

The Effect of Family Supportive Supervisor Behavior on Work-Family Enrichment of Female University Teachers

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Abstract

This paper discusses the influence of family supportive supervisor behavior (FSSB) on Work-family enrichment (WFE) of female university teachers and the mediating role of Leader-member exchange (LMX) through analyzing 183 valid questionnaires. The result shows that emotional support, role modeling and creative work-family management have significant positive effect on female university teachers' WFE, which have promoted the process of LMX. However, instrumental support doesn't pass the significance test and doesn't express prominent influence on WFE. Meanwhile LMX plays a partial mediating role among emotional support, role modeling, creative work-family management and WFE.

Keywords

FSSB; Work-family enrichment; LMX; Female University Teachers.

1. Introduction

Compared with male university teachers, females are more dedicated and meticulous to their job, which indicates that they are more suitable to university teaching and researching work and should enjoy higher level of self achievement and satisfaction. However, as a data from Mycos (the first company in China specializing in higher education management data analytics) in August 2014 showed that almost 80% female university teachers experienced heavy working pressure and less than 1% even feared of their work. As is known to all that work and family life are interconnected and interplayed. Traditional Chinese viewpoint assumes that there couldn't be any conflicts existing in female university teachers since they work easily and enjoy flexible working time. Besides the interface between work and family for them are relatively ambiguous. Unfortunately, with diverse social roles female university teachers are now playing as teachers, wives, mothers, daughters, they are required to shoulder varied labor divisions. According to the work-family boundary theory and role conflict theory, when the main party who displays a diverse role crossing the boundary, its psychological and behavioral means deserve more concerns.

The working behavior and performance of organizational employees are directly affected by the supervision of their leaders. Female university teachers are of no exception. Their supervisors' family concepts, their attitudes towards family support and their relevant actions all have great influence on their teachers' performance which will penetrate their family lives. Therefore, the study of family supportive supervisor behaviors on female university teachers' work-family influence is conducive to the mutual progress and development of both universities and female teachers. The present research on the work-family relation of university teachers mainly focuses on the conflicting perspective. But the role accumulation theory suggests that the positive experience employees gained from one role can achieve the benign performance improvement from the other role. Resource reinforcement view also proposes that the multiple roles individuals undertake can promote each other. Moreover, Rothbard's empirical research (2002) also proves that individual's high-input in one role may have relation with its input in other roles through positive feelings.

The issue of work-family enrichment has gained more and more concerns in the academic field. This study chooses female university teachers as its subject and takes leader-member exchange as a

mediator in terms of enrichment. It aims to explore the influence of family supportive supervisor on work-family enrichment and widen the research perspective of work-family relationship.

2. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

2.1 FSSB and LMX

Family-supportive supervisors empathize with an employee's desire to seek balance between work and family responsibility (Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Hammer et al. (2009) define family Supportive Supervisor Behavior (FSSB) as a multidimensional super ordinate construct consisting of emotional support, instrumental support, role modeling and creative work-family management. As to the routine management in universities, FSSB means various family supportive behaviors of the direct supervisors and leaders to their university faculty. Emotional support is the concern and carefulness of the deans and other administrators attached to their teachers' family needs. Instrumental support means a series of supportive policies that university teachers' receive from their supervisory leaders. Role modeling refers to university supervisors set good examples for their teachers and subordinates and guide them to observe and learn how to deal with work-family problems. The behavior of creative work-family management is related with the entire job restructuring for enhancing university teachers' work efficiency. Social support theory points that individual role space VIP's emotional and instrumental support are of vital importance to the provision of various resources. These resources enable individuals to cope with stress, improve health and increase benefits. Female university teachers' main roles in family life determine that they have much more requirements for their supervisors' family supportive behaviors. Thus, FSSB in universities may help female teachers better satisfy their family needs and relieve them from family worries. It may also promote them to devote themselves to their work and increase working performance, transferring their job satisfaction to family lives and ultimately facilitating the win-win situation of both work and family life.

