory support) were analyzed using the midlife in the US (MIDUS) sample and the national study of changing workforce (NSCW) sample as these two samples did not distinguish between generic and work–family specific social support. Study 1 makes an important contribution to the external validity of the research model as the data comes from two large randomly drawn national samples. In Study 2, an expanded model of workplace social support was considered, which includes

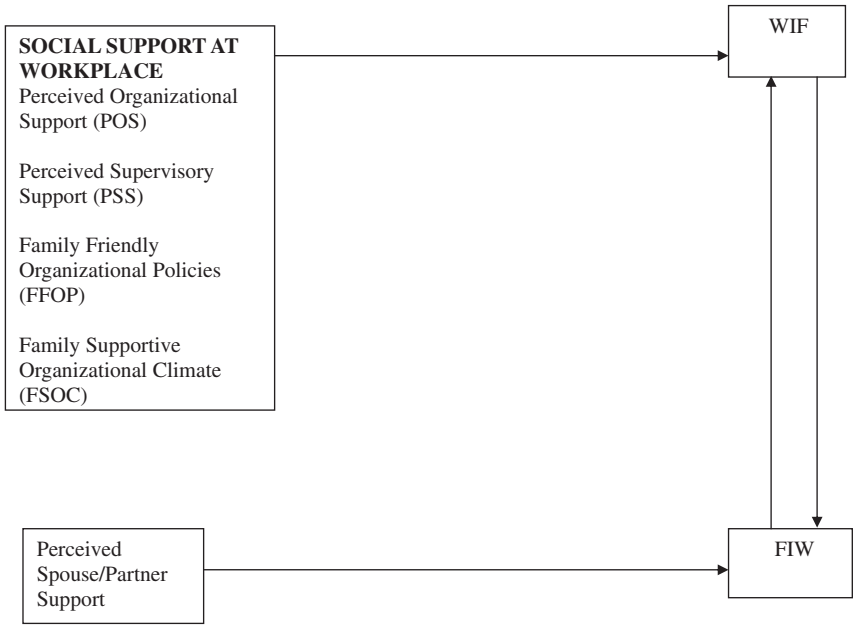

Fig. 1. Research Model for the same and cross domain influences of social support on work–family interface.

generic (POS and PSS) and work–family specific (FFOP and FSOC) social support, using primary data from an independent sample of full time employees. Collectively, both studies address the abovementioned two major objectives of this research,

This research extends work–family literature in two important ways. First, this research addresses the call given by Michel et al. (2011) to examine the cross-domain effects of social support and work–family conflict. Previous research efforts in this area have been sparse and available evidence points to weak cross domain effects (Michel et al., 2011). This may be because previous research efforts have focused on direct cross domain effects. However, absence of direct effect does not preclude presence of indirect effects (e.g., Preacher & Hayes, 2004) between work (family) social support and FIW (WIF) via WIF (FIW). To our knowledge, such an indirect effect has not been examined in the context of social support and work–family conflict. The research extends Frone et al.'s (1992) work as their research was not related to examining cross-domain indirect relationship between social support and work–family conflict.

The examination of indirect effects is important for several reasons. First, as individuals are interested in balancing their work and family lives (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011; Lu, Siu, Spector & Shi, 2009) by reducing conflict originating from both work and family domains (that is, both WIF and FIW), it becomes important to examine the influence of work (family) social support on not just WIF (FIW), but on FIW (WIF) as well. Second, since societal resources are scarce, it is important to examine if availability of resources in one domain may help to reduce conflict originating not just in matching domain, but also conflict originating across the domain with consequential benefits for both the domains. For example, employees with high levels of social support at the workplace may perceive lower levels of WIF, and if work is less interfering with their family lives, they may allocate more resources in terms of time and energy to their family roles. Since these employees are in a better position to fulfill their family obligations, it can lead to lowered perceptions of FIW. In the interest of better management of their work and family lives and adaptive resource allocation, the possibility of such reallocation of resources is suggested by both conservation of resources (COR) model and the selection, optimization and compensation (SOC) model (Baltes & Baltes, 1990). Briefly, these two theories posit that individuals tend to optimize available resource to achieve overall well being in their lives.

The second major contribution of this study is the inclusion of both generic and work–family specific social supports in the examination of the above relationships. Theoretically, the examination of work–family specific and generic forms of social support is necessary to provide a better understanding of the nomological net of social support and work–family conflict and thus such a nuanced approach helps to build better theory (Kossek et al., 2011). For practitioners, the examination is helpful to better identify the types of social support policies that are effective in reducing work–family conflict (Kossek et al., 2011). When the various types of social support systems are examined simultaneously, it can lead to a better understanding of the relative importance of the various types of social support systems. The current research extends Kossek et al.'s (2011) work as their research examined same domain effects of generic and work–family specific social support while our research pertains to cross domain indirect effects of generic and work–family specific social support.

2. Study 1

2.1. Literature review and hypothesis

2.1.1. Social support and work–family conflict: matching domain effects

Research in work–family conflict has clearly established that the four types of generic and specific social support in the work domain, as presented in Fig. 1, are helpful in reducing WIF conflict (e.g., Allen, 2001; Byron, 2005; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005; Kossek et al., 2011; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005; Seiger & Wiese, 2009). Social support systems in the workplace can help reduce work-related demands and thereby reduce WIF.

