Work-Family Spillover and Psychological Distress in Women: A Person-Centered Approach

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Abstract

The present responsibility of women both inside and outside of the home calls for an evaluation of women's psychological distress and depression as a result of work-family spillover. Using data from the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study, we evaluated the relationship between work-family spillover and psychological distress in middle-aged women (N = 2,842 and mean age = 54). Using a person-centered approach, we compared four groups of female participants on psychological distress as measured by the CES-D (Radloff, 1977): (1) those who have low positive and low negative spillover, (2) those who have low positive and high negative spillover, (3) those who have high positive and low negative spillover, and (4) those who have high positive and high negative spillover. Although we hypothesized that participants in group (3) would have fewer depressive symptoms than those in group (2), we were also interested in differences between groups (1) and (4). Analyses indicated that there was a significant difference in depressive symptomatology among groups at Time 2, even after controlling for income, education, age, “desire” vs. “need” to work, and depressive symptomatology at Time 1. Group (2) had significantly higher levels of depressive symptomatology than did group (1) and group (3). This research is innovative due to its person-centered approach and ability to look at positive and negative spillover simultaneously.

Method

Positive-Negative Spillover Grouping Variable:

(1) A “negative” mean scale (Cronbach’s α = .75) was created from (8) negative spillover items combining both work-to-family and family-to-work items (e.g., “To what extent do you agree that your job reduces the amount of time you can spend with the family?”; “To what extent do you agree that family worries or problems distract you from your work?”), measured on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

(2) The “positive” mean scale consisted of (2) items measured on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree): “To what extent do you agree that you can devote a lot of time to your job because of the support you get on the home front?” and “To what extent do you agree that you can do good work on the job because you are so happy at home?”

(3) We conducted a median split for each scale

(4) We created the following four groups based on the median split: (1) low positive and low negative spillover; (2) low positive and high negative spillover; (3) high positive and low negative spillover; and (4) high positive and high negative spillover

Results: Work-Family Spillover and Depressive Symptomatology

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Descriptive Statistics and ANCOVA Results</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependent Variables</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n = 591)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education (years)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symptomatology</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>M (SE)</strong></td>
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</table>

**Post hoc Comparison of Means**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Desire” vs. “Need” to Work</th>
<th>1, 2, 3, 4; 4 &gt; 1</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income (in $K)</td>
<td>20.63 (0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>M (SE)</strong></td>
<td>9.09 (0.06)</td>
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**Analysis**

• We conducted an ANCOVA in which the independent variable was group membership (1, 2, 3, 4) and the dependent variable was depressive symptomatology (modified CES-D), controlling for education, income, age, “desire” vs. “need” to work, and depressive symptomatology at Time 1.

Note: Depressive Symptomatology means for Time 2 are adjusted and estimated in accordance with the covariates appearing in the model (age, education, income, desire vs. need to work, and depressive symptomatology at Time 1).

Method (cont’d.)

Dependent Variable:

Our dependent variable is depressive symptomatology, which we operationally defined using the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977).

Control Variables:

- Demographics: age (years), education (years), and income (in $K)
- Depressive symptomatology at Time 1

Note: Depressive Symptomatology means for Time 2 are adjusted and estimated in accordance with the covariates appearing in the model (age, education, income, desire vs. need to work, and depressive symptomatology at Time 1).

References


Acknowledgments

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