Siber (1974), Mark (1977) and Barnett (2000) all consider that employees' positive experience and experience accumulation obtained from a certain role of can cause performance improvement from the other role. Carlson (2006) presents that work-family enrichment covers developmental, emotional and psychological resources enrichment three parts. Greenhaus & Powell points out that the experience from one role increases the life quality of the other role. They also think enrichment is two-sided just as work-family conflicts. Work-family enrichment is the positive effect of the work filed satisfaction to family life quality, while family-work enrichment directs family interface to work interface. The pleasure of family life can actively influence work. Therefore work-family enrichment is in favor of the balance between work and family life. This paper analyzes the inner relationship between FSSB and work-family enrichment in terms of work enrichment family. As to family enrichment to work, further discussion will be taken in latter research.

A meta-analysis of Kossek (2007) finds that previous studies on the effect of supervisors' support on work-family maily concentrate on the general emotional support instead of the FSSB. The measurement of targeted FSSB may reinforce its relativity with work-family relationship. With an increasingly high working pressure perceived by female university teachers, the emotional experience and overflow at work gradually expands to their family life. The discussion of FSSB not only benefits to the release of working stress, but also to their family relations. We propose the following hypothesis:

H1: FSSB displays a significant and positive effect on female university teachers' work-family enrichment.

1a Emotional support positively affects work-family enrichment of female university teachers

1b Instrumental support positively affects work-family enrichment of female university teachers

1c Role modeling positively affects work-family enrichment of female university teachers

1d Creative family-work management positively affects work-family enrichment of female university teachers

2.2 LMX and FSSB

Based on social exchange theory, Leader Member Exchange points out that the restriction of time and resources has significant effect on the exchange between leaders and their members, advancing the formation of various levels of exchange relations. Female university teachers are bound to develop various levels of LMX with their leaders at work for various kinds of resource limitation. In high-quality LMX, female teachers may receive more physical and mental resources and support forming intra circle relationship. While low-quality LMX tends to gain less resource and support shaping extra circle relationship.

All the four dimensions of FSSB are closely related with LMX. In emotional support, supervisors' trust and support is conducive to the development of psychological, social and physical resources with their teachers and improve their working flexibility. For instrumental support, a series of family supportive policies lay solid foundation for the economic and social exchanges between university supervisors and teachers. As to role modeling, supervisors enrich the content and format of LMX by the setting examples. Creative work-family management builds a platform for further communication between supervisors and their teachers in levels of organizational type. Bagger & Li (2014) demonstrates that FSSB improves the quality of LMX, and forms a positive loop between LMX and FSSB. They are inter-connected and mutual enhanced. When exchanging with their members, leaders should be more concerned with their emotional, instrumental or managerial requirement, promoting higher quality exchange relations of both parties. The following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: All the four dimensions of FSSB have positive significant relationship with LMX

2a Emotional support is positively related to LMX

2b Instrumental support is positively related to LMX

2c Role modeling is positively related to LMX

2d Creative work-family management is positively related to LMX

2.3 LMX and Work-Family Enrichment

Research shows that employees' behavior outcome, attitude outcome and perception outcome may be affected by different quality of Leader-member exchange. Therefore, LMX, as a vital occupational variable, may have great influence to the work-family relation of female university teachers. Liden and Masly (1998) divided LMX as four aspects of exchange such as emotion, loyalty, contribution and professional respect. Organizational leaders master necessary information, resources and occupational rights to fulfill most jobs at workplaces. To the limitation of time and energy, university leaders might have various things to exchange with their female subordinates, which result in different ways of their family life. Those female teachers of high-quality of LMX may be inclined to contribution exchange with their leaders and thus promote to their work-to-family enrichment. Meanwhile, high-level and frequent emotion and loyalty exchange also boost positive influence to female teachers' commitments to their leaders and further enhance their feelings at work enrich their family lives. Furthermore, during LMX, leaders and female university teachers' effective communication may also influence female teachers' psychological resources such as self-esteem, self-efficacy and so on. Active positive LMX can positively affect family life and stimulate family members' to establish self-confidence, clarify their goals and retain self-esteem. We propose the following hypothesis:

H3: LMX has positive effect on female university teachers' work-family enrichment.