2.1.2. Social support and work–family conflict: cross domain indirect Effects

As discussed, work–family studies on social support have mostly focused on same domain effects of social support, that is, the relationship between work social support and WIF, and between family social support and FIW (e.g., Michel et al., 2011). Several studies reported weak or non-significant cross domain relationships between social support and work–family conflict. That is, previous research has found a weak relationship between work support and FIW and similarly, a weak relationship between family support and WIF (e.g., DiRenzo, Greenhaus, & Weer, 2011; Foley, Hang-Yue, & Lui, 2005; Frye & Breaugh, 2004; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005; Michel et al., 2011; Muse & Pichler, 2011; Seiger & Wiese, 2009; Shockley & Allen, 2007; Van Daalen et al., 2006; Witt & Carlson, 2006). However, as several researchers have observed, the absence of a total effect between predictor and an outcome variable does not preclude the presence of indirect effects between these variables by way of an intermediary variable (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). An indirect effect may be present if the intermediary variable transmits the effects of predictor variable to the outcome variable (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West & Sheets, 2002).

The possibility that workplace variables can be indirectly related to FIW via WIF has been suggested by Frone et al. (1992). Although their research model was related to stressors and work–family conflict, their model can be applied analogously to our research concerning social support and work–family conflict. Frone et al. (1992) proposed that stressors in the work (family) domain result to increased WIF (FIW) which in turn leads to increased FIW (WIF). Analogously, we propose in this research that social support in the work (family) domain may be indirectly related to FIW (WIF) via WIF (FIW). The theoretical rationale for such indirect cross domain linkage between social support and work–family conflict is provided by the COR theory (Hobfoll, 2001).

According to the COR theory, an increase in conflict originating in one domain may result in individuals expending more resources in that domain so that they can effectively perform in that domain. Since resources, such as time and energy are limited,

conflict originating in one domain results in reduced availability of resources in another domain and impacting performance in that domain (Hobfoll, 2001). For example, employees with low levels of workplace social support may experience high levels of WIF, and may spend more resources in the work domain so that they are effective in their work-roles (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Consequently, employees may have fewer resources to expend in their family role which impacts their performance in that role (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). COR theory also suggests that when individuals gain resources, they may optimally allocate available resources to achieve overall well-being. Drawing on Baltes and Baltes' (1990) selection, optimization and compensation (SOC) framework, Hobfoll (2002) argued that individuals are adept at manipulating and optimizing available resources to achieve overall well-being in their lives. Thus, individuals with high levels of social support at work (family) domain are in a position to expend fewer resources in the work (family) domain and still be effective in that domain; consequently, they have more resources at their disposal to expend in the family (work) domain so that they can be effective in this domain as well. The end result is that they can achieve increased well-being in both the work and family domains. In other words, high levels of social support in the work (family) domain may result in reduced WIF (FIW), and consequently in reduced FIW (WIF). Below, we review the literature and provide rationale for these cross-domain indirect effects for supervisory and spouse support.

2.1.2.1. Supervisory support and FIW: cross domain indirect effects. Supervisory support can be considered as a generic form of support that can provide socio-emotional resource to deal with their work demands. Research in work–family studies suggests that although generic supervisory support is not family specific, it can be an important resource for reducing WIF (Frye & Breaugh, 2004; Kossek et al., 2011; Luk & Shaffer, 2005). Supervisors are often considered as agents of the organization (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002) who implement organization's policies and practices. Thus, when employees perceive that their supervisors are favorably inclined towards them and care for their well-being, it can act as an important emotional and psychological resource that can reduce the strain created by work demands (Frye & Breaugh, 2004; Luk & Shaffer, 2005).

In the context of this research, a supportive supervisor may not directly lessen the burden of family responsibilities but he/she may help to make work responsibilities less overwhelming and thus reduce WIF, which in turn may help reduce FIW. Thus

Hypothesis 1. Supervisory social support will be indirectly and negatively related to FIW via WIF.

2.1.2.2. Spouse support and WIF: cross domain indirect effect. Research on the relationship between social support in the family domain and FIW is extensive, and the available evidence shows that social support systems in the family domain, such as spouse/partner support, have beneficial effect on reducing FIW (e.g., Boyar, Maertz, Mosley, & Carr, 2008; Byron, 2005; Seiger & Wiese, 2009). The rationale for this relationship is that support from family members can be an important resource for sharing demands in the family domain and can lead to the perception of reduced FIW. By contrast, individuals with lower levels of family social support may be spending more of their time and energy in the family role which may lead to higher levels of FIW. Further, higher levels of FIW may lead to higher levels of WIF because more resources spent in the family domain means fewer resources available in the work domain which impacts role performance and strain in the work domain. A supportive spouse may not directly help in making the work role less burdensome, but may indirectly help in reducing WIF by reducing FIW.

Hypothesis 2. Family social support will be indirectly and negatively related to WIF via FIW.

2.2. Methodology for Study 1

2.2.1. Sample description

Data for Study 1 was based on two separate samples. The first sample comes from the second wave of the midlife in the US (MIDUS) study of health and well-being conducted by the University of Wisconsin research center. The sample has been used in previous work–family studies (e.g., Grzywacz & Marks, 2000a, 2000b). The second sample was from the 2008 survey of the National Study of Changing Workforce (NSCW) conducted by the Family Work Institute. The descriptions of these two samples are shown below.

2.2.1.1. MIDUS sample. The MIDUS sample was identified using random-digit dialing. The first wave of the survey was conducted in 1995 and the response rate was around 70%. During the second wave of the survey conducted in 2005, over 90% of the participants in the first wave were contacted and the response rate for this wave was around 75%. The data was collected using telephone interviews and self-administered questionnaires. For this research, the sample size was 1130 respondents who indicated that they were working at the time of the survey. The average age of respondents was 50.14. In terms of gender and race, 50.9% of respondents were women and 49.1% were men, and over 85% identified themselves as White.

