

The Work-Family Interface: The Development of Family Constructs

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**Session 11: Management/Leadership
Poster**

Thursday, May 31, 2007

4:00 PM - 4:55 PM

Over the past 25 years, scholars have been researching the interdependence of work and family. While both organizational and family health sciences have examined factors that affect the interface of work and family, the majority of the work has been based on time, strain, or behavior-based pressures from one domain affecting the other domain (Eby et al., 2005). Recent emerging research has examined the beneficial effects of participating in both work and family known as work-family enrichment. Within sport, Dixon and Bruening (2005) examined a multi-level theoretical approach on the work-family (WF) interface. They suggested that sport provides an ideal context for examining WF conflict construct as coaches work long evening and night time hours, frequently working on the weekends and holidays, and spend significant time traveling. Their theoretical framework builds on constructions and applications of theories from other disciplines, but they also created a lens for viewing the theories within a sport context. As suggested by Challip (2006), further growth and development of the sport management discipline will require the development of theories within the sport framework. The aims of this study were to examine the development of three constructs unique to the sport phenomena that aid in the understanding of the WF interface.

Little quantitative research within sport on the WF interface has been completed. Anecdotal evidence and qualitative work on coaches have frequently expressed the troubling interference of coaching life on family life (Sage, 1987). Quantitative studies have suggested that coaches with families do experience a significant amount of conflict that may affect important areas such as their home and work quality of life and career aspirations (Dixon & Sagas, 2006; Sagas & Cunningham, 2005). While many of these studies are based on variables and characteristics used in the organizational sciences, none have examined the unique characteristics of the coach's home life which may allow many coaches to alleviate the pressures which can lead to conflict, or build resources that can aid in WF enrichment (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Three new variables attempt to capture these sport differences: spousal sport support, child sport involvement, and child sport attendance.

Support for all three of these characteristics is based on Greenhaus & Beutell (1985) proposition that support from role senders is related to WF conflict. Additionally, sport allows significant others to regularly see the parent/coach in a different social role than what they normally observe. Unlike many jobs that a spouse or child can only hear about what the focal person is doing, sport allows people to interact and involve themselves in the contest and season at hand. In this way, a spouse/partner is able to cheer and support the coach; a child is able to attend practices and games, and participate in the sport that that his/her parent is coaching. In short, these variables account for the unique interaction between work and family within the sport context.

Spousal sport support measures the amount of involvement and encouragement a coach receives from his/her spouse/partner and the understanding of the coach's responsibilities. Besides attending games, spouses may discuss previous competition, or assist in certain tasks. Child sport attendance is a measure of how much a child is able to view the coach in action. Generally this is done by attending games, but many children may attend practices. Child sport involvement is the child's participation in the parent's sport, and the coach's perspective of how much the child enjoys having a parent as a coach. In these three ways, the coach's social roles have ceased to be distinct, but now have in some respects, become amalgamated, possibly reducing the pressures involved in WF conflict and increasing resources available for WF enrichment.

For the validation of the framework mentioned above, experts within sport management and coaching (n=5) were asked to identify ways that spouses or a child could be supportive to a coach. Included in this was the distinction that children, unlike a parent, are more likely to attend a practice and/or actively participate in the sport. These two dimensions within child sport support became child sport involvement and child sport participation. From these discussions several items were generated and field tested on several coaches who were asked to give feedback on the questions (n=6). Following Anderson and Gerbing (1991), additional content validation procedures were taken in which three research/coaching experts were asked to match test items and the construct (along with related constructs), based on items' content and construct definitions. A six-item spousal sport support, five-item child sport involvement, and three-item child sport participation were retained. Finally, items were field tested via a web survey on college coaches. The data were collected from randomly selected cluster samples of NAIA spring sport coaches using a web-survey as part of an overall study on WF relationships. A total of 288 coaches received a survey link with 139 (48%) usable surveys. Data from coaches who were married/living with significant others (n=104) or had children living near/with them (n=74) were used for the analysis.

2007 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2007)

Principal-axis factor analysis with an oblimin rotation was used to test factor validation and to ensure indicators of same measures were more correlated to each other than to indicators of other measures (Bryman & Cramer, 2005). Along with the items from the three new variables, items from the conceptually related constructs of WF conflict and WF enrichment were analyzed. Results suggested high loading and low cross-loadings for five items within spousal sport support, and for three items each for child sport involvement and child sport participation. Reliability estimates for the three variables suggested acceptable to good reliability for spousal sport support = .88, child sport involvement = .86, and child sport participation = .81.

While further validation needs to be undertaken of the test items, including a CFA on a different data set, bivariate correlation results identify many of the expected relationships. Spousal sport support had significant relationships with family satisfaction ($r=.35, p<.01$), coaching satisfaction ($r=.39, p<.01$), and child sport attendance ($r=.35, p<.01$), and negative relationship with both dimensions of WF conflict and a global WF conflict variable ($r= -.32, p<.01$). Child sport participation had a negative correlation with the WF conflict dimension work interference with family ($r=-.23, p<.05$), and a positive correlation with child sport attendance ($r=.34, p<.01$). Finally, child sport attendance had significant relationships with coaching satisfaction ($r=.31, p<.01$) and work-interference with family ($r= -.27, p<.05$). An additional significant relationship was found for gender ($r=-.28, p<.05$), suggesting that children are more likely to attend games and practices when a father coaches, as opposed to when a mother coaches; although it should be noted that there were a small number of mothers coaching in the sample which could have skewed the results.

In sum, results suggest that further inquiry and validation is needed and warranted. However, coach's feedback suggested several other areas of future research including seasonal affects and spousal expectations. This work should lead to the development of a WF interface framework unique to sport organizations which could possibly modify the boundary conditions and assumptions within general WF theory.