Moreover, FSSB and LMX have significant relationship and LMX has positive influence on work-family enrichment of female university teachers. We infer from the above analysis that LMX plays a mediating role between FSSB and work-family enrichment of female university teachers. Hypothesis 4 is proposed as follows:

H4: LMX mediates between FSSB and work-family enrichment of female university teachers.

3. Methods

3.1 Data collection

In order to test all the hypotheses, we use a sample of married female university teachers from Chinese universities. Three different levels of universities are selected to ensure the full coverage of the whole sample: the top 50, the top 100 and ordinary universities. Full-time, married female university faculty is the subject of our data collection. Surveys are carried out over a period of four months from June to September 2016 and 232 questionnaires are sent to 15 universities of Jiangsu Province. In total 208 surveys are collected and we have 183 complete surveys giving a response rate of 78.88% of the total number of participants invited. 55.7 percent participants are between the age group of 30 to 39, 19.7 percent belong to age 40-59 and 24.6 percent are under the age of 30. Among them, undergraduates account for 22.8%, masters 46.1% and PhDs 31.1%. Their years of work are as follows: working years from 1-5 are 29.5%, years 6-10 are 32.2% , years 11-15 are 23.5% and over 15 years are 14.8%. The whole sample is in line with the reality of female university teachers.

3.2 Measures

To make sure the validity and credibility of this test, developed scales are used and all the variables are measured by Likert's five point scale. FSSB is measured using a scale of four items taken from Hammer's study of 2013, including "I feel comfortable when talking about work and non-work issues with my supervisors". These items represent the four dimensions of FSSB: emotional support, instrumental support and creative work-family management. The Cronbach α of the scale is 0.721. The measurement of LMX is based on Graen & Uhl-Bien's seven items scale. The Cronbach α is 0.725. Work-family enrichment includes seven items such as my work helps me understand more and get on well with my family. All the seven items include three aspects of development enrichment, emotion enrichment and psychology enrichment and the Cronbach α is up to 0.827.

With respect to the characteristics of female university teachers, three control variables are chosen: age, education and years of work. The Cronbach α of all the three scales applied in this study is over 0.7. Furthermore, the coefficient of internal consistency is 0.831, proving that the questionnaire is of high reliability. Meanwhile, the KMOs of FSSB, LMX and work-family enrichment are all laeger than 0.74, showing high validity of the questionnaire. The explanatory factor of all the variables is over 50%, indicating good construct validity.

3.3 Assessment of measures

Table 1 reveals the mean and correlation analysis of all the variables. All the three aspects of FSSB show significant positive effect with LMX and work-family enrichment. The mean of FSSB, LMX and Work-family enrichment is over 3.27, reflecting a relevant equilibrium of variables' range level. The relativity index between F3 role modeling and LMX is up to 0.594, the most significant among all the FSSB dimensions. The correlation between LMX and work-family enrichment is also as high as 0.564. Moreover, the correlations among variables are all significant when P is less than 0.01. The above Hypotheses have been testified preliminarily.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and correlations

Variables		Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6
F S S B	F1 Emotional Support	3.27	0.83	1					
	F2 Instrumental Support	3.41	0.67	0.461**	1				
	F3 Role Modeling	3.45	0.69	0.326**	0.592**	1			
	F4 Creative work-family management	3.69	0.70	0.222**	0.579**	0.641**	1		
LMX		3.50	0.51	0.508**	0.520**	0.594**	0.564**	1	
Work-family enrichment		3.38	0.57	0.409**	0.504**	0.491**	0.498**	0.564	1

Notes: N=183, ** P<0.01

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Regression analysis of FSSB on work-family enrichment

Hierarchical regression is applied in this part. In the first step, all the controlled variables are regressed. The controlled variables and independent variables are regressed in the second step. Finally dependent variable is added to the final regression process and all the results are demonstrated in table 2. The two controllable variables of age and working years show significant positive effect in all the six models. It means that they have significant positive impact on relevant variables. In consideration of the relationship among FSSB, LMX and work-family enrichment, these two variables should be paid great attention.