2.2.1.2. NSCW sample. The NSCW sample was based on the 2008 survey conducted using telephone interviews. The number of respondents was 3502 which represented a response rate of 54.6%. For this research, the sample size was 2769, which represented respondents who were wage and salaried employees. The average age 44.9. In terms of gender and race, 51.4% were men, 48.6% were women, and 80.7% identified themselves as White.

2.2.2. Measures for the MIDUS sample

2.2.2.1. Supervisory support. Supervisory support was measured using a 5 point scale ranging from 1 for "all of the time" to 5 for "never". The scale had three items and a sample item in the scale was, "How often do you get the information you need from your supervisor or superiors?" We reversed the scale for the analysis so that lower values reflect lower levels of support and higher values reflect higher levels of support. The coefficient alpha reliability for this scale was 0.87.

2.2.2.2. Spouse support. Spouse support was measured using a 4 point scale ranging from 1 for "a lot" to 4 for "not at all". The scale had six items and a sample item in the scale was, "How much does your spouse or partner really care about you?" Again, we reversed the scale so that lower values reflect lower levels of support and higher values reflect higher levels of support. The coefficient alpha reliability for this scale was 0.9.

2.2.2.3. WIF and FIW. The variables were measured using a 5 point scale ranging from 1 "All of the time" to 5 for "Never". Each scale had four items and a sample item in the WIF scale was, "Your job reduces the effort you can give to activities at home." A sample item in the FIW scale was, "Responsibilities at home reduce the effort you can devote to your job." The scales were reversed so that lower values reflect lower levels of conflict and vice versa. The coefficient alpha reliability for the WIF scale was 0.81 and for the FIW scale it was 0.78.

2.2.2.4. Control variables. We used the following control variables: age, gender, marital status, number of children, and family income. These variables were chosen based on prior research studies of social support and work–family conflict.

2.2.3. Measures for NSCW sample

2.2.3.1. Supervisory support. The variable was measured using a 4 point scale ranging from 1 for "Strongly Agree" to 4 for "Strongly Disagree". The scale had four items and a sample item was, "My supervisor or manager is supportive when I have a work problem." We reversed coded the scale for the analysis so that lower values reflect lower levels of support and higher values reflect higher levels of support. The coefficient alpha reliability for this scale was 0.82.

2.2.3.2. Spouse support. Spouse support was measured using three items from the survey. The items relate to whether the focal employee, his/her spouse or another person is responsible for household activities related to: a) cleaning b) cooking, and c) taking care of children. A sample item was, "In your household, who takes the greatest responsibility for cooking?" Each of the items was measured using five anchors: 1 for "I do", 2 for "My spouse/partner does", 3 for "I share this responsibility about equally with my spouse/partner", 4 for "A child, relative, ex-partner, in-law, or friend", and 5 for "Someone hired to do this task". Since the measure is related to spouse support, for each of the three items, we reconstructed the responses for the scale using a 3 point scale ranging from 1 for "I do", 2 for "I share this responsibility equally with my spouse/partner", and 3 for "My spouse/partner does". Thus, lower levels of this scale indicate lower levels of spouse support and vice versa. The co-efficient alpha for this three item scale was 0.80.

2.2.3.3. WIF and FIW. The variables were measured using a 5 point scale ranging from 1 for "Very often" to 5 for "Never". The scales had five items each and a sample item in the WIF scale was "How often have you not had enough time for your family or other important people in your life because of your job?" A sample item in the FIW scale was, "How often have you not had enough time for your job because of your family or personal life? The scales were reversed so that lower values reflect lower levels of conflict and vice versa. The coefficient alpha reliability for WIF scale was 0.86 and 0.82 for the FIW scale.

2.2.3.4. Control variables. We used the following control variables: age, gender, marital status, number of children and family income and these variables were chosen based on prior research studies social support and work–family conflict.

2.3. Results and discussion of Study 1

The descriptive and correlation statistics for the MIDUS sample and NSCW sample are shown in Table 1. The values above the diagonal consist of correlations for the MIDUS sample and values below the diagonal have correlations for the NSCW sample. To test indirect effects, we used the SPSS macro developed by Preacher and Hayes (2004) which is based on the nonparametric bootstrapping procedure outlined by Preacher and Hayes (2004). Nonparametric bootstrapping procedures are superior to traditional regression methods for testing indirect effects as the former do not make assumptions regarding the shape of the distribution of the variables or the sampling distribution (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The results of the regression analysis for indirect effects for the MIDUS and NSCW samples are presented in Table 2. Table 3 presents the summary of indirect effects for the two samples and includes indirect effects for supervisory and spouse support. Indirect effects are considered significant at $p < .05$ when the 95% confidence interval (CI) for the indirect effect does not include zero.

Hypothesis 1 stated that supervisory support will be indirectly and negatively related to FIW via WIF. As indicated in Table 3, the indirect effect was significant for both the MIDUS sample (indirect effect $= -.08$; Confidence interval $= [-0.1, -0.05]$) and the NSCW sample (indirect effect $= -0.18$; Confidence interval $= [-0.21, -0.14]$) as the confidence interval for these two

Table 1
Descriptive statistics and correlations for the NSCW and MIDUS samples (Study 1).

Variables	Mean (MIDAS sample)	*SD* (MIDAS sample)	Mean (NSCW sample)	Mean (NSCW sample)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	50.14	9.64	44.89	12.61	1	.073*	−.151**	.238**	−.107	−.002	.060	−.174**	−.271**
2. Gender	1.51	0.50	1.49	0.50	.061**	1	−.190**	.032	−.132*	.031	−.153**	−.019	.037
3. Marital status	1.73	0.45	1.30	0.46	−.146**	.108**	1	.188**	.433**	−.014	.111**	.040	.072*
4. No. of children	2.23	1.63	1.44	1.10	−.435**	−.040	−.040	1	.127*	−.036	−.031	−.089*	−.024
5. Family income	68.06	18.59	83,810.52	147,364.27	.111**	−.034	−.184**	−.003	1	−.124*	.005	.215**	.164**
6. Supervisor support	3.58	0.90	3.44	0.63	.000	0.06*	.002	0.05	−.010	1	.100*	−.266**	−.092*
7. Spouse support	3.61	0.55	1.84	0.75	−.002	−.638**	−.403**	.116**	.003	−.030	1	−.132**	−.275**
8. FIW	2.59	0.68	2.09	0.69	−.115**	.034	.030	.089**	.017	−.153**	−.093**	1 .480**	
9. WIF	2.06	0.59	2.52	0.88	−.106**	−.023	−.014	.053*	.005	−0.32**	.068*	.549**	1

Note: Values above the diagonal consist of correlations for the MIDAS sample and values below the diagonal have correlations for the NSCW sample.
FIW = family interfering with work conflict; WIF = work interfering with family conflict.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

Table 2
Regression analysis for indirect effects (Study 1).

Variables	Model 1: DV = WIF			Model 2: DV = FIW			Model 3: DV = FIW			Model 4: DV = WIF		
	B	*SE*	t	B	*SE*	t	B	*SE*	t	B	*SE*	t
MIDAS sample												
Age	−0.01	0.00	−5.09**	−0.01	0.00	−8.0**	−0.01	0.00	−4.5**	0.00	0.00	0.31
Gender	0.05	0.03	1.50	0.07	0.03	2.69**	0.05	0.05	1.04	−0.07	0.05	−1.37
Marital status	0.01	0.05	0.13	−0.05	0.04	−1.41	−0.13	0.12	−1.07	−0.14	0.13	−1.09
Number of children	−0.02	0.01	−1.74	0.02	0.01	2.03*	0.02	0.02	1.35	−0.04	0.02	−2.4*
Family income	0.00	0.00	3.4**	0.00	0.00	1.08	0.00	0.00	2.78**	0.00	0.00	2.8**
Supervisory support	−0.19	0.02	−10.1**	−0.02	0.02	−1.36						
Spouse support							−0.25	0.04	−5.9**	−0.02	0.05	−0.49
WIF				0.39	0.02	18.8**						
FIW										0.65	0.07	9.23**
Model R		0.11*			0.27**			0.14**			0.23**	
NSCW sample												
Age	−0.01	0.00	−2.1*	0.00	0.00	−0.59	0.00	0.00	−1.60 0.00	0.00	−1.41	
Gender	−0.02	0.05	−0.30	0.08	0.03	2.26*	0.04	0.06	0.62 0.00	0.06	−0.04	
Marital status	0.02	0.06	0.26	0.08	0.04	1.88 0.08	0.06	1.17	0.07	0.07	1.08	
Number of children	0.02	0.02	0.69	0.03	0.02	1.63	0.01	0.03	0.39	−0.06	0.03	−2.2*
Family income	0.00	0.00	0.69	0.00	0.00	1.65	0.00	0.00	1.71	0.00	0.00	0.10
Supervisory support	−0.41	0.04	−11.21**	−0.01	0.03	−0.41						
Spouse support							−0.08	0.04	−1.88	0.14	0.04	3.15**
WIF				0.43	0.02	19.1**						
FIW										0.64	0.03	19.22**
Model R		0.11*			0.28**			0.02**			0.28**	

Note:
Model 1: Supervisory Support → WIF.
Model 2: Direct Effects Model for supervisory support and Mediator (WIF) → FIW.
Model 3: Spouse Support → FIW.
Model 4: Director effects model for Spouse Support and mediator (FIW) → WIF.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

indirect effects did not include a zero. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Hypothesis 2 stated that spouse support will be indirectly and negatively related to WIF via FIW. The results presented in Table 3 indicate that the indirect effect was significant for both the MIDUS sample (indirect effect = −0.12; confidence interval [−0.17, −0.08]) and the NSCW sample (indirect effect = −0.05; confidence interval = [−0.1, −0.01]) samples as the confidence intervals did not include a zero.

2.3.1. Additional analysis

We analyzed the data for the two hypotheses by controlling the cross domain social support. That is, for Hypothesis 1 concerning the mediating influence of WIF on the relationship between supervisor support and FIW, we controlled for the spouse support and found that the indirect effect was significant for both the MIDUS and NSCW samples. Likewise, for Hypothesis 2 in regard to the mediating influence of FIW on the relationship between spouse support and WIF, we controlled for the supervisory support and found that indirect effect for spouse support was significant for both the MIDAS and NSCW samples.

Table 3
Summary of indirect effects and confidence intervals (both Study 1 and Study 2).

Independent variable	Indirect effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
MIDUS sample (Study 1)				
Supervisor support	−0.08	0.01	−0.1	−0.05
Spouse support	−0.12	0.02	−0.17	−0.08
NSCW sample (Study 1)				
Supervisor support	−0.18	0.02	−0.21	−0.14
Spouse support	−0.05	0.02	−0.10	−0.01
Study 2 sample				
Work social support				
FFOP	−0.03	0.01	−0.06	−0.01
FSOC	−0.18	0.03	−0.24	−0.12
PSS	−0.02	0.02	−0.06	0.02
POS	−0.05	0.03	−0.11	0.00
Spouse social support	−0.09	0.03	−0.16	−0.02

Note: FFOP—Family Friendly Organizational Policies; FSOC—Family Supportive Organizational Climate; PSS—Perceived Supervisory Support; POS—Perceived Organizational Support.