In Model 2, emotional support, role modeling and creative work-family management are all proved to have significant positive impact on work-family enrichment of female university teachers (β equals to 0.228, 0.165 and 0.254, $P < 0.01$). Hypothesis 1a, 1c and 1d have all been supported. Although the influence of instrumental support to work-family enrichment is insignificant and 1b is not testified, the value of β is positive which indicates that its influence is also active. This result shows that female university teachers attach more attention to their supervisors' spiritual support and the perfect managerial system, which coincide with Maslow's hierarchy needs theory. As a group of knowledgeable intellects, female university teachers receive higher education, acquire good personality and possess mature world and value concepts. They have rational preference to select FSSBs. Supervisors' emotional support, role modeling behaviors and creative work-family management help to promote the establishment of positive feelings and active emotional overflow of female teachers' family life quality. They also show solicitude and appeal to relevant family supportive policies, however, the key to instrumental support lies on policies' implementation. Therefore, female university teachers' FSSB should emphasize more on the execution of policies and the spiritual support of policy executors.

In Model 4, the emotional support, role modeling and creative work-family management all indicate significant and positive relation with LMX (β is 0.338, 0.278 and 0.293 respectively, $P < 0.01$). Hypotheses 2a, 2c and 2d have been supported. Instrumental support is insignificant and hypothesis 2b is not supported. For the rigidity of policy instrument, family supportive supervisors cannot break the formulation and implementation of instrumental policy in the process of LMX. This may lead to the insignificance of its impact on LMX. Conversely, emotional support, role modeling and creative work-family management are flexible dimensions which add more flexibility and humanization in LMX. Thus it is much easier to pass significance test.

Model 6 analyzes the relationship between LMX and work-family enrichment. The results indicate that LMX plays a significant positive effect on work-family enrichment ($\beta = 0.564$, $P < 0.01$) and hypothesis 3 is supported. This states that LMX is beneficiary to female university teachers' work-family enrichment. High-quality LMX will strengthen the perception of support of female teachers, enhancing their active role experience at workplace and stimulating its extension to family lives.

Table 2: Regression Analysis Results

Variables		Work-Family Enrichment		LMX		LMX& Work-Family Enrichment	
		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Age		0.141**	0.142**	0.134**	0.131**	0.231**	0.160**
Education		-0.040	-0.098	0.116	0.036	0.021	-0.033
Years of working		0.417**	0.327**	0.203**	0.127**	0.383**	0.282**
FSSB	Emotional support		0.228**		0.338**		
	Instrumental support		0.157		0.029		
	Role modeling		0.165**		0.278**		

	Creative work-family management		0.254**		0.293**		
	LMX						0.564**
	R2	0.217	0.378	0.061	0.518	0.197	0.318
	ΔR2	0.206	0.364	0.048	0.507	0.186	0.314
	F	19.974**	27.044**	4.707	47.734**	17.707**	84.223**

n=183, standardized coefficients are reported. * P<0.05, ** P<0.01

4.2 The mediating effect of LMX

In view of the above regression analysis results, F2 instrumental support in FSSB is eradicated in observing the mediating effect of LMX. Only the impact of F1, F3 and F4 are discussed. According to Wen’s research of mediating effect, the mediating effect of LMX can be divided into three steps. The first step is to measure the relationship between FSSB (independent variable) and Work-family enrichment (dependent variable). If the result is significant, second step is taken to test the relationship between FSSB and LMX (the mediator). If the result shows significant, the last step comes to bring both FSSB and LMX into the regression equation. If values of independent and dependent variables are smaller than the first step and insignificant, the hypotheses of mediating effects are supported. Otherwise, the result is partial mediating

The test of mediating effect is shown in table 3 after all the variables are decentralized. Without LMX, F1 emotional support (β=0.409,P<0.01), F3 role modeling (β=0.491,P<0.01) and F4 creative work-family management (β=0.498,P<0.01) all have positive significant effect on female university teachers’ work-family enrichment. Whereas, the impact of F1 emotional support ((β=0.166,P<0.01), F3 role modeling (β=0.241,P<0.01) and F4 creative work-family management (β=0.265,P<0.01) is still obvious when LMX is added. But the extent of its influence has a clear decline, which indicates that LMX does play a partial mediating role between FSSB and work-family enrichment and hypothesis 4 has been proven. The VIF value among variables all between 1 to 2 and the DW value is nearly 2, eliminating the possibility of multicollinearity and self-correlation.