The objective of this study was to examine if social support indirectly influences conflict originating in the cross domain. The results of the study across two large samples provide support for the hypotheses of the study. That is, social support in the work domain was found to indirectly mitigate conflict originating in the family domain (FIW) by reducing conflict originating in the work domain. Likewise, social support in the family domain indirectly reduced the conflict originating in the work domain by reducing the conflict originating in the family domain. These indirect effects were found to be significant even after controlling for cross domain social support. That is, supervisory support was indirectly and negatively related to FIW via WIF after controlling for spouse support and spouse support was indirectly and negatively related to WIF via FIW after controlling for supervisory support.

3. Study 2

A major limitation of Study 1 is that the MIDUS and NSCW samples did not distinguish between generic and family-specific social support. Although NSCW study included items related to work–family specific supervisory support, the study reported that factor analysis of work–family specific and generic supervisory support scales resulted in a single factor, and thus, this study could not distinguish between generic and family-specific support. Further, the NSCW sample also had only two items related to flextime and personal leave and does not include other commonly used items typically used in work–family literature for measuring family friendly organizational policies. The objective of Study 2 to is to examine the cross domain indirect effects of workplace social support and WIF by considering both generic and family-specific workplace social support variables. In addition, the variables used in Study 2 are measured by scales that are widely used in work–family research with established validity.

3.1. Literature review and hypotheses for Study 2

In Study 2, we examine the cross domain indirect effects of the four workplace support variables on FIW as presented in Fig. 1. Research in work–family conflict has clearly established that various types of social support in the work domain are helpful in reducing WIF conflict (e.g., Byron, 2005; Eby et al., 2005; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005; Seiger & Wiese, 2009). Below, we review literature on the relationship between FFOP, FSOC and POS and WIF.

3.1.1. Family friendly organizational policies (FFOP)

Support from organization in terms of family-friendly organizational policies has been extensively researched and has been shown to have beneficial effects on reducing work–family conflict (Anderson, Coffey & Byerly, 2002; Hammer, Allen, & Grigsby, 1997; Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006; Russell, O'Connell, & McGinnity, 2009). Family-friendly work policies (FFOP) such as flextime, telecommuting and other flexible work arrangements offer employees flexibility to manage their work demands which can result in employees managing their work demands without sacrificing their family responsibilities (Kossek et al., 2006; Russell et al., 2009). That is, employees working in organizations with flexible work arrangements may perceive that their work demands do not interfere with their family responsibilities.

3.1.2. Family supportive organizational climate (FSOC)

Previous research in work–family conflict suggests that a perceived family supportive organizational climate (FSOC) is an important factor for reducing work–family conflict (e.g., Allen, 2001; Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999). In many organizations, employees are required to put work above anything else and are required to sacrifice their family and other non-work responsibilities, and such an organizational climate that discourages employees to balance their work and family responsibilities may result in higher levels of WIF (Kossek, Colquitt, & Noe, 2001). In contrast, a family supportive organizational climate encourages employees to fulfill their work obligations without compromising their family responsibilities and can potentially reduce the level of WIF (Kossek et al., 2001). Moreover, while formal family-friendly organizational policies are important, research in work–family conflict has recognized that employees may not be utilizing the benefits of these policies if the organizational climate discourages employees to use these policies to balance their work and family roles (Thompson et al., 1999).

3.1.3. Perceived organizational support (POS) and perceived supervisory support (PSS)

Perceived organizational support is considered a reflection of the extent to which an organization cares about the well-being of employees (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Consistent with the COR theory, POS can be viewed as a resource that can provide important social and psychological support to employees. The job demands–resources (JD–R) model (e.g., Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) also offers an important theoretical perspective that can help explain the linkage between social support at work and work–family conflict. The JD–R model suggests that work-related resources such as organizational support can buffer the effect of job demands on outcomes such as stress, strain and conflict (Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer & Schaufeli, 2003; Bakker, van Veldhoven &, Xanthopoulou, 2010). In addition, according to organizational support theory, when an organization cares for the well-being of its employees and values their contributions, it fulfills important socio-emotional needs (Eisenberger et al., 1986) which are beneficial in reducing the strain created by work demands. POS and perceived supervisory support (PSS) can be viewed as generic support that an organization and supervisor provide to its employees (as opposed to family specific support such as family-friendly organizational policies) that fulfills their socioemotional needs by providing them with additional resources to assist them in managing work demands (Kossek et al., 2011). Thus, POS and PSS have the potential to reduce WIF by providing resources to reduce the strain created by work demands (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999).

The above review suggests that the four types of social support systems at workplace are related to WIF. Similar to the rationale for the indirect cross domain effects of supervisory support on FIW presented in Study 1, we would expect that the four types of workplace social support systems will be indirectly related to FIW via WIF. Thus,

Hypothesis 1. The four workplace systems, namely, a) FFOP, b) FSOC, 3) POS, and d) PSS will be negatively and indirectly related to FIW via WIF.

We also examine hypothesis related to the indirect effect of social support on work–family conflict as in Study 1. Thus,

Hypothesis 2. Spouse/partner support will be indirectly and negatively related to WIF via FIW.

3.2. Methodology for Study 2

3.2.1. Research setting and sample characteristics

We tested these hypotheses using a convenience sample of 435 full time employees who are employed at various organizations and enrolled in an executive MBA program at a southwestern university. They were recruited for this study in return for minimal extra credit. The average age of the sample was 30.6 years. The sample consisted of approximately 59% women, and the average number of years of work experience was 10.9 years. In terms of race, the sample was much more diverse than for Study 1. Approximately 42% classified themselves as Caucasian, 15% as Latino, 19% as African-American, 18% as Asian, and 6% as belonging to other racial categories or indicated no race.

3.2.2. Measures

Unless otherwise stated, respondents used a five point scale (1 for "Strongly Disagree" to 5 for "Strongly Agree") to respond to the items for the measures used in this study.

3.2.2.1. Family friendly organizational policies (FFOP). Family friendly organizational policies were measured using a check list of seven commonly mentioned family friendly policies in the management literature. The participants were asked to indicate whether the company provided these policies. The check list included family friendly policies such as telecommuting, compressed work week, day care for children, flextime and leave to take care of family. Following Batt and Valcour (2003) and Ngo, Foley, and Loi (2009), we constructed an index of family friendly policies with values ranging from 0 to 7 based on the number of policies provided by the organization as specified by the participants in the survey.

3.2.2.2. WIF and FIW. The variables WIF and FIW were measured using the scale developed by Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian (1996). WIF was measured with a five-item scale. A sample item from this scale is, "The demands of my *work* interfere with my home and *family* life". FIW was measured with a similar five-item scale. A sample item from this scale is, "My co-workers and peers at *work* dislike how often I am preoccupied with my *family* life". The Cronbach's alphas for the WIF and FIW scales were 0.86 and 0.83, respectively.

3.2.2.3. Perceived organizational support (POS) and perceived supervisory support (PSS). Perceived organizational support was measured using the eight-item scale version of the measure developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986). A sample item from this scale was, "My organization cares about my opinions". Following Eisenberger et al. (2002), perceived supervisory support was measured by modifying the eight-item POS scale by replacing the word 'organization' with 'supervisor/manager' to derive the perceived supervisory support scale. A sample item from this measure was, "My manager/supervisor considers my goals and values". The Cronbach's alphas for the POS and PSS scales were 0.92 and 0.93, respectively.

3.2.2.4. Family supportive organizational climate (FSOC). Family supportive organizational climate was measured using the 3-item family work climate scale used by Kossek et al. (2001). A sample item from this scale was, "In my organization it is expected that employees have to take time away from families to get work done". The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.77.

3.2.2.5. Social support in the family domain. Social support in the family domain was measured using the four item scale used by Frone, Yardley & Markel (1997) to measure tangible support from spouse/partner. A sample item from this scale was, "I can depend on my spouse/partner to help me if I really need it". The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.80.

3.2.2.6. Control variables. We used the same control variables as in Study 1.

3.3. Results and discussion of Study 2

We used previously validated scales for the measures in this research, and accordingly we conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of all the variables. The results of the CFA using AMOS suggested that the hypothesized measurement model had superior fit compared to other combinations of measurement models (details of the results of these alternative measurement models can be obtained from the first author). The hypothesized measurement model had adequate levels of fit (Chi-squared/df = 2.21; CFI = 0.90;

IFI = 0.90; RMSEA = 0.05). Further, each indicator's loading on the corresponding factor in the hypothesized model was significant indicating that the hypothesized factor structure for measurement model was acceptable. Since all the variables were measured using self-reports which could potentially inflate relationships due to common method variance (CMV), we used the unmeasured method factor approach recommended by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) to examine if CMV is a significant issue in this research. Inclusion of the common method factor improved the fit of the measurement model significantly. However, an examination of factor loadings for this measurement model indicated that all the items still significantly loaded on respective factors ($p < .05$). Moreover, the average variance explained by the method factor was 18%, which is less than the 25% threshold value for the method factor variance as recommended by Williams, Cote, and Buckley (1989) for significant levels of method bias. Thus, we believe that CMV is not a significant problem in this research.

The descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 4. To test indirect effects, we used the SPSS macro developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008) which is based on the nonparametric bootstrapping procedure outlined by Preacher and Hayes (2004). Indirect effects are considered significant at $p < .05$ when the 95% confidence interval (CI) for the indirect effect does not include zero.

The results of regression analysis are presented in Table 5. The summary of indirect effects and their confidence intervals are presented in Table 3. As indicated in Table 3, Hypothesis 1a which stated that FFOP will be indirectly related to FIW via WIF was supported since the indirect effect was negative and significant (Indirect effect = −0.03, CI = [−0.06; −0.01]). The indirect effect of FSOC on FIW via WIF was negative and significant (Indirect effect = −0.18, CI = [−.24; −.12]), providing support for Hypothesis 1b. Further, Hypothesis 1c, which proposed that POS will be indirectly related to FIW via WIF, also was not supported since the indirect effect was not significant since the confidence interval includes a zero (Indirect effect, CI = [−.11; 0.001]). The results shown in Table 3 also suggest that PSS was not indirectly related to FIW via WIF (Indirect effect = −0.02; CI = [−.0.06; 0.02]). Thus the findings did not support Hypothesis 1d. Hypothesis 2 which proposed that perceived spouse/partner support will be negatively related to WIF via FIW was also supported, and the indirect effect was negative and significant (Indirect effect = −.09, CI = [−.16, −0.02]).

3.3.1. Additional analysis

Similar to Study 1, we analyzed the data for the two hypotheses after controlling for the cross domain social support variable. The results indicated that, controlling for spouse support, the indirect effect of FFOP and FSOC was indirectly and negatively related to FIW via WIF and the indirect effect of POS and PSS was not significant. Further, the indirect effect of spouse support on WIF via FIW after controlling for the four types of workplace social support was not significant at 95% confidence interval but was significant at 90% confidence interval.

The objective of Study 2 was to examine if the four types of social workplace support systems indirectly and negatively influence FIW via WIF. The results indicated that work–family specific social support systems such as family friendly organizational policies (FFOP) and family supportive organizational climate (FSOC) were negatively and indirectly related to FIW via WIF. In terms of generic support systems, perceived organizational support and perceived supervisory support did not indirectly influence FIW via WIF. In this research, consistent with the approach adopted by Kossek et al. (2011), we simultaneously examined the relationship between the various types of support systems and FIW, and we were able to examine the relative importance of these support systems in predicting FIW. The pattern of results is consistent with Kossek et al.'s (2011) meta-analytic study which found that work–family

Table 4
Means, standard deviations and correlations (Study 2).