Table 3: The Mediating effect of LMX between FSSB and female university teachers’ work-family enrichment

Steps	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	F1 Emotional support	F3 Role modeling	F4 creative work-family management
Step 1 (FSSB-Enrichment)			
FSSB	0.409***	0.491***	0.498***
ΔR2	0.163***	0.237***	0.244***
Step 2 (FSSB-LMX)			
FSSB	0.508***	0.594***	0.564***
ΔR2	0.254***	0.349***	0.314***
Step 3 (FSSB, LMX-Enrichment)			
LMX	0.479***	0.420***	0.414***
Enrichment	0.166***	0.241***	0.265***
ΔR2	0.331***	0.348***	0.358***

Notes: N=183, * P<0.1, ** P<0.05, *** P<0.01.

5. Conclusion

Female university teachers' work and life is closely related and supervisors' support behaviors have great impact on teachers' family lives. Most scholars nowadays focus on the macro level research of supervisors' support and organizational support while ignoring the specific family supportive supervisors' behaviors. This paper explores the effect of FSSB on female university teachers' work-family relations in perspective of work-family enrichment. Meanwhile, the mediating role of LMX is tested between FSSB and work-family enrichment. The research conclusions are as follows: (1)The emotional support, role modeling and creative work-family management of FSSB all have significant positive effect on female university teachers' work-family enrichment. This conclusion is in line with Zhou and Ma's research, which indicates that FSSB is propitious to work-family enrichment by effectively balance the responsibility of female teachers' work and family lives. Instrumental support fails to the test shows the limitation of instrument efficiency in family supportive behaviors. This result also coincides with Thompson. Although more and more organizations try to help their employees shoulder more family roles by implementing family supportive policies and plans, plans and policies cannot solve all the problems. The point is that the whole perception of employees' family support is not strong. When sensing FSSB, female university teachers pay more attention to spiritual support and systematic creative management.

(2)LMX is significant positive to female university teachers' work-family enrichment, which means that high quality LMX is beneficiary to the influence of female teachers' work roles on family roles. The expansion of female teachers' self-development, emotion exchange and psychological enrichment actively promotes them to shoulder family responsibilities.

(3)The four dimensions of FSSB are all positively related with LMX. Emotional support, instrumental support and creative work-family management all show significant effect on LMX, which illustrates that the nature of FSSB is spiritual and physical communication and exchange between supervisors and employees at work. High-degree family supportive communication is conducive to the deep exchange of viewpoints and is active for LMX. Vice versa.

(4)LMX plays a partial mediating role between three dimensions of FSSB and work-family enrichment indicating the importance of making LMX with female university teachers. Meanwhile, FSSB facilitates the enhancement of university working efficiency, gives full play of working enthusiasm and stimulates positive and high-quality interaction and communication with university supervisors under the bridge of LMX. All this promotes the occurrence of more positive energy and its transforming into family lives, clarifying the enrichment effect of work to family and impelling the win-win situation between both universities and female teachers.

The results of empirical study show that the relationship between work and family can be discussed in terms of facilitation and enrichment. As the main party of higher education development, female university teachers and their work-family relations are of vital importance to the development of universities. Both the active display of FSSB through high quality LMX and positive workplace overflow to family life are conducive to the sustainable development of female university teachers, the enhancement of the whole teaching faculty's working performance and the establishment of a stable and efficient faculty group.

There are still some limitations for this paper. Firstly, the survey sample mainly focuses on the female university teachers within Jiangsu Province. The generalization of the conclusion requires further test. Secondly, this study only explores the mediating effect of LMX between FSSB and work-family enrichment. Whether other moderating effect exists or not and how it works need further analysis and study. Moreover, since variables are multi dimensional and complex, this paper only discusses the four aspects of FSSB, the whole dimension of work-family enrichment and the mediating role of LMX. As to the specific dimensions of work-family enrichment, latter and consecutive research is needed.

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