Variables	Mean	*SD*	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	10.00	11.00
1. Age	30.65	8.09											
2. Gender	1.59	0.49	−0.07										
3. Marital status	1.70	0.96	0.41**	−0. 08									
4. No. of children	0.80	1.06	0.41**	0.00	0.34**								
5. Family income	3.48	1.57	0.41**	−0.08	0.60**	0.26**							
6. FFOP	9.76	1.40	0.01*	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.14**						
7. FSOC	3.21	0.90	−0.14**	0.14**	−0.09	−0.09	−0.09	0.19**					
8. Perceived supervisor support	4.25	1.01	−0.05	−0.04	0.05	0.04	0.05	0.25**	0.25**				
9. Perceived organizational support	3.55	0.86	−0.01	0.01	−0.02	−0.03	−0.02	0.30**	0.29**	0.75**			
10. Perceived spouse/partner support	4.10	0.83	0.12*	−0.02	0.59**	0.14*	0.37**	0.12*	0.05	0.20**	0.10		
11. Family interfering with work conflict (FIW)	2.08	0.67	0.08	−0.05	0.11*	0.20**	0.08	−0.20	−0.18	−0.21**	−0.19**	−0.36**	
12. Work interfering with family conflict (WIF)	2.49	1.02	0.14**	−0.17**	0.08	0.19**	0.04	−0.26**	−0.55**	−0.30**	−0.35**	−0.26**	0.51**

* $p \leq .05$.
** $p \leq .01$.

Table 5
Regression analysis for indirect effects (Study 2).

	Model 1: DV = WIF			Model 2: DV = FIW			Model 3: DV = FIW			Model 4: DV = WIF		
	B	*SE*	t	B	*SE*	t	B	*SE*	t	B	*SE*	t
Control												
Age	0.00	0.01	0.78	−0.01	0.00	−1.29	0.00	0.01	−0.63	0.01	0.01	1.52
Gender	−0.24	0.08	−3.03**	0.04	0.06	0.72	−0.01	0.07	−0.14	−0.31	0.09	−3.32**
Marital status	−0.02	0.05	−0.43	0.03	0.04	0.73	0.09	0.06	1.53	0.00	0.08	−0.02
Number of children	0.15	0.04	3.63**	0.07	0.03	2.4*	0.11	0.04	2.99**	0.10	0.05	1.99
Family income	−0.02	0.03	−0.74	0.03	0.02	1.42	−0.01	0.03	−0.53	−0.01	0.04	−0.33
FFOP	−0.10	0.03	−3.30**	−0.05	0.02	−2.1*						
FSOC	−0.51	0.05	−11.15**	0.10	0.04	2.6**						
PSS	−0.06	0.06	−1.04	−0.10	0.04	−2.34*						
POS	−0.15	0.07	−2.1*	0.08	0.05	1.66						
Spouse support							−0.14	0.05	−2.6**	−0.10	0.07	−1.44
WIF				0.35	0.03	10.14**						
FIW										0.65	0.07	9.23**
Model R-sqrd	0.41**			0.30**			0.05**			0.26**		

Note: FFOP—Family Friendly Organizational Policies; FSOC—Family Supportive Organizational Climate; PSS—Perceived Supervisory Support; POS—Perceived Organizational Support.
Model 1: Social Support → WIF; Model 2: Direct Effects Model for Workplace Social Support variables; Model 3: Spouse Support → FIW; Model 4: Direct Effects Model for Spouse Support.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

specific support systems had greater influence on reducing work–family conflict than generic support systems. Kossek et al.'s (2011) research was in relation to same domain effects while this research is in regard to cross domain effects of social support on work–family conflict, and thus, this study is an important extension of Kossek et al.'s (2011) research.

4. General discussion

The scarcity hypothesis and COR theory suggest that efficient utilization of resources is important for managing conflict in the work–family interface (Goode, 1960; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Hobfoll, 1998). Since resources in life's various domains are scarce, and individuals strive to balance their multiple roles, a major objective of this research was to examine if social support in the one domain (work or family) indirectly reduced conflict originating in the other domain. The results, based on two studies and three samples, provide support for the cross-domain indirect effect of social support in lowering work–family conflict. Specifically, Study 1 found that supervisory support was negatively related to FIW via WIF and that spousal support was negatively related to WIF via FIW. Additionally, in Study 2, we found that work–family specific social support systems consisting of FFOP and FSOC were negatively related to FIW via WIF, but generic support systems consisting of POS and PSS were not indirectly related to FIW via WIF. Further, although supervisory support was indirectly related to FIW in the Study 1 samples, it was not significant in the Study 2 sample when generic support systems were examined in conjunction with work–family specific support systems. The relationship between spouse support and work–family conflict points to an interesting pattern of results. For the MIDUS sample in Study 1, the spouse support is emotional and for the NSCW sample and Study 2 sample the spouse social support is instrumental. Based on the pattern of indirect effects observed in Table 5, it appears that the magnitude of indirect effect of spouse support on WIF is relatively stronger for the MIDUS sample. Thus, it appears that emotional support provided by spouse/partner has the beneficial effect of promoting overall emotional well-being of employees which may have helped in dealing with conflict originating in both family and work domains. Whereas, instrumental support offered in the family domain may be less effective in reducing conflict in the work domain. This observation is consistent with previous research which suggests that emotional support provided by the spouse/partner enhances individual self-esteem and well being both in family and work domains (Aycan & Eskin, 2005).

5. Implications for theory, research and practice

Three major contributions emerge from the results of this research. First, this study provides support for the COR theory, which suggests that individuals may conserve and optimally utilize resources to reduce conflict and ensure overall well-being in their lives (Hobfoll, 2001). In this research, work related resources were found to indirectly reduce FIW via WIF. Therefore employees who experienced high level of support from the work domain may transfer some of their resources to the family domain and reduce strain in that domain. Similarly, since spouse support was indirectly related to WIF via FIW, employees who had high levels of family support may transfer some of their resources from family to work domain to be effective in that domain. These patterns of results also support the resource drain mechanism (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000), which provides the theoretical rationale for the transfer of resources between the work and the family domain. Second, our study extends the work–family literature by examining cross-domain indirect effects of social support in work and family domain on work–family conflict. Previous research on cross domain effects of social support on work–family conflict has been sparse and restricted to cross

domain direct effects. In contrast to previous research which showed insignificant direct cross domain effects (e.g., Luk & Shaffer, 2005), in this research we focused on cross domain indirect effects and as predicted by the COR theory and Frone et al. (1992) model, we found significant effects. Thus, our research focus on indirect cross domain effects contributes to a better understanding of cross domain linkages of social support and work–family conflict.

Third, the results also provide support for the notion that models of social support should consider generic and family-specific forms of support as suggested in Kossek et al.'s (2011) meta-analytic research. In this research, we found that only work–family specific work support systems were indirectly related to reduced levels of FIW which further underscores the importance of work–family specific policies in reducing FIW. The current research is an important extension of Kossek et al.'s (2011) study as our research pertains to indirect cross domain effects. Additionally, the pattern of results is consistent with Kossek et al.'s (2011) observation that generic support systems may be significantly related to work–family conflict when the relationship is examined separately, but when both generic and work–family specific support systems are examined simultaneously, generic support systems may be a less important predictor of work–family conflict.

This research also has significant practical implications. The research suggests that various family-specific social support systems such as FFOP and FSOC can directly influence WIF as well as indirectly reduce FIW via WIF. Thus, organizations can improve quality of life of employees not only in the work domain, but also in the family domain by adopting supportive policies at work. It seems that family-specific policies and climate have a greater impact in reducing conflict suggesting that organizations should enact family-friendly policies and ensure a family supportive organizational climate so that employees are not constrained from utilizing the policies. Although generic support systems, such as POS and PSS, are helpful, family-specific policies are needed to have a greater impact in reducing conflict in the work and family domains. Even if family friendly policies are not available at the organizational level, supervisors can create a family supportive climate at their work group level which can greatly reduce work–family conflict for the employees in the work group at no additional cost. This research also has implications for individual employees struggling to balance competing demands in the work and family domains in that employees can use existing resources in one domain to compensate for lack of resources in another domain. Also, at the societal level, majority of employees today are part of the "sandwich generation", who provide care both to aging parents and to their children (Parker & Patten, 2013). Therefore, support in the work domain for managing work–family conflict is much needed and organizational programs may help this growing group of employees minimize work–family conflict. The differential impact of instrumental and emotional spouse support on work–family conflict indicates that partner/spouse may not be in a position to provide instrumental support in the work domain but any emotional support provided can facilitate employee well-being (e.g., better mood), which can spill over to the work domain.

6. Future research directions

Work–family research has increasingly emphasized work–family balance as opposed to work–family conflict. Future research should examine the relationship between social support systems and work–family balance. Such research would also be consistent with COR theory since the focus would be on how employees optimize their resources in order to balance role responsibilities in different domains. In this research, we did not consider work–family specific support at the supervisory level which is a limitation of this study and thus another avenue for future research is to examine if work–family specific supervisory support at the supervisory level, using measures developed by Hammer, Kossek, Anger, Bodner, and Zimmerman, (2011), may be related to FIW. Future research also should examine the indirect effects of FIW via WIF on outcomes in the family domain such as, family satisfaction. Similarly, research could investigate if WIF is indirectly related to work related outcomes such as job performance via FIW. Work–family research also could use repeated measures designs. Daily or weekly data on emotions and attitudes could be examined to see how they influence perceptions of stress, work–family conflict and outcomes. Given the aging population and the increase in "sandwich generation" employees, future research should examine generic and specific support for these employees. As this research indicated that instrumental and emotional spouse support may impact work–family conflict differently, future researchers may take a more nuanced approach by including how these types of support may influence work–family conflict and well being.

7. Limitation and conclusions

The research design is cross sectional in nature, and thus, any causal conclusions based on the observed relationships should be viewed with caution. The study also used a single source for collecting information on all variables, and thus, common method variance (CMV) is a potential concern. However, all the variables in this study, except FFOC, are perceptual measures and gathering information directly from the participants is an appropriate research design (Rothbard, Phillips, & Dumas, 2005). For family friendly policies, Thomas and Ganster (1995) noted that there is no difference between organizational informants and self-reports regarding measurement of the variable. Also, given the large range of correlation among variables in this study, common method bias may not be a major concern (Shockley & Allen, 2007). Moreover, as indicated earlier, analysis of the measurement model using unmeasured methods factor indicated that CMV is not a significant concern in this research.

Despite these limitations, we believe that this research makes important contributions to current work–family research. This research is one of the relatively few to examine the indirect effect of various types of social support systems in the work domain on FIW via WIF, and the results suggest that work (family) based social support systems have the potential to reduce conflict originating in work (family) as well as family (work) domains, which is an important contribution to the work–family literature.

In this research, we used three large and varied samples to test the above relationships which contribute to external validity of the research model.

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